

**Education in Australian English:  
The Challenge for Aboriginal English Speakers**

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## 1.0 Introduction

Education always entails a challenge both to the educator and to the learner. I want in this presentation to focus primarily on the challenge that education poses to the learner, especially where the learner is one of those Australians who enter the education system considering themselves English speakers, but who discover that their English dialect is not the same as that seen as the medium and target of the education process. Specifically, I want to focus on those who are speakers of Aboriginal English.

Aboriginal English has been described in diverse parts of Australia and has its origins in the contact made between the immigrant population and the Indigenous population from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its distinctiveness is due partly to the processes of pidginization and creolization associated with the initial and ongoing language contact, and partly to the persistence of grammatical, interactional and conceptual characteristics associated with the languages it displaced or accompanied. While it shows regional variation across Australia, and embraces a continuum of sociolects, it also serves as a unifying force for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and can be meaningfully focused on as a single dialect.

My object here is to draw on some studies that have been made on the ways in which Aboriginal English impacts on the classroom, looking in particular at actual interactions and at the comments of teachers, Aboriginal community spokespersons and Aboriginal students, in order to clarify the challenges faced by students, before commenting briefly on ways of meeting the challenges these pose to educators.

## 2.0 Linguistic Dimensions

### 2.1 Linguistic Assumptions relating to Production

When Aboriginal English speakers enter an education system based on Standard Australian English (SAE) there is an assumed priority given to the dialect which does not have their primary identification. This immediately puts them on the back foot. The term “discomfort” has been used to refer to the experience of the learner, and this discomfort leads to a reluctance to talk in the classroom at all. As Aboriginal educator Lynette Rodriguez reflects: “If you’re uncomfortable you retreat. You try not to talk to non- Aboriginal people...And if you do talk, you talk with your head down and you mumble a lot, because you’re not confident in using Standard Australian English” (Collard 2000:94). This is not an experience exclusive to Aboriginal learners. Michelle Fine (1987:83) observed a similar response made by speakers of African American Vernacular English, Spanish English and Creole in the New York City public school in which she carried out ethnographic research, and she referred to it with the term “silencing.” From the very beginning, an education system which recognizes only one dialect of English has a silencing effect on speakers of another dialect. This is a part of what Stephen May (2012:22) has referred to as the “*institutionalized* devaluation and marginalization of minorities within the nation-state.”

Aboriginal students have commented on their discomfort in particular with respect to the expectation they will use Standard Australian English, which seems to contradict their Aboriginality. Students interviewed in the course of research carried out in Western Australia made the comments:

*Yeah, actually I do find that sometimes like- some English words- I feel I can't say them.*  
(Malcolm et al 1999a:55)

A Yindjibarndi speaker, who associates the concept of 'home' with the word *ngurrangka*, commented:

*'At home' feels really funny ...when I do, do say it I feel – it feels funny and I laugh.* (Malcolm et al 1999a:55)

The discomfort persists, even into higher education. In an investigation of Aboriginal students at university, one commented:

*It is a totally different language from what you use outside the campus to what you use inside* (Malcolm and Rochecouste 1998:67).

There are, then, linguistic assumptions on the part of the system about the marginal status of Aboriginal English, and counter-assumptions from Aboriginal speakers about the foreignness, opaqueness and verbosity of Standard Australian English.

## 2.2 Use of the home language/dialect in the classroom

Although, as we have seen, "silencing" may be the preferred strategy of Aboriginal students in the classroom, classroom observations show that Aboriginal students may also transfer elements from their home language into the SAE-speaking environment of the classroom, especially where the teacher is interacting with them in small groups as in the following examples:

Student: *Im blackfella name* ['That's his Aboriginal name']  
(Year 3 student, Kimberley)

Student: *That Ron* ['That's Ron']...

Teacher: *What does Ronald do?...*

Student: *E drive the bus* ['He drives the bus'] (Year 3 student, Kimberley))

Student: *Nyanya*

Teacher: *What's that?*

Student: *Dinner* (Pilbara, special Aboriginal class)

Student: *They shut they eyes* ['They shut their eyes']  
(Gascoyne/Murchison remedial group)

Teacher: *What's he got on his eyes?*

Student: *Eye glasses* ['Glasses'] (Goldfields, year 4.5).

Students may also spontaneously switch into their home language or dialect in order to exclude the SAE-speaking teacher, as this one confessed to the Aboriginal/Islander Education Officer who was interviewing her:

Student:           *So we always talk in our own language in class here*  
AIEW:             *Yeah, yeah*  
Student:           *She can't understand us.* (Malcolm, et al 1999a:56).

### 2.3 Influence of the home language/dialect in the classroom

More commonly, the influence of the home language or dialect is less overt. We shall give examples of five ways in which this influence may show:

#### 2.3.1 Influence on reading aloud

Part of the skill of reading aloud is noticing the features of the read text which need to be preserved in the oral version. However, this may be affected when the reader is effectively translating the text into the home dialect, as in the following example:

Student (reading): *"Hundred [Hundreds] of years ago a very brave and adventurous race of people arrived in [the] Pacific...They live in New Zealand, in Tahiti and in 'awaii [Hawaii] and [as] well as on much smaller islands. We are not quite sure what country they came from but we know now how they come [came]. They row [rowed] in mighty double canoes paddled by as many as sixty men and drive [driven] by winds..."* (Gascoyne/ Murchison, year 7 student)

The student, influenced by Aboriginal English, has clearly seen it as unnecessary to pronounce the plural 's' on *hundreds*, the definite article before *Pacific*, the initial /h/ on *Hawaii*, the past tense inflection on the verbs 'come' and 'row' and the past participle form for the passive form 'driven by winds'.

#### 2.3.2 Lack of command of SAE vocabulary

Secondly, although the vocabulary of Aboriginal English is largely shared with SAE, the domains on which it is concentrated are different. Hence Aboriginal students will often find a word-block when attempting to communicate with the teacher. Typically, this block is filled with the substitute word *thing*, sometimes pronounced *ting* or *ding*, as in the following examples:

Student (to researcher): *...the teacher, like, tries to correct us but we still don't know what she's thing [i.e., 'what she's on about']*  
(Year 6 girl, South-West)

Teacher: *Anything else in that picture?*

Student: *Nah...yeah ting...dat ting*  
Teacher: *That's a slicer...* (Kimberley school)

### 2.3.3 Lack of command of SAE grammar

Often it is not the vocabulary but the underlying grammatical structure of SAE which is beyond the command of the Aboriginal speaker, resulting in responses which seem to lack coherence with the questions put by the teacher, as in the following examples:

Teacher: *Which of the jobs would you like to do if you were flying a big helicopter?*  
Student: *The passengers?*  
Teacher: *Flying the passengers* (Year 6/7, Pilbara)

Teacher: *Who's got a cat at home?...*  
Student: *I gota, I gota* (Gascoyne/Murchison, Year 1)

Teacher: *You tell me something that you like about the picture, M...*  
Student: *I can see da ball* (Pilbara, Year 1)

Teacher: *They're putting the...tins in the bin because if they don't...*  
Students: *Flies, flies* (Gascoyne/Murchison, Year 4)

Teacher: *What does he [the insect] dig a hole for?*  
Student: *To live* (Kimberley, Year 1/2)

### 2.3.4 Incomprehension

The problem, on other occasions is that the vocabulary assumed and used by the teacher is beyond the comprehension of the students. A typical comment from an Aboriginal Islander Education Worker was: "Teachers use words that children and parents don't understand" (Malcolm 1995:178). This was the commonest problem alluded to in a survey I made of Aboriginal people involved in education (Malcolm 1992:40). It was also referred to by students, in comments like the following:

*Yeah, the teacher- um says words that we don't know an then- they ...an we don't take notice of em cause we don't know it an they aks us what it is an- we don't know* (Malcolm et al 1999b:77).

Similarly, Moses and Wigglesworth (2008:137) have documented cases in a Northern Territory school where the teacher was asking Aboriginal students questions, to answer which “the students need linguistic resources beyond those they possess.”

There is also evidence that Aboriginal students may go through the motions, providing answers to questions as if they understand, but in fact missing the teacher’s point, as in the following interaction from Wiluna:

Teacher: *What do you think we could call the story?*

Student: (3 seconds delay) *Butterflies.*

Teacher: *Butterflies. Is it about butterflies?*

Student: *No* (Gascoyne/Murchison, Year 1).

#### 2.4 Linguistic Assumptions relating to reception

It is also relevant to look at the factors affecting teacher reception of the students’ utterances. Just as the students have assumptions about SAE, teachers tend to have assumptions about the English used by their Aboriginal students. In a study undertaken with teachers from across Western Australia, teachers were invited to describe the English of their students before undertaking linguistically-based professional development. The comments showed assumptions which saw Aboriginal English as a confused or imperfect approximation to SAE, e.g.

*They confuse ‘was’ and ‘were’*

*They miss words out of their sentences*

*Letters are dropped off words*

*They say and write things back to front*

*They make improper use of tense* (Malcolm 1995:177).

It was encouraging to see how different these teachers’ assumptions were after their professional development. The reality is, however, that such assumptions tend to be the default position of linguistically-uninformed teachers. In a discussion among Aboriginal academics, Kim Collard (Collard et al 2000:86) noted: “I know I’ve been put in many situations...through the education system where I was made to feel really embarrassed you know, dropping the ‘h’s’ and things like that. I felt really bad.” Rose, another Aboriginal spokesperson, commented: “...when I was going to school it was really bad, cause we were always corrected- you gotta talk the proper way...” (Partington 1998:134). Aboriginal academic Scott Fatnowna comments: “The main problem with Aboriginal English is that it has always been viewed as lacking something, and it’s not that it’s lacking anything” (Collard et al 2000:90).

##### 2.4.1 Implied correction

Observation in classrooms reveals that, even where Aboriginal students do not have their English overtly criticised as in error, they may constantly have it modified in teacher feedback moves, which may give them the impression of being corrected by implication, as in the following examples:

Teacher: *Where do you go to see a nurse?...*

Student: *Hospital.*

Teacher: *A hospital.* (Pilbara, year 3/4/5)

Teacher: *J, what do you want to be when you grow up?*

Student: *Matron*

Teacher: *A matron* (Goldfields, Year 1)

Student: *There might um... there might be a cat near while he's looking?*

Teacher: *There might've been a cat there at the same time.*

(South-West, Year 5)

Teacher: *What do you think the ball's doing there?*

Student: *Staying*

Teacher: *It's staying there. Why is it staying there?*

Student: *Stop*

Teacher: *It's stopped.* (Pilbara, Year 1)

It could be argued that the teachers in examples like these are doing the right thing, in that the students need to get feedback on how to modify their utterances to bring them closer to SAE. It is important, though, that students be reassured that the intention is not simply to correct them. As Rosemary Cahill has commented in this regard, "Students who have their speech 'corrected' quickly learn that it is easier and less harrowing to say just nothing" (Cahill 1999:12).

#### 2.4.2 Relaying reception to avoid misinterpretation

What teachers can do to provide feedback without the implication of correction is to relay to the student what they understand them to have said, with the invitation for confirmation or otherwise. This is a not-uncommon occurrence in classrooms with Aboriginal students, as in the following examples:

Student: *I got no more piece of paper*

Teacher: *You got not more space there, have you?* (Pilbara, ungraded class)

Student: *Coralie wouldn't give us the thing..that's why I couldn't wash*

Teacher: *The thing, what is the thing?*

Student: *Um, brush* (Pilbara, Year 1)

Students: *They bin goin runaway.*

Teacher: *They were running away?*

Student: *Yeah, las' night.* (Pilbara, ungraded class)

Student: My mother wears glasses  
Teacher: Yes, T., your father wears glasses?  
Student: No, mum. (Goldfields, Year 2)

### 2.4.3 Misinterpretation

Misinterpretation of student utterances still occurs for various reasons. In the following case, it is because of the teacher's unawareness of the negative connotations that the town of Exmouth has for Aboriginal people in the area:

Teacher: *If you had something really wrong with you, where would you go?*  
Student: *Exmouth?*  
Teacher: (laughing) *You'd go to Exmouth!* (Pilbara, Year 3/4/5)

In the case below, it is because of the teacher's being prepared for a certain answer and not listening carefully enough to what the student has said:

Teacher: *What do we need in the kitchen?*  
Student: *Salt?*  
Teacher: *Use a stove. What type of stoves can you get...* (Pilbara, ungraded class)

Sometimes the student may misinterpret the teacher's question, as in the following case where the student has assumed a less specific focus than the teacher:

Teacher: *...What else do we use when we wash our hands? ...Donald?*  
Student: *Um, shampoo*  
Teacher: *Shampoo!* [Class laughs. Donald drops head, smiling] (Pilbara, Year 1).

## 3.0 Social Dimensions

But the use of language also entails a social dimension. When people interact they follow learned patterns of exchanging speech acts, and when teachers conduct lessons they are operating according to a culturally-learned pattern which is in fact a speech event. Patterns of exchange and speech events are not common across cultures and there is a good deal of evidence that this provides a challenge for Aboriginal learners.

### 3.1 Alternative Interactive Conventions

Aboriginal students have acquired alternative interactive conventions to those which are assumed in schools operating according to SAE:

#### 3.1.1 Unfamiliarity with SAE expectations

At the bedrock of SAE interactive conventions is the expectation that the receiver of an elicitation will make a prompt response to it. Teachers report that this expectation is frequently not met by Aboriginal students.

Moses and Wigglesworth (2008:135) show that in an interaction in a Northern Territory school the teacher had to wait 20 seconds for a response to an elicitation, and still did not receive an audible reply:

Teacher: *...Jelly keeps eggs safe. What do you think it keeps eggs safe from?*  
(6 seconds)  
*What do you think the jelly keeps the eggs safe from?*  
(4 seconds)  
*What would happen to these eggs if they live in the water; they sit in the water?*  
(7 seconds)  
Student: (inaudible whisper)  
Teacher: *What do you think it keeps them safe from?*  
(3 seconds)

Teachers in Western Australia have been observed having the same kind of response:

Teacher: *If there were big waves in the ocean, do you think they could crash over the boat?* (5 seconds) *What do you think?* (Gascoyne/Murchison, Year 7)

Teacher: *What do you think about Ramona, Katie?*  
(3 seconds) (Perth Metropolitan, Year 5)

In these cases, no answer was forthcoming. Sometimes, as in the following case, an answer may come if the teacher waits long enough:

Teacher: How did we get back from the zoo..and catch the bus?  
Student: (after 4 seconds) *Ferry.*  
Teacher: *By the ferry.* (Pilbara, Year 6/7)

Teachers also report that students fail to observe the requirement to make their question sound like a question – i.e., “they use statements instead of questions” (Malcolm 1995:177). For example, we expect requests to be formulated as questions, not like the following:

Student: *Sir, I go first.* (Pilbara, Year 4).

### 3.1.2 Unfamiliarity with the lesson as a speech event

Aboriginal students bring different expectations to lessons as speech events. As Stephen Harris (quoted by Cahill 1999:18) has noted:

*...children in Aboriginal society are not usually explicitly taught...they learn by repeatedly watching and copying behaviour within the group. The focus is on learning rather than teaching.*

This, we might observe incidentally, suggests how foreign “Direct Instruction” may seem to Aboriginal learners.

It is normal, in Aboriginal society, for people to yarn with one another about their experiences. But this is far removed from the kind of structured reporting which is allowed for in ‘news’ sessions within school speech events. Rosemary Cahill (1999:26) has observed, in this regard:

*The ritual of telling ‘news’ in schools is uncomfortable for many Aboriginal students. It is a contrived speech event which requires the use of contrived language structures.*

### 3.1.3 Use of alternative discourse forms

There are different expectations among Aboriginal people as to how talk should function. It is not a necessary element of being sociable. It is possible to be together without talking. Aboriginal/Islander Education Officer Allery Sandy remarked “When you’re alone with a European friend, I feel that you gotta keep talking and talking...” (Malcolm et al 1999a:33).

At the same time, there is not the same obligation *not* to talk if somebody else is talking. As another AIEO remarked: “We don’t find it rude, we’re just helping each other out” (Malcolm et al 1999a:34).

### 3.1.4 Use of paralinguistic support

Speakers of Aboriginal English often remark on how difficult it is to use the dialect without recourse to paralinguistic support in the way of facial expression and gesture, relating the talk to the physical setting.

Aboriginal academic Scott Fatnowna has observed:

*For me, the other side of Aboriginal English is the body language and the physical nature of it as it’s spoken...So Aboriginal English isn’t something that you can take off and close your eyes to. You can pick it up as such but it might not have as much meaning as when you were in conversation with people and actually view what was going on. (Collard et al 2000:91).*

At the same time, Aboriginal English does not carry the expectation that the addresser will look the addressee directly in the face. This has led to teacher remarks like the following:

*It's hard to know when they are talking to you* (Malcolm 1995:177).

### 3.1.5 Shame

One feature of interaction which is ever-present for the Aboriginal speaker, but easily overlooked by others is *shame*. An Aboriginal student observed:

*...lot of kids, they frighten to ask the tutor...or the teacher...for them...you know,  
...specially h'Aboriginal people...They frightened they might feel shame*  
(Malcolm and Rochecouste 1998:65).

The word 'shame' carries a different meaning in Aboriginal English from in SAE. To the Aboriginal it is especially a matter of unwanted prominence as an individual rather than as a member of the group and to the sense of incongruity when one culture is referred to from the context of another. It is sometimes referred to as shyness, as in the following comment by an AIEO:

*Some are very shy and speak into their shoes* (Malcolm 1995:152).

Aboriginal students will be sensitive to one another's experience of shame, and may help out when it prevents one another from responding to the teacher, as in the following extract from a Goldfields school:

Teacher: *Why do you want to be a nurse?*

Mary: *Give a mai*

Teacher: *Beg your pardon?*

**Jan: *Nah, 'e gotta give one up... e gotta give up medicine...all the Wangai***

Mary: *Me.. medicine*

Teacher: *Who to?*

Mary: *All the old ladies* [Mary begins to laugh and hides her face. One or two other children also laugh] (Goldfields, Year 1)

## 3.2 Alternative group reference

Equally important in understanding the way Aboriginal English speakers behave in school is the fact that their dialect has an alternative group reference from SAE. There are social group implications in using SAE for the Aboriginal student.

### 3.2.1 Conflicting home and school/work norms

The use of SAE is, to an Aboriginal English speaker, talking "flash," and is seen as an affected way of speaking when in the presence of non-Aboriginal people. Hence the comment made by Aboriginal researcher Glenys Collard to research assistant Alison Hill:

Glenys: ...Nyungars, or blakfellas in work have different jobs...an they talking sort of flash way.

Alison: Just cause there's Wadjelas [white people] around or?

Glenys: Yeah, because they're in the Wadjela environment (Hill 2002:89).

While switching to SAE is acceptable in non-Aboriginal contexts, it is not in Aboriginal contexts, as this comment from an AIEO indicates:

*If children use SAE at home, parents get angry and say 'You're not at school now!'*  
(Malcolm 1995:178)

### 3.2.2 Conflicting group and school norms

At school, Aboriginal students are responding sometimes to the teacher and the class, in which they may be a minority, and sometimes to one another. They are constantly juggling their language use. "Aboriginal English is used," as an AIEO commented "when talking with other Aboriginal kids" (Malcolm 1995:154). This means that there may be an "underground" communication going on below the surface of the public discourse of the classroom, as, for example, the following exchange which was picked up by my tape recorder:

Student A: *Shut up!*

Student B: *I'll drop yer mate! You trod on my foot.* (Pilbara, Year 1).

### 3.2.3 Inclusive versus exclusive social reference

The topics of classroom discourse are varied. The perspective of the teacher when referring to society may be that of the majority population, but the perspective of the Aboriginal student will invariably be Aboriginal. The different perspectives are apparent in the following interaction from a school in the Goldfields:

Teacher: *But there was one reason why a big hospital was built...*

John [non-Aboriginal student]: *Because of the mine.*

Teacher: *Because of the mine...That's right, John...what sort of people were there?*

Robert [Aboriginal student]: *White fellas*

Teacher: *Mm?*

Ronald [non-Aboriginal student]: *Mine workers.*

Teacher: *That's right. Mineworkers.* (Goldfields, Year 3/4)

Here the teacher seems to be thrown by the Aboriginal perspective brought in by Robert and simply overlooks it.

#### 4.0 Conceptual Dimensions

The third essential dimension to consider, though it can only be illustrated briefly here, is the conceptual. The mental imagery carried by the English of Aboriginal speakers is often not the same as that carried by the English of SAE speakers, and this is a significant, perhaps unseen, challenge in education using SAE.

##### 4.1 Use of vocabulary with semantic shift

In the following interaction the student is describing a picture in which there are a number of balls, but the teacher does not realize when he says “all the ball” that he is conceptualizing a plurality of balls. Rather than adding an “s” to “ball,” he has made the plural by preceding it with “all the.” Then, when, in response to the teacher, he says “too many,” he is not perceiving that there are more balls than there should be (as SAE would have it) but that there are a lot of balls:

Student: *All da ball...* [a number of balls]

Teacher: *But not just one ball, is there? There's...*

Student: *Too many* [a lot] (Kimberley school).

##### 4.2 Use of common vocabulary but different underlying semantic networks

Sometimes animate and inanimate networks are different across the dialects. Thus, when a student refers to spilling something on a person's shirt, he puts it:

*Something could jump on your shirt* (Malcolm 2002:122).

##### 4.3 Use of English informed by different underlying schemas

The use of many words entails the evoking of particular schemas, or mental patterns within which they are conceptualized. Thus, a story about a kangaroo may have levels of meaning to the Aboriginal speaker which escape the SAE speaker. One such story we heard involved throwing a kangaroo into the water. Allery Sandy, an AIEO, saw it necessary to explain this to non-Aboriginal members of the research team as follows:

*There's a rule, we've got two different kinds of kangaroos – hills and plain. The plainy one is a sort of sacred sort of thing, and you're not meant to throw it in the water. So when she threw it in the water, the wind started to come up.*

(Malcolm et al 1999a:40).

#### 4.4 Drawing inferences on the basis of schemas

An 11 year old Nyungar boy referred to a case where the teacher clearly didn't understand the implications of what his friend Christine was saying when she referred to the whistling associated with a *wirlo* bird:

[Nyungars] think ... somebody's die there if a wirlo bird but ... um like Wedjalas [white people] don't know what wirlo bird mean...Christine was tellin us for news [but] teacher didn't even know what she was talkin bout...an if they go whistling too an in Nyungar thas means like someone dyin or something like...in Nyungar. (Hill 2002:87).

Schemas may also lie behind the choice of a definite article ('the') rather than an indefinite article ('a') when referring to something not previously mentioned in a narrative. In a recount of an event where his family had been broken down by the roadside and a passing truck had splashed mud on them, the storyteller ended by saying *Yeah, and Dad threw **the** rock at the tyre* (Malcolm et al 1999b:80). There was no prior mention of a rock, but, as our Aboriginal informant pointed out, *Everybody knows there will be a rock on the side of the road*. In other words, the story evoked the roadside schema and a rock would be a necessary part of that. To a non-Aboriginal listener, however, the reference to "the rock" could prove puzzling.

#### 5.0 Challenges for the Aboriginal student

Summing up the challenges we have reviewed which education in SAE imposes on Aboriginal learners, they include:

- coping with the marginalization of their home variety, which leads to discomfort and silencing in the classroom context;
- dealing with what they may perceive as the foreignness, opaqueness and verbosity of Standard Australian English;
- enduring implied and actual criticism for the inevitable ways in which their attempts to use SAE will be influenced by their home dialect;
- experiencing incomprehension and misinterpretation of teacher speech;
- experiencing teacher misinterpretation of their utterances;
- experiencing disorientation, shame and self-consciousness because of unfamiliarity with SAE interactive conventions and with the lesson as a speech event;
- experiencing tension between home and school speech norms;

- experiencing tension between group and school speech norms;
- experiencing a non-correspondence between dialects on the basis of the schemas they evoke.

## 6.0 Challenges for the educator

As students are facing these challenges, there are corresponding challenges which face those responsible for teaching them. In summary, we can express them as to:

- recognize the unreality of expectations that a classroom which includes Aboriginal students can be free from the linguistic, social and conceptual influence of the home varieties of the Aboriginal speakers;
- recognize that Standard Australian English, together with its associated interactive conventions, is not a “given” for Aboriginal students and needs some justification (as well as patient instruction) to be added to their repertoire;
- recognize that the ignorance underlying miscommunication is often mutual and seek to make the classroom a domain of two-way learning and communication (which will necessitate collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators);
- recognize the damage that can be caused by pedagogies and assessment modes which imply that Aboriginal students should be users only of SAE, and develop approaches which properly recognize, develop and draw on bidialectal competencies.

## 7.0 Meeting the challenges

My intention here has been to let the Aboriginal voice be heard. I believe the challenges we have identified can only be met by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together. Two-way teams need to be formed and trained, and additive, bidialectal strategies developed in place of replacive strategies which recognize only SAE. Teachers need to be made bidialectally aware; bidialectal curricula need to be developed and implemented by bidialectal teams. Some 20 years of collaborative work in Western Australia have led to the development of a significant stock of training resources, of which the most recent and extensive is the 14-volume resource *Tracks to Two-Way Learning*. This is accessible in hard copy or online. A beginning has been made. Together we *can* make a difference.

Notes:

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