INGE KRAL

4. FROM THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

Socialisation into Adult Literacy Practice in the Remote Indigenous
Australian Context

INTRODUCTION

The discourse associated with adult literacy provision in remote Aboriginal Australia
is now intertwined with the notion of training for employment outcomes. The all too
common provision of *ad hoc*, short-term vocational training courses coupled with a
'bolted-on' (Bradley, Parker, Perisce, & Thatcher, 2000) approach to literacy reflects
the shifting policy environment that typically underpins funding in the remote sector.
While it is understood that certain vocational skills can be attained in a short time-
frame, the acquisition of literacy is by contrast a process that is lifelong, life-wide
and life-deep (Banks et al., 2007). Rarely do discussions around adult literacy in the
remote context address the language socialisation processes that lead to adult literacy
practice nor do they take account of the resources – social, cultural, material, textual
and technological – that enable literacy to flourish beyond instructional, institutional
settings. In this chapter I consider the socially, culturally and historically contingent
nature of literacy practice in the Central and Western Deserts regions of remote
Australia.

By drawing on two case studies I explore how language and literacy socialisation
builds on "different, overlapping and intersecting layers of experience" (Duff, 2008,
p. xv) and frames young people's way of being in the social worlds in which they
will live (Heath, 2008). This consideration of literacy from a language socialisation
perspective shifts the focus away from literacy pedagogy by drawing attention to the
sociocultural aspects of literacy acquisition and practice in non-formal settings. By
taking an ethnographic perspective that views language and literacy socialisation
as a lifelong process I also explore how Indigenous youth today are emerging as
agents of change and innovation in the transformation of communication forms and
modes, including literacy, in response to digital technologies. By drawing attention
to the changing shape of literacy in the globalised world (Hull, 2003; Kress, 2003;
Livingstone, 2008; Thurlow & Mroczek, 2011), I argue that it is not possible to
consider adult literacy in the remote context without also considering the multimodal
complex of spoken, written, signed, and additional linguistic and semiotic systems
that people use to convey meanings (Duff, 2008).

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SOCIALISATION

Participating in society and using language are intertwined activities (Ochs, 1996) as the acquisition of socio-cultural competence is gained through the acquisition of language as well as other relevant meaning systems and symbolic structuring, including literacy. Language socialisation, according to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), is the process by which cultural practices and understandings shape the way that people acquire language within the local culture. Being literate, states Heath (1991, p. 3), involves more than having individual technical literacy skills, it also depends upon "an essential harmony of core language behaviours and certain critical supporting social relations and cultural practices". As each local culture has its own norms, preferences and expectations associated with language and literacy practices, resources and ideologies, these factors influence the ways of communicating and participating specific to the local speech community. In this respect everyday language activities, as socialising activities, form the basis for the transmission and reproduction of culture that are linked to the social practices and symbolic forms of that community (Ochs, 1993; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

But what happens in small Indigenous societies when the process of language socialisation that made sense in the not so distant past has been challenged by profound sociocultural transformation, and new modes of communication and social interaction have been internalised? To answer these questions I focus on two case study contexts: the 'Ngaanyatjarra Lands' region in the Western Desert (Western Australia) and the 'Utopia Homelands' in the Central Desert (Northern Territory). I situate these two case studies historically, and subsequently address the broader language and literacy policy context. I then propose, as do others, that we need "to widen our definitions of literacy to include digital multimodality and connectivity" (Stornaiuolo, Hull, & Nelson, 2009, p. 384) in accordance with changing social practice.

WESTERN DESERT

The 'Ngaanyatjarra Lands' in the east of Western Australia comprises approximately three percent of mainland Australia, fanning out from the tri-state border with South Australia and the Northern Territory (Figure 1). With a population of some 2500 people, this desert region operates as a cohesive set of eleven communities. Residents of the 'Lands' are predominantly Ngaanyatjarra speakers, but the speech community also comprises speakers of other mutually intelligible Western Desert dialects (including Ngaatjatjarra and Pitjantjatjara) and many adults have multilectal competence in more than one dialect as well as English. Despite being "critically endangered" (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS], 2005, p. 193), language remains a salient symbol of Ngaanyatjarra social identity and cultural heritage.
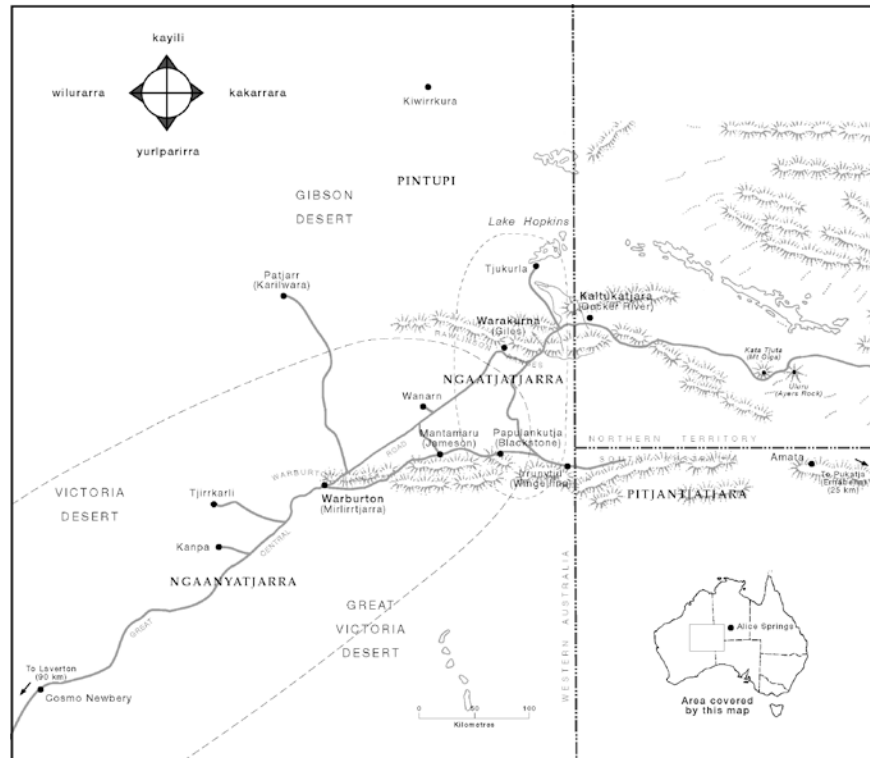
Figure 1. The Western Desert region.
Map by Brenda Thornley. © The Institute for Aboriginal Development.
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The establishment of Warburton Ranges Mission by English-speaking missionaries in the mid-1930s introduced not only a whole new verbal code, but also a corresponding world of European practices, including the new technology of writing, in English, coupled with new ways of being and learning in the mission school and dormitory. It was only in 1957 that the first grammatical analysis of Ngaanyatjarra commenced and a Roman alphabet orthography was devised leading to the production of vernacular primers and Christian reading materials for adult literacy learners (Glass, 2000). Ngaanyatjarra people associated with the Mission thus began to see, then use, their mother tongue – a language previously only heard and spoken – signified in an alphabetic code; leading to the realisation that meaning could be exchanged through written, as well as spoken, communication. Except for a short-lived bilingual education program from 1974–1980 and a Languages other than English (LOTE) program in some schools from the 1990s, schooling in

this region has been English-only. From the 1960s a number of adolescents were sent away to urban centres for secondary schooling and vocational training. By the mid-1980s the Education Department of Western Australia had implemented a 'secondary-tops' post-primary program in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands schools. Adults have been participating in health and education 'vocational' training only since the mid-1980s. In 1996 Ngaanyatjarra Community College opened in Warburton as a registered training organisation and closed a decade later. In summary, compared with many other remote Indigenous regions the overall level of exposure to literacy is comparatively high (Kral, 2012).

The era of Aboriginal self-determination introduced by the Whitlam federal Labor government from 1972 ushered in profound changes across the Indigenous sector. In 1973 Warburton Ranges Mission closed and Ngaanyatjarra people began moving back to their traditional country establishing the permanent communities we see today. Increased access to motor cars meant that people started travelling beyond their local community. In turn they were returning with the new artefacts of communications technology: cassette players, TVs and video players. Over time Aboriginal media organisations such as Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) in Alice Springs and Ngaanyatjarra Media (the local remote Indigenous media organisation) provided access to media in English and local languages via radio and TV.

Over the last decade the communications landscape has once again been transformed as digital technology has slowly rolled out to remote regions in a quest to bridge the digital divide and provide improved broadband access. For a remote region the Ngaanyatjarra Lands has had a relatively high level of access to the new online services through 'telecentres' as well as media training through Ngaanyatjarra Media. A mobile telecommunication tower was erected at Warburton in 2008 and in 2013, towers were erected in a further five Ngaanyatjarra communities. Mobile phones and internet connectivity are now ubiquitous in most Ngaanyatjarra communities. Among youth cohorts the "always on" (Baron, 2008) aspect is facilitating intensive Facebook communication on mobile phones and iPads or tablets.

CENTRAL DESERT

By comparison, in the Sandover River region in the Central Desert of the Northern Territory (NT) pastoralists occupied Aboriginal land from the 1920s. Anymatyerr and Alyawarr-speaking people remained on their land and some were employed on local stations, including Utopia Station, as stockmen and domestics. They reclaimed Utopia Station under the Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act in 1978 and by the early 1980s new outstations were established around 350 km north east of Alice Springs. Today the population of roughly 1,200 is spread over some 16 decentralised homelands or outstations comprising the 'Utopia Homelands'.

Education provision in this region has always been poor. Although a government Native Welfare Branch school had opened at Utopia Station in 1969, it was only in

the mid-1980s that Homeland Learning Centres were established in some but not all outstations (Richardson, 2001). Thus, many children did not have access to any form of schooling until the mid to late 1980s, with the final homeland school built in 2003. No secondary schooling facility existed in the region until very recently, although some secondary-aged students have been sent away to boarding school (Richardson, 2001, p. 221). Only now is there tangible evidence of adolescents coming through high school. Since the 1970s, some informal adult education has taken place in the region including arts-based activities. Adult literacy training for Indigenous evangelists and pastors has also been provided by linguists from the Finke River Mission. Nevertheless, most adult education provision has been short-term and *ad hoc* and provided by various agencies such as health and education.[1] This short history of formal education in the region has resulted in a widespread lack of literacy among adults who have spent the majority of their time in the area (Kral & Falk, 2004).
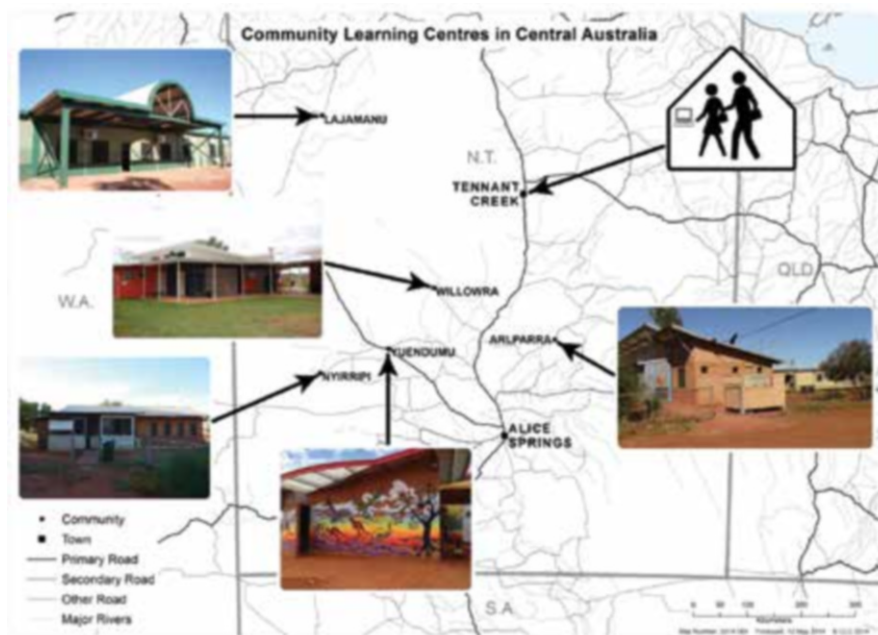

Figure 2. Learning Community Centres in Central Australia.
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Unlike the Ngaanyatjarra, (or even the neighbouring Warlpiri region), the Utopia Homelands have had limited access to communication technologies. The erection of a Study Centre building at Arlparra Homeland in 2004 created a site for occasional

ad hoc provision of Batchelor Institute arts, media and language and literacy courses/projects, primarily for older speakers of the Arandic dialects Anymatyerr and Alyawarr.[2] In 2011, with the arrival of a new co-ordinator auspiced by Batchelor Institute 'Learning Community Centres' (Figure 2), the homeland communities have had access to accredited and non-accredited vocational training as well as informal computer, internet and digital media activity including GarageBand music recording and Facebook. With most outstations some 30 kilometres apart, mobility and access to communication services have been hindered. However the rollout of the mobile phone network from August 2013 has altered the communication landscape (Rodney Mitchell, personal communication, February 20, 2015) enabling individual phone and internet access with mobile devices.

   I will return to the impact of digital media and internet and mobile phone connectivity later. Before this it is necessary to situate adult literacy provision in the remote sector and the broader Australian policy environment.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY EDUCATION POLICY

Other than a few mission schools and some Christian adult literacy initiatives literacy education in remote Australia was unavailable for most remote Indigenous people until the 'assimilation era'. Vocationally-oriented secondary schooling and adult education then became a key element of the assimilation policy rolled out across Indigenous Australia from the late 1950s (Kral, 2000, 2012).

Schools

By the 1970s under the reforming agenda of the Whitlam Labor government a policy turn emerged that took account of Australia's linguistic diversity. In fact, during the 1980s Australia was celebrated as the first country in the world to have a multilingual languages policy (Lo Bianco & Wickert, 2001, p. 29). As noted above, in Indigenous Australia the onset of a policy of self-determination from the 1970s saw the establishment of outstations and communities in remote regions. Soon bilingual education initiatives also emerged in government and non-government schools in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory (Simpson, Caffery, & McConvell, 2009). By the 1990s however, the focus in Indigenous education was shifting to English literacy and the competencies required to function in mainstream society without disadvantage. The earlier language rights approach to education in Indigenous regions was being marginalised and replaced by a discourse of crisis around the literacy 'problem' and unemployment and welfare dependency due to poor education and lack of English. The National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (Department of Employment, Education, Training & Youth Affairs [DEETYA], 1998) ushered in the era of external benchmarking testing and a back to basics approach to literacy pedagogy, as well as the subsuming of English as a Second Language teaching under literacy. The commencement of the National Assessment

Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) in Australian schools in 2008 led to Indigenous students being assessed in accordance with the same developmental pathway for literacy achievement set by English as first language students (McKay, 2001). As education delivery in most remote Indigenous schools takes place in linguistically complex contexts, NAPLAN is considered an inappropriate instrument for testing literacy competence. Wigglesworth, Simpson and Loakes (2011) assert for example, that the NAPLAN test, while being suitable for most groups of Standard Australian English speakers, linguistically and culturally unsuitable for Indigenous children, especially those living in remote communities. Moreover NAPLAN is indicative of the narrow measures of primarily alphabetic literacy that count as literacy in school-based assessments where such measures of learning are based on what Street (1984) terms the autonomous conception of literacy as a set of neutral basic skills. As others emphasise:

> Traditional assessments of reading and writing, while widely understood to be neutral measures of children's skills, continue to reward those children who share the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the test-makers. (Stornaiuolo et al., 2009, p. 385)

It is further argued (Street, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2009, p. 195) that the focus on 'print literacies' in schools around the globe is rapidly being superseded by the reality of contemporary communication, embedded as it is now within 'screen-based technologies'. I return to this perspective later.

Adult Education

In the 1970s, community education also became available for Indigenous adults in the Northern Territory through providers such as the Institute for Aboriginal Development and Batchelor College (later Batchelor Institute), with some Technical and Further Education colleges and Open College training initiatives in communities. These initiatives enabled the delivery of basic literacy and numeracy underpinned by an orientation to community development needs. By the late 1980s however, in response to global changes, Australia introduced the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA). In the remote context under the NTRA it was insisted that workers should now meet nationally accredited Vocational Education and Training (VET) requirements. Paralleling these changes, by the 1990s a national shift away from multilingualism and multiculturalism to a focus on economy became evident which saw the linking of English literacy provision to VET outcomes (Lo Bianco & Wickert, 2001, p. 28). Since the 1990s there has been a movement away from diversity and choice as a means for self-determination, and instead a focus on instilling a sense of responsibility and reciprocity in Indigenous populations has emerged (see Pearson, 2000). What has followed has been a raft of interventions focused on realising individual responsibility through welfare reform strategies such as the use of conditionalities on welfare payments and strategies to get Indigenous

people into training and productive employment. Such changes are evident in the emphasis on 'learn or earn' and the linking of the receipt of unemployment benefits to English literacy and vocational training for future employment outcomes. Currently, if language, literacy or numeracy (LLN) is determined to be a 'barrier' to accredited training, Indigenous learners are referred to the Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program – a federal government program initiated in mid-2014. The federal government Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP) now manages the participation of jobseekers in training and employment through Job Network Providers who win three year contracts to serve in the RJCP Service Delivery Areas (Altman, 2015).[3] The RJCP can refer 'jobseekers' on unemployment benefits into the tightly structured SEE program, monitoring engagement and achieving outcomes against the Australian Core Skills Framework.[4] Worryingly, participants who fail to meet the stipulated training hours may be breached (oftentimes a process initiated by the training provider) and lose their unemployment benefits.

This mindset, one that links literacy with short-term vocational training and employment outcomes, seems unlikely to change in the near future. As exemplified with the Australian federal government's new Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the emphasis in the arena of education is on children and school attendance, and on the provision of vocational training for young people and adults leading to employment, irrespective of the availability of employment in remote regions. Furthermore, as I discuss below, this approach pays scant attention to multimodal literacies in the new media age.

FROM THE LOCAL TO THE GLOBAL

Indigenous Australian youth are living in a multilingual 'linguistic landscape' (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). A heritage language or Kriol may be the everyday spoken language in families and communities, but this is set against the visual and oral-aural backdrop of English in the school, workplace, office, clinic, as well as on TV and through the internet and social media. Like Indigenous minorities around the world Indigenous Australian youth are using social media to communicate, and digitally mediated everyday communication is increasingly taking place in the Indigenous mother tongue. Furthermore, in remote Australia, via engagement with social media and digital communication technologies, we are seeing the agentive participation of youth in new forms of cultural practice and production. While inequities in community and/or household-based access and participation are evident, collective models of 'public access' (Rennie, Crouch, Thomas, & Taylor, 2010) have been developed in accordance with broadband, satellite or WiFi availability (Indigenous Remote Communications Association [IRCA], 2010, p. 67). Even where there is limited access to broadband technology, mobile phones, tablets and other devices are widely used to create, share and store diverse media and information. The recent explosion in digital media practice among remote Indigenous youth can be attributed not only to the increased personal ownership of affordable, small, mobile digital

media technologies such as iPads and mobile phones, but also to the emergence of youth-oriented programs that incorporate digital media activities. Access to informal community-based 'learning spaces' has catalysed digitally-mediated multimodal literacy practices (Kral & Schwab, 2012). I return now to the two case study sites as exemplars of these changes.

In the Ngaanyatjarra region through organisations such as 'Wilurarra Creative Youth Arts Project' and 'Ngaanyatjarra Media' young people access informal learning environments where they are socialised into a world full of technology-mediated activity – downloading music, watching YouTube, playing computer games, looking at and labelling photos and so forth.[5] More sophisticated multimodal practices may also be acquired through film-making and music workshops. Here youth are introduced to the multimedia iLife suite (including iPhoto, iMovie and GarageBand) available on Macintosh computers. In some locations young people have proceeded onto independent video-making, using complex computer editing programs such as Final Cut, leading to DVD production. In other sites they are recording songs on GarageBand and Pro Tools music recording software and producing their own CDs (Kral & Schwab, 2012). Significantly, such access to resources is rapidly enhancing the digital literacy skills of adolescents and young adults in a manner comparable to their peers nationwide and globally. Such activities now form an important aspect of contemporary youth cultural practice in remote settings.

Similarly in the Utopia Homelands the Study Centre or Learning Community Centre at Arlparra blends formal and informal approaches to adult learning with a focus on digital media activity.[6] In addition to the provision of accredited training and Skills for Education and Employment training (inclusive of literacy), an 'open door policy' has enabled an informal approach to learning where anyone can wander in and do a bit of GarageBand or use the internet without being enrolled in an accredited training course (Kral & Schwab, in preparation).[7] This process of observational and peer-to-peer learning socialises young people into the norms around learning as a group as well as the development of individual voluntary specialisation (Kral & Heath, 2013). This has led to the development of computer-based multimodal literacy skills.

In remote Indigenous Australia with acknowledged low school attendance and poor retention rates – especially in the secondary years – and a short and sporadic history of adult education provision, the reality is that the percentage of time spent in formal instructional settings is minimal. While we certainly need to reconsider the 'schooling' of Indigenous youth, there is also a dire need to pay more attention to the process of ongoing and adaptive learning across the lifespan that goes on beyond and outside school. Especially as other scholars attest, schools can never provide all that is required for life. Where even under the best of circumstances school age children and adolescents – even those who attend school regularly – may only spend about 18.5 percent of their waking hours in formal education (Banks et al., 2007, p. 9). In recent years new insights into learning have been gathered from scholars from a range of disciplines who have investigated various alternative

learning spaces (Hill, 2008; Ito et al., 2010) and approaches (Barron, 2006; Hull & Schultz, 2002). Others have addressed learning from a 'public pedagogy' perspective (Sandlin, Wright, & Clark, 2011) or with a focus on participatory learning (Jenkins, with Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2006). Such approaches draw our attention to similar innovative research around the globe, allowing us to also pay closer attention to language and literacy socialisation and the changing nature of literacy in the new media age.

<div align="center">ALTERED LANGUAGE SOCIALISATION FRAMEWORK</div>

As noted earlier, children, adolescents and other novices become culturally competent members of their own social and cultural group through socialisation into the cultural processes of that group and they acquire the linguistic and cognitive orientations of previous generations. Cultural practice results from the acquisition and transmission of the cultural tools – the habits, routines, dispositions and attitudes – of a cultural group, over successive generations.

Indigenous youth in remote settings are now experiencing far broader socialisation experiences than their forebears. Despite variable experiences of schooling and adult literacy acquisition across generations and regions, in a manner not unlike young people all over the world, Indigenous youth are universally entering the flow from the local to the global. Contemporary living is giving them a vast repertoire of symbolic, textual and media resources to draw on in their communicative exchanges, whether oral, written or digital. In other words, for these young people their way of being in the world, their whole language socialisation framework, now involves acquiring more than one language, and "it may also be mediated by new information and communication technologies and may involve the development of related oral, written and multimodal, as well as cultural, practices intertwined with new intercultural or 'hybrid' identities" (Duff, 2008, p. xvi).

In the Central and Western Desert of Australia the language socialisation context has altered profoundly and now embraces alphabetic and digital literacies and an altered developmental trajectory through formal, and non-formal, education. Youth are socialised into a world that spans the enormous gulf between traditional multimodal communication modes and new communication technologies.

Prior to contact with Anglo-European society a multimodal complex of communication forms and semiotic systems were used by groups across the Central and Western Deserts to convey meaning through language, non-verbal communication and iconic representations. People utilised a rich multimodal communicative repertoire incorporating speech, song, sign language, gesture and the graphic symbols evident in sand drawing and sand story telling (Green, 2014). These relevant meaning-making systems were deployed in the manipulation of the symbols and resources of the known world within a coherent sociocultural system. Youngsters acquired the knowledge, dispositions and practices that enabled them to

participate effectively and appropriately in desert society and this was, and still is, realised to a great extent through language.

Youngsters are now growing up in families where local language practices may embrace both historical/mythical orientations and contemporary digital practices. This vast array of symbolic systems is rich in situated meaning and reveals the general schema of how desert people make sense of their world. In these regions the verbal arts remain highly valued and central to social interaction. As children acquire language they also acquire a worldview (Scheiffelin & Ochs, 1986). While alphabetic literacy is synonymous with the realm of childhood language socialisation in most literate, school-oriented Western and other mainstream families, as desert children listen to stories from the Dreaming they acquire this narrative form as normative. Narrative practices socialise children and adolescents into an understanding of the Dreaming and its enduring role over mythical and historical time in the cultural structuring of communication modes. Today young girls still learn to tell sand story narratives incorporating speech, sign language, gesture and drawing from their elders. In this practice children are acquiring cultural rules associated with ways of speaking and kinship connections, locational and spatial terms, and symbolic structuring embracing not only traditional iconography, but also in some regions, alphabetic symbols.

Indigenous youth are the markers of social change and new influences are shaping the multimodal literacy practices they engage in. In these resource-rich communicative ecologies young people are employing multiple modes of communication. They are drawing on traditional communication styles integrated with new embedded literacy traditions. Additionally they are living in an era where digital media form part of the taken for granted social and cultural fabric of learning, leisure and communication.

Nevertheless, Indigenous youth in remote Australia are living in a rapidly changing linguistic ecology. Now, more than ever before, their heritage languages are under pressure and altered language socialisation practices have impacted on cultural learning. Indigenous youth identity is thus in a state of flux balanced as it is between the influences of elders and the pressures of educational demands to learn English and achieve parity in NAPLAN, enter training leading to mainstream employment, and the effect of globalised media on youth language and cultural practice. Simultaneously, the media reinforces negative societal discourses that denigrate Indigenous languages and youth identities. Hence Indigenous youth are trying to form their own linguistic identities amidst tidal waves of sociolinguistic transformation (Harrison, 2007) and competing language ideologies. Yet through new media practices we can see that youth are actually adapting to the 'multilingual multimodal terrain' (Garcia, 2014) that is their contemporary linguistic ecology and this is leading to innovative youth language practices and hybrid identities. As is the case around the globe, "youth growing up in this mediated, digital culture, have wide-ranging opportunities to choose how to represent themselves in relationship to others" (Stornaiuolo et al., 2009, p. 383). In this setting media and communications technology is igniting cultural innovation, transmission, and interaction. With

exposure to new media and online resources the youth generation is simulataneously locally focused and globally oriented.

A NEW MULTIMODALITY

The arrival of digital technologies and the emergence of new social practices surrounding digital media and mobile devices are creating a seismic shift in the ways that 'literacy' is imagined, all over the world (Crystal, 2008; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Kress, 2010). As Jewitt describes (2009, p. 18), the multimodal facilities of digital technologies have enabled "image, sound and movement to enter the communicational landscape in new and significant ways". Hence it is hugely important, suggest Stornaiuolo et al. (2009, p. 384), "to widen our definitions of literacy to include digital multimodality and connectivity as newly available means". In fact, as Street et al. (2009, p. 195) assert, to not take account of multimodality is problematic as this would "de-privilege" learners who are already drawing on "a number of semiotic modes to make meaning".

It is by appropriating new cultural resources, such as alphabetic literacy or communication technologies, that people are socialised into communities inhabiting, and continuously developing, and transforming, symbolic universes, modes of expression and inscription, and material artefacts (Ivarsson, Linderoth, & Saljo, 2009, p. 202). Through access to new cultural resources, such as communication technologies, new practices are rapidly appropriated if relevant for social and cultural purposes, as the Facebook phenomenon illustrates.

Facebook is now one of the distinguishing features of contemporary Indigenous youth practice, especially among females who have formed their own locally-focused online community. Significantly, in a manner redolent of traditional communication styles, Facebook communication is highly multimodal. This multimodal production of cultural artefacts and texts emanating from youth engagement with digital technologies affords new possibilities for seeing how young people are employing literate modes. In the world of Facebook young people are encoding and decoding written texts for each other, primarily in English, but also the local vernaculars. Facebook allows us to see how "local values, ideologies, patterns of social organisation, and cultural preferences are inscribed in everyday discourse and social interactions, making it possible to discern and investigate the relationships between everyday linguistic and discursive practices and broader social structures and systems of meaning" (Garrett & Baquedano-Lopez, 2002, p. 341).

CONCLUSION

By examining remote Indigenous people's sociocultural and communicative practices and how they have acquired new skills and competencies from an historical perspective what becomes clear is the extent to which all forms of

communication and expression – oral, written, gestural, visual, and now computer-mediated – are interdependent and can never be extracted from the social, cultural and historical, context from which they emerge, in which they change, and for which they exist.

Youth coming of age in remote Indigenous communities today face a complex of competing language socialisation influences. They must acquire the modes of communication and social interaction particular to their own small society. Simultaneously, they are living in a digital globalised world where they must also develop and share new understandings of what it means to participate in activities and relationships across linguistic, social and geographic time and space. The youth generation is connecting, communicating and learning through new media and imagining and constructing identities that are both tied to the past and stretch out to the future. To balance this complex of life goals and expectations young people must acquire diverse linguistic and cultural practices, technological competence and correspondingly hybrid identities. The young people described here are responding to a radically altered language socialisation framework and emerging as agents of change and innovation in the transformation of communication forms and modes, including literacy.

To conclude, I suggest that a complex web of language and literacy socialisation experiences factor strongly in determining how these young people will engage, and indeed succeed, in formal education and other institutional domains across the lifecourse. Reconfiguring approaches to adult literacy in the remote sector in a way that decouples literacy from short-term training for employment outcomes may appear unattainable in the current policy context. It remains, nonetheless, imperative that we broaden our understanding of how and where young people are acquiring the knowledge, practices and dispositions required to function as competent members of social groups and cultural communities. If remote Indigenous youth are to acquire the knowledge, skills, awareness and practices necessary to participate effectively in the mature roles in their own, and the wider, community, then attention will need to be paid not only to the provision of schooling and formal adult literacy tuition, but also to how language, literacy and technological know-how is acquired through socialisation and learning as a lifelong process in contexts beyond institutions. This will require supporting and resourcing non-formal learning settings, especially in locations where engagement with schooling and adult education is at best sporadic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOTES

[1] Some adult literacy training in Arlparra commenced in 1996 when Olga Dubrowski established an outreach literacy program. Rodney Mitchell took over the program in 1998, followed by Kathryn Gilby from 2000. In 2000 Batchelor Institute signed off on managing the construction of the Study Centre at Arlparra Homeland. Rodney Mitchell returned as the Coordinator of the Arlparra Study Centre in 2011. Other literacy training was provided by the Urapuntja *Health* Service Aboriginal Corporation.

[2] Projects have included: *Arrwekeleny Lyeteny 'old ways and new ways'* 2008–2009. Utopia Bush Medicine Project – an integrated Art and language educational project funded by Batchelor Institute and the Central Land Council. See also (Morton et al., 2013; Woods & Carew 2008).

[3] See: http://www.australia.gov.au/topics/employment-and-workplace/employment-services-and-jobs

[4] See: http://www.innovation.gov.au/skills/LiteracyAndNumeracy/AustralianCoreSkillsFramework/Pages/default.aspx

[5] See: http://wilurarra.com/; http://ngmedia.org.au/

[6] By mid-2014 Learning Community Centres had been established in the Warlpiri communities of Lajamanu, Willowra, Nyirripi and Yuendumu through a partnership between WETT and Batchelor Institute. Batchelor Institute has also independently established a Learning Community Centre at Arlparra (Utopia Homelands) (Kral & Schwab, in preparation).

[7] GarageBand is an intuitive yet sophisticated software program for music recording and editing found on the iLife suite on Apple Mac computers.

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