

Chapter 3

Language and Control: Fighting with Words

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a provisional framework for interpreting the functions of writing in English and the vernacular in Aboriginal communities with Bilingual Education Programs. A critique is offered of writing programs based on transcription (writing as speech written down) instead of social function and of teaching methodologies (such as process writing) which de-power Aboriginal people by restricting their writing to recounts of personal experience. It is suggested that if Aboriginal people are to use writing in the vernacular to conserve their culture and writing in English to negotiate with white Australia, then a much wider range of empowering writing needs to be taught.

WHY WRITE?

The author

In November of 1986 Chris Walton and Brian Gray invited me to speak at a bilingual education conference they were organising as one of the activities leading up to the 8th World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Sydney the following August. Because my own research in the area of literacy had concentrated on urban children, they suggested I spend some time in the Northern Territory's bilingual schools. In the

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event I spent a few days before the conference in Yuenbung and Lajamanu, and a few days afterwards in Yirrkala. This paper, based on those brief visits, is to be read as the comments of a new boy in Aboriginal education on literacy teaching in the bilingual education program.

It was clear from the outset that literacy was a complex issue in bilingual schools, though most of the problems are not really different in kind from those found in urban contexts. Many migrant children in Sydney for example arrive at school emerging from a fundamentally oral culture and a community with a keen interest in preserving their traditional language and values. Of course most of these languages do have a tradition of writing, although not always in the dialect of the language spoken by the children themselves. Whereas with Aboriginal languages literacy in the vernacular is just getting off the ground.

In this paper I will try and develop a functional interpretation of writing in bilingual schools. In doing so I will simply pass over the issue of status. Obviously there is a sense in which writing the vernacular shows that it is just as good a language as any other. And writing in English may bring prestige to those who learn it well. In addition I will not address the issue, important though it is, of **transition** - of whether literacy in the vernacular facilitates literacy learning in English (cf Roche, Watt & Cataldi 1986). Instead I want to concentrate on **function** - on what writing in the vernacular or English enables people to do. In doing so I will draw heavily on two theoretical paradigms: one from linguistics and one from educational linguistics.

The linguistic framework I will be using is a systemic functional one. A basic introduction can be found in the work of Butler 1985, Halliday & Martin 1981, Halliday 1985a, Halliday & Fawcett 1987. My educational linguistics model will be that which has evolved around genre based approaches to literacy development. The best introduction is through Deakin University's *Writing: study guide and reader*, edited by Fran Christie, and the whole of their Language Education series. Critical publications include Painter 1984, Martin 1985, Halliday 1985b, Rothery 1986, Painter & Martin 1986, and Hasan & Martin 1988.

Aboriginal people

The real question we are asking then, from the point of view of functional linguistics, is what can writing do for Aboriginal people? In answering this question we need of course to distinguish between writing in the vernacular and writing in English and take into account the nature of a particular school's commitment to two-way education. Lajamanu School's *Statement of Policy 1984* puts its commitment as follows:

AIMS

THAT Yapa Way be strong and Kardiya Way be strong

- the community decide exactly what Yapa things and Kardiya things they want the children to learn
- Yapa teach the children proper strong Warpiri and after that Kardiya make it strong and teach the children English properly so that the children can really understand and speak both
- there is continued support for the Bi-lingual Programme of the school of whoever controls the school.

(The Warpiri use the term 'Yapa' to refer to themselves, and 'Kardiya' for whitefelas).

In order to back up a commitment of this kind, the underlying principle must be that of **functional diversity**. Bilingual communities can only survive as long as the role played by the different languages in the community is different. Each must enable members of the community to do different things. Similarly for speaking and writing; all cultures that make use of writing do so in such a way that writing complements speaking. Common sense may tell us that writing is just speech written down (technically **transcription**). But in fact, in all literate cultures, speaking and writing evolve as distinct registers, specially designed to do different jobs (Halliday 1985b: 61-101). This means that if Aboriginal people are going to be writing in English and the vernacular, then (1) the functions of the writing in the two languages must be distinct; and (2) the functions of speaking and writing within each language must be distinct. As noted above I will be passing over status, so consideration of the ways in which writing might or might not reinforce cultural identity will not be pursued.

From the point of view of the vernacular, it would appear that in general terms the major function of writing has to do with **conservation** - with making the vernacular language and culture strong. In Australia, all Aboriginal languages and cultures are severely threatened. Even a relatively robust people such as the Warlpiri have to be very concerned with the kind of education their children experience, in school and in the community itself, especially in the context of rapid and irreversible social change such as that documented in *Stories from Lajamanu 1977*. The painting of Yuendumu's remarkable Dreaming doors was very much a response to such change, as Paddy Japaljarri Stewart comments in the *Introduction to Yuendumu Doors*:

We painted these Dreamings on the school doors because the children should learn about our Law. The children do not know them and they might become like white people, which we don't want to happen. We are relating these true stories of the Dreamtime. We show them to the children and explain them so that the children will know them. We want our children to learn about and know our Law, our Dreamings. That is why we painted these Dreamtime stories (1987:13).

Where once body paintings disappeared at the end of ceremonies, the doors remain. As Muecke (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe, 1984) points out in the section Always Already Writing of *Reading the Country*, symbolic representations are not new to Aboriginal people. But the permanency that acrylic paints and writing systems bring is new, and could be developed through schools as a conservation measure. Increasingly, Warlpiri people do seem to view the school itself as something they can participate in and control:

The parents were at first mistrustful of the school, their children were taken away from them. But now they can see the school is their school and they go and look and see what the school does. And the more we can have an open school where parents can come anytime, the better. When you walk around the settlement, you can see the parents are interested in the school (Luther, 1977:15).

The *Lajamanu School Statement of Policy*, negotiated among the council, school staff, parents, relatives and interested community members, clearly aims to make Warlpiri language and culture strong, suggesting that 'community members be employed as organisers for the Warlpiri part of the curriculum' (1984:8). As Cataldi outlines in the schools' 1986 *Language Policy*, bringing community members into the school gives writing a raison d'être for young literacy learners:

We have also found that conversation sessions, particularly with Warlpiri adults who are authorities on different things have inspired Lajamanu children to write longer pieces than they may have done before. Here the pressure to write may be the permanence of writing as understood by the modern Warlpiri child and its ability to record information passed down by older people about a way of life that everyone here recognises has inevitably changed. Writing for Warlpiri people is recognised as one way of preventing that part of Warlpiri culture from being lost (Cataldi, 1986:68).

The writing as conservation message here is very clear. In the face of massive social change the ability of writing to document both language and culture is, potentially at least, of considerable significance. The question now arises as to what kinds of writing can be encouraged which can participate effectively in making Warlpiri language and culture strong. This will be partially addressed in the next section.

The other side of the coin is writing in English, which as noted above needs to have a different function from writing in Warlpiri if the two are to co-exist in the community. Speaking once again in general terms, the major function for English writing would appear to be **negotiation**. All Aboriginal communities, however remote, need English for doing business with the rest of Australia. Their schools, community councils and health clinics have to liaise with the Northern Territory Government. Their store and arts collectives have to deal with business people from outside. More recently the development of Aboriginal media has become a reality through the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (Michaels, 1986).

In many communities, few if any of these institutions may actually be controlled by Aboriginal people. But to the extent that Aboriginal people want 'local people running the place, local people to be the bosses of their own tribal lands' (Luther, 1977:18), then they will have to take responsibility for doing business; and this means learning to write for business purposes. Some of the kinds of writing needed to accomplish this will be reviewed later.

To sum up this section then, we are left with two questions:

- A What kinds of vernacular writing can be evolved to **conserve** vernacular language and culture?
- B What kinds of English writing can be learned to **negotiate** with the outside world?

WRITING IN THE VERNACULAR

Evolving literacy

Aboriginal cultures have always been, and for the most part remain, oral cultures. The transmission of law and language has been through speaking. And until recently, oral transmission has been effective, sustaining Aboriginal languages and cultures from one generation to the next. Since contact with European settlement, this process has been breaking down. Consequently Aboriginal people, working with teacher linguists and linguists, now have to consider whether writing has a role to play in sustaining their traditional languages and cultures.

Within the bilingual education program literacy initiatives have been mainly concerned with (1) orthography; (2) dictionaries; and (3) the production of reading materials for use in the early grades of bilingual schools. For the most part the reading materials are based on traditional stories, or are adaptations of English stories, translated into the vernacular. These initiatives are in one sense necessary ones.

But it may be worthwhile questioning their effectiveness from a functional perspective.

The model of writing implicitly assumed in these initiatives is that of **writing as speaking written down**. The linguist involved starts with phonology and transcribes, with an aim to developing an orthography which the community proceeds to adapt through use. The linguist then moves on to words, producing a dictionary, perhaps along with an outline of vernacular syntax. As the question of literacy materials arises, the linguist works with the teacher linguist and literacy workers writing down what people would normally say. The functional interpretation of writing symbolised in this process is **transcription**. And so the writing which results is not designed to do a different job.

One might argue that this is approaching things precisely the wrong way round. Beginning with context, instead of phonology, one might ask what Aboriginal people need writing for; then what kinds of text exist or could be evolved to fulfil these needs; then what kinds of discourse patterns realise these texts; and what kinds of teaching methodologies will enable Aboriginal children to learn them; then how is the grammar designed to realise the discourse patterns, building in lexis as realising more specific distinctions than grammatical structures; and then finally the question of orthography could be addressed (for applications of a model of this kind see Martin 1985, 1986a; 1986b). It is after all rather pointless designing a writing system for a language that no one will ever use.

As far as I can tell, the kind of social engineering suggested by a literacy program which begins with the cultural context has not yet been seriously addressed in the Northern Territory. But without a reason to write it is unlikely that literacy programs can fulfil the conservation goals outlined above. The real danger in fact is that bottom-up literacy programs will subvert, rather than sustain vernacular language and culture. Currently, writing in the vernacular does not complement speaking; it's simply a rather ineffective watered down version of it - a poor relation. The rationale for writing in the vernacular is thus reduced to the questions of status, and transition to English literacy passed over above. This kind of writing program does not appear to be what Aboriginal people want, or need, to make their languages and culture strong.

Any kind of social perspective on writing of course has serious implications for the ways in which linguists, teacher linguists, literacy workers and teachers are trained. The major institutions training personnel for the bilingual education program do not at present approach literacy from a functional perspective and so do not offer appropriate training in functional grammar, discourse, register, genre or ideology (cf. Chadwick, Chapter 16 this volume). This raises further implications concerning the extent to which these institutions are actually serving the needs of Aboriginal people, which will not be further pursued here. Instead, let's look at the kind of writing and reading materials that evolve when the transcription model is assumed.

Some Warlpiri texts (in translation)

In this section a number of different Warlpiri texts will be reviewed, with an eye to the social functions they serve. Each has implications for the question of how to evolve a literacy which can help sustain a culture. But the discussion can in no way hope to provide the solution that Aboriginal people need to negotiate with the linguists and teacher linguists in their communities. The first two were written by children at Lajamanu School; the next two are from their reading program.

Text 1 is the most common type of writing found at Lajamanu School. Indeed, Gray, (1986) reports that texts collected during a moderation exercise by the Northern Territory Department of Education in 1985 from Aboriginal children writing at a year 5 or year 7 level of competence could all be identified as belong to this text type.

Text 1 RECCOUNT (telling what happened)

We all went to seven mile, hunting, and we found bush grapes, bush bananas and bush tomatoes, then we went back home for our lunch. First we lit the fire and then we cooked some meat and then we cooked some damper. Elaine and Angela cooked the meat and then they made the tea and then we all ate everything. Then after lunch we all went off and picked more bush tomatoes (translated from the Warlpiri).

Generically this text type can be described as a recount. Its function is to tell what happened - usually a recent experience. Typically it is written in the first person and consists of a series of actions sequenced in time.

In Australia, this genre is the most common type of writing accomplished by children in infants and primary school, whether Aboriginal or not (Martin, 1985:51). Its prevalence is due to a particular teaching methodology developed by Graves (1983; 1984) and promoted in Australia by Walshe (1981) and Turbill (1982). One of its guiding principles is that of **ownership**, with the result that children are encouraged to choose their own topics and teachers are encouraged not to interfere too directly with what the children write. In response most children turn to the recount, a familiar genre from their experience of spoken language, and one related to their immediate past experience rather than specialised school learning. From the point of view of mode, the genre is really a kind of transcription, of something one would normally speak, although personal letters do draw in part on writing of this kind.

What role writing of this kind might play in conserving culture is unclear. Telling what happened is certainly something that can be accomplished effectively in spoken language and the experience recounts draw on does not appear to be under threat in Aboriginal communities. Recounts are not about law/business/dreaming, nor about living off the land, which is the kind of knowledge that is being lost. Significantly however this is the main, if not in many communities the exclusive genre written by Aboriginal children. It meshes nicely with the transcription model of literacy currently being implemented in the vernacular and is actively encouraged by current fashions in writing pedagogy. For these reasons it is unlikely that writing in the vernacular will contribute significantly to conserving culture in bilingual schools in the near future.

Recounts are not, it must be stressed, the only kind of Warlpiri writing found in Lajamanu School. Text 2 has a very different social function.

Text 2 REPORT (describing what things are)

Ngapiri - We use this type of bush-medicine 'ngapiri' to wash with when we become ill. It makes us no longer feel ill.

Mijilypa - The type of bush-medicine known as 'mijilypa' is used to put on open sores. It cures them.

Ngalyipi - This sort of bush-medicine 'ngalyipi' is used to tie around the head when people become giddy.

Jujuminyiminyi - Jujuminyiminyi is a type of bush medicine we put in our noses.

Murlurpa - Murlurpa is a type of bush medicine used to strengthen new born babies in its smoke translated from the Warlpiri).

Writing of this kind looks far more promising as part of a writing conservation program. As text 2 illustrates, it allows traditional knowledge, which may be at risk, to be brought into the school, passed on to children and in fact documented in their writing. It is equally clear that process writing is an inappropriate teaching methodology for writing of this kind. Setting aside the appropriacy of introducing the metaphor of **text as private property** as the basis for writing programs in Aboriginal schools, report writing lends itself to an alternative teaching methodology - the concentrated language encounter developed by Gray (1980; 1985) at Traeger Park School (before the closing of its language unit and elimination of its language co-ordinator position in early 1987; one unfortunate result of this was that participants at the World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Sydney were unable to visit the Northern Territory's best known and internationally renowned literacy project).

Concentrated Language Encounters (CLE's) encourage contexts to be set up in which boundaries between school and community are broken down, either by bringing knowledgeable members of the community into the school, or sending children out into the community to visit them. What is really involved is turning Aboriginal children into ethnographers (cf Heath 1983), working on their own cultural context, documenting through writing whatever their community sees to be both appropriate and at risk. This is writing for a purpose and a sound foundation for a literacy program which seeks to establish complementary functions for writing and speaking in contemporary Aboriginal communities. The time that was once spent passing on this knowledge orally, is after all now spent in school. So new channels of transmission must be designed.

Reports focus on things in general, rather than specific events ordered in time. They classify (eg the types of bush medicine in 2), describe habits/functions/uses (again as in 2) and may as well focus on the description of parts and qualities. Text 2 depended on illustrations of the plants involved to do this job. A more contextually independent report would have put this into writing as well.

Another genre which could be usefully integrated into a concentrated language encounter literacy program is illustrated in text 3. This genre is referred to as a procedure, and explains how things are or were done. Unlike the report, it focuses on events, rather than things. Like the report, and unlike recounts, it is general rather than specific (a recount can in fact be viewed as a specific instance of a procedure). Text 3 is part of the reading program at Lajamanu School.

Text 3 PROCEDURE (explaining how something is/was done)

In the old days the dogs were the suppliers of meat. Every morning the people would set off hunting with their dogs. The dogs would smell the scent of the kangaroos and many other animals while they would be in hiding. The dogs were fierce and good game hunters in those days.

When the women went hunting they would take their dogs too, to chase fast animals like goannas and skins. The women used to take fire-sticks so as to make big bush fires.

After the grass had been burnt down it would be easier to look for the reptiles. As for nowadays, people would be arrested or fined for making bush fires.

The women used to take water in their water-carriers with leaves over the top to keep it cool to quench their thirst. Now the women take their water in billy-cans filled from the tap. Nowadays we travel in comfort with cars and trucks just to shoot a kangaroo with a rifle. People go hunting for miles with cars and are back in time for supper (translated from the Warlpiri; Granites 1981).

As Paddy Patrick Jangala (1977:24-25) points out in *Stories from Lajamanu*, Aboriginal life-styles have changed:

I think people were healthier in the old days although now we've got medicines, fruit, all kinds of food. But I think we have to stay as we are now - we cannot go back and stay in the bush: we can for a while but the people want to come back to the settlement. Like my kids - they like to watch movies, and it's not easy to take away a movie from a child's mind. We can stay in tribal country for two or three weeks but then we want to come back to the settlement, to the shop and get different kinds of food; and we want to have a look at the movie too! Still, the kids enjoy it to go out in the bush some time - there is fresh air out there.

Where once Aboriginal children learned how to do things through participation, with language accompanying action, they are now much more dependent on text. Procedures are the appropriate genre for documenting how things were, and might continue to be done.

Relying on reports and procedures for conservation may entail, following Harris (1984) and Christie (1985), that Aboriginal children be taught new learning styles for coping with text. Hughes (1984:22), then Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Education Committee, summarises traditional learning styles as follows:

- the initiative often lies with the learners; group performance and systems of shared reward are emphasised;
- learning by doing, observation, imitation and repetition;
- most learning activities are ends in themselves and not necessarily means to future ends;
- learning skills are related to particular situations;
- knowledge is valued on account of the relationship with the person imparting knowledge; teachers are judged on how they relate as persons rather than their technical competence as educators.

Learning strategies such as these have their place in all cultures [see Gray, Chapter 11; Painter, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988]; but they are not adequate in themselves in a community which depends in part on writing for cultural transmission. Concentrated language encounters are well designed to incorporate all of Hughes' points, and having taken them as a point of departure lead on to teaching Aboriginal children to deal effectively with text. The point here is that if writing is evolved for conservation purposes, then bilingual schools will have to effectively implement teaching methodologies like the CLE in order to teach students to use reports, procedures and other critical genres.

The final Warlpiri text, text 4, is taken from reading materials at Lajamanu School and illustrates one further genre, the traditional story.

Text 4 TRADITIONAL STORY

A long time ago a man lived in the bush. His name was Namurran-ganigi.

He lived beside the creek where there was a lot of water. His humpy was on the banks of the creek.

And there were two women who were sisters, and they came to the place where he lived by the creek, to dig yumurnunju (a root vegetable).

They all went digging for yumurnunju and then he saw a big rain coming towards them. The elder sister said to the younger one, 'Let's go home to get out of the rain; otherwise we'll get wet. We'd better go before it gets here.'

But there was a man hiding behind a big ghost gun waiting to grab them. He had a spear and a spear thrower with him.

The two women were coming closer. The man suddenly grabbed the younger woman around the neck. He dropped his spear and spear thrower on the ground, and the frightened woman dropped her digging stick and dilly-bag. The other woman was going across and didn't know what happened.

He got both of them and took them back to his camp. One woman was sitting by the fire and the other woman was looking for lice in the man's hair. While she was looking for lice, she was singing a magic song to make him go to sleep.

She made him go to sleep - the one who was looking for lice. Having put him to sleep, they both turned into butterflies and flew away.

Later, when the man woke up, he saw that the two women were missing. Then he saw them both high on the hill waving to him.

The man was coming towards the two women with his arms open to take hold of them, but then just as he was going to hold one, they both turned back into butterflies again and flew away and never came back (translated from the Warlpiri; Napanangka & Harris 1982).

This story is not in fact a traditional Warlpiri story, but one given to them by Aboriginal people from the Top End (it was in fact taken to Yuendumu by the lead singer of the Warumpi band, incorporated into literacy materials there, and then passed on to Lajamanu). This illustrates the point that Warlpiri people at least have no problem borrowing stories of this kind.

Interpreting the social function of traditional stories is a complex task. Taken as a whole they interact with ceremonies, kinship and painting in such a way as to embrace the whole of Aboriginal law/business/culture. As such they are obviously crucial to writing for conservation. Much of this knowledge is of course not public; only parts of it are appropriate for children to read. And even where texts are made public, their interpretation at various levels may be rather restricted. But there is no reason why sacred texts, along with their full exegesis, could not be written down and secured for the appropriate sections of the community. Confidential documents are after all an important part of writing in any literate society and could have an important role to play in the face of language and cultural death. This perhaps underlines the problem of too strong an association of literacy with schooling in bilingual education programs. It obviously has a role in adult education as well, though only a limited effort has so far been directed towards reading materials for adults.

WRITING IN ENGLISH

Writing in class

As with writing in the vernacular, writing in English is mainly the writing of recounts. Text 5 is a typical example, written after the annual Sports Weekend in Yuendumu. [Note the potential for the development of a narrative text given the events recounted; see Rothery 1986:39-42 for exemplification of the kind of conferencing possible here.]

Text 5 RECOUNT (telling what happened)

On Sunday all the Lajamanu girls were playing basketball at Yuendumu. We were playing with Yuendumu girls. We had a ball so we went to play basketball. When we went back to Lajamanu camp some people met some red ochre men. Lucky one man saw them. They drove faster and faster. We got to Rabbit Flat. I was hungry. Lucky my father got to Rabbit Flat with some money. We camp half way. Some people were sleeping at Rabbit Flat. In the morning we went to Lajamanu.

Schools making use of CLE teaching methodology encourage two additional text types: procedures and narratives. Examples of these can be found in *Negotiated Stories: book samples* published by the Alice Springs office of the Northern Territory Department of Education. Many of these are however generically confused. Recounts may include descriptions of the photos scaffolding the text: 'Doug went back to his house to get some wood for the barbecue... Here is the steel barbecue plate...' (p 55). At other times procedures are mixed up with recounts: 'First we got the ingredients to make a damper... Helen puts the soda into the sieve... Rodney kneaded the dough...' (p 48). Teachers' lack of explicit awareness of genre can lead to texts which do not really accomplish the social purpose for which the genres involved are intended (see Gray [1986] for further discussion).

Overall then, the kinds of writing taken up by Aboriginal children in English parallel those taken up by children in the rest of Australia in primary school. It's the kind of writing our society deems appropriate for the least powerful members of our community: the retelling of personal experience and imaginative stories with the odd factual text thrown in (Martin 1985:51-61). Given the rather precarious situation in which Aboriginal people find themselves in Australia and the fact that few finish more than primary school, this kind of writing is more than pointless; it is profoundly empowering and holds out no hope whatsoever of Aboriginal people being able to use written English to do business with other Australians.

Writing for the school

What then of doing business - of using writing to negotiate with powerful English speaking Australians? Writing of this kind is not undertaken by children in bilingual schools. But it is a problem for staff. As part of their teacher development program, Aboriginal teachers at Lajamanu School are introduced to submission writing. Text 6, drafted by the Senior Girls Warlpiri teacher illustrates this genre [used with the kind permission of Marjorie Watson Nungarrayi].

Text 6 SUBMISSION (persuading authorities)

Why Lajamanu School Needs an After School Homework Programme. It needs it so that children can improve their educational standards more and more, and so the children can get used to independent study. At home they don't have any pencils, rulers, papers and facilities. Most of

the children don't live in houses, they live in humpies. They also do not have homework when they go back home after school. They often get bored.

Also we need two teachers to supervise the homework in the evening. We need one Aboriginal and one European teacher. Why we really need both is so that the children can learn both ways, English and Walpiri. A homework programme will help the children raise their educational standards. Also the children will need more help from their parents, for the children to be able to gain the skills to be able eventually to run this Community without a European beside them, and without getting any help from Kardiya.

It is for these reasons we really need a homework programme down here.

While at Lajamannu I did some work with the Aboriginal teachers, taking this text as point of departure. My first point was that submissions usually have an Introduction which set out clearly the text's purpose. Text 6 begins 'It needs it...,' which depends on the title in a way that is untypical of writing.

I then tried to suggest that arguments are usually organised into paragraphs, as a way of highlighting the reasoning, with each argument typically introduced with ordering conjunctions: first of all, second, finally etc. These arguments are then pulled together in a conclusion which functions as a kind of appeal.

The critical stages of a submission, along with relevant scaffolding, are presented below:

TITLE
PURPOSE (for these reasons)
ARGUMENTS (first of all, second, finally)
APPEAL (for these reasons)

Figure 1: Scaffolding for submissions

On the basis of this discussion the School Principal negotiated the following draft of text 6 with the teachers, using the techniques developed by Gray for joint text creation in CLEs (ie teacher scribing and guiding towards the genre, students suggesting what to write).

Text 7 SUBMISSION (text 6 re-negotiated)

Submission for On-going Funding for Lajamannu Homework Programme.
Lajamannu needs on-going funding for a homework programme for these reasons.

First of all, the homework programme is needed to help the children improve their educational standards. This is important so that the children are able to gain the skills to run the community without a European beside them and without getting any help from Kardiya (Europeans).

Second, the children also need a homework programme at Lajamannu so that they can get used to independent study. This will enable them to perform equally as well as European children at high school level.

Finally, the children have no place to study at home. Aboriginal people at Lajamannu live in large extended family groups, differently from most Europeans, which therefore often makes it difficult for children to find a

quiet place to study at home. Usually they do not have any pencils, rulers, books, papers or homework facilities.
It is for these reasons that we, the Aboriginal teachers at Lajamannu School, request that a homework programme be set up immediately and supported over a long-term period.

Submissions are clearly an essential genre for any bilingual school. Extra funding is constantly required, simply to maintain basic programs and there are various government agencies that need to be approached. As well as appealing for extra funds, submissions are also used to defend existing programs. Text 8 illustrates a submission of this kind, written by a member of a Lajamannu community to protest the downgrading of Lajamannu School from Band 4 to Band 3 status in 1985 [used with the kind permission of Paddy Patrick Jangala.]

Text 8 SUBMISSION (from community member)

Dear Sir,

I am a tribal Aboriginal Person of the Walpiri tribe. I live at Lajamannu (Hooker Creek) community on the northernmost fringe of the Tanami Desert. Up until the age of about fourteen I grew up in the bush near the Granites. Now I am a member of the Lajamannu Council and also a parent and part of this community.

I would like to tell you this. There are 181 children enrolled in this school. The NT Education Department says we have to lose teachers next year even though we will have the same number of kids. I think that to cut down teaching positions would make it very hard for our children to get a good education and very hard for the staff.

There is a RATE programme going now that is an on-site teacher-education programme to train Aboriginal teaching assistants. If we don't have enough staff the whole programme will either completely stop or it will become of such a low standard that it will be a joke for a teacher education programme. The Aboriginal Assistant teachers at Lajamannu started the RATE (Remote Area Teacher Education) programme here in August 1984. They really want to continue their study, but they can't do it without enough teachers in senior positions, experienced people who are able to take the responsibility of teaching adults who want to learn how to take over running all aspects of the school in the future.

We are losing two teachers in senior positions in 1986, the Band 4 Principal and a Band 2 senior teacher position. I think the school will become so confused because there won't be enough people in senior positions to develop the knowledge and teaching skills of the Aboriginal and European teachers who are mostly in junior positions. This is what I feel now and this is what I think.

Our present class sizes are as follows:

Preschool	27
Transition	23
Grade 1/2 composite	30
Grade 3/4 composite	40
Grade 5	25
Senior Boys (Grade 6 to Grade 9)	19
Senior Girls (Grade 5 to Grade 8)	17

Some of these classes are bilingual classes and some are English only. That's why some are bigger than others.

I think you'll agree that if these class sizes get any bigger next year we'll all be in real trouble. Also many children are dead.

I hope that somebody out there would see and understand what I am trying to say.

At the end of 1984 we lost three teachers, but no kids. Next year we are going to lose two Aboriginal Assistant teachers and two European senior teachers. I don't think that's good for our school. But if this kind of thing continues we will have to come to a decision in the future to become an independent school, away from the Northern Territory government.

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Patrick Jangala

Member of Lajamanu Community Council

Member of Lajamanu Community

parent of three children attending Lajamanu School and one Aboriginal assistant teacher studying on RATE programme.

Text 8 is typical of writing in literate societies when communities mobilise behind issues. They play an essential role in keeping governments in touch with their constituencies in any democratic nation. These community submissions often accompany more official submissions from institutions the community is trying to defend. An example of writing of this kind was published anonymously in the Northern Territory Bilingual Education Newsletter (85/1&2:57-62).

Text 9 SUBMISSION (from an institution)

Sir,

Our school is a school primarily characterised by community involvement and support. Like a number of other Aboriginal schools in the NT, our school was not initially allocated Band 4 status on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled in the school. The justification for its Band 4 status, as opposed to the Band 3 status that its *enrolled* numbers alone would justify, arose from the recognition of the numerous and time-consuming extra duties incumbent on education leaders in the bush, on the complexity of the socio-economic variables in such a situation, the special programs necessitated by the situation, the sometimes harsh conditions, and the limited access to services which urban schools take for granted, such as Emergency Relief Teachers. It was based on the further recognition that the Principal of a School in such a remote area held responsibility for the schooling of THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY, ie adult education right down to preschool education, a situation unheard of in the urban educational context. Each of the above will now be elaborated upon.

1 EXTRA DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES INCURRED BY BUSH PRINCIPALS

A Promotion of Community Involvement - An Enormous Task.

According to the Northern Territory Department of Education's Information Statement 6, *Education for Aborigines, Strategies for Improving the*

Academic Performance of Aboriginal Students in Primary or Secondary Education.

'New initiatives have most chance of success when derived from the widest community involvement. Such an approach should ensure that different and changing situations are taken into account when programmes are introduced.'

In the typical urban teaching context, the clientele, their parents and families, and their teachers for the most part share important common assumptions about the nature of the educative process and the functions and outcomes of Western education. Equally, in the typical urban context the values underlying the schooling process are supported and reinforced by the values predominating in the immediately surrounding world. In the traditionally-oriented Aboriginal community, where the Western educative process is frequently implemented by young, white, monolingual, monocultural, neophyte teachers who often have neither specialist knowledge of Aboriginal education, nor TESL methodology, such shared assumptions are most certainly not the case. In many instances the lack of shared beliefs about and approaches to education can result in misunderstanding or trauma (popularly referred to as 'culture shock') on the part of the individuals or groups concerned. This makes for a highly stressful work situation leading to additional demands with a corresponding additional work load being carried by the educational leader. The additional workload can be enumerated as follows.

The 'community liaison' component of the Principal's workload is unusually high. This is because it is not simply a matter of 'getting to know you' which it frequently is in the urban educational setting, but of explanation about and discussion of the very foundations of the Western educational system and its by products. The present Principals spends between two and four hours per day (mainly after hours) on this task. This time is well spent in terms of increased community understanding and involvement in the Western educative process. It would simply have to be abolished if the school were to suffer a reduction from its present Band 4 to Band 3 status, with the concomitant 50% teaching requirement on the part of the Head Teacher. It would in fact mean that important advances that have already been made, such as parents coming to read to the children during school time, parents and relative taking charge of the Social and Cultural Education lessons, would have to be abandoned, because of lack of adequate time on the part of any school staff to negotiate such activities. It would result in contradiction of both our school policy and NT Department of Education policy, which explicitly states:

'...these teachers also need to... be committed to the need for parent education about schooling and become familiar with those aspects of Aboriginal culture (including language and adaptations relevant to Aboriginal learning styles) which are necessary for them to know. (Information Statement Number 6, Education for Aborigines).'

Parental and community involvement in children's education at our school has resulted from four years hard work, long hours, and painstaking effort at the cultural interface. Last year, in conjunction with the wider community, a

far-reaching School Policy was developed which sets broad educational directions for both school and community. This approach to policy-making is now included in a tertiary course at a NSW University, with our School Policy Statement being used as the model for other schools aspiring to broadly-based community involvement.

Only now are the results of this community-based approach to education being shown, and they are extremely promising. The situation here dictates that unusual amount of dialogue about educational matters must take place before progress occurs. It would be sad and ironic to see these past initiatives which have resulted in the implementation of major Government Policy:

... The Government intends to encourage the trend towards greater involvement of Aboriginal communities in education and aims to develop informed community support for education programs at all levels throughout the Territory', (Information Statement Number 6, Op Cit).

destroyed or harmed. The savings to be made by reducing our school to a Band 3 school would be relatively small, even over a long-term period, and the destructive effect great. I submit that both in the short term and long term this would be a false economy.

B Induction of New Teachers into the Community and into the School. While it is recognised that this is a task undertaken by all educational leaders in the Territory, it is a task of considerably greater magnitude in the large Aboriginal Schools, where the turnover of staff is much greater than the Territorian average, and the proportion of inexperienced staff higher. In the bilingual educational setting, it is improbable that new teachers will be effective without at least a rudimentary knowledge of the language and culture. One of the Aims of Aboriginal Education, as stated in Information Statement Number 6, reads as follows:

... The content of the curriculum, the methods of instruction used and the way the school is administered should be planned and organised to ensure that what is learned in school is not only relevant to community living but is compatible with skills and attitudes inherent in Aboriginal culture.

The deep understanding inherent in this statement are not reached overnight and are never reached without the guidance of a Principal or educational leader well-versed in local mores, knowledge of suitable teaching methodology and with *the time* in which to assist newcomers to develop and apply these understandings. The same comments apply to the induction of new Aboriginal staff, who while obviously not ignorant of local custom or language rarely have knowledge of teaching methodology; administrative processes or curriculum content or shape, and who require intensive long-term induction into these processes in order to be successful in their chosen career. It is not possible to cut corners in the induction process of either of these groups without very destructive results, including increase in staff turnover and without a dramatic and negative impact on the quality of the educational service offered. Induction, to be successful, takes time, and if the school is reduced to Band 3 status it will

be an area to suffer greatly. The education of the children at our school will suffer accordingly.

C Co-ordination and Management of a Range of Special Programs in the School.

The number and range of special programs currently in progress at our school is a powerful argument for the school remaining a Band 4 school. These special programs, which it must be noted are *all still in the developmental phase*, are as follows:

a **The Bilingual Education Program:** Our school has a Bilingual Program, as well as classes that are TESL based with inserted vernacular classes. The fact that the school operates two distinct programs creates administrative difficulties beyond the already daunting task of curriculum development for the Bilingual program.

b **The RATE (Remote Area Teacher Education) Program:** Our school also conducts a RATE program, the on-site Aboriginal teacher education program which comes under the auspices of Batchelor College. It is planned and taught by the present Band 3 Assistant Principal. If the present Band 3 Deputy Principal becomes a Band 2 Senior Teacher which in effect will mean a full-time teaching load, the only course of action will be to abandon our RATE program midstream. Reducing our School from a Band 4 School to a Band 3 School as well as eliminating one of the present Band 2 teachers, will mean the end of the RATE Program at our school as there will quite simply be no personnel available to teach or administer it. The Department's Information Statement Number 6 has a section headed *Aboriginal Staff for Aboriginal Children* with a sub-heading about the RATE program. Our community has stated again and again that it views the training of Aboriginal staff and in particular the RATE program as a community educational priority. It is predicated that the community reaction to the enforced abandonment of the RATE Program because of the downgrading of the status of the school will be strong and negative.

c **The Literacy Workers Training Program:** This body of Adult Aboriginal workers is responsible for the production of most of the vernacular curriculum materials used in the school, and is vital to the continuing health of the Bilingual program at our school. To date, several of these students (who are funded by the Commonwealth Government Aboriginal Study Grants) have passed the Darwin Institute of Technology Certificate of Literacy Attainment, while others have passed the Darwin Institute of Technology Certificate of Transcription. All of these students are currently engaged in further study at the school's Literacy Centre.

d **Post-Primary Program:** The children currently enrolled in Grades 8 - 10 represent an additional responsibility for the Principal of a bush school above and beyond that of his/her urban equivalent, and generate a considerable administrative load (eg Aboriginal Secondary

Education grants). In recent times we have been expending a lot of effort in building up our Post-Primary section, despite the difficulty of having to place these children in composite classes with children from Grades 5, 6 and 7 since the loss of a number of teachers.

e **Program for Hearing-Impaired Pupils:** More than 50% of our school children have educationally significant hearing loss. In conjunction with the National Acoustic Laboratory a pilot program has been set up in the Senior Girls class, the effects of which to date appear to be highly beneficial. We have been hoping to expand this program to the younger grades in order to help these children overcome this severe educational advantage. It must be noted that this has been a self-help program for which we have not requested the extra staff. To lose Band 4 status would therefore be to doubly disadvantage us and to further disadvantage the high percentage of children with this problem.

f **Liaison with the Aboriginal residential college:** There are 26 children from our school enrolled at the residential college. The present Band 3 Assistant Principal, who is an ex-teacher of a residential college, spends approximately four hours per week on liaison work with that college, on behalf of teachers at both institutions and on behalf of the families of students attending college.

g **The Community Library:** There is a community library situated in our school which is at present manned by volunteer labour which is organised and supervised by the school.

D **Responsibility for Education Buildings and Teacher Housing.**
In addition to the preceding the Principal of our school has the responsibility for all teacher residences. This includes security, repairs and maintenance, along with the problem of accommodating the frequent visitors who visit our school and require accommodation. This is not a responsibility incurred by town Principals and can be very time-consuming.

2 LIMITED ACCESS TO SERVICES

A Minimal Access to Emergency Relief Teachers

The present Principal has spent more than 50% of 1985 acting as an ERT in classrooms where the teacher has been sick or absent, and the same figure applies to the present Band 3 Assistant Principal. In 1984 this was also the case. In 1984 a number of NTTS staff from our school were evacuated from the school with acute health problems including causes of Ross River Fever and hepatitis. This year another NTTS staff member has contracted hepatitis, an environmentally related illness. We have had very little ERT to date this year with the Principal and Deputy taking on this role when it is necessary, which is most of the time. I respectfully submit that the Department is already making a saving on our school by not being in a position to provide us with ERT, and to reduce the school to a Band 3 school would represent a *double saving* in relation to town schools. It is also relevant to note that the unusually large volume of administrative tasks which are the lot of Band 4 Principals and Band 3 Assistant Principals in bush schools are still completed, but after the day's full teaching load is completed, usually starting at about 4:30 pm and being completed at approximately

10:00 or 10:30 pm. Both the Band 4 and Band 3 teachers at our school are already working in excess of 80 hours per week, and I submit that to work more as the result of downgrading the status of the school would be both impossible and intolerable.

B No School Secretarial Assistance

Our school does not have even part-time secretarial help. Again, this is a task taken on by the present Band 4 Principal and has already, over the long term, represented a huge saving on the part of the NT Department of Education, even when the cost factor of retaining the school as a Band 4 School is taken into consideration. The number of secretarial duties at a school like ours is usually high: for example one may have to wait a matter of hours either to place a call on the radio telephone, or to receive a call. Because of this it is often preferable to communicate by letter, even over the simplest matters which could be dealt with in a 30 second phone call.

CONCLUSION

Each of the preceding points on its own represents sufficient reason to retain the school at its present level. However when viewed together the observation must be made that the school is already suffering from an acute staffing shortage. Furthermore, the fact that we have already experienced major cuts must be taken into account.

(signed) Principal of a Northern Territory Bilingual Aboriginal School.

[Names of Principal and school supplied.]

Text 9 is much longer than texts 6, 7 & 8, and its length creates organisational pressures which have to be satisfied if it is to be readily consumed. The text approaches this in two ways. First it has an introduction, which outlines the points to be elaborated on. Second, it uses a number of headings and sub-headings to highlight these as they are taken up. Both the introduction and the headings makes use of a special kind of English to manage this organisation. In the introduction, the arguments in favor of Band 4 status are introduced as follows:

- i the **recognition** of the numerous and time-consuming extra **duties** incumbent on education leaders in the bush
- ii the **complexity** of the socio-economic **variables** in such a situation
- iii the special programs **necessitated** by the situation
- iv the sometimes harsh **conditions**
- v the limited **access** to services
- vi the further **recognition** that the Principal of a school in such a remote community held **responsibility** for the **schooling** of the ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

The first five of these are listed in the third sentence of the introduction; the sixth is dealt with in sentence four. The most striking feature about the English used is that it is heavily nominalised; each argument is presented as a nominal group (i-vi above), and these nominal groups themselves contain a number of nouns which do not realise people, places and things. Rather, words like **recognition**, **duties**, **access** and **schooling** code what are semantically

processes as nouns, as if they were things. Nominalisation of this kind is primarily a feature of written, rather than spoken English (Halliday 1985b) and represents one of the critical ways in which written English has evolved as a distinct resource for meaning in our culture. Let us consider for a moment this process of nominalisation in more detail:

a coding processes as nouns (instead of verbs):

a school primarily characterised by community involvement and support	meaning	wording: noun	verb involve support
	involve support	noun involvement support	involve support

[cf a school people are involved in and support]

b coding qualities as nouns (instead of adjectives)

the complexity of the socio-economic variables	meaning	wording: noun	adjective complex
	complex	noun complexity	complex

[cf the socio-economic variables are complex]

c coding logical relations as nouns (instead of conjunctions)

the justification for its Band 4 status... arose from the numerous and time-consuming extra duties incumbent on education leaders in the bush	meaning	wording: noun	conjunction because
	reason	noun justification	because

[cf because there are numerous and time-consuming duties incumbent on education leaders in the bush, the school was given Band 4 status]

d assessments of probability and obligation as nouns (instead of modal verbs)

the principal of a school in such a remote area held responsibility for the schooling of THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY	meaning	wording: noun	modal verb must
	'requirement'	noun responsibility	must

[cf the Principal in such a remote area must educate the entire community]

Text 9's headings also make use of nominalised English of this kind: each is a nominal group, and almost all contain processes, qualities or assessments dressed up as things (and highlighted in bold face in text).

Text 9 Headings

1 EXTRA DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES INCURRED BY BUSH PRINCIPALS

A Promotion of Community Involvement - an enormous task.

B Induction of New Teachers into the Community and into the school.

C Co-ordination and Management of a Range of Special Programs in the School:

(a) The Bilingual Education Program.

(b) The RATE (Remote Area Teacher Education) Program.

(c) The Literacy Worker Training Program.

(d) Post-Primary Program.

(e) Program for Hearing-Impaired Pupils.

(f) Liaison with Aboriginal residential college.

(g) The Community Library.

D Responsibility for Education Buildings and Teacher Housing.

2 LIMITED ACCESS TO SERVICES

A Minimal Access to Emergency Relief Teachers

B No School secretarial Services.

These headings for example include the following processes dressed up as nouns: *promotion, involvement, task, induction, co-ordination, management, education, program, liaison, housing, access, relief, and assistance*. In addition there are three nominalised qualities: *range, literacy and emergency*; and one assessment: *responsibilities*.

The introduction and headings of text 9 display one of the most important functions of nominalised English - that of organising a text. The introduction predicts the crucial points to be covered and the headings then organised these on three levels, named 1 and 2: A, B, C and D: and a, b, c, d, e, f, g. In a less complex text the introduction might have predicted the actual structure of the headings as well.

Some further examples from text 9 of this kind of match and mis-match between what something means and how it is coded grammatically are given below:

processes	as verb	as noun
'assume'	assume	assumption
'believe'	believe	belief
'guide'	guide	guidance
'liaise'	liaise	liaison
'abandon'	abandon	abandonment

qualities	as adjective	as noun
'big'	big	magnitude
'iterate'	iterate	iteracy
'difficult'	difficult	difficulty
'secure'	secure	security
'short'	short	shortage

logical relations	<i>as conjunction</i>	<i>as noun or verb</i>
'cause'	because	reason
'cause'	so	mean
'cause'	because	result from/result
'cause'	so	result in/result
'cause'	because	base on/basis
assessments	<i>as model verb</i>	<i>as noun/adjective</i>
'required'	must	responsibility
'required'	must	duty
'ability'	can't	impossible
'probability'	won't	improbable
'chance'	may	chance

Mismatches between meaning and wording are much less common in text 8 than text 9. This is the main reason text 9 sounds more 'official'. But scrambling the relation between meaning and wording is not just a question of status. It is also functional - to organise a text as we have seen in the introduction and headings of 9; and equally importantly to expand the ways in which grammar can be used to talk about the world.

SECRET ENGLISH

The English used to write text 9, like the English used in this paper, is one very important variety of written English. As we have seen it is heavily nominalised, with the result that natural iconic relationships between semantics and grammar are broken down. In the video version of this paper the author tried as far as possible to keep the wording natural, coding meanings **congruently** as follows:

- (a) processes realised as verbs
- (b) qualities realised as adjectives
- (c) logical relations realised as conjunctions
- (d) assessments realised as modal verbs

But here, the author is writing writing. Processes come out as verbs and nouns, qualities as adjectives and nouns, logical relations as conjunctions, nouns, verbs and prepositions, and assessments as modal verbs, adjectives and nouns. The relationship between meanings and wording is often **incongruent**. This kind of English is harder to understand because it has to be read on two levels. Consider the following (incongruent wordings in bold face):

In many instances the **lack** of shared **beliefs** about and **approaches** to **education** can **result** in **misunderstanding** or **trauma** (popularly referred to as 'culture shock') on the part of the individuals or groups concerned.

As far as the grammar is concerned this sentence relates a long Subject (*the lack of shared beliefs about and approaches to education*) to a long Complement (*misunderstanding or trauma popularly referred to as culture shock on the part of the individuals or groups concerned*) through the Predicator *result in*. The Subject and Complement are long because they are realised by complicated nominal groups which are put into a causal relationship with each other.

But there is more to the sentence than this. If we **unpack** it semantically we come up with something like the following:

Often, because teachers, students and their parents think about school and go about teaching in different ways, the individuals and groups involved misunderstand each other and become upset (popularly referred to as 'culture shock').

Reading on these two levels requires a different kind of consciousness than listening. This is why written English is so hard to understand when read aloud. Written English takes longer to absorb, because meaning and wording do not match. Because it has to be read on two levels, Halliday refers to the process whereby meaning and wording are scrambled as **grammatical metaphor** (1985a).

It is important to note in passing that other varieties of written English may be technical, as well as heavily nominalised; this is particularly true in the writing of science and technology. Technical writing will not be considered in detail here (see Wignell, Martin & Eggins 1987; Martin, Wignell, Eggins & Rothery 1988 for discussion). But it too creates problems for Aboriginal people. Jungarrayi & Sherman's *Know the European Law* represents one exemplary attempt to unpack secret English of the technical kind:

At the Police Station the reason for your arrest is written down. This is called a CHARGE (undated:9).

At the Police Station after being arrested you have a right to ask for **BAIL**. Bail is when the arrested person, or a relative or friend agrees they will pay some money as a promise that the arrested person will go to court. If **BAIL** is given, the arrested person can go free until court (undated:5).

In literate cultures, spoken language is learned in the home; but written language is learned in religious or secular institutions, most commonly in schools. In Australia, infants and primary schools at present concentrate mainly on transcription. Children learn to read and write the kind of English they speak. In junior secondary school most students are introduced to incongruent English for the first time, in the form of the textbooks associated with different subject areas. At this stage the students tend to write the way they talk, but they do learn to read written English, and copy it from texts or reference books when they are expected to write incongruently (Wignell, 1986).

It is probably not until senior secondary school that students are expected to write incongruently. Only successful students become adept at this, and those who do go on to University to develop their skills. Their written English becomes the fundamental research tool of the humanities, and has a significant role to play in social science and science as well. By the time of graduation most students will be able to read and write incongruent English, at least in those disciplines they have specialised in. They are literate in the language of power.

Currently, as noted above, a similar policy is followed in bilingual schools. The writing programs are based around transcription - the children read and write the kinds of things they speak. For various reasons few of the children will proceed beyond primary school. It has always been difficult for students to leave their communities for life at a residential secondary school such as Yirara; even those who could once have adjusted to life there are now expected by the Northern Territory Department of Education to pursue their secondary education in their own com-

munities, with minimal institutional support. The result of this is that Aboriginal people are by and large illiterate in the language of power.

Beyond this it is doubtful whether bilingual schools have the resources to teach the kind of written English which English speaking Australians use to do business. By and large the schools are staffed by primary trained teachers. Principals are promoted from their ranks; teacher linguists are for the most part committed primary teachers who adjust to the culture and learn the vernacular; RATE tutors, ESL teachers and adult educators in these communities are as well often people with a background in primary education. As in the rest of Australia, the Northern Territory Department of Education has very little funding for in-service training for this staff, and what little is available is decreasing because of funding cutbacks; all of which is compounded by the remoteness of bilingual schools.

As a result Aboriginal people are short-changed. And they know it. Consider the following:

We want them to learn. Not the kind of English you teach them in class, but your secret English. We don't understand that English, but you do. To us you seem to say one thing and do another. That's English we want our children to learn (Bain, 1979).

... a generalised hostility to Europeans. This did not arise from any notion that Europeans were innately superior. Specific questioning on this point provides evidence that **bimij** believe they are superior to **balanda**. The specific complaint, then, is that **balanda** withhold the secret of their power, and that much of this 'power' is tied up with the 'big English' to which Aboriginal people are denied access. According to one Aboriginal interpretation, schools are failures because they fail to teach this 'power' (von Sturmer, 1984:273).

Of course Aboriginal people are not alone in being denied access to secret English. Writing is not actually **taught** in Australian schools, and what children learn they simply have to pick up for themselves. Writing is learned through osmosis, by reading, copying and somehow uncovering the hidden literacy curriculum at work in our education system. But writing is not learned by all. About 10% of Australians never learn to read and write in school. And a much higher percentage never learn to read or write the big English. If we take enrolment in tertiary education as a rough guide, then Australia is one of the most functionally illiterate countries in the western world. Migrant and working class Australians, along with Aboriginal people, are the main groups to suffer in this system.

It will be at least another generation before writing is taught in schools (see the debate over teaching *genre* in Reid, 1987). For the most part educators in Australia believe that learning to write is like learning to talk - it just happens. Underlying this is a profound misunderstanding of the role of interaction and guidance in the context of shared experience when learning to speak (Halliday, 1975; Painter, 1984; 1985; Hasan & Martin, 1988) alongside a failure to appreciate the ways in writing and speaking differ in kind (Halliday, 1979; 1985a; Martin, 1984; 1985; 1987). Genre based approaches to literacy development are currently addressing these concerns (Martin, Christie & Rothery, 1987). But the major re-orientation required will take time; and Aboriginal people do not have a generation or two to spare - they cannot afford to wait.

DOING BUSINESS

What does secret English do? Or more to the point, what can it do for Aboriginal people? We have already looked at one of its important functions - submission writing. Examples of other roles in bilingual communities are easy to find.

Meetings, although primarily an oral genre, make use of the big English for **resolutions**, which are then reported in minutes. Resolutions have the function of documenting consensus. Consider the following examples from the Central Australian Teachers in Aboriginal Schools (CATAS) association:
Text 10 RESOLUTION (in meeting minutes)

We pass this **motion** to the Minister of Education:
CATAS urges that:

- a Children from all communities, including those with Post-Primary facilities have the **option** of going to Yirarra College.
- b That children from larger communities have the **option** of returning to Yirarra if they drop out of ASHS until Post-Primary courses in Aboriginal communities are up-graded to truly provide a continuing **education** at the child's appropriate level. (CATAS minutes, 1/11/86)

Text 10 can be translated into spoken English as follows:

written: We passed this motion...
spoken: We moved and agreed that...
written: have the option of going...
spoken: can choose to go...
written: have the option of returning...
spoken: can choose to return...
written: to truly provide a continuing education...
spoken: so that the children can really keep studying...

Text 10 nominalises processes and assessments. In 11, a logical relation is nominalised as well:

Text 11 RESOLUTION (in meeting minutes)

The following **motion** was passed:
'We recognise that the **replacement** of Batchelor trainees is a major **advance** as a result of NTTF and Department **interaction**.' (CATAS minutes, 3/5/86)

In spoken English Text 11 can be translated as:

We recognise that because the NTTF has negotiated with the Department Batchelor trainees will be replaced and that is good.

In focussing on resolution writing we are not arguing that meetings cannot be conducted and consensus reached in spoken English or the vernacular. But increasingly, as they take over their schools and business operations, Aboriginal people will need to make their decisions public, and writing is the most effective way of doing this. It may also be that in times of rapid social change, consensus has to be reached more quickly, is harder to reach and decisions are more contentious than in

the past. A clear efficient record of what has been decided can avoid retracing one's steps through bitter ground, as any administrator knows.

Policy documents are another site for written English. As Aboriginal people take over government sponsored schools, they will find themselves accountable for their curriculum, regardless of how supportive or not the government is of two way education. School policy will have to be developed and made publicly available. Generically policy statements are large proposals for action, outlining the principles on which action will be based. The following sections from Lajamanu's exemplary *Statement of Policy* (1984:1) illustrate the kind of English used (a rough translation into spoken English is provided). (Note that writing school policy in Plain English would certainly make it more accessible to the community - but the functional advantages of nominalisation (ie text organisation in general terms and bringing different resources in the grammar to bear on different kinds of meaning) would be lost. It may be that parallel documents are needed, one congruent and one incongruent, to fulfil bilingual communities' needs.

Text 12 SCHOOL POLICY (proposal)

The **purposes** of the school are **educational** and the **purpose** of Lajamanu School is to offer the highest **quality** of **education** to the children attending the school, and to **engage** all children in the community in successful **learning**.

(Lajamanu School wants to teach its children as well as possible, and to make sure that all children are able to learn.)

To fulfil these **purposes** the school sets itself these **goals**:

- the **growth** and **development** of each child's **knowledge**, understanding and **appreciation** of the world and his or her place in it; (help each child know more and to understand and appreciate the world and his or her place in it)
- the **development** of **self-worth**, of **self-acceptance**, of **personal identity** and **confidence** based on **self-esteem**. (make children feel good about themselves so they will feel confident, know who they are, accept themselves and feel they are worth something)
- the **desire** for and **ability** to go on learning and the **willingness** to take **responsibility** for one's own **learning**. (make children want to and able to learn and keen to learn without being made to)
- the **achievement** of basic **competencies** to ensure the **confidence** and **ability** to go on learning. (make sure that children can do the things they need to in order to feel confident they can go on learning)
- the **ability** to communicate effectively in a **variety** of ways. (make sure children can communicate effectively in different ways)

Just as important as writing policy is reading policy. Northern Territory Government policy for example circumscribes school policy like that exemplified above. Bureaucracies have a tendency to use nominalisation for nominalisation's sake, again for the simple reason that institutional writing is not taught and so administrative recruits do not understand the function of nominalisation in text. This can make policy hard to understand. But it may also have a tendency to make it self-

contradictory or vague. As such it is open to be interpreted and picked up on in various ways, some of which might be more useful to bilingual schools than others. The Northern Territory recent *Towards the 90s* document illustrates writing of this kind (see Martin 1986a for a discussion of bureaucratic writing):

Text 13 GOVERNMENT POLICY (proposal)

EXCELLENCE IMPROVING STANDARDS IN NORTHERN TERRITORY PRIMARY SCHOOLS

...
To **ensure validity** and **reliability** in the proposed new **testing program**, and to **ensure fairness** in relation to the **award** of additional funds, a **pre-test** and a **post-test program** is considered the most appropriate and professional **method**. The **intention** is to measure the **improvement** in student **achievement** during a specific period. All students at a particular Year **level** would take the English and Mathematics tests early in the school year (February/March) and they would then be re-tested later in the year (September/October) and the **difference** in their **performance** recorded (1987:8).

Incongruent wordings appear in bold face in Text 13. I will leave it to the reader to test the explicitness of the proposals. It might be however that Aboriginal people should insist on Plain English translations of documents such as these before negotiating them with government officials.

In Text 14 the question of who chooses the school principal is raised. Note that the incongruent imperative *that the council has the major say* is less clear about just how much control councils will have than the congruent *having selected a principal, councils should*. This contrast was in fact the focus of a major debate when the policy was presented by Government officials to teachers in Arnhem Land.

Text 14 GOVERNMENT POLICY (proposal)

SCHOOL STAFFING

... SELECTING THE PRINCIPAL

If a school is to be governed by its council, it is **imperative** that the council has the major **say** in selecting the principal. The Government believes that a council **should be able to select an outstanding leader**... *having selected a principal*, councils should then see their role as... (1987: 20-21).

In Australia then, the big English is used to do business of various kinds. Certain of these are crucial if Aboriginal people are to negotiate in writing with the rest of Australia as they take over control of their communities. A primary school education, as presently conceived, does not equip them for this task. For most, secret English is just that. They can't read it, nor understand it when it is read to them. They haven't been trained to write it and so run the risk of writing like children when they try. This makes them dependent on sympathetic whitefellas who will act as interpreters and scribes.

Whitefellas of this kind are in a vulnerable position. The more forcefully they present Aboriginal views and integrate themselves into Aboriginal communities and culture, often including participation in ceremonies and other aspects of kinship and

law, the more likely they are to be dismissed as simply 'pro-Aborigine'. At the same time they are often accused of putting their own views across instead of those of the people they claim to represent or of stirring up trouble in the first place when it would have been better to leave well enough alone. Aboriginal people would obviously be in a stronger and more credible position if they could write for themselves. The more they take control of their communities, the more important this becomes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

In this section I will pass over the question of writing in the vernacular, leaving it to Aboriginal people, their linguists and teacher linguists to negotiate a function or set of functions for writing that will allow it to evolve in a way that complements speaking and serves the needs of bilingual communities. The question of writing in English will be approached in more detail.

The first thing that needs to be said is that almost all of the writing presently done by Aboriginal children in English is disfunctional. Records do not do business in Australia. In order to negotiate, Aboriginal people need writing of other kinds. Unlike bright middle class children in urban centres, Aboriginal children do not have an opportunity to pick up writing of this kind by osmosis. Rather, it has to be taught. The question is, where to begin?

The obvious place to start is primary school, once initial literacy work in the vernacular is underway and learning to read and write in English begins. Researchers in Sydney and throughout Australia have now demonstrated that children can be introduced to factual writing at this age and learn to use it effectively. The initial work by Rothery and Pledger in a middle class composite 3-5 class focussed on reports, procedures, explanations, expositions and discussions (see Martin, 1985 for generic categories of factual writing). This work was followed up during 1987 through an action research project directed by Callaghan of the Disadvantaged Schools Program in the Sydney Metropolitan East Region. In this project Year 5, 6, 7 and 8 children from working class and migrant backgrounds, many of them speaking a language other than English in the home, were successfully introduced to a similar range of factual genres. (The materials produced in this project will be available from the Disadvantaged Schools Program Centre, Erskineville, Sydney, NSW from late 1988.)

Critical to these interventions was an implementation of Gray's concentrated language encounters as the principal teaching methodology (see Rothery, 1986; 1987). The main additional input was in terms of adding explicit knowledge about generic structure to the work on models and jointly negotiated texts. Given that CLEs are one of the principal teaching methodologies sanctioned by the Northern Territory Department of Education, genre based approaches to literacy could be adapted to the bilingual school context. All that is really needed is some additional work on genres critical to negotiation: submissions, minutes, policy, letters of complaint and so on. Any number of relevant themes, including land rights, European law, mining etc could be mounted to provide meaningful, motivating and relevant contexts for these genres. There is nothing to stop Aboriginal children from learning to write for power in their primary schools.

While genre is not a problem at this level, secret English is. It is very likely that the line drawn between primary and secondary schools in literate culture symbolises a developmental stage children pass through before learning to scramble meaning and working in written text. It is the constant match between meaning and wording that makes children's talk sound simple (their grammar is in fact very complex). Somewhere around puberty, in literate cultures, they are ready to learn to talk and write like a book.

For speakers of English as a second language there is a similar developmental sequence. So Aboriginal children in bilingual communities have in some sense a double hurdle to overcome. Again, they will need help. They cannot learn big English without being taught. This need places considerable pressure on bilingual school's post-primary, ESL, adult education and RATE programs. One thing that is critical is that staff appointed to these programs are fluent writers of nominalised English in at least some of the genres critical for doing business. Teachers cannot teach Aboriginal people what they cannot write themselves. One implication of this would be that more university educated, secondary trained teachers will need to be employed than at present. In addition, specialised in-service for existing staff, preferably including teacher linguists, will have to be devised so that all post-primary staff can recognise incongruence and explain its function in different fields and genres. Further implications would include a considerable focus on writing in administrative contexts for Aboriginal students in training at Batchelor College.

It may be that an elitist model is appropriate at this post-primary level, at least initially. Most Aboriginal communities need at least a few fluent readers and writers of secret English quickly in critical areas. Since at present most of the writing of this kind is handled by a few whitefella scribes, this seems a realistic approach. It may even be that Aboriginal communities would choose an elitist model of this kind, rather than introduce literacy in English to all members of their culture. Some communities are after all reluctant to enter into bilingual education programs at all because of the impact of western style education on the vernacular language and culture. There may well be a fear that too much secret English will further erode traditional values. One response to this would be to argue that 'code-switching' between spoken and written registers is a natural feature of any literate culture.

But when languages and cultures are so severely threatened as Aboriginal ones, it may be that the big English is something Aboriginal people wish to contain.

Without the big English however, Aboriginal people will remain objects rather than subjects in their own land. The following extract from Coombs, Brandl and Snowdon 1983 symbolises this relationship:

Text 15 REPORT (sociology)

INCONGRUENCY OF SCHOOLS WITH ABORIGINAL CULTURE

With the **exception** of a growing **number** of independent Aboriginal institutions schools have been and are, the primary **agents** in socialising Aboriginal people towards the **goals** and **practices** of 'white' society. Twenty years ago in Australia we called that **assimilation**. Today we ostensibly reject that **objective** yet refuse to recognise that we still, in **practice**, pursue it.

But Aboriginal people recognise it:

We've got to lay the **foundation** for our children, when we go there will be no-one who knows the law and **ceremonies**. We have got to have our own school. When they go to the Government school they don't learn our way. We have to prepare things for our children.

Annie Isaac from Borroloola said:

...we teach our children and maybe one fella like a teacher will say, 'Oh, you don't want to teach like that.' I say, 'this is my kid, I can teach.' Her friend, and sister-in-law, Eileen McDinny added her **comments**' Nobody will stop me (Isaac and McDinny, 1980:2).

Blackfellas talk, whitefellas write - quoting blackfellas from time to time. This difference is even more strongly symbolised when attempts are made to capture

the 'orality' of blackfellas's talk. Muecke (1984:40) scribes part of one of Paddy Roe's stories as follows:

When we left sheep station -
they took me out -
when we got -
we got up to the last windmill anyway -
then from there no more windmills -
we camped there (Benterrak, Muecke & Roe, 1984).

This contrasts with Muecke talking:

Yes, I feel I do carry this major responsibility, and I am assuming it is not without problems. I am hesitant to take on the label of 'author', and not just because of the trendy 'death of the author' slogan (1984:229).

And Muecke writing:

But with three authors one cannot image that the book is guided by any poetic unity or harmony. On the contrary, the poetry is of a different sort, one that responds to our times (1984:11).

In this text, whitefellas both write and talk writing, and as in the sociology text above, blackfellas talk. In such a world, Kardiya probably will stop Eileen McDinny. Without control of secret English Aboriginal people will continue to be patronised, with whitefellas attitudes ranging from racism and open hostility to paternalism and pastoral care. Neither position surrenders power. But it is power to control their world that Aboriginal people so desperately need.

Bilingual schools are the agents with the responsibility to deliver to Aboriginal people the literacy they need. This means more than teaching them to write talk down. It means teaching a functional literacy which accomplishes what they need. Finding ways of doing this remains an urgent task for educational linguistics in the Northern Territory and the rest of Australia.

*(This paper is the written version of a talk given at the Cross Cultural Issues in Educational Linguistics Conference held at Batchelor College August 9-11 1987. An edited video of that talk is available from Chris Walton at the Northern Territory University and is addressed specifically to Aboriginal participants at that conference. This written version is intended for 'white-fellas'.)

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