ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

What is the place of Aboriginal Languages within the curriculum?

How can Aboriginal Languages be taught in schools?

What is Aboriginal English?

How should Aboriginal English be included in the classroom?

Drawing primarily from Readings:
• NSW Board of Studies 2003, *Aboriginal Languages K-10 syllabus* pp 5-10
• Green, R. & Oppliger, A. 2007 pp 81-87
• Harrison, N. 2008 pp 84-99

Artwork by David Dunn retrieved from http://www.abearsoldwares.com/D.DUNN.NEW/ABORIGINAL.ART.0037.JPG

Created by Belinda J Christensen
2010
What is the place of Aboriginal Languages within the curriculum?

Responsibility of the Government:

as ‘these languages…[have] been adversely affected by… government policies and… the consequences of social dislocation …from the earliest colonial period’;

noting ‘that languages are integral to the sense of identity of all Aboriginal people’, and

‘learning about Aboriginal languages also assists in the processes of reconciliation by increasing cross-cultural understanding’.

Map of Aboriginal Language Groups

Estimated 250 Aboriginal languages existed prior to colonisation

- NSW Board of Studies, 2003, Aboriginal Languages K-10 Syllabus, p5, 9, 10
How can Aboriginal Languages be taught in schools?

Revitalisation of language and culture through authentic practice

• ‘As the language is brought up once again the energy of the land is been brought back up’ (Green & Oppliger 2007:83)
  • ‘By embracing an Indigenous worldview and way of learning’
    (Green & Oppliger 2007:84)

• With great respect for local Aboriginal communities – through extensive, ongoing consultation and negotiation
  • Invite an Aboriginal person of authority to teach students about Aboriginal cultural beliefs

• By comparison and translation
• Authentic tasks relating to activities outside of school
Languages lost ........
 ........... like people and culture

Of the estimated 250 Aboriginal languages existing prior to colonisation;

• 145 Aboriginal languages spoken in Australia today. 110 of these are "critically endangered";
• 20 Aboriginal languages spoken in New South Wales today;
• 10 Aboriginal languages in NSW considered healthy enough to be included in school curriculums.


Artwork by David Dunn retrieved from http://www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/resources/blog/
Group Activity

In groups of 3 or 4 people

Discuss and list:

- Practical & sensitive issues faced by a TEACHER of Aboriginal languages

- Faced by
  - Aboriginal Students, and
  - non-Aboriginal Students

Some opinions on Aboriginal languages

• "[Aboriginal] language is an important embodiment of cultural heritage, knowledge, tradition and identity unique to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," says Russell Taylor, Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS).

• Aboriginal people "often don't even know that [their mother] language is still strong and people speak it. When we show that to them it just blows their mind," says Ken Walker, NSW North Coast Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal language teacher.

• Yolngu [north-Australian] language is our power, our foundation, our root and everything that holds us together. [It] gives us strength; language is our identity, who we are. Yolngu language gives us pride. Language is our law and justice.—Yalmay Yunupingu, Aboriginal teacher.

• In the language are our ideas and we need them, the world needs them.—Bruce Pascoe, Aboriginal teacher.

What is Aboriginal English (AE)?

Diana Eades’ definition:
‘Aboriginal English is the name given to the various kinds of English spoken by Aboriginal people throughout Australia’.
Eades believes ‘In many subtle ways Aboriginal English is a powerful vehicle for the expression of Aboriginal identity’.

Harrison’s (2008:85) definition:
Aboriginal English is a dialect rather than a language. It is ‘not just a way of talking among Aboriginal people; it is a way of thinking and behaving’.

How should AE be incorporated into the classroom?

- As a ‘bridge’ to learning Standard English (Harrison 2008:84)
- Strategy 1 - explicit teaching in SE, with oral support in AE.
- Strategy 2 – inclusion of AE in specific texts.
- Strategy 3 – whole-school approach; teaching differences between AE and SE to Aboriginal students.
- Strategy 4 – as strategy 3, with differences taught to ALL students.


• ‘The recognition and understanding of Aboriginal English pragmatics is essential to effective cross-cultural communication’.

Conclusion

- Aboriginal Languages have a strong, important place within the curriculum
- Aboriginal Languages can be taught in schools with respect for Aboriginal community members and dedication from educators
- Aboriginal English is the accepted spoken language in many Aboriginal peoples’ homes
- Aboriginal English should be included in the classroom with care and sensitivity to all students

- For improving outcomes and reaching reconciliation
- With positive results including increased self-esteem and an openness in students to learning the Indigenous worldview
- That brings a sense of solidarity and comfort between Aboriginal people
- Enhancing the opportunity for reconciliation through acceptance and cultural understanding
Reference List

- New South Wales Board of Studies 2003, 'Introduction & Rationale', in *Aboriginal Languages K-10 syllabus*, June, NSW BOS, Sydney, pp. 5-10.


- Eades, Diana School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at the University of New England, retrieved from [http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/definitions/aboriginal.html](http://www.une.edu.au/langnet/definitions/aboriginal.html)
## Handout 1: examples of Aboriginal English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal English</th>
<th>Standard English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Camp</td>
<td>➢ home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mob</td>
<td>➢ group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Big mob</td>
<td>➢ a lot of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lingo</td>
<td>➢ Aboriginal language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sorry business</td>
<td>➢ ceremony associated with death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Grow [a child] up</td>
<td>➢ raise [a child]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Growl</td>
<td>➢ scold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Gammon</td>
<td>➢ pretending, kidding, joking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Cheeky</td>
<td>➢ mischievous, aggressive, dangerous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Solid</td>
<td>➢ fantastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To tongue for</td>
<td>➢ to long for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPIC: Aboriginal Languages; Aboriginal English</td>
<td>PRESENTER: Belinda Christensen</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEMINAR QUESTIONS:</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is the place of Aboriginal languages in the curriculum? How can Aboriginal languages be taught and how should Aboriginal English be incorporated in the classroom?</td>
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<tr>
<td>LESSON OBJECTIVES:</td>
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<tr>
<td>➤ Explicitly address the content, themes and concepts found in all the readings about implementing Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English in the classroom.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>➤ Fully answer the questions in an informed and sensitive manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>➤ Display evidence of lesson planning and lesson goals, and classroom management, as well as communication, questioning, discussion, listening, group work and ICT skills, and the use of engaging activities and resources.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LESSON SEQUENCE:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Introduction:</strong> slide 1 – Topic Aboriginal Languages; Aboriginal English Drawing from Readings - NSW Board of Studies 2003, <em>Aboriginal Languages K-10 syllabus</em> pp 5-10; Green, R. &amp; Oppliger, A. 2007 pp 81-87; Harrison, N. 2008 pp 84-99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • **Discussion:** slide 2 – “What is the place of Aboriginal Languages in the curriculum?” Ask the question – “What do the readings tell us?” | slide 2 continued over page...
Lesson plan continued…

LESSON SEQUENCE continued…

Slide 2 continued…

The NSW BOS indicates the ‘government has acknowledged responsibility’ (2003:5, 9, 10) – Ask the question: who can tell me, in a historical context, why the government is responsible? [discussion, then each point on slide entered one by one…];


Harrison develops a definition of AE, curriculum requirements and the unequal power relationship between AE and SE.

• **Discussion: Slide 3** = “How can Aboriginal languages be taught in schools?” Play the audio/visual film link found [http://www.nfsa.afc.gov.au/services/soa-media/index.html](http://www.nfsa.afc.gov.au/services/soa-media/index.html) Ask the students to think about possible problems that may arise. Ask the question: ‘What do the readings say?’

• **Slide 4** = “Languages lost...like people and culture”. A brief summary of BOS focus of improving Indigenous outcomes – in line with current AETP; revitalisation of culture, self-esteem and pride in Aboriginal people; reconciliation. Green & Oppliger share their positive experience of incorporating the Dharug Language Programme at Dunhevan High School; and Harrison concludes with a list of suggested strategies for incorporating AE into the classroom.


slide 4 continued over page…
LESSON SEQUENCE continued…

Slide 4 continued…

The themes of the readings imply the incorporation of Aboriginal languages have a positive impact on Aboriginal students’ outcomes, communal self-esteem and raised levels of respect from the non-Indigenous community.

- **Activity: Slide 5** = Students are asked to complete an 8 minute activity in groups of 3-4. “Discuss and list the practical & sensitive issues faced by the teacher ..and what about issues…faced by Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal Students?” Students informed that these will be built upon in tutorials.

- **Slide 6** = Ask students to read their responses. Another source…”Opinions on the inclusion of Aboriginal languages” – read quotes… Ask students for feedback.

- **Slide 7** = “What is Aboriginal English?” Read definitions from Eades and Harrison. Go through examples in handout #1 - AE = Standard English – camp = home; mob = group; big mob = a lot of; lingo = Aboriginal language; sorry business = ceremony associated with death; grow [a child] up = raise [a child]; growl = scold; gammon = pretending, kidding, joking; cheeky = mischievous, aggressive, dangerous; solid = fantastic; to tongue for = to long for.

  slide 7 continued over page…
LESSON SEQUENCE continued…

Slide 7 continued…

“How should AE be implemented into the classroom?” Ask the question, “What is the stance of NSW DET on AE?” Harrison includes the DET requirement to incorporate AE and the NSW BOS English syllabus emphasizing acceptance and encouragement of AE as ‘an important means of showing acceptance of the students’ home background language’ (Harrison 2008:89). Harrison continues by mentioning specific strategies (Malcolm (2003)) - enter strategies on RH side slide 7.

• Conclusion: slide 8 = summary of issues provides an answer to both topic questions.
Lesson plan continued....

LESSON REVIEW STATEMENT:

• The introduction provides key issues from the readings covering the two key themes that inform this unit and this topic – as i) improving outcomes of Indigenous students and ii) reaching reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people of Australia.

• The discussion from students elicits how historical contexts have influenced the focus of contemporary education policies.

• The group activity provides students with the opportunity to consider their individual assumptions that they will need to remain aware of as teachers. It will also allow them to consider with empathy the often challenging feelings that may be experienced by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students when faced with learning an Aboriginal language.

The answers expected from the discussion may include, but are certainly not limited to, a) concerns from teachers regarding the use of appropriate language for Aboriginal students to understand. b) Aboriginal students may fear ‘appearing white’ to their Aboriginal peers by taking an interest in academic learning. c) Non-Aboriginal students may resent the ‘extra attention’ given to Aboriginal students via learning their specific Aboriginal language.