The Australian Journal of
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

Mapping Early Speech:
Prescriptive Developmental Profiles
for Very Remote Aboriginal Students
in the First Two Years of School

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This article examines the issues surrounding the mapping of the oral language development of Standard Australian English (SAE) in the early school years of remote and very remote Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory (NT). Currently, teachers in this context have 2 mandated documents as guides that chart the development of SAE oracy. However, a close inspection of both documents demonstrates an incomplete view of English oracy for this unique education and linguistic context within the broader Australian social milieu. A detailed profile of emerging English oracy is not captured by current profiles that do not recognise the influences of homeland Aboriginal language groups on the acquisition of SAE. A more detailed emergent SAE oral profile can be constructed from existing oral SAE language samples. These samples have been collected by the NT Department of Education and Training (NT DET) from 6-year-old children participating in the Indigenous Language Speaking Student (ILSS) program. The development of an emergent oral SAE profile will be an extremely useful adjunct for the 2 existing documents. This article is a preliminary mapping of the issues with current SAE oral language profiles for remote and very remote Aboriginal school children.

∎ **Keywords:** oacy, developmental profiles, remote Aboriginal education

In many remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory (NT), spoken English is not dominant and the children living in these communities are learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This means the language being learned has no major role in the community and is learnt and used mostly in school (Ellis, 2009). This is not surprising given that the reality of geographic remoteness ensures that most remote/very remote Aboriginal children in the NT have their first exposure to English when they enter the school system (Simpson, Caffery, & McConvell, 2009; Simpson & Wigglesworth, 2008).

The terms 'remote' and 'very remote' in the NT describe geographical distance from urban and regional areas. Within this article the term remote is used to denote Aboriginal communities between 50 and 100 kilometres from the nearest urban or regional centre, while the term 'very remote' is used to describe homeland Aboriginal communities more than 150 kilometres from the nearest urban and/or regional centre. The term EFL is distinct from English as a Second Language (ESL) with the similarity between EFL and ESL learners being the acquisition of a second language and the key difference between EFL and ESL learners is the context. EFL learners are not immersed within the broader social milieu of the language being learnt while ESL learners are surrounded by the social and cultural elements of the language being learned.

Many teachers that come to the NT and go to remote/very remote Aboriginal community schools are from other Australian states and may have a limited understanding of the contextual realities of remote/very remote community living. This lack of understanding of the remote/very remote contextual reality is then com-

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bined with the issue of appropriately trained teachers as the majority of remote/very remote teachers do not have ESL specialist teacher training. Sixty-three per cent of NT teachers were trained elsewhere and 27% of NT teachers have recognised undergraduate or postgraduate ESL training and in remote/very remote NT communities 16% of teachers have recognised ESL qualifications (Abu-Duhou, McKenna, & Howley, 2007).

Despite the unique linguistic and educational contexts within the majority of remote/very remote Aboriginal communities in the NT there was, until recently, an absence in training incoming and existing teachers in EFL or ESL methods and techniques. To address the current lack of EFL/ESL trained teachers NT DET in conjunction with Charles Darwin University (CDU) has offered priority placements to currently employed remote/very remote teachers in a newly developed Graduate Certificate in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) for Indigenous Learners from 2011. This TESOL course offered to current employees has been specifically designed for the Aboriginal context of the NT and to address the absence of qualified ESL teachers in remote and very remote locations. The method of delivery for the course units caters to the realities of remote and very remote teachers in the NT and this certificate is a joint initiative between NT DET's Curriculum Teaching and Phases of Learning Division and the School of Education, Faculty of Education, Health and Science, Charles Darwin University (NT DET, 2011). This joint initiative is an effort to address the current contextual dilemma confronting NT DET of not having enough ESL trained teachers in the remote and very remote context. For more than a quarter of a century there has been a need for a systematic approach in both pre- and postteacher training to be adopted by the NT and federal government and NT DET for the delivery of teaching SAE speech to Aboriginal school children in the NT (Simpson et al., 2009). The current context is that remote/very remote children arrive at school unable to speak English and many remote/very remote teachers are untrained in EFL or ESL techniques.

Presently within the NT, teachers are provided with two key documents to chart the progression of SAE oracy of students, including remote and very remote Aboriginal students, the *Diagnostic Net for Transition to Year 9* (2010; the use of the term 'Transition' in the NT describes students in their first year of school contact, similar to 'Kindergarten' in New South Wales and 'Preparatory' in Victoria) and the *Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF;* 2002, 2009). A later examination of these two NT DET documents reveals a deeper underlying problem and issue for remote/very remote teachers in the NT (NT DEET, 2002; NT DET, 2009a, 2010d).

It should be recognised by education providers that the education and linguistic contexts of remote/very remote Aboriginal communities throughout Australia are extremely distinct from nonremote Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Therefore, it is essential that second language developmental models and profiles are based on data and research conducted from within this context rather than the currently imported models that have been developed in urban and rural centres with quite different language learners.

The benefit and significance of remote/very remote Aboriginal second language research is clearly highlighted by the poor educational outcomes for these Aboriginal students in the NT. Although many factors influence these poor results it is imperative that second language SAE models and profiles of developmental patterns are investigated to enable all stakeholders in remote/very remote Aboriginal education in the NT (and other remote Aboriginal communities throughout Australia) to better understand and cater for these students.

Description of the Study

This article is the first in a series that stem from a PhD project that will inform and rectify this language disparity by specifically focusing on early SAE oracy in four very remote Aboriginal communities in the NT. This PhD project aims to describe the elements contained within an early oral SAE profile for 6-year-old first-grade school students from four linguistically homogenous very remote Aboriginal communities. The language disparity arises from an apparent dislocation between national assessment practices, education curriculum profiles, teaching programs and the oral ESL capabilities of Aboriginal children from these remote communities. The dislocation is a content/context divide that fails to recognise the appearance and consolidation of emerging developmental behaviours and indicators for oral SAE that are common to many remote/very remote Aboriginal school children in their first few years of formal western schooling.

As a remote area teacher for more than six years and as a senior teacher and mentor for the last three-and-a-half years, I have noticed that many teachers new to this context comment on the low levels of English comprehension and production in the first years of formal school by remote/very remote Aboriginal children. These anecdotal comments are supported by the Australian Early Development Index's (AEDI) 2009 inaugural national report in which children starting school in the NT scored higher rates for being identified as 'vulnerable' and 'at risk' in both the language and cognitive skills domains when compared with other Australian States and Territories (NT DET, 2010d, p. 6).

Although the acquisition of a first language and a second language have been widely studied and documented in the literature there are remaining gaps in understanding first and second language acquisition. Importantly, only a little is known about first or second language development from an Australian Aboriginal lan-

guage perspective, particularly the remote/very remote Aboriginal communities of the NT.

Only a few studies have researched Aboriginal children's language developmentally with recent studies coming from the Aboriginal Child Language Acquisition project (1 and 2) overseen by the Linguistic departments of Melbourne and Sydney Universities. Developmental Aboriginal language research has examined mixed language settings (Eagleson, Kaldor, & Malcolm, 1982), Aboriginal English (Harkins, 1994; Malcolm, 1996), Kriol (Rhydwen, 1992), contact languages (Disbray, 2008), Warlpiri (Bavin, 1992, 2000; O'Shannessy, 2006) and Yolngu Matha (Hill, 2008). Unlike these previous studies, this project is specifically concerned with profiling or mapping the acquisition of SAE as a second language by first-grade primary school students from the very remote Aboriginal community perspective.

The Problem Beneath: Benchmarking

Benchmarking individual school students and cohorts against or along a developmental continuum or curriculum framework is a commonly accepted method to evaluate and document student learning. There are many terms employed to describe student performance and achievement: profiles, bandscales, scales, and benchmarks. These descriptions of learners provide stakeholders in education with a common reference point and are employed as a standard that is used to measure and demonstrate pupil achievement and progress (Gardner & Rea-Dickens, 1999). These stakeholders include education providers, teachers, parents and students. Benchmarks are descriptions of learners that are used to chart and measure the progression of learners against mandated curriculum and other documents and are outlines or maps of the expected developmental trajectory for all learners within a particular education system.

Any discussion of public education in Aboriginal communities in the NT inevitably turns to benchmarking practices and the related issue of student achievement. Generally these discussions revolve around the low literacy levels or poor educational outcomes for Aboriginal children in the National Assessment Program: Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). NAPLAN assesses student skills in English literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 throughout Australia, and results for 2009 demonstrated 'no significant improvement in Northern Territory students' literacy and numeracy outcomes' particularly 'students in remote and very remote locations' (NT DET, 2010d, p. 5). NT DET disaggregated the 2009 NAPLAN results to demonstrate that the remote/very remote cohort had the lowest or poorest results of all Australian school children (NT DET, 2010d).

Despite the poor 2009 NAPLAN results from remote/very remote schools in the NT prior to NAPLAN criticisms from Malcolm (2003) maintained that 'the

missing factor … not picked up by the statistics is the fact that benchmarks which are used to measure Indigenous student performance fit the bulk of the population … and they do not fit most Indigenous students' (p. 5). Further critiques of the 2009 NAPLAN test illuminate some of the contextual difficulties of this national standardised assessment model from the remote Aboriginal perspective. They show that the geography of remote communities influences and limits the types of cultural knowledge that can be assessed and that many of the cultural contexts depicted in the NAPLAN test are foreign to most remote/very remote Aboriginal children in the NT (Wigglesworth & Loakes, 2009; Wigglesworth & Simpson, 2009). This underscores the veracity that the social and cultural context of remote/very remote Aboriginal students is distinct from English as a first language and ESL learners that are found in other contexts throughout Australia.

Other research shows that geographic location or geolocation can significantly influence education outcomes impacting on staff and students. For example, geolocation was found to influence staff retention and student attendance, two factors commonly cited as contributing to the low outcomes for remote Aboriginal school children. A comparison with urban/rural schools and remote/very remote schools demonstrates that there were lower rates for staff retention, 82% for urban/rural compared with 54% for remote and 72% for very remote schools (NT DEET, 2008, p.4). The statistics for Aboriginal student attendance for urban/rural schools was 83% while for remote/very remote schools it was 63% (Abu-Duhou et al., 2007, p. 16).

Although geolocation may be a significant contributor to the low scoring levels for remote/very remote school children it should be acknowledged that many of the education outcome statements or profiles applied to the NT are standardised levels of attainment. Further, the assessments from these standardised levels and their associated assessment tasks are based on mainstream education achievement levels or benchmarks and not on ESL benchmarks (Nicholls, 2005). Outcome statements are descriptions of learners that indicate the stage or placement of the learner in their education journey and many outcome statements are influenced and developed by mainstream education profiles of learners. Fundamentally, mainstream developmental profiles are not readily transferable and become problematic when they are applied to remote/very remote Aboriginal school-aged children from the NT for two important reasons.

1. The development of these student profiles are undertaken in mainstream urban and/or rural communities where SAE is the taken for granted first language and they do not profile children who are learning to learn in a foreign language.

2. The SAE oral student profiles currently used in the NT do not include many of the emergent developmental behaviours and indicators that are the foundations of more advanced SAE speech.

Recently NT DET underwent a departmental restructure and a shift in pedagogy with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum and the establishment of a Literacy and Numeracy Taskforce (NT DET, 2010d). In July 2010, NT DET released the 2010 to 2012 strategic plan from the taskforce and it aims to raise education outcomes for all NT school students through a concerted focus on literacy and numeracy. A part of this new direction is the implementation of the Australian Curriculum into the NT school system and an associated Diagnostic Net for Transition to Year 9 (NT DET, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c).

The developmental continuum in the T-9 Diagnostic Net was created and developed internally by NT DET stakeholders and then externally validated by a variety of academics, institutions and foundations. This article and the related PhD project are interested in the language profile of the T-9 Diagnostic Net and this language profile identifies six areas in the development of SAE oracy: speech sound perception, speaking and listening, phonemic awareness, graphophonics, spelling sound and protocols and social language. Although comprehensive, this developmental profile clearly reflects mainstream education developmental profiles and does not encompass any early and emergent language behaviours or indicators. These early emergent language indicators are what many remote/very remote Aboriginal students display in their first few years of school and this is the content /context divide for these EFL learners.

The descriptors in the speaking and listening section of the T-9 Diagnostic Net Continua are an incomplete view of the developmental process as they begin with a description of learners that have mastered the emergent SAE oral behaviours and indicators. For example, the Transition speaking and listening profile describes students as speaking in sentences of four to five words and that they are able to join these short sentences using the words; *and, or, but,* and *because.* This is the 'expectation' for these students by the end of their Transition year, this is the first year of school contact for many of these remote/very remote Aboriginal children that are at least 5 years old but no more than 6 years old (NT DET, 2010c, pp. 30–31). After their first year in Transition children move into first grade or year one and are now in their second year of schooling. The year-one or first-grade students are the participants within this study and the speaking and listening area of the T-9 diagnostic continua shown in Table 1 outlines the expected 'grammatical markers' and 'little words' that students must be able to use by the end of this year (NT DET, 2010c, p. 30). The term 'little words' is a jumbled collection word classes (types) that include articles (a, the), an un-contractible copula or a contractible copula depending on the use in a sentence (am), and two examples of an un-contractible or contractible copula or un-contractible or contractible auxiliary (is, are) depending on their use in a sentence. The inclusion of a variety of different word classes under a generalised heading of 'little words' does not differentiate the increasing complexity of these word classes or their usage by speakers.

The Diagnostic Net T-9 Continua does not cover emergent oral development as it begins with Transition students being able to speak and link four to five word sentences together by the end of their first year of school contact. The Diagnostic Net then sees students progress to year one or first grade and depicts students using grammatical markers for tense and contractions in their speech by the end of this year of schooling. The anticipated developmental progression over the first two years of school envisions these very remote EFL students acquiring the previously discussed oral SAE abilities, yet does not acknowledge that beginning learners of a second language need time for exposure and consolidation in the learning process that may begin with an extended silent period before moving through holophrases and into the stages of telegraphic speech in their use of SAE (Ellis, 2009).

Turning to an examination of the remaining key document employed by remote/very remote teachers for profiling early oral SAE development reveals an issue in opposition to that of the Diagnostic Net T-9 Continua. The second document utilised by teachers in the NT to chart the progression of SAE oracy is the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) English as a Second Language (ESL) Speaking and Listening Phase 1 outcomes and their indicators (NT DEET, 2002; NT DET, 2009a).

The Communication strand of the ESL speaking and listening section of the NTCF provides the developmental details for teachers to map the detail of the developing SAE oracy for these EFL/ESL learners. As shown in Table 2 the indicators for the three levels within the framework of Phase 1 outlines ESL children moving from a few single nouns to some single nouns and then leaping to three word sentences.

The NTCF ESL Phase 1 Speaking and Listening framework omits many important developmental steps and milestones in language, for example, two word combinations, telegraphic speech and the acquisition order of grammatical morphemes (Brown, 1973). This creates a situation where teachers in this context may be unaware or have no knowledge of expected developmental profiles and consequently are unable to identify, target and effectively program for the developing EFL/ESL needs of these learners.

This NTCF ESL Speaking and Listening profile very briefly describes ESL students for teachers and this lack of detail may originate in part from the genealogy of the NTCF which cites the Curriculum Corporation (1994) ESL Scales as the basis for its outcomes and indicators (NTDEET, 2002, p. 102; NTDET, 2009a, p. 8). The current

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NTCF is an update to the NTCF 2002 document but does not include an update for the ESL component of the curriculum framework and this section of the NTCF has remained static and unchanged (NT DET, 2009a, pp. 1–46). This is despite an acknowledgement that 'outcomes and indicators' for the earlier 2002 framework 'were too broad and did not enable teachers to identify key developmental milestones' (NT DET, 2009a, p. 17), which echoed earlier findings that 'as the sole policy guide to dealing with the language backgrounds of significant ethnolinguistic minorities the NTCF is inadequate in providing guidance to schools and teachers' (Abu-Duhou et al., 2007, p. 26).

To summarise, remote/very remote teachers within the NT have two key documents, one that describes mainstream English as a first language student learners and their anticipated oral SAE developmental trajectory, the Diagnostic net (NT DET, 2010d), the other the ESL section of the NTCF that is based on developmental profiles of ESL learners from urban and rural contexts around Australia that are immersed in mainstream culture (NT DEET, 2002; NT DET, 2009a). Neither document provides a detailed account of emergent developmental behaviours or indicators for SAE ESL/EFL oracy from the remote/very remote Aboriginal context. The Diagnostic Net provides a detailed profile applicable to mainstream learners and the NTCF ESL Phase 1 Speaking and Listening outcomes and indicators provide at best a sketchy and fragmented vision of the ESL learner. The two key documents provide too much information that is not applicable or too little information that is. Consequently, many remote/very remote teachers in the early years of school using these profile tools cannot identify and chart the developmental progress within this crucial early stage of language development.

Mapping Early Speech: Finding a Trail

This section will provide a brief overview of the intention and scope of this project and its potential to fill the gap identified in the critique of the existing documents and includes a description of the data set. Many early research studies provided a panoramic view of first and particularly second language developmental profiles and found broad similarities in the developmental progression of ESL learners and English as first language learners. For example, research from the early grammatical morpheme order studies suggested that all learners follow a 'similar pattern of development' and that the 'subsequent acquisi-

tion of grammatical structures is very gradual, manifesting common stages of development' (Ellis, 2009, p. 18).

However, within this panoramic view of second language learners, the common stages that have been described in the literature do not account for the fact that on a micro-level there are distinct differences in the developmental trajectory of second language learners. For example, it has been noted in a wide variety of studies of ESL learners that the acquisition of English grammatical morphemes include idiosyncrasies in the common stages of development that are dependent or influenced by the speaker's first language (Ellis, 2009). These ESL idiosyncrasies influenced by a learner's first language clearly highlight the disconnection between the panoramic and micro views of ESL/EFL learners and their anticipated developmental profiles. This disconnection is within the parameters of the investigation of this project as the underlying language structures of many Aboriginal languages are quite different to English and are yet to be fully investigated by education or linguistic researchers for any similarities or differences in the progression of development, like the acquisition order of English grammatical morphemes.

This PhD project is concerned with the acquisition of one aspect of the English linguistic system — grammatical morphemes. A grammatical morpheme is defined by linguists as the 'minimal unit of meaning' (Johnson & Johnson, 1998, p. 217, as cited in Kwon, 2005, p. 1), and linguists concerned with ranking the order of acquisition are solely concerned with grammatical morphemes or functors (Kwon, 2005, p. 2). A functor was described by Brown (1973) as a nonreferential form of language and is one of two types of word classes, the other being contentives. Differentiating these two types Brown (1973) states that:

> contentives are the nouns, verbs, and adjectives and some, but not all, made concrete reference to persons, objects, actions, and qualities. The word classes or 'parts of speech' involved have very many members and readily admit new members. Functors are forms that do not, in any simple way, make reference. They mark grammatical structures and carry subtle modulatory meanings. The words classes or parts of speech involved (inflections, auxiliary verbs, articles, prepositions, and conjunctions) all have few members and do not readily admit new members. (p. 75)

Within this article the term *grammatical morpheme* shall be used and is generally described as the smallest piece of language that can have meaning attached to it and it can be a word or a grammatical unit such as the plural –s or the past –ed as in the English language. Thus, morphemes are the smallest meaningful units of words and they can also be categorised as *free* or *bound* (Kuczaj, 1999, p. 133). Free morphemes include words like; *are, the, in, and, is, at*; bound morphemes include grammatical markers like tense and aspect (*ed, ing,* and *s*). For example *cat* is one morpheme and *cats* is two morphemes 'cat' and 's'.

Similarly, *swim* is one morpheme and *swimming* is two morphemes 'swim' and 'ing', and *jump* is one morpheme and *jumped* is two morphemes 'jump' and 'ed'.

Data

This section provides a brief overview describing the data set for this project. In early 2008 four very remote Aboriginal communities and schools within the NT participated in designing a culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate assessment protocol for early oral SAE for the ESL ILSS program. The priority for the ESL ILSS program is to ensure that participating children are accelerated through the NTCF outcome levels to reach a minimum of Level 1 within a one year timeframe.

Currently, the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funds the English as a Second Language Indigenous Language Speaking Student program (ESL ILSS). The ESL ILSS program began in 1998 and recognises that participation in the classroom affects the acquisition of literacy skills and it is designed to address initial oral English difficulties through ESL intervention. In the NT the ESL ILSS program has doubled participation from 500 and 41 students in 57 schools in 2000 to one thousand 107 students across 92 schools in 2009 (NT DET, 2009b).

This assessment method was developed in consultation with these very remote Aboriginal communities and NT DET stakeholders. The standardised assessment protocol was a semistructured elicitation task involving four sequential pictures of a known context with the same two broad open ended questions for each of the four pictures with an introduction and explanation to the structured elicitation task in two languages. The introduction and orientation to the elicitation task was conducted in the participants' first language and then in English. This protocol was designed to gather information on the SAE range and abilities of ESL ILSS participants and was used to align them with the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) ESL Speaking and Listening outcomes and their indicators (NT DET, 2002, 2009a).

The 2008 ESL ILSS elicitation task employed in a few very remote Aboriginal schools in the NT was developed as a new uniform approach to standardised assessment and was designed to track student progress and ensure participants meet the program's aim of reaching the NTCF's ESL Speaking and Listening Level 1 outcome. The primary analytical purpose for the 2008 ESL ILSS data was to collect multiple samples from each child, over the course of their single year enrolled in the program, and compare the oral SAE produced by participants against the NTCF ESL Phase 1 Listening and Speaking outcomes and their indicators. This data may provide the necessary information to begin developing a comprehensive oral SAE developmental profile for early years remote/very

remote Aboriginal school children. The development of this profile or map of progression will empower and enable education providers and teachers in these contexts to appropriately cater for and design teaching programs and methods for these students.

Conclusion: Wrapping It All Up

Most remote/very remote Aboriginal children in the NT arrive at school with little or no experience with English and many teachers recruited to remote communities have no recognised ESL training. Teachers in the NT have two key documents to enable the identification and tracking of oral SAE development. The NTCF and the Diagnostic Net T-9 offer prescriptive oral SAE profiles whereas the SAE oral profile under development will be a descriptive profile of these remote/very remote Aboriginal learners that charts the entire developmental process. This descriptive SAE oral profile will include the developmental transition from the participant's Aboriginal first language to SAE. The SAE profile under development will provide a detailed account of the SAE word types and frequency employed as they move into emergent SAE speech and then through to the consolidation and expansion of SAE until learners are speaking SAE sentences with five or more words. This profile will fill the existing gaps in the NTCF and the large developmental disparity between the NTCF and the Diagnostic Net T-9. The SAE profile under construction will include an examination of the developmental progression of SAE grammatical morphemes by these remote/very remote learners and will clarify the existing haphazard amalgamation of 'grammatical markers' and 'little words' currently included within the Diagnostic Net T-9.

As demonstrated both documents fail to acknowledge and recognise the emergent developmental behaviours and indicators that are common to many remote/very remote Aboriginal school children. Further, research suggests that the developmental progression of ESL is influenced by and dependant on a speaker's first language background and very few studies have examined Aboriginal languages from a developmental perspective and none to date have examined the developmental perspective and interplay of SAE and Aboriginal languages or the unique interplay of ESL/EFL with these learners.

However, there is a solution to this issue as NT DET has been collecting oral SAE language samples and transcripts from ESL ILSS participants since the program's inception in 1998. The existing ESL ILSS data, particularly the standardised protocol developed and implemented in four very remote Aboriginal schools in the NT throughout 2008, may provide the necessary information to begin to chart and develop a profile of the progression of early oral SAE for remote/very remote Aboriginal school children. Importantly, this project attempts to reverse the usual

direction of benchmarking practices by beginning with the children and mapping their developing oral SAE.

Finally, this project recognises that developmental profiles must complement learners to be useful documents for teachers. The application of mainstream models, in the remote/very remote Aboriginal context in the NT, causes much angst and distress for many remote/very remote teachers and it's one of the many factors that contribute to the poor education outcomes for these students. It is the materialisation of emergent behaviours and indicators that must be addressed through research from the remote/very remote Aboriginal community context. Identifying and charting the potential developmental patterns of oral SAE for the ESL ILSS participants in this project will add to the knowledge base of second language acquisition and can start to address the issue of educational measurement and assessment of remote/very remote Aboriginal children in their first few years of formal western schooling.

Acknowledgements

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Lawrence Kenny has two degrees from the University of Western Sydney (Nepean) graduating with a Bachelor of Teaching in Early Childhood in 1998 and with a Bachelor of Education Honours in 2000. Lawrence is currently enrolled in the University of Western Sydney's School of Education PhD program and is conducting research in very remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Lawrence is an employee of the Northern Territory's Department of Education and Training and has worked as a teacher in this context since 2005.