



LANGUAGE USE AND LANGUAGE ATTITUDES
IN A RURAL SOUTH AUSTRALIAN
COMMUNITY

**Presented
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**As part of the requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in the Linguistics
Discipline, University of Adelaide, September 9th 1998.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page Number
ABSTRACT	II
INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER	1
CHAPTER 1 Early Indigenous history of the Riverland	18
CHAPTER 2 Indigenous people in the Riverland today	27
CHAPTER 3 Language Attitudes Research	61
CHAPTER 4 Non-standard varieties of English	85
CHAPTER 5 Policy on Indigenous Australian peoples and their languages	115
CHAPTER 6 Analysis of Speech evaluation	142
CHAPTER 7 Conclusion	154
APPENDICES	159
REFERENCES	272

ABSTRACT

The topic of this thesis is language use and language attitudes towards Indigenous peoples in a rural South Australian community.

This is essentially a linguistic thesis, however, due to the intermeshing of sociohistory and language in the target community, this work argues the importance of considering non-linguistic factors in understanding the community situation, the most important of these non-linguistic factors being the role of people's attitudes. As Edwards (1982p.20), points out:

“With regard to sociolinguistics in particular, attitudes have traditionally been of considerable importance. This is because people's reactions to language varieties reveal much of their perception of the speakers of these varieties...”

This thesis is divided into three interrelating sections. The first outlines the situation in the target community. The second discusses language attitude research and compares attitudes to language varieties around the world. The third illustrates Australian Governmental attitudes through their past and present policies, in dealing with Indigenous Australians.

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the university library, being available for loan and photocopying.

September 9th 1998

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following for their support and observations. Above all, my supervisor, Professor Peter Mühlhäusler, for giving me this opportunity and for his constant enthusiasm, encouragement and guidance. Thanks to Professor Peter Dowling of the Australian National University, Canberra, who gave me much insight into the life of the early Indigenous Riverlanders. Thanks also to Dr Ted Davis of the Geography discipline at the University of Adelaide for his assistance and recommendations.

I would like to thank all the members of the Riverland Community for participating in the speech evaluation and for discussing their opinions and feelings with me. Thanks to Mr G. Dowling for his tour of former Ngawait territory, Bob O'Brien, Maureen Stolz and Matthew Sleeman for their recommendations and information. Special thanks to those who kindly donated their voices for my speech evaluation, Ken and Heather Wright, Mark Elliot, Damon Inness, Ilonka Wid and Emma Sapinski.

Prior to writing this thesis I knew next to nothing about the Indigenous community in the Riverland. I want to thank all the Indigenous people who gave me some insight into their life and culture and who helped me to see things from a different perspective. I especially want to thank Bessie Rigney, Agnes Rigney, Jenny Southgate and Damon Inness at the Jerry Mason Senior Memorial Centre, Daphne Lindsay, Rob Agius and Francis Day at R.A.A.P., ViVi Healey and Sherrell Bonney at the Riverland District Education Department, Maria Rossack, Peggy Giles and Muriel Fewquandie at the Barmera Health Clinic, Margaret Lampard at the TAFE College Berri, Mark Elliot and Emily Lindsay/Meyer.

Special thanks also to Lucy Dowling, Erica Sapinski, Christine Goodfellow and especially to Bob Goodfellow for his huge contribution in assisting me with computer skills.

To everyone who helped in some way, thanks heaps, your contribution has been invaluable.

ABBREVIATIONS

AACLAME - Australian Advisory Council on Languages and Multicultural Education

AEP - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy

ALA - Aboriginal languages Association

ATSI - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

DAA - Department of Aboriginal Affairs

FECCA - Federation of Ethnic communities council of Australia

NALLS - National Languages and Literacy Strategy

NALP - National Aboriginal Languages Programme

NPL - National Policy on Languages

UAM - United Aboriginal Mission

UMA AW - Upper Murray Association for Aboriginal Welfare

TERMINOLOGICAL MATTERS

Before beginning this work I would like to highlight some important points:

- a) I have used, wherever possible, the term 'Indigenous', rather than 'Aboriginal', when describing the Indigenous community of the Riverland. Some Indigenous informants thought this more appropriate in such a formal piece of work;
- b) In the Riverland the term 'Aboriginal' is sometimes used in a derogatory way by non - Indigenous people;
- c) The term 'Nunga' is *sometimes* used *only* between Indigenous peoples, and not all Indigenous people in the Riverland are 'Nunga' e.g. Ngarrindjeri;
- d) The term 'Indigenous' refers to not only 'Aboriginal' people, but also Islander peoples e.g. Torres Strait Islander people. While all these people are Indigenous to Australia, they have very different cultures and identities and it is OFFENSIVE to label them all as 'Aboriginal'.
- e) The term 'Koorie' is inappropriate for South Australia. Most Indigenous Riverlanders refer to themselves as 'Nunga', not 'Koorie'.

WARNING: The mention of the names of certain deceased Indigenous Riverlanders may be offensive to some readers of this thesis.