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Language and Identity: the case of indigenous australians

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MASTER 2 D'ETUDES ANGLOPHONES

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

THE CASE OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

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INTRODUCTION

> To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization. (Fanon, 1952, p. 17)

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon makes it clear: language and identity are intertwined. Language does not exist in a void. All language systems are anchored in a much broader concept. When a people face colonisation, both their identity and language are being challenged. Derrida introduces the notion of *disorder of identity* (1998, p. 14) to express one of the blurred areas that is formed in the mind of the speaker who has been colonised. The effects that colonisation has on the colonised in terms of identity and language are numerous and were the subject of study of several prestigious linguists. Fanon (1952), Derrida (1996) and Saïd (1991), to name a few, tackle the subject of the oppressed language, or the language of the 'Other'. Taking this issue to Australia, where no official language has been adopted, the subject of the study will be the Indigenous people who were met with colonisation in the late 18th century and the question will be: does the place of Indigenous languages and cultures in wider Australian society reveal a move away from a tradition of assimilation?

Since James Cook settled in Australia in 1770 and colonisation was effective a few years later, approaches towards Indigenous languages have evolved through time. There were first explorers who tried to learn some Aboriginal words and recorded them in diaries. Colonists took interests in Aboriginal languages in order to communicate and exchange goods. Indigenous languages have been influenced by English and contact languages such as pidgins and creoles have emerged, the best example being Kriol. English borrowed Indigenous words and Indigenous languages borrowed from English. There has been an ongoing language shift created by the contact with English. In the 19th century, a dialectal form of English spoken by Aboriginal people emerged. Aboriginal English was recognised in the 1960s as an official dialect of English in Australia. Throughout colonisation, language has also been a means to repress the 'Other.' Indeed, colonial discourses had a huge impact on the languages and identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They were and are still faced with linguistic prejudices. The treatment given to Indigenous

languages during Indigenous removals from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1970s can best epitomise these prejudices. The Stolen Generations are the Indigenous people who were removed from their family and land and were placed in missions or foster families. The children were forbidden to speak their Indigenous languages. English became a tool of oppression towards assimilation. Linguistic prejudices are not a past controversy; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still met with disadvantages and racism through language. For instance, in Northern Territory, a recent policy has been introduced, creating a new Stolen Generation who is losing their Indigenous languages (Gibson, 2015).

Colonisation left scars on the identities of Indigenous people and on both traditional and new Indigenous languages. And yet, they were the first people of Australia:

> We know that people have been in Australia for at least 40,000 years (and much longer periods have been suggested). Many Aboriginal people believe that their ancestors have always been here. Archaeologists, however, think that there has been more than one influx of people. Until around 7,000 or 8,000 years ago Papua New Guinea was joined by a land bridge to Australia. (Walsh, 1993, p. 4)

The term Indigenous people has to be clarified. It designates the peoples who lived in a land before colonisation. It brings together numerous peoples who identify themselves as Indigenous. We can find differences between Indigenous peoples; the main one being language. The term Aboriginal people is used to refer to Indigenous people, except Torres Strait Islanders, who are a group of people living in islands situated in the North of Queensland and near New Guinea. The word "Aborigine" comes from the Latin *ab origine*, meaning "from the beginning". Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have indeed occupied Australia for centuries, meaning that their cultures have deep roots. The knowledge of the world passed from generations to generations by storytelling. To Indigenous people, the origin of the world can be explained by *Dreamtime* stories. Their culture is oral and it is fundamental for an Indigenous individual to grasp what *Dreaming* is. Even though Aboriginal people take pride in their ancestors being in Australia "since the Dreamtime began, not merely for 150 years", the term "Aborigine" has a negative connotation (Mattingley & Hampton cited in Walsh, 1993, p. 8). It is an inclusive label that has been imposed on the first people of Australia (Walsh, 1993, p.8; Leitner & Sieloff, 1998, p.155; Malcolm, 2013b,

p. 48). In some regions of Australia, the generic word started to be replaced with the traditional regional terms such as Murri (or Murrie) in Queensland:

> The relationship between Australians of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent is an area where the remnants of linguistic racism, or what is perceived as such, are gradually being eliminated. New terms for the indigenous population are sought and propagated. The term *Aborigine* is being restricted to a generic use. With reference to Aborigines in particular regions, such as in the south-east, the west, or the north-west, terms like *Koori* [or Koorie], *Nunga* [or Nyoongah], and *Yolngu* respectively have been introduced. (Leitner & Sieloff, 1998, p.155)

Aboriginal people prefer these identifiers because it is the way they have always referred to themselves. Since the 1970s, these traditional terms have found legitimacy in a broader representation of Aboriginal people.

A voice to the first people of Australia has only recently been given some value. In 1972, the government of Australia introduced a policy of self-determination which ended a fierce intervention on Indigenous people's lives. This meant Indigenous people were granted autonomy to make decisions concerning economic, social and cultural development. It is indeed during this decade that interest in the representation of Indigenous people's cultures and languages gained momentum. The 1970s were also marked by land rights movements so that studies on Indigenous languages and cultures were needed for political and legal purposes (Anker, 2014, pp. 107-110). Many Aboriginal languages started to be written in the late 1960s and early 1970s for educational use (Black, 1993, pp. 214-215). In the 1990s, traditional Indigenous languages were the focus of more descriptive works and research studies than contact languages mainly because of "the urgency of documenting these endangered languages" (Meakins, 2014, p. 366). Since the 1960s and 1970s, Australia has been moving towards a better representation of Indigenous languages and cultures in the broader Australian culture and society.

Representation does not mean assimilation. Colonisation brought a culture of assimilation. Language loss and linguistic prejudices are leading towards it. Dixon goes as far as saying:

> If a minority group is to maintain its ethnic identity and social cohesion it must retain its language [...] Once a group has lost its language, it will generally lose its separate identity and will, within a few generations, be

> indistinguishably assimilated into another, more dominant political group. (1980, p. 79)

In placing side by side two distinct groups–Indigenous people and wider Australian society– confrontation with the relation of power that emerged between the colonised and the coloniser is inevitable. It is also harder to look into the situation from a white and western point of view. But this will lead the study to raise a number of questions in order to understand colonial power in a post-colonial society: Are colonial discourses decisive for Indigenous languages? Are Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions anchored in colonial discourses? What is the power relationship in Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions? Do political directives assert a form of colonial power? Is the place of Indigenous languages and cultures in a constant state of negotiation? Language in the educational, medical and legal spheres is at the core of the issue. Entrenched in a reconciliation discourse, the study will try to understand whether both groups work together efficiently or not towards a better cohesion.

The first part of the study will focus on the place of traditional and new Indigenous languages in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and in wider Australian society. It will adopt a more diachronic perspective in order to understand how Indigenous languages evolved and changed with colonisation. Language loss, language shift and language ownership will be the key themes. It will provide the tool in order to analyse, in part two, the representation these languages have in wider contemporary Australian society. The questions will be: what challenges Indigenous languages face to maintain a place or acquire better representation in Australia? How can they survive in a predominantly English-speaking country? Language maintenance and revitalisation will be a focus of this second part alongside Aboriginal English, seen as a bridge between two cultures. Post-colonial discourses will lead the third part of discussion. The study will look into the power relationships in a post-colonial society. It will be debated whether post-colonial discourses shape the interactions between two cultures and permit or prevent Indigenous languages to have a place within wider Australian society. The question to be discussed: is Australia moving away from a culture of assimilation?

PART I

THE PLACE OF TRADITIONAL AND NEW ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE: AN INTRODUCTION

1 TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES AND THEIR ENDANGERED STATUS

1.1 The Diversity of Traditional Languages

The first traces of traditional Aboriginal languages date back to 1770, when British ships arrived in Botany Bay (Walsh, 1993, p. 4). Traditional languages refer to the languages which were spoken before colonisation. These languages are very diverse. Indeed, Indigenous people do not have a common language allowing them to communicate. Australia is a wide land and it is not surprising that there is a variety of languages spoken in different geographic regions. It is believed that at the beginning of European contact, around 1788, about 250 languages were spoken within Indigenous communities (Walsh, 1993, p. 1; Malcolm, 1994, p. 289; Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 3).[1] Furthermore, several of these languages had dialects, evidence of the diversity of traditional Aboriginal languages; Koch and Nordlinger (2014, p. 3) estimate that Australia was home to up to 800 language varieties. To name a few, Murrinh-Patha, a language spoken in Wadeye (Port Keats) in the Northern Territory, Dharawal, a language spoken in coastal New South Wales, and Warlpiri, a language spoken in central Australia are all traditional languages. It is believed that, before colonisation, eight to twelve separate languages were spoken in Tasmania:

> Examining the vocabularies of the various bands for which we have written records, as well as paying attention to what observers from the time said about who could and could not understand each other, it seems that there were probably at least eight separate languages, and possibly as many as a dozen. (Crowley, 1993, p. 54)

The overall number of traditional languages cannot be precise since the traces that are available are very few. This is partly due to the fact that Indigenous culture is more an oral one than a written one.[2]

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[1] Koch and Nordlinger (2014, p. 3) suggest that a recent study by Claire Bowern would draw the figure closer to 350: 270 Pama-Nyungan languages and 80-90 non Pama-Nyungan languages.

[2] In order to have a hint at the approximate location of Indigenous languages, a map was designed by David R. Horton for the AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies). I forward the reader to https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia in order to visualise where Indigenous language groups are situated in Australia. The diversity of Indigenous languages is well rendered. (see Appendix)

The great number of traditional Aboriginal languages caught the interest of linguists who started to analyse their similarities and differences. The aim was to determine whether traditional languages had a common ancestry and whether they were linked to other language branches in the world. The research studies drew on lexis, syntax, phonology and comparative analysis. For instance, Walsh (1993) states that some Aboriginal languages have similarities in phonology. He writes that "most Australian languages have more than the three positions of English plosives. All of them have an additional position in which the blade of the tongue makes contact with the hard palate." (p. x); and that "most Australian languages have no fricative consonants such as English *f* and *s*" (p. xiii). The outcome of linguists' work is that they were able to regroup and classify some traditional languages:

> In Aboriginal Australia there are languages which are clearly distinct, like Tiwi (from Bathurst and Melville Islands, off the north coast of Australia) and Pitjantjatjara (from the desert areas of South Australia and Western Australia). There are also forms of speech which share much the same grammar but differ in pronunciation and vocabulary just as various dialects of English do. Examples of such forms of speech are Gugada, Ngaanyatjarra, Luritja, Pintupi and Pitjantjatjara, which linguists have classified as belonging to the 'Western Desert Language'. (Walsh, 1993, p. 1)

An ancestry language to Indigenous languages has not been found. However, several of them show similarities and have been classified under the umbrella name Pama-Nyungan. They do not include all Indigenous languages, as Colin Yallop (1993, p. 16) points out:

> To be more precise, Australian languages other than those from the north of Western Australia and the north and northwest of the Northern Territory show considerable similarities in pronunciation and grammar. They are known as Pama-Nyungan, a term based on words for 'man' in the far north of Queensland (*pama*) and the southwest of Western Australia (*nyunga*).

To be more precise, there are 25 language families which are unevenly distributed across Australia (Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 4). Pama-Nyungan is the most widespread language family, covering seven-eighths of the territory (Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 4). Moreover, the search for an ancestry language raised other questions. Linguists wanted to know whether traditional languages had links with other languages overseas. They were interested to know whether these languages

were genetically related to that of New Guinea or Indonesia. But they have not been able to find any connection between Aboriginal languages and languages outside of Australia (Yallop, 1993, p. 16; Gaby, 2008, p. 212).

If there are many Australian Aboriginal languages, we can wonder how Indigenous people from different language background are able to communicate. Is there a *lingua franca*, or a main language for each region? Even though there is no *lingua franca* used between all Indigenous people, they are able to understand one another for various reasons. As mentioned above, some languages have similarities which allow mutual intelligibility, the same way a Norwegian speaker can understand a Swedish speaker or a Danish speaker. There is also evidence that some strong Indigenous languages are used as a *lingua franca* on a small scale. A lingua franca, called Murrinh-Patha, is indeed used by communities living in Wadeye (Port Keat), Northern Territory (Walsh, 1993, p. 8; Walsh, 2014, p. 334). Moreover, it is not common for an Indigenous person to be monolingual. As Laycock (cited in Rumsey, 1993, p. 195) puts it: “Australian Aborigines are the leading contenders for being the most multilingual people in the world.” Alpher (1993, p. 97) adds: “Australian Aborigines often speak fluently more than one Aboriginal language, more than one regional variety of the same Aboriginal language, and one or more varieties of English.” Mutual intelligibility is thus possible thanks to their multilingual competence. Indigenous people generally know the languages of the neighbouring communities and are frequently led to do long journeys through the land and use different languages according to the differing regions they traverse. Multilingualism is so present in Indigenous culture that they are required to code-switch frequently. For instance, in a study of Aboriginal code-switching, Patrick McConvell puts the Gurindji speakers under scrutiny. He explains the current situation:

> Most current speech amongst Gurindji speakers themselves involves regular code-switching between Gurindji , the Aboriginal vernacular of the Pama-Nyungan family, and an English-based variety along a continuum between basilectal Creole/Pidgin and acrolectal ‘Aboriginal English’. (McConvell, 1988, p. 97)

Even though the focus of the study is on code-switching between traditional languages, new Aboriginal languages and English, McConvell also notices code-switching between traditional languages. He writes:

> In this area [Kununurra, Western Australia], I have also often observed switching between different traditional languages and dialects, e.g. between Ngarinyman and Ngaliwurru, Miriwung and Gija. (McConvell, 1988, pp. 99-100)

Indigenous people are able to switch between multiple traditional languages. This is also due to the fact that marriages occur between communities who do not share the same language. For instance, Evans (2010, p. 9) underlines that in Arnhem society, spouses have to learn one another's language, which means that a couple's child learns at least two different languages or dialects in addition to a third language when marrying someone outside the community.

1.2 The Endangered Status of Traditional Aboriginal Languages

The diversity of Australian Indigenous languages is at risk. These disappearing languages are often known as dying languages. The current situation shows that a lot of traditional languages have disappeared and the remaining ones are endangered, even though a minority of Indigenous languages have gained speakers during the last decade. Walsh (1993, p. 2) gives precise numbers:

> A recent study of the language situation in Australia indicates that 160 languages are extinct, seventy are under threat and only twenty are likely to survive (at least in the short term).

A report released in 2014 by the AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) addresses the case of declining traditional and new Aboriginal languages, as well as those being stable and those gaining speakers.[3] The study looks at three traditional languages which are on the decline. These languages are Anmatyerre (central Australia), Wik Mungkan (regional Queensland), and Badimaya (Western Australia). The key findings show that in 2014, there were 920 speakers of Anmatyerre. The younger speakers (less than 59 years old) spoke it often and the older speakers (more than 60 years old) always spoke the language. The key findings also show that there were 1,030 speakers of Wik Mungkan who used the language often. The study notes that there was only one full speaker of

[3] The study asks for "speaker numbers, proficiency, frequency of language use, and intergenerational language transmission." Proficiency is categorised in three groups (a) "can only say some words and simple sentences" (b) "can have a conversation in limited situations—not able to express everything in the language (part-speakers)" and (c) "can have a conversation in all situations—able to express almost everything in the language (full speakers)." (Marmion, Obata & Troy, 2014, pp. 5-6)

Badimaya and around ten part-speakers who barely used the language. The current situation of Badimaya is however not an isolated case. Other languages are endangered as far as having only one full speaker left. A study driven by Rupert Gerritsen (2004) on Nhanda, a language from Western Australia, shows that the language is facing the same situation i.e. only one full-speaker of Nhanda remains. The given figures exemplify well the endangered status of these traditional languages.

One of the reasons that could explain the extinction or declining number of traditional languages is the actual decline in the size of the Indigenous Australian population. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015), "in 2014, there were about 713,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, accounting for 3.0% of the total population." That the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is drastically dropping is a phenomenon that was seen as a fatality in the colonial era. It was commonly believed to be inevitability, as A. O. Neville (1937)–the chief protector of Aborigines in Western Australia between 1915 and 1936–claims in writing: "No matter what we do, they will die out". With European contact, the number of Indigenous people dropped alongside the number of speakers. It led traditional languages to disappear. The history of Tasmanian languages can best epitomise this phenomenon. As Walsh (1993, p. 5) puts it: "the Tasmanian people were subjected to horrific treatment from government authorities and their languages suffered an early decline [...]".[4]

Another reason why traditional languages are endangered is that some Indigenous people were disconnected from their language. The Stolen Generation can best exemplify disconnection with the mother tongue. From the beginning of the 19th century until the 1970s, the Australian government took directives in order to remove Indigenous children from their home, especially those defined as "half-cast". This was aimed at preserving the so-called purity of the white race. They placed the children in Christian missions and taught them domestic work, Christian values as well as the English language. Speaking a language other than English was forbidden.

[4] There is a widespread belief that there are no Tasmanian Aboriginal people left, and that their history ended in 1876 with the death of Truganini–an Aboriginal woman believed to be the last Tasmanian (Plomley cited in Crowley, 1993, p. 51). Crowley argues that this is a myth; Tasmanian Aboriginal people have not died out (1993, pp. 51-52).

This policy caused a lot of Aboriginal children to lose their mother tongues.[5] One might think that these kinds of injustices belong to the past and yet, current governmental directives applied in Northern Territory make people wonder if another sort of Stolen Generation is being created. As Gibson (2015) puts it: “There are now more than 15,000 Indigenous children in “out-of-home care” and approximately 1,000 new children are coming into the system every year”. He argues that a lot of Indigenous children are placed in “out-of-home care” and that the government is creating another Stolen Generation. He also tackles the question of language:

> These children were shifted between a number of non-Indigenous foster households. During visits they confided to their grandmother that they had been physically assaulted while in care. They lost use of their Warlpiri language. (Gibson, 2015)

The effects of language loss and disconnection with language will be discussed later in the study (§3.3).

Linguistic prejudices in a predominant English-speaking country can also explain the disconnection with traditional languages. Traditional languages compete both with new Aboriginal Languages and English. What Arthur (1996, p. 1) argues is that:

> Sometimes the older speakers of a language did not hand on their knowledge to the younger generation, possibly because they felt that the society their children now had to inhabit was so inimical to Aboriginal culture that such knowledge would only be to their disadvantage.

That is to say that the pressure of the dominant language (English) played a role in the disrupted transmission of traditional languages. The reluctance to hand on a language that is so tied to Aboriginality is an effect of a long history of linguistic prejudices. However, these prejudices did not stop all Indigenous people from connecting with their language; this can be applied only to a minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A majority of them are proud of their language and regard it as an important part of their identity. Foster and Mühlhäusler (1996) report a speech given by a Ngarrindjeri man, named John Summer, to a meeting of the

[5] The film Rabbit-Proof Fence by Phillip Noyce (2002) depicts this removal. Three Aboriginal girls are taken from their family and put into a church mission. In the scene where they arrive at the mission, they speak their Aboriginal language with one another. They are asked to stop using this language and rather use English.

Aborigines Friends Association (1903) which tackles the issue of linguistic prejudices and the dominance of English. With his words, he transmits a certain pride to speak an Indigenous language:

> [...] He said: 'White man came to me and he say,' "You descended from Monkey." I say, 'What book says that?' 'The half-caste could not think of the author's name, but evidently the questioner had been Darwin's 'Origin of Species.' John Summer continued: 'I ask God. I am poor ignorant native. God put it into my heart, and I look white man straight in the face, and he scratch his head. I say,' "You put monkey on my shoulder and ask him question in English. Then if he answer I say I am descended from monkey. Then if I put monkey on your shoulder and I ask question in my native language he cannot answer. Then I ask you question in my language, and you cannot answer, therefore you same as monkey."' This illustration of aboriginal logic appealed to the audience, who sympathetically cheered John Summer. (cited in Foster & Mühlhäusler, 1996, pp. 10-11)

The endangered status of traditional languages is one of the consequences of colonisation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander were repressed and the languages they spoke disappeared with them. The natural transmission of traditional languages was disrupted by the removal of Indigenous children and also by the sense of oppression that was created by the dominant language.

2 THE CONTROVERSY OF NEW ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

2.1 The Birth of New Aboriginal Languages

Indigenous languages have evolved with the contact of European settlers. New Aboriginal languages designate the languages that have been influenced by English or other languages during colonisation. Those contact languages include pidgins, creoles, mixed languages and Aboriginal English. Because these languages have emerged recently, their development is better documented than that of traditional Indigenous languages. Besides, according to the 2014 AIATSIS survey, "recently developed Indigenous languages have more speakers than traditional languages" (Marmion, Obata, & Troy, 2014, p. 17).

2.1.1 Pidgins

A pidgin is the result language of two communities' attempt at communicating without learning fully one another's language (Walsh, 1993, p. 6). Pidgins are generally formed by syntax and grammar simplifications and rely on borrowings from the two languages concerned (Walsh, 1993, p. 6; Meakins, 2014, p. 368). It is also characterised by a reduced communicative use (Meakins, 2014, p. 368). The structure of a pidgin employs the patterns of the dominant language (Walsh, 1993, p. 6; Meakins, 2014, p. 368). The dominant language can be English as in New South Wales and Queensland Pidgin English or it can be an Indigenous language as in Pidgin Kaurna (Adelaide) and Pidgin Ngarluma (Pilbara region) (Meakins, 2014, p. 368).[6]

Pidgins are the first languages that arose with European contact. The first contact between Aboriginal people and British people is depicted in the Journal of an officer named Watkin Tench (cited in Troy, 1993). He writes that only simple verbal exchanges and gestures allowed them to stay in the Bay. Troy bases her study on Tench's account. She explains the first contacts between the colonists and Indigenous people. Two Aboriginal people–Arabanoo and Bennelong–were successively captured in order to be used as a means of communication between the two communities. By staying with the colonists, these two Aboriginals acquired language competency in English, and developed a sort of pidgin. She writes:

> Tench (1979, 176) noted that Bennelong spoke 'broken English' which suggests that at least an incipient pidgin language had developed through the colonists' communication with Arabanoo and Bennelong. (Troy, 1993, p. 40)

This linguistic experiment is the first proof that "a pidgin now known as New South Wales Pidgin had its origins in Sydney and was in regular use by the middle of the nineteenth century (Troy 1990)" (cited in Troy, 1993, p. 49).

Likewise, Foster and Mühlhäusler (1996) studied the pidgin that arose in South Australia with the first European contact. They define the "Pidgin English, as spoken

[6] Australia was also home to other forms of pidgins that were used between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Meakins (2014, p. 368) recognises pidgins based on non-Indigenous languages other than English–Italian, German or others–such as Pidgin Macassan (NT), and Broome Pearling Lugger Pidgin (WA).

in South Australia" (known as Pidgin Kaurna): "It has been characterized as the linguistic no man's land where speakers of different languages can meet." (1996, p. 1) They argue that the primary use of pidgins is commercial:

> The role of pidgin language during the initial years of control in South Australia was predominantly instrumental; their use enabled the different interlocutors to 'do business' rather than voice cultural concerns. (Foster & Mühlhäusler, 1996, p. 4)

They explain that Pidgin Kaurna was a pidgin used in the early years of the British colony in South Australia. Their analysis of Pidgin Kaurna shows that the language underwent adaptations in syntax and in grammar. For instance, the personal pronouns *oichau* (me) and *ninko* (you), which correspond to the possessive pronouns *ngaityo* (my) and *ninko* (your), "are used unchanged in form regardless of their case function as transitive and intransitive subject, object and possessor" (Foster & Mühlhäusler, 1996, p. 4). Also, Pidgin Kaurna uses English syntax. They give some examples: *Oichau yaungum ninko mura mura* meaning 'Me give you bread'.

2.1.2 Varieties of Creoles

Pidgins are contact languages with which speakers cannot fully express themselves. Thus, they cannot be people's first language. Studying the evolution of pidgins is necessary to understand the birth of new Aboriginal languages, especially creoles. Pidgins can undergo creolisation. When they develop greatly to become the primary language of a community, they are no longer pidgins (Harris, 1993, p. 146; Meakins, 2014, p. 379). Concerning English-based pidgins, Walsh (1993, p. 6) writes:

> With extended contact, a creole may arise which is still English-based but has a much wider application, being used to meet all the communicative requirements of its speakers.

New South Wales Pidgin English influenced Queensland Pidgin English which then divided into two varieties–one which developed further to be the basis to north Australian creoles, the other called Kanaka English which alongside Melanesian Pidgin influenced the development of the creole variety in the Torres Strait (Meakins, 2014, pp. 371-374).

Generally, two forms of Aboriginal creoles are distinguished (Malcolm, 1994, pp. 289-290). The AIATSIS survey notes: “Kriol, spoken across the region from the Kimberley to Katherine NT, and Yumplatok, spoken in the Torres Strait Islands” (Marmion et al., 2014, p. 17). Yumplatok comes from ‘Yumpla’ which means ‘our’ and ‘tok’ which means ‘talk’. This variety emerged in the 1890s and takes its roots both in English and in the traditional languages Meriam Mer and Kalau Lagau Ya (Korff, 2016). Unlike Yumplatok, Kriol has driven the interest of many linguists and its development is therefore the subject of several studies. As is written above, Kriol is spoken in a vast northern region of Australia. Several varieties of Kriol coexist in this territory. Mary Rhydwen (1993, p. 155) mentions the two varieties at the origin of the spelling of Kriol: “Kriol is the word ‘creole’ written in the orthography of the variety of creole spoken in Barunga (formerly Bamyili) and Ngukurr (Roper River).” They are only two of the six varieties Meakins (2014, pp. 379-380) lists–Kimberley Kriol (WA), Wumpurrarni English or Barkly Kriol (NT), Kimberley Kriol (WA), Westside Kriol (NT), Ngan’giwatyfala or Daly River Kriol (NT), Barunga/Beswick Kriol (NT), and Roper River Kriol (NT). The latter is the most-studied variety because it is believed to be at the origin of Kriol. However there are two theories about the development of Kriol. Meakins (2014, p. 381) argues:

> This similarity has led to two theories for the diffusion of Kriol, which I refer to as (i) the “monogenesis hypothesis” and (ii) the “multi-regional” hypothesis. The monogenesis suggests that Kriol originated at Roper River Mission and then spread across northern Australia as a fully-fledged creole in a process of language shift and expansion (Munro 2000). The multi-regional theory proposes that Pidgin English spread throughout the north of Australia [...] and creolised in different places [(]Simpson 2000; Sandefur and Harris 1986).

Harris (1993) studied the development of Roper River Kriol which he argues originated from Northern Territory Pidgin English, a lingua franca used between Aboriginal people, Europeans–who settled in the region around Darwin in 1870 to develop the cattle industry, and Chinese people–who immigrated during gold rushes. He explains that the natural transmission of traditional languages was disturbed by a period of repression against Aboriginal people. In 1908, the Anglican Church established a mission in Roper River, where Aboriginal people from various communities were welcomed. This allowed the emergence of Kriol. Only the adults were able to communicate because they were multilingual. Kriol was the answer to

the need for children to understand one another–especially at school–despite missionaries' attempts to prevent it. Harris (1993, pp. 148-149) specifies:

> The eight groups spoke separate and distinct languages. As is typical of Aboriginal people, the adults were multilingual. Although they had not lived permanently in such close proximity before, they had met regularly for ceremonial and other purposes. Over the course of a lifetime, these people had always become fluent speakers of each other's languages. The children, however, were not yet multilingual. Approximately seventy children attended school at the mission, each one of them forced into contact with other children whose languages they had not yet had time to learn. *They were the new community, they needed a primary language, and they needed it immediately.*
>
> Whereas their parents could communicate with other adults by speaking Alawa or Mara or whatever, the children could not. What they had in common was the English pidgin used between Aboriginal and European people, together with the English they were hearing in school. With this limited input, it was this younger generation who, in the course of their lifetime, created the creole, manipulating the linguistic resources available to them to create a language which catered for all their communicative needs. This language is now called Kriol.[7] (my highlights)

Kriol is now spoken by a number of Indigenous people either as first or additional language.

2.1.3 Mixed Languages

Kriol has also led to the development of other new Indigenous languages. Two mixed languages emerged from the mixing of Kriol and other traditional languages–Gurindji Kriol (NT) and Light Warlpiri (NT) (Gaby, 2008, pp. 222-223; Meakins, 2014, pp. 396-402). Gurindji Kriol was created because of the permanent code-switching between Kriol and Gurindji in the community of Kalkaringi.[8] For that matter, McConvell (1988, pp. 97-98) proves that code-switching between Gurindji, Kriol and English occurs systematically between individuals of the community and is even

[7] Harris highlights the importance of children in the creation of Kriol. This has been debated by others such as Munro (2000; 2004) who argues that the role of children in the formation of Kriol should not hinder that of adults she believes are responsible for the substrate influences from the local traditional languages found in Kriol (cited in Meakins, 2014, p. 381; cited in Ponsonnet, 2010, pp. 164-165). To give too important a role to children in its genesis supports Bickerton's "language biogram", which is the idea that "the features of creoles are determined by universal tendencies in language learning via situation whereby a group of children is compelled to communicate despite inadequate access to the language they are supposedly trying to learn" (Ponsonnet, 2010, p. 164).

[8] Bakker (2003) refutes this argument. According to him, code-switching "play no role in mixed language genesis" (cited in Meakins, 2014, p. 399).

found at sentence level. Likewise, the merger of Kriol with Warlpiri gave birth to Light Warlpiri. Gaby (2008, p. 223) shows evidence to the mixing, characteristic of Light Warlpiri:

> As can be seen in (8), Light Warlpiri utterances exhibit mostly Warlpiri-origin NPs and Kriol origin verb phrases:
>
> | (8) karnta-pardu-ng | i-m | puj-ing | it | kurdu-pawu |
> |---|---|---|---|---|
> | Woman-DIM-ERG | 3sg-NFUT | push-PROG | 3sg | child-DIM |
>
> 'The woman is pushing the child.'
>
> O'Shannessy 2006: 47

Meakins (2014, p. 396) argues that the emergence of such languages is different from pidgins and creoles:

> [T]heir genesis is a product of expressive rather than communicative needs. [...] [M]ixed languages are created in situations where a common language already exists and communication is not an issue. [They serve] as an expression of an altered identity, be it new, or differing significantly from an older identity.

Mixed languages give evidence that a language shift towards Kriol and English is occurring (Meakins, 2014, p. 402).

2.1.4 Aboriginal English

The other language that emerged from the contact with English-speakers is Aboriginal English. Aboriginal English is the dialect of English spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290). In that way it differs from creoles and English pidgins. If we were to situate English-based new Aboriginal languages in a continuum, English Pidgins would be basilectal, creoles–Kriol and Yumplatok– would be mesolectal and Aboriginal English would be acrolectal (McConvell, 1988). This means that Aboriginal English is the variety that is the most similar to English. There is more than one variety of Aboriginal English (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290; Sharifian, 2006, p. 13; Eades, 2013, p. 78); scholars talk of 'Aboriginal Englishes' (Marmion et al., 2014, p. 17). Usually, it refers to "heavy" (basilectal) and "light" (acrolectal) Aboriginal English which are respectively more or less closer to Kriol or English (Eades, 2013, p. 81). Malcolm (1994, p. 290) argues that its heavy style is preferred during in-grouped Aboriginal interactions whereas its light style is preferred during non-Indigenous and Indigenous interactions. There are intricate links between

heavy Aboriginal English and creoles (Eades, 2014, pp. 417-418). The comparative study between creoles and Aboriginal English results in the hypothesis that Aboriginal English may originate from a decreolisation process. For that reason, Malcolm (2011; 2013c, p. 610) sometimes label Aboriginal English a "post-pidgin/post-creole English". However, the genesis of Aboriginal English and whether it is the result of a decreolisation process is still debated among specialists (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290; Eades, 2014, p. 417). Pidgins and creoles may not have had a direct influence on the Aboriginalisation of English (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290; Eades, 2013, p. 80; Eades, 2014, p. 417). Malcolm (1994, pp. 290-291) gives four main theories:

> [O]ne (Kaldor and Malcolm, 1982) sees Aboriginal English as the outcome of a process of pidginization, creolization and decreolization; another (Kaldor and Malcolm, 1979) sees it as evidencing the influence of a pidgin which disappeared without creolization. Perhaps, according to Mühlhäusler (1991: 162) forms of Aboriginal English may be 'heavily reconstructed' earlier pidgins and creoles; another (Siegel, personal communication) sees it as a 'language shift English' comparable with Irish English, Amerindian English and South African English (see Mesthrie, 1992); finally there is the view which sees it as an interlanguage, either living or fossilized (Sandefur, 1983).

The Aboriginalisation of English in terms of social and cultural identity and the implications regarding the use of Aboriginal English in wider Australian society will be further discussed in §5 and §6.

2.2 The Controversial Status of New Aboriginal Languages

"[R]ecently developed Indigenous languages have more speakers than traditional languages", states the AIATSIS survey (Marmion et al., 2014, p. 17). Aboriginal English is spoken by the majority of Indigenous people, whether it is their first or additional language (Eades, 2013, p. 81). The AIATSIS survey gives the figures of Kriol speakers: "[...] according to Year Book Australia, 2009-2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010), linguists estimate as many as 20,000 to 30,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak Kriol as their first language" (Marmion et al., 2014, p. 18). New Indigenous languages have clearly a strong place within Indigenous communities. And yet, their status is controversial. This is partly due to either linguistic assumption deeply rooted in colonial discourse or

to what Derrida (1998, p. 14) calls a “disorder of identity” experienced by the colonised people.

In the colonial era, early recordings of pidgins can be found in gazettes and other newspapers (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996). Foster & Mühlhäuser (1996) argue that the rendering of pidgins was mainly derisory. They give evidence that the recordings of pidgins were used as racial prejudices:

> The exotic quality of the pidgin or, more commonly, the humorous effect, appears to have been the main reason the passages were recorded. Typical of such occurrences is the following passage from the 1851 trial of two Aborigines for sheep stealing:
>
> > On being asked to plead, Warraki, one of the prisoners, said, ‘Yes me take ‘um two sheep; no killee.’
> > This unusual mode of pleading guilty excited much merriment in the Court, in which the prisoners joined, apparently much delighted at having been cause of it (South Australian Register, 14 August 1851). (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 5)

They explain that in the late colonial period, recordings of pidgins are found in newspapers in order to render an Australian colour. They write: “It was in the 1880s, in a period when Australian society was beginning to search for its own ‘voice’ that pidgin became the standard register of the Aboriginal voice” (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 6). That is to say that at a time when Australia needed to define its identity, pidgins became a marker of an Aboriginality which was then seen as authentic to Australia. Later, in the 1960-80s, the recordings of Aboriginal words in dictionaries served the same agenda i.e. to promote an Australian identity (Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, pp. 220-225). Pidgins and Aboriginal words gave a colour to the writings in which the author wanted to “demonstrate [its] familiarity with the bush and its people.” (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 7)

However, far from giving a voice to Indigenous people, it reduced them to a primitivism constructed by non-Indigenous people. For that matter, Foster and Mühlhäuser (1996, p. 8) write, “[a]s is apparent, most of the anecdotes, humorous or not, were coloured with the use of Aboriginal pidgin, a form of language that appeared to bear out presumptions of Aboriginal simplemindedness.” They rely on Saïd’s (1991) model of Orientalism to demonstrate that “Europeans spoke for the Aborigines” (p. 6) because they were the ones mediating the Indigenous voice through pidgins. They argue:

> Far from recognizing this language as a reflection of the Aboriginal creativity and ability linguistically to adapt to new communicative domains, it was variably interpreted as a sign of inferiority, loss of authenticity and proof of the user's drollness. (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 10)

With these words, they understand pidgins as a creative answer to a communicative need, a view that differs with previous colonial assumption. This view is shared by Harris (1993, p. 145) who states that:

> A pidgin is a contact language, used only for limited purposes between groups of people having no common language. [...] Pidgins are the creation of skilled people faced with a sudden need to communicate with other people who do not speak the same language. [...] It is important to realise that simplification of languages is not necessarily a backward step.

Both Kriol-speakers and Aboriginal English speakers were also met with linguistic prejudices due to the fact that these languages are perceived as a failure to learn perfectly English. As McConvell (1988, p. 145) puts it: "[Kriol] has been more commonly known to Aborigines as 'Pidgin English', 'Broken English' and 'Blackfella English'." Aboriginal English is also a language qualified as 'bad English', 'broken English', 'lazy English' or 'incorrect English' (Eades, 2013, p. 77; Arthur, 1996, p. 3). This is the common assumption that creoles and Aboriginal English are the languages of uneducated people. It is the heritage of a long history of colonial linguistic prejudices, as was explained above.

However, Kriol and Aboriginal English have recently received recognition. It is only in the 1960s that Aboriginal English was recognised a legitimate, grammatical variety of English (Eades, 2013, p. 2) and only in the 1970s that the linguistic world recognise Kriol as a proper language (Harris, 1993, p. 150; Meakins 2014, pp. 390-392). One of the major events that helped the recognition of Kriol as a language in its own rights is the translation of the Bible. A translation program started in 1973 and *Holi Baibul*–the translated Bible into Kriol–was first published in 1985 (Harris, 1993, p. 151). This was a great step towards recognition, which was claimed by Indigenous people in Ngukurr, Barunga, Darwin, where Kriol is more spoken than elsewhere. Harris (1993, p. 150) writes that "the translation of a book with so much deep philosophical and abstract material lays to rest the criticism that creoles are inadequate languages which can only express simple ideas."

Furthermore, there is the belief that new Indigenous languages are unauthentic given their influence from English. They were sometimes described in the linguistic world in negative ways. For instance, Sharpe (1993, p. 73) explains: “At that time [in the 1970s] there was a big drive in Australia to record ‘dying’ languages and dialects. There was also great concern to get ‘pure’ language, not ‘contaminated’ with English [...]”. It is an assumption that comes from their comparison with traditional languages. In addition, new Indigenous languages are put in rivalry with traditional languages given the endangered status of most Indigenous languages and the language shift towards English new Indigenous languages represents. The AIATSIS (Marmion et al, 2014, p. 37) tackles this issue:

> There were also some negative feelings about recently developed Indigenous languages. These feelings are represented in the following two categories.
> • Secondary. Recently developed Indigenous languages have some place but are secondary in importance to traditional languages. (13 per cent)
> •No place. There is no place for recently developed Indigenous languages. (9 per cent)
> These two, ‘secondary’ and ‘no place’, were mentioned more often by people who do not identify with these languages, being reported by 14 per cent and 10 per cent of these people, respectively.

These answers show the reluctance of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people regarding language shift. It would be in favour of the argument which states that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not able to adapt and are against evolution. Black (1993, p. 207) explains this assumption with these words:

> It would be just as fair to characterise non-Aboriginal Australians as 'clinging' to ways of life one or two thousand years old, at least, because many of their social, political, and religious practices go back that far - and we seldom know for sure which Aboriginal practices go back much further than this.

However, this usually apply to the elderly generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who look unfavourably on new Indigenous languages which they believe are overshadowing traditional languages. Taking the example of Kriol, McConvell (1988, p. 145) writes: “In the last thirty years [Kriol] has begun to replace the traditional languages of the area as the first language. Many older speakers find this situation confusing and disturbing.” For that matter, Meakins (2014, p. 391)

underlines that Kriol "is sometimes labelled a 'killer language' as a result." Nonetheless, in a context of language loss and language death, it is usual that language shift is negatively perceived. On this subject, Trudgill (1991, pp. 62-63) writes that language shift is one of the causes to language death occurring in the world:

> Sociolinguists have employed two terms to describe the phenomena which lead to the loss of language varieties. One is language shift. As is well known, this is the process by which a community more or less gradually abandons its original language and, via an intermediate stage of bilingualism, adopts another. [...] Language shift normally occurs as the result of some form of social, cultural, political, economic and/or military pressure. What varies from one situation to another is simply the degree of the pressure. Both language shift and language murder lead, obviously, to language death.

Kriol speakers' views on their own language are diverse. As is explained in §2.1.2, Kriol emerged from the repression of Indigenous people in Northern Territory. Thus, Kriol speakers tend not to identify with the language they speak and show low self-esteem. Ponsonnet (2010, p.163) reports the view of a 20-years-old Kriol speaker telling her it is "*breinwoj brom Inglij*, literally, 'brainwash from English'." She argues that his criticism "sounded like a political claim about the integrity of his own cultural identity rather than a simple denial of the legitimacy of his own language." (Ponsonnet, 2010, p. 166). Harris (1993, p. 150) explains:

> Creoles have not normally arisen as the languages of the rich or powerful. Those who speak creoles have endured generations of abuse of themselves and their languages. It is little wonder that they have grown ashamed of their speech.
> There is, however, a worldwide trend for creole-speaking people to gain a new sense of self-esteem as they break away from the colonial oppression of the past. The languages which have become their own are invariably part of their emerging identity and gain new respect.

Rhydwen (1993, p. 157) notes the intricate relation Kriol speakers have with their language: "Kriol speakers never identify themselves as Kriol people. They refer to themselves by the name of their ancestral language, even if they do not speak it" (see §3.1.1). This means language identity and cultural identity are in conflict. This conflict is also present for speakers of Aboriginal English. It is mistakenly thought that

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who do not speak a traditional language are somewhat "less Aboriginal" (Eades, 2013, p. 56; Eades, 2014, p. 428).

It is clear that the place of new Aboriginal languages is controversial. In the colonial era these languages were undermined by non-Indigenous people. Their representation had merely other goals than promoting an Indigenous culture. Assumptions die hard and the current situation shows that non-Indigenous and Indigenous people have negative views on new Aboriginal languages. They are compared to English and to traditional languages. However, some of these languages have been recognised as languages in their own rights. They are part of the Indigenous world the same way as traditional languages are.

3 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES, A MARKER OF ABORIGINALITY

3.1 Land and Language

Language is a bearer of Aboriginality i.e. Aboriginal culture and identity. Because land is a central aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, it has an unusual place within Indigenous languages. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people traditionally transmit orally the values which are at the core of their culture. In Aboriginal culture, language and land are so intertwined that this link can even be found in Dreamtime stories. These stories clarify the connection between land and language and reflect the multilingualism of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Language is also the sesame to land, giving rights and duties to the Indigenous speaker. The syntax and grammar of some Indigenous languages were influenced by the way Indigenous understand land. Also, because land is important for Indigenous people to construct their identity, place names that were replaced in an unauthentic way become an issue.

3.1.1 Multilingualism, Land, and Dreamtime

In Indigenous cultures, the notions of land, language and identity are merely inseparable. Litaudon (2012, p. 1) argues that their oral culture allowed them to have a strong knowledge of their land:

> Bien que restés sans écriture, les Aborigènes ont développé une culture orale forte, capable de transmettre à travers les mythes, un savoir

> géographique et environnemental leur assurant, jusqu'à l'arrivée des Européens, une remarquable maîtrise du territoire.

The knowledge of the land has been transmitted through myths from generations to generations. Indigenous people place a great importance in what they call *Country*, which refers not only to the land they live in, but to the knowledge of the environment and the social constructs that apply to this land. To Indigenous people, an Indigenous person *becomes* Indigenous with the learning of these myths. These myths are part of *Dreaming*, which is a spiritual concept which explains how the world was created. In *Dreaming* stories, the link between land and language is fictionalised. They are evidence that, to Indigenous people, *Dreamtime* heroes shaped the territory through language. They carried languages to specific areas (Evans, 2010, p. 5). They switched languages during their journey, drawing social boundaries between Indigenous groups, and establishing multilingualism as a common practice. Rumsey (1993) reports such story:

> A thousand kilometres to the west, in the Kimberley district of Western Australia, the Ngarinyin people have told me of how their language originated at a place called Gulemen, 'Beverly Springs', where it was first spoken in the Dreamtime by Possum. From there he carried it all over present-day Ngarinyin country, and that is why the language is there today. (Rumsey, 1993, p. 202)

Dreamtime stories give mythical explanations to Indigenous multilingualism. Indigenous people switch from a language to another according to the land they are in, because Dreamtime heroes carried this specific language to this specific land:

> Southwest of Jawoyn country, in the Roper River region, the Mangarrayi people tell a story of the Dreamtime, in which the landscape in the eastern part of their territory was created by two Olive Pythons. As the story was told to Francesca Merlan, the Pythons speak in the Mangarrayi language, until they get to a place called Jambarlin. The place must be steep, for they climb slowly. When they get there, they start speaking a different language, Alawa. As the narrator tells the story, she herself switches from Mangarrayi to Alawa, and quotes them in that language as saying 'Let's you and I go quickly'. The narrator comments on the switch of language and says that now, from that point on [to the east] 'people always talk Alawa' (Merlan 1981, 144). (Rumsey, 1993, p. 201)

According to *Dreamtime* stories, language is associated to land and not people.

Moreover, in Tamara McKinley's Jacaranda Vines (2001), the Indigenous character Wyju explains that he is able to trace where the songs come from. This narrative passage is evidence that in a wider Australian culture, it is typical of Indigenous people to link language and land:

> "Rose avait entendu parler de sentiers invisibles.
> -Comment connais-tu les paroles, Wyju? Si tu ne les vois pas, tu ne peux pas trouver la piste des chants!
> Le vieillard secoua lentement la tête.
> -Ce sont les sentiers du Temps du rêve, Patronne. Mon ancêtre marche et sème des mots et de la musique dans ses empreintes. Une chanson est une carte donnée à un bébé par sa mère quand il est dans son ventre. La mère désigne l'emplacement et il devient un totem pour le bébé. Il rêve alors aux paroles et il rencontrera ses frères du même totem s'il ne l'éloigne pas d'eux.
> -Tout cela me paraît très compliqué, Wyju, grommela Otto. Si tu ne vois pas les paroles et n'entends pas la musique, comment sais-tu que tu es sur le bon chemin?
> Un grand sourire éclair le visage sombre de Wyju.
> -L'Australie est une grande musique, Patron. Les paroles des chansons te suivent de lieu sacré en lieu sacré. Seuls les homes noirs savent où ils sont." (p. 250)

However, the relationship between language and land is not always fictional. In Indigenous cultures, language is seen as the key to access land. For instance, proficiency is one's language gives duties and rights within the land it is spoken. Conversely, one will own the language of the land related to their community, even if they do not speak it (Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 3). Evans (2010, p. 9) explains, "your clan language is your title deed, establishing your claims to your own country, your spiritual safety and luck in the hunt there." When moving to another land a person has to receive a formal welcome which gives them access to the territory (Evans, 2010, p. 8). The ceremony is run by an Indigenous Elder who speaks the local language because it is their duty to ask for permission to their ancestors (Evans, 2010, p. 8). In the documentary *Talking Language with Ernie Dingo* (Allam, 2013), the latter goes through six different places. At the beginning of each episode his Indigenous host gives him a Welcome to Country in the local language. That one is granted rights according to their language is characteristic of Indigenous traditional laws (Anker, 2014, p. 129). It is thus not surprising that the work of linguists and

anthropologists was needed to understand traditional laws during the period of land rights trials (Anker, 2014; Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 11).

3.1.2 Environment within Grammar

The connection between land and language is so important that some Indigenous languages bear markers associated to land in their grammar. It is the case of Bundjalung, which has a specific gender for trees:

> In its grammar, Bundjalung is unusual among Pama-Nyungan languages in its gender system. The language distinguished four genders: masculine, feminine, arboreal (for trees) and neuter (for anything else). (Sharpe, 1993, p. 76)

This shows that it is characteristic to Budjalung speakers to have precise knowledge of their environment. This knowledge is reflected on the language. This interpretation relies on the reflective or mimetic approach to theories of representations. Hall (1997, p. 29) defines this approach as such:

> In the reflective approach, meaning is thought to lie in the object, person, idea or event in the real world, and language functions like a mirror, to *reflect* the true meaning as it already exists in the world. [...] the theory which says that language works by simply reflecting or imitating the truth that is already there and fixed in the world, is sometimes called 'mimetic'.

If we apply this theory to Bundjalung speakers, it is their environment that shapes their language. This perceptive is put into question by Walsh (1993, p. 199):

> Does the language you grow up using influence the way you perceive the world because of its inbuilt perceptual and conceptual grid? Or is it that the culture (and even the environment) shapes the perceptual and conceptual grid which has developed in the language?

Walsh phrases a well-known debate around linguistic relativity. Linguistic relativity was introduced by Sapir and Whorf in the 1920s. Their hypothesis suggests that the structure of a language influences one's world view and one's thoughts:

> This study shows that the forms of a person's thoughts are controlled by inexorable laws of pattern of which he is unconscious. [...] And every language is a vast pattern-system, different from others, in which are culturally ordained the forms and categories by which the personality not only communicates, but also analyzes nature, notices or neglects types of

> relationship and phenomena, channels his reasoning, and builds the house of his consciousness. (Whorf, 1941, p. 252)

Looking further into this linguistic chicken-and-egg debate is however out of the scope of the analysis.

3.1.3 Place Naming Controversy

Studying the connection between land and language, it is inevitable to address the issue of place naming. Place names were given by the European settlers during colonisation. When Australia wanted to assert its own identity, place names became an issue. When World War I broke out, Australia wanted to be distinguished from Europe and German place names were replaced:

> Indeed, when it was decided to remove German place names from the map during World War I, a committee recommended replacing them with Aboriginal names (p. 285). We note that many of the place names lack of authenticity. A common strategy was to translate the German names morphemes by morphemes as in Carlsruhe, 'Charles Rest', which was renamed Kunden, an Aboriginal word meaning 'resting' (p. 285). (Foster & Mühlhäuser, 1996, p. 9)

This is highly controversial. With regards to spatial identity discourses, there is a belief amongst scholars that place has a role in the construction of identity:

> [...] some writers began to theorise the links between space, place and identity, summed up neatly in R. Barnes's (2002) argument that *who* we are is inextricably linked to *where* we are, have been or are going. (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, p. 210)

Benwell and Stokoe look further into the situation and introduce the notion of 'geosemiotics' and identity (p. 209). Geosemiotics studies the link between places and meaning conveyed through signs. With geosemiotics we can draw a parallel between place names and identity. What can be interpreted is that replacing place names with inaccurate Aboriginal words that have no authentic meaning for Indigenous people–as well as non-Indigenous people–is far from asserting an Indigenous identity.

3.2 Community, Culture and Language

The notion of community is an inherent part of Indigenous cultures. Indigenous people can construct individual identity only through communal identity. It is easy to find traces of this communal Indigenous identity in the way in which Indigenous people use language. In Indigenous Australia, child's language, respect language, initiation language, and sign language are all bearers of Aboriginality. Their use is characteristic of how Indigenous people function as communities.

In Indigenous communities, children are not seen as conversational partners, unlike in western communities (Bavin, 1993, p. 86). Bavin (1993) looks into the case of Warlpiri speakers. She argues that "children are not necessarily encouraged to speak until they have some knowledge to give, and question-answer routines are not part of the adult-child interaction" (p. 86-87). She adds that "adults do not attempt to interpret what is not easily recognisable" [9] and she illustrates her point with a quote from a Warlpiri speaker, "[l]ittle ones who talk like crows, they are not speaking Warlpiri" (p. 92). The place children have in Indigenous communities differs from western cultures. Thus, studying the way children interact is crucial in understanding the place they have in communities. Bavin explains that a child in a Warlpiri community is given more independence and is given responsibility to learn to be a child. A generation transmits to the next the knowledge concerning environment as well as community. In order to construct their own identity and to learn their place within the community, it is important for a child to understand the relations between members of the community. The social structure in Indigenous communities is very complex. Yet, it is important for a child to grasp some of it. For instance, Bavin (1993, p. 88) writes:

> [...] if a child's mother is named *Napaljarri*, any *Napaljarri* has a classificatory mother relation to the child and can be called *ngati* 'mother' by the child. [...] Even though the baby will not be able to process or remember the names, the behaviour indicates the importance of knowing who other people are.

[9] This phenomenon goes against Paul Grice's cooperative principles (1975) according to which speakers are supposed to communicate in a cooperative way. The Indigenous care giver is not trying to reconstruct meaning of the child's utterance that is not recognisable.

The social construct is transmitted to children with simplifications. Kin terminology is indeed difficult for a child to master. Evans (2010, p. 160) reports that Kunwinjku children play games to “pep up this conceptual fluency”. Besides, the fact that it is crucial for children to learn this knowledge in their early years shows that community is of high importance in the development of communal identity. In fact, each individual has a specific place within the community. As Bavin (1993, p. 88) demonstrates:

> To function as a member of the society, a Warlpiri person requires a name known as a skin or section name. Systems of skin names are in operation in many Australian Aboriginal groups. In the Warlpiri system there are eight skin groups, each of which has a male and a female name. A child's name is determined by the names of the father and mother, according to a fixed pattern of descent. For example, a *Japaljarri* man should marry a *Nakamarra* woman and their children will be *Jungarrayi* (if male) and *Nungarrayi* (if female).

It is even more crucial that each individual knows their place within the community since their place defines their role. Simpson (1993, p. 126) points out:

> The division of memory labour and of keeping check on memories has been achieved in many Australian Aboriginal societies by efficient social structures. In many areas, responsibility for knowing the songs, myths and ceremonies for different tracts of land is divided among people according to their family relationships.

Moreover, this aspect of Indigenous social structure is so central in Indigenous culture that it has an impact on the structure of the language (Gaby, 2008). Gaby (2008, p. 216) argues that diverse kin terms and pronouns are used to refer to a specific person according to the kinship the speaker has with the referent and with the interlocutor:

> Even more complex are the dozens of ‘trirelational’ kin terms found in languages such as Warlpiri, Panjima, Bininj Gun-Wok, Pintupi, Yir Yoront and Wardaman. These terms refer to a particular person (K) by simultaneously expressing the kin relationship between K and the addressee. For instance, you can use the Dalabon term kundjirr to refer to your spouse if and only if you are talking to your spouse’s sibling (Evans and Sasse 2007). Kinship is of such cultural salience that it finds its way into even the closed pronominal paradigms of languages such as Arrernte, Martuthunira, Lardill, Wangkangurru and Nyungar, where the selection of

> a pronoun to refer to a pair or group of people will depend in part upon the generation and moiety[10] to which each group member belongs (cf. Black 2003; McConvell and Obata 2006).

Language is a means for Indigenous people to create, develop and maintain a community group identity by asserting one's place and respect it through words.

As children become adult they are able to master the knowledge of the social structure. When adults are addressing a specific person they adjust depending on the place this individual has in the system. The respect register is used by Indigenous individuals who wish to be appropriate to one another according to their family relationships. The way the respect register functions varies from one Indigenous language to another. Alpher (1993, pp. 98-99) describes the case of Yir-Yoront respect register:

> For example, in the Yir-Yoront language – spoken by Uw-Oykangand's neighbour to the northwest – inclusion of the function word *wangal* in a sentence, preceding the verb, characterises the sentence as respectful (*wangal* also occurs as a content word meaning 'hand' in the respect register).

However, Alpher (1993) reports that respect registers used in other Indigenous languages can be more complex. Modifications can occur at word level as is the case in Olkel-Ilmbanhthi, where all function words remain unchanged whereas content words are replaced by those of the respect register (Alpher, 1993, p. 98). They can occur at morpheme level as is the case in Uw-Oykangand: "Alka-nhdh" becomes "Udnga-nhdh" (spear-INSTRUM). In addition, in some cases, hyperonyms are used. It means that words become unspecific. The meaning conveyed can thus become very vague and imprecise. Alpher (1993, p. 99) explains:

> It is as if the message of the utterance becomes to an extent less important than the nature of the social relationship that the speaker is trying to maintain or establish with the person spoken to. In the respect registers of Aboriginal languages such vagueness is implicit in the use of a single respect-register word to substitute for any of a number of ordinary-register words that are related to each other in one way or another. Most usually, this relation is one of membership in the same class based on similarity of meaning. It is as if, in English, there were a respect register in

[10] Gaby (2008, p. 225) gives a definition to 'moiety': "[It] is a kinship group based on unilateral descent."

> which the word 'vehicle' was always used whenever one wanted to refer to a car, a bus, or a truck.

When Alphers writes “the nature of the social relationship is more important than the message”; he is referring to the notion of face that was introduced by Goffman (1967). In fact, using the ordinary register instead of the respect register would position the speaker as inappropriate and impolite, would embarrass or upset the interlocutor and would threaten the social bond between them. In short, it would become a face threatening speech act (Brown & Levinson, 1978). In order to avoid it and “save face” in such circumstances Indigenous speakers use the respect register. Furthermore, the vagueness found in the respect register of these Indigenous languages correlates with Brown and Levinson’s (1978) strategies in face-to-face interactions. According to them, being vague, ambiguous or imprecise are some of the several strategies that can be used to maintain face and avoid face threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp. 225-226). Thus, the use of the respect register is evidence to the importance of social construct and communal identity.

Ceremonies are another aspect of community where language is involved. In order to become a man, Indigenous boys have to go through some rite of passage. Initiation is crucial for the coming to term of their own identity both as an individual and a member of a community (Curran, 2011). The language used during Initiation is particularly interesting. However, the knowledge we have of the languages used during ceremonies is limited. Their sacred aspect means that only small information has been revealed and it is usually unethical to discuss it in scholarly work (Alpher, 1993). Lardil people (Queensland) made available information about their ceremonial language when it fell out of use:

> Demin uses some 150 basic elements to substitute for all the words of regular Lardil. Demin words differ from those of ordinary Lardil in one very conspicuous way: the sound-system according to which they are pronounced is radically unlike that of ordinary Lardil or of any other Australian Aboriginal language. This system includes in its inventory of sounds several nasalised clicks and an ingressive lateral (an [1] sound made by drawing the breath into the lungs). Without going into the details of how all these sounds are produced, it should nonetheless be clear to readers that words in Demin have and are intended to have a bizarre sound. Speakers find them both funny and fun to make. Alpher (1993, p.102)

Denim is thus a language of creation that was used by Lardill male speakers during Initiation (Alpher, 1993; Evans, 2010, p. 201). The speaker has to efficiently convey meaning with the small stock of words that is available to them. The phonological system of Denim is also different from that of Lardill (Alpher, 1993; Evans, 2010). The use of Denim is intentionally done to have an effect on the listener. It may be done to impress the young initiands or to give spirituality through sound (Alpher, 1993). This recalls the intentional approach to language which has been defined by Hall (1997, p. 29) as such:

> It holds that it is the speaker, the author, who imposes his or her unique meaning on the world through language. Words mean what the author intends they should mean. This is the intentional approach.

However, Hall is quite sceptical of this approach: “We cannot be the sole or unique source of meanings in language, since that would mean that we could express ourselves in entirely private languages.” (p. 29) Yet, Denim seems to be the proof that Indigenous people are able to create an entirely private language used by men only during Initiation. Denim is unique in its way (Evans, 2010). Alpher (1993, p. 102) also argues that Denim is used as a tool to gauge the skills of a young Indigenous man, “what seems to be asked of the young initiands is that they demonstrate verbal proficiency, just as they are asked to demonstrate proficiency in other aspects of adult life.” This is during such rites of passage that language competency is being tested. A young Lardil man will–through the use of Denim–be able to assert its identity within his community. This clearly shows the intricate link that exists between language, community and identity.

The use of Aboriginal sign language also indicates how communication functions within Indigenous communities. As mentioned earlier, kinship is a predominant aspect of Indigenous life. In some Indigenous communities, a woman who loses her husband remains silent during the long period of her mourning (Alpher, 1993, pp. 103-104). He argues that Aboriginal sign language relies on image, sound and units of meaning. He develops the connection between signs and sounds:

> The third feature is that sign language 'words', when they are extended to cover the meanings of more than one spoken word, sometimes do so, not on the basis of shared features of meaning, but on the basis of shared features of sound. So, for example, the Warlpiri sign corresponding to the

> spoken word *winpiri* 'spearwood' (a species of tree) is used also for the spoken words *wina* 'winner', *wiki* 'week', wiki 'whisky', *Winjiyi* 'Wednesday', and *Winiyi* 'Winnie'. The basis for the association is the shared syllable *wi*. (Alpher, 1993, p. 104)

In his analysis, Kendon (1988) notes that sign language emerges from different social behaviours:

> With respect to the development of sign languages Kendon emphasizes that these processes are associated either with the imposition of speech taboos or even speech bans on females as parts of mourning rituals or with speech taboos imposed on males in initiation ceremonies, or, though to a far lesser degree, with the need for silent communication while hunting. (cited in Senft, 1991, pp. 401-402)

Sign language is an answer to a need to communicate within the community when social factors or circumstances do not allow Indigenous people to use spoken language. Sign language is thus a communicative means that is characteristic of Indigenous people as members of a community.

3.3 Language, Sense of Identity and Wellbeing

It has been argued earlier in the study that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's sense of identity has been altered with colonisation. Identity through language is challenged by language loss, disrupted language transmission and the emergence of new Indigenous languages (see §1.2 & §2.2). Identification through language is rather important given the link languages have to land and community (see §3.1 & §3.2). It is argued that language use develops one's individual and communal identity, strengthens one's self-esteem and improves one's wellbeing (Marmion et al., 2014; Nordlinger & Singer, 2014).

Even though Indigenous cultures have been undermined for two centuries, they have been maintaining a strong sense of identity. Language is crucial in acquiring, maintaining or reviving one's sense of identity. Language, identity and wellbeing are at the core of the 2014 AIATSIS survey, entitled *Community, Identity, Wellbeing: the report of the second National Indigenous Languages Survey* (Marmion et al., 2014). The link between language and wellbeing is explicit. Connection to language strengthens one's identity, "the survey data shows that traditional language is a strong part of Indigenous people's identity, and connection with language is critical

for their wellbeing" (Marmion et al, 2014, p. xiii). The key findings speak for themselves, "75 per cent of respondents strongly agreed, illustrating that traditional languages plays an important role in respondents' sense of identity" (Marmion et al, 2014, p. 29). Indigenous people believe that the use of traditional languages improves their wellbeing mainly because it strengthens "their sense of identity and sense of belonging to their tradition, culture, ancestor, spirit, family, community, land, and/or country"; and also because it "empowers" them in strengthening "their self-esteem, pride, and positive feelings in general" (p. 29). They quote a Boandik woman who clarifies the sense of self-esteem that comes alongside language use:

> Strong cultural identity enables one to feel proud of themselves, and speaking and maintaining ones language raises self esteem and enables one to feel good about themselves. Traditional language is important for maintaining strong cultural connections. Where traditional languages have been taken away from communities, a sense of loss, grief and inadequacy develops. To keep communities and generations strong, traditional language being passed from one generation to another is vital. (Brooke Joy cited in Marmion et al., 2014, p. 28)

Brooke Joy notices the effect that language loss has on one's self-esteem and identity. Reviving one's language is a way to reconcile with one's identity (Marmion et al., 2014). The survey quotes a Barngala woman:

> I believe that if we were to revive our sleeping language, we could not only gain recognition in the Aboriginal and wider community but we could also regain our sense of identity, we could start to become a strong community and family again. (Jenna Richards cited in Marmion et al, 2014, p. xi)

This Indigenous woman suggests that giving a place to Indigenous languages allows Indigenous people to connect with themselves as well as with the wider world. The survey supports the idea that this can be achieved through language learning:

> The survey respondents said that they conduct language activities on order to improve people's wellbeing and to help people connect with language and culture. This is supported by research in this area; for example, a 10-year study in central Australia found that connectedness to culture, family and land, and opportunity for self-determination assisted to significantly lower morbidity rates (Australian Human Rights Commission 2009, p. 61). (Marmion et al, 2014, p. 45)

The survey aims at demonstrating that learning Indigenous languages can improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This view is shared by other linguists–among them are Nordlinger and Singer (2014). They argue that Indigenous language learning is linked to the health improvements of young Indigenous people:

> This is supported by recent studies showing that Indigenous youth who speak an Indigenous language have substantially better physical and emotional wellbeing, engage far less in risky drug and alcohol use, and have lower rates of suicide. (Nordlinger & Singer, 2014, p. 2)

These arguments are working towards awareness from the wider Australian society concerning language maintenance and revival.

It has been argued that language maintenance and revival is crucial Aboriginal self-identification and wellbeing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can strengthen their sense of identity, their pride, their sense of belonging and overall their wellbeing with the connection to language. Marmion et al. (2014) argue that they show a desire to have their languages given a place within their communities as well as within a wider Australia.

PART II

MAINTAINING A PLACE WITHIN WIDER AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

4 LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND REVITALISATION

4.1 Writing Oral Languages

It has been mentioned in Part I that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have an oral culture. The knowledge of the world is passed on through story-telling. Writing Indigenous languages is a recent issue (Black, 1993, p. 214). Even though some Indigenous languages are found in colonial records, it is during the late 1960s and early 1970s that many Indigenous languages developed a written form (Black, 1993, p. 214). During this period, Indigenous languages gained visibility in wider Australian society. A written form for Indigenous languages was needed mainly for education purposes (Black, 1993, p. 215). The importance of having written records of these languages was highlighted by the endangered situation of traditional languages. However, writing Indigenous languages raised different issues–among them is the conflict between orality and literacy.

The awareness towards the endangered status of Indigenous languages was raised in the late 1960s and 1970s. Linguists called for the "urgency of documenting these endangered languages" (Meakins, 2014, p. 366). Gaby (2008, p. 212) notes, "[f]or decades, the chief concern of Australianist linguistics was to record and describe those languages that remained." In order to preserve these languages, they need to be recorded orally and/or through writing. The first drive to write Indigenous languages is a need coming from non-Indigenous linguists ascribing features of what is known about languages in a wider cultural sphere. In the late 19th century, Boas (cited in Evans, 2010, p. 36) proposed a model of language description in order to avoid interferences coming from the linguist's culture:

> Boas made explicit many of the tenets that have become axiomatic in the best descriptive work: the importance of describing each language and each culture on their own terms rather than importing inappropriate European models, the need to discover the inner design of each language inductively through the study of texts, and the scientific responsibility to produce as undistorted a record as possible by setting grammar alongside a comprehensive dictionary and text collection–the so-called Boasian trilogy.

According to Boas, a language description is composed of grammar, dictionary and texts. Yet, many descriptions of Indigenous languages do not follow the Boasian trilogy (Gaby, 2008, p. 212; Koch & Nordlinger, 2014 p. 9). Gaby (2008, p. 212) argues:

> Unlike in the USA, however, few languages were documented to the level of 'Boasian trilogy' of grammar, texts and dictionary. Although the collection of thousands of texts was assured by standard field linguistics practice, only a fraction of those collected was transcribed, and even fewer published.

Koch and Nordlinger (2014 p. 9) add that "most grammatical descriptions of Australian languages include a few illustrative texts, usually narratives." Documenting Indigenous languages is a means to preserve them in a wider cultural sphere. Evans (2010, p. 129) argues that writing oral languages goes against their extinction: "Once a culture adopts writing, the disappearance of speech no longer needs to mean the death of a language, and the loss of an oral tradition does not delete this knowledge for all time." He makes the plea that preserving endangered languages is necessary for several reasons including human capacity of adaptation, human quality, broader linguistic research, as well as the storage of the world's knowledge. This view is shared by most linguists–among them is Nordlinger (cited in Trounson, 2016, p.5) who argues that, "[...] the faster that these languages disappear without us really understanding them, the more we lose in terms of knowledge about ourselves and what it is to be human, so in that sense this should matter to all of us."

Documenting Indigenous languages helps keeping the knowledge of the world and helps securing a place within a wider cultural sphere. In addition, it helps their revitalisation. This is the case of Tasmanian languages which revive nowadays through Palawa kani. Walsh (2014, p. 330) reports:

> [...] [L]anguage revitalisation efforts have been in train since at least the 1990s, and by 2006 it is reported that a range of story books and CDs were available using the "retrieved" language known as Palawa kani (http://www.fatsilc.org.au/voice-of-theland-magazine/vol-30–39–2005–2009/vol-32-april-2006). However one might ask: what is the nature of this language? According to one source:
>
>> Palawa kani is a reconstructed language; an ongoing project which aims to create a generic language, resembling the extinct languages once spoken by the Tasmanian Aborigines (Palawa).

> … The original Tasmanian languages became extinct in 1905 when the last native speaker died. As part of community efforts to retrieve as much of the original Tasmanian culture as possible, efforts are made to (re)construct a language for the indigenous community. Due to the scarcity of records, Palawa kani is being constructed as a composite of the estimated 6 to 12 original languages. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palawa_kani)

Documents coming from six to twelve Tasmanian languages helped the construction of Palawa kani. Palawa kani lies at the extreme of language revitalisation. Nevertheless, other Indigenous languages build on previous documentation in order to develop a writing system and dictionaries:

> This is just one part of the process of building on old materials for new purposes: developing vocabulary (Glacon 2010; Jones and Laffan 2008; Simpson 1995), deciding on a spelling system (Jones et al. 2010; Thieberger 1995); interpreting early sources [...]. (Walsh, 2014, p. 339)

According to the Boasian trilogy, assembling dictionaries is crucial in the appropriate documentation of languages. Dictionaries are the first step towards visibility within a wider culture. The first dictionary of Indigenous languages was a dictionary of the Adelaide language created in 1810 by the German missionaries Schürmann and Teichelmann (Simpson, 1993, pp. 129-130). Simpson (1993) gives several reasons to the publication of the dictionary. Their mission was "to preserve the native language; to give the Aborigines a writing system and translations of the New Testament; to teach the Aborigines to read [; and to] help other Europeans learn the language, so as to be able to talk with Aborigines" (Simpson, 1993, p. 129). However, in the 19th century, dictionaries of Indigenous languages were mainly used by non-Indigenous people in order to communicate with Indigenous people, and by non-Indigenous people interested in Indigenous languages (Simpson, 1993, p. 135). Since the 1970s, the audience of dictionaries of Indigenous languages has evolved (Simpson, 1993, p. 135). Dictionaries are a tool for education. There is a need of both monolingual and bilingual dictionaries for educational purposes (Simpson, 1993, p. 135). For instance, in a documentary (Allam, 2013), Ernie Dingo goes in Raukkan (South Australia) to meet Tom Trevorrow, a Ngarrindjeri man. He informs him that missionaries collected a book of stories and of the Ngarrindjeri language–*The Folklore of the South Australians Aborigines*. He reports that within the community there are more than 250 speakers of Ngarrindjeri; that they have built on this book to

record their own dictionary; and that they have developed an alphabet book to teach the younger generations.

Furthermore, to start writing a language means to decide of a spelling system. The task of creating a writing system is not an easy one since it involved linguistic and non-linguistic considerations. The choices of new rules and conventions rely on several factors. The choices towards a standard system in writing the Kriol variety of Roper River are evidence to what is in consideration. The main implications in developing a writing system for Roper River Kriol were linguistic, sociological, psychological, pedagogical and practical (Disbray & Loakes, 2013, p. 290). Disbray and Loakes (2013, p. 290) further explain:

> The first factor was ‘maximum representation of speech’ and to satisfy this, the orthography was to closely reflect the sound system of Kriol. The second criterion was ‘maximum motivation’, wide community acceptance of the orthography. This acceptance, by both minority language speakers and speakers of the majority language (such as education and language planning authorities), would satisfy sociological considerations. The third criterion, ‘maximum transfer’, acknowledged the importance of transfer between orthographies in other languages, English and other Traditional Indigenous languages. The fourth criterion was ‘maximum ease of learning’, aimed at ensuring that the orthography was easy to teach, covering pedagogy. Finally, practical concerns meant that special symbols were avoided, to achieve ‘maximum ease of reproduction’.

It is worth of notice that community acceptance of writing systems are to be in consideration. The sociolinguistic aspect to literacy is indeed crucial. The acceptance of a writing system can be seen when there is a “vernacularisation of literacy” (Malcolm, 2002, p. 13). There is vernacularisation of literacy when the introduction of literacy and its use within a community serve its own purpose (Malcolm, 2002). Writing can indeed be a powerful expressive means for minority languages which strive to have their voice heard (Disbray & Loakes, 2013).

Nevertheless, the fact that literacy is introduced within oral cultures raises several questions: are literacy and orality in conflict? Is it paradoxical to write oral cultures? Does literacy inhibit oral cultures? Black (1993, p. 215) argues that “[w]estern societies value written contracts over oral promises, for example, and the idea that the written word is safer or stronger than the spoken is a compelling one.” In

literate societies, writing is a quality of high value; reversely non-literate societies value orality:

> Evaluations of oral language are often implicitly based in literate standards, as Bloomfield noted long ago, although speakers of some minoritized languages hold them in high esteem precisely because they "cannot be written" (King 1994, Taylor 1989). (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998, p. 39)

Moreover, Evans (2010, p. 189) reports that some Indigenous people may be apprehensive of literacy because it would alter a brain capacity constantly solicited with oral cultures i.e. memory:

> In a preliterate society human memory is the only archive–what we forget is gone forever. [...] My Aboriginal language teachers are repeatedly astonished when I fail to remember, for example, the pairing of a bush and a name they have given me for it a month or a few years ago. [...] And I once heard of an Aboriginal mother who was reluctant to let her daughter learn to read and write because of her fear that this would atrophy her memory.

Issue coming from literacy do not only concern brain capacities: "It has sometimes been suggested that a reliance on literacy may inhibit oral storytelling and thus interfere with the oral transmission of traditional stories." (Black, 1993, p. 215) However, Black (1993, p. 215) argues that, "[i]t is not literacy that is killing off oral traditions" suggesting that this is not the only factor to the disruption of oral transmission.

4.2 A Place for Indigenous Languages in Bilingual Education

The documentation of Indigenous languages is a tool for education. Before the 1970s, the government of Australia did not take into account the inadequacy of monolingual education–in English–for Indigenous children. In the late 1970s, the first bilingual programs started to be designed–especially in the Northern Territory. In other states, bilingual education and language programs were introduced only at the beginning of the 21th century. Bilingual programs were mainly introduced as governmental prescription to general improvement of Indigenous education (Black, 1993, p. 210). However, these programs give visibility to Indigenous languages within

Australian institutions. Indigenous languages gain representation within wider Australian society through bilingual education.

In the 1990s, there were about thirty bilingual programs implemented in Northern Territory and South Australia (Black, 1993, p. 210). Among the Indigenous languages receiving a bilingual program are Kriol, Warlpiri, Arrernte, Pintupi, Luritja, Pitjantjatjara, and Yankunytjatjara (Black, 1993, p. 211). Northern Territory was the first state to introduce bilingual education in the 1973 (Malcolm & Koscielecki, 1997, p. 79; Walsh, 2014, p. 332). This is partly due to the great amount of remote areas within the state. As has been argued in §2.1.2., Kriol covers a wide area of Northern Territory. Malcolm (1994, p. 290) reports that, “Kriol [...] has been used in bilingual education since 1975”. For instance, in Beswick Reserve, Bamyili (or Barunga) school has been a bilingual school delivering education both in English and Kriol for twenty-two years (Murtagh, 1982; Rhydwen, 1993, pp. 156-158; Meakins, 2014, p. 392). Meakins (2014, p. 389) argues that bilingual education in English and Kriol is possible only thanks to the recognition of Kriol as a proper and distinct language and not as an ethnolect of English[11]. Rhydwen (1993, p. 157) notices the difficulty creole speakers are met with for their language to be part of bilingual schooling:

> The ideology of bilingual education, of biliteracy, is that it allows 'both ways' education, the 'both ways' being Western and Aboriginal. Yet, many children speak a language that gives them access to neither. Children who are creole speakers are, with a few exceptions, treated as though they speak English, albeit 'badly', and there is no provision for them to be taught English as a second language. At the same time, children who speak creole often live in communities where the establishment or continuation of a bilingual program in an ancestral language has been refused on the grounds that the children do not have such a language as their first language.

Moreover, the choice of the local language taught alongside English is determining for Indigenous communities:

> Many such situations are complicated by the fact that more than one ancestral language is used within the community: the school, by choosing to use one rather than another, alters the status of languages, and by implication, of social groups within the community. Nevertheless, given

[11] An ethnolect is language variety spoken by an ethnic group. In this case, Kriol is not regarded as a variety of English spoken by Indigenous people.

> that the process of schooling cannot but have a homogenising effect, the fact that one or more Aboriginal languages may be used within school programs is at least a concession to the special needs of the community. (Rhydwen, 1993, pp. 156-157)

Standard Australian English is generally the language used in bilingual education integrating the local Indigenous language. One Arm Point is a bilingual school which puts forward the importance of using the two Australian dialects of English within bilingual education. One Arm Point is indeed a three language school comprising Standard Australian English, Aboriginal English and the local Indigenous language–Bardi:

> As far as I know, One Arm Point has the longest-running language/culture program in Western Australia. It's been going for more than 20 years now, which is a real testament to the strength of this community and their commitment to keeping culture strong. It's really impressive. One Arm Point school is talking about itself as a "three language school" now, which is also really good. The three languages are Aboriginal English, Standard Australian English, and Bardi. (Bowern cited in Walsh, 2014, p. 338)

However, bilingual education where the two languages are taught equally is only possible in areas where the Indigenous language is strong i.e. well-documented and still spoken within the community. Languages in a state of revival cannot benefit from a proper half-half bilingual program. There are different language programs going from first language maintenance to language awareness. This is the case of Noongar, which is barely spoken within the Noongar community. The Australian Children's Television Foundation released an educational program–entitled *Waabiny time* (Trimboli, 2011)–teaching children up to six years-old their traditional language. The program targets elementary and primary schools who wish to revive the language and promote pride in its use (Burton, 2010). Such languages activities allow Indigenous languages to gain speakers (Marmion et al., 2014, pp. 19-23). Sometimes, bilingual education and language programs allow a reversal shift in language transmission within communities who revive their language (Walsh, 2014, p. 341). Walsh (2014, p. 341) argues that, "the view that intergenerational transmission must flow from upper generations to lower generations was brought into question by reports that children were instructing their parents and other carers in the revitalised languages."

Bilingual education allows Indigenous languages to find and maintain a place within Australian institutions. For instance, in 2012, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs published a report entitled *Our Land, Our Languages: Language Learning in Indigenous Communities*. Among the committee's recommendations stands: "resourcing bilingual school education programs for Indigenous communities where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact)". Besides, Indigenous education and bilingual schooling are issues included in the broader national *Close the Gap* policies. *Close the Gap* is a campaign which started in 2006 and aims at reducing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in terms of health, employment, education etc. (Oxfam Australia, 2016). However, bilingual education is left to state decisions (House of Representatives). Governmental directives are sometimes in conflict with the development of such programs (Walsh, 2014, p. 332). As Meakins notes (2014, p. 392), "in 2009 the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training dismantled the last 12 bilingual schools in the Northern Territory [...]".

4.3 Self-ruled Language Projects: Strengthening the Place of Indigenous Languages within Communities

In order to maintain and strengthen the place of Indigenous languages, self-ruled language projects arose within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. During the period of self-determination, the government put forward the importance of giving accessible language resources and funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who wished to develop language projects:

> The first Commonwealth policy to significantly address Indigenous languages was the National Policy on Languages of 1987. The main objective of the policy was to outline the nation's 'choices about language issues' in the context of Australia's emergent multiculturalism. The policy covered all language-related activities in Australia, including policy specific to Indigenous languages. It recommended the development of the National Aboriginal Languages Project (NALP) to fund Indigenous language education programs and projects. The main outcome of this policy was the provision of funding to community based Indigenous language programs. (House of Representatives)

Later, in 2009, the government introduced a program in order to support language projects financially (House of Representatives). The program is known as Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) and is led by the Office for the Arts (OFTA). In 2012, the *Our Land, Our Languages* report asked the government to "[expand] the Indigenous Languages Support (ILS) program and [prioritise] the development of language nests". Indeed, initiatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are subject to funding (Evans, 2010, p. xix). Evans (2010, p. xix) writes that, "what small communities can do to maintain their languages [...] is such an uphill battle, with so few positive achievements, and as much at the mercy of political and economic factors as of purely linguistics ones". However, Walsh (2014, 332) notes that "First Languages Australia is a recent instance of pressure groups that have arisen to lobby for resources and policy development for Australian Languages."

As Evans (2010, p. 213) puts it, "retaining of traditional language is not incompatible with economic development and self-determination." For instance, in Allam's documentary (2013), Ernie Dingo goes in Tyrendarra (Victoria) and meets a Gunditjmara woman who tells him that the community has purchased back a significant place of Gunditjmara people where an electrical group was based, and has built a language centre to revive their traditional language. Since the 1970s-80s, Indigenous language nests have developed and language projects have been created, increasing opportunities to use traditional languages and therefore strengthening their place within communities. Kimberley Language Resource Centre is the first language centre that has been established and "covers around 30 languages in the region"–among them are Bunuba, Gooniyandi and Kija (Walsh, 2014, p. 335). Resource centres have an important role within Indigenous communities willing to revitalise their traditional language. Walsh (2014, pp. 335-336) argues that these language nests are fragile because subject to funding–he reports the closure of two of the nests–but are "particularly committed to self-management". In addition, self-determination is supported by other organisations such as the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity:

> Indigenous linguists have played an increasing role in the documentation of their own languages (e.g. Bani and Alpher 1987, Ford and Ober 1991, Henderson and Dobson 1994, Granites and Laughren 2001, Bell 2003, Turpin and Ross 2012). In recent years the Resource Network for Linguistic Diversity has provided extensive support and training for

> Indigenous communities interested in documenting and revitalising their own languages [...]. (Koch & Nordlinger, 2014, p. 6)

It means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities more than having access to language resources can participate in the maintenance and the creation of new resources. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities may have more control on certain language projects than on language learning policies–even though it varies from case to case. Resource centres allow language projects to thrive. For example, in the region of Kimberley–where language nests have been developed–a media group has been created to promote Indigenous languages. The media group is called Pakam (Pilbara and Kimberley Aboriginal Media) and mainly broadcasts songs in traditional languages. Allam's documentary (2013) recounts a similar case. In episode 5, Ernie Dingo goes in Roebourne (Western Australia) and visits the Juluwarlu Archiving Project. This project started in 1998 to preserve the language and culture of the Yindjibarndi people (Julurwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation). The Julurwarlu Group Aboriginal Corporation aims at promoting and exhibiting Yindjibarndi language and culture. In order to do so, they created a radio program. Ernie Dingo meets the Yindjibarndi Elder broadcasting herself through the Ngaarda Radio. These radio programs strengthen the place local Indigenous languages have within their community; and because it is accessible to anyone it gives the language a wider scope of visibility–to some extent.

4.4 Language Maintenance and Language Shift

Within the linguistic field, the paradox between language maintenance and language shift is put forward. Harris (cited in Black, 1993, p. 219) asks, "[i]f cultures and languages must change, however, what does it mean to 'maintain' them?" Black (1993, p. 218) argues that documenting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages does not mean "'freezing' the culture or language at some point in time, whether at the time of first European contact or at the present." For instance, a common criticism towards the early inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures within educational settings gives that curricula address them as part of a past history and do not address their contemporaneity (see Brown's poem about the history of Tasmanian people cited in Crowley, 1993, p. 51). This is a reason why resource centres are in a constant development, archiving old and new material for languages to be preserved and revitalised. *Waabiny Time* (Trimboli, 2011) stands for

a good example of a language project addressing the challenge of revitalising the traditional language without freezing it either in a past or contemporary time. The project took this issue into account and was launched with the help of the Noongar community. Trimboli (cited in Burton, p. 4) argues, “Waabiny Time merges traditional and contemporary Noongar culture to create a world that the young audience can relate to, and one that they feel comfortable participating in.” However, among the criticisms to language maintenance is the feasibility of language revitalisation:

> A language is a difficult thing to learn, other than as a young child, and requires application and concentration. There has to be a utilitarian reason for learning it, something more (to judge from recent experience) than ethnic pride.
> It is also the case that no language — once it has ceased to be used in everyday life — has ever been revived. Mention is sometimes made of Hebrew as a putative counter-example to this statement. But Hebrew was always in use, both as a written medium (in books, journals and correspondence) and in religious services. It was augmented into the first language of a group — which did take unusual application and dedication — but this group had a political unity. Hebrew did not burst out as the minor language of a minority group, but as the official and prestige language of a nation. Only in these circumstances would such a resurgence be likely to happen. (Dixon cited in Walsh, 2014, p. 341)

The current linguistic situation of Australia exposes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to a language shift towards English. As has been mentioned in §2.1., new Indigenous languages–creoles, Aboriginal English and mixed languages–are evidence of a linguistic shift towards English. Kriol and Aboriginal English are widely spoken within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities. To give figures, Kriol has about 20,000 speakers and it is believed that Aboriginal English has even more speakers (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290). The question is: does language shift inhibit language maintenance and revitalisation? Are Kriol and Aboriginal English more likely to be the languages to maintain and strengthen a place within wider Australian society? Evans (2010, p. 55) argues that, “Arrernte is the only Aboriginal language to survive today in an urban setting.” He writes (p. 55) that the “tenacity of Arrernte speakers in maintaining their language in the face of English” is the explanation to it. In addition, language shift towards English is not always negatively viewed (see 2.2. for Kriol labelled as a “killer language”): “Sometimes, an older generation are actually proud that their modern children speak a prestige

outside language, and see language shift as an inevitable ticket out of the ghetto." (Evans, 2010, p. 217)

5 ABORIGINAL ENGLISH: THE DIALECT OF ENGLISH USED BY INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS TO MAINTAIN, DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN A PLACE WITHIN WIDER AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Aboriginal English is the dialect used by Indigenous people to maintain, develop and strengthen a place within wider Australian society (Malcolm, 2011, p. 261). It epitomises the language shift towards English that occurs within the Aboriginal Australian linguistic ecology. Most Indigenous people talk Aboriginal English; some of them speak Standard Australian English and a few are bidialectal in the two varieties. Aboriginal English is sometimes regarded as a bridge language giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access to education and employment. Even though Australia has not adopted an official language, English is the dominant language across the country. For instance, resumes have to be written in English only. Aboriginal English has been recognised as an official dialect of English in the 1960s (Eades, 2014, pp. 419-422). Eades (2013, p. 78) defines a dialect as such:

> A dialect is a variety of language that:
> • can be understood by speakers of other varieties of the same language; and
> • differs from other varieties of the same language in systematic ways (these differences can be found in sounds, grammar, words and their meanings, and language use).

It has been argued in §2.1.4. that Aboriginal English is the umbrella term for several dialectal varieties of English spoken by Indigenous people. However, despite its recognition within the academic sphere, Aboriginal English is commonly but mistakenly regarded as "incorrect English" (Eades, 1993, p. 185; Malcolm, 2011, p. 262; Malcolm, 2013b, p. 42). Aboriginal English has its own linguistic features which makes it different from Standard Australian English (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, p. 172). Besides, it is a form of English that allows the expression of Aboriginality (Malcolm, 2011, p. 261).

5.1 Linguistic Differences between Standard Australian English and Aboriginal English

Unlike creoles (Meakins, 2014, p. 390), Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English are mutually intelligible. However, Aboriginal English differs from Standard Australian English in its grammar, phonology and vocabulary (Malcolm, 1994, pp 291-292; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, p. 172). In other words, it has its own linguistic system. Hereunder is a summary of the features found in most varieties of Aboriginal English.

At the grammatical level, Aboriginal English is different from Standard Australian English in many ways. The following summary relies on Butcher's analysis (2008). The clause structure in Aboriginal English is distinctive. The verb *to be* is not systematically used as a copula or auxiliary (1). Topicalisation of complements is frequent–meaning that the complement appears clause-initially and changes the normal SVO word order (2).Topicalisation can occur by apposition as pre-clausal or post-clausal extension–especially when it is the extension of a pronoun (3). Question tags are invariable, the most frequent being *inna* and *unna* (4). Although, other forms exist: *ina, ma, ini, init, inti* (Malcolm, 1994, p.292; Malcolm, 2013a, pp. 274-275). The inversion subject-verb/auxiliary may not occur in questions. In addition, wh-questions are formed by the introduction of a wh-word clause-initially onto a statement (5). However, this applies mainly in basilectal forms. Subordinate clauses are not usually introduced by a conjunction but are marked by their position within the clause (6).

(1) They really big.
Where that Rebecca mob?
(2) That grog they bringin'.
(3) Emu egg, I bin eating 'em.
I kill im, that old kangaroo.
'E killed a big snake, big green one.
'E buy muticar, that blue-one Toyota.
(5) You got dog?
When he can go home?

(6) I seen one lady was fall in that water. for “I saw a lady who fell in the water.”[12]

Concerning verb phrase structure, Aboriginal English does not use the third-person singular tense marker (7). Past tense markers may not occur on regular verbs (8). However, the past participle form of a verb may be used without an auxiliary as a past marker (9). Malcolm (2013a) also notes that irregular verbs are regularised (10). It is worthy of notice that *was* is used as a regular agreement between the preterit of the verb *to be* and all personal pronouns (Malcolm, 2002, p. 6). Malcolm (cited in Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, p. 138) also suggests that tense markers on verbs are not compulsory when there is a time marker within the sentence (11); and that a double past marker may be used on verbs (12). He adds that *bin* is introduced “as a past tense and completive aspect marker” (13) (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291). *Gotta, gonna* and sometimes *go* are used as auxiliaries to form the future (14). Multiple negations are frequent in Aboriginal English (15). *Never* may be used as a preverbal past tense negator (16). *Nomo* (from “no more”) and *nothing* sometimes occur as preferred negative particles (17).

(7) When my sister come, we can eat.
(8 & 11) ’E look for that kangaroo before.
(9) I seen that big one.
(10) catch, catched, catched
(12) camed
(14) You gotta come to that ceremony?
(15) ’E not married to none of them woman, eh?
(16) I never got no pay.
I never went to school yesterday.
(17) ’E nomo my fadda. for “He’s not my father.”
That fella got nothin clothes on

[12] Malcolm (2011, p. 266) argues that this structure is a result of a different cognitive process (see §5.3). This construction is what Malcolm (2002; 2011) labels “embedded observation”. He explains further:

> The desire to give separate attention to the entity and to the attributes is also seen in structures like *I saw him was running behind me*. This is a blend of ‘I saw him’ and ‘He was running behind me’, but it does not use the standard English method of embedding. In calling this “embedded observation”, I emphasize the fact that the structure only occurs when the first verb depicts the observation from the point of view of the person who made it, then the second verb is concerned with the nature of the observation. It is a syntactically different way of achieving the same kind of effect as that of post-clausal modification. (Malcolm, 2011, p. 266)

With regards to noun phrases, noun plural marking is not necessary when there is an explicit plural marker in the noun phrase (18). *For*, as a preposition or as a suffix, is used as a genitive marker (19). Aboriginal English uses *he* or *'e* indistinctively between *he, she, it* and the existential *there* (20). It has a more elaborate pronoun system–based on Indigenous language substrates–which includes dual and plural forms, and exclusive and inclusive first person plurals (21). Malcolm (2002, p. 6; 2013a, p. 271) notes that the formation of reflexive pronouns is based on possessive pronouns such as *hisself.* The suffix *–one* is used on adjectives as a "nominalising suffix" (22). Aboriginal English uses the suffix *–bala* on numerals and pronouns (23). In addition, it can be noted that the use of *one* is extended as a substitute indefinite article and *dat* as a substitute definite article[13] (24) (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291; Malcolm, 2013a, p. 273). Verbs of manner are formed with the suffixes *–way* or *–time* (25) (Malcolm, 2002, p. 5; Malcolm, 2013a, p. 276). Furthermore, Aboriginal English borrows the possessive marker *–ku* from Ngaanyatjarra and the nominative marker for names *–na* from Yindjibarndi (26) (Malcolm, 1994, p. 292).

(18) E catch treepala turtle. for "He caught three turtles."
E catch whole mobba turtle. for "He caught lots of turtles."
(19) That dog for Alan mob 'e come to my house. for "Alan's family's dog came …"
Alan mob-for dog 'e come to my house.
(20) My sister, 'e got four kids.
'E nice house, eh?
(21) minyu for "me and you" (dual form)
you-n-him for "you and him" (dual form)
mela for "we, including the listener" (inclusive form)
(22) Majella keepin that lil kangaroo baby-one.
That big-one tree...
(23) They kill twobala wallaby.
(25) north way (towards the north); quick way (quickly); long way (far); wobbly way (wobbly); full way (terrific, well done); dark time (night); alltime (all the time); late time (at a late hour).

[13] The use of *dat* may be close to the use of *det* in Kriol–especially when inscribing the analysis in the decreolisation theory to the genesis of Aboriginal English (see 2.1.4). Nicholls (2016) argues that

> [...] currently *det* has two functions in Kriol: firstly, it fulfils the role typical of an article (following Munro 2004); and secondly [...] *det* has an important function as a 'recognitional determiner' related to culturally motivated referring practices. In this role it is used to introduce familiar referents to the discourse while allowing the speaker to maintain a high level of circumspection, particularly in relation to person reference (cf. Nicholls 2013).

Aboriginal English has thus its proper grammatical system. Some grammatical features reveal the input of Indigenous language substrates into Aboriginal English and other features are shared with non-standard varieties of English. Malcolm (1994, p. 291) argues that these grammatical differences can be explained by three processes–simplification, nativisation and transfer. For instance, according to Malcolm (1994), (3), (4), (13), (21), (24) and (25) are evidence of nativisation whereas (26) is an explicit example of transfer.

Aboriginal English varies from Standard Australian English within its phonological system. In terms of vowels, Butcher (2008, p. 630) notes five main vowels: /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/ and /u/. Its vowel spectrum can be reduced to the three vowels /i/, /a/ and /u/ in the most basilectal varieties of Aboriginal English (Butcher, 2008, p. 630). The vowel quality is left unchanged whether it is in stressed or unstressed syllables (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291). Malcolm (1994, p. 291) recognises that, "[v]owel, as well as consonant, phonemes have a wider allophonic range than in [Standard Australian English]". Hereunder is the classification Malcolm (cited in Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, pp. 138-139) offers of these variations:

KIT	i > ɪ	FLEECE	ɪ	*NEAR	ija
DRESS	e ~ a	FACE	e ~ eɪ	SQUARE	eja
TRAP	e ~ a	PALM	a	START	a
LOT	a	*THOUGHT	o	NORTH	o
STRUT	a	*GOAT	o ~ oʊ	FORCE	o
FOOT	u	GOAL	o	*CURE	jʊa
*BATH	a	GOOSE	u	HappY	i
CLOTH	a	PRICE	a ~ aj ~ aɪ	lettER	a
NURSE	oː ~ aː ~ eː	CHOICE	oj ~ aj ~ oɪ	horsES	idj
		MOUTH	a ~ aʊ	commA	a

With regard to consonants, Malcolm (1994, p. 291) writes that, "[Aboriginal English] recognizes fewer phonemes and may not distinguish between voiced and unvoiced consonants, between fricatives and affricates, and between some plosives and fricatives." The phoneme /h/ is dropped when occurring word-initially (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291; Butcher, 2008, p. 629; Eades, 2013, p. 82). However, Aboriginal English speakers are subject to /h/-insertion–which is interpreted as a phenomenon of

hypercorrection (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291; Butcher, 2008, p. 269). Plosives are preferred to fricatives: /t/ instead of /θ/ and /b/ instead of /v/; and alveolar articulations are preferred to laminal-palatal consonants: /ʃ/ instead of /dʒ/ (Malcolm cited in Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, p. 139). Moreover, consonant clusters are barely found in Aboriginal English (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291). Malcolm (1994, p. 291) notices that phonemic boundaries differ from Standard Australian English and that there is "a greater tolerance of contiguous vowels across word boundaries without liaison". In addition, Aboriginal English has a different stress pattern system where stress generally occurs syllable-initially (Malcolm, 1994, p. 291; Butcher, 2008, p.631).

Furthermore, differences between the two dialects can be found within the lexicon. Malcolm (1994, p. 292) gives several of the different word-formation processes which explain the development of the distinctive lexicon of Aboriginal English: word compounding (1); innovative suffixation such as the suffix *–way* which forms adverbs from adjectives coming either from English or Aboriginal languages (2) and the suffix *–time* which modifies nouns to form adverbial expressions (3); blending (4); back-formation (5); and borrowings (6). Some words go through a semantic shift– including semantic extension (7) or semantic inversion[14] (8) (Malcolm, 1994, p3 292; Malcolm, 2002, pp. 8-9).

(1) fire-smoke, cattle-cow, foot-track, eye-glasses, finger-ring.
(2) quick-way, bashful- way, long-way, ngulu-way (fearfully).
(3) long-time (a long time ago)
(4) ownlation (blend of *own* and *relation*)
(5) nothe*r* (from *another*)
(6) from Nyungar: nyungar (southwest Aboriginal person)
from creole: bogie (swim)
from English via Aboriginal languages: wetjala (white man)
(7) *clever*: clever or spiritually powerful (blending of physical and spiritual domains)
poison in *poison cousin* or *poison auntie* where the meaning is extended to describe the avoidance relationship (relatives who are

[14] Malcolm (2002, p. 9) suggests that semantic inversion may be associated with Aboriginal reverse language. Aboriginal reverse language is usually used during ceremonies or children's games. Curran (2011, p. 43) gives the example of up-side-down Warlpiri or Jiliwirri used during men's rituals. Participants are required to replace sentences by their antonyms to convey meaning (Evans, 2010, p. 230). For instance, "I sit on the ground" is expressed as "you stand in the sky" (Evans, 2010, p. 230). However, Malcolm (2002, p. 9) also acknowledges that semantic inversion may be associated "with youth culture (in Australia and overseas)."

forbidden to communicate given Aboriginal kin structures and the notion of respect). (Butcher, 2008, p. 637)

business in *man's business*, *women's business* or *sorry business* extended to religious ceremonies, rituals and their knowledge. (Butcher, 2008, p. 637)

(8) deadly (handsome, very good)

All of these processes allow the emergence of neologisms, enrich Aboriginal English lexicon and makes it distinct from Standard Australian English.

It is clear that Aboriginal English has different rules from Standard Australian English. However, Aboriginal English speakers are often met with the common assumption that they speak some kind of "uneducated English" and that the rules governing the dialect are in fact mistakes of language learners of English:

> It would seem (from the way in which English language and literacy are taught and tested with respect to Indigenous people) that Australia assumes that Indigenous Australians speak English the way they do [...] because they do not know any better. They speak a form of English that they should gratefully relinquish once they have the benefits of education in standard English. (Malcolm, 2011, p. 262)

A distinction should be drawn between varieties of Aboriginal English which follow shared set of rules and Aboriginal interlanguage varieties of English which are described as such:

> Interlanguage refers to the linguistic system of language learners, which in such regions would include some English and some indigenous language forms and structures. It is not a stable, rule-governed language variety, and in this way is quite different from Aboriginal English [...] (Eades, 2013, p. 128)

Eades (2013, p. 5) notices that, "Aboriginal speakers of interlanguage English mostly live in the more remote and northern areas of Australia". Interlanguage English is different from Aboriginal English in the simple fact that speakers of interlanguage English have not finished learning English (Eades, 2013, p. 5).

5.2 The Ownership of English

Aboriginal English speakers are mistakenly reported to speak "broken English" or "rubbish English" (Malcolm, 2013b, p. 42). It has been argued that Aboriginal English follows different linguistic patterns. However, the lack of awareness of

Aboriginal English rules is not the only cause to the misconception about Aboriginal English not being "proper" English. This assumption may also cover another issue– that is the ownership of English. Evans (2010, p. 51) argues that, in a world of language diversity, it is very common to flatter one's own language by degrading one's neighbours' languages:

> In many languages the names for one's neighbors' tongues are derogatory. In Russian, German is *nemetsky*: "dumb [person's] language," or originally "in a mute, dumb way." And in the Aboriginal language Guugu Yimithirr, the neighboring Gugu Yalanji language is *Guugu Dürrurru* ("mumbling talk"). Conversely, it is normal to call your own language by reassuringly flattering terms like "proper talk." Kayardild, for example, literally means "strong language."

This phenomenon takes on its full meaning in post-colonial Australia, at a time when non-Indigenous Australians have been through the process of searching their own voice. Within two centuries, Australian English has developed as an oral and written norm (Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, p. 31). The variety of English spoken by Non-Indigenous Australians has been promoted as a legitimate form of World Englishes. Paradoxically, Aboriginal borrowings served the emancipation of Standard Australian English (Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, pp. 148-149). Within Standard Australian English, 400 loans from Aboriginal languages can be counted (Dixon et al. cited in Leitner & Sieloff, 1998, p. 154; Moore cited in Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, p. 149). However, whether it is common practice to compare one's language with one's neighbour's languages in order to promote one's own voice; it leads to linguistic prejudices in a post-colonial context when the colonised group speaking one variety are met with prejudices and less opportunities within the social, political and cultural spheres particularly because of the variety they speak.

Standard Australian English and Aboriginal English are both vehicle for the expression of Australian identity. Reframing the two dialects of English within a post-colonial social context, Standard Australian English is the variety spoken by the colonising group whereas Aboriginal English is spoken by the colonised group. In addition, it seems that there is diglossia between the two dialects within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Diglossia is characterised by "the use of two varieties of the same language in different social contexts throughout a speech community" (Merriam-Webster dictionary). Across Australia, Standard Australian

English is the variety of English valued over Aboriginal English within the social, political and cultural spheres. Australian institutions are scarcely bidialectal. Language policies favour Standard Australian English (Przewozny-Desriaux, 2016, pp. 225-227). Malcolm (2013b, p. 48) underlines that this diglossia involves the separation between cultural and social identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people:

> It is sometimes useful to distinguish between cultural and social identity (Norton 1997), in that the former concerns one's perceived relationship to the world in the wider sense, and the latter to one's relationship to social institutions. To Aboriginal people, the cultural identification is represented by Aboriginal languages (simply referred to as language in Aboriginal English) and their successors, pidgins, creoles and Aboriginal English and the social identity by Australian English and the institutions to which it grants one access.

Standard Australian English is thus the high (prestige) norm that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are expected to acquire and use within Australian institutions. Malcolm (2013b, p. 42) writes that, "most Aboriginal people expect their children to acquire [Standard Australian English] through the education system." In this system, Aboriginal English is the low variety of English which has no room within Australian institutions. Nevertheless, Harkins (cited in Sharifian, 2006, p. 13) argues that Aboriginal English is "the most truly Australian variety of English, more so than current Standard Australian English [and] may well exert a powerful influence on Australian English in the years to come."

In addition, speakers of Aboriginal English claim the distinctiveness of the variety they speak. Malcolm (2013b, p. 42) writes:

> There is increasing evidence that, over recent decades, Aboriginal speakers have taken possession of English – that is, their own English – and are using it in defiance of public opinion, making such claims as "That's our way of 'talking'" (Eades 1981: 11), "This is who we are. This is our language" (Darlene Oxenham, in Collard, Fatnowna, Oxenham, Roberts and Rodriquez 2000: 96) and "It belongs to Aboriginal people" (Malcolm, Haig, K¨onigsberg, Rochecouste, Collard, Hill and Cahill 1999: 124).

The ownership of English by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is the answer to maintaining their Indigenous identity in the face of the language of the colonised

group. Malcolm (cited in Sharifian, p. 13) notes that, “[Aboriginal English] is a symbol of cultural maintenance; it is the adopted code of a surviving culture.” One of the strategies used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to claim ownership over English is Widdowson’s principle of “dynamic adaptation” i.e. “to take liberties with the language” (Malcolm, 2013b, p. 47). Malcolm (2013b, p. 47) argues that:

> Many of the features of Aboriginal English, such as noun-verb conversions (e.g. *growl im* ‘scold him’; *she blackeyed Amy* ‘she gave Amy a black eye), clipping (e.g. *glueies* ‘people who sniff glue’; *peeps* ‘people’, or ‘relations’), semantic mapping across domains (e.g. *broken down English* ‘broken English’), adjectivalization (e.g. *big mob trailers* ‘many trailers’) (Malcolm, Königsberg, Collard, Hill, Grote, Sharifian, Kickett, and Sahanna 2002), could well have started off as dynamic adaptations by Aboriginal English speakers.

Concerning linguistic colonisation, Malcolm (2013b, p. 46) builds on Spack’s understanding of Cheyfitz’s postcolonial theory and notes three ways to answer as a colonised group: (i) “to master the colonizer’s language in order to ‘become white.’” (Spack cited in Malcolm, 2013b, p. 46); (ii) “to master the language in order to expose the colonizer’s power position. The latter rhetorical stance challenges the notion that the colonizer has exclusive rights to the language and instead asserts that anyone can claim ownership” (Spack cited in Malcolm, 2013b, p. 46); and (iii) to

> treat the colonizer’s language (or language variety) with the same disdain as that with which the colonizer has treated theirs, thus despising or ignoring the language (or language variety) which is used to control and focusing on the language (or language variety) of alternative cultural continuity. This, of course, is an alternative means of resisting control and it is often the preferred means of young people in education settings.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a push-and-pull relation with English. English is the language bridge towards wider Australian society and a language of fulfilment and at the same time a language of oppression. Eades (2014, p. 424) writes:

> As Harkins explains it, English is seen as a “bridge across cultures” or a “two-way language”: speakers want to use English “to get knowledge, information and things of value from the non-Aboriginal world, and to communicate to that world what they as Aboriginal people think, need, want and have to say” (1994: 5).

Harkins (cited in Eades, 2014, p. 424) highlights the positive outcome of using English–it is the pull-side of the phenomenon. Malcolm (2013b, pp. 49-50) mentions the ambivalent feelings towards English:

> First, there is an ambivalence towards the dialect which has always been used as a means of their oppression but which continues to be offered to them as the means of their fulfilment. This has been described by Smitherman (1977) as the push-pull factor: “a simultaneous push towards gaining proficiency in Standard English as the language of access to power, and a pull away from it for fear of sounding or acting white” (Nero, 2006: 9).

Aboriginal English is the result of the ownership of English by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in order to promote their distinctiveness in linguistic identity.

The ownership of English by Aboriginal English speakers is even clearer in regards to the way varieties are more or less close to Standard Australian English. It has been argued in §2.1.4. that varieties of Aboriginal English are inscribed within a continuum where “heavy” varieties are basilectal and “light” forms are acrolectal. Basilectal varieties of Aboriginal English are less intelligible with Standard Australian English. These varieties are sometimes used as an in-group language,

> [T]he term ‘Aboriginal English’ refers to varieties which are used only by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially for intra-group communication and as a symbol of identity. Such varieties may be heard in the southern and eastern White population centres as well as in the northern and remote areas. Aboriginal English has its more basilectal (or ‘heavy’) style, reserved for Aboriginal contexts, and its acrolectal (or ‘light’) style which is approximated to, as far as possible, in communication with Whites. (Malcolm, 1994, p. 290)

or even as a language of exclusion: “One of the communicative uses of Aboriginal English in the context of a wider culture in which Aboriginal people may be on the defensive, is to use it as a means of excluding non-Aboriginal listeners.” (Malcolm, 2013b, p. 47) The ability for Aboriginal English speakers to switch from one basilectal variety to one acrolectal variety in order to define group memberships is evidence to their ownership of English.

5.3 Aboriginality retained in Aboriginal English

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have taken possession of English and express through Aboriginal English the meaning of their cultural and conceptual world. Malcolm (1994, p. 291) writes that Aboriginal English "is English adopted by Aboriginal people for the purpose of providing their own construction of themselves for living in a culturally ambiguous world". One might wonder whether language shift towards English is inhibiting Indigenous cultures to be exhibited and promoted in a wider cultural sphere, and the question is worth attention. Malcolm (2011, p. 261) writes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people "are increasingly using [Aboriginal English] as a medium of cultural expression in the wider community." Besides, Muecke (cited in Malcolm, 1994, p. 292) argues that "[A]boriginality, as an ideology, is not in the process of dying because of the declining use of traditional languages. It is finding its expression in Aboriginal English." In addition, Sharifian (2006, p. 13) points out:

> Although Aboriginal people come from a variety of cultural-linguistic backgrounds, with a fair level of generalisation it is possible to refer collectively to the varieties of English that they speak as "Aboriginal English". This is due to the similarities in the conceptual systems and the worldviews that characterise most varieties of English spoken by Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal English is a marker of Aboriginality because it is deeply rooted in Aboriginal cultural conceptual system. It means that this variety of English is anchored in Aboriginal culture. Malcolm and Sharifan (2002, p. 178) underline that Aboriginal English "linguistically show continuity with English but conceptually show continuity with Aboriginal culture."

Studying the Aboriginality, as a concept, retained within Aboriginal English leads the analysis to be inscribed in a cultural-conceptual approach–especially in cultural schema theory. Sharifian (2006, p. 12; 2010, p. 3368) makes clear that cultural conceptualisations are constantly negotiated within a cultural group through time and space and are heterogeneously distributed within its members. With regards to cultural conceptualisations, Sharifian (2006, p. 14) writes:

> The fundamental premise in this approach is that language is entrenched in conceptualisation, which is largely culturally constructed. That is, language does not always encode an ''objective reality'', whatever it is, but largely communicates and embodies our construal and conceptualisation of various experiences, which as mentioned earlier emerge from the interactions between members of various cultural groups.

In addition, Cultural conceptualisations can be featured within "*schemas, category, metaphor,* and *blend*"–amongst other notions (Sharifian, 2006, p. 11). Schemas are "non-linguistic cognitive and perceptual systems" (Sharifian, 2006, p.11). Malcolm and Sharifian (2002, p. 170) specify the definition:

> Schemas are like informal, private theories that we develop about the universe and its components, being objects, events, or situations. Schemas are also like computational procedures that are used in an attempt to account for patterns of observation. Finally, schemas act as parsers determining the degree of legality of events, according to a certain system of rules.
> Schemas appear to operate at several levels. They may be universal (Piaget, 1970), idiosyncratic (Sharifian, 2000), cultural (D'Andrade, 1995; Palmer, 1996; Shore, 1996; Strauss and Quinn, 1997), or societal (Sharifian, 2000).
> [...] Cultural schemas are conceptual structures that enable an individual to store perceptual and conceptual information about his or her culture and interpet [sic] cultural experiences and expressions.

Cultural schema theory inscribed itself within the broader cultural conceptualisation approach.

Furthermore, Malcolm (2011) argues that Aboriginal English speakers have a different cognitive and perceptual system than Standard Australian English speakers. He notes that Aboriginal English speakers prefer integration over abstraction which means that they focus on (i) "experience rather than existence", (ii) "experience rather than time", (iii) "substance than function", (ix) "the entity rather than attribute", (v) "the entity rather than its components", and (vi) "the spiritual, not just the temporal" (Malcolm, 2011). This cognitive system is a cultural one. It lies underneath the cultural conceptualisations in Aboriginal English.

Cultural conceptualisations can occur at the level of grammar or within the lexicon of Aboriginal English. Sharifian (2006) focuses on two main categories

influenced by cultural conceptualisations–kinship and spiritual. Concerning cultural conceptualisations of kinship, she notes:

> Speakers of Aboriginal English in central Australia have used *-gether*, a truncated form of English *together*, as a suffix to express dyadic kin concepts. A dyadic term captures two or more kin concepts such as father and child. The need for such conceptualisation is that the social reference point in traditional Aboriginal societies tends not to be the individual, as it is in many western cultures. The minimal unit in any social domain is at least two family members, be it from the extended family or the nuclear family. Examples of Central Australian Aboriginal English dyads are *father-gether* 'father and child' and *sister-gether* 'elder sister and younger brother or sister' (Koch, 2000).

It means that the introduction of the suffix *–gether* is explained by the cultural cognition (v) "the entity rather than its components"–the place of the individual within the social system and its relation to its other members is more important than the individual. For instance, other examples from the lexicon of Aboriginal English follow the same cultural conceptualisation:

> [T]he word ''relation'' seems to have been truncated to ''lation'' and has been attached to the word ''own'' to make ''ownlation'' meaning 'one's own relation'"; and "the use of compounds such as ''cousinbrother'' or ''cousinsister''. These compounds may be used to refer to a cousin who is regarded as close as one's brother or sister and are usually used with the children of one's mother's or father's siblings. (Sharifian, 2006, p. 16)

With regards to spiritual conceptualisations, Sharifian (2006, pp. 16-17; 2010, pp. 3374-3375) notices that words such as *sing*, *smoke* and *light* go through a semantic shift:

> The word ''sing'', for example, may be used to evoke a schema that is associated with incantation exercised on a person by getting hold of a belonging of him/her. [...]The word *smoke* may also be used in association with a schema that captures the experience of walking through smoke for the sake of protection against certain spiritual exercises. [...] The word ''light'' may also be used in Aboriginal English to refer to a category that includes lights that are associated with certain spiritual experiences.

Semantic shift is indeed frequent within Aboriginal English in order to transfer the cultural conceptualisations within its features. Malcolm (2013b, p. 45) writes:

> Equally significantly, they embody some words which might look English but are actually relexifications of Aboriginal concepts [...]. It is in this way that Aboriginal speakers maintain the continuity of patterns of cultural communication which Aboriginal people, together with their forbears, own and have always owned.

Malcolm (2013b) distinguishes between non-English words and English words that express Aboriginal concepts in Aboriginal English. For instance, English words such as *Country* are rooted in a different cultural concept:

> [I]n Australian Aboriginal English, people speaking about “caring for country” etc. – as if it were a proper noun – is uncomfortable to the English ear, with its understanding of country as an object or a political entity, is one which obliges differing concepts of place, as well as the work done by language, to come to the foreground. (Anker, 2014, p. 121)

The cultural conceptualisation involved in the use of *Country* as a proper noun is found in the metaphors LAND IS A PERSON, LAND AS A LIVING BEING or ANCESTOR BEINGS ARE PART OF THE LAND (Sharifian, 2006, p. 19). In addition, Malcolm and Sharifian (2002, p. 170) write that “even where Aboriginal English seems to employ the same vocabulary as Australian English, it is informed by a semantic system deeply rooted in Aboriginal cultures. The meanings of such everyday terms as *family, home, open* and *solid* are associated with different prototypes.”[15]

Furthermore, cultural conceptualisations are embedded in cultural schemas. Malcolm and Sharifian (2002, p. 174) distinguish at least five cultural schemas in Aboriginal English–travel schema, hunting schema, observing schema, scary things schema and family schema:

> *Travel schema*: the representation of the experience of known participants, organized in terms of alternating travelling (or moving) and non-travelling (or stopping) segments, usually referenced to a time of departure and optionally including a return to the starting point (see Malcolm, 1994, for more details).
> *Hunting schema*: the representation of experience of known participants, organized with respect to the observation, pursuit and capture of prey,

[15] Conversely, a similar semantic broadening can be noted in expressions used in Standard Australian English with regards to Aboriginal concepts (Leitner & Sieloff, 1998, p. 155). Leitner and Sieloff (1998, p. 155) argue that, “[e]xpressions like *land rights, traditional owner, Mabo legislation*, or *Mabo spirit* illustrate how the meaning of English words was extended in order to refer to Aboriginal people and concerns.”

usually entailing killing and sometimes eating it. Success is usually associated with persistence expressed with repeated and/or unsuccessful actions (e.g. shoot and miss, look and never find). There are a number of subschemas associated with hunting, including Cooking, Fishing and Spotting.
Observing schema: the representation of experience, usually shared experience, in terms of observed details, whether of natural or social phenomena.
Scary Things schema: The representation of experience, either first-hand or vicarious, of strange powers or persons affecting normal life within the community and manifest in the expression of appearance and disappearance or seeing or not seeing/finding evidence of the phenomenon in question.
Family schema: The representation of experience in relation to an extended family network.

Cultural schemas can be deciphered in discourse analysis. An oral or written narrative in Aboriginal English follows a certain path or schema. Malcolm and Sharifian (2002, p. 175) argue that cultural schemas can explain some discourse strategies in Aboriginal English. In addition, they identify different “genres” in narrative discourse following the same cultural schema (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, p. 175). For instance, they give three different genres associated with the hunting schema:

> Hunting yarn: *a narration of hunting experience following the Hunting schema*.
> Fishing yarn: *a narration of fishing experience following the Hunting schema*.
> Sporting yarn: *a narration of sporting experience following the Hunting schema*. (Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, p. 175)

Sharifian (2010, p. 3368) writes that, “’Yarn’ is an Aboriginal speech event that has culture-specific characteristics”. Concretely, Malcolm (1994, p. 293) explains that yarns following the hunting schema are recognised by the fact that they describe an alternate narrative of movement and pauses, and sometimes the narrative is accompanied by sand drawings:

> On the fringes of the Western Desert country, I found Aboriginal children communicating to one another by means of ‘sand stories’ such as this, and I found that many Aboriginal children structured their discourse around the two axes Edwards has described: sitting and going, or, as I

described it, stopping [which in Aboriginal English means staying] and moving). Elsewhere I have used the name ‘tracking’ to describe the cultural feature expressed in this discourse.

Hunting is part of a cultural experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people which is embodied within a cultural schema and can be recognised in discourse narratives.

Thus, Aboriginal English speakers follow cultural schemas rooted in the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Cultural conceptualisations and cultural schemas are evidence to the distinctiveness of Aboriginal English, and to the maintenance of an Aboriginal culture and identity. It has been argued that Aboriginality is embedded within the features of Aboriginal English. Aboriginal English speakers inscribe the expression of themselves–their cultural concepts and experiences–within the features of the variety. It is clear that Aboriginal English retains aspects of Aboriginality.

PART III

NON-INDIGENOUS–INDIGENOUS INTERACTIONS: POWER, POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSES AND LANGUAGES AT STAKE

6 POWER RELATIONSHIPS: INTERCOMMUNICATION BETWEEN ABORIGINAL ENGLISH AND AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH SPEAKERS

6.1 Pragmatics, a Way of Understanding Non-Indigenous–Indigenous Interactions

Pragmatics is a useful study tool used to analyse intercommunication between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English speakers. Blum and Hamo (2011, p. 170) give a definition of pragmatics:

> In the broadest sense, pragmatics is the study of linguistic communication in context: the choices users of language make and the process of meaning-making in social interaction. Language is the chief means by which people communicate, yet simply knowing the words and grammar of a language does not ensure successful communication. Words can mean more – or something other – than what they say. Their interpretation depends on a multiplicity of factors, including familiarity with the context, intonational cues and cultural assumptions.

Aboriginal English speakers communicate in a way that is unusual for Standard Australian English speakers (Eades, 1993; Malcolm, 1994; Eades, 2013; Eades, 2014). It means that sociocultural differences are found in the use of language and hamper communication between Aboriginal and Standard Australian English speakers (Eades, 2013, p. 85). Interactions differ at several levels including the use of question, information seeking, the use of silence, and eye-contact (Eades, 1993; Eades 2013). Eades (1993, pp. 185-186; 2013, p. 85) argues that Aboriginal English speakers avoid using direct questions and instead use indirect forms of information seeking. She writes:

> While the direct question is central to most information seeking in mainstream Australian society, Aboriginal people throughout Australia, whether they speak a traditional language or Aboriginal English, frequently use a range of indirect means of finding out information. For example, they make a hinting statement and wait for a response:
>
> > I'm wondering about what happened last night. I need to know about why you didn't do your homework.
>
> Or they may volunteer information for confirmation or denial:
>
> > It seems as if everyone went to the creek after school.

> People might say that no-one likes the Maths teacher. (I think) maybe no-one likes the Maths teacher.

> Or they may tell people what they need to find out about, and then wait for a later occasion before receiving an answer. (Eades, 1993, pp. 185-186)

These types of information seeking devices correlate with Brown and Levinson's (1978; p. 211) politeness strategy to "give hints". Eades (2013, p. 85) underlines that to resort to this device is indeed part of Aboriginal politeness: "It is important for Aboriginal people not to embarrass others by putting them 'on the spot'. So they volunteer some of their own information, hinting at what they are trying to find out. Information is sought as part of a two-way exchange." She adds that for Aboriginal people "to get an answer is a privilege, not a right" (Eades, 2013, p. 34). It also means that silences are valued in Aboriginal English in order to allow the interlocutors to volunteer information; and that turn-taking follows different rules (Eades, 2013, p. 85). Eades (1993, p. 187) highlights the differences in the use of silence between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people:

> This is a difficult matter for most non-Aboriginal people to recognise and learn, because in Western societies silence is so often negatively valued in conversations. Between people who are not close friends or family, silence in conversations or interviews is frequently an indication of some kind of communication breakdown. On the contrary, in Aboriginal societies silence usually indicates a participant's desire to think, or simply to enjoy the presence of others in a non-verbal way. Because Aboriginal people are so accustomed to using silence in conversation with other Aboriginal people, many are uncomfortable if they are not given the chance to use silence in their conversations or interviews with non-Aboriginal people.

Eades (1993, p. 86) also notes that "[q]uestions which ask the respondent to choose one of two alternatives are rarely found in the linguistic structure of traditional Aboriginal languages or in Aboriginal English." Moreover, Eades (1993, p. 187) notices that the use of eye-contact in conversation is differently connoted between the two cultures:

> Direct eye contact is frequently avoided in Aboriginal interactions where it is seen as threatening or rude. Conversely, in much non-Aboriginal interaction in Australia, the avoidance of eye contact, especially by someone who has been asked a question, is interpreted as rudeness, evasion or dishonesty.

Aboriginal English speakers follow different communication devices than Standard Australian English speakers. This leads to miscommunications.

6.2 Miscommunication and their Implications

It has been argued in §5.3. that Aboriginal English relies on different cultural conceptualisations and schemas than Standard Australian English. Cultural conceptualisations and schemas are therefore a useful tool for the analysis of miscommunication between Aboriginal and Standard Australian English speakers, so is the study of pragmatics. Pragmatics is a tool used to define the interactional devices Aboriginal English speakers use. Given that communication devices are culturally anchored, we are able to identify various discrepancies between Aboriginal English speakers and Standard English speakers' ways of practicing communication (Eades, 1993; Malcolm, 1994; Malcolm & Sharifian, 2002, p. 173; Evans, 2010; Eades, 2013; Eades, 2014). The study of pragmatics is part of a literature of cross-cultural studies, such as cultural conceptualisations. Cross-cultural studies between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English show interest in how miscommunication happens and what implications it has. Sharifian (2010, p. 3367) argues that, "miscommunication [...] has often disadvantaged Aboriginal speakers in educational, legal and other settings."

Eades (2013, p. 86) writes that, "The direct question is central to communication in most mainstream Australian institutions, including education, the media and the law. In fact [the question has been] 'institutionalised' in interviews, enquiry counters and questionnaires." This implies that Aboriginal students may be disadvantaged at the beginning of their education until they develop intercultural knowledge. Eades (2013, p. 87) writes, "[w]hile some Aboriginal children will also have developed some bidialectal and bicultural skills, for others their entry to school will present them with the first situation in which they have this need or opportunity." Harrison and Sellwood (2016) provide a teaching guide for non-Indigenous educational workers where interactional strategies are mentioned. They advise to "avoid asking a lot of direct questions" and "direct [...] questions to the entire class, rather than to an individual" (p. 93). Intercultural competence for workers is also crucial in other domains such as health care (Black, 1993, p. 208; Kelly & Luxford, 2007). For instance, Black (1993, p. 208) writes:

> Let's consider some examples. Clinics in many communities now depend heavily on Aboriginal health workers, who generally interact with patients in the local language. Amery (1986, 23-24) notes that this not only involves much new vocabulary relating to diseases and treatments but also that it can lead to less traditional patterns of interaction as the health workers adopt Western practices in asking more direct questions in taking a medical history.

In addition, Eades (1993, p. 187) argues that the "cultural difference in use and interpretation of eye communication can be very important in the classroom, as well as in police or courtroom interviews." For instance, in their teaching guide, Harrison and Sellwood (2016, p. 90) suggest that eye-contact is not necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to follow classroom activities. They report:

> Ian Malcolm and a group of researchers from Western Australia (1999) have done a lot of research on how Aboriginal people listen and speak. They observe that speakers of Standard English require eye contact, and 'if a listener is not looking at a speaker then there is an assumption that he or she is not listening' (Malcolm et al. 1999, p. 33). Eye contact is often not required from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander listeners, and it is not expected. These researchers (Malcolm et al. 1999, p. 33) add that an 'Aboriginal English speaker does not require feedback in terms of acknowledgment or agreement which non-Indigenous listeners give by nodding and saying 'Mm' or 'yes' at various points in the conversation'. (Harrison & Sellwood, 2016, p. 90)

Furthermore, miscommunication can reveal the power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Eades, 2014, p. 433). Eades (1993, p. 186) explains that an Indigenous person answers "yes" to a question asked by non-Indigenous person even when they do not agree in order to avoid conflicts. She writes:

> Aboriginal people throughout Australia often answer 'yes' or agree to whatever is being asked by a non-Aboriginal questioner, even if they do not understand the question. This phenomenon, which has been observed for many decades, has recently been labelled 'gratuitous concurrence' (Liberman 1985). Liberman explains this gratuitous concurrence as a way that Aboriginal people have developed to protect themselves in their interactions with non-Aboriginal Australians. It occurs particularly where the questioner, say a teacher or police officer, has authority over the Aboriginal person being questioned.

> [...] Their apparent agreement often really means something like this: 'I think that if I say "yes" you will see that I am obliging, and socially amenable, and you will think well of me, and things will work out well between us'. This is undoubtedly one of the major problems facing Aboriginal people seeking justice in the legal system. (Eades, 1993, p. 186)

Conflict avoidance is a principle at the core of Aboriginal English discourse strategies–especially in intercommunication with non-Indigenous people (Malcolm, 1994, p. 299). Eades (1993; 2016) makes the plea that Indigenous people are met with linguistic prejudices and that miscommunication reveals a power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. She underlines the importance of acquiring intercultural competence in order to avoid linguistic prejudices. Eades provided workers in the legal sector with a handbook to achieve successful communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people–*Aboriginal English and the Law: Communicating with Aboriginal English Speaking Clients: A Handbook for Legal Practitioners* (1992). Eades (2013, pp. 120-126) cites the Pinkenba case where intercultural competence was used as a defence in the trial. She reports that three Aboriginal teenage boys "were approached by six armed police officers who told them to get into three separate vehicles" and "were then driven 14 kilometres out of town and abandoned [...] in Pinkenba [...] from where they had to find their own way back" (p. 121). The defence used linguistic strategies drawing on intercultural knowledge in order to win the trial (pp. 122-123). She states (p. 122) that, "[t]he manipulation of Aboriginal ways of using English was central to this defence strategy, particularly the use of gratuitous concurrence and of silence (see Eades 2002, 2003a)." She concludes (p. 127) that, "the Pinkenba case demonstrates that education of legal professionals about Aboriginal English is not enough. The participation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system cannot be separated from sociopolitical issues involved in race relations in Australia."

The study of pragmatics in the context of non-Indigenous and Indigenous interactions in Australia is evidence to the culturally anchored ways of communicating. Aboriginal English speakers do not express themselves the same way as Standard Australian English speakers. Pragmatics appears to be a useful study tool to understand where miscommunication between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people originates from. It is also evidence to the necessity of regarding

Aboriginal English as a distinct dialect of English within the educational, legal and health sectors since the reverse situation leads Aboriginal English speakers to face linguistic prejudices. Not acknowledging the distinctiveness of Aboriginal English and its implications would freeze the power relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people and not go further colonial discourses.

7 BICULTURAL COMPETENCE AND DISCOURSE OF RECONCILIATION: MOVING AWAY FROM ASSIMILATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SPHERE

7.1 From Assimilation to Reconciliation

Aboriginality as an ideology is a construct emerging from colonial discourses of 'the Other' in Saïd's terms (1978). Discourse is a term introduced by Foucault (1980). Hall (1992, p. 291; 1997, p. 44) writes:

> By 'discourse', Foucault meant 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – a way of representing the knowledge about – a particular topic at a particular historical moment. [...] Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But it is itself produced by a practice: 'discursive practice' the practice of producing meaning. Since all social practices entail *meaning*, all practices have a discursive aspect. So discourse enters into and influences all social practices.

Hall (1992, p. 292) underlines that, "Discourses are not closed systems. A discourse draws on elements in other discourses, binding them into its own network of meanings." Assimilation is a colonial discourse which addresses the power relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, in Memmi's words (1957). In the colonial era, education was used as a means to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Missionaries taught Indigenous communities to read and write in order to impose western cultural ideology. The Australian educational system is a colonial institution i.e. instated by the power of the coloniser. For instance, A. O. Neville's 1937 speech 'No matter what we do, they will die out' (cited in Warhaft, 2004, p. 321) is inscribed within this assimilation discourse:

> If the coloured people of this country are to be absorbed into the general community they must be thoroughly fit and educated at least to the extent of the three R's. If they can read, write and count, and know what wages

> they should get and how to enter into an agreement with an employer, that is all that should be necessary. Once that is accomplished there is no reason in the world why these coloured people should not be absorbed into the community. To achieve this end, however, we must have charge of the children at the age of six; it is useless to wait until they are twelve or thirteen years of age.

In a post-colonial context, it has been argued in §4.2. and §4.3. that Indigenous languages gained representation within Australian institutions through bilingual education and through institutional supports of self-ruled projects. Bilingual education can be interpreted as a first step towards a move away from an absolute assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the wider Australian society. However, this step has to be taken further in order to coincide with the Australian post-colonial discourse of reconciliation. Reconciliation, self-determination, intervention, and recognition are some of the main discourses in Australian post-colonial politics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The reconciliation discourse emerged in the 1970s in Australian politics. The famous speech 'These lands belong to the Gurindji people; we will be mates, white and black' (cited in Warhaft, 2004, pp. 341-344) given in 1975 by Prime Minister Whitlam marks the emergence of a reconciliation discourse. Dealing with Indigenous languages within the Australian educational system, two-way education, also known as bicultural education, is an integral part of the reconciliation discourse. This system responds to wishes to move away from assimilation and to reconcile two cultures: being Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

7.2 From One-way Education to Two-way Education

Two-way education or bicultural education is a system entrenched within Aboriginal philosophy (Lee et al., 2014). This philosophy is conceptualised in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (Lee et al., 2014). For instance, Yolngu speakers use the metaphor of *ganma* to express this philosophy (Lee et al., 2014, p. 58; Evans, 2010, pp. 19-20). Evans (2010, pp. 19-20) explain:

> A few hundred kilometres east of Warramurrungunji territory, the Yolgnu peoples of eastern Arnhem Land, in conceptualizing the value of the bilingual and bicultural schools they are striving to develop on their lands, employ the Yolgnu metaphor of *ganma*. This denotes the special mixing

> that develops when the outgoing freshwater current of a river mingles with the saltwater of the incoming tide.

Yolgnu people use another concept regarding two-way education:

> *Bala/lili* (away from/towards) is about give and take. It expresses 'an explicit understanding of reciprocity'. It means ''giving' and then also 'getting something back'' (Marika et al 1992, p. 152). In developing an appropriate educational philosophy and program, *bala/lili* means fulfilling obligations to the *Ngalapal* who are 'our thinking people, our intellectuals who guide our life according to our law which they understand' (p. 151). 'These obligations require us to do the things that they expect us to do, particularly by being good role models for the children of our community and to be seen to use the learning that they organise for us' (p. 151). *Bala/lili* can also refer to relationships between teachers and learners (Marika-Mununggiritj 1990, p. 49). (Lee et al., 2014, p. 59)

Two-way thinking is part of Aboriginal conceptualisation. It is not surprising that Aboriginal leaders and educationists introduced this way of thinking into Australian schooling. McConvell (cited in Lee et al., 2014, pp. 55-56) reports a Gurindji leader who mentions his will of moving away from one-way education:

> McConvell said Gurindji leader, Pincher Nyurrmiyarri 'perhaps went furthest in working out the concept of the two-way school' because he took it beyond the teaching of 'both European and Aboriginal language and culture' to deepen the idea to include 'a two-way flow in reciprocity and exchange between groups' (p.62). He wanted policies and programs to be discussed and negotiated rather than being 'imposed only from the white side' (p.63).

Two-way education is an educational system which values both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of learning (Malcolm & Koscielecki, 1997, p. 79). It means that in two-way education, the Indigenous educational concepts such as *ganma* and *bala/lili*–as well as other Indigenous educational concepts–are valued at the same level as and used alongside non-Indigenous educational concepts.

7.3 Bicultural Competence and Intercultural Knowledge

Two-way education allows Indigenous and non-Indigenous students to acquire bicultural competence. It enables them to function both in Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts (Harris cited in Malcolm & Koscielecki, 1997, p. 79). Malcolm

and Koscielecki (1997, p. 79) report that the Aboriginal educationist Yunupingu in favour of two-way learning asserts that this system enables Indigenous children to acquire a “double power”. In addition, Lee et al. (2014, p. 56) write, “Two Way schooling, based on give and take and mutual obligation, would cover curriculum, knowledge, policies and power.” This demonstrates that two-way schooling alters the power relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people within the Australian educational system. It progresses from assimilation to integration, self-determination and reconciliation. For instance, Walsh (2014, p. 331) reports: “I think ultimately that sharing our Languages will further open doors of understanding and reconciliation between mainstream Australians and Indigenous Australians. (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2009: 6)”. Walsh (2014, p. 331) adds that, “Aboriginal teachers declare that a result of this language learning [1,000 people learning Wiradjuri] is a very significant decrease in racism/discrimination.”

Other scholars highlight the importance of acquiring intercultural knowledge for non-Indigenous people (Evans, 2010; Merrotsy, 2016; Trounson, 2016). For instance, Merrotsy (2016, pp. 102-105) writes on the importance of teaching Aboriginal astronomy. Languages vehicle and therefore give access to Indigenous knowledge. Trounson (2016) argues that words in Indigenous languages hold the knowledge of the land, so preserving Indigenous languages is necessary to allow non-Indigenous people to understand the Indigenous connection to the land (see §3.1.2). He writes:

> That was made obvious to Associate Professor Nordlinger 20 years ago while undertaking fieldwork in the Barkly Tablelands of the Northern Territory on the local Wambaya language. She was intrigued by all the different names in Wambaya for the various types of eucalyptus trees that seemed to the uninitiated to all be the same tree. When she brought back samples to the experts at the Alice Springs arboretum, they discovered that for some of the specimens there simply were no scientific names. They were new.
>
> “What this says is that Wambaya had a much finer-grained understanding about these trees than our modern scientific knowledge does.”
>
> Such knowledge tied to words can be highly functional. In some Indigenous languages two completely different things can be linked by having the same name in a phenomenon called by linguists *sign*

> *metonymies*. A famous example is that in the *Kunwinjku* language of Arnhem Land in which the Spangled Grunter fish and the White Apple tree are both known as *bokorn*. That is because the tree will often indicate that the fish is nearby since the fish waits around to eat apples that fall into the creek.

Trounson and Nordlinger (2016) put forward the importance of grasping the knowledge inscribed within Indigenous languages for a scientific purpose. Evans (2010, p. 230) goes further in describing how the knowledge coming from Indigenous languages and cultures benefits the wider Australian community:

> The Kabulwarnamyo project illustrates how suddenly a domain of traditional knowledge can be transformed from purely theoretical interest into a resource of great economic value. With global warming and the advent of carbon credits has come the realization that a huge fraction of Australia's CO2 emissions arise from hot-burning forest fires in its northern savannahs, and that these can be significantly reduced by following traditional Aboriginal burning regimes. A number of resource extraction companies have become interested in gaining future carbon offsets by supporting the maintenance and reinstatement of these indigenous burning practices. Research with elders like Lofty is closely tied in with the training of young fire rangers interested in working on their traditional country and finding out as much as they can of their ancestors' time-tired burning practice. This information is intimately interwoven into their traditional language.

Even though these arguments are at first sight pleas to maintain, preserve and revitalise Indigenous languages, they also highlight the importance of the circulation of Indigenous languages and cultural knowledge and the importance of exchanges of knowledge with Indigenous people.

7.4 Partnerships in Bicultural Education

Bicultural education is about self-determination. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people highlight the importance of being consulted for the creation of curricula. At the level of communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people assert their wish to be asked how their languages should be taught and use within the classroom; and how cultural knowledge about their communities should be included within the classroom. The philosophy of two-way education is realised in

bicultural schools through partnerships with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on the decisions about language learning and Indigenous culture is a central theme within bilingual and bicultural education. The Aboriginal educationist B. G. Yunupingu (cited in Rhydwen, 1993, p. 157) states, "The school is a place which can do a great deal to help children become successful in language use, but it will work best at this when the community is consulted about how language is to be used." Bicultural education involves the creation of partnerships with local Indigenous communities. For instance, the importance of having Elders coming in schools to pass on the knowledge about a particular topic is a practice which is put forward by bicultural education. Furthermore, it involves also the recruitment of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW). They have different titles–among them are "Indigenous Education Worker, Aboriginal education assistants, Koorie educators, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers, and Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers" (Milgate, 2016, p. 201).

Harrison and Sellwood (2016, p. 95) argue that Aboriginal Education Workers are crucial for students to develop a two-way thinking or bicultural competence:

> The best thing of all is that students experience two perspectives in the classroom, one from the teacher and one from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education worker, and these perspectives are built in front of them. Teachers are modelling a cross-cultural relationship for students rather than just talking about it.

Malcolm (cited in Eades, 2014, p. 431) underlines the importance of working with partnerships:

> [It] involves an expanded understanding on the part of non-Aboriginal staff and students as to what is normal as well as an acceptance by them of the necessary and demanding task of learning from their Indigenous associates so that they can more successfully learn, and live, with them

Recent documentation was introduced to provide non-Indigenous educational workers with strategies to create successful partnerships. Malcolm (2013b, p. 51) writes:

> On the basis of some of the research which has been alluded to here, two-way bidialectal education has become a reality within the Western Australian education system, supported by the recently-launched 14-volume training resource *Tracks to Two-Way Learning* (Department of Education and Department of Training and Workplace Development 2012). This forms a basis for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators to work in two-way teams, showing mutual respect and receptivity, to the end that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal learners will learn in linguistic and cultural partnership.

In addition, *Strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students* (Harrison & Sellwood, 2016) and *Building empowering partnerships between schools and communities* (Milgate, 2016) are part of this recently developed documentation. These chapters are created as tips drawing on experience and case-studies aiming at non-Indigenous education workers. Their goal is to communicate to non-Indigenous education workers how to develop partnerships, how to develop cultural competency and how to develop inclusive teaching. For instance, Sellwood (2016, p. 87) reports:

> I knew some of the Torres Strait parents were not confident in Standard Australian English (SAE). However, they were all fluent in Yumplatok, formerly known as Torres Strait creole, the main language spoken throughout the Torres Strait. Yumplatok means 'our way of talking' in colloquial SAE. (For further explanation, see Ober, 1999; Sellwood & Angelo, 2013.) Some of them were also fluent in a traditional Torres Strait language. I capitalised on this strength by using the topic of 'languages' as a curriculum focus. As part of this topic the children investigated their home language/s and family language background. I invited parents in as guest speakers to talk about the languages of the Torres Strait and to teach the whole class everyday words, phrases, popular songs and sit-down dances.

Milgate (2016) also draws on the Australian Professional Standards for Principals and for Teachers in order to argue in favour of inclusive curricula and of partnerships. Black (1993, p. 212) argues that, "[t]his helps make both the children and the local community feel that the school is something of their own, rather than an alien and perhaps colonial institution."

8 INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND EDUCATION: COLONIAL DISCOURSE DIE HARD

8.1 Controversies over Partnerships and Regime of Truth

The notion of discourse is interwoven with the notion of construction of the self. In *Orientalism* (1978), Saïd makes the plea that the West constructs itself through discourses and in opposition with the Orient. Identity is performed in a dynamic dichotomy. Thus, discourses do not exist outside power. Foucault (1975) introduces the notion of "regime of truth". It designates a discourse which becomes true or is perceived as true only because it is in use and is effective. Hall (1992, p. 295) builds on Foucault and writes:

> Discourses [...] always operate in relation to power – they are part of the way power circulates and is contested. The question of whether a discourse is true or false is less important than whether it is effective in practice. When it is effective – organizing and regulating relations of power (say between the West and the Rest) – it is called a 'regime of truth'.

It means that discourses are established as true on the sole condition they circulate through a society which conditions them as true. Institutions are places subject to "regimes of truth" because they are the entities conveying the notion of truth.

The controversy over partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australian education is that they are governed by a "regime of truth" (Vass, 2012). Miller (2015) looks into the case of partnerships in early childhood education. She argues that the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are consulted perpetuates colonial discourse despite the intention of supporting "access to local knowledges and perspectives" (p. 549). More specifically, she argues (p. 553) that, regarding the creation of partnerships, Indigenous and non-Indigenous interactions involve a certain positioning of Indigenous people inscribed within colonial discourses:

> In interactional patterns between non-Indigenous educators and Indigenous people, historical traces of colonialism can result in harmful positionings of Indigenous people. These include as informants (Khan 2005), targeted resources (Gareau 2003) and knowledge commissioners (Walter 2011) in relation to accessing cultural knowledge. Historically, these positions related to the use of the term 'informant' to refer to

> Indigenous mentors of anthropologists. In more recent times, traces of colonialism can be present in the reconstruction of this role as Indigenous 'consultants', 'partners' or 'co-curators' (Crosby 1997), dependent on the underlying intent and approach used to build a professional partnership. Harmful positionings of Indigenous people rely on the reproduction of colonial discourses including duty and service (Furniss 2005). Duty and service have underscored paternalistic discourses throughout Australian history premised on the supposed protection of Aboriginal people as well as their assimilation into western society. In part, this occurred through force and coercion into roles such as labourers, stockman and domestics for non-Indigenous land 'holders' and households (Elder 2009).

Another of her arguments is that non-Indigenous educational workers "mobilise colonial discourses to initiate and define boundaries for consultation and partnerships with Indigenous people in early childhood education" (p. 550). It means that they rely unconsciously on colonial discourses to define the limits of partnerships, to define what is and is not suitable for the classroom. These boundaries are thus governed by a regime of truth.

8.2 Representation of Indigenous Languages and Regime of Truth

Furthermore, a regime of truth seems to operate on the definition of new Indigenous languages–especially creoles and Aboriginal English. Discourses about the legitimacy of Indigenous languages are crucial for Indigenous languages to appear in the classroom (and in other Australian institution). For instance, it has been argued in §4.2. that bilingual education in Kriol and English is possible given that the language is not defined as an ethnolect of English (Meakins, p. 389). Besides, Schieffelin et al. (1998, p. 39) write:

> The belief that distinctly identifiable languages can and should be isolated, named, and counted enters not only into minority and majority nationalisms but into various strategies of social domination. For example, ideas about what is or is not a "real" language have contributed to profound decisions about the civility and even the humanity of others, particularly subjects of colonial domination in the Americas and elsewhere.

In addition, concerning the varieties of Aboriginal English, the definition of Aboriginal English is standardised through a regime of truth. It has been argued in §2.1.4. that its basilectal forms are commonly defined as "heavy" and its acrolectal forms as "light". The choice of terms like "heavy" and "light" instead of the linguistic terms

basilectal and *acrolectal* inscribes descriptions of Aboriginal English within colonial discourse. It is positioning the analysis of Aboriginal English from a non-Indigenous perspective where basilectal forms of Aboriginal English–which are closer to creoles and thus less intelligible with English–are given a negative connotation e.g. hard to decipher. Conversely, acrolectal varieties are given a positive connotation because closer to the language of the coloniser. It implies colonial assumptions about Indigenous languages which are embedded within a history of linguistic prejudices i.e. racism through language. It means that the varieties of Aboriginal English are defined in opposition with English–the language of 'the Other' versus the language of the coloniser. They are not defined by other criteria such as region or class as it is the case with standardised varieties of English. For example, Australian English, American English or British English are defined with terms such as *general, standard, broad* and *cultivated*. For that matter, Schieffelin et al. (1998, pp. 39-40) argue that minority languages are structured through the standards that led to their oppression:

> Movements to save minority languages often structured, willy-nilly, around the same received notions of language that have led to their oppression and/or suppression. Although in some minority language movements the standard terms of evaluation are subverted (Posner 1993, Thiers 1993, Urla 1995), minority language activists often find themselves imposing standards, elevating literate forms and uses, and negatively sanctioning variability in order to demonstrate the reality, validity, and integrity of their languages. Or again, culturally cohesive indigenous groups that enter into struggles for state recognition in the nationalist ideological climate may reconstrue their internal linguistic differences as defining ethnic distinctions (Jackson 1995).

Standards are thus imposed on Indigenous languages by a regime of truth.

8.3 Deficit Discourse

Discourses about the literacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are set in a deficit discourse which is by nature a colonial discourse. The deficit paradigm is found in expressions such as "a problem to solve" or "close the gap" (Vass, 2012, p. 92). It is inscribing a deficit view on the literacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The deficit discourse is a colonial discourse since it involves the common idea that the colonised needs the help of the coloniser in order

to move from an uncivilised to a civilised form of life. This is one of the colonial ideas that justified colonisation. Vass (2012, p. 93) adds:

> The enduring impact and influence of deficit thinking, assimilationist ideologies, and race-based assumptions are all built on the legacies associated with dispossession and the ongoing denial of Indigenous sovereignty. It is the uncritical production, re-production and dissemination of the 'knowledge' that sustains this nexus of domination and urgently demands far greater scrutiny within the educational landscape in Australia.

Discourses about Aboriginal education are subtly linked to the deficit paradigm. Some linguists argue that the maintenance and teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is realised to promote literacy in English–among them are Rhydwen (1993) and Black (1993). Black (1993, pp. 210-212) argues that bilingual schools are established as a means to promote literacy in English:

> Nowadays bilingual education is often thought to be important for local language maintenance, but most of the programs were in fact started in order to improve the general education of the children. In most programs children begin schooling in their own language but over the next few years are taught increasingly in English, which typically comes to be used more than the local language by grade four. After less than a decade of operation, some such programs were indeed found to be more successful, in general academic terms, than the English-only programs that they replaced (Gale, McClay, Christie and Harris, 1981; Murtagh, 1980).

For that reason, Rhydwen (1993, p. 156) adds that, "[t]here is currently far more emphasis on the efficacy of vernacular literacy in promoting English literacy than on it as a means of ensuring cultural survival" and that "there is also the question of whether vernacular literacy is seen as a tool of assimilation or of liberation". The aim of including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in education is to fix low attendance and low achievement in education in regards to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This perspective is thus inscribed within the deficit discourse. Some recent educational documentations attempt to move away from this deficit paradigm. For instance, *Teaching talented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students* (Merrotsy, 2016) is part of Harrison and Sellwood's teaching guide specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education. However, Vass (2012, p. 93) addresses a critique towards teaching guides explicitly made for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander education. He writes about Harrison's former teaching guide (2008):

> While the sentiment is commendable, my anxiety stems from the continuance of framing this within 'Indigenous education' at all. It is a statement that is equally true when considering students from a variety of different backgrounds. Harrison is simply describing good pedagogy; it does not have to be framed as good pedagogy *for Indigenous students*. [...] This then draws attention to what is perhaps the greatest challenge regarding 'Indigenous education': how does the education community move forward in ways that genuinely support and meet the needs of Indigenous students in ways that do not sustain a deficit perspective? Harrison is inviting prospective teachers to make the moral leap to simply decide to work with Indigenous people, but is this enough? That 'Indigenous education' remains relatively unchanged over the past 40 years, despite the efforts of many who do want to work with Indigenous people, would suggest to me that the approach is not adequate on its own. (Vass, 2012, p. 93)

Vass (2012, pp. 93-94) suggests "the challenge of Indigenous education" is to be aware of the "culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial" "regime of knowledge".[16] He writes (p. 94) that "[t]aking up this challenge may enable discourse on 'Indigenous education' to move away from the deficit paradigm by transforming concerns with perspective, position and power within the Australian setting."

A regime of truth seems to operate on the definition of Indigenous languages as well as their place within the Australian educational system. The educational system is a strategic place for the representation and recognition of Indigenous languages. Their inclusion within language programs and curricula is vital for language maintenance and revitalisation. Their representation within Australian institutions–such as within the educational system–is also crucial to counter the power relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. However, the way the educational system includes Indigenous languages raises issues. Partnerships are revealing of a permanent positioning of Indigenous people as a colonised group. This is evidence that a regime of truth is circulating within Australian society, which puts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages at stake.

[16] This correlates with Foucault's idea that a discourse is by definition not "innocent" (see Hall, 1992, pp. 293-295).

CONCLUSION

The place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are in constant negotiation–whether it is within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or within the wider Australian society. Their place cannot be understood outside a colonial framework. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages evolved with the contact with Europeans. The colonial repression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people led the communities to lose their traditional languages and disrupted the traditional oral transmission of languages. It resulted in an endangered situation for traditional languages. In addition, the genesis of new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is explained by the European contact and the influence of English on traditional languages. Creoles and Aboriginal English are widely spoken within Australia. Among these new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are Kriol and Aboriginal English which have acquired a better representation within the cultural and educational sphere since their recognition as proper languages.

The Australian government is moving towards cultural friendly and inclusive educational programs. It means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages negotiate a better representation within Australian institutions. Governmental support is crucial to develop bilingual and bicultural schools. However, it also means that the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are subject to political directives and cannot secure representation within Australian institutions. Self-ruled projects emerged as the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reconnect with their ancestor languages, with their selves, with their identity. Language maintenance and revitalisation is not only necessary for language posterity and the storage of the world's knowledge; it is crucial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander to assert their Aboriginality. It has been argued that Aboriginality is found at several linguistic levels in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and that cultural conceptualisations and discourse strategies characteristic of Aboriginality were carried on the varieties of English Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people speak.

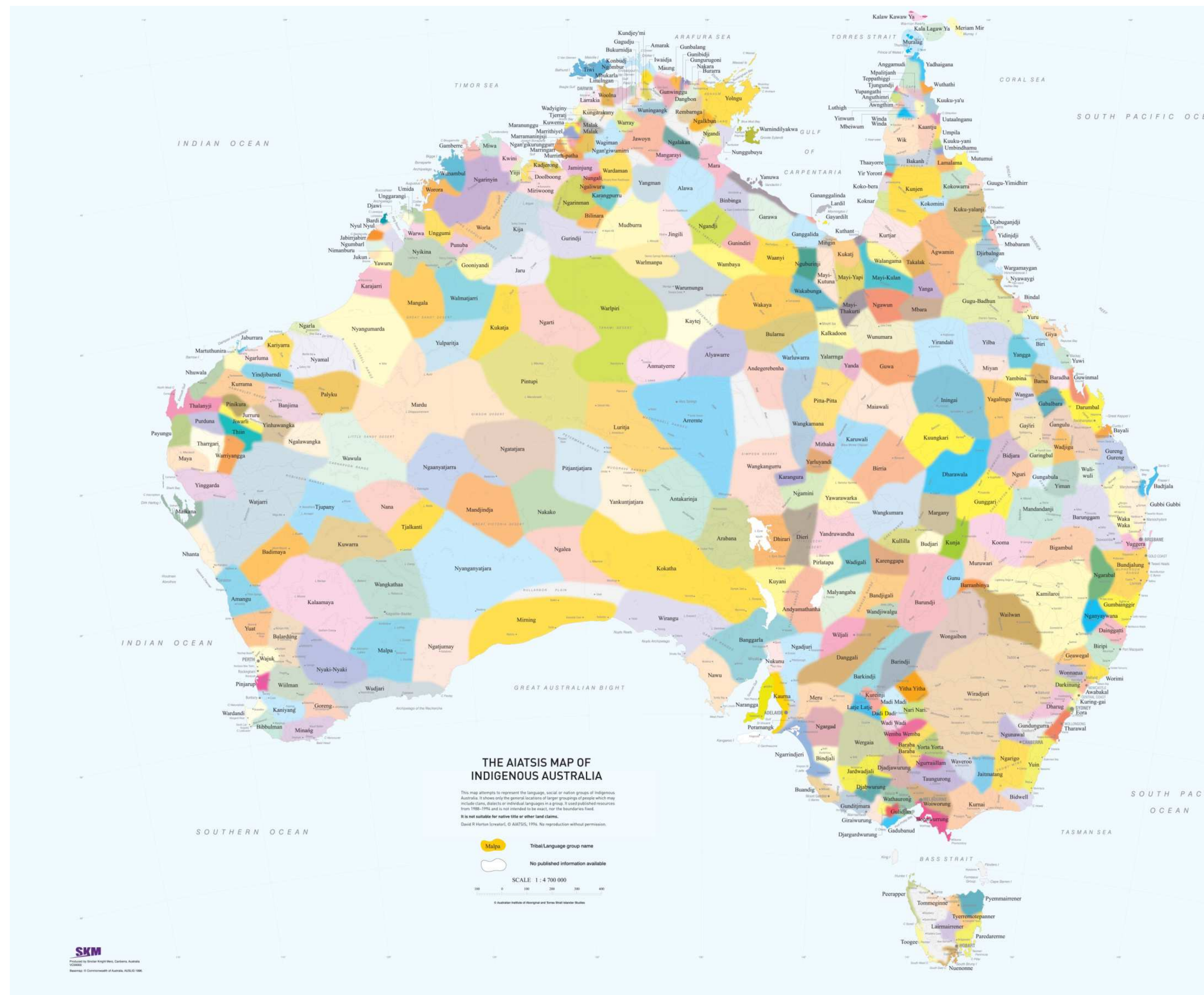
Nevertheless, the place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages negotiate in wider Australian society goes hand in hand with the impact of colonial discourses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers face preconceived ideas

about languages that are inherited from a colonial thinking. It has been argued that the interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people–that it be in the educational or legal spheres–reveal a power relationship. The consultation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to create partnerships–especially in the educational sector–is confirming the power and superiority of a non-Indigenous thinking over an Indigenous thinking. It has been argued that the positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultants and language learners is inscribed within colonial discourses. Decisions regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages coming from non-Indigenous institutions follow a regime of truth entrenched in western and colonial/postcolonial perspectives.

The study asked whether the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and cultures reveal a move away from a culture of assimilation. It has been argued that their place was negotiated though colonial and postcolonial discourses. Self-determination discourses and reconciliation discourses are postcolonial discourses which reveal a move away from assimilationist perspectives and have an impact on the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Thus, it cannot be denied that there is a move away from a culture of assimilation. However, it remains a small move. The culture of assimilation and colonial power is still present within Australia.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Horton, D. R. (Creator). (1996). The AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia. Permission granted on 18 April 2018 by the AIATSIS.



This map attempts to represent the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. It shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from 1988-1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed. It is not suitable for native title or other land claims. David R Horton (creator), © AIATSIS, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: www.aiatsis.ashop.com.au/

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Abstract

The colonial era impacted Indigenous languages. Contact languages emerged which disrupted the Australian language ecology. Nowadays, the place of Indigenous languages is hindered by the dominance of English. New Indigenous languages gained recognition only in the 1970s. At that time, the urgency towards the protection of traditional languages–the majority of which disappeared alongside their last speakers–was put forwards in Australia. The linguistic identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people is at the core of the study. The discussion will look into the status of traditional and recently developed Indigenous language, language maintenance and revitalisation, and their representation in the wider Australian society. The study will also look into the maintenance of Aboriginal linguistic identity in wider Australian society and the difficulties speakers of new Indigenous languages– especially Aboriginal English speakers–are met with. The main themes of the analysis will be: linguistic identity, representation, postcolonial heritage, linguistic prejudices, inter-communication and miscommunication. The aim is to show that intercommunication between two linguistic groups with significantly different cultural aspects is effective only with the acknowledgement of these differences; that relations of power between the colonised and the coloniser are asserted through language and that Indigenous languages are at stake in regards to postcolonial discourses.

Keywords: Australian Indigenous languages, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, endangered languages, new Aboriginal languages, contact languages, Kriol, Aboriginal English, linguistic identity, Aboriginality, postcolonial discourse, linguistic prejudices, intercommunication, miscommunication, bilingual and bicultural education, language maintenance and revival.

Résumé

Les langues aborigènes ont été marquées par la période coloniale. Des langues de contact se sont développées, bouleversant la carte linguistique de l'Australie. Aujourd'hui, la dominance de l'anglais ne laisse que peu de place aux langues aborigènes dont certaines ont acquis une reconnaissance seulement dans les années 1970. C'est au cours de ces années-là que l'Australie a pris conscience de l'urgence quant à la protection des langues aborigènes traditionnelles dont la majorité disparaît avec leurs derniers locuteurs. L'identité linguistique des aborigènes d'Australie est au cœur de l'étude. Il s'agira de comprendre le statut des langues aborigènes traditionnelles et récemment développées, les enjeux de leur maintien, de leur revitalisation, ainsi que leur représentation dans une société australienne plus vaste. L'étude présentera les enjeux liés au maintien d'une identité linguistique aborigène dans la société australienne et les difficultés auxquelles sont confrontés les locuteurs des langues aborigènes récentes, notamment ceux de l'anglais aborigène australien. Les thèmes abordés seront : l'identité linguistique, la représentation, l'héritage postcolonial, les préjudices linguistiques, l'intercommunication. L'objectif sera de démontrer que l'intercommunication entre deux groupes linguistiques dont la culture est différente ne peut être effective que par la connaissance de ces différences, que les relations de pouvoir entre colonisé et colonisateur se sont affirmées à travers le langage et que les discours postcoloniaux ont un enjeu majeur sur les langues aborigènes d'Australie.

Mots-clefs: Langues aborigènes d'Australie, Aborigènes et Indigènes des îles du détroit de Torrès, langues en voie de disparition, langues de contact, Kriol, anglais aborigène australien, identité linguistique, identité aborigène, discours postcoloniaux, préjudices linguistiques, communication interculturelle, enseignement bilingue et biculturel, maintien et revitalisation des langues.