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Aboriginality and English : report to the Australian Research Council

Ian G. Malcolm
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Aboriginality and English

Report to the Australian Research Council
November 1997

Ian G Malcolm and Marek M Koscielecki

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MT LAWLEY 6019, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Acknowledgments to the West Australian for permission to use the front print on First Exploration of the Upper Swan from their archival collection.
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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments i

Table of Contents ii

Executive Summary iii

Chapter 1 Introduction 1

Chapter 2 Diachronic Component: Socio-historical Survey 7

Chapter 3 Diachronic Component: Linguistic Survey 20
   3.1 Part 1 Phonology 20
   3.2 Part 2 Grammar 25
   3.3 Part 3 Lexico-Semantics 39
   3.4 Part 4 Discourse 41

Chapter 4 Diachronic Component: Pragmatic Survey 45

Chapter 5 Synchronic Component 57
   5.1 Part 1 Aboriginal English recorded at La Perouse 57
   5.2 Part 2 Aboriginal English recorded in the South West of W.A. 65

Chapter 6 Aboriginality and English: Some Speculative Inferences 76

Chapter 7 Aboriginality and English in Education 79

References 87

Appendix Word List
Executive Summary

The relation of aboriginality to English has important implications for communication between Aborigines and other Australians, and especially for the education of Aboriginal and other Australian children within a context of reconciliation.

The investigation of which this is the final report derives from the assumptions that Aboriginal English has been maintained at least in part because of its function as a bearer of aboriginality and that, by exploring the nature of the distinctiveness of this dialect and the historical circumstances of its formation and ongoing development we may better understand how to provide appropriately for the communicative and educational needs of its speakers within a society where the dialect operates alongside the significantly different variety which is generally called Australian English.

The project has comprised both a diachronic and synchronic investigation and attempted to relate the findings of each to the other. The diachronic component, which was carried out first, involved the accessing of a wide range of historical sources to enable a description to be made of the circumstances of contact in which Aborigines encountered and started to use English in the colonies established at Port Jackson (N.S.W.) and the Swan River (W.A.) From the historical sources, the contact history was traced and all quotations or recollected reconstructions of English as used by Aborigines were extracted for linguistic analysis. The linguistic analysis involved a chronologically organized description of Aboriginal English at the levels of its phonology, grammar, lexico-semantics, discourse and pragmatics. The synchronic component involved obtaining recordings of contemporary speech by Aboriginal people in Sydney and Perth and analysing it according to the same principles used in the analysis of the historical records.

The diachronic study has supported the view that the development of Aboriginal English in the Port Jackson and Swan River settlements was closely related. The combined evidence of the synchronic and diachronic data suggests that Aboriginal English is a unified dialect which developed out of a principled selection of alternative forms of linguistic, semantic and pragmatic organization. It is argued that it is in the principles of this selection that the aboriginality of English is to be found. Speculatively, it is suggested that in the development of Aboriginal English, its speakers have created a more hearer-focused variety to complement the more speaker-focused variety which is Australian English. In so doing they have also provided a form of communication which may exclude persons outside its own speech community because of its reduced linguistic explicitness.

The relationship between Aboriginal English and Australian English requires an appropriate educational response, and the report concludes by providing the rationale for two way bidialectal education which is the best way in which both aboriginality and English may thrive together within a schooling which will relate meaningfully to a life experience in which both English dialects have an important place.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Rationale

Teachers have long been aware that Aboriginal students often use English in distinctive ways. They have also been aware that many Aboriginal students are not comfortable in school settings and do not achieve optimal academic outcomes. Language differences (often misleadingly called "problems") are often seen to be related to the disappointing educational outcomes of schooling for Aboriginal students, yet the reasons for the language differences, and the ways in which dialectal difference bears on school learning, have not been adequately investigated.

It is of the nature of bidialectal communication that the less favoured dialect remains submerged in settings like school classrooms. It is discernible by the standard-English speaking teacher, but only as the tip of an iceberg. The full richness of the dialect's potentialities is revealed only in Aboriginal settings, and the meaning carried even by the apparently "standard" utterances of the child can only be fully understood in the light of the socio-historical circumstances which have attended the development and use of English by Aboriginal people.

English, to Aboriginal Australians, most of whom no longer speak their heritage languages, may serve as a marker not only of Australian identity but also of Aboriginal identity. The dual identity which English carries for Aboriginal people is a reflection of a history of unequal partnership with other Australians as residents of this country and of an ongoing ambivalence with respect to the values represented in the present day society.

Schooling is transacted in standard English and generally on the assumption that standard English is a neutral channel in which knowledge and values may be openly shared. To the bidialectal child, however, standard English is not neutral. It is the English of the "other", not the English of the "self". The English they encounter in schools is often described by Aboriginal people as "big words". The term might well be paraphrased "not our words". This is not purely a matter of vocabulary but of a variety which invokes a world from which, historically, Aboriginal people have been excluded.

It follows from this that, if the educational needs of Aboriginal students are to be adequately met through the school system, more needs to be learned about the "submerged" dialect of which their school communication gives little more than a hint. More needs to be known about the meanings carried by English as a bidialectal system of communication for Aboriginal people. More needs to be known about how, and why, Aboriginal Australians have, since almost the time of initial European settlement, developed and maintained English as a means of "two-way" communication which enables Aboriginal identity and values to be preserved while intercourse is also carried on, to a greater or lesser extent, with the wider society.

For this knowledge, linguistic inquiry needs to be supported by socio-historical inquiry. Most studies of Aboriginal English have hitherto provided synchronic descriptions, revealing the linguistic features which distinguish the speech of contemporary groups of speakers from standard English. Prior to the initiation of the present research, no study had sought to combine a synchronic description with diachronic data, tracing the history of contact and the history of the development of Aboriginal English.

In its original conception, the project sought to trace the socio-historical and linguistic developments from the time of European settlement on two sides of the continent, in the Port Jackson and Swan River settlements. While the initial interest of the Chief Investigator, whose
previous research into Aboriginal English has been mostly based in Western Australia, was to study the developments in that state, it was considered that the establishment of the colony of New South Wales, 41 years prior to that of Western Australia, would be likely to have an important bearing on the way in which Aboriginal English developed in the west. This, indeed, was borne out by the research. Contact between New South Wales and Western Australia was made at an early stage and the New South Wales government set up an outpost at King George's Sound, Albany, three years before the British Government established the Swan River Colony (Nind, 1979:16). In early contacts with Aboriginal people in Western Australia it is probable that members of the landing parties, who had familiarity with the form of communication used with Aboriginal people in New South Wales, would have used it, just as (according to Rowley, 1970:64), the "mobile white population or ships' crews from Sydney" brought with them to the northwest their "frontier English" from the 1860s on. At a later stage we know that Aboriginal people were brought by ship from New South Wales to Western Australia (Tucker, 1868:20) and this may also have occurred earlier. We know that Mokare, who served as interpreter to the settlers at King George's Sound, later served in the same capacity for explorers associated with the Swan River Colony (Cross, 1980:14). This study has, then, enabled the development of Aboriginal English in the Swan River Colony to be considered as at least subject to influence from New South Wales, and possibly as a western dissemination of the variety which developed through the first forty years of contact in the east.

1.1.1 Resource Constraints

In attempting to bring together both synchronic and diachronic data and both Western Australian and New South Wales data, the project entailed significant resource demands. These were conservatively estimated in the project submission at over $60,000. In the event, a grant of $30,000 was received. It was obviously necessary to reduce the scale of the project without interfering with its essential objectives. Advice was sought from the Aboriginal Steering Committee and the team was encouraged to retain both the eastern and western components and the synchronic and diachronic components but to limit the data collection according to what could be done within the resources available. It was decided therefore to settle for a less ambitious programme than originally planned, both with respect to the review of literary sources and with respect to the gathering of contemporary speech samples.

In the initial submission the project's aims were expressed as follows:

1. To carry out an extensive study of the written documentation of language contact leading to the development of Aboriginal English in Australia, focusing particularly on the Port Jackson and Swan River areas.
2. To critique and extend the literature on the origins and development of Aboriginal English.
3. To carry out case studies of speakers of Aboriginal English drawn from a range of age groups and geographical regions.
4. To provide an account of the functions, genres and semantic features exhibited in contemporary Aboriginal English.

The more conservative aims which the project set itself in the light of the resources granted were:

1. To carry out an extensive study of the written documentation of language contact leading to the development of Aboriginal English in Australia, focusing particularly on the Port Jackson and Swan River areas.
2. To extend the literature on the origins and development of Aboriginal English.
3. To record and analyse the speech of selected contemporary speakers of Aboriginal English in the vicinity of Sydney and Perth for purposes of comparison with the data obtained from the historical sources.
Thus, the project retained the objectives of both documentary and contemporary speech analysis with a view to extending understanding of the origins and development of Aboriginal English on both sides of the continent, but it limited the amount of speech data analysed and the scope of the account of contemporary Aboriginal English. It also excluded (except by implication) the critique of existing literature on the origins and development of Aboriginal English.

Project Management
The project team consisted of the following personnel:

1. Chief Investigator
   Professor Ian Malcolm
2. Graduate Research Assistant
   Dr Marek Koscielecki
3. Aboriginal Research Assistant
   Ms Glenys Collard
4. Research Assistant (temporary)
   Ms Rebecca Watts

The Chief Investigator was committed 20% time to the project and the research assistants' combined time amounted to approximately a half time position for one year.

The team was also assisted by paid consultants from Aboriginal communities:

1. Western Australian Consultant (Nyungar Community, Perth) Mr Fred Collard
2. New South Wales Consultant (La Perouse Community, Sydney) Mr Don Williams

The Chief Investigator, based in Perth, was responsible for the overall direction of the project within the guidelines provided by the initial submission, the advice from the Aboriginal Steering Committee and the input provided from the relevant research literature. Honorary consultants whose advice was sought from time to time were Professor Geoffrey Bolton (with respect to the socio-historical component) and Associate Professor Simon Forrest (with respect to Aboriginal cultural matters). The Chief Investigator also carried out the linguistic and pragmatic analyses and wrote all sections of the final report except for Chapter 2.

The Graduate Research Assistant, whose base was in Sydney, carried out all documentary searches and initial classification of the documents obtained. He was also responsible for negotiating the involvement of the La Perouse Community in the project. He wrote Chapter 2 of the report (the socio-historical survey) in its entirety and assisted in the compilation and proofreading of the report as a whole.

The Aboriginal Research Assistant was responsible for providing transcriptions and interpretations of the material tape recorded in Perth and in Sydney. She also provided advice to the Chief Investigator with respect to his linguistic and pragmatic analyses of the diachronic material.

The temporary Research Assistant provided short term assistance to the Chief Investigator in extracting relevant information from documentary sources.

The Consultants in the Nyungar and La Perouse communities obtained tape recordings of contemporary free speech within their respective communities and provided information on the background of the speakers recorded.

1.2 Methodology

I. The Diachronic Component

1. Literature searches were carried out in person in the Mitchell Library, N.S.W., Sydney University Library, the University of Western Australia Library and Edith Cowan University Library and, through electronic means, with other major libraries in Australia to access
Chapter 1

documents relating to the circumstances of initial contact between Aboriginal people and English and the subsequent development of Aboriginal varieties of English principally (though not exclusively) in the Port Jackson and Swan River settlements. In selecting materials, the principle followed was one of inclusivity. All available genres, including government records, academic works, ships’ logs, settlers’ diaries, autobiographies, theses, newspapers, missionary reports and works of fiction were treated as potentially relevant.

2. An initial sort was made of the materials accessed to determine whether or not they were relevant to the project. An extensive collection of potentially relevant materials (books, articles, photocopies) was reviewed first by the Graduate Research Assistant and then by the Chief Investigator. Those materials selected were classified in one or more of the categories: Circumstances of Contact; Linguistic; Pragmatic, separately for New South Wales and for Western Australia.

3. On the basis of the materials related to Circumstances of Contact the first draft of the Socio-historical Survey was written.

4. Progressively, two data bases, in chronological order, were compiled from the documents, one relating to New South Wales, and one to Western Australia, organized in the sections: Phonology, Grammar, Lexico-Semantics, Discourse and Pragmatics.

5. Each section was analysed to yield a linguistic or pragmatic description on principles which facilitated comparison both between Western Australia and New South Wales and between data from the diachronic and synchronic studies.

6. The linguistic and pragmatic reports were written up.

II. The Synchronic Component

1. Contact was made in writing and by personal visit to the Nyungar community in Perth (through Mr Fred Collard) and the La Perouse community in Sydney (through Mr Don Williams). Tape recorders, tapes, consent forms, background information forms and guidelines for making spontaneous speech recordings were provided to the community representatives and they were invited to make the recordings and fill in the forms at a time convenient to the community and inform the team when the material was ready. At that time payment would be made.

2. In the case of one community the tape recorded material was provided within one or two weeks. In the case of the other, there was a delay of several months. It was, however, recognized that the time frame of the research had to correspond to that of the communities which were contributing to it, and not vice-versa.

3. The tape recordings were listened to and transcribed with the assistance of the Aboriginal research assistant (assisted in turn by research assistant Ms Alison Hill who made time available from another project to do this). In one case the Aboriginal research assistant advised against using the material on one of the tapes as it was of a potentially sensitive nature. The team took this advice. It was recognized that the chosen policy of leaving the Aboriginal consultants to make their own recordings had the disadvantage of reducing the capacity of the research team to exercise controls over the kind of data which would be recorded. It was, however, considered to be the most appropriate way to proceed in view of the importance to this project of having data from a setting in which non-Aboriginal people had no involvement.

4. The tapes and transcripts were subjected to a linguistic analysis using the same basic categories as those used in the analysis of the material from documentary sources.
III. Comparative Analysis and Applications

1. On the basis of the comparable linguistic framework used in the diachronic and synchronic data collection, the features of the dialect were compared to enable some preliminary assessment to be made of the more enduring features of Aboriginal English and the possible significance of the ways in which aboriginality has found distinctive expression in English.

2. The synchronic and diachronic data were considered with respect to their implications for language planning and education. As a part of this, and in consideration of similar situations in other cultural settings, a rationale for bidialectal education was developed. This has been put forward at academic gatherings in the United States, the Netherlands and Germany for consideration as a possible model with international applications. It forms Chapter 7 of this report.

1.3 Limitations of this Research

This research does not attempt to supplant other approaches to the study of Aboriginal English. The diachronic data, which constitute the main new input it offers to this field of research, do not have the same status as linguistic data gathered on the basis of recognized procedures of linguistic fieldwork. They are incomplete, and, despite the considerable efforts made in the documentary search process, constitute a very small corpus. For reasons outlined in 1.1.1 (p.2) it was decided the main focus of the documentary data gathering should be on early sources and data from more recent linguistic studies (eg Eagleson, Kalder and Malcolm, 1982, Douglas, 1976, and Hitchen, 1992) was not included in the analysis. Except for a few cases where the documents comprise written records actually made by Aboriginal persons in the past, the records are at best second hand. They embody not only the perceptions of the non-Aboriginal observers about the communication of Aboriginal people but also their assumptions about how novel linguistic aural input can be reduced to writing. Sometimes these assumptions were not fixed but variable, in that the same authors appear at times to reduce the same Aboriginal expressions to writing in two or three different ways in the course of their writings. Another problem is that some sources of linguistic data are much richer than others. This means that we do not have a continuous picture of the development of Aboriginal English over the past two hundred years but rather one where periods of rich data input may be succeeded by periods of comparative poverty or of no input at all. It also means that the corpus represents the views of certain observers much more completely than it does those of others. In very few cases did the persons recording the language used in contact experiences record extended conversations or complete genres used by the Aboriginal speakers. Our description is therefore particularly limited when it comes to the discourse level.

It follows from this that the kind of analysis which is yielded by data coming from documentary sources is a tentative one. As further documentary sources come to light, it will hopefully become more complete, but it will never have the same substance as a description of contemporary communication on the basis of standard procedures of linguistic fieldwork. It cannot, however, be supplanted by synchronic descriptions and stands as an important supplement to them, helping us to understand the historically-grounded depth which provides some of the motivation for the maintenance of Aboriginal English as distinct dialect.

The selection of documentary sources used in this study has, as explained above, been as broad as possible. Sources which were obviously fanciful or where the manner of expression was obviously heavily edited have not been used. However linguistic samples have been drawn from both purported factual reports and from fiction (albeit fiction written by authors with considerable relevant experience). Academic, journalistic, moralistic, bureaucratic and many other kinds of writers have been included, as have those writing from first hand or other than first hand experience. It was considered that, since all the data must be interpreted with caution, it was neither desirable nor practical to exclude potentially useful sources on the basis of any
generalised criterion of acceptability. Rather, the material is presented for what it is: data based on records of human perceptions. Such material is not infallible but it does have the capacity to inform our understanding of the experience which was closer to its authors than to the present observer.

1 Two kinds of sources of material have been used in this study: first hand sources and second hand sources. The most important second hand source is Troy (1990), which is the most substantial academic resource relating to early English language contact in New South Wales. Troy provides an analysis of the reliability of the sources from which she quotes. This information is not repeated in this report.
 CHAPTER 2

DIACHRONIC COMPONENT: SOCIO-HISTORICAL SURVEY

2.1 Socio-Cultural History of Contact Between Aborigines and Settlers

The initial contact between Aboriginal people of Australia and other cultural groups took place long before the arrival of Captain James Cook on the eastern coast of Australia in the second half of the 18th century (see Howse, 1983; Favenc, 1888). The encounters of Aborigines with other people are the outcome of at least two prevailing situations in previous centuries:

a) economic trade endeavours (e.g. fishing, pearling) by Asian neighbours who established simple commercial intercourse with the native inhabitants of Australia (see Harris, 1985; Urry and Walsh 1981);

b) intermittent explorations by Europeans (e.g. Luis Baez de Torres in 1606; Abel Tasman in 1642; William Dampier in 1678; Captain James Cook in 1770) who gradually assumed the dominating position and exploited the land and its inhabitants.

The early contacts between Aborigines and the British invaders might have superficially been of an amicable nature (Barton 1889:122; Blundell 1848: 167; Extracts of Letters from Swan River 1830: 6; Eyre 1841/1985: 14-17; Millett 1872:262; Stirling 1833:7). However soon the European intentions became more or less understandable to the Aborigines, that is, the intruders were settling the land for grazing purposes as, for instance, reported by a settler who when meeting a group of Aborigines tried to explain white settlers' actions involving them:

"We said that we had made war upon them, because they had killed white people, but that now our anger was gone, and, that we wished to live in peace with them; that we wanted nothing in their country but the grass, and would leave them their kangaroos, their opossums, and their fish...all this appeared extremely satisfactory to our audience" (Fisher's Colonial Magazine Jan/Apr 1843:143).

Eventually further explorations of the land led to discoveries of natural resources (e.g. gold) which in turn led to mining the land in some parts of the country and at the same time pushing the Aborigines off the land (see The Kalgoorlie Miner 15 Dec 1897 & 17 Dec 1897; Roberts 1978). Aborigines were also subjugated to British laws due to the fact that they were treated as "British Subjects"! (Landor, 1847:186; Landor, 1847 cited in Aveling, 1979; see also The Aborigines and You 12 July 1963).

With time the hospitable responses of Aboriginal people had ceased. Various historical sources on contact history between Aborigines and white Settlers suggest that at the outset of the settlement the Aboriginal people were friendly to the white invaders because:

a) some believed that the white men were the spirits of Aboriginal men who departed the Earth and came back as "whites" - in fact, a number of convicts who escaped the harsh penal conditions survived in the bush due to this superstitious belief. For instance, Clarke was one of those who was accepted by the Kamilaroi group of people who treated "him with kindness and respect as a superior being" (Sydney Gazette 8 Dec 1831 cited in Boyce 1970:24). One can also mention a settler of New England who had some kind of physical deformity which gave him a similarity to a former Aboriginal chief who was assumed to have "jumped up or arisen as white man" - he was George MacDonald also known as "Bangar" among the Aborigines (MacDonald 1830 cited in Bloomfield 1992:58;
Chapter 2

see Science of Man 21 Feb, 1898 & 21 Nov, 1898 on death and spirituality).

b) Aborigines most probably did not suspect that the European intruders were here to stay - however, it is reported by an Officer who had accompanied Phillip on his journey to Port Jackson that

"The natives when they discovered that their visitors were likely to stay, shewed evident signs of dissatisfaction, and seemed not unwilling to prevent the preparation on foot, if they could have collected force sufficient, and who could blame them? Could they have known the bloody destruction and havoc Christians have carried into the different quarters and harmless territories of the globe, they would rather have wished to remain in their state of nature, rude and uncivilised than become the slaves of imperious and political masters" (an Officer 1789/1978:19-20).

c) Often the initial behaviour of white settlers was to make friendly relations with the Aborigines by luring them with various gifts as reported by Stirling in his expedition to Western Australia

"...Mr Dale is amongst the natives; landed immediately and joined him; found five natives had come upon him suddenly, but were friendly; gave a swan, some rings, knives, beads &c., and received in exchange, spears and stone hatchet, and parted very good friends;..." (Stirling, 1833:7; see also Barton, 1889:122).

2.1.1 The Port Jackson and The Swan River Settlements

On the 26 January 1788 eleven British ships entered the Sydney Cove with about 750 or so convicts. The first Australian white settlement was established in that year under the governance of Arthur Phillip. The settlement was intended for the prisoners who could not be accommodated in British penal institutions. However, Phillip had different intentions as he declared in his letter to Lord Sydney that he had the satisfaction "of finding the finest harbour in the world, in which a thousand sail of the line may ride with the most perfect security"; furthermore Phillip believed "that this country will hereafter be a most valuable acquisition to Great Britain from its situation" and Port Jackson "the Seat of the Empire" (Discussion of Phillip's Original Letters 1788 cited in Hudnott & Ludgrove, 1995, see Barton 1889:title page; Mann 1811). However, it has to be acknowledged that a favourable picture for establishing a settlement in Sydney was given by both Banks and Under Secretary Nepean, long before the arrival of the First Fleet, who claimed that the land was fertile, suitable for agriculture and settlement. In fact, the first administrators assumed that the colony of NSW would become self-sufficient in the third year of operation (Historical Records of NSW 1786:14-19).

In 1840 there were 38,305 convicts in NSW; however, the number of convicts had decreased by 1851 (Shaw, 1966:367-368). Furthermore, with the discovery of gold in NSW and Victoria in 1851 the population of Australia grew to 1,146,000 within the next 10 years (Ward 1966a:25).

The Swan River Settlement was settled much later and under different circumstances. The propagator for the establishment of the separate colony on the western coast was Captain Stirling who arrived in Sydney in 1826. Stirling's original duty was to take charge of removing the Melville Island outpost to a more suitable location (Cameron, 1973; see also Harris, 1985). However, due to unfavourable climatic conditions during the Monsoon season he undertook to investigate the West Coast, especially the Swan River area. According to Cameron, (1973) Stirling, in order to establish the Swan River Settlement, had to prove that the Swan's area satisfied at least two conditions:

a) that the Swan River had a large safe harbour;

b) that there was sufficient fertile land to support the colony's future population.
Eventually, Stirling gave a favourable report for the establishment of the Swan River Settlement with first settlers arriving there in 1829 (see Berryman, 1979; Burton 1971; Hart, 1891; Rowley, 1970).

Although the Swan River Settlement was intended for private British citizens who wanted to migrate to WA the colony had also, for a short period, a number of convicts with the first shipment of 200 arriving there in 1850. While the population of the rest of Australia had increased considerably by 1851 the Swan River Settlement had only 7,186 white settlers by that time (Ward, 1965:41; for other reasons for settling the Swan River see Hansford-Miller, 1988).

2.1.2 Diachronic Description of Communication Strategies between Aborigines and Settlers

The early period of European settlement provides us with some diachronic data for examining language contact history between the Aborigines and the European settlers. However imperfect the data might be they are usually the only source we have to rely on. It has also to be stated that the early contact history is one sided due to the fact that the Aboriginal people of Australia did not leave us with any written data we could use in our analysis.

The historical sources which we have for description of contacts between Aborigines or Settlers do not rely on any "scientific" study of language (e.g. linguistics) so for that reason speech recorded in various descriptions of the spoken language relies on the "idiolcet" of the writer. Green, (1989) points out the problem of codification, for instance, of Aboriginal place names which are often not written the same way by the same author. Often we have to reconstruct the pronunciation through the knowledge of present day English and recent linguistic developments in the field of historical sociolinguistics. A case in point is the anglicised name of Kojonup which was first recorded by the Surveyor Alfred Hillman in 1837 while making plans for a new road between King George Sound and the Swan River. The problem arises as to what was meant by Hillman's sign above the letter /6/. It is not known whether it was supposed to be pronounced as in a word "boat" or "rock". However, some old residents of the place claim that it was pronounced as in the word "book" (Bignell 1971). Bignell further gives some possible etymological derivatives as to what certain parts of the word might have meant in the Aboriginal language; however, there are not any folkloristic data to give certain reconstruction or the pronunciation of the word (p.2); (see The West Australian 9 Aug 1939:16 for a folkloristic explanation of the name "Karrakatta" which had originated from "Garrgattup").

The language contact situation between white settlers and Aborigines must be seen in the context of power, conflict and economic disadvantage created by the British colonisers. In this regard Aboriginal people were considered by most British settlers as a "primitive" race condemned to disappear on the basis of their own fault. In fact, such a view was even supported in the early 1980's with regard to the supposedly already extinct Tasmanian Aborigines who in words of Patricia Cobern have disappeared not because of white settlers' encroachment on the island but because

"the only massacres that were carried out were those on white people by the natives. The killer that stalked the Tasmanian Aborigine tribes was the traditions and customs of the race, its face was not white" (Cobern, 1982:34).

Such socio-cultural analyses as those by Cobern which support the view that Aborigines were not the "unfortunate" people whereas the white occupiers were, only distort historical facts and inform us, as if the white settlers were the "rightful" inhabitants of Australia in the late 18th century (see Fisher's Colonial Magazine 1843; Melville, 1835 cited in Reynolds, 1974; Statham, 1981). Although the doomed Aboriginal race (see Stirling, 1835 cited in Haynes, 1974:13) did not disappear from the face of Australia many Aboriginal languages did (see Schmidt, 1993; McKay, 1996) and this was due to the interplay between the forces of Western civilisation and the cultural organisation based on the nomadic principles of survival. In this regard nomadic Aboriginal
culture required the people from time to time to change their tribal grounds for some of the following reasons:

a) in search of food or water (see Sexton, 1934:9);
b) trading with other tribes (see McCarthy, 1939);
c) re-settling because of the hostility of other people (including the European invaders; see Fisher's Colonial Magazine 1843:142).

Furthermore, Australia's lowland topography created conditions which facilitated quite extensive wanderings (Numelin, 1967). Some degree of multilingualism must have been quite common among some Aborigines, especially those, who had lived on the borders of various settlements (see Brandl & Walsh, 1982; Elkin, 1938/1956). It was not uncommon for Aboriginal tribes to take part in corroborees beyond their linguistic territories where twenty tribes speaking various dialects could be present (Numelin, 1967).

The system of inter-communication among Aborigines was necessary for the exchange of goods and followed well established trade-routes along which they would be able to find water (McCarthy, 1939; Roth, 1897:136). Roth (1897) further states that many Aborigines who went on "walk-about" beyond the limits of their own territories had to be familiar with sign language not only when going along the "trade-routes" but also in cases of being on the "war-path" (p.71) or the chase as silence was so essential "an adjunct to success" (p.71). It must also be stated that "verbalising" was not the only mode of communication among Aborigines - periods of extended silence were possible because

"Aboriginal languages generally are economical languages in terms of word usage. This is reflected to some extent by the extensive use of Aboriginal sign language" (Davis, 1980:4).

The sign language was understood over large areas and probably throughout the whole Aboriginal population (Bleakley, 1961) a fact which had already been acknowledged by Roth (1897) when studying the ethnology of Aborigines of North-West Central Queensland and Northern Territory.

European explorers had often reported that Aborigines were well versed in sign language. Both Dampier and Governor Phillip during their initial contacts had to communicate by signs when looking for fresh water

"Then we turned again to the Place where we landed, and there we dug for Water...there came 9 or 10 of the Natives to a small Hill a little way from us, and stood there...At least one of them came towards us, and the rest followed at a distance. I went out to meet him... making to him all the Signs of Peace and Friendship I could; but then he ran away, neither would they any of them stay for us to come nigh them; for we tried two or three Times" (Dampier, 1981:121).

Governor Phillip seemed to have more luck with the natives when using the sign language

"...the Governor shewed them some beads, and ordered a man to fasten them to the stem of the canoe. We then made signs that we wanted water... On landing they directed us by pointing to a very fine stream of fresh water" (quoted in Bertie, 1952:111-112/116).

British settlers' earliest difficulties were their inability to understand or to make themselves understood. In fact,

"The Intercourse which for a long time subsisted between the Colonists and the Natives was necessarily imperfect; Their Ignorance of each other's Language, the Fears of both
Parties, and the occasional Ruptures which took place, precluded the Possibility of explaining the Principles of those laws under which the White Man lived..." (Stirling, 1835 cited in Haynes et al., 1974:10).

However, some observers have claimed that Aborigines showed more aptitude for learning English than the settlers for learning Aboriginal languages ("A Traveller" - Perth Gazette & WA Journal 1836 cited in Haynes et al. 1974:14; Bleakley 1961; The Leader 15 July 1882:5). Aborigines' first hand experiences in exchanging information among themselves in a rich multilingual continent gave them the advantage over the monolingual settlers who based their civilising experiences on the basis of British culture and materialistic values by means of which they tried to integrate the Aboriginal population into the mainstream as a matter of urgency. The English Judge Advocate and Secretary, David Collins claimed that Aborigines were much better at understanding when communicating with each other at Port Jackson

"...for at the time of writing this, nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party; and it must be added, that even in this the natives have the advantage, comprehending with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, everything they hear us say" (Collins, 1798:544).

From the very early stages of settlement Captain Arthur Phillip was under instruction from the British administrators to treat Aborigines as British subjects and to "open an intercourse with the natives and conciliate their affections" (Governor Phillip's Commission: Hist. Records of Australia, 1787:2-13; Series 1 Vol. 1; see Becke & Jeffery, 1899 ). Furthermore, Phillip was instructed to punish

"any of our subjects (who) shall wantonly destroy them, or give them any unnecessary interruption in the exercise of their several occupations" (HRA 1787 : 13-14, Series 1, Vol.1).

In this regard Landor (1847) questioned the anomalous position of the British administrators stating that

"Nothing could be more anomalous and perplexing than the position of the Aborigines as British subjects. Our brave conscientious Britons, whilst taking possession of their territory have been most careful and anxious to make it universally known that Australia is not a conquered country.... We build houses and cultivate the soil, and for our own protection we find it necessary to declare the native population subject to our laws..., are they really within the jurisdiction of the laws of England... (Landor, 1847 cited in Aveling, 1979 : 102-103).

It is an axiom of history that the British settlers and Aborigines have influenced each other's socio-linguistic context from the very early stages of British presence in Australia. British need for communicating with the Aboriginal population created a need for acquiring languages other than English. However, this was not the ultimate policy of the early settlers and for that reason they preferred to acquire a number of local Aboriginal inhabitants in order to teach them English and make them "go-betweens" with the rest of the Aboriginal residents of the district. For this reason the initial communication experiences between the settlers and Aborigines had both implicit and explicit connotations.

It is suggested here that within the implicit framework of communication we may include all types of "contact-encounters" between settlers and Aborigines which involved both verbal and non-verbal interactions on an ad hoc basis. On the other hand, all pre-arranged "intentions" (e.g. policies) which involved some kind of organised framework for "civilising" the Aboriginal population through English would serve the explicit intentions of the settlers.

Implicit communicative acts have occurred continuously in European-Aboriginal interactions
Chapter 2

across the Australian continent. These interactions involved linguistic (e.g. each other's language), non-linguistic (e.g. drawings) and para-linguistic communication (e.g. signs). With regard to sign language two instances used by Dampier and Phillips during their initial contacts with Aborigines have already been mentioned. A mixture of communication strategies was also used either by the Aborigines or settlers. An example, though perhaps of doubtful veracity, is given by Jackman who supposedly was separated from his comrades on the coast of Western Australia. While on the beach he was accosted by seven "naked savages" who spoke to him in an Aboriginal language

"Yaneki eru goli? Aman Bockin coli?"

which he supposed to mean "who are you?" and "Where did you come from?" Then they made signs telling him to pull off his clothes (Jackman, 1853:97). A similar request was made to King's party at Port Jackson in 1788 (Moore, 1987: 80-81). While communicative interactions between Aborigines and settlers might have first started with signs, in more demanding situations one way "verbalisation" might have also occurred. In fact, first attempts at acquiring English language skills by Aboriginal people involved a mixture of both Aboriginal language and English. In this regard Backhouse (1843) narrates an example of such use. For instance, in an attempt to speak English Aborigines during the arrival of settlers (sailors) into the city would call them "Kibra men" and at the time of their departure they called them "Kibra walk". Backhouse claims that "Kibra walk" means the sailing of the ship. Colebatch (1929) tries to explain such usage and how new words are being created and enter the native lexicon. According to him

"...he [an Aborigine] notes a strange shape moving slowly over the waters towards the land. he turns and runs to tell his family - they also must come and look. "kybru!" he exclaims, and so the ship, something seen for the first time is named, and the name remains a native word, "KY" - in the distance, "BRU" - I saw it" (Colebatch, 1929:112).

In addition to the above example, Donaldson (1985) and Smith (1985) explain how words from both English and Port Jackson language (Dharug) gave rise to new words which eventually were taken into an Aboriginal language, Ngiyampaa. They give as an example the juxtaposition of the English word "white" with the Dharug "tiyin" (woman) which became a new word for "white woman" meaning "waatyin".

Furthermore, Backhouse (1843) correctly observed that Aborigines when pronouncing some words in English would substitute certain sounds due to the absence of sibilant sounds in their own languages and for this reason "sixpence" would become "tickpens" and "shilling" would become "tilling" (pp. 538 & 548). It had also been asserted when observing the pronunciation of English words by Aborigines in early contact situations that they had a tendency to attach a vowel to every consonant (Ridley, 1875:5).

2.1.3 Issues related to explicit communication between settlers and Aborigines

The first explicit policies of "language planning" in Australia were initiated by Governor Phillip and arose from the need to communicate with the Aborigines of Port Jackson who were unwilling to join the members of the First Fleet and intermingle with them. Aborigines' further inhibitions about too friendly relations with the white invaders stemmed from the incident related to La Perouse who fired at them when at Botany Bay (Barton 1889:281). Due to Phillip's inability to persuade the Aborigines to voluntarily participate in the life of the new colony, he inaugurated a "policy of abduction" in order to get some of the Aborigines who would act as "go-betweens" with other Aborigines in the area of Port Jackson. Phillip instructed Lieutenant Ball and Lieutenant Johnstone to capture some natives of Port Jackson. They were able to catch two natives, one of whom escaped while being transported by boat to the Governor's house, and the other whose name was Arabanoo, who after spending a short time at the Governor's house, died of smallpox (Barton, 1889; Becke & Jeffery, 1899; Willey, 1979; on the epidemic of smallpox see Stirling, 1911).
The abduction experiment was repeated on two other natives who were captured by Lieutenant Bradley. Phillip's determination to capture the natives was also necessitated by his need to obtain some information on local food resources which were needed to supplement the shortage of food at the settlement (Walker & Roberts, 1988; Willey, 1979). Sociolinguistically speaking, from the very beginning of the settlement, Aborigines were manipulated by the British Administrators to acquire the English language and fulfil the intentions already preconceived by Phillip in 1787, when

"he hoped to create an Aboriginal settlement near Sydney in which everything which could tend to civilise them would be provided" (cited in Read, 1988:5).

This sociolinguistic "manipulation" went as far as sending Aborigines to England to acquire the "taste" of civilisation. Among the first who went there were Bennelong, Yamerrawanyea and Moowattye. Unfortunately, while all of them acquired good English language skills they could not adjust to the English weather. In fact, Yemmerrawanyea died in England. Moowattye on his arrival back in Australia

"returned to his country and native life" (quoted in Bowd, 1986:26; see Willey, 1979).

Bennelong on his return to Sydney got involved in a drunken brawl and got killed (Millin, 1945:319).  

In addition to these events, young men from Western Australia were also taken to Europe. Unfortunately their fate was similar to that of the Aborigines from New South Wales. We can cite here the case of monk Rosendo Salvado who took with him two boys who visited a number of countries with him. Both of them got very ill. One of them died in Europe and the other on his return to Western Australia (Green & Tilbrook, 1989:XV). Probably the most astonishing "Aboriginal Expedition" to Europe was undertaken by a group of Aborigines who went to play cricket in England in 1868 and who were well received by the English press stating that

"They are perfectly civilised, having been brought up in the bush to agricultural pursuits as assistants to Europeans, and the only language of which they have a perfect knowledge is English" (Sporting Life 1868 cited in Mulvaney & Harcourt, 1988).

These sociolinguistic contacts between Aborigines and Europeans both at home and overseas created a native society which fell into both linguistic and economic dependency; that is, Aborigines were not able to carry on or be in charge of their own cultural change because they were answerable to the laws established by the representatives of the British Crown. Basically, the British in order to keep the Aboriginal population within the limits of the established laws and regulations had to exert their cultural/religious beliefs through the English language as Aboriginal languages could not deal with such abstract issues as, for instance, God. In this regard Parker (1854) had claimed that Aboriginal languages were "miserably deficient" in psychological or metaphysical designations and that they proved to be

"the greatest obstacle to the conveyance of religious truth to the aboriginal mind. On this account I have long inclined that is more desirable to induce the natives to acquire English than to depend upon aboriginal languages for conveying the truth" (Parker, 1854 cited in Stone, 1974:72).

In fact, Captain K. H. Maconochie of the Royal Navy claimed in a public lecture that in order to civilise and convert native tribes

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2Moorehead, A. (1987) claims that Bennelong was killed in a tribal fight in January 1813 (p.173).
"systematic efforts should be always made to teach them English; and that translations, even of the Bible, into their own language are of very doubtful utility" (Maconochie, 1838 cited in Stone, 1974:61).

Furthermore, Sir Thomas Mitchell who carried out explorations in New South Wales spoke favourably about Aboriginal people stating that

"[t]hey were never awkward; on the contrary, in manners and general intelligence they appear superior to any class of white rustics that I have ever seen. Their powers of mimicry seem extraordinary, and their shrewdness shines even through agreeable companions...It would ill become me to disparage the character of the aborigines" (Mitchell, 1838 cited in Stone, 1974:62-63).

A later source claimed that

"reports supplied from the various schools established for aboriginal children are unanimous in affirming that the dusky youngsters of Western Australia are found little, if any, inferior in intelligence to their white brethren" (Thiel, 1901:178-179; see also Reynolds, 1987).

In addition to these claims the anthropologist Elkin (1937) warned that "we must also beware lest we undervalue their intelligence because of the existence of certain aboriginal cultural traits which seem to us superstitious or primitive.."(p. 486) and with regard to evidences of their educability he stated that it is visible when we take into account their adaptability to new ways of life "with little and usually no schooling" (p.495).

Despite some favourable accounts about Aborigines by some observers, for most settlers Aborigines were a "puzzling race" which was a burden on the so called "civilised society", a society which did not take into account their own encroachment and the havoc they created to the ecology of the land, to the traditional Aboriginal "economy" and to the existence of both Aboriginal languages and the Aboriginal race. The entry of British settlers into the Aboriginal continent has kept them in the state of political submissiveness where the power relationships are acted upon through English. Aboriginal people had no choice and had to be influenced by the new establishments created in the name of a "better and refined" civilisation which often carried its teachings through the process of evangelisation - a process which ignored both the cultural and mystical values of the native people (see Markus, 1990). In the beginning of the 19th century missions and some native schools were established by outsiders in order to refine the character of Aboriginal people. The next section attempts to outline some socio-historical facts about these institutions and how they affected the sociolinguistic context of contact situations between Aborigines and settlers.

2.1.4 Propagation of English through Missions and Schools

As has been mentioned in the previous sections there were explicit intentions on the part of the British administrators to develop some basic channels of communication through English from the very early stages of the settlement. These intentions were not necessarily supported by all strata of the new society. Furthermore, in the early days of the colony of NSW, there were not any educational infrastructures which could support the study of English by Aboriginal children either through missionary activities or a public school system. As the matter of fact, this is quite understandable because the colony itself did not have its first school till at least 1793. This in turn was dependent on the number of children the colony had - and in fact only 26 children arrived in Sydney on the 26 January, 1788 (First Fleet). A year later the colony had 42 children. In 1793 there were 153 children and by the year 1800 had 958 children (McGuanne, 1906). Therefore, in the early stages of the invasion of the British, the Aborigines of Sydney were not keen on mixing with the settlers and the British administrators did not think about educating the native.
Chapter 2

Educating Aborigines

The newly settled land of Australia became an object of interest to various missionary groups, some of which propagated the view that

"..., Christianity was..., a solution to the Aboriginal problem, and was officially aided and encouraged. To make Christians of them would civilize them and stop them from disrupting the advance of white society" (Woolmington, 1974:3).

Australia also became a "heaven" for missionaries who had not succeeded in the Pacific Islands because of the threats made by native people there (Bollen, 1977). One of such missionaries was Shelley, who came to Australia from Tahiti. His previous experience convinced him that "educational practices" in New South Wales were wrong with regard to individual Aboriginal people such as previously mentioned Bennelong who was supposed to be trained to acquire "European like" behavioural characteristics (Bridges, 1968:230). He proposed to the then Governor Macquarie that Aboriginal children should be educated in government sponsored boarding schools in order to teach them the 3r's.

Macquarie considered Shelley's proposal and opened a school in Parramatta on 18th January 1815, where Shelley also acted as a manager. The school in the initial stages of operation had 6 boys and 6 girls. At one stage it had 23 children. One of the pupils, an Aboriginal girl, attained first place in a public examination among all the children of the colony (Bridges, 1968:231). Later the school was moved to Blacktown and at one stage of its operation it had also 5 Maori children who were supposed to influence Aborigines in a positive way (Bridges, 1968; Bollen, 1977:284).

Some members of missionary establishments believed that educating Aborigines through the word of God would help them in achieving an understanding of the European way of life and Christianity. One of the Methodist Ministers of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, Rev. Samuel Leigh asked the authorities in England to send someone to Australia who would be in charge of ministering to the native tribes.

In 1820, Rev. William Walker came to Australia and opened a school with 13 "half-caste" children. However, during the school year two boys died and parents withdrew their children from the school. The Wesleyan Society tried to open an agricultural industrial school in the north of NSW without success. The same society also failed to establish such an institution in Western Australia in 1840 (Bleakley, 1961:86; Cowan, 1977). In time a string of various denominational institutions grew up throughout the Australian continent (see Bridges, 1968:233).

Western Australia, though settled 41 years later than the colony of NSW, had a number of "mentors" overseas who tried to encourage various missionary societies to work in WA. For example, they tried to encourage the Church Missionary Society to work among the West Australian Aborigines; however, the members of that society declined the offer (Bates, 1907). As a result of these unsuccessful attempts to persuade some of the British missions to establish their societies in Western Australia a "Swan River Mission" was formed in Dublin in 1834. The objective of this society was to send missionaries of the Church of England to Western Australia. On the initiative of the "Swan River Mission", London was chosen as the most appropriate seat for the formation of the Christian mission called "West Australian Missionary Society" in 1835. The Rev. Dr Guistiniani was the head of the mission and arrived in Western Australia in 1836 and resided in Guildford. However, he was unable to create any visible institutions which could care for the natives. In fact, the man who took charge of Aboriginal "affairs" was Mr Armstrong who was appointed by the Governor Stirling as a protector of Aborigines (Bates 1907).

Between the years of 1836 and 1871 there were a number of Aboriginal school missions which tried to educate the native children in order to prepare some of them in the service of white settlers. For instance, there was an Aboriginal Mission at the Swan in 1836 and it was known as the "Swan River Mission" in 1841. The mission was under the guidance of Rev. George King of
the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel' and its school had 18 children. In 1842, the mission was moved to Fremantle, then transferred to Albany in 1852 and back to Perth in 1871 (see Burton, 1939; Bates, 1907). During his career as a missionary, Rev. George King was instrumental in the establishment of five churches in various districts of Western Australia. These were: Guildford, Pinjarra, Mandurah, Vasse and Fremantle. Aboriginal children under his care attended catechetical classes with European children, all of whom soon "learned to read and write tolerably well" (Bates, 1907:11). Due to King's poor health he had to leave for Sydney taking with him one of the native pupils, John Kirby, who later sailed on the voyage to England with the desire to see Queen Victoria. However, he did not realize his wish as he died in Greenwich Hospital (Bates, 1907:12).

Other missions were established, for example, for the Roman Catholic Benedictine Order by Fathers Serra and Salvado in New Norcia in 1846. In the second half of the 19th century Rev. J.B. Gribble who had established a successful mission in NSW in 1877 had moved to Western Australia to work among Aborigines in 1885. He was under constant criticism by the fellow settlers who did not approve of his missionary activities which revealed the plight of native people and the treatment they received at the hands of the white settlers.

Gribble's unpopularity among the settlers was further increased by the publication of his book "Dark Deeds in the Sunny Land" in which he attacked the settlers and their attitude towards Aborigines stating that conditions of Aborigines in WA were different from in NSW because in WA Aborigines were central to the settlers' economy (Hunt, 1984:44).

In 1890 a Trappist Mission was founded in Beagle Bay under the direction of Bishop Gibney (Bates 1907:22; Bleakley, 1961:102). By 1893, the United Aborigines Mission, an interdenominational organization was formed through the initiatives of the Christian Endeavour Union which carried out evangelical work in all parts of Australia not only in settled villages but also among nomadic tribes (Bleakley, 1961:103).

The above description of the contact situations between Aborigines and white settlers proves that it is difficult to speak from the sociolinguistic point of view of one particular contact situation with the English language and its influence on present-day Aboriginal English, with the exception of the early contact with the "Sydney Language" (see Troy, 1992; 1994) where the contact situations were far more frequent and occurred much earlier (1788-1796) than in other states. This was due to the fact that Aborigines around the Port Jackson area came into contact with a greater variety of English accents spoken by both convicts and white settlers than the Aborigines in the Swan River district and other parts of Western Australia.

Furthermore, by 1792 a form of NSW Pidgin was being used for communication purposes between the settlers and the Aborigines (Troy, 1992). In fact, NSW Pidgin must have been a quite powerful tool for communication given the rise of Queensland's Pidgin English (see Dutton, 1983).

In addition to the above we might assume that the development of a common lingua franca in the Eastern States in the form of Pidgin might have been more urgent because of the variety of Aboriginal languages and dialects which could not have been acquired by the settlers going into the distant parts of the continent. On the other hand, the parts of Western Australia which were often visited by explorers and settled by Englishmen constituted the large territory of the Bibbulman race which was the largest homogeneous group in all of Australia comprising more than 70 "family" groups [it was claimed by one explorer that the term 'family' is more applicable than 'tribe' with regard to Aborigines of Western Australia (Ord 1879:5)], linked by one language with local variations (Bates 19:59-60). According to Fraser (1903), for instance, the Albany natives used words similar to those of Perth with some differences, for example, in the use of suffixes, and that all the verbs in the Albany dialect ended in "-gar" (Fraser, 1903:64).

The increased 'mobility' of settlers, convicts and explorers across the Australian continent
created conditions for far more explicit contact situations and often involved the inclusion of Aboriginal people who would cross from one district to another bringing new ideas and values they acquired from the new "civilised" masters. A case in point is stated by one author who says that

"Early Western Australian exploring parties used black guides to communicate with more remote tribes... As news of Europeans spread a few words of Pidgin English were carried back beyond the frontier – notably yarraman for horse, jumbuk for sheep, bula or bulloki for cattle, wheelbarrow for dray. These words and one or two others found their way into Aboriginal vocabularies from Bass Strait to Cape York and west into central Australia" (Reynolds 1982:13).

While the contact situations between European invaders and Aborigines influenced each other's languages it is also true that the very contact situations enhanced the disappearance of Aboriginal people of the original settlements of Port Jackson and Swan River. It was estimated that the Port Jackson Settlement had about 1,500 natives in 1788 whereas the Swan River Settlement in around 1836 was visited by about 700 natives. However, in 1839 the Port Jackson "full-blood" natives became entirely extinct and in Perth the last Swan River Aboriginal woman died in 1907 (Bates, 1907:9).

Despite the extinction of full-blood Aborigines, descendants of mixed origin remained around both settlements and "voluntary migration was prevalent in the vicinity of the major towns. Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth all attracted Aborigines in from their hinterlands..." (Reynolds, 1982:115).

In fact, by 1891 the total number of natives near the settled areas mixing or in the employment of European settlers in the area of Perth was 5,670 of whom 3,223 were male and 2,447 female (Fraser, 1903:78). Furthermore, according to Fraser (1903) there were 12,307 Aborigines in contact with white settlers in 1899. However, he further states that the census of 1901 shows the number as 5,260 "civilised or semi-civilised" natives in employment and living in proximity to white settlements.

Urban living became the catalyst for two-way interactions between the settlers and Aborigines. But those interactions always occurred under conditions of inequality. Aborigines were targeted by both missionary and governmental institutions which intended to help them to become civilised in the white dominated society. Hasluck (1970) points out that by "civilising" the natives it was meant that "the natives should learn to wear trousers or a 'wolberry' in the presence of white people. He should pick up enough pidgin English to be able to understand instructions and repeat them. He should change his way of life sufficiently to continue for at least several months in the one employment and to be diligent in his labour" (Hasluck, 1970:197). Under these "white sentiments" Aborigines were locked into a dependency on colonial masters who controlled Aborigines in mission settlements, government hostels, sheep/cattle stations and camping reserves" (Schapper, 1970:32).

2.1.5 Concluding Remarks on Aboriginal and European Contact Situations

The expansionist intentions of European settlers and their increased mobility throughout the early part of the 19th century led to the employment of a number of Aborigines who acted as guides and "go-betweens" with other Aboriginal tribes. Some Aborigines often went further than their own tribal boundaries and had to accustom themselves to new cultural and linguistic contexts, both European and native.

Because of their increased mobility and changing cultural environments within the Australian continent some Aborigines were in a position to acquire some English language skills. As mentioned before one way of acquiring English for a small number of Aborigines was through education at the Mission schools which did not necessarily improve the conditions of those who
attended them.

Among the missionaries themselves there was some evidence of conflict about how to accommodate Aborigines with respect to their education. One case in point is, for instance, the education of young Western Australian Aboriginal girls who were supposed to be able to acquire civilised Christian manners and be sent to Victoria to get married to Victorian Aboriginal men in order to eradicate their "heathen customs" (Tucker, 1868:22). On the other hand, some Aboriginal men were able to improve and utilise their English skills by going overseas.

A more common way of acquiring English language skills was probably by a discontinuous kind of communication when the contacts between Europeans and Aborigines were on an ad hoc basis. Basically the contact situations of Aborigines with Europeans can be depicted in the following diagram:

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ABORIGINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>schooling</th>
<th>ad hoc</th>
<th>Europeans (e.g. missionaries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>movement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Europeans (e.g. settlers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>punishment</td>
<td></td>
<td>Europeans &amp; other Aborigines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Europeans & other Aborigines [travelling from state to state]

Europeans & other Aborigines [jails]
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In all these situations Aborigines were in very unequal communicative exchanges, especially in those situations which took place on an ad hoc basis. Often, this was not serious communication but "jocular" in nature as in the case cited by von Hügel (1834/1994):

"...But what is to become of a poor, uncouth and indolent people who never hear one sensible word, or anything suggestive of intellect or sensibility, from an Englishman? Whenever, he sees a New Hollander, the Englishman coo-ees and, when he comes close, the usual question is 'hullo, blackfallow, what's your name? You got plenty patta (a lot of food) in your belly? The black man laughs, baring his teeth, that's right. How many Jin [gins] - wives - have you got? - and so the jokes go until the Englishman can't think of any more. The Aborigine never hears a single sensible or informative word, and as for what he learns from the lower classes, that may well be imagined" (p.274).

Furthermore, von Hügel had doubts as to whether those who were in charge of Aboriginal Affairs had enough education themselves to be useful to Aborigines:

"There is an Englishman called [Francis] Armstrong in Perth..., being the only Englishman who has ever mastered the Aborigines' language sufficiently to converse with them as if in his mother tongue..., Unfortunately his own level of education is so low that he could not even conceive that anything about these savages could be of interest" (von Hügel, 1834:63-64).

These ad hoc communicative situations usually involved Aborigines who were in "master-servant"
relationships when seeking favours or help from the whites. For this reason there would be a range of "white-perceptions" and attitudes towards Aboriginal communication in English.

The other extremes of Aboriginal communication involved Aborigines almost totally accustomed to European ways of speaking and they often had a full command of the English language as evidenced by letters written by Aborigines (see Taplin, 1879: appendices) and the previously mentioned Aboriginal cricket team which was praised by the English press.

As we can deduce from the above conclusions a number of totally different communicative acts must have been developing with regard to the use of English among Aborigines. The Aborigines' subservient role towards their European masters created forms of English which served different functions depending on the situations they were in and the ability they possessed in English.

Most descriptions of the way the Aborigines used English for communication are provided by Europeans. European perceptions were two fold in nature, that is, some Europeans praised Aborigines' English language skills whereas others scoffed at their inability to use English. In fact, there was a range of perceptions as to what constituted different "communicative strategies" among Aboriginal populations. These communicative strategies were represented by language forms which were the outcome of functions Aborigines had to perform when using English. These functions were, perhaps, more extensive than the Europeans realized. Indeed, as Troy (1990) has shown, in order to understand the full significance of the English which was to develop among Aboriginal speakers we need to look beyond Aboriginal - European contacts to Aboriginal - Aboriginal post-contact communication.

The linguistic data will be analysed in the following sections using both diachronic data from historical sources and synchronic data provided by the Aboriginal speakers of present-day Aboriginal English in Sydney and Perth.
CHAPTER 3

DIACHRONIC COMPONENT: LINGUISTIC SURVEY

This chapter will attempt to infer from the documentary sources accessed the linguistic features which characterized English-based communication especially among the earlier generations of Aboriginal speakers. We use the term ‘Aboriginal English’ with reservations in referring to the developing variety (or varieties), knowing that, at least in New South Wales, a pidgin developed during the period of study and we are not in a position to determine the extent to which this can be distinguished from the developing Aboriginal English.

3.1 Part 1: Phonology

In attempting to reconstruct the phonology of the English spoken by the Aboriginal people involved in language contact we are entirely dependent on the records provided by English speakers (themselves, in some cases, speaking dialects other than Standard Australian English) who attempted to reflect in modified spelling the phonological features they were hearing or who commented on the kind of auditory impression they received in listening to the talk of the Aborigines.

Colonists’ Impressions of the Auditory Features of Aboriginal Languages

It was common for colonists to refer to Aboriginal speech in their traditional languages as “yabber” (see, e.g., Stone, 1974:98), a term later adopted into Aboriginal English to refer to talk (Telfer, 1939:212; Donaldson, 1985a:134). The term, like “babble” probably does not attempt to reproduce the auditory impression received but simply to reflect the incomprehensibility of the talk to the English speakers. Some observers, however, were impressed with the musicality of the speech of the Aborigines. Cook in 1770 said of the Aborigines he encountered in the Endeavour River area “their voices [are] soft and tunable” (Roberts, 1978:16); Flanagan, the author of a book on Aborigines published in 1888, expressed the view that “In fullness of tone, variety of sound and easy flow of expression the language of the Australian tribes is... not to be surpassed” (Flanagan, 1888:39), and a visitor to the New England area in 1856 commented: “The actual native language, as spoken among themselves, appeared to me rather musical and pretty, from the frequent use of single and double vowels at the termination of words.” (Lady, 1978:248) One might surmise that the Aboriginal speakers, by contrast, found the frequent consonantal word endings in English uneuphonic and perhaps for that reason frequently articulated them minimally, if at all, when speaking English.

Apart from the musicality of the Aborigines' speech in their own languages, the settlers observed its loudness at certain times. The Western Australian explorer Collie observed of Botup, a friend of his Aboriginal guide Mokkare (Mokare), that his “salutation and accent were loud and sharp” (Collie, 1979:63). An unnamed writer from the H.M.S. Sulphur, which brought Captain James Stirling, the first Governor of Western Australia to the Swan River settlement, commented on the sudden appearance of an Aborigine carrying a spear, who "was very outrageous at first, pointing to his spear and roaring out, Warra! Warra! which means, begone!" (Cross, 1830:11). In a similar incident with the H.M.S. Supply in Sydney the Port Jackson Aborigines were described as "making a noise" and shouting at the sailors (Stanner, 1977:5). Lieut King described their "menacing and vociferous tone of voice" in yet another similar encounter involving the shaking of spears. Such encounters, as Stanner (1977) has observed, had an element of the ceremonial about them (see p.48). Contrary to the expectation of the whites, as von Hügel noted, a noisy approach did not convey hostile intent, but rather the desire to be noticed (1994:50-51). Other ceremonial occasions such as funerals (White, 1934:225) and corroborees (Hodgkinson,
Chapter 3

1842:51) were also noted by the colonists to be associated with high volume vocalisations. When Captain Phillip's captive Bennelong was being taught 'civilized' ways, he learned, according to Captain WatkinTench to speak in a "soft, gentle tone of voice" but when angry or when dealing with other Aboriginal people he would "revert to his native vociferation" (Troy, 1990:114).

English Speakers' Evaluation of the Developing Aboriginal English

If the auditory impression gained from hearing Aborigines speaking their own languages was sometimes positively evaluated, there is no record of this being the case with Aborigines speaking English. From the beginning the contact forms of English which the Aborigines used were compared unfavourably with the speech of the white people. David Collins, Judge Advocate and Secretary in the new colony, as noted on page 11, condemned the developing English jargon being used between Aborigines and whites as "a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect" (Donaldson, 1985b:79). He did, however, to his credit, make the objective observation that Aborigines from north of Port Jackson displayed similar phonetic features to those in Sydney when pronouncing English (Troy, 1990:53) and this constitutes virtually the only recorded non-evaluative direct observation about the phonology of Aboriginal English during the first century after European settlement.

Articulation of Consonants and Vowels

Despite the unsystematic nature of the recorded information it is possible to derive from the spellings used by those reporting Aboriginal English speech a fairly clear impression of the ways in which English consonants were articulated by Aboriginal speakers. Such information can be supported by contrastive analysis of the phonology of Aboriginal languages and English, though it is beyond the purposes of the present study to do this.

Figure 1: Consonant Phoneme Substitutions Perceived in Records of Aboriginal English, New South Wales and South Australia 1788-1879

Data Sources:

1. 1788-94 (Troy, 1990)
2. 1796 D'Urville (Dutton, 1983)
3. 1813-1818 (Troy, 1990)
4. 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990); 1827 (Miller, 1985)
5. 1830 (Dawson, 1987)
6. 1827-1835 (Troy, 1990)
7. 1835-1845 (Troy, 1990); 1841 (Eyre, 1985)
8. 1852 West (Troy, 1990)
9. 1875 (Ridley, 1875); 1879 (Taplin, 1879)
In Figure 1 the phonemes of English are represented roughly in relation to their places of articulation, assuming we are observing the speech organs from the left side of the face. The arrows indicate roughly the articulatory direction of the consonant substitution which is represented in the reported pronunciations. The sources of the documentation have been put in chronological sequence, although it is important to note that the dates in some cases represent dates of reporting (or publication of reporting), not necessarily dates of observation. The numbers beside the arrows enable the observations to be related to the chronological sequence so that, where relevant, earlier and later trends may be distinguished.

In summary, the data outlined in Figure 1 enable five generalized observations to be made about the way in which Aboriginal speakers may have modified the articulation of consonants in early New South Wales and (in the case of Taplin, 1879) South Australia:

1. Labio-dental fricatives /f/, /v/ might be replaced by bilabial plosives /p/, /b/ or (rarely) by the bilabial semivowel /w/.
2. Apico-dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ might be replaced by alveolar plosives /t/, /d/.
3. Voiceless sibilants /s/, /ʃ/ might be avoided or replaced by alveolar plosives or (in the case of /ʃ/) by the affricate /ʃ/.  
4. The glottal consonant /h/ might be avoided or replaced by the voiceless velar plosive /g/.
5. The distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants might not be observed.

These trends, for the most part, appear to be relatively stable over time. If anything distinguishes the second half of the century being observed from the first, it might be the lessening of the tendency to find alternative articulations for /s/ and /ʃ/.

The relative consistency of the consonant substitutions, suggests that they may be accounted for on the basis of a limited number of linguistic influences. Undoubtedly one of these was transfer from the phonology of Aboriginal languages. The nature of the substitutions also suggests that there could have been transfer from pidgins accessed initially through maritime influence. Particularly noteworthy in this regard is the strong tendency to replace fricatives with plosives.

The articulation of consonant phonemes was also clearly affected by morphophonemic factors, as was that of vowel phonemes. The data from New South Wales between 1788 and 1930 include the following examples:

- midger
- mister 1788-1794 (Troy, 1990)
- nutter
- sufferers 1788-1794 (Troy, 1990)
- massa
- master 1830 (Dawson, 1987)
- dressel
- directly 1796 D'Urville? (Dutton, 1983)
- Engla
- England 1813-1818 (Troy, 1990)
- dum
- dump 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990)
- gepplemen
- gentlemen 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990)
- top
- stop 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990)
- peak
- speak 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990)
- pose
- suppose 1818-1827 (Troy, 1990)
- geppleman
- gentleman 1827 (Troy, 1990)
- bout
- about 1830 (Dawson, 1987)
- gain
- again 1830 (Dawson, 1987)
- blieve
- believe 1830 (Dawson, 1987)
- bo-ay
- go away 1842 (Eyre, 1985)
- mither
- mister 1835-1845 (Troy, 1990)
Chapter 3

It is possible to account for these modifications on the basis of eight generalizations:

1. Word initially, where syllables are unstressed they may be either deleted or devocalised.

2. Word initially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal, the /s/ may be deleted.

3. Word medially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal the /s/ may be deleted, except in the case of massa, where the plosive is deleted.

4. Word medially, where two plosives are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced, and the second may be replaced by an unstressed vowel.

5. Word medially, where a nasal and a plosive are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced.

6. Word finally, /s/ may be deleted.

7. Word finally, where a nasal is followed by a plosive, either the plosive or both the nasal and the plosive may be deleted.

8. Word finally, where a lateral is followed by a plosive the plosive may be deleted.

The trends observable here are fairly consistent and show a strong tendency to avoid contiguous consonants wherever they occur. Consonants especially vulnerable to deletion are the voiceless sibilant /s/ and the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/. Rules 1, 7 and 8 appear to represent enduring trends. In the case of rule 3, the exception of the word "massa" may be accounted for on the basis that, as Mühlhäuser (reported by Troy, 1990:57) has observed, it is a borrowing from Pacific Jargon English.

Enunciation of Vowels and Diphthongs

The salience of consonant substitutions to the colonial observers shows in the frequency with which they modified the spelling of words to reflect them. By contrast, vowel substitutions were rarely noted in this way. This may be related to the fact that the English orthography is more phonemic with respect to the representation of most consonants than it is with respect to the representation of vowels, so the settlers found it difficult to represent the vowel modifications they were hearing in an unambiguous way in writing. It is possible, however, to observe a range of variation in vowel pronunciation through the alternative spellings used by different observers, and sometimes by the same observer when representing what were probably the same word pronunciations. The following are some notable examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mitter</td>
<td>mister 1835-1845</td>
<td>(Troy, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bacco</td>
<td>tobacco 1835-1845</td>
<td>(Troy, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directaly</td>
<td>directly 1835-1845</td>
<td>(Troy, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tausan</td>
<td>thousand 1835-1845</td>
<td>(Troy, 1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>member</td>
<td>remember 1875</td>
<td>(Ridley, 1875)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gainst</td>
<td>against 1875</td>
<td>(Ridley, 1875)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frighten</td>
<td>frightened 1908</td>
<td>(Telfer, 1939)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ol</td>
<td>old 1930</td>
<td>(Telfer, 1939)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
On the basis of these variations it is possible to suggest certain areas in which Aboriginal speakers of English were perceived to show less than the normal discrimination between vowels which comprise distinct phonemes in English. It seems that the front vowels /ɪ/, /ɛ/ and /æ/ comprised such a group, with the 'i', 'e' and 'a' in jirrand, jerran and jarrah representing alternative ways in which the same front vowel might have been interpreted (as withibble, debbie and dabble and with merry and marry).

Another group appears to have been the back vowels /ʌ/ and /ɔ/, represented in spelling, respectively as 'or' /aw' and 'o', resulting in the items cobawn, corban, corbon and cabou (with the transcribers' difficulties added to by the forwarding of stress and the weakening of the final consonant). The back vowel /ui/ and the diphthong /ou/ also appear to have been identified in some pronunciations, such as those represented by coe and coo-ee, and coulor, coolar/cool/cool. The variation in pronunciations of the word bidgeree, etc., is somewhat harder to account for on phonological grounds. Front, central and back vowels which are phonetically quite distinct seem to have substituted for one another in the pronunciation of the first syllable. The problem is partially resolved if one assumes that the transcribers intended for "u" and "oo" the same phonetic value (/ul/).

Western Australian Data on Phonology

It is more difficult to reconstruct the possible phonology of early Aboriginal English in Western Australia since the records contain very few attempts by the settlers to incorporate cues to pronunciation in their spellings. The first such attempt we have come across relates to 9 years after the establishment of the colony when, according to Backhouse (1843) the initial voiceless sibilants /s/ and /ʃ/ were replaced by the voiceless alveolar stop /t/ in the words tickpens (sixpence) and tilling (shilling). The only other author to reflect phonemic shifts in spelling is Bates (1944), who gives early 20th century pronunciation barragood (very good) which exemplifies shifts from the voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ to the voiced bilabial /b/ and from the front vowel /ɛ/ to the more open front vowel /æ/. These phoneme shifts, minimal though they are, are interesting in that they show evidence on the western side of the continent of the operation of three processes which are identical to those observed in the data from New South Wales (consonant substitution rules 1 and 3 and the interchanging of front vowels).

With respect to sounds in combination, the evidence provided in the Western Australian literature is minimal. In the example already quoted from Backhouse, (tickpens), the sibilant /s/, which was found to be highly vulnerable to deletion in the New South Wales data, is deleted where it is contiguous with a plosive on each side. The only other examples come from Stuart's 1959 novel set in the Pilbara, Yandy. One of them involves initial syllable deletion (rest for 'arrest'), which is in keeping with Rule 1 observed for sounds in combination in the New South Wales data. The other examples, however are exceptional in the corpus as a whole and may not represent distinctively Aboriginal speech, although they do characterize casual speech in general in Australia. They are
orright, where a contiguous lateral is assimilated into the following retroflex continuant, and thass, which compares with the exceptional case observed in the New South Wales data, massa, where, in the coming together of a plosive and a sibilant, the plosive rather than (as is more common) the sibilant is deleted.

3.2 Part 2: Grammar

For the purposes of this report, grammar will be taken to comprise the distinctive forms (morphology) and functions of noun and verb phrases and their components, and the distinctive syntactic patterns exhibited in the data. The organization of the material follows traditional grammatical principles and is intended to meet the requirements of ready comparability across the eastern and western and the synchronic and diachronic data sources, as well as accessibility to the general reader. Data from New South Wales and Western Australia will be dealt with separately under the headings Verb Phrase, Noun Phrase and Syntax. It should be noted that, although the focus here is upon distinctive forms (i.e., those which differ from the usage from non-Aboriginal speakers and from standard English) it is not implied that standard forms do not occur also in the data.

NEW SOUTH WALES: THE verb PHRASE

The verb phrase, as it occurs in the data, will be described with respect to the basic functions which are performed (i.e., expression of tense, aspect, person agreement, modality, negation, voice and extension) and the forms which are used to perform the various functions. The description will show the occurrence of variability of form in relation to the expression of function and trace it across nine main time periods between the time of initial European settlement and the time of the investigation (see further tables 1 and 2, p.35-38).

Present Non-Continuous (e.g. standard English "he walks")

Only one distinctive form was observed, i.e. the unmarked 3rd person singular:

- 1813-1818 die (dies), drink (drinks) Troy, 1990:58
- 1818-1827 pose he rain Troy, 1990:71
- 1830 when urokah jump up (when the sun rises) Dawson, 1987:62
- 188 it find Victoria1993:129 [writing]
- 1932 when time come Donaldson, 1985:130
- 1939 he snore like thunder Telfer, 1939:54

Past Non-Continuous (e.g. standard English "she walked")

Four distinctive forms alternate in the data:

1. bin/been 1830 all black pellow been say so Dawson, 1930:125
   1852 you been make a proclamation Troy, 1990:56
   1879 old woman been tumble down Taplin, 1879:85 [S.A.]
2. unmarked 1852 Who tell him? Troy, 1990:56
   1853 you try shoot him [past] Ridley, 1875:169
   1920 gubmint take dousand...pound Bates, 1936
   1930 (est.) he just smile Telfer, 1939:54
   1932 Mine go away from camp Donaldson, 1985a:130
   1990 come (came) Sharpe, 1990:235
3. overgeneralized 1930 (est.) I knowed Telfer, 1939:54
4. BE reversal 1981 They was inferior Menary, 1981:40
   1990 they was Sharpe, 1990:235

Present Continuous (e.g. standard English "we are going")

One distinctive form occurs, with zero auxiliary:

1818-1827 the bone coming out Troy, 1990:74

Past Continuous (e.g. standard English "they were going")

One distinctive form occurs, with zero auxiliary and an unmarked verb:

1933 Last night I lie along my bed Telfer, 1939:212
Chapter 3

Perfect Non-Continuous (e.g. standard English "I have gone")
One distinctive form occurs, with zero auxiliary:
1834  Massa gone out  von Hügel, 1834:73

Perfect Continuous (e.g. standard English "you have been working")
One distinctive form occurs, with an unmarked verb:
1830  We look out for you long time  Dawson, 1987:86

Future (e.g. standard English "we'll go")
Where this is distinctive, there is no auxiliary or other form of future marking:
1818-1827  Massa when you come?  Troy, 1990:75
1827  dat dam blackpellow killit whitepellow  Miller, 1985:46
1830  You come Port Teebens, massa?  Dawson, 1987:69
1920  We kill waijela  Bates, 1936:Art. 24 [S.A.]  
1933  Then he take me  Telfer, 1939

Copula statement (e.g. standard English "it is red")
Two distinctive usages were observed
1. Zero copula
1816  That my pickaninny  Levy, 1947
1825  I too b—y frightened to pray  Troy, 1990:56
1827  dat geppleman der, poor man  Miller, 1985:46
1835-1845  That my uncle  Troy, 1990:94
1853  I that blackfellow, Charlie  Ridley, 1875:169
1937  He same as me  Montagu, 1974:8

2. Zero subject, zero copula
1845  No good, all same like croppy  Rowley 1970:28

Non-copula Yes-No Question (e.g. standard English "Do you like it?")
This was sometimes formed without the "do" auxiliary:
1830  You hear, massa?  Dawson, 1987:11
1933  You likem this big-fella church?  Telfer, 1939:212

Transitivity (not marked in the morphology of standard English)
This was sometimes marked, and represented in a variety of ways in writing:

1788-1800  killim (hit)  Troy, 1990:45
1813-1818  -im  Troy, 1990:56
1818-1827  eatt  Troy, 1990:67
1827  dat dam blackpellow killit whitepellow  Miller, 1985:46
1827  Bel boodgorer kill it pickaninny?  Kingston, 1977
1830  You like him black pellow?  Dawson, 1987:62
1827-1835  Me like it pai-alfa you.  Troy, 1990:81
1835-1845  catch him  Troy, 1990:89
1853  blackfellow, you chase’em with pistol  Ridley, 1875:169
1879  Him ’teal um along a whitefellow  Taplin, 1879:84 [S.A.]
1900 (est.)  Me cookum meat, boss  Telfer, 1939:86
1933  you like em this big-fella church?  Telfer, 1939:212

Infinitive
This distinctively occurs without “to” after a finite verb:
1818  He no learnt him read book  Troy, 1990:118
1853  you try shoot him  Ridley, 1875:16

26
Negation

The data show seven distinctive ways of expressing negation:

1. no + finite verb 1818  
   _He no learnt him read book_  
   Troy, 1990:18

2. never-no 1818  
   _When black man die, never no more..._  
   Troy, 1990:120

3. no+infinitive 1830  
   _black pellow no hit me_  
   Dawson, 1987:65

4. nossing 1830  
   _Nossing!_  
   Dawson, 1987:159

5. bel+VP 1853  
   _bel blackfellow any more coola_  
   Ridley, 1875:169

6. none+NP 1856-7  
   _Me none able to tell_  
   Lady, 1978:255

7. not+infinitive 1933  
   _I not see him any more_  
   Telfer, 1939:54.

Existential There is/are; It is

The impersonal subject and and existential copular verb may both be omitted:

1827  
   _Bel boodgorer kill it pickaninny?_  
   Kingston, 1977

1830  
   _Why for he leabe black camp when dark?_  
   Dawson, 1830:76

WH Question (i.e., questions formed with an interrogative adverb, e.g. who, how)

Such questions may be formed distinctively in three ways:

1. Zero BE aux 1827-1835  
   _What for you jerran?_  
   Troy, 1990:81

2. Zero Subject and DO aux 1830  
   _Where nangry [do we sleep] tonight?_  
   Miller, 1985:45

3. Zero DO aux 1851  
   _When he see dat?_  
   Troy, 1990:56

Passive Voice (e.g. standard English "He was hit by a car")

Two distinctive forms of the passive voice occurred in the data:

1. Zero aux 1827-1835  
   _Black fellow killed here murry long while ago_  
   Troy, 1990:81

2. GOT aux, overgeneralised past participle 1883  
   _She got hurted_  
   Victoria, 1993:129

Conditional (e.g. standard English "If he called I would answer")

This occurred distinctively introduced by Pose and with the unmarked verb:

1830  
   _Pose dat come dat take it black pellow, bael dat likit kangaroo_  

Adverb Morphology

Two distinctive forms occurred:

1. Zero suffix 1813  
   _quick_  
   Troy, 1990:59

1885  
   _they talk a little different_  
   Donaldson, 1984:30

1930 (est.)  
   _I sleep beautiful_  
   Telfer, 1939:54

2. -fella suffix 1933  
   _Come quick-fella, Missus_  
   Telfer, 1939:212.
NEW SOUTH WALES: THE NOUN PHRASE

Noun Plural
The distinctive form which occurred was the zero plural morpheme:

1818-1827  White fellow kill and eat black fellow  
1827-1835  bulla gin (two wives)  
1830  white fellow (plural)  
1833  I have few friend here  
1920  five pound  
1930 (est.)  only white fella go church

Possessive, in Nouns, Pronouns and Adjectives
A number of distinctive forms occurred:

1. Juxtaposition of nouns with zero suffix
   1834  Mr Macarthur Pikenini  

2. Forms of belong between the possessed and the possessor
   1830  brooder belonging to me  
   1830  Dat belonging a you  
   1830  Dat belonging corbon massa  
   1835-1845  'long  
   1932  Mine belonga Wonghibong tribe  
   1933  This church belonga you and your people

3. Possessive adjective function performed by unmarked personal pronoun forms
   1818  you (your)  
   1827-1835  me (my)  
   1933  up to Him (his) big-fella church

4. Possessive adjective function performed by possessive pronoun form
   1932  Take mine rainstone

Pronouns: Personal

First Person Singular
1. Zero case marking 1818-1827  Me like the bush best  
   1830  Me mury gerret  
   1830  Me toot him  
   1853  me say I kill you  
   1879  Me can't hear um

2. Zero animacy marking 1830  Dat (I) bring massa pish

3. Possessive form 1932  Mine (I) belonga Wonghibong... Donaldson, 1985:130

First Person Dual 1990  me-n-you; me-n-im

Third Person Singular
1. Zero case marking 1879  Him 'teal um along a whitefellow

2. Zero gender marking 1818-1827  he-she  
   1830  it (he/she) leabe it

3. Zero animacy marking 1816 Governor, that (he) will make a good settler

   1830  it (he/she) leabe it
Chapter 3

Second Person Plural
Plural morpheme -z/ 1990 youse  Sharpe, 1990:235

Third Person Plural
Zero animacy marking 1830 Dat (They) go tit down with you Dawson, 1987:70

Pronouns: Relative
1. all same 1879 When we catch um that big one sandhill Taplin, 1879:84
   all same where whitefellow get um sugar
2. what 1970 (est) our pride what we live by Donaldson, 1985:135

Articles
Definite Article
1. Zero definite article:1818-1827 to keep poor dead black man warm Troy, 1990:73
   1830 (est.) about middle of that day Pickette & Campbell, 1984:121
   1863 Government never given us friend Victoria, 1993:128
   1920 all time Bates, 1936:Art.24 [S.A.]
   1932 when time come Donaldson, 1985:130
2. Demonstrative form dat:
   1827 dat dam blackpellow killit whitepellow Miller, 1985:46

Indefinite Article
1. Zero indefinite article:
   1818-1827 What for you make fire? Troy, 1990:73
   1830 (est.) Long time ago when I was very small piccanini Pickette & Campbell, 1984:121
   1834 im geban wheelbarrow von Hügel 1994:273
2. One 1830 (est.) took shelter in one large cave Pickette & Campbell, 1984:121

Prepositions
1. Allative to
   Zero occurrence 1830 Mary come me Dawson, 1987:65
   1930 (est.) these blacks never go church Telfer, 1939:85-86
2. of after expression of quantity
   Zero occurrence 1830 Dat get it plenty bark Dawson, 1987:70
3. for before a receiver
4. for before a time period
   Zero occurrence 1830 We look out for you long time Dawson, 1987:86
5. Forms of along
   1879 Him ‘teal um along a whitefellow’Taplin, 1879:84 [S.A.]
   1920 Look out longa white missus Telfer, 1939
   1933 You bigfella yabba along me Telfer, 1939:212
   1933 Last night /lie along my bed Telfer, 1939:212
6. same as 1937 He same as me Montagu, 1974:8

Adjectives
Quantitative Adjectives
1. too much (i.e., much/many) 1856-7 Too much dibil dibil sit down there Lady, 1978:255
   1933 too much prickle on head Telfer, 1939:212
2. dual form bulla 1827-1835 bulla gin Troy, 1990:81
3. big one + N 1879 that big one sandhill Taplin, 1879:84 [S.A.]

29
NEW SOUTH WALES: SYNTAX

Five distinctive syntactic processes require comment:

1. Reduced syntax

   Verbless structures 1788-1794
   Hungry, bread Troy, 1990:51
   All dead, all dead Troy, 1990:52
   1796
   No, massa, no tommora; dreckle Dutton, 1983

   Verb only structures 1908
   Run away; tumble down; finish Poad, West and Miller, 1985:33

2. Thematization (Topicalization)

   1845
   Pretty place, Botany! Troy, 1990:32
   1920
   Yuldi we take, Tarcoola we take, Port Augusta we take [S.A.] Bates, 1936:Art. 24

3. Structural repetition

   1853
   You 'member blackfellow, you chase'em with pistol, you try shoot him Ridley, 1875:169

4. Parataxis

   1932
   Mine go away from camp...take mine rainstone, sit down for long time and pray to 'Big One up there Donaldson, 1985:130
   1939
   Only policeman come when some fella get drunk and fight- lock 'em up Telfer, 1939:85

5. Double subject (subject reprise)

   1930 (est.)
   The ole man, he snore like thunder Telfer, 1939:54.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: THE VERB PHRASE

Present Non-Continuous

As in the N.S.W. data, there is one distinctive form, the unmarked 3rd person singular:

   1867-8 him talk a lot and get a lot of money Mulvaney and Harcourt, 1988:77
   1907 if He want me go He send it along Telfer, 1939:105

Past Non-Continuous

All of the four forms observed in New South Wales and South Australia occur also in the Western Australian data:

1. been/bin 1936
   Lunch I been make him quicktime now Bates, 1936, Art. 4
2. unmarked 1930
   Tell me...why white man shoot Midgegeroo Durack, 1964:66
   1884 Another blackfellow coax 'em me Forrest, 1884:13
   1884 I like ship, I was not sick Forrest, 1884:13
As in the data from the eastern side of Australia, the unmarked form is the most pervasive. The *been/bin* form did not come from the vicinity of the Swan River settlement but from Broome.

**Present Continuous**

No data.

**Past Continuous**

No data.

**Perfect Non-Continuous**

The only data on this tense come from the 20th Century and all involve zero HAVE aux:

- 1907  *He got all the silver and all the gold*  Telfer, 1939:105
- 1936  *big pindana mob blackfellows come up*  Bates, 1936:Article No. 3
- 1959  *you gotta take every one of us*  Stuart, 1959:123.

**Perfect Continuous**

The one example comes from a work of fiction based in the Pilbara and displays the use of standard and non-standard forms in the same sentence:

- 1959  *We been eating the big pigs; we shot them and ran the littlefellers down on foot, and we've been keeping them for youfellers*  Stuart, 1959:98

**Future**

As in the data from New South Wales and South Australia, no auxiliary or morphological means is used to mark the future.

- 1830  *You shoot Yagan?*  Durack, 1964:69
- 1907  *If He want me go He send it along*  Telfer, 1939:105
- 1908  *Never trust white fellow; you never know what --- thing he do next*  Telfer, 1939:112
- 1913  *When I finish all finish*  Bates, 1936: Article 18

**Copula Statement**

The only distinctive form occurring is that with zero BE copula and it occurs consistently.

- 1830  *Might be Yagan somewhere this place*  Durack, 1964:67
- 1830 (est.)  *Him fine baby*  Hastings, 1968:229, 230
- 1830 (est.)  *He not good*  Hallam, 1991:332
- 1834  *Yes, Noonar me*  Goldsmith, 1951:350
- 1867-8  *Music very nice*  Mulvaney & Harcourt, 1988:77
- 1880 (est.)  *That vump letter stick, same as paper talk*  Hassell, 1975:57
- 1884  *Policeman Trustove no good*  Forrest, 1884:13
- 1884  *Policeman Wheelock a good fellow*  Forrest, 1884:13
- 1907  *I not frighten...I think I drunk nearly all the time*  Telfer, 1939:106
- 1926  *The educated aborigines and half castes about to form a protective union*  Haebich, 1988:272
- 1934  *The better you to the department the worse you treated*  Haebich, 1988:313

**Non-Copula Yes/No Question**

As in the New South Wales data, this occurs without auxiliary:

  *White boy look for Yagan?*
Chapter 3

**Copula Yes/No Question**

In the one example observed (which comes from an Aboriginal man’s writing) this occurs with the plural unmarked in the auxiliary. There are no occurrences of this function in the data from New South Wales.

1915  Now sir is my children allowed to go to school. / Haebich, 1988:143 won’t your answer.

**Transitivity**

No evidence of transitivity marking was found in the Western Australian data prior to 1880. We cannot be sure that any of the examples comes from a community in the vicinity of the Swan River settlement. (The data from Forrest 1884 come from Rottnest prison which was occupied by prisoners from all over the state). There seems no evidence that a pidgin developed or was in consistent use in the Swan River area.

1880 (est.) Yhi (sun) hide-um face nunghar look down  Hassell, 1975:55
1884 Too many kill ‘em. Too many make ‘em ill  Forrest, 1884:13
1884 Another blackfellow coax ‘em me  Forrest, 1884:13
1921 they spearum you  Telfer, 1939
1936 Lunch I been make him quicktime now  Bates, 1936: Article No. 4

**Infinitive**

As in the New South Wales data, this occurs without to following a finite verb:

1907  If He want me go  Telfer, 1939:105

**Negation**

The form nothing (c.f. nossing in the N.S.W. data), which seems to be an emphatic negative, is the only distinctive form of negation occurring in the Western Australian corpus:

1884 Policeman Wheelock a good fellow, nothing sulky  Forrest, 1884:13
1921 You nothing touch em  Telfer, 1939

**Existential There is/It is**

There are two forms of this, the earlier of which is common to the New South Wales data at the same period:

1. Zero impersonal subject, zero existential verb:
   1830 Plenty fish, plenty cold  Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:16
2. Substitution of Him for There is/are:
   1933 Him no sorry-fella up there  Telfer, 1939:212

**WH Question**

Only one occurrence was observed: the zero DO aux form, which (although rare) was the more common form in the New South Wales data:

1830 Why white woman run away?  Durack, 1964:66

**Passive Voice**

This is expressed with zero auxiliary and zero verb marking. It does not occur this way in the New South Wales data, but occurrences from both areas are rare:

1884 Too many kill ‘em. Too many make ‘em ill  Forrest, 1884:13
1913 When I finish, all finish  Bates, 1936: Article 18

**Conditional**

There are three occurrences, all with zero auxiliary and unmarked verb but without the conjunction pose which occurred in the New South Wales corpus:

1830 You shoot- me spearl  Durack, 1964:68
1880 (est.) Put baby down to walk he soon run round  Hassell, 1975:55
1907 He tell me he be good to me  Telfer, 1939:106
Chapter 3

Adverb Morphology

As in the New South Wales data, the -ly suffix may not occur but there is evidence of other suffixes developing, possibly reflecting different senses of the adverb (i.e., -way expressing manner, -time expressing time).

1. Zero suffix 1907 He talk kind to me Telfer, 1939:107
   1959 We'll go, willing Stuart, 1959:123
2. -time suffix 1936 Lunch, I been make him quicktime now Bates, 1936, Art 4
3. -way suffix 1959 We start new way now Stuart, 1959:122.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: THE NOUN PHRASE

Noun Plural

As in the data from New South Wales and South Australia, the noun plural may be unmarked.

1830 taking plenty of kangaroo Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:16
1907 till all light go out Telfer, 1939:107

Possessive, in Nouns Pronouns and Adjectives

In contrast with the comparative frequency of occurrence of possessive forms in the New South Wales data, there is only one example from Western Australia, and it is an unmarked personal pronoun serving as a possessive adjective:

1830 (est.) Where is you fat? Hallam, 1991:332

Pronouns: Personal

First Person Singular
1. Zero case marking 1830 You shoot- me spear! Durack, 1964:68
   1833 Me dance von Hügel, 1994:71
   1907 Me go West Australia Telfer, 1939:105
2. Noun retention 1830 You shoot Yagan (me)? Durack, 1964:69

Second Person Singular
Noun retention 1842 Lady (You) Cowan, 1977:39

Third Person Singular
Zero case marking 1830 (est.) Him fine baby Hastings, 1968:229, 230
1867-68 him talk a lot Mulvaney & Harcourt, 1988:77

Articles

Definite Article
Zero definite article 1830 Why white woman run away? Durack, 1964:66
1867-68 music very nice Mulvaney & Harcourt, 1988:77
1884 I like ship Forrest, 1884:13
1907 take me...up into bush Telfer, 1939:106
1936 By goorara bush Bates, 1936: Article 17

Indefinite Article
Zero indefinite article 1830 (est.) Him fine baby Hastings, 1968:229, 230
1907 on farm Telfer, 1939:106
1908 Never trust white fellow Telfer, 1939:112
Prepositions

1. of after expression of quantity:
   Zero occurrence
   1830 Plenty fish, plenty cold  Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990:16
   1936 Big pindana mob blackfellows  Bates, 1936:Art.3
2. Form of along:
   1939 Look out longa (look after) white missus [La Grange]
      Telfer, 1939:164

Adjectives

Demonstrative adjective them: 1959 Let them revolvers drop  Stuart, 1959:123

WESTERN AUSTRALIA: SYNTAX

Several processes common to the data from New South Wales and South Australia are present:

1. Reduced syntax
   Verbless structure  1830 Plenty fish, plenty cold  Hallam & Tilbrook, 1990:16
2. Thematization  1936 Lunch, I been make him quicktime, now  Bates, 1936: Article 4
3. Structural repetition  1884 Too many kill 'em. Too many make 'em ill  Forrest, 1884:13
4. Double subject
   (subject reprise)  1915 Mr Stewart the Head Teacher he told me to write to you  Haebich, 1988:143
   1929 All of us kids, we'd be out of it  Haebich, 1988:262.

Observations on the Development of Aboriginal English Grammar in Eastern and Western Australia

Tables 1 and 2 present comparative summaries of the information on the verb phrase and the noun phrase from New South Wales and Western Australia.
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### Table 2: Noun Phrase Summary

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| **Indefinite art:**
| zero | NSW | SA | WA | NSW | | | | | |
| 'one' | NSW | | | | | | | | |
| **PREPOSITIONS** | | | | | | | | | |
| Zero allative 'to' | NSW | | | | | | | | |
| Zero 'of' after expr of quantity | NSW | WA | | | | | | | |
| Zero 'for' before receiver | | | | | | | | SA | |
| Zero 'for' before time period | NSW | | | | | | | | |
| 'along' for from | | | | | | | SA | | |
| 'along' for with | | | | | | | | NSW | |
| 'longa' for after | | | | | | | | NSW | |
| **ADJECTIVES** | | | | | | | | | |
| 'too much' for much, or many | NSW | | | | | | | | |
| dual form 'bulla' | | | | | | | | | |
| big one + N | | | | | | | | NSW | |
| big fella (+ N) | | | | | | | SA | | |
| Demonstrative 'there is' | NSW | | | | | | | | |
| bad fella + N | | | | | | | | NSW | |
| Demonstrative 'Them' | | | | | | | | WA | |

Chapter 3

Table 2: Noun Phrase Summary cont.)
From observation of the data summarised in Tables 1 and 2, it is possible to gain some impression as to the course of development followed by the grammar of Aboriginal English from the time of first contact of Aboriginal people with English on both sides of the continent. While the picture is incomplete and subject to inaccuracies inherent in data sources, it provides support for a number of generalizations of a somewhat exploratory nature:

1. The greater part of the grammatical distinctiveness of Aboriginal English has related to processes of formal simplification, in the sense of rendering unnecessary or optional morphological marking within the verb phrase of tense, aspect, mood and voice and within the noun phrase of number, possession, case, gender, animacy and definiteness.

2. There is evidence that some of these processes have influenced Aboriginal English in an enduring way, and that they are no longer related to processes of pidginization which took place in the past. It is likely, then, that the effects of simplification contribute to the functional significance of Aboriginal English in the lives of its speakers. Its function could lie in the fact that the expression of aboriginality in a monolingual English context renders necessary the retention of a dialect which favours implicitness over explicitness.

3. The development of Aboriginal English (which is continuing) also shows that its speakers have been seeking greater semantic differentiation in some areas than is offered by standard English. In the past this has resulted in the development of mechanisms for the expression of transitivity, emphasis, a variety of forms of negation, duality of person, and similitude. Early tendencies to extend the differentiation of quantitative expression through the noun phrase and of verb modification through adverb morphology appear to have been maintained.

4. Aboriginal English has followed similar lines of development across the continent and, in its essentials, may be regarded as a single dialect.

5. The pidgin which developed within the early decades of settlement in New South Wales (partly under the influence of contact varieties spoken outside of Australia) became the base for the development of Aboriginal English not only in that colony but also in the Swan River Colony and probably elsewhere in Australia.

3.3 Part 3: Lexico-Semantics

The Appendix contains a word list compiled from the literature surveyed in this investigation. Some of these words come from compilations made by other writers, (in particular, Troy, 1990, Menary, 1981, Toussaint, 1992) and the remainder are drawn from the various sources used which have served as the basis for the linguistic analysis. No attempt has been made to go beyond these sources, as the list is not intended to stand alone but to serve as a part of the overall survey. It will be noted that, for each item listed, the location from which the example was drawn is listed, as is information about the word class, approximate meaning and possible origin. Where deemed necessary, contextualized usages are given.

The list comprises 373 items, many of which appear in the list more than once because they were reported from different areas. The list is biased towards New South Wales (305 entries) mainly because the richest data sources (Troy, 1990 and Dawson, 1987) related to that area. There are 55 entries specific to Western Australia. Also 10 items from South Australia and 3 from Queensland have been included although this study does not purport to provide any information specific to those areas.

A full analysis of the lexico-semantics of even this small data base would be a major undertaking and is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, it is the authors’ view that Aboriginal English differs as much from standard English in its lexico-semantics as in its grammar (perhaps more), and some preliminary remarks will be made which may lead to further investigation at a later date.

A deficit view of Aboriginal English (such as, unfortunately, still prevails in many quarters) would see it as deficient in vocabulary. A consideration of this short word list provides some evidence that such a view is based
on ignorance. Aboriginal English will be misunderstood if it is assessed on the basis of what it does not share with another variety. It is a unique dialect and has developed a significantly differentiated way of dealing with the environment and experience of its speakers. It has done this by drawing on many sources, including Aboriginal languages, contact varieties and social, regional and temporal dialects of English. Little of what the dialect has drawn from other sources has remained unchanged. What has been borrowed has been brought into a new linguistic ecology in which it has had to become part of an ongoing system of meaning.

Many of the words in the list are recognizably Aboriginal in origin. Words such as nangri (sleep), patter (eat), urokah (sun), coming from the Port Stephens area were early borrowings which do not appear to have been disseminated widely and would not be understood by speakers in other areas. In Western Australia, such words as winyarn (feeling sorry for someone), yorga (woman) are in everyday use in Nyungar communities, but might be opaque to non-Aboriginal listeners. The word kangaroo, which would be known to everybody, was, in fact not used with its present meaning in Port Jackson settlement. Its place of origin was the Endeavour River area in Queensland, whence it was borrowed into the colony by the Europeans, and then adopted by the Sydney Aboriginal people to refer to animals (except dogs) brought to Australia by the Europeans (Troy, 1990:41).

The word list has many words whose meaning would be assumed known by any speaker of English, and yet which have undergone significant semantic shift. In some cases the semantic extension reflects the semantics of Aboriginal languages, as in the case of kill (hit, kill). In some cases English words have to serve the purpose of depicting aspects of lifestyle which are peculiarly Aboriginal, as with sit down (remain a long time, stay, camp), stop (remain a short time), look out (hunt) and roast (cook game). Some words reflect a perspective which a white person cannot share, for example white man (non-Aboriginal man or woman) and camping about. Some would change their meaning completely if used by a non-Aboriginal person, for example blackfeller and brother. There are words which have undergone semantic shifts which would lead to significant miscommunication if used across dialects, for example tosuan(d) (more than twelve), by and bye (some time in the past) and moon (month). Others illustrate more accessible shifts of meaning, as in the case of hang (choke) and learn (teach). The most difficult words of all, from the point of view of communication across dialects, are those which we perceive as part of the fundamental functional structure of the language, like too (very), too much (a lot of) and all (a plural pronoun).

There are many examples within the word list of coinages which show a creative and functional use of bilingual resources, like bëreewolgal ("men come from afar", i.e., colonists), kibra men (persons who come and go in ships), big wheelbarrow (carrier) and paper talk (written notes). Some confront the speaker of standard English with their directness, as with tumble down (be born, or kill) and jump up (be reincarnated, or resurrected). Some clearly have their origin in satire or parody, such as white bread (non-Aboriginal person), jackey jackey (white lackey), bang-all (leg shackle), monarch (law enforcement officer) and perhaps musquito (an ejaculation). As in any living language, not all coinages survive, but the richness of the historical record is a guide to understanding the vigorous life that Aboriginal English has enjoyed within the shadow of the standard language which its speakers are aware of, draw on, when necessary, but also distance themselves from.

The word list is arranged on basically chronological principles, and shows that, although some of the early borrowings from Aboriginal languages are no longer current, Aboriginal English has continued to add complexity to its lexicon through the incorporation of coinages and semantic shifts and the maintenance of a core of Aboriginal words of local significance, some of which come from languages no longer spoken. What may not be immediately apparent from the word list is the areas in which the dialect has developed particular concentrations. Brief preliminary comment will be made on three such areas.

1. Quantity and Size

A good deal of semantic innovation seems to be associated with the expression of quantity and size. There is evidence of this from the earliest records, with the prevalence in the records of such words as murree (large), corbon/cobawn (big, large). There is a set of words which overlap with the meaning of 'large' but are used to qualify an expression to make it bigger or more extreme: murri, murry, marry, murray (very), corban (very). The tendency to associate together extent and extremity is reflected the semantic shift which takes place in English to make all (temporarily) into a plural pronoun and to shift the sense of too and of too much (more permanently) from excess to extent. Similarly, the superlative quality of most is merged within the concept of extent in the
Chapter 3

semantic shift which it undergoes. The focus of the dialect on quantity and size is also seen in the way in which it adopts and aboriginalizes plenty (many, frequently, a large quantity) and employs overstatement in reference to numbers with *tousand/towsan/dousand* (a large number, at least over 12). A similar trend may be seen in the way in which *mob*, which in standard English tends to refer to dangerously large groupings, becomes the standard way of reference to a group, whether large or small.

2. Time

A number of distinctive items in the lexicon show an attempt to express time differently from the way in which standard English expresses it. Points or periods of time are identified with respect to objects or activities with which they are associated: *nangri* (sleep, day, night), *moon* (month), *sundown* (sunset, end of the day) and the significance of time reference expressions is changed: *longtime* (for a long time), *by and bye* (after that, in the past, later). Also, as we have seen, the word *time* is adopted as a suffix which classifies certain adverbs.

3. Aborigine

The dialect seems also to be used to help to enable Aboriginal people to talk about themselves in contradistinction to others. The term *fellow* was, according to Troy (1990) an early relexification of *man* which came into use in Aboriginal English. From it was derived *blackfellow* as a term which identified Aborigines in general rather than in their traditional groupings, and enabled them readily to be differentiated from the *whitefellow*. The term *-fellow* became a productive suffix, perhaps comparable to a classifier in an Aboriginal language, which could be attached to a range of descriptive terms (especially those concerned with quantity and size, but also, for example, *poor fellow* and *sorry fellow*). Within the Aboriginal society, as some Aboriginal people became more identified with contact settings, terms arose for reference to others: *myall fellow* ("wild blackfellow", also "strange fellow") and *bush black* or *bush black fellow*. Associated with the same semantic field (as well as with that of quantity) was the word *mob*, which could be used after some defining feature (usually territory) of a group, to refer to them. It would appear that, in more recent times, there has been an increasing use of traditional group names such as *koories* and *murrries* rather than the earlier more inclusive terms.

These preliminary observations, it is hoped, give some justification to the view which is fundamental to this study that aboriginality has been married with English in the development of the dialect of Aboriginal English. To understand the dialect at depth, linguistic data need to be supported by extensive work on relevant semantic fields. Other areas of semantic concentration which might be pursued on the basis of the word list provided here are birth/death/afterlife/spirits, occupying of space, non-Aboriginal people and movement. The semantics of Aboriginal English is a rich field for further research.

3.4 Part 4: Discourse

As has been indicated earlier, the sources uncovered in this study were of limited usefulness for enabling us to gain an understanding of the discoursal dimension of the development of Aboriginal English. Few of the colonial observers were concerned to comment other than incidentally on their experience of Aboriginal people and the patterns of their communication, and none recorded extended texts to enable discourse genres employed by Aboriginal English speakers to be described and analysed. An analysis of the circumstances of the early communicative encounters will be given in the next chapter under the theme of pragmatics and within that context some reference will be made to matters of discourse. In the present section, then, we shall explore, within the range of the records accessed, the perceptions shown by the colonial observers of communicative events, discourse markers and stylistic markers associated with Aboriginal communicators first in New South Wales and then in Western Australia.
Chapter 3

New South Wales

For the most part, the colonists watched the communicative events in which the Aborigines participated from afar. They perceived that ceremony played an important part in Aboriginal life and were impressed with the way in which the Aborigines moved easily between differing communicative modes, verbal and non-verbal, spoken and sung (Troy, 1993:40). They did not, however, participate in, or understand the discourse in Aboriginal contexts, even though such discourse was engaged in within the bounds of the settlement (Troy, 1992:11).

It took certain kinds of events to cause Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to engage in discourse together. Such events included bartering (Troy, 1992:11), soliciting food or money (Troy, 1990:72), paid labour (Mann, 1811:47), carrying out exploration, and disputation (Troy, 1970:53-54).

At Port Jackson settlement, the Aborigines would barter fish for other items of food from the colonists. Unfortunately we do not have an explicit verbal record of a bartering exchange, although we do have some records relating to insistent repetition of blunt demands by Aboriginal mendicants (Troy, 1990:125; see further p.52). Participants in some early encounters relating to exploration typically refer to initial shyness on the part of the Aborigines, especially if on land, followed by friendly interactions (Troy, 1990:110, 112; Moore, 1987:79; Campbell, 1978:7). Sometimes the Aborigines would approach colonists on ship and talk to them from their boats. Macquarie in 1811 expressed some impatience at the Aborigines in their canoes who “remained alongside some time, speaking to us in their gibberish” (Troy, 1990:118). It is clear that, initially, extended conversations took place with heavy support from non-verbal means (Troy, 1992:19).

Examples of disputation, although not necessarily accommodated with a verbal record, can reveal some information relevant to discoursal conventions. In one incident, described by Troy (1990:53-54), it was clear that the point at issue was whether or not the Aborigines had a right to seek goods from one of the colonists, who happened to be a female. A male colonist, seeing the female being apparently tricked by the Aborigines into giving them goods, intervened, whereupon he was abused and threatened by the Aborigines. The dispute shows the clash of two sets of assumptions: one which claims a right to individual ownership and the other which claims a right to support from the group. From the point of view of the colonists, the Aborigines were making demands on the woman which she was entitled to deny, and which, in that event should have been withdrawn. In terms of discourse, the speech event should have ended with the woman’s refusal. However, the refusal did not signify to the Aborigines that the encounter had concluded.

Literacy was introduced to a limited number of Aborigines in the early years of the colony (see Chapter 2). However it does not seem that any significant link was made between the literacy which was being acquired and the ways in which it might be used as a vehicle for other than Western based cultural expression. Some Aboriginal people acquired literacy in the early years of the colony, but we have no records of Aboriginal genres being transposed into literary form and preserved.

Telfer (1939:140-141) provides the full text of a story called “The Eagle and the Crow”, written around the turn of the century by an Aboriginal boy, which won him a gold medal. The story is indeed in faultless standard English. It retells a traditional Aboriginal tale which accounts for why the eagle has long claws and the crow is black. However, it is framed with an opening clause, “The aborigines say ....” which essentially establishes the frame of reference as non-Aboriginal. Aboriginal children were thus rewarded for expressing themselves in the English of non-Aboriginals from the standpoint of non-Aboriginals, even when the subject was supposedly Aboriginal. If literacy were seen as truly culturally independent, then it would undoubtedly be more readily acquired by Aboriginal people.

The data from New South Wales show at least two distinctive discourse markers being used by Aboriginal speakers. One, revealed in an early encounter described by a ship’s captain, was clearly a termination marker for the speech event. It is reported (in Tench’s words) by Troy (1992:19) as follows:

After nearly an hour’s conversation by signs and gestures, they repeated several times the word whurra, which signifies, begone, and walked away from us to the head of the bay. (See further, p.48)
Chapter 3

The discourse recorded by Dawson at Port Stephens shows his Aboriginal interlocutors employing two kinds of clause-final tag. The first appears to have the function of attention checking:

*dat set down black camp, you know...All black pellow belonging to massa now, you know.* (Dawson 1987:62).

The second tag is a frequently repeated address term which possibly implied a reciprocal care relationship comparable to that which might apply in a relationship within an Aboriginal group:

*Where nangri tonight, massa...Corse most tired, massa.* (Miller, 1985:45).

Stylistic features are noted by some of the early commentators. The most frequently mentioned one is repetition. It was assumed that Aboriginal speakers repeated phrases for emphasis (Troy, 1990:120) or importunity (Troy, 1990:72).

Aboriginal communicators were sometimes seen as incompetent in handling the rules of discourse. This was particularly apparent where there was an expectation that due deference would be made to social rank. An old native woman observed in 1873 is described by Rosamond and Florence Hill in the following terms:

*Her manner was extremely sociable, with a ludicrous mixture of the self-deprecatory, reverence of a dog, and an offhand familiarity surpassing that of one's most intimate friend.* (Kingston, 1977:5).

Western Australia

The Western Australian records show a great deal of similarity with those of Eastern Australia with respect to what was noted in terms of speech events. There is reference to the Aborigines' ceremonial interest (Hallam, 1983:134; Macdonald, 1898:15; Barley, 1984:28), initial shyness followed by friendliness (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:121; Cross, 1980:42), and ready trading activities with the colonists (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:x; Backhouse, 1843:551). Particularly noteworthy to observers in the west was the place of song and story in Aboriginal life (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:23; Macdonald, 1898:15; Hassell, 1975:80; Bates, 1936:Article No.8). The multi-modal nature of the oral art of the Aboriginal people (still preserved, at least, in the Kimberley) is described by Shaw, 1984:48.

It was said, according to E.W. Landor in 1847, that the Aborigines of Western Australia were "a much more peaceable and harmless race than those of any other part of Australia" (Aveling, 1979:101). The records show that an Aborigine named Mokare, first contacted in the King George's Sound outpost and used by successive explorers as a guide and interpreter, communicated extremely well with the settlers and earned much respect and affection from them (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990). There was, however, as in the Port Jackson settlement, a significant amount of disputation as the interests of the colonists and those of the Aborigines came into conflict (see, e.g. Battye, 1924:105). A reconstruction of one of the key early disputes is provided by Durack, 1968, but there is little by way of observers' records of actual discourse to enable us to describe the wording of an interaction.

Among the few discourse features mentioned by the commentators on Western Australia is the clause-final tag *now,* (Bates, 1936: Article 4), which indicates the boundaries of small discourse units. More stylized discourse features associated with oral narrative are described by Shaw, 1984. The Aboriginal employment of silence in a discourse turn is noted by Millett, 1980:298, an observer of the 1840s. Bates (1936:Article 4) describes how she revised her earlier impression of Aboriginal people as "deliberately secretive" when she realized that it was, at least in part, a response to the fact that few whites were really interested in their "black life."

As on the eastern side of the continent, observers in Western Australia noted the predilection of Aboriginal people for repetition, something which occurred in their traditional oral art as well as in their everyday discourse (Bates, 1936:Article 13). Another echo of the colonial responses to the Aborigines on the east coast is seen in the observation made by Eliza Brown in 1842:
Chapter 3

I have often been thus addressed on these occasions: Lady gib berram (give) me bread then bye and bye me wunga (call) Lady good fellow. (Cowan, 1977:39).

The conflict of person-based communication with status-based communication and the conflict between the expectations of community dependence and of personal independence lay behind a considerable amount of misunderstanding wherever Aborigines came in contact with colonists.
CHAPTER 4

DIACHRONIC COMPONENT: PRAGMATIC SURVEY

4.1 Circumstances Associated With British Settlement

European sailors made a number of visits to Australia from the late 16th century onwards (see further Favenc, 1888; Appleyard and Manford, 1979). Towards the end of the 18th century, Captain James Cook carried out explorations along the east coast and landed and made contact with Aboriginal people on Cape York Peninsula and at Botany Bay near Sydney. Cook reported positively on the land and its people and the British Government decided to establish a colony in New South Wales which would serve as a penal settlement for unwanted convicts as well as serving British political and economic interests in this part of the world. Accordingly, in January 1788 a fleet of eleven British sailing ships under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, who was to become Governor of the colony of New South Wales, sailed into Botany Bay. The same month two French ships under the command of M. de La Pérouse also arrived, whereupon Phillip moved to Port Jackson where he took possession of the colony in the name of the British crown on the 28th January.

Phillip's instructions and his inclination caused him to wish to open up friendly interaction with the Aboriginal people as soon as possible. As we shall see, however, from the beginning the cultural and pragmatic implications of these intentions were underestimated.

In 1826 an outpost was established by the New South Wales colonial government at King George's Sound, where the town of Albany now stands on the south coast of Western Australia. A number of Europeans at this tiny outpost made friendly contact with the Aborigines. There was, however, no intention to establish another colony until some two years later when Captain Fremantle arrived from London and carried out an exploratory investigation about three hundred miles to the north-west of Albany, around the place where the Swan River enters the Indian Ocean. On 2nd May 1829 Fremantle took formal possession of the western side of New Holland for the British crown and later the same month the ship Parmelia arrived, this time bringing free settlers, not convicts. The next month the Governor of the new colony, Captain James Stirling arrived with a detachment of soldiers, formally proclaiming settlement in Perth on the 18th June. Again, the desire of the British was to have friendly relations with the Aboriginal people, but astonishingly little thought was given to how this might be accomplished.

4.1.1 The Aboriginal Response to Contact

In surveying the data from the 18th century to the present day it is possible to discern in the Aboriginal response to European contact three co-present, and in some ways, contradictory impulses:

- the impulse towards non-involvement,
- the impulse towards communicative innovation, and
- the impulse towards cultural and communicative conservation.

Of these impulses the first was strongest at the earliest stages of contact, the second developed rapidly at the post-initial stages, perhaps more slowly in New South Wales but faster in Western Australia because of the importation to the west of contact varieties already developed over the four decades which separated the establishment of the two colonies, and the third became
dominant after the first few decades of contact and when it was apparent that Aboriginal communities had suffered devastating loss of life, languages and culture through the contact experience.

These impulses find their pragmatic expression in a range of behaviours which were observed by the European settlers as sufficiently "marked" to deserve comment. Such behaviours may be assumed to constitute evidence of pragmatic contrast. For our purposes it is useful to consider them in seven groups.

4.1.2 Evidence of Pragmatic Contrast

1. Preference for Observation Over Personal Contact With the Europeans

One of the earliest observations made by European discoverers about Aboriginal people in Australia was that they were hard to find. This has been particularly noted with respect to Western Australia. Appleyard and Manford (1979:104) have commented:

"The absence of contact with Aborigines by any European explorer to the Swan River area between 1619 and 1803 (save the few met by sailors from Emeloort on the coast near Jurien Bay), when there was so much evidence of their presence, is one the salient characteristics of European contact with Swan River. As the Nijptangh diarist wrote, 'all were very shy' and unwilling to reveal themselves, but they were almost certainly watching with great apprehension the progress of strangers who miraculously moved across water on the backs of huge 'birds' and could instantly kill a black swan merely by pointing a stick at it and making a loud noise."

For many years the Aborigines employed strategies of concealment, observing the newcomers but vanishing into the bush if they approached. Records in New South Wales show that those who did show themselves did so at a distance and were not prepared to communicate with the new arrivals at close range (e.g. Troy, 1992:1, Moore, 1987:79). Failing to find the Aborigines, the Europeans concluded either that the land was unoccupied or that the inhabitants were "shy", both of which were in fact mis-perceptions. Rather, their dominant impulse was for non-involvement.

2. Self Sufficiency and Lack of Interest in the Possessions and Ways of the Europeans

This impulse showed itself also in the apparent lack of interest the Aborigines seemed to show in the Europeans and what they had brought in their initial encounters with them. Captain James Cook, reporting on his experience in Botany Bay in 1770, noted that

"...they seemed to set no value upon anything we gave them, nor would they part ever with anything of their own for any one article we could offer them. This, in my opinion, argues that they think themselves provided with all the necessities of life, and that they have no superfluities (Roberts, 1978:16).

Cook's experience tallied with that of William Dampier who, a hundred years previously, had visited the western coast of Australia and thought to bribe the Aborigines into working for him by giving them cast-off clothes. He observed:

"I did not perceive that they had any great liking to them at first, neither did they seem to admire anything we had" (Favenc, 1888:360).

(This encounter is discussed more fully on p.82.)
In a sense, we could say that the Aborigines failed to observe a politeness maxim important to the Europeans: protect the positive face of the other person by admiring what he or she has. But although "face" was, and is, enormously important to Aboriginal people, in their culture it was gained or lost on the basis of meeting social expectations unrelated to the accumulation of possessions.

The fact that the Aborigines were opting for non-involvement provided a particular challenge to Governor Phillip in New South Wales. He had been given specific instructions by King George III to

"endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them." (Woolmington, 1973, quoted in Bickford, 1988:57). (See further chapter 2, p.11.)

After trying in vain to persuade Aboriginal people to engage in this "open intercourse" with him and his people, Phillip resorted to a policy of involuntary co-habitation (or as we have called it in chapter 2, "abduction") for a number of Aboriginal people whom he had captured and kept chained in his quarters with the purpose of giving them intensive exposure to the English language and culture. The Aboriginal people had opted for non-involvement, but under the British they were to be brought into cross-cultural communicative encounter whether they wanted it or not. As we shall see, their response to this was to be a constructive one.

3. Use of Vernacular Languages and Signing When Obliged to Communicate With the Europeans.

One of the first people to be detained in this way by the Governor of New South Wales was an outgoing, volatile and highly intelligent young man by the name of Bennelong (see further chapter 1, 2.1.3). Although Bennelong acquired a high level of bilingualism and biculturalism relatively quickly, he communicated at first by gestures. By this means he was observed to retell the experience of his capture (Troy, 1990:44). His use of mime and gesture was clearly noteworthy in the eyes of the settlers. John Hunter, a first fleet officer, observed that he was able to imitate all the actions and gestures of all the members of the Governor’s family (Troy, 1993:40).

There are numerous other records of Aborigines in contact situations communicating successfully by non-verbal means (see further chapter 2, p.10). For example, another senior officer of the first fleet, Watkin Tench, reported on an encounter in 1788 where he and his men met a group of about a dozen Aborigines. After a tense beginning, the encounter led to "nearly an hour’s conversation by signs and gestures" and was concluded by the repeated utterance by the Aborigines of the word "Whurra", which Tench assumed to mean "Begone." (Troy, 1992:19). Yet another senior officer of the first fleet, King, reported on a non-verbal exchange between his men and a group of Aborigines on the shore. The Aborigines, to whom clothing was unknown, were unable to determine whether the sailors were men or women. King perceived their meaning and ordered one of his men to strip and "undeceive them", at which the Aborigines uttered a great shout and, in King’s words, "pointing to their women standing on shore, offered them to the Europeans’ service." (Moore, 1987:80-81).

Fremantle, encountering Aborigines in the Swan River area, received requests from them in gestures (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:121) and understood their intention to return at a particular time by their pointing to the sun (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:124). Pointing, it seems, was a sign which was instinctively understood by both sides, although Aborigines in some parts of Australia point with the lip rather than the hand. Other signs which were used by the Aborigines and recognized by the Europeans were shrugging to express uncertainty (Kingston, 1977, Troy, 1990:125) and nodding in assent (Dawson, 1987).

For as long as they could, the Aboriginal people communicated with the newcomers through their own languages and through signs. However the limitations of such communication soon became
apparent. David Collins, Judge Advocate and Secretary in the new colony of New South Wales observed one example of how Bennelong’s meaning was misconstrued when speaking about something culturally unfamiliar to the Europeans:

“When Bennillong was first captured and was being questioned he tried to tell the settlers that the Cammerraygal would knock out the front tooth of young men to initiate them. The settlers at first thought he meant a man called Cammerraygal wore all the teeth around his neck.” (Troy, 1990:111).

It has also been suggested that the Europeans misconstrued the meaning of Aboriginal non-verbal and verbal expressions. In particular, a typical behaviour on contact, was for Aboriginal men to brandish their spears and cry "War-re, war-re", which was interpreted as “Go away,” or “Bad, you are doing wrong.” However, this kind of behaviour could have carried a ceremonial rather than a hostile intent, and indeed it sometimes preceded quite friendly interactions. Stanner suggests it might have been "no more than a conventional response to anything startlingly new" (Stanner, 1977:5).

Inevitably, then, despite their preferred option of non-involvement, the Aborigines were drawn into using the language of the settlers to communicate with them.

4. English and Aboriginal Code Mixing and the Development of Jargons

Experimentation with English marked the second impulse among Aboriginal people in response to the contact encounter. There was, as we have suggested, some evidence of this impulse from the beginning, but it grew more dominant as the non-viability of the initial preferred strategy of non-involvement became more apparent.

Already we have observed how Bennelong imitated the non-verbal behaviours of the colonists. The imitation soon extended, in many cases, to linguistic behaviours. The first fleet surgeon, Worgan, observed:

“They are wonderfully expert at the art of mimicry, both in their Actions and in repeating many of our Phrases, they will say- ‘Good Bye’ after us, very distinctly. The sailors teach them to swear. They laugh when they see us laugh” (Troy, 1990:16).

It is clear, then, that from the beginning, although there was no formal instruction given to the Aborigines (except for Bennelong and the other few like him who were detained for this purpose) they were given some form of directed linguistic input by the persons with whom they were in contact. Initially, such persons would have comprised in the main sailors and convicts. A number of early records bear testimony to the linguistic influence of both these groups on the Aborigines (e.g. Mann, 1811:47, Cunningham, 1827, in Troy, 1990:125). Their influence is significant. It is noted that the sailors encouraged the Aborigines to swear. We also have evidence that they gave the Aborigines access to pidgin forms of English current in the Pacific islands (see further Troy, 1990). The convict influence exposed the Aborigines to “Billingsgate slang”, a jargon current in British prisons (Troy, 1990:125).

After some time, the Aborigines began to use English words in connected speech. One of the first references to this comes from Judge David Collins, who in 1791 reported on an Aboriginal boy, Blondel, who had spent a period on Norfolk Island with Captain Hill with whom he was in service and who, when he returned, “seemed to have gained some smattering of our language, certain words of which he occasionally blended with his own” (Troy, 1990:111). By 1796 it was apparent that this kind of code mixing was common, and was very negatively evaluated from the settlers’ point of view, although they also participated in it:

“Language indeed is out of the question; for at the time of writing this, nothing but a barbarous mixture of English with the Port Jackson dialect is spoken by either party
Significantly, as noted in chapter 2, p.11, Collins goes on to say that this mixed form of speech is much better handled by the Aborigines than by the settlers. Aborigines (according to Collins) "have the advantage, comprehending with much greater aptness than we can pretend to, everything they hear us say" (Collins, in Donaldson, 1985b:79).

Thus, as Troy (1990) has pointed out, an unstable form of mixed speech developed between the Aborigines and the English speakers, which, at this stage was no more than a jargon but which had the potential to stabilize into a pidgin. The low prestige carried by the jargon is apparent in various evaluations given by European observers. The visiting Austrian nobleman von Hügel described it as "quite peculiar" (von Hügel, 1994:273) and Captain Maconochie of the Royal Navy described its use by English speakers as "ludicrous" (Maconochie, in Stone, 1974:62).

It is worth noting Romaine’s observation that “Grillo (1989, 173) points out that an essential feature of linguistic stratification in Europe is an ideology of contempt. Subordinate languages are despised languages. From the 18th century the label ‘barbarous’ was applied by speakers of dominant languages to those who spoke subordinate languages.” (Romaine, in Morgan, 1994:21)

If the European Australians placed no value on this form of communication- and were relatively inept at it- that, perhaps, provided all the more motivation for the Aborigines to adopt it and develop it into a form of communication to serve their purposes as people at the lowest rung of the ladder in this new culturally diversified community. As Troy (1990) has demonstrated, its use declined among the whites, while, over the first 30 or 40 years after contact, it slowly stabilized, at least in places of consistent contact, into New South Wales Pidgin English.

It was once assumed, in association with ideas on decreolization, that, in creole situations, the basilect developed first and, under the influence of the lexifier language, underwent progressive structural attrition towards the acrolect. More recently, however, it has been argued (following Bickerton, 1988) that in plantation settings, "the varieties assumed to be basilectal developed later when the proportion of nonnative speakers on large plantations became much greater than that of native speakers and earlier slaves. The development was toward the ‘basilectalization’ (formation of a basilect) of the new language varieties rather than toward their ‘acrolectalization’ or ‘debasilectalization’" (Mufwene, in Morgan, 1994:66).

Similarly, in Australia, the evidence suggests that Aboriginal English developed as an extension of the repertoire of Aboriginal people who had access to native speaker models of English but for whom English needed to perform diversified functions.

5. Aboriginal Maintenance of a Diversified Communicative Repertoire

The impulse towards communicative innovation which led to the development of a new pidgin was to be associated with, and, to some extent, to entail, a contradictory impulse towards maintaining Aboriginal ways of communication and cultural expression.

It is apparent from the early records that the Europeans were impressed with the physicality and multi-modal nature of the communication of the Aboriginal people. In 1787 Tench observed of Bennelong that he combined singing, dancing and capering with the communication of information (Troy 1993:40). Macquarie, in 1811, observed an Aborigine who had been reluctant to communicate at close range strutting, dancing and capering when at a distance (Macquarie, 1956:1811). Similar behaviour was observed at the very early stages of contact in Western Australia by Fremantle (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:121). Another thing noted in the early days of contact in the Swan River settlement was that Aboriginal people, when confident enough to come close to the settlers, might want to feel them, touching or stroking their faces, bodies or clothing (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:10; von Hügel, 1994:51; Appleyard and Manford, 1979:124).
The gesticulation, sometimes rapid, of Aboriginal people was noted in Western Australia by the explorer Collie, in 1834 (Collie, 1979:63) and in South Australia in 1879 by Taplin (1879:84). Dawson, writing in 1830, observed how Aboriginal people in Port Stephens, not far from Sydney, were seen to vary their facial expression between a stoic expressionlessness when facing aggression, punishment or reproof (e.g. Dawson, 1987:129) to vivid animation with rolling eyes and head movements when expressing alarm (Dawson, 1987:119). An English visitor to a station property in New South Wales 1856-57 observed how an Aboriginal man, when pressed into communicating names and burial places of persons who had died, would modify his utterance by whispering when doing so (Lady, 1978:256).

In these practices we see Aboriginal people operating according to traditional Aboriginal pragmatic norms. They did this before they had adopted English as a means of communication and, at least in some respects, they continued to follow such pragmatic norms as they used English.

It was increasingly apparent to the settlers on both sides of the continent as the 19th century wore on that Aboriginal people could demonstrate marked linguistic skill and acquire English much more readily than the Europeans could acquire Aboriginal languages (see, e.g. Reynolds, 1987:103; Taplin, 1879:13; Montagu, 1974:9; Brown, 1842 in Cowan, 1977:39). Indeed, one of the earliest Europeans making a serious effort to learn an Aboriginal vernacular in New South Wales, the London Missionary Society missionary L.E. Threlkeld found himself ridiculed by the Aborigines for his incompetence (Troy 1990:122). It is apparent that by the second half of the 19th century at least, some Aboriginal people were already bidialectal in English and exhibiting the capacity for situational shifting between varieties. For example, an Aboriginal employee in a white household in 1873, asked by a non-Aboriginal observer what was contained in the pot she was stirring, answered "White fellows..." then corrected herself, "White ladies' dinner." (Kingston, 1977:15).

John Baugh, in commenting on the development of Black English varieties in the United States, has demonstrated, on the basis of historical analysis, how the "unique linguistic past" of African Americans has "given rise to flexible styles, where speakers tend to adapt their speech patterns to suit each situation" (Baugh, 1983:12). It can be argued that historical analysis of the Australian situation shows that the same kind of adaptation was made by Aboriginal speakers of English in Australia. The formative influences in the development of English by Aboriginal speakers included, as we have seen, a number of non-prestige varieties of English, pidgin English, Aboriginal languages and standard English, all with their differing pragmatic conventions. Aboriginal speakers accordingly acquired a diversified English repertoire which provided a basis for sociolinguistic style shifting.

Many Aboriginal people have sought to keep their cultural and communicative options as open as possible. The history of contact shows many examples of what we might call "culture shifting" where Aboriginal people initiated into European culture have chosen to opt out of it and return to the bush at least for a period. This happened, for example, in the case of Bennelong, who, according to Troy (1990:45) was "the first Aborigine recorded as using contact language knowledge in order to communicate with other Aborigines". Similar behaviour was noted, for example, by Hunter (1843:649) and Tucker, (1868:29).

The same impulse towards cultural conservation led Aboriginal people to employ their diversified linguistic and pragmatic repertoire in a way which would prevent themselves from being submerged in the English language and culture of the surrounding society. Increasingly, their repertoire became functionally diversified. English was found to be useful for maintaining and extending Aboriginal communicative links, so it was used as a lingua franca among Aboriginal groups (Donaldson, 1985a:133). At the same time, as the Aborigines' repertoire of varieties increased they were able to switch codes to exclude whites and reinforce Aboriginal solidarity (Elkin, 1938:333).
As Morgan (1994:1) has suggested, "...creole situations are by definition dialogic with their history and their role in the modern world." Historically, Aboriginal people had reached a point where they required English to fulfill purposes for them which it had not been required to fulfill before. They were in a parallel situation to African American people, as described by one of their number, Geneva Smitherman:

“African American English had its genesis in enslavement, where it was necessary to have a language that would mean one thing to Africans but another to Europeans. Forced to use the English of Ole Massa, Africans in enslavement had to devise a system of talking to each other about Black affairs and about The MAN right in front of his face. Because of continued segregation and racism, this necessity for a coded form of English persisted even after Emancipation, and it underlies the evolution of Black Language.” (Smitherman, 1994:26).

Sadly, in some cases, Aboriginal languages ceased to have a day to day communicative use and were reserved more for ceremonial use, this preventing them from being passed on to the next generation. Donaldson, noted in 1985:

“Someone now in her sixties described to me how in her youth she had overheard members of the ngurrampah generation talking Ngayambaha together 'like music'. They would drop their heads in sudden silence, kuyanpuyan, as she said ('with shame') at the approach of children...The language itself was becoming in some respects like ceremonial knowledge. It was not lightly to be exposed to children who were, as we have seen, likely to show themselves 'not interested,' even if moved by it at some, then probably unacknowledged level...” (Donaldson, 1985a:135).


The English used by Aboriginal people not only acquired linguistic markers identifying it as their own but also pragmatic markers, in terms of differently executed speech acts. Perhaps the feature most commonly remarked upon by the Europeans was the reticence of the Aboriginal people in their presence. This characteristic relates back to the first of the three principles we mentioned earlier: the desire for non-involvement. The Aborigines were not, in many cases, desirous of opening up or maintaining communication with the whites. This was variously interpreted as "great caution" (Macquarie, 1956), "shyness" (Campbell, 1978:7; Moore, 1987) and "timidity" (Eyre, 1985:23). It was a feature of contact behaviour on both the east and the west of the continent. Stirling, the first governor of Western Australia, reported to Britain that the Aborigines "keep aloof" (Cross, 1830:6). The reluctance to come forward and communicate was indeed related to caution and it applied more to the women and children than to the men (Hodgkinson, 1845:46; Giles, 1889:124). However, as the Europeans came to be more regularly involved with Aborigines who knew them well, they found that their initiating acts often did not produce the anticipated responses from their Aboriginal interactants. Elizabeth Shelley, who, with her husband, founded the first asylum and school for Aboriginal children in New South Wales, found her efforts frustrated by the kind of "culture switching" we have referred to (p.50). Former students would return to the bush, and when she met them again and tried to converse with them "on religious subjects", they would not pursue the conversation. Church Missionary Society missionary the Rev. Walter Lawry had a similar response. The Aborigines would laugh and move away when he tried to talk to them about God. (Troy, 1990:120, 121). When they sought information from the Aborigines through questioning, the Europeans often found the Aborigines uncommunicative. They might simply not respond (Dawson, 1987:228, 229; Millett, 1980:298; Hassell, 1975:58), perhaps give an abstract look (Telfer, 1939:85) or feign ignorance of the matter about which information was being sought (Dawson, 1987:303). Similarly, when the European's elicitation consisted of a request for services, a minimal response might be given after a delay (Troy, 1990:130). In other words, the Aborigines did not recognize the same pragmatic force in requests for information or services that the Europeans saw in them. They did not recognize requesting acts as necessarily opening up adjacency pairs. Nor did they...
Chapter 4

necessarily see the need to respond to informing acts related to information which they were not interested in.

Interestingly, however, the colonists observed that the Aborigines were not reluctant to make requests of them and they tended to make them in an unmitigated way. The grazier James Malcolm (interviewed in 1845) observed they might ask for money by saying “Give me white money [paper money], Give me black money [coins]” (Troy, 1990:133). Ridley quoted the request of an Aborigine to a stockman “You give me ‘bacca’ [tobacco]” (Dutton, 1983:120). The naval surgeon Peter Cunningham observed in 1827:

“As beggars the whole world will not produce their match. They do not attempt to coax you, but rely on incessant importunity; following you, side by side, from street to street, as constant as your shadow, pealing in your ears the never-ceasing sound of ‘Massa, gim me a dum! Massa gim me a dum’ (dump).” [A dump was a small silver coin]. (Troy, 1990:125).

Further related to the matter of requesting and responding to requests is the matter of expressing thanks when (whether requested or not) services have been performed. One of the most frequently observed, and negatively evaluated, behaviours of Aboriginal people in the eyes of the settlers was the failure to express gratitude. This was observed by von Hügel in 1934 in areas inland from Sydney (though not in Sydney itself) (1994:420). It was also commented on by Gunther, (1843:646), Parker in 1854 (Stone, 1974:72) and Taplin, in 1879 (Taplin, 1879:12). Barley, observing this behaviour in Western Australia, noted “Reciprocity and sharing were fundamental to their way of life to such an extent that their language contained no word for ‘thank-you’” (Barley, 1984:29). This observation can be applied to the whole complex of behaviours involving requesting and thanking. The retention of the pragmatics of requesting and thanking, whereby requests do not require mitigation and services do not require thanks, was linked to the retention of the view of mutual obligation associated with the traditional Aboriginal life.

Another area highlighted by the settlers was that of greeting behaviour. Within the context of the group, greetings might not be given, since they are redundant, as was noted by Salvado in Western Australia (Hallam, 1983:142). Oldfield, in the Sydney area in 1828 (Troy, 1990:127, 128) and Backhouse at the Swan River settlement in 1838 (1943:550) observed that where travel is involved, Aboriginal people by way of greeting might ask the person being greeted “Where are you going?” This inquiry, potentially intrusive to the European speaker, can, in the bush context, perform the useful function of giving the inquirer information which may enable the traveller to be assisted with travel information or perhaps located should the need arise. The logic of greeting behaviour in metropolitan contexts may have been hard for Aboriginal people to see, resulting in incongruous behaviours like that recorded by Oldfield in Sydney in the 1820s and reported on by Troy, (1990:127), where an Aboriginal person went up to a stranger in the street, saying “How do you do, shake hands.”

Also important is the area we have already mentioned (under 5, p.50) of the appropriate speech act in response to punishment or reproof. As Dawson (1987:129) observed, the Aboriginal might respond much more passively in such circumstances. Cross-culturally, this may be seen as either lack of feeling or lack of remorse.

In this section, then, we have seen that, well on in their contact experience, Aboriginal people were observed by the colonists to perform some speech acts distinctively. Particularly affected were speech acts involved with the seeking and giving of information or services, initiating contact and responding to punishment or reproof. These behaviours have may be related back to the impulse we have already mentioned for non-involvement in communication with the settlers, but they also represent pragmatic transfer. The situation is again comparable to that which has been described with respect to the development of African styles in the use of English in the U.S.A. As Morgan has put it, "African language style was...transformed" [in AAVE] (Morgan, 1994:130)
On the one hand, the Aboriginal people were transferring to their interactions with Europeans the expectations associated with the reciprocal obligations of traditional Aboriginal communities (where there is no loss of face in demanding services, nor in accepting them without thanks). On the other hand, the Aborigines were generalizing from their own culture avoidance behaviours which they reserve for persons with whom it is not proper to cultivate a relationship. These avoidance behaviours were perhaps further strengthened when the whites began to intrude further on Aboriginal freedoms though various forms of institutionalization, as suggested by Ryan:

"When the Aborigines were dispossessed and placed in institutions they employed the resistance techniques of a defeated people to preserve their dignity and identity. They relied upon non-co-operation, silence, lying and ingratitude as well as acts of small scale defiance and affronts to middle class mores in order to outrage their captors" (Ryan, 1977:27).

The situation compares with that described by Baugh, where "The social distance between the groups has been sufficient to drive perceptual wedges between blacks and whites. As a consequence of this linguistic dilemma, many street speakers remain silent when standard English is the dominant dialect." (Baugh, 1983:6)

7. Participation in Distinctive Speech Events

If the Aboriginal people were observed by the colonists to perform distinctive speech acts, they were also seen to perform distinctive speech events. We are using the term "speech event" here to refer to communicative practices involving the structured use of speech acts.

As we have already observed, the Aborigines, on contact, were observed to incorporate a number of modes of communication in their speech events. In particular, many events involved the use of song. From the first year of the colony of New South Wales, before there was a shared verbal language, the Aborigines and the settlers interacted in song and dance. According to Hunter, "they danced and sung with us, and imitated our words and motions as we did theirs" (Hunter, 1793:52). Song was sometimes extended and interspersed with talk in the informal interaction of the Aborigines travelling with the explorers Eyre (1985) and Hodgkinson (1845:43). Captain Barker, in Western Australia, listened to his guide Mokare sing a song "about the kangaroos he had speared and his becoming a man" (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:23). This bears comparison with the comment of Northern Territory Aborigine Yunupingu: "my father taught me to sing some of the songs that talk about the land" (Roberts, 1978:5). It seems clear that there were a range of events employing song, sometimes purely for relaxation and sometimes for the communication of culturally important information.

It was apparent to the settlers that ceremony played an important part in the lives of the Aboriginal people. The author of a guide to a Western Australian museum exhibition (possibly A. C. MacDonald) wrote in 1879:

"Indeed no people are greater slaves to form and ceremony, in every act, and circumstance of life, than the natives of Western Australia. There are forms for meeting, forms for paring, for communicating intelligence, good, or bad, in short, for almost every daily occurrence of social life" (A Brief Account...1879:9).

One of the first ceremonies observed was the corroboree, which, according to Troy, was still being performed in Sydney in the early 1800s. The New South Wales explorer Hodgkinson, described this event, rather disparagingly in the terms "obstreperous singing and frantic gesticulations" (Hodgkinson, 1845:51). Another form of ceremony which was frequently noticed was the funeral. White, describing a funeral in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, in 1848 saw it as "a great commotion" involving everybody in the camp (White, 1934:225). MacDonald,
Chapter 4

(1898:15) observed that a number of different funeral practices existed among Western Australian Aborigines though he gave no detail about the communicative practices involved.

Speech events involving trading of goods were not unfamiliar to the Aborigines when the whites arrived. Some of the earliest records of the encounters at Port Jackson show the Aborigines exchanging fish for bread (Philip and Collins, in Troy, 1992:11). In an encounter at King George Sound in 1821, Philip Parker King and his crew traded vigorously with the Aborigines and, "In less than two weeks King's crew obtained 100 spears, 300 woomeras and 150 knives at the trade rate of half a ship's biscuit per item." (Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:x). At the Swan River settlement, Fremantle recorded Aborigines bartering a hair string for a hat (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:121) and fish for mutton, tongue and biscuit (Appleyard and Manford, 1979:124). Stirling records an Aborigine bartering a spear for a silk handkerchief (Cross, 1830:11). We do not, unfortunately, have records of the ways in which the communicative acts were exchanged.

The other major speech event which is referred to in a number of the records is the telling of oral narratives. This often took place at night, around the fire. Bates (1936, Article 8) wrote in one of her newspaper articles for the Sydney Sun:

"On the moonlight nights when there was no dancing, the tellers of tales would gather the camp about them with age-old stories of the dreaded 'woggal' snake and the 'winnaitch' places of evil magic, where the 'jang-ga' ghosts of the dead came back to decry and torture living victims; of standing stones that held the spirits of the unborn, and more especially of the birds and beasts and insects who spoke and lived and acted as men and belonged to the 'nyitting' or dreamtime."

There are other records of oral narratives referring to similar events being passed on in English, both in the South-West of Western Australia (e.g. Mokare, in Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:23) and in the Kimberley region in the far north (Shaw, 1984). With the transfer of the stories into English, many of the stylistic features associated with their narration have also been transferred. Shaw refers, for example, to

"the 'silent language' of unspoken cues and gestures or the markers in the speech of tone, inflection, exclamation... and conventions such as "tongue clicks, hand claps, dramatic pauses, interrogatives, eye and body contact, mime, tapping with the finger or a twig for emphasis, drawing lines in the dust, and indications of direction and distance" (Shaw, 1984:48).

Mention should also be made of the discourse form of parody, which was already developing out of the often comical mimicking of whites by the Aborigines in the early years after contact (as of Bennelong, for example, mentioned under section 3, page 47). Sir George Grey's journals of exploration in Western Australia include some records of candid interactions between him and his guide, Imbat, where they are achieving some satisfaction from highlighting what they see as the illogicalities in one another's behaviour:

"He moved merrily along, trying to win me from my moody thoughts...I...lit a fire and laid down, Imbat again beginning to cook-and then chattering: 'what for do you who have plenty to eat, and much money, walk so far away in the bush?' I felt amazingly annoyed at this question, and therefore did not answer him. 'You are thin,' said he, 'your shanks are long, your belly is small-you had plenty to eat at home, why did you not stop there?' I was vexed at his personalities, besides which it is impossible to make a native understand our love of travel- I therefore replied- 'Imbat, you comprehend nothing, you know nothing.' - 'I know nothing!' answered he; 'I know how to keep myself fat; the young women look at me and say, Imbat is very handsome, he is fat - they will look at you and say, He not good-long legs- what do you know? What for do you know so much if you can't keep fat? I know how to stay at home and not to walk too far in the bush- where is you fat?' 'You know how to talk; - long tongue;' was my reply; upon which Imbat,
Chapter 4

forgetting his anger, burst into a roar of laughter, and saying, 'and I know how to make you fat,' began stuffing me with frogs, barde and bu-yu nuts." (Hallam, 1991:332).

In this kind of parodic behaviour we see the origins of a counter-language which would turn the meanings of English against those from whom the language had originated. Counter-language of this kind, as Morgan (1994:130) has pointed out, provides an avenue for the expression, by style change, of an alternative reality, through satire.

Schaffer (1995:124) refers to another story of a native guide, this time in Queensland, who parodied the system of class distinction which distinguished the 'geppleman' from the servant. Contemporary Aboriginal people commonly employ code switching between Aboriginal English and what they call "flash talk" to carry out speech events which parody the whites (see, e.g. Malcolm, 1995; c.f. Jones, 1986, quoted by Morgan, 1994:127: "certain elements of the Black community lash out against 'talking proper'.")

In this section, then, by observing the speech events of Aboriginal people which drew the notice of the non-Aboriginal settlers, we see continuing evidence of what I have called the impulse towards cultural and communicative conservation. The Aboriginal Australians, albeit within a culture in which English was the dominant form of communication, used English distinctively to carry out speech events which were an expression of their aboriginality. In some cases they developed new speech events; in others, they continued to practise longstanding traditions within the changed social context. For example, the funeral in Aboriginal society remains a focal speech event which has a strong demand for community participation.

What we are observing here is what has been observed in other creole related situations and observed by Morgan: "While the situations from which creole languages have emerged can be described merely as examples of language contact, that denotation is hardly sufficient if one considers the complex ways in which these communities currently use language to mediate and substantiate the multiple realities that constitute their world." (Morgan, 1994:1).

4.1.3 Implications

It is clear that encounters between the colonists and the Aborigines in the early years of contact were frequently marked by pragmatic contrast and it is interesting that, in many respects, the pragmatic contrasts have been maintained. For the most part, the colonists expected that their own speech events and conventions would be adopted by their involuntary Aboriginal hosts and that communication on their own terms would prevail. However the world of the Aboriginal people did not revolve around the unbidden venturers who had established themselves on their shores, and the way in which they initially communicated showed the peripheral nature of the white people's world to them. Aboriginal people initially showed little interest for communication in English, and when they eventually adopted an English based form of communication they did so in the context of the continuity of their cultural identification as Aboriginal. This showed to some extent in the linguistic form of the English which they came to use, but it showed perhaps more markedly in the pragmatic conventions which they maintained as the interpersonal relational base for their communication. Eventually, rather than exchanging their Aboriginal ways for English ways and becoming monodialectal and monocultural, the majority of Aboriginal people extended their communicative repertoire to accommodate, to a greater or lesser degree, the colonists' ways of communicating as well as their own.

In the parlance of bilingual education, we could say that Aboriginal people's adoption of the colonists' language was additive rather than subtractive. They adapted to contact by extending their communicative repertoire but resisting wholesale Europeanization. Their communicative strategies show a strong desire to make use of the new without abandoning the old. In response to a situation which, for them, had become "rather ambiguous in terms of identity" (as Mervyn
Alleyne put it (Morgan, 1994:10) they developed a radically bidialectal communicative milieu in which communicative functions expanded along with the expanded repertoire of communicative forms.

We have observed that a number of pervasive features of Aboriginal culture have found and continue to find reinforcement in the way in which Aboriginal people operate their complex system of bicultural communication. Principles of reciprocity, group solidarity, exclusion of the outsider and continuity with a socially-mediated relationship with the past have been and are daily reinforced in the communicative acts of Aboriginal people, despite the fact that they may be using English as their first language. These, as much as linguistic forms, carry the aboriginality which is present in Aboriginal English.
CHAPTER 5
SYNCHRONIC COMPONENT

5.1 Part 1: Aboriginal English Recorded at La Perouse

The Corpus

The project's Aboriginal consultant in Sydney was contracted to provide naturalistic recordings of speech by residents of the La Perouse Aboriginal community as the New South Wales corpus for the synchronic component of the project. The members of the community chose to use their own recording equipment and were provided with audio tapes. Three recordings were made in the second half of 1996. The first recording consisted of extended naturalistic conversation between three elderly women of the community, concerning community and family matters. The second recording involved two males, but was essentially a polemical monologue by the older of the two (a man around middle age), about the treatment of Aboriginal people in Australian society. The third recording was made by a woman 74 years old, telling about herself and the history of her people in the La Perouse area. Unfortunately, the woman's speech was not spontaneous. It appeared that the woman was reading material which was written in standard English. All the material was transcribed, but only the first two recordings were used in the analysis.

The Analysis

The analysis of contemporary speech in the project will be carried out in a manner which enables the most ready comparison with the diachronic data. The nature of the recordings (especially in New South Wales) enables a reasonable comparative analysis of phonology and grammar to be made. There is little to report on with respect to lexico-semantics, discourse and pragmatics. The material on phonology and grammar will be presented in tables using the categories which were used in the analyses of the documentary material in Chapter 3. The categories will appear in bold on the left hand side of the page. Examples of material from the contemporary corpus will appear under the relevant headings, in italics. Where there is no example under the bold heading, nothing relevant to that category was found in the corpus. Where new categories have had to be formed to account for the contemporary data, they will be shown in italics, in bold.

Phonological Data

Normally, in presenting the phonological data, phonetic transcription will not be used. It was considered that, in keeping with the analysis in Chapter 3, where phonological material was presented in the spellings developed for this purpose by the transcribers, the practice in chapter 5 would be to employ the conventions adopted (after mutual consultation) by the two research assistants, both experienced transcribers with native English competence, and one bidialectal in Aboriginal English and standard English.

PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulation of Consonants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Labio-dental fricatives /f/, /v/ might be replaced by bilabial plosives /p/, /b/ or (rarely) by the bilabial semivowel /w/.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Apico-dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ might be replaced by alveolar plosives /l/, /d/.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

wash the /da/ windows
this /ts/ morning

3. Voiceless sibilants /s/, /ʃ/ might be avoided or replaced by alveolar plosives or (in the case of /ʃ/) by the affricate /tʃ/.

4. The glottal consonant /h/ might be avoided or replaced by the voiceless velar plosive /ɡ/.
   blaming Harry /æri/  
   he /i/ said
   So who /u/ did he /i/ say to ring, S....?

5. The distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants might not be observed.

5.1.1 Articulation of Consonants in Combination

1. Word initially, where syllables are unstressed they may be either deleted or devocalised.
   cause (because)
   port- important (self-correction by the speaker)
   s'posed
   splain (explain)

   1a This may also occur word medially
   de'nly (definitely)
   prob'ly

2. Word initially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal, the /s/ may be deleted.

3. Word medially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal the /s/ may be deleted, except in the case of massa, where the plosive is deleted.

   3a Word finally, where /s/ is followed by the plosive /t/ the /t/ may be deleted, as in ‘massa’
   thas right

   3b Word finally, where /s/ is followed by the plosive /k/ the phonemes may be reversed
   she kept aksing me an aksing me

4. Word medially, where two plosives are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced, and the second may be replaced by an unstressed vowel.

5. Word medially, where a nasal and a plosive are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced.
   an that

6. Word finally, /s/ may be deleted.

7. Word finally, where a nasal is followed by a plosive, either the plosive or both the nasal and the plosive may be deleted.

8. Word finally, where a lateral is followed by a plosive the plosive may be deleted.
   They’re all wil’ (wild)

9. Word initially, the semi vowel /ʃ/ may have a preceding alveolar nasal added
nused (having been used)

10. **Word finally, a velar nasal may have a voiceless velar plosive added.**
    *if anything’s comin up
    nothink

11. **Word finally, a velar nasal may be changed to an alveolar nasal.**
    Workin

**Enunciation of Vowels and Diphthongs**

1. There may be reduced discrimination between front vowel phonemes /i/ and /e/.
2. There may be reduced discrimination between back vowel phonemes /o/ and /a/.
3. There may be reduced discrimination between phonemes /u/ and /a/.
4. **Word finally, the diphthong /ou/ or /au/, may be replaced by the short vowel /ə/.
5. *Vowel liaison involving the consonant /n/ or semi vowel /l/ may be reduced*
    a urgent phone call
    th’ other fella

**Discussion of the Phonological Analysis**

In order to make firm generalizations from naturalistic data, one must have a very large corpus. We can make only qualified generalizations about the data. They are put forward as possibilities which invite further consideration and investigation.

In this and the subsequent discussions, by comparing the contemporary with the historical data we shall attempt to suggest wherein the dialect of Aboriginal English seems to be showing lessening divergence from standard English, where it seems to be showing increasing divergence from standard English and where it seems to be showing enduring divergence from standard English.

Lessening divergence from standard English would appear to be shown in the fact that the contemporary speakers do not show evidence of avoiding labio-dentals /f/ and /v/ or sibilants /s/ and /z/ and that they do not interchange voiced and voiceless phonemes. Increasing divergence from standard English shows in the increasing tendency towards /h/ deletion. Enduring divergence shows in the continuing substitution of plosives for the apico-dental fricatives.

When we focus on consonants in combination we see that there is lessening divergence from standard English in lack of evidence of /s/ avoidance after a plosive or a nasal, or of resistance to having two contiguous plosives. There are, however, more areas in which the divergence from standard English could be increasing, in particular the strengthening of the trend towards the deletion or devocalizing of unstressed syllables (even medially), and resistance to the final velar nasal, either by substituting the alveolar nasal for it or by following it with the unvoiced velar plosive. Other apparently more recent trends are the substitution of /ks/ for /sk/ in ‘ask’ and the introducing of the alveolar nasal before /j/ in ‘used’. Interestingly the pidgin-influenced trend to assimilate /t/ to /s/ when they come together (as in ‘massa’) has extended to other words, and the tendency to delete a final plosive following a lateral has shown itself to be an enduring feature.

With respect to vowels and diphthongs, the phonemic distinctions would appear to be being made more clearly by contemporary speakers although the front vowel /e/ would still appear to be closer to /i/ than in the pronunciation of most Australian speakers. The reduction in liaison between vowels may be strengthening as a distinctive feature of the dialect.
Chapter 5

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS

VERB PHRASE

Present Non-Continuous

Unmarked 3 Pers S

1. bin/been
2. unmarked
3. overgeneralized
4. BE reversal
5. past participle used as verb

he come in the day after (May be 5)
what we grewed
we was in a little mini
when I seen that
Debbie run out

Past Continuous

1. Zero aux
2. Double aux

she's is getting jealous

Past Continuous

1. Zero aux, unmarked verb
2. Aux unmarked for tense
3. BE reversal

I didn't know e's going down there
they was walking

Present Continuous

1. Zero aux
2. Double aux

she come in the day after (May be 5)
what we grewed
we was in a little mini
when I seen that
Debbie run out

Perfect Continuous

1. Zero aux
2. Zero aux, unmarked verb

Perfect Non-Continuous

1. Zero aux
2. Unmarked past participle
3. Double aux

something else that gotta be fixed up
dem girls got the music goin
he's opened the house up and give D the key
a story of what's she's done

Perfect Continuous

1. Zero aux
2. Zero aux, unmarked verb

Future

1. Zero aux, unmarked
2. Gonna, with BE reversal

the ones who's gonna lose out in the long run

Copula Statement

1. Zero copula
2. Zero subject, zero copula
3. Zero copula in dependent clause
4. Hypercorrect copula
5. BE reversal

We bull...bungarti mob 'ere see
people who from the Housin
do the people who the aura descendants
you've gotta 'ave everything is clean
you was something they could use
Non-Copula yes/no question
1. Zero DO aux
2. Zero HAVE aux

Copula yes/no question
1. BE reversal
2. Zero copula

Transitivity

Infinitive
Zero “to”

Negation
1. No + finite verb
2. Never + no
3. No + infinitive
4. Nothing / Nothing
5. Bel + VP
6. None + NP
7. Not + infinitive
8. Not + PP + nothing
9. ‘don’t’ with 3rd pers S

Existential
1. Subj & copula del
2. Him for There are
3. Pronoun subj. del
4. It is + subj. & verb
5. Overgeneralized ‘There is’

WH Question
1. Zero BE aux
2. Zero subject & DO aux
3. Zero DO aux
4. BE reversal

Passive Voice
1. Zero aux
2. GOT aux, overgen pp.

Conditional
1. Pose
2. Zero marking
3. Double conditional
Chapter 5

Adverb morphology

1. Zero suffix
2. -fella suffix
3. -way suffix
4. -time suffix

NOUN PHRASE

Noun plural

Zero suffix

Possessive

1. Juxtaposition, zero suffix
2. Forms of belong
3. Unmarked personal pronoun
4. Possessive pronoun as adj.
5. Definite article as poss adj.
6. Reanalysed poss adj 'he’s'/‘hees’
7. Double marking

Pronouns: Personal

First Person S
1. Zero case marking
2. Zero animacy marking
3. Possessive form
4. Noun retention

First Person Dual

Second Person S
Noun retention

Third Person S
1. Zero case marking
2. Zero gender marking
3. Zero animacy marking

Second Person P
Plural morpheme /-z/

Third Person P
Zero animacy marking
Plural morpheme /-z/ (dems)

Pronouns: Relative

1. all same
2. what
Pronouns: Reflexive

*Third Person P 'theirselves'*

have a good look at theirselves

Articles

Definite Article
2. Demonstrative form dat
   
   Where's Eora language?

Indefinite Article
2. One
3. *Indef. art with uncountable N*
4. *Indef. art with plural N*
   
   noone got a spare time
   you gotta have a degrees and stuff

Prepositions
1. Zero allative 'to'
2. Zero 'of' after quantity
3. Zero 'for' before receiver
4. Zero 'for' before time
5. Forms of along
6. same as
7. 'in' for 'into'
8. 'on' for 'at'
9. Zero 'on' before time point
10. Zero 'of' after because
11. 'to' for 'of'
12. Zero 'on' after 'draw'

as soon as they walk in it
I can't go mad on you
they wanted me to move Sundy
because all the excitement
we can be certain to that
drawn indigenous people's knowledge

Adjectives

Quantitative Adjectives
1. too much
2. dual form bulla
3. big one + N
4. big fella + N

Bad fellow

Demonstrative adj. THEM

them houses
Dem girls got the music goin

Zero demonstrative adj with 'mornin'

she rung sis mornin

Predicative adj. 'otherways'

our stories are otherways, you know, ana

Plural suffix on adjectival noun

thousand years old fish traps

SYNTAX

Reduced Syntax

1. Verbless structures
2. Verb only structures
Chapter 5

Thematization

all that science and technology, put it with black fellas’ stories

Structural Repetition

Parataxis

Double Subject (Subject Reprise)

Conjunctions

Zero coordinating conjunction
Conjunctive use of ‘with’

see Giligam up there he sent a letter to
won’t be back till either Saturday Sunday
I’d be bugged if I’m gonna let some idiot with a little folder full of paper walk around and try and scare me with the knowledge I’ve got in my head is older than a piece of paper.

Discussion of the Grammatical Analysis

Overall it is interesting to see how many of the categories have been filled, suggesting that many of the early trends observed in Aboriginal English have shown themselves to be enduring. There are, however, a number of specific trends, some of which suggest new directions of development.

In the expression of the non-continuous past, the pidgin related form bin/been is no longer in evidence. There is, however, still a wider range of ways of expressing this function that in standard English, and there is (perhaps under the influence of non-standard Australian English) a trend not evident before to use past participle forms to express past tense. Within the verb phrase, the auxiliary/copula continue to be a focus of divergence from standard English. There is, perhaps, increasingly a tendency towards “BE reversal”, i.e., the interchanging of is and are and was and were. The gonna form of future marking has, it seems, become the main form for these speakers of La Perouse Aboriginal English. In a number of areas (e.g., statements involving the copula or auxiliary, existential expressions or the conditional) there appear to be hypercorrect forms developing while the earlier non-standard forms persist as well. For example, the copula or auxiliary may be left out altogether or (now) expressed twice; an existential statement may be made without a verb, or (now) with There is and another finite verb as well; the conditional may be unmarked or doubly marked. There appear to be fewer ways of expressing negation than there have been in the past but an increasing preference for double negation. Transitive marking, like that other pidgin related feature bin, is no longer in evidence.

With respect to the noun phrase, the unmarked plural appears to be an enduring feature. In many respects, though, the noun phrase would seem to have come closer to standard English. Possessive is no longer expressed by juxtaposition or through forms of belong. The pronoun system allows much less diversity than in the past, though an interesting continuing feature is the use of forms not marked for animacy in reference to humans. Hypercorrect alternatives have developed in the pronoun system, such as hees and theirselves. It is also possible to mark the possessive twice (someone’s else’s). Prepositions continue to diverge from standard English, but in some new ways.

In syntax, few of the earlier features are in evidence. Perhaps the conjunction is an area of some innovation.
5.2 Part 2: Aboriginal English Recorded in the South West of W.A.

The Corpus

The project's consultant from the Nyungar community was contracted to provide tapes of naturalistic speech by Nyungar people. Seven separate recordings were made in the first half of 1996 around Perth and the South West. The consultant was (and is) active in the reclamation and maintenance of the Nyungar language and in promoting reconciliation and these interests frequently entered into the interactions he recorded. The tapes, however, provide a variety of interactions with males and females aged around their 40s upwards (though little children are often in evidence in the background while the recording is going on). Some of the recordings were made at an Aboriginal men's meeting in a South West town. One side of one tape contained confidential material and on the advice of the project's Aboriginal research assistant we did not use it.

The Analysis

As with the material from New South Wales, the analysis will employ the categories used in the analysis of transcripts from the diachronic sources. Where new categories were introduced to account for the New South Wales data they will not appear in the Western Australian analysis unless they are also relevant to the Western Australian data. The Western Australian data makes it possible for us to include some comments on lexico-semantics and discourse, though the main focus will be on the analyses of phonology and grammar.

PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Articulation of Consonants

1. Labio-dental fricatives /ʃ/, /v/ might be replaced by bilabial plosives /p/, /b/ or (rarely) by the bilabial semivowel /w/.

2. Apico-dental fricatives /θ/, /ð/ might be replaced by alveolar plosives /t/, /d/.

   ~ wid (with)
   ~ d- d- dey're in between

2a. Where preceded by the bilabial nasal /m/, /n/ may be replaced by bilabial plosive /p/

   ~ doin sumpin like that

3. Voiceless sibilants /s/, /ʃ/ might be avoided or replaced by alveolar plosives or (in the case of /ʃ/) by the affricate /ʃʃ/.

4. The glottal consonant /h/ might be avoided or replaced by the voiceless velar plosive /g/.

   ~ 'ave a look

4a. The glottal consonant may be added at the beginning of words beginning with a vowel

   ~ what's hit mean? (what does it mean?)
   ~ he used to hask them

5. The distinction between voiced and voiceless consonants might not be observed.
6. The semi vowel /w/ may be deleted from "was" when it is preceded by "we"

we'as

5.2.1 Articulation of Consonants in Combination

1. Word initially, where syllables are unstressed they may be either deleted or devocalised.

2. Word initially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal, the /s/ may be deleted.

3. Word medially, where /s/ is followed by a plosive or a nasal the /s/ may be deleted, except in the case of massa, where the plosive is deleted.

3a. Word finally, where /s/ is followed by the plosive /t/ the /t/ may be deleted, as in 'massa'

i's hard (it's hard)

Thas goods init
souwes (southwest)

4. Word medially, where two plosives are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced, and the second may be replaced by an unstressed vowel.

5. Word medially, where a nasal and a plosive are contiguous, only one of them may be pronounced.

6. Word finally, /s/ may be deleted.

7. Word finally, where a nasal is followed by a plosive, either the plosive or both the nasal and the plosive may be deleted.

8. Word finally, where a lateral is followed by a plosive the plosive may be deleted.

9. Word finally, a velar nasal may be changed to an alveolar nasal.

gettin money out

10. Word finally, a velar nasal may have a voiceless velar plosive added.

nothink

5.2.2 Enunciation of Vowels and Diphthongs

1. There may be reduced discrimination between front vowel phonemes /i/, /e/ and /æ/.

2. There may be reduced discrimination between back vowel phonemes /o/ and /o/.

3. There may be reduced discrimination between between phonemes /u/ and /ou/.

4. Word finally, the diphthong /ou/, or /u/, may be replaced by the short vowel /a/.

how much nyoongah talk do yah know

66
5. **Vowel liaison involving the consonant /n/ may be reduced**
   - *is that a area*
   - *I ad a interview*

6. **Vowels may be lengthened for emphasis**
   - *Yes we go waaaay back*

Discussion of the Phonological Analysis

A consideration of the first section of the table shows that in many ways the developments in Western Australia parallel those in New South Wales. In both locations the data show that neither labio dental nor sibilant consonants are subject to substitution by other consonants, or to deletion, as was common in the earlier data. Also, in both locations the apico dental phonemes continue to be subject to substitution. In Western Australia we observe not only alveolar but bilabial consonants (in the appropriate environment) may be substituted for the apico dentals. Another feature common to the contemporary sources is the deletion of initial /h/. In Western Australia, though not in New South Wales, it is also commonly hypercorrectly added to words beginning with vowels. A feature perhaps especially characteristic of contemporary Western Australia is the deletion of initial /w/ from was when it is preceded by *we*.

The data on consonants in combination show that far fewer consonants are being deleted in the contemporary speech we recorded than were in some of the earlier data. Of the eight rules we found necessary to account for the diachronic data we are only able to illustrate two from the contemporary Western Australian data. The data show that final plosives may be weakly articulated in certain environments and that, as in New South Wales, the final velar nasal is subject to change either by adding a voiceless velar plosive to it or by substituting an alveolar nasal for it- trends which, of course, are common to non-standard English among non-Aboriginal speakers.

The data on vowels show little evidence of strong variation from standard English. The lack of elision is an interesting distinctive feature shared with the data from La Perouse.

**GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS**

**VERB PHRASE**

Present Non-Continuous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unmarked 3 Pers S</th>
<th>it make that</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>just talk back in English what it mean</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Past Non-Continuous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. bin/been (c.f. 5)</th>
<th>I been called up twice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I been working in ATSIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. unmarked</td>
<td>Don't know what become of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. overgeneralized</td>
<td>two was sold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. BE reversal</td>
<td>that I done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Past participle form</td>
<td>he didn't stayed late at night</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Double marked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Present Continuous

1. Zero aux
   - we goin for land
   - we should gettin some old reserves back
2. BE reversal
   - alot of people who's already umm up and running

Past Continuous

1. Zero aux, unmarked verb
   - Dad was work for Bon Marché
2. Aux + unmarked verb
   - he mus be chasin yorga down there
3. Zero aux
   - They was comin to Wagin
4. BE reversal
   - they's doin it in th'own own language

Perfect Non-Continuous

1. Zero aux
   - now they sent it up to the main office
   - you never done any further study since
2. Zero subject zero aux
   - No, never used much of it really

Perfect Continuous

1. Zero aux
   - people who been dying
2. Zero aux, unmarked verb

Future

1. Zero aux, unmarked
2. BE reversal with 'gonna'
   - you isn't goina get your name drawn out
3. Zero aux with 'gonna'
   - we gonna have to start negotiating overseas

Copula Statement

1. Zero copula
   - you uh famous sportsman
   - I know you in a hurry
   - they really just jacked off
2. Zero subject, zero copula
3. Zero copula in dependent clause
   - When they on the drink
4. Hypercorrect copula
   - It's was very interesting what's they said
5. BE reversal
   - if they's interested they would

Non-Copula yes/no question

1. Zero DO aux
   - You .. you teach them too?
2. Zero BE aux
   - You gonna put in for some land down the souwes?

Copula yes/no question

1. BE reversal
2. Zero BE copula
   - You a supporter of that reconciliation...?

Transitivity
Infinitive

Zero “to”

they pay you about 110 dollars for four hours go in there just teaching.

Negation

1. No + finite verb
2. Never+ no
3. No + infinitive
4. Nossing/Nothing
5. Bel + VP
6. None + NP
7. Not + infinitive
8. Not + no
9. Not + nothing

You don’t sort of take no notice
They can’t get nothing
you reckon you don’t know nothing

Existential

1. Subj & copula del
2. Him for There are
3. That for It
4. BE reversal
5. It subject del

Too many cynics in the job
That’s have to be Steve S... we ave to serve
um paper on Steve S...also
There was some wonderful players
becomes a lot easier then to communicate

WH Question

1. Zero BE aux
2. Zero subject & DO aux
3. Zero DO aux
4. Zero HAVE aux

What we in now?
Where you work now?
How long you been there?
how many nyoongahs ... you still got there

Passive Voice

1. Zero aux
2. GOT aux, overgen pp.
3. GOT aux
4. BE reversal

we used to goin out an watch it
One got taken off the market
we was allowed

Conditional

1. Pose
2. Zero marking

you couldn’t sit down an e- explain it to them
be no problem

Adverb morphology

1. Zero suffix
2. -fella suffix
3. -way suffix
4. -time suffix

Boddington way
I lay down at night time
Chapter 5

NOUN PHRASE

Noun plural

1. Zero suffix
   set up to help Aboriginal to get land
   how many more year he got to go?
   these little boy

2. Overgeneralized suffix
   womans
   policemans
   one of the strangest mans you ever seen

Substitute NP

thing

So - thas some of the - thing

Possessive

1. Juxtaposition, zero suffix
2. Forms of belong
3. Unmarked personal pronoun
   I done me best
4. Possessive pronoun as adj.
5. Reanalysed possessive adj. ‘he’s’/ ‘hees’
   hees name was Ken C...
   wet hees bed

Pronouns: Personal

First Person S
1. Zero case marking
2. Zero animacy marking
3. Possessive form
4. Noun retention

First Person Dual

Second Person S
Noun retention

Third Person S
1. Zero case marking
2. Zero gender marking
3. Zero animacy marking

Second Person P

Plural morpheme -lz

youse go back what... fifty decades...

Third Person P
1. Zero animacy marking
   the kids and that are into mischief
2. Zero case marking
   a lot of themfellas not there for any other reason..
   Edith Cowan and them are doin research
   themfellas

Pronouns: Relative

1. all same
2. what
   in the language er or what I can understand
   dese three what ... t could talk the Noongar talk...

70
3. **Zero relative pronoun**

   got a lot of ‘em didn’t like to have an Aboriginal
   we got um ole Kevin Y supports it up here

**Pronouns: Demonstrative**

1. **Zero case marking**

   them native toilets

**Pronouns: Indefinite**

1. **Plural morpheme /-z/**

   everyones can get grants

**Articles**

- **Definite Article**
      The girls are closer to me than boy
      behind ole um taxation department
  2. Demonstrative form dat

- **Indefinite Article**
      it cleared the first hurdle couple of weeks ago
      e’s Wadjela man
      I can get grant
  2. One

**Prepositions**

1. Zero allative ‘to’
2. Zero ‘of’ after quantity
3. Zero ‘for’ before receiver
4. Zero ‘for’ before time
5. Forms of along
6. same as
7. Zero ‘on’ before time point

**Adjectives**

- **Quantitative Adjectives**
  1. too much
  2. dual form bulla
  3. big one + N
  4. big fella + N

   Bad fellow

**SYNTAX**

**Reduced Syntax**

1. **Finite verbless structures**

   Another four months be four years
   (In another 4 months it will be 4 years)

2. **Verb only structures**

   Native toilets too they had
Chapter 5

Structural Repetition

Parataxis

I can sing to the boys there tell them yams I tell em all a lot of things you know

Double Subject (Subject Reprise)

Carol she's workin down in Manjimup

Discussion of the Grammatical Analysis

In most ways the verb phrase in the Western Australian data is noteworthy for its similarity to that in the La Perouse data. In both states we see trends towards the use of the past participle (for some verbs) as a past tense form, the ongoing variability in dealing with the verb to be (deletion of auxiliary or copula, reversal of singular and plural forms), the exclusive use of gonna as the future form, the loss of transitivity marking and the reduction in the number of ways of expressing the negative (but increased use of double negatives). One difference from the La Perouse data is that we see fewer hypercorrect forms, though we do see some (e.g. double expression of past tense).

The noun phrase in the Western Australian data shows considerable movement towards standard English, much of it in common with trends in the La Perouse data. There is a reduction in the variability within the pronoun, preposition and adjective inventories. Enduring features are the zero noun plural suffix and non-employment of definite and indefinite articles. An interesting more recent development (in common with the La Perouse data) is the reanalysed possessive adjective form hees.

In syntax, the tendencies towards the use of thematization, parataxis and double subjects show themselves as well established.

LEXICO-SEMANTICS

We are not in a position to carry out a lexico-semantic analysis on the basis of the data gathered, but, since a large number of distinctive words came up in the Western Australian corpus, we will reproduce them here.

murdirji adj.  good
warra adj.  bad
kurlongka n.  children
keppa n.  wine or beer
Nyungar/Nyoongah n.  Southwest Aboriginal
Wadjela n.  non-Aboriginal
Wongi n.  Goldfields Aboriginal
kurda n.  brother (Aboriginal)
balyads n.  little hairy people
mamaris n.  little hairy people
chasin yorga v.p.  looking for female company
murt ?
burrins n.  sticks
barmin v.tr.  hit
yonga n.  kangaroo
dwert n.  dog
The words are presented here simply in the order in which they were recorded. Whether or not they are all current in Aboriginal English is a matter for further investigation, since many of them were elicited by the consultant as Nyungar words (rather than Nyungar English words). It will be observed that many of the words relate to natural phenomena, particularly fauna. These are probably the terms least likely to occur naturally in Aboriginal English. Other terms, like marry in, talkin flash and ole grampy show the extension of the resources of English to accommodate to distinctive areas of cultural emphasis in Aboriginal life. The term morn is another one in the set we have already observed which refer distinctively to time classifications.

DISCOURSE

The Western Australian data included a number of interesting discourse features as well as some metadiscoursal talk, developing on the basis of ideas put forward by the consultant. Some of the distinctive discourse features are listed below.
Chapter 5

Code Switching

*How many kurlongka you got...how many children?*

(It should be noted that this was not true code switching, since the consultant was using Nyungar words to encourage his interlocutors to do the same and he was translating for the benefit of those who would listen to the tape).

Self-correction

*They was- they were good years*

Tags

One of the features which, perhaps distinguishes the Western Australian data from that recorded in New South Wales is the frequent use of tags in the course of the discourse. The tags have been labelled according to their function as I perceive it, but more intensive study of this aspect of the dialect might show that the functions are much more complex than suggested here. In particular, what I have called an "emphatic tag" appears almost to signal a change of modality.

Attention checking tag: *So we gotta look ahead, you know
god only knows what it was about you know*

(It is noteworthy that this tag, although not observed in the contemporary data from N.S.W., was frequently reported from Port Stephens by Dawson in 1830 – see p.43).

Assent-seeking tag:

*shore last year, una
I can't speak it very fluently annit
the young people idnit?
George .. that Dumbartung "dumbartang" una
Thas goods init*

Emphatic tag: *didn't know it was on wonder Brian never rang me hey*

Affiliative tag: *You talk much Nyungar language, bro?*

Descriptive tag: *they was comin to Wagin like*

Repetition (one of the features commented on by European observers from the beginning) remains an important stylistic device within the dialect. The example below comes from a passage where a participant has just sung a Nyungar song and the speaker is recounting the words.

*Repetition: e's singin about gone winyarn winyarn ees poor woman winyarn my york gone away see yorka mean yorka*

The metadiscoursal portions comprise discussions of the Nyungar customs of greeting one another, yarning and participating in simultaneous conversations. They constitute valuable data on the ethnography of speaking of contemporary Western Australian Aborigines, and help to show the significant discoursal dimensions of Aboriginal English.

Greetings, Yarns:

*F: right yeah thats good well .. they're some of the main things like when yah when yah meet a nyoongah you know you say yarn like thats sort of like how are yah what da ya know where you going
J: yeah yeah yeah whats happening yeah*
F: yarn means a lot of things doesn’t when you say that word yarn

Turn Taking Conventions:

J: ahh where there’s a whole lot of ... nyoongah words and ah .. and ... it’s interesting listening to nyoongahs and particularly my family I mean when we all get together an my wife Joyce who’s not A- not Aboriginal she uh uh sometimes .. particularly early in the piece ah she had no idea what was going on or who what people were saying it was quite interesting to hear her make comments ah after we’d all get together and everyone would be talking and there’d be 15 different conversations going but everyone knew what was ea- what everyone else was talking about and thats ah I think thats a the beauty of Aboriginal culture and particularly the Aboriginal people and traditions and ah ah the way that they communicate.
CHAPTER 6
ABORIGINALITY AND ENGLISH: SOME SPECULATIVE INFERENCES

This study has essentially been seeking to uncover variability and consistency in the use of Aboriginal English across time and space and to contribute to the understanding of how, and why, in the creation and maintenance of Aboriginal English, Aboriginal people have selected out what has, for them expressed their Aboriginal identity and left the rest either to extinction through time or to adoption by others in the Australian English speaking community.

As we have looked at the time dimension we have seen that Aboriginal English was born when Aboriginal people sought to account for the contact experience and to make use within their own communities of the new linguistic tool which had fallen into their hands. The dialect developed slowly and admitted in the earlier years a great deal more variation within its phonological, grammatical and lexico-semantic systems than it now does. Today, Aboriginal English maintains clear links with the past in all these systems, but it evidences the capacity for innovation and self-renewal.

The space dimension has been shown to be less significant than might, perhaps, have been thought. Despite the expanse of the Australian continent, Aboriginal English, originating in the Port Jackson settlement, has been disseminated across the country. In many ways the directions of development of the dialect are comparable or even identical in Perth and Sydney. At the same time, the inheritors of Aboriginal English around Perth strongly identify as Nyungars and tend to call their English Nyungar English, while the Aboriginal people recorded in La Perouse appear, by their strong tendency towards hypercorrect forms, to be reaching outwards with their dialect while retaining its core distinctiveness. It cannot, however, be assumed that such a small sample of speakers is representative of Sydney speakers of Aboriginal English as a whole.

The findings of this study give a good basis for treating Aboriginal English as one dialect, though, like any dialect, it has room for the expression of differences of emphasis and experience within an overall shared history and culture. The findings also show the enduring nature of the distinctiveness of the dialect and thereby give support to arguments that it should be recognized in institutional contexts, not only within the communities whose members have maintained it. The next chapter will look at the implications of this for education.

Wherein, then, is the aboriginality in Aboriginal English? The question has become more difficult to answer with this study which has revealed ever more its complexity at all levels of linguistic structuring.

Aboriginal people received English from multiple sources: from sailors, settlers, convicts, explorers, missionaries and others, bringing with them numerous regional, social and contact-related varieties. The nature of the input, together with the effects of their first language background and of the inevitable processes of pidginization meant that, of necessity, they began to use English distinctively. In a sense, to begin with they had no choice in the matter. However, later, by choice, they developed their own English rather than adopting that of the colonists. Aboriginal people, according to a number of reports, showed considerable linguistic aptitude and could have acquired the same variety which was developing among the non-Aboriginal population. Instead, though, they developed English as an alternative working system which bore their own culture in subtle ways. In the course of time the attrition of certain features and the invention of others had the effect of sustaining the independent development of Aboriginal English as an increasingly unified alternative to standard English.
If there is one way of describing the essence of what distinguishes Aboriginal English from what is generally called Australian English, it would be, as I see it, to say that Aboriginal people have taken a speaker-oriented variety of English and turned it into a hearer-oriented variety. Many of the significant and enduring changes in the language which have occurred in the formation of Aboriginal English have had the effect of reducing the onus on the speaker to be formally explicit, (something also observed by Eades, 1988) and correspondingly increasing the onus on the listener to employ appropriate processes of inference, drawing on non-linguistic as well as linguistic sources. In a sense, this in itself is an imprinting of a culture on the language, in that Aboriginal culture favours observation and inference as ways of learning and views communication as something in which individual expression is subject to various processes of group monitoring and control.

It is, perhaps, more difficult to find evidence of what I am arguing here in the phonological system than in the grammar, discourse and pragmatics, but (following Palmer, 1996) I suspect that the same kind of underlying imagery informs the system at all levels. Within the phonological system, the enduring trends include a favouring of alveolar consonants (which are often prominent in Aboriginal languages) over apico-dentals, a higher articulation of /s/, a tendency towards /a/ in place of the neutral vowels or some back vowels, a generally fronted stress pattern and a weakening of unstressed syllables. In addition /h/ has become an identity marker, both in the contexts where it is absent and in those where it is present. The relation of these changes to the system as a whole remains to be explored.

Within the verb phrase the enduring trends would appear to be a reduced dependence on a copula and auxiliary base and on the verbal marking of existence, a more optional rather than obligatory system of the marking of tense, number and case in the verb, and a tendency towards making the adverb phrase sensitive to time, space and manner distinctions. Perhaps, in time, more information which is conveyed through the verb morphology will come to be conveyed through adverbial expressions. Again, this leaves room for greater inexplicitness, where required, than would normally be possible in Australian English.

The distinctiveness of the dialect shows more in the verb phrase than in the noun phrase, but the move towards less explicitness with respect to number and case applies to the noun system as well. To some extent, there is also less explicitness with respect to the marking of gender and animacy.

With respect to syntax, the processes of cohesion appear to be less explicit than in Australian English.

The lexico-semantic system lies at the heart of the aboriginalization of English and, although we can do little more than hint at it here, it seems likely that the entire lexicon which Aboriginal English shares with standard English is informed by a different organization of semantic fields and areas of focus. There are also lexical items not shared with Australian English, some of which reflect the global identification of the speakers as a dialect community, and others of which reflect the local identifications which, especially in some areas (as illustrated in the South West) remain strong.

In discourse, as in the grammatical system, Aboriginal English is adapted to the employment of fewer explicit controlling devices. Turn taking is relatively open and overlap is acceptable. There are, however, more devices to monitor the listener's attention, involvement and relation to the speaker (through a more elaborated system of tags) than in Australian English, supporting the contention that the dialect is characterized by listener orientation.

The aboriginalization of English has occurred at the pragmatic as well as the linguistic level. Aboriginal English, having developed and been maintained within Aboriginal context, conforms to conventions of participation, face maintenance and inference which have been developed within Aboriginal communities. This appears to have been the case for most of the time in which
Chapter 6

Aborigines have been using English, as it is today. Furthermore, since Aborigines have needed to operate in a bidialectal environment they have developed a repertoire of bidialectal strategies which add layers of meaning to their communicative behaviours for interlocutors who share their bidialectalism.

Aboriginal English is likely to continue to develop as a unique system but maintaining a symbiotic relationship with standard English, with which it has a complementary, and to some extent, dialectical role, in its speakers' daily lives. The inference one must draw from this is that a true sensitivity to Aboriginal bidialectalism must be built into education. It is to this matter that we turn in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 7
ABORIGINALITY AND ENGLISH IN EDUCATION

7.1 Two-Way Bilingual Education

Bilingual education by definition involves the recognition of two languages as mediators of learning. It has traditionally been associated with the provision of education to students whose first language is not that of the school system and who therefore require support especially in the early years, if they are to achieve the desired educational outcomes.

There is, however, a one-sidedness about bilingual education so conceived, in that it implicitly accords higher value to the language which the student encounters in the school setting than to the language that he or she brings to it.

The concept of two-way bilingual education represents a reaction against this one-sidedness. It accords a more equal place in the educational program to both languages, recognising that knowledge of, and knowledge accessed through, the home language are of educational value per se, not only to the students who are identified with that language but also to those who are not.

Thus, to take one example of many, the Holyoke Public Schools two-way bilingual education program, described by David Groesbeck in 1984, was established in Massachusetts when an elementary school desegregation plan caused the coming together of groups of monolingual English speaking students with groups of Hispanic students who had been engaged in a Transitional Bilingual Education Program. It was decided, with the parents' consent, to develop a two-way programme which would provide both "native language and English as a Second Language instruction for linguistic minority/limited English proficient students as well as Spanish language instruction to monolingual English speaking students interested in acquiring Spanish language skills" (Groesbeck, 1984:23).

The Australian Government introduced a bilingual education policy for Aboriginal students in the Northern Territory in 1973. Almost from the outset, at least in the aspirations of the Aboriginal people, the bilingual programs established under this provision, were regarded and spoken of as two-way or both ways. (See McConvell, 1982).

A well-known Aboriginal educationist, Yunupingu, has argued in favour of both-ways curriculum in traditional Aboriginal contexts as giving Aboriginal students "double power" (Yunupingu, 1990), in that it educates them in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways. There is, then, a difference between this kind of two-way education and that going on at Holyoke. Yunupingu's focus is on the Aboriginal students and their bicultural competence, whereas Groesbeck's is on bicultural education of a mixed community, so that both groups may value one another's learning.

There has, in fact, been much debate about the nature and desirability of two-way bilingual education in Australia. The best known advocate of two-way education has been Stephen Harris, (1990, 1991) who sees it as based in the concept of cultural domain separation, or the assumption that Aboriginal and English cultural domains can be clearly separated and that children should be educated to function in certain domains in the Aboriginal language and in other domains in English. This view has been contested by Patrick McConvell, (1991) who argues that it encourages a stereotyping of Aboriginal culture.

The kind of domain separation which Harris sees as essential to two-way education is indeed only possible, if at all, in a limited number of remaining traditionally-oriented communities where Aboriginal languages are still in active use. Most Aboriginal people today are functioning in
complex bicultural contexts for a lot of the time, and, indeed, most of them are functioning in English all the time. It is necessary that a form of two-way education be developed which will be relevant to students like this and to the non-Aboriginal students who sit with them in classrooms.

7.2 Two-Way Bidialectal Education

The idea of two-way bidialectal education is indeed not new. In 1976, Gail Chermak proposed a "two-way bilingual educational approach" in the educational of Black children in the United States. Accepting the findings of research by Baratz and others, which suggested that Black children spoke a different dialect from standard English and could not be assumed bidialectal, she rejected the "one-way" models of education for such students which were currently being advocated. Rather than focusing simply on removing the stigma from Black English and making its speakers bidialectal, she argued that it was necessary to bring Black and white children together through helping both sides to recognize their commonalities and differences with respect to English. She wrote:

"...as the black child will eventually feel comfortable with the 'standard' dialect in the educational system, the white child should be given the opportunity to acquaint himself with the dialect of the black child. Each child would approach early education through his 'native tongue' and only after some success would he begin to explore another dialect. This 'two-way' bilingual approach would go further in accomplishing the goals outlined by Baratz (1973) educationally, psychologically and socially" (Chermak, 1976:105).

Although Chermak calls this bilingual education, it is more strictly speaking bidialectal education, and it is two-way, in the sense in which the programme described by Groesbeck is two-way, that is, while it is motivated by the need to improve the education of the non-native speakers of standard English, it recognizes that it order to do this it is necessary to incorporate both groups in a two-way learning process.

The first attempt to establish a two-way bidialectal approach to the education of Aboriginal students in Australia began in 1994 in a teacher development project based at Edith Cowan University, under the title "Language and Communication Enhancement for Two-Way Education". This project engaged 18 teachers from widely scattered schools in areas where English, rather than an Aboriginal language, was the dominant means of communication among Aboriginal people. Over a period of a year the teachers were trained as action researchers gathering linguistic data from their bidialectal school contexts, then, working together with university specialists in linguistics and education, they developed and implemented a range of, customized two-way curricula. (See Malcolm, 1995).

This program led to the development of bidialectal education training packages which are now offered externally to teachers for university credit. It also led to further research to provide 'cultural linguistic' perspectives on the phenomenon of the dual English repertoire of Aboriginal people and the theoretical underpinnings of two-way bidialectal education. The present research has been one of the outcomes of this project.

7.3 Cultural Linguistics and the Study of Language Varieties

There is a longstanding tradition in linguistics which is concerned with the form rather than the content of language. It produces descriptions of language at the various levels at which its observable forms, that is, sounds, words and morphemes, may be structured and combined. Such descriptions are certainly useful in enabling linguistic varieties to be identified and systematically compared, at least at the formal level. They also yield input to language teaching by way of contrastive analyses which highlight or illuminate learning problems related to structural incompatibilities between varieties.
There is, however, a significant limitation with such systems of linguistic description in that they tell us nothing about how language operates, in concert with culture, in making plausible particular ways of seeing the world and of operating in it. There is a need to bring together within the same explanatory framework the forms and the meanings which a given language or variety allows.

Recent work by Gary Palmer (1996) in developing a theory of cultural linguistics makes significant progress in this direction. Palmer assumes that all cultural knowledge, including language, is unified, for a given culture, in common underlying imagery and he provides evidence from various cultures of the ways in which language and culture mutually reinforce one another. The cultural linguistics which he advocates and uses in this research brings together the strengths of three traditions within linguistic anthropology: Boasian linguistics, ethnosemantics and the ethnography of speaking.

Although Palmer has developed this approach to account for differences (and similarities) between groups speaking different languages, it provides an equally useful tool for exploring the underlying imagery which separates two culturally different groups whose difference has generated contrasting dialects such as Aboriginal English and standard English. One way in which divergent imagery may operate is in the acceptance, by the two groups, of different schemas for behaving and interpreting behaviour. "It is likely," Palmer argues, "that all native knowledge of language and culture belongs to cultural schemas and that the living of culture and the speaking of language consists of schemas in action" (1996:63). It is implied that different schemas entail different selections of what is important, culturally and linguistically, in the same setting. Thus, even speaking the same language, cultural groups operating according to different schemas, may be attending to and conveying quite different meanings.

7.4 The Principle of Multiple Construction of Knowledge

Evidence of this happening in educational settings is not hard to find. In a project focusing on tertiary literacy, recently completed at Edith Cowan University (Malcolm and Rochecouste, 1997), Aboriginal students were interviewed about their experiences in education. Many referred to the fact that they had encountered in the educational setting a different world and a different English. One commented:

I liked history but I had a lot of conflict with the teacher because we were learning European history and nothing that related to me as an Aboriginal person.

A view common to a number of those interviewed was expressed by one student as follows:

It is a totally different language from what you use outside, the campus, to what you use inside. Um you can't, you have to learn to live two different languages, one when you go outside and when you are at home and one when you are here. Um, it's a necessity to use it at the campus and then you try and use that on people at home and it just doesn't work.

There is something more than dialect here. It is a matter of the ways in which the world is constructed, linguistically and culturally, and the ways in which learners find themselves and their lives constructed within the educational system.

The divergence in the constructions of knowledge represented by Aboriginal English and standard English, marked though it is, as we have observed, of relatively recent origin, since English speakers only began to settle in Australia 209 years ago. It is therefore possible for us to trace in existing records some of the circumstances which attended the first contact between English speakers and Aboriginal people. That way we can observe how Aboriginal people were constructed in English from the beginning and how they appropriated English in their own way as
Chapter 7

a defence against this. We need to turn to a consideration of the beginnings of bidialectalism among Aboriginal people in Australia in order to see the kind of educational response which it must entail.

7.5 Standard English and the Construction of Aborigines by the Settlers

The first Englishman to set foot on New Holland, as Australia was then called, was Captain William Dampier, who came ashore for a short period in 1688. Landing on an island off Cape Levêque, he encountered a group of about forty Aborigines and immediately took an aversion to them. He wrote in his log: "The inhabitants of this country are the miserablest people in the world...They are long-visaged and of a very unpleasant aspect, having not one graceful feature in their faces..." (Favenc, 1888:358-359). The first construction of the Aboriginal people in English was, then, as miserable, unpleasant and graceless. More significant, though, is a further reference in Dampier's log:

'...we found some wells of water here, and intended to carry two or three barrels of it aboard. But it being somewhat troublesome to carry to the canoes, we thought to have made these men to have carried it for us, and therefore, we gave them some old clothes; to one an old pair of breeches, to another a ragged shirt, to the third a jacket that was scarce worth owning, which yet would have been very acceptable at some places where we had been, and so we thought they might have been with these people. We put them on them, thinking that this finery would have brought them to work heartily for us; and our water being filled in small, long barrels, about six gallons in each, which were made purposely to carry water in, we brought these our new servants to the well, and put a barrel on each of their shoulders for them to carry to the canoe. But all the signs we could make were to no purpose, for they stood like statues, without motion, but grinned like so many monkeys, staring one upon another; for these poor creatures seem not accustomed to carry burthens, and I believe that one of our ship boys, of ten years old, would carry as much as one of them. So we were forced to carry our water ourselves, and they very fairly put the clothes off again, and laid them down, as if clothes were only to work in. I did not perceive that they had any great liking to them at first, neither did they seem to admire anything we had." (Favenc, 1888:360)

Virtually at the first encounter, the English visitors to the land of the Aborigines positioned their hosts as "our new servants." English, from the beginning, was the language which gave expression to a perception of them as deprived and dependent. The Aborigines were also constructed as "poor creatures" who might be expected to admire and desire what the English had brought with them, although, unaccountably, they didn't.

It was another hundred years before the British established their first Australian colony in New South Wales. In the early records of the settlers we find Aborigines referred to in terms such as "truly the most witched & Deploreable beings my eyes ever yet beheld" (William Henry of the London Missionary Society, Willey, 1979:186), "these ignorant natives" (Richard Johnson, chaplain with the first fleet, Woolmington, 1988:22), "these poor Natives" (William Shelley, whom Governor Macquarie appointed Superintendent for Educating the Aborigines, Woolmington, 1988:23), "the lowest type of humanity" (Becke and Jeffery, 1899:61). By 1840 the explorer Edward John Eyre was to observe in his journal: "The character of the Australian native has been so constantly misrepresented and traduced, that by the world at large he is looked upon as the lowest and most degraded of the human species, and generally considered as ranking little above the members of the brute creation" (Stone, 1974:66). Standard English, and the culture its speakers had brought with them, constructed the Aborigines as lacking in all the things the settlers had and were proud of. They were close to being non-persons.
Even a relatively positive account by the surgeon with the first fleet, George Worgan attempts without success to understand the Aboriginal women he encounters within the categories of his past experience in England:

-------- There is something singular in the Conduct of these Evites, for if ever they deign to come near You, to take a Present, they appear as coy, shy, and timorous, as a Maid on her Wedding Night, (at least as I have been told Maids are) but when they are, as they think out of your Reach, they hollow and chatter to You, Frisk, Flirt, and play a hundred wanton Pranks, equally as significant as the Solicitations of a Covent-Garden Strumpet. I cannot say all the Ladies are so shy and timorous on your approaching them, for some shew no signs of Fear, but will laugh and Frisk about You like a Spaniel, and put on the Airs of a Tantalizing Coquet. Indeed, if it were not for the nauseous, greasy, grimy appearance of these naked Damsels, one might be said to be in a state of Tantalism, whenever they vouchsafe to permit Us to come near them; but what with stinking Fish-Oil, with which they seem to besmear their Bodies, & this mixed with the Soot which is collected on their Skins from continually setting over the Fires, and then in addition to these sweet Odours, the constant Appearance of the excrementitious Matters of the Nose which is collected on the upper pouting Lip, in (p. 48) rich Clusters of dry Bubbles, and is kept up by fresh Drippings; I say, from all these personal Graces and Embellishments, every Inclination for an Affair of Gallantry, as well as every Idea of fond endearing Intercourse, which the Nakedness of these Damsels might excite one to, is banished. (Worgan, 1978:47-48)

We find, then, that standard English and its users construct Aboriginal people from the beginning either in English-based categories which do not fit them (like a maid on her wedding night or a Covent Garden strumpet), or at the lower end of such categories as attractiveness, grace, intelligence and prosperity.

7.6 The Construction of the Settlers by the Aborigines

The Aborigines, for their part, found little to admire in the settlers. Like Dampier, those who arrived from 1788 on saw themselves as entitled to command and the Aborigines obliged to obey. This perception was not shared by the Aborigines, so force was soon called upon by the English to compel compliance. As we have observed in chapters 2 and 4, the first governor, Governor Phillip, wanted to get Aborigines to talk with him so that he could impart the English language and culture to them but found none willing to leave their community and enter the society of the settlers, so he commanded that several Aborigines be kidnapped and kept in chains within his compound. Thus, the acquisition of English, and of its associated culture, was associated from the first with the violation of liberty and of traditional cultural ties.

On one occasion, Phillip thought he had an ideal opportunity to demonstrate to one of these involuntary residents, a man called Arabanoo, how well disposed he was to Aboriginal people and how impartial the system of British justice was. Sixteen convicts had plundered an Aboriginal settlement, coming away with spears and fishing tackle. Phillip condemned the offending convicts to a severe flogging and had it carried out before the eyes of Arabanoo, having carefully explained to him the meaning of this action. The outcome was, however, far from what he expected. Arabanoo, rather than admiring British justice, responded with disgust and terror (Willey, 1979:106). Arabanoo, indeed himself a victim of British violence, was not able to relate to the way in which Phillip attempted to rationalise it to him.

Sometimes Aboriginal people attempted to provide their own rationalisations for what had happened with the coming of the British. George Macdonald, a clerk visiting an agricultural settlement near Port Macquarie in 1828, described in a letter to his father the following experience:
"[I] had one evening been conversing for a considerable time in broken English with one of the natives, when he suddenly stopped short in his discourse, looked eagerly at me with large dark eyes, and ended by stating that I was one of the King's River tribe who had been killed sometime before, and that I had 'jumped up' again as a white man. I took no notice of this ridiculous circumstance at the time; but I soon discovered that this idea had spread very generally among these simple and superstitious people by whom I was ever addressed by the name 'Bangar' which it would seem was my original patronymic.' Blomfield, 1992:57

This was not an isolated occurrence – see further Chapter 2, p.7.

So, as the settlers were engaged in constructing the Aborigines in one form of English in a way which conformed to their culture, the Aborigines were from the very early years of settlement engaged in constructing the settlers in another form of English in a way which conformed to their culture.

7.7 English as the Carrier of Multiple Constructions of Knowledge

English, indeed, was soon discovered by the Aboriginal people as a medium which could be moulded to serve their own purposes of cultural expression. First, however, it needed to be recreated in the context of the colonial society by way of pidginization. English aboriginalised provided for them an important function of identity maintenance in a context where the English of the settlers constructed them as inferior and inadequate.

Brandl and Walsh (1982:74) have observed that
"among Aborigines the emergence of Aboriginal creoles and dialects of Aboriginal English (rather than standard Australian English) illustrates the boundary marking such politically dominated groups still feel to be necessary toward others who are very different indeed."

This use of a dialect of English for a boundary-marking function dates back to a very early stage in the settlement of Australia. Jakelin Troy (1990), as we have previously noted, in a detailed study of Aboriginal contact with the English language in New South Wales through the first 56 years after the establishment of the colony, observed that, after an initial period when settlers and Aborigines communicated through an unstable jargon, a pidgin which she calls New South Wales Pidgin emerged. Although the development of this pidgin was most evident in areas where the Aborigines were in frequent contact with the settlers, her research showed that it was used primarily for communication among the Aboriginal people themselves and not for communication between them and the settlers.

"NSW Pidgin", she says, "was never purely for communications between Aborigines and colonists. It was used by the Aborigines as a means of rationalising their contact with English speakers and conveying amongst themselves information about the contact and how to deal with it at all levels, social and linguistic. This is why Pidgin developed amongst the Aborigines rather than between Aborigines and colonists. NSW Pidgin may well have been an expression of an Aboriginal answer to an Aboriginal problem, that of how to cope with the colonists." (Troy, 1990:47).

From the very early years of settlement, then, a distinctive English-based form of communication arose among the Aborigines and it served them for Aboriginal-oriented communication about their bicultural life experience. In the course of time, what began as a pidgin developed in some areas into creoles and in others (sometimes by way of creole) into the Aboriginal English of today, which maintains a lively existence alongside standard English in the lives of many Aboriginal people today as a carrier of distinctive cultural identity. At the same time, standard English still carries for many Aboriginal people the taint of an imposed and alien culture and is avoided in Aboriginal contexts and used hesitantly elsewhere although it is recognized as a necessary
acquisition for advancement in the wider society. English, then, is, in the context of Aboriginal Australia, a "two-way" language, a language which is a carrier of multiple constructions of knowledge, a language which is the site of competing discourses and identities, a language which, in its cross-dialectal incompatibilities, mirrors the unresolved tensions of the experience of Aboriginal people in a society which has attempted to redefine them.

7.8 Implementing Two-Way Bidialectal Education

It follows from what we have been saying that monodialectal education, especially monodialectal education in standard English, will not fit the Aboriginal experience. It will be a denial of their history and of their contemporary experience, an assumption of what Brown (1991) has called their "racelessness", which amounts to an assumption of their identity with the speakers of standard English, an ascription to them of defacto whiteness. For many Aboriginal people this will not work, since it is grounded in unreality. How can they trust an education which, from the outset, unquestioningly accepts what they know to be an untruth?

Monodialectal education, common though it still is in the Australian school systems, is not likely to succeed with most Aboriginal students, as is amply borne out by the low school completion and high truancy rates which are on record. However, bidialectal education cannot succeed either if it is founded on unrealties. It cannot be based on a perception of the dialect which sees it as differing from standard English only in terms of linguistic form rather than in underlying cultural imagery. It cannot be based on the principle of domain separation, since most Aboriginal students do not live in completely predictable Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal domains. It cannot be based on the assumption that schools rather than Aboriginal communities are the custodians of Aboriginal English and its associated culture, since history shows that these have been maintained independently of, and even in resistance to, formal education. It cannot extricate the Aboriginal students from their co-partnership with non-Aboriginal students in the educational experience, since their lives are, and will be in the future, co-dependent.

What is required is a model of two-way bidialectal education which will be founded in a reality which will ring true to the Aboriginal student's experience. For this it must recognize the fact and legitimacy of bidialectalism and show openness to the underlying cultural imagery which informs the differences which separate Aboriginal English from standard English. It must give Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students equal opportunity to achieve success and take pride in what they have as their respective linguistic and cultural heritages. It must recognize that it is not primarily non-corresponding phonemes or grammatical forms which stand in the way of Aboriginal students' learning, but worlds of linguistic and cultural imagery which have a long history of opposition to one another, and it must work towards developing two-way respect which will remove the threat from standard English and allow it to be seen as a system worth learning and worth learning through. (See further Malcolm, 1995).

In partnership with the state Education Department of Western Australia, and with the support of an A.R.C. Collaborative Research Grant, Edith Cowan University is attempting to establish this model of bidialectal education within the entire education system. A team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal linguists and educators at the University is working with Aboriginal and Islander education workers from schools across the state and the teacher-partners they have nominated, to extend research into the dialect spoken by Aboriginal children widely separated regions. The bicultural teams are observing and recording the use of language by Aboriginal children and analysing it with a view to understanding the underlying cultural imagery, or semantics, which lies behind its linguistic and pragmatic distinctiveness. Elicitation techniques include the normal means of free speech elicitation besides exercises in word association, prototypes, sketching in response to key words, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interpretations of the same text and a range of other informal techniques. This is yielding a significant body of data which is being analysed by the bicultural team and fed into a computerised semantic and pragmatic data base. Material from the semantic and pragmatic data base is, in turn, being provided to a team of
curriculum writers, who are working through state curriculum statements and profiles in all 8 curriculum areas to identify matters of form and content in which they require expansion or modification to make them appropriate for bidialectal education. Revised curriculum documents and support materials, as they are developed, are being trialed by the teams in the trial schools.

The project is deliberately aimed at bringing about change at the systemic level, while working also at school level with teachers and their Aboriginal partners. The idea of giving recognition to Aboriginal English, rather than simply condemning it, is still not fully accepted at the staffroom level although the Education Department of Western Australia, in response to the research reported on here, has accepted the principle of bidialectal education. The work at the school level is fundamental, in that our experience has shown that a school can be transformed by a teacher who has his or her eyes opened to the reality of Aboriginal English by being engaged in action research on it.

If bidialectal education is to work, it needs to be supported by resource materials on Aboriginal English to match, if only in a small way, those available on standard English. A project now in the early planning stages, proposes bringing together the Edith Cowan University team with colleagues from the Macquarie University Dictionary Research Centre, to develop a dictionary of Aboriginal English usage which will be sensitive to both sociolinguistic and regional variation across the country. It is noteworthy that, coinciding with the finalization of this project, a dictionary of Aboriginal English, organized thematically, has been published by Oxford University Press (Arthur, 1996). Although not designed as a pedagogic tool, this will provide a valuable teacher resource until specifically classroom-oriented materials are produced.

The research which the present document has described will, it is hoped, have immediate ongoing application as it feeds into these related projects and helps to build into educational practice the due recognition of the fact that the union of aboriginality and English is one which is profound and meaningful and constitutes a necessary foundation for effective educational experiences for most Aboriginal people.
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92
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APPENDIX

WORD LIST
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<td>wine</td>
<td>Bennelong Troy, 1993:43</td>
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<td>Pacific Jargon English Troy, 1990:69</td>
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<td>von Hügel, 1994:273</td>
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<td>Pickette and Campbell, 1984:121</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>NSW:Port Stephens</td>
<td>verb, intr.</td>
<td>come (and stay?)</td>
<td>Dawson, 1987</td>
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<td>live</td>
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<td>1913</td>
<td>WA:Eucla</td>
<td>verb, intr.</td>
<td>stay (i.e. dwell with)</td>
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<td>too much</td>
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<td>a lot of</td>
<td>Troy, 1990:70</td>
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<td>Telfer, 1939:106</td>
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<td>white bread</td>
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<td>non-Aboriginal person (metaphor)</td>
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<td>stupid fellows</td>
<td>1825</td>
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<td>&quot;all heterodox persons who have not implicit faith in, and do not hold, the traditions of, their fathers* (Threlkeld)</td>
<td>Pickette and Campbell, 1984:121</td>
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<td>most</td>
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<td>Miller, 1985:45/Dawson, 1830</td>
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<td>&quot;wild blackfellow&quot;</td>
<td>Dawson, 1987</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:115</td>
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<td>verb, tr.</td>
<td>eat</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:62</td>
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<td>towsan</td>
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<td>any number over a dozen</td>
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<td>verb, intr.</td>
<td>rise (as of sun)</td>
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<td>be reincarnated</td>
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<td>noun</td>
<td>&quot;fire brand&quot;</td>
<td>Dawson, 1987:77</td>
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<td>hunt</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:117</td>
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<td>why</td>
<td>Grey journals, quoted in Hallam, 1991:332</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:118</td>
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<td>Hallam and Tilbrook, 1990:22</td>
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<td>Telfer, 1939:106</td>
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<td>verb tr.</td>
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<td>Troy, 1990:81</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:124</td>
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<td>Pickette and Campbell, 1984:121 &quot;the now town of Coonabarabran&quot;</td>
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<td>Dawson, 1987:134, 159</td>
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<td>&quot;a term which was in use among them when their guns missed fire, or when they missed their game&quot;</td>
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<td>1838</td>
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<td>Backhouse, 1843:549</td>
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<td>Broome, 1982:155</td>
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Note: The table includes terms and definitions from various sources, with specific locations indicated in parentheses.
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<td>&quot;Dagos learn their own kids their own yabber*&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;...so why are we shamed?&quot;</td>
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<td>gerund</td>
<td>giving to kin, assuming reciprocity</td>
<td>Toussaint, 1992:23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>close up</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>WA: south-west</td>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>close (e.g. &quot;close up kin&quot;)</td>
<td>Toussaint, 1992:24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keening</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>WA: south-west</td>
<td>gerund</td>
<td>wailing at graveside</td>
<td>Toussaint, 1992:24</td>
<td></td>
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