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Edith Esch & Martin Solly (eds)

The Sociolinguistics of Language Education in International Contexts

Peter Lang

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Section 3: Practices

ANDROULA YIAKOUMETTI

Bidialectism and Aboriginal Language Education: Sociolinguistic Considerations Pertinent to Australia's Aboriginal Communities

1. Introduction

Australia is a country associated with innovative, sustained and influential work that has resulted in language-education initiatives for Indigenous (i.e. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) students. Since the 1970s, sociolinguistic studies on the language use and education of Indigenous people have been flourishing. The research of Malcolm (Malcolm 1979, 1994, 1995a, 1995b) and others (Kaldor/Malcolm 1982, Berry/Hudson 1997, Clayton 1999, Malcolm *et al*. 1999) introduced the framework of bidialectal education for Aboriginal English speakers and promoted English-as-a-second-dialect instruction for these speakers. This research pointed out the equality of the various linguistic varieties which co-occur on the continent and advocated the proposition that Indigenous students' linguistic repertoires, cultural knowledge, communicative styles, learning styles, and worldviews ought to be respected and harnessed in the classroom. Many pedagogical initiatives resulted from this research (and these are briefly discussed in section 2.4).

Despite the many sociolinguistically-informed pedagogical initiatives, researchers report that Indigenous students' performance is significantly poorer than that of non-Indigenous students (Luke/Land *et al*. 2002, Oliver *et al.* 2011) and researchers continue to strive to discover the factors which underlie Indigenous students' poorer performance. It is accepted that various factors such as linguistic and cultural differences, learning styles, assessment instruments and con-

tent, and irregular attendance (as well as interactions amongst these factors) all affect students' performance (McTaggart 2010).

This chapter focuses on non-Indigenous teachers who work in Indigenous communities in Australia. Teachers are the focus of this chapter as they are key transmitters of knowledge. Specifically, the chapter aims to highlight that, for Indigenous students' language education to be successful, teachers need to be sociolinguistically informed. The study provides empirical support for the call for educators of Aboriginal students to be trained in (i) general sociolinguistic issues related to linguistic diversity and (ii) specific Aboriginal-related sociolinguistic issues. Suggesting teacher training in language issues is not a new proposition. Researchers from around the globe have drawn from their studies within linguistically-diverse communities in deciding to advocate such training (Baugh 1999, Meier 1999, Ball/Lewis 2005, Yiakoumetti/Esch 2010, Yiakoumetti 2010). Despite this advocacy, there are only a few programmes that educate teachers about linguistic diversity (Wolfram 1999). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it should be highlighted that providing sociolinguistic enlightenment to teachers alone is not sufficient. It is very likely that, ultimately, family members, community members, speech and language pathologists, and policy makers will also need to be enlightened (Ball 2010).

The chapter starts with a brief review of the literature on the sociolinguistic profile of Aboriginal English-speaking students and the education provided to these students in Australia. The setting of the study, the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda, and the research procedures are then described. The findings of the study are discussed in terms of (i) initial observations and (ii) in-depth analysis of teachers' opinions about a professional development workshop on Indigenous pre-Prep education. The study's educational implications are set out in detail in the form of recommendations for teacher training programmes.

2. Aboriginal linguistic landscape

2.1. Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English

Contact between colonisers and Indigenous people has often led to the formation of new linguistic varieties. Aboriginal English in Australia is one such variety which resulted from contact between an Indigenous people and English-speaking settlers who occupied the continent in the late 18th century. This variety, which underwent processes of pidginisation/creolisation, drew distinctive vocabulary from the settlers' regional and social varieties of that time and grammatical influences from the Aboriginal languages (Malcolm/Truscott 2011). The British colonisation did not produce Aboriginal English (AE) only: Australian English also developed as a variety directly related to British English (Collins/Peters 2008).

Today, AE is used as an umbrella term in Australia and refers to a continuum of varieties: at the one end, varieties share features with creoles and, at the other end, varieties share most of their features with informal Australian English (Malcolm/Grote 2007). AE is considered to be a nonstandard, primarily spoken English variety. Australian English, on the other hand, is the standardised language of education and administration referred to as Standard Australian English (SAE). AE differs in systematic ways from SAE at all levels of linguistic structure (Malcolm 1995a) and these differences have an impact on classroom teaching and learning.

It would be unfeasible to give detailed consideration to the differences between the two varieties in this short chapter but, for examples of typical differences, see Haig *et al.* (2005). Pronunciation, stress, intonation and pauses in speech contribute to a distinct AE accent. Morphosyntactic differences between AE and SAE include the pronoun system, person marking, possessive, verb tense, and use of articles and prepositions. In terms of lexico-semantics, a number of AE words are shared with SAE but have different meanings (Malcolm *et al.* 1999, Sharifian *et al.* 2003). In terms of pragmatics, AE speakers are generally less direct about seeking information (Cahill 1999) and

silence is accepted and does not indicate that communication has broken down. Naturally, the linguistic differences between AE and SAE pose pedagogical challenges for teachers. In addition, as Haig *et al.* (2005) note, AE speakers are often disadvantaged because their home linguistic behaviour does not match that expected in the classroom.

Malcolm and Truscott (2011) argue that SAE and AE are Englishes in opposition. According to the authors, Aboriginal people do not generally identify with SAE, which they refer to as 'flash'. Non-Aboriginal people, in their turn, view AE as a corrupt form of their own English.

2.2. The role of English in the Aboriginal language ecology

Drawing on the concept of language ecology, Mühlhäusler (1996) explains that English has a significant role in the contemporary language ecology of Aboriginal people. English is now integrated into the postcolonial Aboriginal language ecology: AE is very much a living variety, the functions of which progressively expand (Malcolm 2001). At the same time, there is no doubt that Aboriginal people need SAE (the language of the majority population) if they are to share equal access to career opportunities with non-Indigenous Australians. One should remember, however, that English did initially invade the Aboriginal language ecology and that the arrival of the Europeans and the English language led to the decline of the vast majority of traditional Australian languages (Walsh 1993). The displacement and subsequent mixing of Aboriginal people with different linguistic varieties contributed further to the English reinforcement (Troy 1990). It is estimated that there were between 500 and 700 Indigenous linguistic varieties in Australia when Europeans arrived, a number which roughly corresponds to the number of tribal groups (Romaine 1988). In 1982, Eagleson *et al*. estimated that 170 Indigenous varieties were still alive. There has been a further decline of Indigenous languages in recent years (Luke/Land *et al*. 2002).

2.3. Sociolinguistic profile of Aboriginal students

Aboriginal speakers are a heterogenous population: some Aboriginal people speak AE as their mother tongue while other Aboriginal people speak traditional Aboriginal languages as their first language. This study focuses on the students whose mother tongue is AE.

Aboriginal students who speak AE at home but learn to read and write in SAE are considered to be bidialectal. These children use a dialect of English at home which differs from the educational English variety. The situation of bidialectal children clearly contrasts with that of bilingual children. At a linguistic level, bidialectal children have (sometimes limited) proficiency in varieties of the same language. Because of the close relatedness between the two varieties, the school English variety should not be treated unthinkingly as a second language. Nevertheless, bidialectal children do need to be taught the differences between AE and SAE and how the use of each depends on the context, purpose and people involved in interaction (Haig *et al*. 2005). At a sociolinguistic level, the linguistic distinctiveness of bidialectal children has 'a quality of invisibility' (Malcolm 1995a: 2). The children are not seen as speakers of a dialect that is an alternative to SAE but rather as speakers of 'bad English'. (For a thorough investigation of the differences between second-dialect acquisition and second-language acquisition and the reasons why the former is in some ways more difficult, see Siegel 2010.) As already mentioned, the negative evaluation of AE is generally held by the native speakers of the prestigious and predominant language of the community/country.

It must be emphasised here that the phenomenon of bidialectism is universal. In the US, it has been extensively discussed in relation to African American English and Standard American English (Rickford/Rickford 1995, Wolfram *et al*. 1999). In Canada, it has been discussed in relation to First Nation English dialects and Standard English (Ball/Bernhardt 2011). In Europe, bidialectal communities (with official languages other than English) which have received considerable research attention include the Netherlands (Hagen 1989), Belgium (Van de Craen/Humblet 1989), Switzerland (Ender/Straßl 2009), and Cyprus (Yiakoumetti 2007). Research in all of these bidialectal contexts has indicated that banning students' nonstandard mother tongues from the

classroom leads to low educational achievement. On the other hand, when dialectal diversity is recognised, respected and promoted, students' performance improves dramatically (Yiakoumetti 2006).

2.4. Language education for Aboriginal students

Early language education of Aboriginal people was tightly linked with missionary education which promoted colonial English and punished Aboriginal language use (Luke/Land *et al*. 2002). As in other colonial settings, mission-school education was characterised by a monolingual orientation which was based on the principle of linguistic deficiency: emergent linguistic varieties (e.g. pidgins and creoles) were viewed as deficit forms of 'proper English' (Siegel 1987, Romaine 1988).

Since the 1970s, language education for Aboriginal people has started to receive the attention it deserves. Research, educational interventions, and pilot programmes have taken on a sociolinguistic perspective by which linguistic diversity has been acknowledged and utilised for the benefit of Aboriginal students (Eagleson *et al*. 1982). In fact, Australia has, to date, produced some of the most inspiring initiatives in the field.

Numerous paradigms are associated with Aboriginal people's language education across the continent (Luke/Land *et al.* 2002):

- EFL/ESL/ESD education (English as a foreign language / English as a second language / English as a second dialect): programmes that explicitly recognise issues associated with the transition from AE to SAE.
- Two-way schooling: programmes that bring into the classroom aspects of Aboriginal language and culture.
- Culturally appropriate Aboriginal pedagogy: awareness that teachers' pedagogical approaches may need to be modified in order to better support the specific linguistic and cultural learning styles of Aboriginal students.

In 1999, the Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners were developed following adaptations from the ESL Bandscales (McKay 1994). The NLLIA (National Languages and Literacy

Institute of Australia) Bandscales follow Cummins's (2000) BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) to CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) sequence but the Bandscales adaptations recognise that the sequence suggested is tentative and may need to be varied (Turnbull 2002). The Indigenous Bandscales recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will learn SAE more effectively if their home varieties are maintained and accepted (Turnbull 2001, 2002, Turnbull/Hudson 2001). The Bandscales thus aim to raise teachers' awareness of the home varieties of Indigenous students in order to cater for their needs in the classroom more effectively.

In spite of the many initiatives and Australian educators' highly commendable aims to use language fairly and to provide literacy to all children, it is widely accepted that Aboriginal students do not fare well at school when compared with their non-Aboriginal counterparts (Luke/Land *et al*. 2002). It is additionally accepted that Aboriginal students' achievement is lower in isolated rural locations (Luke *et al*. 2000, Luke/Woods *et al*. 2002). The current situation is therefore one of poor achievement in SAE and of continued decrease in Indigenous language proficiency. The question that many researchers ask is how Aboriginal students' SAE performance can be improved without causing further language loss.

Indigenous students' underperformance in relation to non-Indigenous students has also been documented by the OECD PISA (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment) surveys. Since 2000, PISA surveys demonstrated a substantial difference between the average reading literacy performances of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (De Bortoli/Cresswell 2004, Thomson/De Bortoli 2008, De Bortoli/Thomson 2009, Thomson *et al.* 2011). PISA's reading literacy performance consists of five levels of proficiency with level 5 being the most difficult and level 1 being the least difficult. In 2009, for example, Indigenous students achieved a mean score of 436 points compared to a mean score of 518 points for non-Indigenous students. This difference of 82 score points equates to more than one proficiency level or more than two full years of schooling. The average performance of Indigenous students was also 57 points lower than the OECD average, which again represents significant underperformance (Thom-

son *et al.* 2011). The low achievement of Indigenous students remains a concern for Australian policy makers who see almost 40 per cent of Indigenous students failing to achieve performances of level 2 or higher. Policy makers are committed to improving the performance of these students such that they can reach their full potential.

3. Research setting and procedures

3.1. Setting of the study: the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda

The study was carried out in 2009 over a period of two months (primarily) at the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda. Woorabinda is located in the central region of the Australian state of Queensland and the meaning of the toponym is Aboriginal for "the place where the kangaroo sits down" (McGregor-Dey 1993). Woorabinda was chosen to serve as the setting of the study because of its uniqueness. A brief description of the history of the community is pertinent here.

Woorabinda was officially established in 1927 and Aboriginal people from different language groups were forcibly placed there. It is the only DOGIT (Deed of Grant in Trust) Aboriginal community in central Queensland. This means that, since 1986, complete control has been invested in the Woorabinda Community Council and that elected local Aboriginal representatives administer community affairs. The community has a much higher proportion of Aboriginal people under the age of 18 compared to the wider non-Aboriginal community. Woorabinda is considered one of the most violent Aboriginal communities and has difficulty retaining teachers for long periods of time. A year before the commencement of the study, in July 2008, a complete ban on alcohol was implemented to reduce the heightened levels of alcohol-related abuse which took place in the community (Queensland Government, Liquor Amendment Regulation No. 1, 2008). In 2009, Woorabinda had a population of around 1000 Aboriginal people. The community has one co-educational school, the Woorabinda State

school, and one child care centre, the Undoonoo Child Care Centre. All students attending both the school and the centre are Indigenous.

3.2. Research methods

This chapter focuses on one aspect of a broad ethnographic study carried out on the topic of bidialectism and Indigenous language education in Australia. Specifically, it deals with non-Aboriginal teachers' opinions about their teaching experience and the support that they received during their teaching time within Aboriginal communities. The primary data come mainly from interviews with educators within the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda but these are complemented by secondary data which come from interviews with (i) Aboriginal residents of Woorabinda and (ii) non-Aboriginal educators who work in other Aboriginal communities and who participated in a professional development workshop on Indigenous pre-Prep training (see next section for a description of Indigenous pre-Prep education). For reasons of preservation of anonymity, a distinction between educators working in different Aboriginal communities will not be made. Some of the teachers who participated in the study in 2009 no longer work in Aboriginal communities. These teachers were interviewed again in 2010 to elicit their opinions about their teaching experiences in the Aboriginal communities which have developed since they completed their service there.

As a researcher, I lived in the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda and interacted with the locals on a daily basis. My own interpretation of how I was perceived by locals ought to be addressed here. As I am not an Indigenous Australian, I was aware prior to arriving in the community that the locals might be reluctant to be open with me. However, the fact that I was also not any sort of Australian (but rather a citizen of a small country somewhere far away in Europe) placed me in a category other than that of the 'whites'. The additional fact that I have an accent which is clear and present evidence of the fact that English is not my mother tongue helped in further distinguishing me from the non-Aboriginal Australians and, indeed, appeared to stimulate welcome curiosity and openness amongst most members of the community.

3.3. Pre-Prep education in Indigenous communities

Pre-Prep education in Indigenous communities is a part-time early education programme recently introduced by the Department of Education, Training and the Arts of the Queensland Government. It targets three-to-four-year-old children living in 35 Indigenous communities and aims to better prepare these children for school. Pre-Prep is therefore designed for children in the year before they commence formal schooling (via admission to the Preparatory or kindergarten year) and can be delivered in various Queensland settings including community kindergartens, child care centres, and schools. Pre-Prep educators follow the framework of 'Foundations for Success' (Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts 2008) which provides guidelines for educators on how to work with community members for the development of quality early-year (pre-Prep) education for Indigenous children. The Queensland Government initiated pre-Prep education based on the principle that the foundations for successful learning are laid in the early years. It was hoped that the initiative would train and motivate children to regularly attend the pre-Prep programme so that they might become accustomed to the routine of daily learning prior to their Prep year.

Pre-Prep in Woorabinda was introduced for the first time in 2009, the year in which the study was conducted. The sole pre-Prep educator assigned to the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda was non-Aboriginal and, along with other (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) pre-Prep educators, participated in a pre-Prep professional development three-day seminar soon after her teaching duties within the Aboriginal community commenced. Pre-Prep in Woorabinda was delivered at the Undoonoo Child Care Centre and was expected to target up to 18 children. It was delivered on a daily basis between 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. Initial observations

This section presents my initial observations upon (i) arriving within the Aboriginal community of Woorabinda and (ii) visiting other Aboriginal communities. The purpose of presenting these observations in brief (rather than undertaking an in-depth discussion) is to provide a relatively unencumbered impression of life as it pertains to education in the Aboriginal communities.

4.2. Non-Aboriginal pre-Prep educators

An initial discovery was that non-Aboriginal educators were sent to Aboriginal communities to deliver the pre-Prep programme. The great majority of these teachers had very little previous experience of working in Aboriginal schools. In addition, these were not familiar with the lifestyle of Aboriginal children or, more generally, that of the Aboriginal community. For most non-Aboriginal educators, working with pre-Prep children was also a new experience. The first teacher's comments below capture the truly difficult task with which he was faced upon commencing his job within an Aboriginal community. His discourse demonstrates the immense challenges he encountered: lack of teaching experience with Aboriginal students, lack of experience working with pre-Prep children, and lack of awareness of the community's living conditions. The second teacher's comments below also evidence the difficulty of adjusting in Aboriginal communities.

(1) Teacher 1: It was a massive culture shock. I used to teach Year 7 white students and I then had to teach Pre-Prep Indigenous. I had never taught Pre-Prep before. It was a new experience. […] It wasn't that bad. Housing was a real concern.

(2) Teacher 2: Because I didn't start at the beginning, I didn't have the opportunity to do 'Pathways to Peace'.
Researcher: Do you know what that professional development programme is about?

Teacher: What teachers might be facing in the Aboriginal communities. To stop the shock. Warming them to the idea.

4.3. Non-Aboriginal educators' attitudes towards Aboriginal children's irregular attendance

All teachers expressed their disappointment at students' frequent absences. This is an issue identified by Education Queensland as a problem to be tackled and, indeed, it was one of the driving factors for the pre-Prep initiative. Below are quotes from two teachers which clearly demonstrate teachers' frustration with irregular attendees.

(3) Teacher 1: We never know who is enrolled and who isn't. They just don't come back. But they might come back. After three months.

(4) Teacher 2: There was no teaching going on technically. There were supposed to be up to 18 students. I had two days with 18 students. On average 8 students. 12 students on a good day. I didn't even get to know all of their names.

4.4. Aboriginal people's attitudes towards non-Aboriginal teachers

It was evident from the start that Aboriginal community members were disappointed with the fact that 'white' teachers do not stay in the community for long enough. Some explained that if teachers stay longer, 'each side can learn better the other's ways and adjust'. In contrast, other community members preferred that Aboriginal people teach Aboriginal children because they feel that they understand their children better than the 'whites' and know what to teach them. This second group expressed a desire 'to go back to our roots'.

4.5. Aboriginal people's attitudes towards their own language

One of the early discoveries of this study was that the Aboriginal members of the community of Woorabinda with whom I spoke were not concerned about traditional Aboriginal languages. They stated that

English is their language now and that the 'other languages' are long lost. This attitude contrasted starkly with that of the non-Aboriginal teachers in the community who did not consider Aboriginal children to speak proper English. (It must be noted, however, that when a teacher was asked if she thought it would have been useful if she had the opportunity to attend a course on (i) the way Aboriginal people speak English and (ii) the differences between SAE and AE, she said that she taught Aboriginal children the same way she would teach any other child in Australia.) It should also be said that it proved to be difficult to engage community members in talking about their Aboriginal English variety. One member described it as 'Yankee' because of the perceived influence of television programmes from the US.

4.6. Teachers' opinions about the professional-development workshop on Indigenous pre-Prep education

All teachers agreed that they found the workshop useful when it came to learning about Aboriginal culture and ways to incorporate it into the classroom. They explained that they received useful information about Dreamtime stories which describe Aboriginal people's patterns of life. Many teachers were very satisfied with the 'hands-on activities' they were advised to employ with Aboriginal children and the majority of them referred to the activities as 'creative'.

However, not all teachers thought that the workshop fulfilled its purpose. A number of these teachers explained that, because pre-Prep education was a new concept, limited guidance was available. Teachers' disappointment with the workshop is expressed in the following quotes.

(5) Teacher 1: I didn't know what it was. It was play-based, not book-based. Nobody told us how to encourage kids to come to school.

(6) Teacher 2: We were sent to Cairns for training. We had no idea what we were supposed to be doing. We got together and decided.

It is obvious that the first teacher's expectations were not met by the workshop. It was apparent from our discussion that, for her, motivat-

ing Aboriginal children to come to school was the highest priority. She explained that, even after the workshop, she still faced the same problem of irregular attendance. Her expectations of the pre-Prep curriculum also seem to be characterised by perhaps Prep and Primary School principles: she explained that she expected more formal, book-based teaching as opposed to 'just fun and games'.

All teachers stated that they heard the term 'Standard Australian English' for the first time at the workshop. Taken in isolation, this finding demonstrates the significant prospects of such professional-development workshops. However, further investigation highlighted that essential sociolinguistic information was not part of the workshops that have thus far been attended by teachers. Below is an extract from a discussion with a participant which demonstrates that, although teachers have the best intentions to help children with their learning, they are at a disadvantage because they are unaware of vital sociolinguistic facts.

(7) Teacher: It was the first time I heard the term SAE, Standard Australian English. The English we use versus their dialect, I guess. We were encouraged to write the stories in English and in their language.
[The teacher moved on to discussing another issue. After a few moments, I attempted to come back to the issue of writing in both varieties.]
Researcher: You said that you were encouraged to write the stories in both dialects.
Teacher: No. In Standard Australian English and their dialect.

The workshop exposed the teacher, who has more than 30 years of teaching experience, to valuable sociolinguistic information. It was no doubt educational that he learned an appropriate term for the linguistic variety promoted in Australian schools, SAE. At the same time, however, this information seemed to further establish the hegemony of the standard in the teacher's mind. When I inadvertently used the term 'dialect' and referred to both SAE and AE as dialects, he corrected me by distinguishing between his standard and their dialect. It was obvious that, for him, standard varieties were associated with prestige and nonstandard 'dialect[s]' were viewed as inferior.

Teachers agreed that one of the main messages of the workshop was for teachers to encourage Aboriginal children 'to speak'. The fol-

lowing extract demonstrates teachers' views about Aboriginal children's linguistic behaviour.

(8) Teacher: To encourage them to speak because they are not good at conversation.
Researcher: Why do you think they are not good at conversation?
Teacher: Because they don't speak to each other. They are not very communicative people. They don't talk, they just look at you. They are not like our children. They just don't talk.
Researcher: What language do they use amongst themselves?
Teacher: I have no idea. No one would be able to answer this. They came from different regions, they speak different languages.
Researcher: The Aboriginal people in the community speak different languages?
Teacher: Their forefathers did.
Researcher: And what do they speak now? Some sort of English?
Teacher: I suppose so.

It is obvious that the teacher did not really consider the native variety of her Aboriginal students. For her, the main problem was that Aboriginal children do not speak in the classroom. The differences between the home variety and the school variety were never addressed or questioned and were not considered to be important or relevant to the teacher. When urged to discuss the native language of the children, she referred to traditional Aboriginal languages which are clearly not currently spoken by these children.

Finally, all teachers stated that Aboriginal children need ESL education. When they were asked to explain why they thought that ESL provision would be appropriate for these children, they all compared Aboriginal students with students whose first language is not English. None of the teachers mentioned the term or concept of English-as-a-second-dialect and none considered Aboriginal children to speak English as their mother tongue. These findings are somewhat in line with those of a study carried out in Western Australia (Oliver *et al.* 2011). The authors demonstrated that, even after professional development training, teachers gave inaccurate descriptions of AE and only few referred to codeswitching, a critical concept in bidialectal education.

5. Educational implications: teacher training in sociolinguistic issues

One must remember that teachers who choose to work in isolated Aboriginal communities are undoubtedly interested in providing better education to Aboriginal children. These teachers choose to live in unknown and, very often, less-than-ideal conditions in order to fulfil their worthy pedagogical aspirations. The findings of the study demonstrate that non-Aboriginal teachers working in Aboriginal communities felt less than empowered to carry out the challenging task of preparing young (pre-Prep) children for meaningful education. It is essential that professional development workshops and, indeed, any other types of teacher training provide clear and sociolinguistically-informed knowledge to teachers. Teacher training should certainly avoid causing further uncertainties and should not lead to misunderstandings. This study demonstrates that, for some teachers, the superiority of SAE was reinforced. Judging from Australia's history in promoting linguistic equality, this unfortunate outcome could not have been one of the workshop's objectives.

The study proposes that pre-service and in-service teacher training which explicitly focuses on the ways teachers can better support Aboriginal students who live in Aboriginal communities and who speak AE as their mother tongue is essential. It is suggested that such training would benefit from addressing general sociolinguistic issues (which would be relevant in any linguistically-diverse community) and specific Aboriginal-related sociolinguistic issues. Of course, simply telling teachers about sociolinguistic complexity may not in itself lead to new and helpful classroom approaches. Rather, training should focus on highlighting specific methods that utilise linguistic diversity for clear pedagogical purposes.

5.1. General sociolinguistic issues: linguistic diversity

5.1.1. Linguistic terms and their social values

Teachers should be educated about terms such as dialect, language, standardisation, bidialectism/multidialectism, and bilingualism/ multilingualism. They should understand that linguistic variation (as opposed to monolingualism) is the norm and that there exists a great range of linguistic varieties (i.e. regional, social, ethnic, Aboriginal, contact and sign languages). It should be explained to teachers that all types of linguistic varieties are complex and systematic. Linguistically speaking, no variety is better than another; it is people who assign values of prestige or deficit to linguistic varieties.

5.1.2. Language as a symbol of one's identity

Teachers should be educated about the link between language and identity (Joseph 2004). Speakers intentionally assert social identities through their choice of language use. Teachers should understand that children who speak a nonstandard variant have style variation available which signals social meaning which may be inexpressible in the standard variant.

5.1.3. Linguistic Human Rights

Teachers should be informed about Linguistic Human Rights which are needed for speakers of dominant languages who individually and collectively experience marginalisation or even the extinction of their languages. Observing Linguistic Human Rights means that (i) all can identify positively with their mother tongues and have this identification respected by others, (ii) all can learn their mother tongues fully, and (iii) those whose mother tongue is not an official language in the country where they reside can learn one of the official languages of that country (alongside their mother tongue) (Skutnabb-Kangas 1994).

5.1.4. Linguistic diversity and education

Teachers should understand the factors behind the hegemony of standard varieties. It should be explained to them that, traditionally, the

languages that are accorded prominence in education are dominant languages and that the underlying policy of many communities around the globe is that of assimilation of linguistic-minority groups to the dominant language and culture. Language shift is therefore imposed on minority/Indigenous/immigrant language speakers. It should be clear to teachers that language in all its societal, variational, and cultural diversity both influences and is influenced by education.

5.1.5. Significance of the social context

It is essential that teachers understand the importance of the social context and that, for language teaching to be successful, the context at hand should be taken into account (Toohey 1986).

5.1.6. Benefits of bidialectism and biculturalism

Teachers should be made aware that research around the globe has repeatedly indicated the social, cognitive, and pedagogical benefits of educational systems which promote linguistic and cultural diversity (Hornberger/Wang 2008).

5.2. Aboriginal-related sociolinguistic issues: Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English

5.2.1. Historical development of Aboriginal English

Teachers should be made aware of (i) the origins of this variety, (ii) the fact that it is a distinct dialect of English, and (iii) that it is equal to other English varieties.

5.2.2. Functions of Aboriginal English

It should be explained to teachers that AE fulfils a number of functions and serves as a symbol of Aboriginal people's identity (Malcolm/Grote 2007).

5.2.3. Main linguistic differences between Aboriginal English and Standard Australian English

Teachers should be exposed to the main areas in which AE and SAE diverge. Common lexical items which are shared by the two varieties but have different meanings should receive special focus. Naturally, teachers are not expected to be competent in AE, especially as AE refers to a range of varieties. However, awareness of the main linguistic differences between AE and SAE would allow teachers to better support their students.

5.2.4. Aboriginal culture and its incorporation into the curriculum

Teachers ought to be educated about the Aboriginal worldview and how it can be successfully introduced and harnessed in the classroom.

5.2.5. Aboriginal students' learning styles

Teachers should learn that Aboriginal people have distinctive learning styles which are context-dependent, visual and kinaesthetic (Harris 1984, Christie 1985).

5.2.6. Lifestyles in Aboriginal communities / schools

Teachers should be told of the unique characteristics of Aboriginal communities such as the facts that schools are not frequently seen as integral to Aboriginal communities and that student absenteeism is high.

5.2.7. Recognition that Aboriginal students should be taught Standard Australian English as a second dialect

Teacher-training programmes should emphasise the need for specialist expertise that is necessary to support Aboriginal students' learning of SAE that Indigenous language proficiency should be harnessed in the classroom and that bidialectism should be cultivated.

Implementing the above recommendations is undoubtedly an enormous task. However, such implementation is very much desirable and, with effort, is achievable. Policy makers must provide teachers with the necessary theoretical and practical means for supporting In-

digenous students. There is no doubt that teachers have immense responsibilities. However, it is both undesirable and unfeasible to ask them to shoulder this burden alone.

6. Conclusion

The study carried out in Queensland, Australia was timely as it came immediately after the 'Australia 2020 Summit' (Australian Government 2008) which, among other themes, focused on educational planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and suggested that early-childhood development should be at the centre of policy and programmes. Undoubtedly, for language education to be successful, it needs to reflect the linguistic ecology of the community to which is pertains. This chapter proposes that both general and Aboriginal-related sociolinguistic issues should be addressed in teacher-training programmes. This study provides evidence that one cannot work in isolation from the other. Teachers have the immense task of educating and preparing learners for real life. Teacher-training programmes should thus be conceived adequately so that they can provide teachers with the linguistic means to carry out this task efficiently and successfully.

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