

Summary of Key Concepts Related to Teaching Aboriginal Students SAE

Language is a carrier of culture

- Both need to be valued
- They are linked to a sense of identity
- Language is an identifier (ie. Aboriginality)
- Relationships are crucial (A meaningful relationship is required between instructor and learner)
- Family/cultural structures and relationships dictate social conventions
- They carry world views and perceptions (eg. The concept of literacy is different in different cultures)
- The meaning of nonverbal communication may differ between Aboriginal cultures and western norms (ie. Gestures)
- Sharing is important (ie. Sharing answers is not seen as cheating but an obligation to help)
- Children are brought up to be independent and often learn by trial and error
- Traditional languages did not have vocabulary for social niceties such as please and thank you

An Overview of the Languages and Dialects

Term	1 st /2 nd Language	Background/ History	Vocabulary	Rules	Other Notes
Pidgin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd language only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact language • People from two different languages trying to communicate • Communication is the key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not consistent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually one language tends to be more dominant than another
Creole	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next generation of pidgin speakers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic word but can apply to a specific language
Kriol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixture of traditional Aboriginal languages & English • Is a creole found in the Kimberley, NT and North Queensland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive • Some words may sound like English but could have different meanings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marker of Aboriginal identity • Heavy to light Kriol
Aboriginal English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialect rather than a language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive • Some words may sound like English but could have different meanings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More consistent rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marker of Aboriginal identity • May differ depending on region

Dialect & Language

- Generally speaking, a language is unintelligible by others who don't speak it while a dialect is a variation of a language and can be understood
- Home talk/language (Aboriginal English, Kriol or a traditional Aboriginal language)
- Traditional languages were oral languages
- Non-Aboriginal people have created the orthography (writing system) for home languages
- The languages/dialects are rule governed (Although there are some variations some say there is a continuum with Kriol at one end, SAE at the other and AE falls in between)
- Home languages are not inferior to SAE or other languages
- Similarities between SAE and AE can cause issues
 - Miscommunication
 - False friends (Sounds like SAE but has different meanings)
 - Some consider to be "bad English"

Features of AE

- Phonology (Sounds)
 - Pronunciation (Less difference between voiced and voiceless consonants – eg. p & b, k & g, t & d and vowel sounds are different to SAE)
 - Accent (pronunciation, stress & intonation)
- Grammar
 - Plural ("Two dog" – the number indicates plural)
 - Pronouns ("E" = in not gender specific)
 - Possession ("Who for dis at?" = Who for this hat? – Whose hat is this?)
 - Questions (Sound like more like statements to SAE speakers eg. "You can buy me ice cream" = Can you buy me an ice cream?)
- Word Meaning
 - Vocabulary differences (eg. Deadly = cool/great, liar = fake)
 - Compounding of nouns (eg. Eye-glasses = glasses)
- Pragmatics
 - Silence is acceptable and in some cases is a sign of respect (It is OK not to respond to questions or comments)
 - A lack of eye contact is a sign of respect
 - Two way information is exchanged rather than asking many questions
 - Some knowledge is not accessible to all (eg. Women/Men's business)
 - "Shame" – feelings experienced by Aboriginal people when they sense an unwelcomed distinction being made of them in front of others (eg. Praise)

Teaching Implications

- Model SAE in the classroom (This may be the only time SAE is heard)
- Value and respect the home language and culture
- Focus on student strengths and reject a deficit model (ie. Trying to "fix" the home language)
- Link learning to the local community- attempt to keep it authentic, real & purposeful
- Behaviour needs to be explicitly taught
- Explicitly teach pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and social rules

Why is it important to value the language and culture students bring with them?

- Enhances self-esteem
- Helps maintain strong Aboriginal identities
- Contributes to academic success
- Facilitates two way learning (teachers can then build on prior knowledge, make learning meaningful etc.)

The Code-switching stairway

This is a framework to assist with the teaching and learning of SAE. It explains the level of understanding and helps teachers to focus on teaching different aspects.

- Awareness
 - Realises many different languages exist in the community
 - Understands each language is good and should be a source of pride
 - Recognises AE and Kriol are valid varieties of English
 - Practises SAE structures
- Separation
 - Identifies when it's appropriate to use each language
 - Identifies differences between SAE and their home language
 - Further practises SAE structures
- Code-switching
 - Recognises code switching in real life
 - Practise their own code switching skills
- Control
 - The goal and comes when people are able to unconsciously switch between SAE and their home language.

Two-Way Learning

Is an educational philosophy which aims to value and teach non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal perspectives. It involves:

- Acknowledging the different cultures & languages in the school
- Respecting different points of view
- Sharing and exchanging of cultures & languages
- Involves the whole community

The Ideal Teacher

Fanshawe (1976) described the ideal teacher of Aboriginal students as:

- Warm
- Encouraging
- Demanding
- Stimulating
- Responsible
- Systematic
- Positive attitude toward students
- Valuing students as people
- Respecting culture
- Free from racial prejudice
- Confidence in their own ability to set demanding but realistic goals

Final Hints:

- Teachers need to have high expectations of their students
- SAE does not replace the home language but SAE compliments it (ie. Double power)
- Try not to make assumptions about prior knowledge – Focus on explicitly teach concepts
- To ensure all students have knowledge - create shared experiences (ie cooking, gardening) discuss it (teach vocab/sentence structures) and then write (scaffold the writing process)
- Try to avoid stereotyping and tokenism (eg. Putting a kangaroo on a poster/worksheet doesn't make it culturally sensitive. Analyse the resources in your classroom and think about how your students would relate to them.)
- Asking students if it “sounds right” is not a useful strategy – SAE is not their first language and if it sounds like AE then it could sound right
- Students may have otitis media (conductive hearing loss) which significantly impacts on student learning and behaviour (eg. Spelling, pronunciation, following instructions etc.)