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# Teaching Australian Lexicon, Both Aboriginal and Allogenic: The Significance of Language in the National Cultural Heritage of Australia

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## **MÉMOIRE DE MASTER 2**

**MÉTIERS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT, DE L'ÉDUCATION ET DE LA  
FORMATION (MEEF), SECOND DEGRÉ, PARCOURS ANGLAIS**

Faculté des Langues

Département d'Études du Monde Anglophone

**Université Lumière Lyon 2**

**Teaching Australian lexicon, both  
Aboriginal and allogenic: the  
significance of language in the  
national cultural heritage of Australia**

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## **Abstract**

This master's thesis explores the learning and teaching of Australian lexicon, focusing on the interaction between Aboriginal languages and Australian English and their role in shaping Australia's linguistic and cultural identity. Grounded in a postcolonial perspective, the study highlights how colonization violently disrupted Indigenous languages and cultures, while imposing English as the dominant language. Despite this history, Aboriginal communities have actively appropriated and transformed English, creating Aboriginal English and Kriol as meaningful linguistic systems embedded in Indigenous worldviews and experiences.

The thesis analyses the reciprocal lexical exchanges between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians: while Aboriginal English incorporates English vocabulary through processes such as semantic shift, compounding, metaphor and neologism, Australian English has adopted a limited number of Aboriginal terms, mainly related to fauna, geography and cultural references. This imbalance reflects broader power dynamics inherited from colonization.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, this thesis examines language, identity, multiculturalism and systemic racism in Australia, showing how linguistic hierarchies marginalize Indigenous speakers. Finally, it focuses on education, critically analyzing English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks and curricula used in French secondary education, to show that Australian linguistic diversity is often overlooked. This thesis argues for the pedagogical value of teaching Australian lexicon in France, advocating for a more inclusive, culturally informed approach that acknowledges Aboriginal languages as central to understanding Australia's national identity.

**Key words: Australian English; Aboriginal English; Indigenous languages; Linguistic identity; Lexical borrowing; Postcolonial linguistics; Language and culture; Linguistic identity; Multiculturalism; Decolonisation of language; Didactics of English.**

## **Résumé**

Ce mémoire de Master étudie l'apprentissage et l'enseignement du lexique australien en mettant l'accent sur les relations entre les langues aborigènes et l'anglais australien, et sur leur rôle dans la construction de l'identité linguistique et culturelle de l'Australie. Inscrit dans une perspective postcoloniale, le travail rappelle que la colonisation britannique a entraîné la destruction massive des langues et des cultures autochtones, tout en imposant l'anglais comme langue dominante. Toutefois, les communautés aborigènes ne sont pas restées passives : elles se sont approprié l'anglais pour créer l'anglais aborigène et le kriol, des variétés linguistiques riches, ancrées dans leurs expériences historiques et culturelles.

Le mémoire analyse les échanges lexicaux entre populations aborigènes et non aborigènes. Si l'anglais aborigène intègre de nombreux mots anglais à travers des processus linguistiques variés (glissements sémantiques, métaphores, néologismes, composition), l'anglais australien n'a adopté qu'un nombre limité de mots autochtones, principalement liés à la faune, à la géographie et au folklore. Cette asymétrie reflète les rapports de pouvoir hérités de la colonisation.

Enfin, l'étude aborde les enjeux sociolinguistiques, le multiculturalisme et le racisme systémique, avant d'analyser la place de l'Australie dans les manuels scolaires d'anglais pour l'enseignement secondaire en France. Elle plaide pour un enseignement plus critique et inclusif du lexique australien, reconnaissant les langues aborigènes comme essentielles à la compréhension de l'identité nationale australienne.

**Mots-clés : Anglais australien ; Anglais aborigène ; Langues autochtones ; Identité linguistique ; Emprunts lexicaux ; Linguistique postcoloniale ; Langue et culture ; Multiculturalisme ; Décolonisation linguistique ; Didactique de l'anglais.**

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	5
I. Introduction.....	7
II. History – then and now .....	9
III. Understanding Australian linguistics: What is behind the “Australian” language?.....	15
IV. Aboriginal Australian and English Australian: how together they make up the linguistic identity of Australia. ....	16
1. English vocabulary adopted by Aboriginal communities.....	17
1. Retention .....	17
2. Compounding of nouns.....	18
3. Compounding of verbs and particles .....	19
4. Conversion .....	19
5. Metaphor .....	20
6. Semantic shift.....	21
7. Modified analysis.....	23
8. Clipping.....	24
9. Neologisms .....	24
2. Aboriginal vocabulary adopted by Anglo-saxon communities .....	25
1. Fauna and flora .....	26
2. Geographical description .....	26
3. Actions .....	27
4. Objects/artifacts/weapons .....	28
5. Legends/cultural folklore.....	28
6. Emotions, states .....	28
7. Post-contact.....	28
3. Australian slang.....	30
V. Sociolinguistics and Identity .....	32
1. Australian lexicon as a reflection of national identity .....	32
2. <b>Multiculturalism</b> & multilingualism: what does the Australian language look like if half of the population was not born in Australia? .....	32
VI. « Multiculturalism rhymes with racism » .....	35
VII. Analyzing content from ESL textbooks: discussing how Australia is taught in French secondary schools.....	38
1. How is Australia represented in French textbooks? (stereotypes, cultural and historical representations) .....	38
2. Australian languages in French ESL textbooks.....	41
3. Diachronic analysis .....	44

4.	Why is learning about Australia interesting for French students? .....	44
VIII.	Learning Australian lexicon in the ESL classroom in France: challenges and strategies? 46	
1.	Official French instructions from institutions regarding the ESL curriculum.....	46
2.	Setting up classes based on Australia .....	48
3.	How and why would I teach Australian lexicon? .....	49
IX.	Conclusion.....	52
X.	Appendix - Excerpts from French textbooks for English classes (from 2003 to 2023)	54
XI.	Bibliography.....	56

## I. Introduction

“White people have never been able to leave Aborigines<sup>1</sup> alone.” (Read, 1998, p.3)

To discuss Australia, we must essentially keep in mind that Australia is a former British colony that was built on murdering as many First Nations People as they could, bury them with their language, culture, traditions, and steal their lands. As put by Thurber and al. (2022, p. 3), “Racism arrived in Australia with colonization in 1788; from the outset, settler colonists racialised and dehumanised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and, in order to justify dispossession of land and to legitimise attempted genocide, deemed the population an intellectually inferior and primitive race.” Colonialism planted its roots, and they are still visible today; the supremacy of the English language is one example. We are only 250 years later. The consequences of such a young nation having been set up based on racism and discrimination are that society is still immensely rooted in these immoral ethics, and it will take many generations to get out of them.

Australia has always felt very personal to me. It brought stars to the eyes of my child self, I began to daydream about traveling there to admire its native fauna, to wander through the luxurious flora, to discover what “down under” is like. The older I became, the more I would learn about Australia, its particularities, its secrets, its magic, the more I would feel drawn to the land. At nineteen years old, over the course of my third year of bachelor’s, I left my home country, France, to live overseas, and Australia was my destination. Sydney and the West Coast became my home for eleven months, and this life-changing experience taught me so much about the country, its history, its culture, its language. The University of Technology of Sydney (UTS) opened many intellectual paths for me to explore: I took courses on sociology and Aboriginal Australia, Indigenous stories and politics, the global history of Australia. And every place where I set foot during my year in Australia had me thinking about the Indigenous populations of these territories, whose lands were forcibly stripped from them. While abroad, I educated myself about the true face of Australia; so-long discriminating, now trying to be forgiven. My idea of the perfect cosmopolitan society was wrong; everything I discovered about how the Native Peoples of Australia have been treated since the British first arrived on the land was my delusion. I came back to France, entered a Master’s program to become an English teacher, still thinking about what I had learnt about the land of the fair-go.

<sup>1</sup> : The original wording of the quote is displayed here, however, it is important to highlight that the term “Aborigine” is considered offensive in contemporary Australia, and will not be used in this thesis unless when citing sources using it, or historical concepts or institutions (e.g. the position of “Chief Protector of Aborigines”).

This is where my idea for this thesis comes from. While traveling, working, studying, partying, overall living in Australia, I encountered the Australian language(s). I was exposed to the interesting specificities of Australian English – the expressions, the pronunciation, the grammatical style, the lexicon, etc. The accent specifically stuck with me, I cherish it. Coupled with the classes I followed at university, I came to wonder: What does “Australian English” stand for? Is it Aboriginal Australian English, or allogenic Australian English? or both? and how all this variety of languages make up for the linguistic identity of Australia?

From what I have read, research exists on Australian English and Aboriginal English separately, but they are rarely analyzed together. My paper serves this purpose.

My thesis also demonstrates why teaching about Australia, and especially its languages, makes sense. Recently, Australia has become more and more present in French curricula for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL). As this dominion of the Commonwealth has become an attractive destination for tourism, working conditions and opportunities, sunny weather and geographical assets, its advantages started to be recognized in schools too. A few decades ago, Australia was sparsely present in textbooks, whereas now it takes up a significant space and becomes a wider subject of study. However, its linguistic aspects are often entirely ignored. My work, being more critical of the linguistic aspects of the Australian languages, explores the reasons behind such choices.

### **Disclaimers**

I would like to specify that I do engage and write about Aboriginal culture and history, but I am a French scholar who lives thousands of kilometers away from Aboriginal Australian communities, and have never been in contact with them. Their knowledge, culture, historical background, practices, beliefs, are due all my respect and they deserve all the credit for being the subject of this thesis. They know better than I do.

Moreover, I want to stress and recognise the agentivity of Indigenous Australians, who are not a passive people. Throughout their vast history, they have demonstrated their resilience and will to defend their existence. As Standfield & Russell (2020, p. 3) write, “Indigenous communities have resisted colonization and agitated for their rights since the arrival of colonists on their land”. Indigenous populations still exist, and are not an object from the past. Since forever and from now on, Native Peoples are acknowledged. I would like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of the land.

## II. History – then and now

A letter dictated by Bennelong in 1796 has been claimed to be the first written use of English by an Aboriginal person (Malcolm, 2018). Within the first 30 years after the British came, the first school to teach Aboriginal children English would be set up in Parramatta, an area around Sydney (Malcolm, 2018). These two events happened only eight and twenty-six years respectively after the British disembarked on the west Australian shore. How come there was such a need for the expansion of the English language on this new wild land?

To begin, a brief summary of the Australian history (adapted from Ponsonnet & Grundmann, 2015, chapters 4 to 8).

Peoples have been living on this territory for more than 65 000 years; they were migrants from South East Asia at the end of Ice Age. From the fifteenth to the seventeenth century was the Age of Discovery; rich European explorers set sail to “discover” countries, which meant nothing less than governing the Indigenous populations, dispossessing them from the land, eventually profiting from the resources they had by extorting them. As Young and Levy put it (2011, p. 1), “from 1500 through 1950, very nearly all of the inhabited world came under the power of one or another European state, or a European-derived settler state”.

Australia was firstly colonized by the Dutch. In 1606, Willem Janszoon reached the North and baptized this land “New Holland” but did not settle because the land did not seem appealing enough in terms of commercial wealth. Then, Abel Tasman also navigated around the area and is attributed to the discovery of Tasmania (then “Van Diemen’s land”), New Zealand and the Fiji Islands. In 1770, James Cook anchored in Botany Bay, a few kilometers south to current Sydney. He claimed “New South Wales” – the western part of the continent. He also declared the land to be “terra nullius”. In doing so, Australia was considered a land without owners. The colonizers were thought to have simply settled there, not to have conquered the island or fought anyone. This idea led to denying the sole existence of the first inhabitants of the continent, and by extension, their sovereignty, their rights, their sufferings over the centuries. Indeed, the British justified this doctrine by saying the Aboriginals were “too primitive to be actual owners” (Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, 2015, paragraph 1). The name “Australia” itself, given by navy officer Matthew Flinders in 1801, derives from “Terra Australis Incognita” : the unknown land in the south. Of course, it meant, “in the south, relative to England” as European ethnocentrism was evident.

In 1772, the French arrived, and claimed the western part of the continent, naming it “French Western Australia”. Fearing that the French would expand too quickly, the English settled on the continent as fast as they could.

Originally, the British would send their criminals to America, but it was no longer an option after the thirteen colonies declared their independence. Australia then seemed perfect for the job. Intending to settle a penal colony, the First Fleet, led by Arthur Phillip, docks in “Port Jackson” (currently Sydney) in January 1788, shipping 1500 people, half of whom were convicts, deported for seven years, fourteen years or for life. The convict transportation system took place between 1788 and 1868, shipping over 160,000 convicts. Eventually, this system ended, convicts being rumored to have been both competition to honest free labourers and the source of crime and vice within the colony.

Thus, in 1788, colonization started. Whereas First Nations people of Australia had been living there for thousands and thousands of years, their lives changed dramatically with the arrival of the British. Unlike colonists, they regarded their natural surroundings with care. Their spirituality and the land were immediately interconnected. The concept of private property regarding the environment and resources was brought by the colonists. Settler colonialism was undertaken. Settler colonialism is “a form of domination that violently disrupts human relationships with the environment. Settler colonialism is ecological domination, committing environmental injustice against Indigenous peoples and other groups” (Whyte, 2018, p. 1). The bond between Indigenous people and their land is very much attached to spirituality, finding happiness and self-fulfillment in nature. Whyte (2018, p. 11) advances brilliantly how “the settlers’ aspirations are to transform Indigenous homelands into settler homelands”. Settlers often constructed moralizing stories to justify the destruction of other peoples, portraying them as militarily or culturally inferior, or they deliberately obscured the inherent violence and aggression involved in settlement. For Indigenous peoples, settlement was profoundly damaging, as it involved the deliberate erasure of their economies, cultures, and political structures to make way for settler societies (Whyte, 2018, p. 11). Indigenous communities did not correspond to the White civilization standards.

Along with the non-immunity of the Native peoples to the diseases carried by Europeans, a genocide had been undertaken against the Indigenous peoples of this land called Australia from the very day British colonization started. The whole land has been transformed for British convenience and superiority. All in all, the settlers did everything in their power to despise, denigrate, discriminate, and disrespect the Indigenous peoples and their cultures, languages,

beliefs, traditions and lifestyles. It involved the destitution of Indigenous peoples' languages to impose theirs.

From the beginning, the English-speaking population reaching Australia was diverse, as it represented speakers from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. It covered a wide social spectrum, from freemen and their families to convicts. Indigenous communities of Australia were said to be particularly close to the Irish, as they were both the most underprivileged groups of this newly formed social group. Therefore, the burgeoning Australian society was born. Few convicts went back to England after their sentences were done, and would rather resume their lives in this newborn civilizational community.

After a century of development, having the Australian population growing from approximately 350,000 people in 1800 to almost four million people in 1900, this Dominion of the Commonwealth became self-governed from 1901 (Ponsonnet & Grundmann, 2015). This former colony was, from now on, a state. It started to be independent from the United Kingdom, with its own political institutions like a Parliament, but still had the British Monarch as the Head of State. The notion of "Australian citizenship" appeared in 1949 – so far, the inhabitants of the land were subjects of the British Empire. 1901 also marked the beginning of an unfamous and controversial/questionable policy when the the Immigration Restriction Act (also known as the White Australia Policy) was passed. It set up strict racial restrictions onto who could enter the country or not. It targeted non-Europeans, especially Asians, primarily Chinese people, in order to create a "White/British" ideal. In their terms, it was "Australia for the Australians", as if the people leading the country had not colonized the land in the first place. It was repelled in 1973, when multiculturalist policies began, recognizing the differences among the population and protecting the cultural and historical legacies of all communities (Ponsonnet & Grundmann, 2015). Today, Australia welcomes up to 140.000 immigrants a year (ABC news, July 2025).

Furthermore, from the mid-18th century to the 1970s, Aboriginal children were forcibly taken from their mothers, their families, and their lands, to raise them in non-Aboriginal contexts. They could be turned into servants for White families, or workers for White employers, or be put into "care institutions" that looked more like concentration camps. These children were named the « Stolen Generations ». An estimated 100.000 children were victims of this system, representing between 10 and 30% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2025, "Stolen Generations"). The Australian government intended to "breed out" the color of the Indigenous peoples, to assimilate them into the ideally White society. The Northern Territory Chief

Protector of Aborigines in 1927-1939, Dr. Cecil Cook argued that "everything necessary [must be done] to convert the half-caste into a white citizen" (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2007, p. 2). Indeed, Australian policies went through different phases: first *protection*, ultimately meaning segregation, then *assimilation*, then *integration*, then *reconciliation* from 2001 onwards. Despite having been inhabitants and custodians of the land for more than 65.000 years, the Indigenous Peoples of Australia were officially recognized citizens of the land in 1967, after a national referendum, in which 90% of voters voted "yes". Another significant moment in the recognition of the Indigenous peoples of Australia was the public "Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples" by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2008. More recently, Australia launched in 2023 another referendum asking citizens if they wanted to increase the political participation of Indigenous peoples. More precisely, the idea was to create a parliamentary body only composed of First Nations People. The proposed institution, i.e. "Voice to Parliament", would "represent their communities and provide advice to government on issues affecting Aboriginal people" (UNICEF Australia, 2025). Most voters answered 'No'. However, a majority of the Indigenous voters voted for this recognition: "In some communities 96% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people voted to be included in the Australian constitution." It did not pass. The Australian Electoral Commission shared the results (Australian Electoral Commission, 2023): 60.06% voted 'no', 39.94% voted 'yes'. Australia still has a long way to go to fully pay its tribute to the population the settlers so violently massacred. Indigenous Peoples of Australia represent about 3% of today's population, when they were 100% not so long ago. Australia's national day is January 26<sup>th</sup>, officially known as "Australia Day". It commemorates the arrival of the First Fleet on the Australian coast, thus celebrating when colonization started. For the last decades, many Aboriginal Australians and activists have been calling this date "Mourning Day" or "Invasion Day", names which makes much sense regarding all the loss endured by the Natives Peoples.

When the British landed, there were many Indigenous people (the estimations range from 315,000 to 1 million according the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008)), dispatched in around 500 tribal groups, speaking over 250 languages and up to 800 dialects derived from those languages (Malcolm, 2018).

Eventually, after almost 250 years of colonization, what language(s) do Aboriginal Peoples of Australia speak? English, Aboriginal English, their native languages, or a bit of everything?

“Aboriginal English” is not a form of Australian English in the sense that we have been using the term. Australian English embodies “a different response to the English varieties which were brought to Australia by the colonizers and it has emerged as a result of different processes in different speech communities. Its existence alongside Australian English reflects the fact that the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speech communities have not been integrated, but have maintained a largely parallel existence in Australian society” (Malcolm, 2018, chapter 2.8.1). Meanwhile, to other researchers like Eades, “Aboriginal English is the name given to dialectal varieties of English spoken by the majority of Aboriginal people throughout Australia” (Eades, 2013, chapter 1.2).

A group of Aboriginal Education Workers, in response to a request for a collaborative definition of Aboriginal English provided the following: “Aboriginal English consists of English words that are used by Aboriginal people and which have specific Aboriginal meanings. Aboriginal English is used in an Aboriginal context. It belongs to Aboriginal people” (Malcolm, 2018, chapter 7.8).

Kriol, an Aboriginal-driven, English-based creole, also took shape, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

So, what is the Australian language? Is it “Aboriginal” English, or “White” (as in, British or Anglo-saxon) English, or “immigrant” English? Or all of it?

Let us first see how English is represented in Australia: “Over 80% of Australians claim to speak only English, while some 2% claim not to speak English. One in five Australians claims to speak a language other than English at home. Among Indigenous Australians, there are up to 150 languages in use, though, of these, only 20 are considered non-endangered, and therefore likely to survive into the next generation. Some 13% of Indigenous Australians claim to speak an Indigenous language or creole at home. Thus, English is the language most commonly spoken by Indigenous Australians” (Malcolm, 2018, chapter 2.2). For the majority of its history, the Australian continent was home to languages other than English. In just over two hundred years, it has shifted from a land where around 250 Indigenous languages thrived to one where English now predominates among both immigrant and Indigenous communities.

Over the past two centuries, 50 languages have disappeared, while many other Indigenous languages are now endangered. At present, around 130 languages are spoken by

fewer than 50 individuals and survive only in restricted contexts among elderly speakers, and even “healthy languages are subject to rapid shift” (Hatoss, 2005, chapter 3). Furthermore, ninety per cent of Aboriginal people today no longer speak their Indigenous language (Hatoss, 2005). As Hatoss argues, “[l]anguage death is a worldwide phenomenon” (*Ethnologue*, 2004, quoted by Hatoss, 2005, chapter 3). The *Ethnologue* reports that 417 languages worldwide are considered nearly extinct, meaning they are spoken only by a small number of elderly individuals. The Pacific region shows the most severe levels of language loss; of the 417 nearly extinct languages identified, 157 are found in the Pacific, including 138 in Australia (Hatoss, 2005).

Not only did colonization destroy the culture, but also the language. The variety of languages has stopped shining and is now extinct, and most Aboriginal languages used to exist (Malcolm, 2018). The English hegemony over the continent has meant control over all the institutions and the people, and that includes oppressing the peoples and their languages.

As the figures demonstrate (Malcolm, 2018), most Indigenous people of Australia speak some version of English. In today’s view, do they consider English as theirs to make it a strength? as if they were playing by the British rules? is it some kind of political recuperation? or is it only because they underwent colonization and had to adapt to English?

Regarding Kriol, “it is a remarkable demonstration of the human capacity, over seven generations or less, to nativize a foreign language to the point where what was completely foreign is completely enculturated” (Malcolm, 2018, chapter 7.1). Aboriginal English now belongs to Aboriginal communities. They have made the language their own. Is language a form of self-determination? And how do the association of Aboriginal and allogenic Australian languages make up for the Australian linguistic identity?

### **III. Understanding Australian linguistics: What is behind the “Australian” language?**

#### **The development and particularities of the Australian language**

From 1788, people migrating to Australia to build the penal colony were a great mosaic of individuals coming from a great range of socioeconomic backgrounds: convicts, settlers, workers, cooks, government officials, etc. Their own individual accents got mixed up and had to dialect-level to communicate with one another, in order to create that new society. “to dialect-level” means that they had to make efforts when interacting to make different varieties of English converge in order to achieve communication.

Roughly 50 years after the first settlements, the Australian accent started to appear. It was a linguistic and phonetic mixture made of SBE (Southern British English), Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and Aboriginal Australian to some extent.

Australian English was seen as the purest English possible by scholars of the time. But a change occurred in the linguistic standards in England: Received Pronunciation gained popularity among the intellectuals and the highest spheres of British society. This standard of English, which forms the acronym RP, is also nicknamed “BBC English”, “the Queen’s English”, “Oxford English”, etc. It is perceived as an eloquent, elegant way of speaking British, spoken mainly by the Royal family and the upper echelons of society. RP was then taught across the British Empire, and Australians started to get distanced from their own accent, judged too coarse and harsh. Even from 1901 when the Federation gained its independence, RP was still highly valued.

Based on linguistic theories (Collins, 2012), there are three types of Australian accents, based on socio-economical background and geographical background :

- 1) general (spoken by the vast majority of people. Example : Hugh Jackman)
- 2) broad (more rural. Example : Steve Irwin)
- 3) cultivated (high society of Australia. Example : Kate Blanchett).

Nowadays, Australian English is often mocked online or in real life, for their accent or well-known expressions (“G’day mate !”). We will expand on the lexicon later on.

#### **IV. Aboriginal Australian and English Australian: how together they make up the linguistic identity of Australia.**

In this section, we dig into the relations between Indigenous languages and the colonists' English. Under what circumstances were Aboriginal lexical particularities picked up in (non-Indigenous) Australian English? When we talk about « the Australian language », are we onto “English” or “Aboriginal”? Or both?

It has been noted by Malcolm (2018, chapter 8.2) that “colonization instilled the belief that standard (British) English is the native language of anyone born and raised in a former British colony.” Should that be true?

Linguistic rights in Australia have been evolving a lot. A significant recognition of language rights (that left open the question of whether “English” could be defined as including a non-standard dialect) was made in the Australian National Policy on Languages. The Lo Bianco report from 1987 stated:

✦ “No Australian resident ought to be denied ... equal, appropriate and fair treatment by the law including representation and other rights commonly associated with equality or deriving from citizenship, because of language disabilities, or lack of adequate, or any, competence in English” (Lo Bianco, 1987).

A think tank was set up to promote equity between Aboriginal and other Australians in education, built on this conception of language rights by “stressing the need to recognize the cultural dimension”. The report advocated for bilingual/bicultural programmes and the recognition of the legitimacy of Aboriginal English.

So what about a cross-cultural approach, or a bi-lingual/bi-dialectal education, in which both languages would be taught in school?

Is it currently up in Australia? Yes. Where? Particularly in remote and regional schools. Is it a national obligation? No. Can schools choose to implement a bidialectal education or is it law-dependent? Schools can offer bidialectal education if community, staffing, and resources align. It is not mandatory or forbidden anywhere. But in order to set up this kind of education, we would need bidialectal teaching assistants and bicultural/bidialectal learning resources and the elimination of cultural bias in teaching and testing (deconstructing stereotypes and analysing representation). These resources are increasingly rare.

In a study led by Hatoss (2005), it was proved that a total of 13% of all Year 12 students studied a language other than English (abbreviated LOTE). The main languages were Japanese, French, German and Chinese. 13% is a rather low percentage, considering the multicultural character of Australia (Hatoss, 2005). The desire for uniformization in a contemporary, post-colonial, capitalist society wipes most linguistic diversity to crown English as essential.

## 1. English vocabulary adopted by Aboriginal communities

In this subsection, we analyse the English lexicon adopted by Aboriginal English speakers, and the linguistic phenomena around them. Nine different processes (retention, compounding of nouns, compounding of verbs and particles, conversion, metaphor, semantic shift, modified analysis, clipping, neologisms) were identified by Malcolm (2018, chapter 5). All the words quoted in this section come from the same book (Malcolm Ian G., 2018. *Australian Aboriginal English: Change and continuity in an adopted language*) except if another reference is specified. All the other references can be found in Malcolm's book, previously mentioned.

### 1. Retention

Aboriginal English preserves certain forms that were common in 18th- and 19th-century English but have disappeared from contemporary Australian English, for instance:

- gammon 'nonsense' (attributed by Arthur 1996 to 19th century criminal slang); She properly gammon 'She's not telling the truth' (Enemburu 1989:9)
- humbug 'causing trouble or difficulty'; He sits in there, doesn't make humbug (Crugnale 1995:86)
- necktie 'tie'
- supper 'evening meal'
- jar 'scold'
- 'E bin jar 'im off (Kaldor & Malcolm 1985:234; Arthur 1996:100).

"Some forms still current in Aboriginal English probably reflect the derogatory terms used in the colonial past to refer to Aboriginal people, for example":

- flog 'belt, beat': When 'e comes back I'll flog 'im (McKenry 1995)
- cheeky 'mischievous, dangerous': We bin find cheeky animal (Crugnale 1995:14)

- make 'im jump 'frighten someone into doing something' (Malcolm, et. al., 2002:62)
- drop 'hit, fell' (originally with references to pugilism or forestry)
- Go away, two pigs, before I drop you (Eagleson, Kaldor & Malcolm 1982:235).

## 2. Compounding of nouns

“There is a strong tendency in Aboriginal English to bring nouns together as compounds. Such compounds may be hyponymic, as in”:

- finger ring = ‘ring worn on the finger’
- ink pen = ‘pen, for writing’
- cold sick
- cattle snake = ‘a snake with markings like those on cattle’
- law man = ‘a person very knowledgeable in the law’
- scar tree = ‘a tree that has had bark removed for ceremony or implement making’ (Adams 2014:14)
- bushtucker = ‘food from the bush’: We lived on bushtucker (Crugnale 1995:3)

“In some cases the compounding may be following a feature of Aboriginal languages whereby generic classifiers are used to accompany nouns (Dixon 1980:272)”:

- sand beach = shore
- waterflood ‘flood’
- paper wrapping ‘wrapping’
- cattle cow ‘cow’

Some compounds have been retained from pidgin or creole, for example:

- motor car = car
- blackfella = ‘Aboriginal’.

Some, which are co-ordinative rather than hyponymic, express kin, or extended kin, relationships:

- cousin brother = ‘classificatory, rather than co-sanguine, brother’

- Marky boy ‘son or nephew of Mark’
- auntie girl ‘someone the same age or younger’ (Adams 2014:15)
- auntie mum ‘closely related older female’ (Adams 2014:15).

“Thus, for example, where Standard English speakers are generally comfortable in using such nouns as *smoke*, *track*, *glasses*, *cow* and *cold*, Aboriginal English speakers tend to relate them to associated categories, as in *firesmoke*, *foot track*, *eye glass*, *cattle cow* (Malcolm 2011:268) and *coldsick* (Crugnale 1995:8)”.

### 3. Compounding of verbs and particles

“There is also a strong tendency for verbs to be accompanied by particles. This may strengthen the sense of completeness or effectiveness, as in”:

- learn it up ‘study it’
- ripped ‘em right up ‘remonstrated with them’
- get jarred up ‘be reprimanded’
- roast it up ‘roast it’
- we bury im up ‘we buried it’
- they got married up ‘they were married’

It may also emphasize the scope of what is being said, as in:

- share things up ‘share things around’
- sing out laugh out ‘shout’

### 4. Conversion

“Often forms are taken over in Aboriginal English and given a different grammatical function. Very commonly the conversion is from a more nominal to a more verbal function, as in”:

- shellin’ = ‘gathering shells’
- we go rabbitin’ = ‘we go hunting rabbits’
- I schooled in Derby = ‘I went to school in Derby’
- she blued = ‘she got drunk’
- I versed against B.D. = ‘I played against B.D.’

- he blackeyed 'im = 'he gave him a black eye'
- Don't liar, Dad = 'Don't lie, Dad'
- to clothes up = 'to dress or provide with clothes'
- to fish them = 'to catch fish'
- to loan = 'to lend'

“Other examples referred to by Butcher 2008:639 include *rudin* ‘being rude to’, *cruellin* ‘being cruel to’ and *jealousin* ‘envying’.

Another case is the conversion of what in Standard English are intransitive verbs to transitive verbs, as in: *My own mother grew me up* ‘My own mother raised me’.

It is also not uncommon for what are mass nouns in SAE to be converted to count nouns in Aboriginal English, as in”:

- some barks ‘some bits of bark’ (Kimberley, W.A., Eagleson, Kaldor & Malcolm 1982:227)
- two woods ‘two pieces of wood’ (Alice Springs, Sharpe 1977b:48)
- the staffs ‘the staff members’ (Alice Springs, Harkins 1994:18)

## 5. Metaphor

“English words may be used in an original way in Aboriginal English as metaphors, as in”:

- He's a horse = 'He's a terrific guy'
- That's boss = 'That's very good'
- Demons = 'detectives'
- proper feed = 'desirable girl'
- scorch 'im up = 'be strict on him'
- made that bus piss = 'really drove the bus hard'
- hurt that motorcar = 'drove the car really fast'
- 'e's charging up = 'he's drinking alcohol'
- Jaffa = 'Aboriginal person in a red motor car'
- street light black = 'urban Aboriginal' (Adams 2014:12).

## 6. Semantic shift

“Many English words used in Aboriginal English have undergone semantic shift. This would be consistent with the view which sees the English vocabulary as often relexifying concepts previously expressed in another language. The semantic shifts are of four kinds: extension, specification, inversion and blending. Semantic extension is seen where the word includes, but goes beyond, the meaning it carries in the source language. This may be seen, for example in”:

- *granny/grannies*, which may be used as a reciprocal term between grandparents and grandchildren;
- *mum*, or *mummy*, which may refer to a person’s mother or to the mother’s sister, and which may also be used, preceded by “little”, by the mother to the daughter; the terms *daddy* and *little daddy* may operate similarly;
- *see*, which may be used with the Standard English sense of ‘look’ as well as ‘see’, i.e., “the intention of an action and the action itself... represented by one word” (Arthur 1996:7);
- *learn*, which may be used with the Standard English sense of ‘teach’ as well as ‘learn’: *Learn ‘im to talk Nyungar words* (Königsberg & Collard 2002:83);
- *kill*, which may be used with the Standard English sense of ‘hit’ as well as ‘kill’;
- *fall down*, which can be used with the sense of ‘fell,’ as in *to fall down a tree* (Pirola 1978:132)
- *bump*, which can extend to *running over*, as in *we bumped a brulliga ‘we bumped/ran over a bullock/cow’* (Yandeyarra, W.A.)
- *fire*, the meaning of which, at least in Alice Springs, may be generalized to include the match which lights a fire (Harkins 1994:146);
- *calico*, which may cover the meaning not only of the material a tent is made of, but of the tent as well (Arthur 1996:7);
- *bamboo*, which may be used with its Standard English meaning but may also be used to refer to a didjeridoo
- *broke[n]*, which may be applied more widely than in Standard English, as, for example, in *That big eagle, he went and broke my hand* (Mullewa M9) or *broken smoke* (Malcolm et al 2002:63).

- *belong to/blongtu*, which can be used to refer to one's country, as in she's blongtu there (Sharpe 1989), where in Australian English one would put it "she's from there" since the sense of mutual ownership between person and land is not so strong.

What Malcolm calls "semantic specification" refers to cases where "an expression with a generalized application comes to be used in Aboriginal English with a culturally specific reference, as in the case of":

- *sit down*, derived from the Kriol form "jidan" (Sandefur 1979:184), which refers to staying, for a while, or camping (Butcher 2008:638), in a place;
- *stop*, which also carries the sense of staying for a while, perhaps overnight (Eagleson, Kaldor & Malcolm 1982:233)
- *camp*, which, by contrast with *camp out*, can refer to an indoor stay: *Can I camp at your house tonight?* (Adams 2014:13);
- *country*, which refers to traditional land (Koch & Koch 1993:46);
- *man*, which can be understood to imply an initiated man (Arthur 1996:46), whereby *to make someone a young man* is understood in Central Australia as to initiate someone (Koch 1985);
- *poison*, which may precede a term such as brother, cousin or auntie, to indicate an avoidance relationship with the speaker (Butcher 2008:637);
- *language*, which implies an Aboriginal language;
- *dreaming*, which relates to the time in which the landscape and living things were formed;
- *to go for*, which relates to *hunting*, as in *They went for kangaroo* (Harkins 1994:68), and sometimes, by extension, to *shopping*, as in *On the weekend we went to Tennant Creek fro [for] shopping* (Gillespie 1991, student writing, McLaren Creek, N.T.);
- *smoke*, which refers to a means of ritual cleansing: *They smoke us so we don't swear* (Crugnale 1995:68);
- *business*, sometimes preceded by men's or women's, which refers to ceremonial obligations;
- *clever*, which implies the exercise of spiritual powers;
- *shame*, which is specific to "transgression of cultural norms" (Harkins 2000:73);
- *sorry*, which refers to bereavement (Harkins 2000:73; Sharifian 2011b);

- *take [away]*, which implies the experience of the stolen generations, where the government required the removal of “part-Aboriginal” children from their parents (Königsberg & Collard 2002:23);
- *take over*, which implies the Aboriginal response to this, by taking of threatened children by family members into less accessible Aboriginal communities: *when they took me over, out in the bush...* (Königsberg & Collard 2002:83).

Semantic inversion refers to the practice (exhibited also in African American Vernacular English, and in youth culture), of using negative, or potentially negative, expressions with a positive meaning, as in:

- *deadly* = ‘very good’: E didda deadly one (Sleep 1996:17)
- *cruel* = ‘extreme[ly]’: a cruel kick; we was laughin cruel (Collard 2011:31)
- *hungry* = ‘good-looking, sexy’
- *wicked* = ‘terrific[ally]’: there’s the best world cars, they wicked (Malcolm et al 2002:31)
- *savage* = ‘good’

Very often the semantic processes leading to the distinctive English vocabulary of Aboriginal English entail conceptual blending, that is, they “bring together shades of meaning which do not converge in Standard English” (Malcolm & Sharifian 2007:394) :

- *Lorna was talk us a story* (McLaren Creek, N.T., Gillespie 1991). The use of talk rather than ‘tell’ emphasizes the interactional nature of the event of storytelling in the Aboriginal community.
- *The boys went cross the swamp* (McLaren Creek, N.T., Gillespie 1991). The use of cross instead of the preposition ‘across’ might be seen as strengthening the sense of directional movement in depicting the action of the boys.
- The metaphorical expression *in the foot Falcon* (Adams 2014:19) blends the idea of going on foot (which is its literal meaning) with the more prestigious idea of driving in a Falcon, thus ironically lending dignity to having to walk.

## 7. Modified analysis

“Aboriginal English speakers may reproduce what they will have heard from other English speakers in a way which shows a modification, so that, although the meaning is maintained, the form is distinctive. If this were done by speakers within the same culture, it might be called a malapropism, however used as it is across cultures, it could be seen as deliberate resistance to the forms of the prestige dialect. Some examples are”:

- a remote controlled community = ‘a remote community’: Umbilgari, it’s a remote controlled community (Perth. W.A.)
- talking broken down English = ‘talking broken English’ (Roebourne, W.A.)
- eardropping ‘eavesdropping’
- revision mirror ‘rear vision mirror’
- You not worse! [from ‘You’re not worth’] expression of rebuke (Goldfields, W.A., Ross Bilson, pers. comm.)
- Da’s why we never had meat ‘That’s because we didn’t have any meat’ (Goldfields, W.A., Ross Bilson, pers. comm.)
- I pacifically said... ‘I specifically said...’ (Victoria, Adams 2014:11).

## 8. Clipping

“Clipping is, of course, characteristic of colloquial Australian English (Simpson 2004, 2008). It also characterises Aboriginal English, but is used distinctively, and as such provides a means of reinforcing relationships, as in”:

- Cuz = cousin
- Bro = brother
- sis = sister
- unc = ‘uncle or older male’
- peeps = ‘people, i.e., relatives’
- rellies = ‘relations’
- olds = ‘old people’

## 9. Neologisms

“There have been many innovations in varieties of Aboriginal English whereby Aboriginal speakers have enabled English better to express their meanings. Often these have involved terms of reference to family members, as in”:

- budda, budder, buddah = brother
- budj, bruz = male peer
- tidda = sister or female peer
- niddy = ‘the last one in the family’: Give some to my niddy sister (Yandeyarra, W.A.)

Other innovations, with other frames of reference, include:

- tell-lie = ‘pretending’, e.g. tell-lie stick ‘pretending to be a stick’ (Onslow, W.A.)
- liar (adv.) ‘insincerely’, e.g. *liar cry* = ‘cry crocodile tears’ (Butcher 2008:639)
- *bulliga* = ‘bullock’ (Yandeyarra, Pilbara region, W.A.)
- *steps* = term of measurement used by children in the Goldfields, W.A., e.g. a goanna may be described as *three steps* (Ross Bilson, pers. comm.)
- *man-head* = ‘E’s a proper little man-head, that one (Perth W.A.) = ‘He’s a clever boy’
- *woman head* = She’s a proper little woman-head, that one (Perth, W.A.) ‘She’s a clever girl’
- He’s up there blue = ‘He’s drunk’ (Perth, W.A.)
- Hammered = ‘really drunk’ (Victoria, Adams 2014:11)
- *lingo* can refer to Aboriginal languages or languages other than English (Harkins 2000:73)

This large panel of examples discloses how it was mainly, as one would expect, Aboriginal communities who picked up English vocabulary, and not the other way around. Needless to say, they had to as they were the one being colonized. The English language was imposed on them anyway.

## 2. Aboriginal vocabulary adopted by Anglo-saxon communities

Below is a non-exhaustive selection of words of Aboriginal and Indigenous origin, recognized to be commonly used in Australia by non-Indigenous people. Their definitions and

ways to use them follow each instance. They were taken from the *Dictionary of Australian Phrase and Fable* of Kel Richards (2013).

## 1. Fauna and flora

1. Barramundi : An Aboriginal name given to a number of different fish caught in rivers and coastal waters.
2. Galah : a grey-backed, pink-fronted cockatoo. As such, the word 'galah' comes from the Aboriginal name for this bird (from the Yuwaalaraay language).
3. Gidgee : native Australian plant. The word comes from the south-western Western Australian Aboriginal language Nyoongar.
4. Goodoo : An indigenous name for the Murray cod (*Maccullochella peelii*) – from the Kamilaroi language of northern New South Wales and Southern Queensland
5. Kangaroo
6. Koala (Dharuk)
7. Kookaburra (type of bird)
8. Mulga : a species of the Acacia family
9. Quoll : A carnivorous marsupial, sometimes called a 'native cat'.
10. Wallaby
11. Warrigal (similar to a dingo)
12. Yabby: Small freshwater crayfish. Comes from the Aboriginal language Wemba Wemba (Victoria/NSW): yabij
13. Yarra: type of Australian tree

## 2. Geographical description

14. Big smoke: A town or city – an expression of Aboriginal coinage, first recorded in 1848.
15. Billabong: A waterhole in an anabranch (a branch of a river which leaves the main stream and enters it again further on); Wiradjuri word that originally meant 'a watercourse that runs only after rain'.
16. Bindi-eye: Sharp prickles that grow in the grass and stick in your feet. The name comes from a word found in the Kamilaroi and Yuwaalaraay Aboriginal languages: bindayaa
17. Bombora: A word from Australia's surfing subculture. A bombora is a wave generated by a submerged reef, loved by surfers as it gives them a chance to catch a wave in deep water.

18. Booligal: windy place
  19. Parramatta: head of the waters
  20. Uluru (used to be known as Ayers Rock)
  21. (a extensive list of places in Australia hold an Aboriginal name)
  22. Boree: An Aboriginal word that white settlers applied to a type of acacia tree, having the reputation of making good firewood. The word itself comes from the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi languages.
  23. From 'Ngambri' to 'Kamberri' to Canberra ('meeting place')
  24. Gunyah & Humpy: An Aboriginal name for a rough bark hut or temporary shelter.
- From the Dharuk language
25. Nimbin: comes from a local Aboriginal word for 'camp, hut or house'; or alternatively (and Nimbin folk always like to be alternative) that it comes from another Aboriginal word meaning 'a little man who dwells in mountains or rocks'
  26. Warrambool A watercourse that floods after rain, but is dry most of the year. (Kamilaroi language)
  27. Willy-willy: An Aboriginal name (from the Yindjibarndi language) for the whirlwinds of the outback.

### 3. Actions

28. Barrack: “ ‘to barrack’ means ‘to shout sarcastic or abusive comments about the performance of a team or player’. But this word appears to be an ‘auto-antonym’ – that is, it can also have the opposite meaning of shouting support or encouragement. There are a couple of suggestions as to the source. One is that it comes from an Aboriginal word *borak*, meaning ‘to poke fun at’. However, The Australian National Dictionary disputes this idea and suggests that ‘barrack’ is more likely to come from an English dialect word that originally meant ‘to brag or boast’. Is it possible that both are true? Could it be that barracking for a team (shouting encouragement) comes from the old dialect word for bragging, while barracking in the sense of ‘shouting abuse and ridicule’ comes from borak? It is, I suppose, possible – and it would explain the two opposite meanings of barracking.”
29. Bogey: Having a wash, or a bath, or a swim. It seems to have been a very early borrowing from the Aboriginal language spoken in the Sydney area. (the Bogey Hole in Newcastle)
30. Yabba Chatter, talk, conversation – perhaps rapid or garbled conversation.
31. Yakka: hard work. Yagara language

#### 4. Objects/artifacts/weapons

32. Bondi: Kamilaroi word (war club: weapon?)
33. Boomerang = kylie
34. Dilly (bag): comes from a Yagara Aboriginal word for a bag or basket made from woven grass or fibre
35. Onkaparinga: a woollen blanket.
36. Waddy: An Aboriginal weapon – a wooden club (from the Dharuk language).
37. Woomera: from the Dharuk people. A throwing stick, about a metre long, which hooked on to the end of a spear to propel the weapon with greater speed and force.

#### 5. Legends/cultural folklore

38. Bunyip: An imaginary monster in Aboriginal legends who hangs around billabongs and swamps. Wemba wemba people of north-western Victoria
39. Cooe: originally a call used to attract attention in the bush. It's of Aboriginal origin, coming from the Dharuk people who lived in the west of what is now Sydney.
40. Corroboree: An Aboriginal gathering for a festival of dancing and singing. (Dharuk)
41. Maluka: An Aboriginal title for the person in charge; the boss
42. Min Min: an ancient Aboriginal spirit guarding the land.
43. Nimbin: the Aboriginal equivalent of Ireland's leprechauns
44. Rainbow serpent: A common motif in the art and mythology of Aboriginal Australians.

#### 6. Emotions, states

45. Bung: Broken, damaged, or impaired, as in 'This computer's gone bung.' But originally bung meant 'dead' and 'to go bung' meant 'to die'. It's recorded in this sense from the 1840s, and it seems to come from an Aboriginal word (from the Yagara language)

#### 7. Post-contact

46. Jackaroo: was a white settler who chose to live beyond the boundaries of close settlement, and later it came to mean a young man (often an English immigrant) seeking to gain experience by working cheaply at a sheep or cattle station. 'jackaroo' comes from an Aboriginal word, 'jagara', meaning 'a wandering white man' (combined, obviously, with the tail of 'kangaroo')

47. Migaloo: A white person – from the Mayi-Kutuna Aboriginal language of the Leichhardt River area of north Queensland.

Australian English also picked up Aboriginal words, but in much less quantity and for a very different and less wide use. What did Australian English pick up Aboriginal words for? As the examples showcase, I have categorized the nature of the use of these under large semantic categories : to designate animals, describe geographical locations, talk about cultural folklore... The languages now work together, despite on taking over the other. According to data we will detail further on, most non-Aboriginal people of Australia know more than a handful of Aboriginal words. Meanwhile, most Aboriginal people speak English fluently and easily.

As Malcolm (2018, chapter 5.2.2.1.5) writes, “The experience of Aboriginal people since colonization is embedded in the English they use”. He explains that words such as *blackfella* and *tag boy* are offensive to Aboriginal Australians “when uttered by a non-Aboriginal speaker, whereas they have become a part of in-group usage”. According to him, terms like *behind bars* have a wider association to them than simply imprisonment (for example, institutionalization), and that *flog* is used where other Australians might use *belt*. The linguistic constructions *take away* and *take over* also allude to significant historical experience within the speech community. The scope and depth of these segments are entirely different regarding who the speaker is.

What is the impact of this knowledge on the way my pedagogic content is built up? When placed in the context of a study unit, I would then teach, equally, non-Aboriginal Australian English and Aboriginal Australian English expressions and terms. I would have learners reflect on how, despite unbalanced, these two languages shaped the linguistic landscape of Australia. I will expand on this idea further away in this memoir.

### 3. Australian slang

In this section, we allude to how “Aussie slang” is part of the – previously mentioned – linguistic landscape of Australia, what is its influence on the understanding and acquisition of lexicon. All in all, is it slowing or pushing the learners forward?

1. To bludge : to avoid responsibilities or hard work
2. Cactus : Broken, not working properly
3. Cheese and kisses : One’s wife or girlfriend, slang for rhyming with “missus”
4. Chucking a sickie : take a day off from work
5. Give someone a bell : give someone a (phone)call
6. Chunder : to vomit
7. Dog's breakfast : a mess, chaotic situation
8. Down under : Australia + New Zealand
9. Face like a dropped pie : Unhappy or disappointed
10. Fair dinkum : fair enough
11. Fair go : a chance
12. Flat out like a lizard drinking : Very busy
13. Full as a goog : very drunk (or eaten too much)
14. Not the brightest crayon in the box : Not very smart
15. Macca’s : Mc Donald’s
16. Two sandwiches short of a picnic : Not very smart
17. stone the crows
18. budgie smugglers

Australians also tend to add -ie, -o and sometimes -a when shortening their words, to turn them into abbreviations. A few examples :

1. Ambo : A paramedic – Aussie abbreviation of ‘ambulance officer’
2. Aussie : Australian
3. Arvo : Afternoon
4. Barbie : Barbecue
5. Bikkie : Biscuit
6. Bloke : man

7. Bottle-o : Bottle shop (liquor store)
8. Boobook : the most common owl in Aus
9. Boomer : large male adult kangaroo
10. Brekkie : Breakfast
11. Budgie : Short for budgerigar — an Australian green and yellow coloured parrot

often kept as a pet.

12. Chook : chicken
13. Chrissie : Christmas
14. Chrissie pressie : Christmas present
15. Dead horse : tomato sauce
16. Footy : Football (Australian rules)
17. Fairy floss : cotton candy
18. Garbo : Garbage collector
19. G'day : good day
20. Goog : egg
21. Grid : bicycle
22. Lollies : candy
23. Mozzie : mosquito
24. Ranga : red head
25. Rat coffin: meat pie
26. Reckon' : you bet!
27. Roo : kangaroo
28. Sanga/Sanger : sandwich
29. Schoolies : school holidays
30. Servo : Gas station
31. Smoko : Smoke break
32. Sunnies : sunglasses
33. Swag : a backpack for bush explorers
34. U-ey : u-turn

A lot of expressions exist because they rhyme. A large part of Australian expressions fall under the linguistic spectrum of the Old Bush Vernacular (acronymized as OBV), cherished by the local Australian populations.

## V. Sociolinguistics and Identity

### 1. Australian lexicon as a reflection of national identity

As « Aussie English is alive and well and as fit as a Mallee bull » (Richards, 2013), in this section, we study expressions and iconic terms, soaked in Australian history. The following terms are key concepts of Australian history. For example, ‘larrikins’, ‘bogan’, ‘bush’ (and ‘bushrangers’), ‘outback’, ‘convicts’, ‘redneck’, ‘stoner’, ‘wog’, ‘eshays’=’lad’=’chav’, ‘flash’ (slang from London, originating from the first convicts) etc. All these words take up their sense when used in an Australian context, and they are particularly relevant into Australian history. The Australian accent is also a great holder of cultural and linguistic identity, however it is not the subject of my work but it could be the expansion of the main themes.

### 2. Multiculturalism & multilingualism: what does the Australian language look like if half of the population was not born in Australia?

In relation to multiculturalism and multilingualism, Australia’s first national language policy, the Lo Bianco report (1987), highlighted that the cultural and linguistic abilities of migrants constitute important national resources and put forward several proposals aimed at maintaining community languages. The report promoted a model of “two-way bridge-building”, whereby Australians from non-English-speaking backgrounds were encouraged to study a LOTE in order to strengthen their first language and literacy skills, as well as to learn an additional language, while English-speaking Australians were given opportunities to connect with non-English-speaking communities through the learning of a language other than English (Hatoss, 2005).

The Lo Bianco report defines three main rights, which are:

- ✦ “Cultural identity: the right of all Australians to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion;”
- ✦ “Social justice: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth;”
- ✦ “Economic efficiency: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.”

Are those rights truly so respected in contemporary Australia? While English is not the official language, it is indeed the national language of the country. Therefore, not being fluent in English does prevent one from accessing all the services one needs to thrive in society.

A study led by Hatoss (2005) demonstrates that 2.8 million people in Australia use a language other than English in their homes. This figure represents 14.8% of the population, which is low if we acknowledge that approximately 41% of Australia's population was born overseas or has one parent who was born overseas. The representation of Indigenous languages is even lower, at 2.68%. Interestingly, the proportion of foreign people settling in Australia has decreased: the 2021 Census published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) indicates that over 27.6% of the Australian population was born overseas. However, the proportion of LOTE-speakers at home increased.

There is a socio-linguistic phenomenon related to immigration; it is called "language shift". It occurs when the first generation of children born to migrants in the new country start to speak the local language as their main language, rather than their parents' native language.

In many instances, language shift occurs because immigrant communities perceive their native language as having no value within the host society, which, regarding Australia, primarily functions in English. Also, even when there is a willingness to maintain their language, institutional and educational support for its instruction is often minimal or nonexistent. With these factors in mind, "it is difficult to argue that Australia fulfils its role as a truly multicultural society" (Hatoss, 2005, chapter 3). Australia is undeniably multicultural and multilingual, but does not hold up to value these facets of society. The diversity of people and dialects is not taken care of or given credit to, as English and the colonial past of the nation are still so prevalent.

To achieve multiculturalism in an ethnically plural society, Hatoss (2005, chapter 4) argues that the "education system must provide at every level (primary, secondary, and tertiary) opportunities for all individuals". These include the following options:

1. to learn the shared values of society, including the national language (which in Anglo-Saxon societies means English);
2. to study their mother tongue in its cultural context (including the acquisition of literacy)
3. to gain access to an ethnic community language and culture other than their own, whether ethnic community or the language of a neighbouring country or trading partner;

4. to understand and value the multicultural nature of society and learn to appreciate the various cultures within it.

While Australia is quite inclined to respect the first and third point, the fourth one is not really set up and the second one is left aside. Australia showcases surface-level multiculturalism.

Hatoss (2005, chapter 4) argues that “Multilingualism should be valued per se, not only if it is tied with potential economic benefits.”. Once again, capitalism, which derives from colonialism in this context, spreads the idea that maintaining and protecting the variety of languages has no purpose if it builds no capital. If it is only for the happiness of local communities and brings no economic prospects, it is not interesting in a profit-led society.

Multilingualism is not strongly rooted in the concept of multiculturalism, and both immigrants and Indigenous peoples often view the dominant language (English, in the case of Australia) as a key pathway to success within the broader society.

Indeed, in many nations which have been occupied by the British at some point, competence in English stands for success and wellbeing in society.

And that leads us to one sensible issue in Australia: racism, discrimination and social justice.

## VI. « Multiculturalism rhymes with racism »

Racism can be conceptualized as “unfair and avoidable disparities in power, resources, capacities, or opportunities centered on ethnic, racial, religious or cultural differences that can occur at three levels: internalized, interpersonal, or systemic”, as Paradies defines it in *Racism and Indigenous Health* (2018, p. 1). Furthermore, Paradies (2018, p. 2) explains that regarding Australia, racism is closely intertwined with colonialism, shaping the dominant part of society.

Australia’s school system originally comes from colonial structures, in which “mainstream education systems apply knowledge, for the most part, that reflects and reproduces dominating non-Indigenous cultural values, practices, and worldviews which continue to be framed by settler-colonialism.” (p. 2). These “inherent dominant values or beliefs are taken for granted as an unassailable truth” (Phillips, 2021, p. 10).

Language is a factor of non-integration for minority populations like the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders communities. This exclusion reveals deeper, systemic racism and has real repercussions. As the Australian Human Rights Commission asserted (2014), Indigenous Australians are much more prone to be unfairly treated by the authorities (the national rate of imprisonment is fifteen times higher for them), their life expectancy is about ten years shorter than that of non-Indigenous people (less access to health services, see Truong and Moore, 2023, p. 17), and Indigenous people were 16.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous people to die in custody between 1990 and 1995 (Eades, 2013).

*Table 1. Summary of key indicators of ‘Indigenous disadvantage’  
(drawn from SCRGSP 2011)*

<i>INDICATOR</i>	<i>RATE (Indigenous to non-Indigenous)</i>	<i>COMMENT</i>
imprisonment	14 times	age-adjusted
juvenile detention	22 times	
long term unemployment	6 times	
weekly household income	\$300 less per week	median gross
not completed high school	almost twice	
infant mortality	1.6 to 3.1 times	
child mortality	1.8 to 3.8 times	
all causes mortality rate	twice	age-adjusted
life expectancy male	11.5 years less	
life expectancy female	nearly 10 years less	

*Table 1. Key indicators of 'Indigenous disadvantage' reproduced from Eades, 2013, chapter 11.2.*

Eades (2013) argues that in contrast with SAE (Standard Australian English), Aboriginal English has been described by its speakers as “‘easy’, ‘simple’, ‘slack’ or ‘straight’ English, ‘blackfella English’, or ‘blackfella talk’” and that “[u]ntil non-standard dialects of English began to be described by linguists, first in the U.S.A., then in Australia from the 1960s, it was commonly believed that the use of a non-standard dialect was a sign of a linguistic deficit.”

There have been and still are prejudices regarding the quality of English people can show off. And the standards of the said quality of English differs from one person to another. It derives from the assimilation policy undertaken in Australia during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, Indigenous people had to comply with everything regarding their lifestyles, languages, beliefs, to fit those of White Australian people.

Next, Mellor (2003) and Paradies (2013) agree that in governmental history textbooks, the history of Aboriginal Australia(ns) is not taught. It is almost exclusive to White Australia. Aboriginal children may not feel valued, as they feel like they are not “worth as a people” (Mellor, 2003, p. 8). This feeling of exclusion is present and felt. Phillips (2021, p. 9) made with the following striking statement: Indigenous peoples are often objectified as “known” rather than “knowers”. Even through history, they are much more often seen as patients of historical events rather than actors.

A recent review of data (Paradies, 2018, p. 2) from 23 countries detailed ongoing evidence of poorer health and social outcomes for the clear majority of Indigenous peoples compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts in relation to life expectancy, mortality, birthweight, malnutrition, obesity, educational achievement, and economic status. Australia is part of this range of countries.

Australia appears multicultural and multilingual from the outside. But it is only an image – some immigrant populations are favored over others, English is necessary to lead a successful life, and Indigenous languages are dying.

As Hatoss (2005, chapter 5) argues, “[i]f leading multicultural societies are unable to manage and successfully sustain their linguistic diversity, there is little hope for other societies which are modelling their social progress on these leading societies.” Given the multicultural

image Australia has been gilding itself in, it needs to “successfully sustain their linguistic diversity” (Hatoss, 2005). Otherwise, “other societies which are modelling their social progress on these leading societies” are not going in the right direction. If other countries will follow the wobbly way multiculturalism is set up in Australia, things will look good on the surface, but intrinsically, many entities and institutions will appear empty, not cared after, left unaccounted for.

Teaching/approaching Aboriginal lexicon with students makes it possible to educate them on the global notion of racism and discrimination through the prism of language, thanks to the studies on Aboriginal Australian populations. The students’ minds open up, they think about what is going on behind this society and its pride in being smoothly multicultural, when actually huge disparities exist and have been shaping the country over the past 250 years.

## **VII. Analyzing content from ESL textbooks: discussing how Australia is taught in French secondary schools**

This section of the thesis focuses on what representation is given of Australia throughout a selection of French ESL textbooks published between 2003 and 2023.

To collect this corpus of textbooks, I read over fifty textbooks kept at the Bibliothèque Patrimoine, a university library which is part of the ENS in Lyon, France. This collection of available textbooks thus corresponds to a preexisting selection outside of my control. One might wonder why some textbooks are not included in the collection of the Bibliothèque Patrimoine.

Among those fifty textbooks, I included all those which featured Australia; for a total of sixteen textbooks included in this study. Details of the textbooks included in the corpus are provided in the Appendix.

### **1. How is Australia represented in French textbooks? (stereotypes, cultural and historical representations)**

As Kidd (2015, chapter 1) quotes Webb (2009: 3), “We live immersed in representation: it is how we understand our environments and each other. It is also how we both are, and how we understand ourselves; representation is implicated in the process of me becoming me.”

Depending on the textbooks, the representation of Australia is more or less accurate. Each perspective matters and, in a way, depicts one side of Australian identity. Some textbooks illustrate Australia as mainly a land in which everything is all fun, sunshine and kangaroos, with strange animals – whereas other textbooks portray Australia as a cruel land of European invasion, genocidal towards the Native populations. All aspects of Australia actually make up what Australia is today throughout the collective imaginary – textbooks are a sample of how people conceptualise Australia.

As I could see through the pages, the lower the age of the learners was, the furthest away the content was regarding serious and complex matters like racism, discrimination, colonialism, Indigenous erasure, etc. These themes tend to be explored when students are older. When addressed to younger pupils, Australia is more likely to be depicted as a fun country with bizarre but dangerous animals. This can certainly serve as a useful introduction, but there is much more to cover about Australia. This can be approached when pupils get older.

Ranked by year of publication, I have analysed the textbooks regarding different criteria. Table 2 summarises the depiction of Australia in the corpus. A table I have conceived with the collected data is below. (see pages 54-55, first two pages of the appendix, for the data ranking of the sixteen textbooks)

	I put a cross regarding how Australia is depicted:					
Year the textbook was published	Australia is all fun, sunshine, surfing and kangaroos, animals are dangerous though	Aboriginal -related content (their culture : art, music, paintings, food, folklore)	Content about colonization / convicts/ settling a penal colony	Representation of the discriminatory policies led onto Aboriginal Australian peoples (Stolen Generations, assimilation, racism...)	James Cook/settlers portrayed as heroes	Activism/ Aboriginal fights for equality and justice today
2003 (4)	x			x	x	
2004 (11)		x	x	x		
2005 (7)		x			x	
2007 (1)	x					
2008 (2)	x					
2009 (8)		x		x		
2011 (12)	x	x	x	x		
2017 (3)	x	x	x	x		
2017 (6)	x	x		x		
2019 (13)		x	x			x
2019 (14)		x				x
2020 (17)				x		x

2020 (16)		x				x
2023 (15)		x				x
2023 (9)	x	x				
2023 (10)	x	x		x		x

*Table 2. Depictions of Australia in 16 ESL textbooks used in French secondary schools.*

The way Australia is portrayed in these textbooks directly influences how students imagine Australia afterwards. The representation of Australia should be the most accurate possible, but accurate according to whom? Who has the right to say that this representation of Australia is accurate or not?

As Table 2 shows, almost all of the textbooks in the corpus dedicate a few pages to Aboriginal Australian peoples : their culture, including their art, music, paintings, food, and their myths are developed. Half of the textbooks deal with the discriminatory policies led against Aboriginal Australian communities (Stolen Generations, assimilation, racism...). No textbook published before 2019 included current information regarding pro-Indigenous activism, what Indigenous Australian fights look like today.

This allows us to create an idea that First Nations Peoples are not an object of the past – they are very much alive and belong to the present. Half of the textbooks depict Australia as being all fun, sunshine, surfing and kangaroos, even though native animals of this land can be dangerous. This stereotypical side of Australian identity is the most widespread, worldwide. Only a handful of textbooks explicitly detail the British colonization over Australia and the transportation of convicts. We also find two textbooks that portray James Cook and/or the settlers as heroes.

As my field of research is focused on the Australian lexicon, I will now cite all the words of Australian origins, or being specifically tied to Australian vocabulary or history, which I could find in the corpus. I attributed to each textbook a reference number (see the Appendix for more detail):

- (1) “Down under”, “Outback”, “Aboriginals”, “kangaroos”, “koalas”, “Aussie”, the “freshie”, the “saltie”
- (2) “Down under” + “Jackaroos” & “Jillaroos”, “Outback”, “Oz”.

- (3) “Outback”, “Aborigine”. “Kangaroo”, “Koala”, “convicts”. “emu”, “platypus”, “boomerang”, “didgeridoo”, “Stolen Generation”, “Rabbit-proof fence”.
- (4) “Aboriginals”, “boomerangs”, “Stolen Generation”, “rabbit-proof fence”, “kangaroos”, “wombats”, “koalas”, “platypus”, “terra nullius”, “kooris”.
- (5) “Great Barrier Reef”, “Uluru”, “Vegemite”, “Sydney”, “Boomerang”, “surf”, “Aboriginal Australians”.
- (6) “Aboriginal story-telling”, “the Dreaming”, “Indigenous Australians”.
- (7) “Down under”, “Outback”, “Bush”, “Australian Aboriginal”, “Stolen Generation”, “didge”.
- (8) “Aboriginal elders”, “ibis”, “bush”, “kangaroos”, “possums”, “koalas”.
- (9) “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people” “Indigenous Australian” “Kokatha” “Naghiralgai” “Dauareb-Meriam” “Jardwadjali” “possum” “emu” “Reconciliation” “Kirrae Whurrong” “Butchulla” “Gubbi Gubbi” “First Nations people” “reserve”
- (10) “rabbit-proof fence” “outback” “stolen generation” “Aborigines” “Aboriginal community” “half-caste” “reconciliation” “Dreamtime” “Rainbow Serpent” “Terra Nullius” “penal settlement” “convicts” “reservations” “Indigenous”
- (11) “Land of Oz” “Indigenous people” “Great Barrier Reef” “Ayers Rock” “Uluru” “Down Under” “Aborigines” “Dreamtime” “Gagudju” “Rabbit-proof fence” “Stolen generation” “koala”
- (12) “Aboriginal” “Dreamtime” “Aborigines” “outback” “Arrernte” “Pintupi” “Lizard Dreaming” “Kangaroo Dreaming” “Rain-Maker Koala” “Down Under” “Gunbalanya”
- (13) “Indigenous peoples” “Terra Nullius” “Uluru” “Nyikina” “Mardoowarra” “Dreamtime” “Rainbow Serpent” “Mithika” “kalaya” “emu” “panpanpalala” “Mutitjulu”
- (14) “Aboriginal Australians” “Eastern Kuku Yalanji”
- (15) “Stolen Generations” “Aboriginal culture” “Indigenous”
- (16) “Stolen Generations” “Indigenous Australians” “Aboriginal children” “First Nations kids” “Eualeyai” “Kamillaroi” “Gunnedah”

## 2. Australian languages in French ESL textbooks

As the sample of the 16 textbooks I have selected show, Australia is quite prominent in French ELS textbooks, throughout its culture and much by through its language. The words of Australian context that occur the most frequently are :

WORD	Frequency of appearance / occurrences of mentions
Aboriginal(s)	12
Stolen Generation(s)	7
Indigenous Australians / Indigenous Peoples	7
Outback	6
Down Under	5
Koala(s)	5
The Dreaming / Dreamtime	5
Aborigene(s)	4
Kangaroo(s)	4
Rabbit-proof fence	4
Emu	3
Boomerang	3
Terra Nullius	3
Uluru	3
Convicts	2
Oz	2
Platypus	2
Didgeridoo	2
Great Barrier Reef	2
Bush	2
Possums	2
Reconciliation	2
First Nations People(s)	2
Reserves / Reservations	2
The Rainbow Serpent	2
Aussie	1

Freshie	1
Saltie	1
Jackaroos	1
Jillaroos	1
Wombats	1
Kooris	1
Vegemite	1
Ibis	1
Torres Strait Islanders People(s)	1
Kokatha	1
Naghiralgai	1
Dauareb-Meriam	1
Jardwadjali	1
Kirrae Whurrong	1
Butchulla	1
Gubbi Gubbi	1
Half-caste	1
Penal settlement	1
Gagudju	1
Arrente	1
Pintupi	1
Lizard Dreaming	1
Kangaroo Dreaming	1
Rain-Maker Koala	1
Gunbalanya	1
Nyikina	1
Mardoowarra	1
Mithika	1
Kalaya	1
Panpanpalala	1
Mutitjulu	1
Eastern Kuku Yalanji	1
Eualeyai	1

Kamillaroi	1
Gunnedah	1

*Table 3. Words of Australian origin/context used in 16 ESL textbooks.*

A minority of those words have Aboriginal origins. However, it is significant to study and learn Aboriginal names to contribute to the narrative working to avoid the erasure of the Aboriginal Australian communities, and pay tribute to their history by sharing their names.

### 3. Diachronic analysis

As Table 2 showcases, the representation of Australia has evolved a lot over the last twenty-two years. The euphoric and all sunny part of Australia has always been a core part of its representation in ESL textbooks. When some textbooks could casually portray James Cook and the settlers as heroes, the textbooks published from 2019 onwards focus more on Indigenous activism and the ongoing fights for equality and against racism. Whereas Aboriginal culture is a common object of study among the textbooks, it has been only a few years since the conversation is more about advocating for equal rights and acknowledgement of what the First Nations communities have been undergoing. The narrative is shifting.

### 4. Why is learning about Australia interesting for French students?

French pupils learning about Australia can spark interest in them in many ways – its endemic fauna and flora, exceptional climate and culture, can involve them in the First Nations cause, debunking Australian myths, etc. That is why, although many sides of the representation we can find in textbooks about Australia can be seen as stereotypical, talking about Australia and its characteristics is still a good start for me – but many myths about the country are to be debunked. Australia is an ever-evolving country and exploring its brightest and darkest sides makes sense and contributes to a more and more accurate depiction of Australia.



## VIII. Learning Australian lexicon in the ESL classroom in France: challenges and strategies?

### 1. Official French instructions from institutions regarding the ESL curriculum

Official academic instructions from the *Éducation Nationale* (equivalent to Department of Education) regarding the curriculum for ESL classes in secondary schools indicate the following :

For the fourth cycle of schooling (which encapsulates 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades in US schools, years 8 to 10 in UK schools, and 5<sup>ème</sup>, 4<sup>ème</sup>, 3<sup>ème</sup> in French schools, so students aged between 12 and 14 years old), students must be “confronted to different types of languages and learn how to choose the most appropriate ones” and the “plurality of languages and the diversity of cultures” will make them grow within their understanding and knowledge of the English-speaking sphere of countries. (Bulletin Officiel de l’Éducation Nationale n° 31, July 2020, own translation).

For high school-level students, the Department of Education and Youth (*Ministère de l’Éducation nationale et de la Jeunesse*) sets out that students must enrich their vocabulary, and expand their linguistic horizons. Studying and understanding the language and the way its lexicon is inherited and constructed is an essential component of their education related to foreign languages. As language is a senseful token of cultural identity, language(s) and culture(s) are interconnected. Approaching cultural diversity helps students develop linguistic autonomy. The *Éducation Nationale* even specifies that to deepen their understanding and their ability to interact effectively, students are gradually exposed to variations in accents and to regional or national linguistic specificities (Programme d’anglais pour les classes de lycée général et technologique, 2025, p. 4).

In French secondary schools, the national curriculum is divided into “*axes*” (themes). For 10<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 11 students (US format), or *Secondes* (French format), the following *axes* can include pedagogic content regarding the instruction of Australian lexicon:

*Axe 1*: “Self-representation & relationships with others” (own translation). Its goal is to put in perspective norms, conformity, and reappropriation (of the English language by First Nations’ peoples). We may also expand on the definition of a moving identity, and how art can

essentialize the revendication of identity (through an Aboriginal Australian perspective, once again).

*Axe 2*: “Generations living together” (own translation) : how both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities have been evolving, together and individually, since colonization of the land.

*Axe 3*: “The past in the present” (own translation). This axis can include Aboriginal culture in contemporary Australia, and the policies of reconciliation in countries of British heritage : acknowledge the past to build a better future.

*Axe 6*: “The countries of the Commonwealth” (own translation): legacies, unity, diversity : decolonialisme and modern populations living together.

For 11<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 12 students (US format), or *Premières* (French format), the following *axes* can include pedagogic content regarding the instruction of the Australian lexicon:

*Axe 1*: “Identities & exchanges”: the oppression of Native peoples, and how they are the original Australians but have only been recognized as such by the British less than sixty years ago.

*Axe 2*: “Diversity & inclusion”: positive Aboriginal-oriented activism, fights for equality and justice.

*Axe 3*: “Art & power”: both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal art as a vortex of resistance and anti-imperialism. The point is still to give voice and space to Aboriginal voices, unfairly silenced for so long.

For 12<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 13 students (US format), or *Terminales* (French format), the following axes can include pedagogic content regarding the instruction of the Australian lexicon:

*Axe 2*: “Territory and Memory”. How Aboriginal Australians are the original custodians of the land, and how they are gradually acknowledged as such in today’s contemporary societies.

*Axe 6*: “The United Kingdom and its nations”. The weight and significance of colonial heritage, what it has meant for Australia to be a subject of the British Empire and then the Commonwealth.

According to the official instructions, the weekly timetable regarding classes of foreign languages should be the following for all students in French secondary schools:

For 6<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 7 students (US format), or *6èmes* (French format): 4 hours of foreign language instruction per week.

For students from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Grade (UK format), students from Year 8 to 10 (US format), and students of *5èmes*, *4èmes*, *3èmes* (French format), they should have 3 hours per week of their main foreign language (it generally is English, but it can be Spanish, German, Italian...). If English is their second foreign language, they should have 2.5 hours of English per week (Bulletin officiel de l'éducation nationale, de la jeunesse et des sports, May 2015).

For 10<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 11 students (US format), or *2ndes générales* (French format), they should have 5.5 hours of foreign language instruction per week, compiling the two foreign languages they chose to learn (i.e. *Langue Vivante A* (LVA) and *Langue Vivante B* (LVB) in French). This is for general learning, *2ndes technologiques* (in vocational high schools) have 5 hours per week.

For 11<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 12 students (US format), or *Premières générales* (French format), they should have 4.5 hours per week of their two foreign languages (LVA and LVB).

For 12<sup>th</sup> Grade student (UK format), Year 13 students (US format), or *Terminales générales* (French format), 4 hours of foreign languages (LVA and LVB) are expected per week.

For *Premières and Terminales technologiques* (i.e. vocational high school), 3 hours of LVA and LVB are expected per week.

## 2. Setting up classes based on Australia

This being said, I can imagine designing a unit on the Australian lexicon, using the prompts I have produced before, regarding the *axes* of study. There are six *axes* in each level of ELS instruction, among which five must be studied throughout the year. Thanks to the level of freedom that teachers can exercise regarding their teaching practices in the French education system (“*liberté pédagogique*”), I would be free to design a unit based on the studying and learning of Australian lexicon. But that may be too detailed for general-level classes, we may not have time to cover everything efficiently. My suggestion is to focus on Australia, however other countries from the Commonwealth could benefit from the same type of focus. Advanced English classes, however, may be the opportunity for me to approach this content. Optional or elective courses, such as International or European classes, bilingual courses, or English for Specific Purposes (*Enseignements de spécialité anglais*) for high-school students, which all include a further, deeper understanding and interest in English-speaking cultures, could be the way to dig into Australian lexicon and history. We could use authentic resources, such as the film *Crocodile Dundee*, or video extracts of TV personality Steve Irwin, or other series and songs, to teach Australian lexicon and accent: that would be an efficient introduction. So many things are to be demystified about Australia and I would love for students to deconstruct aspects of this country, that they may want to visit one day.

Based on my linguistic analysis of the Australian languages and of the content related to Australia which I found in textbooks, I can imagine what kind of lessons I would set up for students.

### 3. How and why would I teach Australian lexicon?

Teaching the Australian lexicon is valuable because it connects language learning with culture, real-world communication, and an understanding of English as a global language rather than a single fixed system. Australian English reflects particular social values such as informality, egalitarianism, humour, and solidarity, and these values are embedded in everyday vocabulary and expressions. Words like “mateship”, “fair dinkum”, or “larrikin” are not just lexical items; they express ways of relating to others and interpreting the world. By teaching the Australian lexicon, learners gain cultural literacy and a deeper understanding of how language operates within a specific national and social context.

There are also practical reasons for teaching the Australian lexicon. Teaching students Australian linguistic specificities may lead to them planning to travel there eventually, so they

would inevitably engage with local vocabulary and expressions that differ from other varieties of English. Without this knowledge, everyday interactions can become confusing. Australian expressions often rely on abbreviation, idiom, and informal phrasing, which can make even simple conversations difficult for learners who only know standard forms of British English and/or American English. Teaching this lexicon therefore supports communicative competence and helps learners function more confidently in real-life situations. The Australian lexicon can also be highly engaging for learners. The creativity of Australian slang, especially its use of shortened forms and diminutives, often feels playful and memorable. Expressions such as “brekkie”, “arvo”, or “servo” tend to spark curiosity and discussion, making lessons more enjoyable and increasing learner motivation. When students are interested in and amused by language, they are more likely to remember it and use it appropriately.

Another important reason to teach the Australian lexicon is to raise awareness of the diversity of “Englishes” worldwide. English exists in many legitimate varieties, each shaped by history, geography, and culture. Introducing Australian English helps learners understand the beauty and significance of all variations of English, taking pride in what is made today of the colonizing language. This perspective encourages flexibility, tolerance, and critical thinking about language norms.

In terms of how to teach Australian lexicon, it is most effective when presented in context rather than as isolated lists of slang. Learners benefit from seeing vocabulary used in realistic situations, such as short dialogues, video clips, advertisements, or everyday scenarios like socializing or ordering food. Authentic Australian materials would be the best resources. Films, television shows, social media, and advertisements expose learners to real language as it is used by Australians themselves. Classroom activities such as role-plays, translation exercises, and vocabulary journals allow learners to actively engage with the lexicon and reflect on how it functions as a means of communication.

Context allows learners to understand not only meaning but also tone, intention, and social function. From there, teachers can draw attention to common word-formation patterns in Australian English, such as diminutives and clippings, which helps learners recognise and interpret unfamiliar words independently.

Comparing Australian English with other varieties, such as British or American English, further deepens understanding. These comparisons highlight differences in vocabulary and usage while reinforcing shared meanings. Equally important is teaching register and

appropriateness. Many Australian expressions are informal and suited to casual conversation rather than formal writing or professional settings. Learners need guidance on when such language is acceptable and when more neutral or standard forms are required.

Ultimately, teaching the Australian lexicon would not replace the teaching of standard British and American English varieties but rather build upon them. It works best as an additional layer that enhances cultural understanding, communicative effectiveness, and awareness of linguistic diversity. By teaching about the Australian lexicon in a thoughtful and contextualised way, I would help learners navigate English in the real world with greater confidence and insight.

I can imagine designing a course over several years, but that would mean to having the same students over these years. It would be appropriate to do it with groups of students taking advanced English classes over several years (e.g. European or International classes...).

This tension between what would be ideal to cover with students and what we can actually do with them challenges us.

I would also love to get feedback from my students, for them to express their thoughts on my unit, Australia, what struck them, what they particularly enjoyed. I would have them answer multiple-choice quizzes or printed/online surveys about the classes I taught, mostly anonymously and in written form. For example, I could ask: “What part of today’s lesson about Australia did you find most interesting?”; “Is there something about Australia you would like to explore in future classes?”. I could also have them answer briefly at the end of the class: “One thing I learned today about Australia...”; “One question I still have...”. It is not applicable at my current work placement as a trainee teaching, otherwise I would have loved to design a unit based on Australia and focusing on its national linguistic characteristics, and how they shape its linguistic identity.

## IX. Conclusion

Languages in Australia are shifting, evolving constantly. Language is a form of self-determination, a sign of identity particularly important and meaningful for Indigenous people. If a language is erased, part of a people's legacy is erased.

Learning about Indigenous culture and languages is a way of making space for them to exist in today's society and fight for their cultural legitimacy and history. As Coburn (2013, p. 1) strongly states, "Indigenous research is a form of resistance to centuries of colonial domination". We must keep reading Indigenous-oriented works, hearing and sharing about their ongoing fights against unlawfulness, and overall educating ourselves on these matters and sharing their testimonies in an authentic and respectful way.

By listening to these communities sharing their stories, in which they are agentive, in which they are the ones transmitting their knowledge instead of being the ones under study, we recognize their voices after more than two centuries of erasure and marginalisation. Teaching Aboriginal Australian lexicon is a way of fighting against imperialism. To strengthen the process of decolonization, we must keep reading Indigenous-oriented works, hearing and sharing about their ongoing combats against unlawfulness, and overall educating ourselves on these matters.

Besides the Indigenous lexicon, there is the non-Indigenous lexicon, which came from immigration. Learning about these Australian linguistic characteristics makes sense because language is inseparable from the social and cultural contexts in which it is used. Australian English reflects local histories, values, and patterns of interaction. Having the students think about why we speak English on the other side of the world would make them gain some perspective on the ever-lasting impact of colonization. Taking into account that this variety of Australian was born thanks to colonization, studying allogenic Australian characteristics would produce thoughts about embracing Australian culture, what it means to speak Australian, where Australia is situated in the English-speaking world and the Commonwealth today. Should we take pride in Australia?

It is both relevant and feasible to introduce the Australian lexicon in English lessons in France, insofar as it can coexist alongside other teaching units without replacing core language objectives. This approach is more suitable for advanced learners, particularly students in *Secondes*, *Première*, and *Terminale*, who already have a solid foundation in English and are able to engage with linguistic variation and cultural nuance (to approach colonization,

racism...). Notably, my work is based on Australia, but the same type of research could be applied to other cultures/countries which have undergone colonization. It would be equally interesting to study how Indigenous languages resist today, how immigrant languages flow, and how everything co-exists, in Australia as well as in other countries.

Writing this thesis has taught me a lot in my role as a teacher, it has notably helped me develop Professional skill no.14 (Référentiel des compétences professionnelles des métiers du professorat et de l'éducation, 2013), which involves engaging in both individual and collective processes of professional development. It has encouraged me to update and deepen my scientific, didactic, and pedagogical knowledge, to stay informed about current research in order to participate in innovative teaching projects, and to reflect critically on my own practice, both independently and with peers, before reinvesting this reflection into classroom action. This work has also strengthened my understanding of academic and scientific issues and fostered a greater sense of responsibility, creativity, and project management skills.

Thanks for reading!

**X. Appendix - Excerpts from French textbooks for English classes (from 2003 to 2023)**

This table summarises the corpus of textbooks analysed for this thesis. To make understanding easier, I also decided to number the textbooks, from (1) to (16). They are ranked both by year of publication and the studying level of students.

References of the textbooks						
The identification number I gave each textbook	Title	Year of publication	Level targeted + CECRL	Publishing company	Author(s) and writing directors	Pages used
(1)	<i>New Spring Anglais</i>	2007	5e / A2	Hachette Education	Jean-Rémi Lapaire, etc.	110-111
(2)	<i>Get in Touch</i>	2008	4e / A2 towards A2+	Bordas / SEJER	Hubert Malfray, etc.	12-14
(3)	<i>So English!</i>	2017	4e / A2	Hatier	Evelyne LEDRU-GERMAIN, etc.	50, 52-58, 63
(4)	<i>Spring Anglais</i>	2003	3e / A2 towards B1	Hachette Education	Jean-Rémi Lapaire, etc.	82, 88-89, 92, 94-95
(5)	<i>New Hi There!</i>	2017	3e / A2 towards B1	Bordas / SEJER	Daniel Leclercq, etc.	44-45
(6)	<i>Insight Anglais</i>	2005	2nde / A2 → B1	Hatier	Daniel Masson, etc.	138-139, 142
(7)	<i>Impact Anglais</i>	2009	2nde / A2 → B1	Hachette Education	Brigitte Lallement, etc.	96-103

<b>(8)</b>	<i>Hit the road!</i>	2023	2nde / A2 → B1	Magnard	Gaël Manescau, etc.	44-45, 114-120
<b>(9)</b>	<i>New Let's Meet Up!</i>	2023	2nde / A2 → B1	Hatier	Erwan Gouraud, etc.	128-133, 136
<b>(10)</b>	<i>Bridges</i>	2004	1ere Générale / B1 → B2	Nathan	François Guary, etc.	52-53, 60-61, 171, 175, 183
<b>(11)</b>	<i>Meeting Point</i>	2011	1ere / B1 → B2	Hatier	Josette Starck, etc.	212-219, 224-225
<b>(12)</b>	<i>Hit the road!</i>	2019	1ere Générale / B1 → B2	Magnard	Gaël Manescau, etc.	254-258
<b>(13)</b>	<i>Seasons</i>	2019	1ere Générale / B1 → B2	Hachette Education	Brigitte Lallement, etc.	83, 87-91, 94
<b>(14)</b>	<i>Make it yours!</i>	2023	1ere and Terminale Générale / B1 → C1	Hachette Education	Benjamin Baudin, etc.	68
<b>(15)</b>	<i>Hit the road!</i>	2020	Terminale / B1 → B2	Magnard	Gaël Manescau, etc.	280-282
<b>(16)</b>	<i>Let's Meet Up!</i>	2020	Terminale / B1 → B2	Hatier	Erwan Gouraud, etc.	282-285

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