**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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>1st/2nd Language</th>
<th>Background/History</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Rules</th>
<th>Other Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pidgin</td>
<td>2nd language only</td>
<td>Contact language</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Not consistent</td>
<td>Usually one language tends to be more dominant than another</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>People from two different languages trying to communicate</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Communication is the key</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>1st language</td>
<td>The next generation of pidgin speakers</td>
<td>Extensive vocabulary</td>
<td>More consistent rules</td>
<td>Generic word but can apply to a specific language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kriol</td>
<td>1st language</td>
<td>Mixture of traditional Aboriginal languages &amp; English</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>More consistent rules</td>
<td>Marker of Aboriginal identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Is a creole found in the Kimberley, NT and North Queensland</td>
<td>Some words may sound like English but could have different meanings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Heavy to light Kriol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal English</td>
<td>1st language</td>
<td>Dialect rather than a language</td>
<td>Extensive</td>
<td>More consistent rules</td>
<td>Marker of Aboriginal identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some words may sound like English but could have different meanings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>May differ depending on region</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 is 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 (i.e., Double power).
- Try not to make assumptions about prior knowledge – Focus on explicitly teach concepts.
- To ensure all students have knowledge - create shared experiences (i.e., cooking, gardening) discuss it (teach vocab/sentence structures) and then write (scaffold the writing process).
- Try to avoid stereotyping and tokenism (e.g., 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 (e.g., Spelling, pronunciation, following instructions etc.)