Chapter 10
The Development of Successful Bilingual, Biliterate and Bicultural Pedagogy: Place for Tiwi Teachers and Tiwi Language in Learning

Frances Murray

Introduction

> *I would like to point out that our children need to learn the knowledge and skills of our culture. I believe this strongly. This is very important in maintaining the language and our culture. I also believe that it is important to preserve it in written records of various texts or audio tape. The children do need to learn the knowledge and the skills of our culture such as where their country is - their sacred areas, the features of their country's environment, kinship, language groups, dance, family and relations, song, history, totems, ceremony and rituals. Our other language: English-Second-Language is also our major language because English is the language to communicate in the wider and broader world. (Gemma Nganbe, member of the Leadership Team, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School, Wadeye, NT).*

From the beginning, Indigenous staff in bilingual schools understood the complexities and significance of using both languages in their children's education. This chapter describes how the *bilingual teaching context* and the intercultural nature of the *bicultural teaching teams* stimulated and influenced the evolution of a bilingual, biliterate and bicultural methodology in the early years of the Bilingual Education Program in the Northern Territory. This occurred at Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic school (MCS), Wurrumiyanga (Bathurst Island), where a bilingual program began in 1974. Tiwi people are the traditional owners of Bathurst and Melville Islands. The school's enrolment was around 300 children, with attendance of 95–97 per cent. Here, a drive to invigorate the teaching of English-as-an-Additional Language (EAL) gradually resulted in changed pedagogies for learning through both languages. The chapter is built around the cornerstones of successful bilingual education in the NT: (1) Intercultural team teaching; (2) an active role for the home language (HL) in learning, and for Tiwi staff in teaching; and (3) Teaching empowering English for bilingual proficiency through academic learning.

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The evolution of a communicative, learner-focused and cognitive approach to language and literacy learning in two languages replaced the behaviourist literacy teaching methodologies in use at the time. The chapter has been written with the hope that it may inspire teachers and influence decision-makers given the positive outcomes of bilingual, biliterate and bicultural pedagogy as it was experienced through 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s.

The Bilingual Teaching Context

The aims of the Bilingual Program (Department of Education 1973) made clear that the goal in the early years of school was to teach students initial literacy in their home language, alongside oral English, as a base for later 'bridging' to English literacy in Year 4.

The Bilingual Program used the staircase model of bilingual instruction. Young children spent the majority of their time learning in HL. They were taught oral English for a small proportion of the day, which increased until Year 4, when there was a 50–50 time allocation to each language. From this point on, the fraction was reversed until the majority of learning time was through English in Year 7. The philosophy of the Program was that of a Maintenance Model of bilingual instruction; i.e., both languages were to be used in teaching at all year levels. However, as the Assistant Teacher (HL-speaking staff) allocation was reduced at Year 5, the program was a Transfer Model in practice. I taught 5-year-old children, who spent 90 per cent of their time learning in and through their home language, and 10 per cent of the day learning Oral English. At this time, two parallel language programs operated within the classroom.

Intercultural Team Teaching

My allocated grade had an enrolment of 39 and I taught with two Assistant Teachers (ATs). Together we made up the teaching team. I spoke English, the Tiwi teachers spoke Tiwi and English-as-an-Additional Language (EAL), so there was a linguistic imperative to have a bilingual, bicultural teaching team. Locally, the ATs were known as Tiwi Teachers. The naming was empowering in itself. From the beginning we expected to team-teach with the Tiwi teachers as equals. As a young teacher, I was not as experienced as any of the Tiwi teachers. They had each been teaching in those classrooms for between 5 and 12 years longer than I had. The Tiwi teachers taught in and through Tiwi during formal literacy lessons, when giving instructions, and for explanatory purposes and lesson management throughout the day.

During those first few years I didn't know what I didn't know. More importantly, I didn't know what the Tiwi teachers didn't know. It was more obvious that I didn't

know what they did know either! As the qualified English-speaking teacher in the teaching team, I was seen as the 'holder' of curriculum knowledge, by default. This was despite the fact that the Tiwi teachers held the HL curriculum knowledge. This would eventually be rectified.

In line with the Team Teaching model (Graham, this volume), the Tiwi teachers and I negotiated and developed our identified roles in the classroom. In the after-school *Planning Together* sessions, we prepared both the HL program and students' learning of and through English. I did my best to explain the nature of the skills and knowledge—in western Maths, Science, Physical Education, Social Sciences, Arts—to be taught through Tiwi or English. We talked through the activities (in English), gathered the required resources, and collaboratively wrote notes in our daybooks (in English, as I didn't understand Tiwi!). Practices for classroom routines, and planned intra-cultural and cross-cultural learning, became clearer as they were shared by each team member and thus became more reflective of bilingual teaching and learning. When cross-cultural *Learning Together* sessions were formalised within the school, we learnt how to exchange cultural information about learning and content, with each of us gaining more understanding of the other's culture and knowledge. This wasn't always easy, as these sessions could often become one-way knowledge transfer (of western learning by English speakers to Tiwi teachers). Maintenance of the two-way nature of learning and practice was crucial. The effort to maintain it needed to be continuous, especially given the high non-local teacher turn-over.

My Role as Monolingual English-Speaking Teacher in the Bilingual, Bicultural Teaching Team

My formal teaching time was initially 30 min/day of oral English. I acted as the class 'conductor' and support/mentor teacher in Tiwi instruction time. We grouped the children, Tiwi teachers each taught an aspect of the Tiwi literacy program, and I taught the day's oral English lesson to each group. We then moved on to Maths and other learning areas delivered through Tiwi, in line with the bilingual staircase model. I depended on the Tiwi teachers as the children understood them, and I did not speak Tiwi. I had only a general idea of what was being taught in those lessons, thus the necessity for bilingual, bicultural team teaching.

Team teaching in the Early Childhood years at MCS was further developed in 1980, when a colleague and I designed 'The Jirnani Approach' (Murray and Gastin 1980). As a larger teaching team of 2 teachers and 3 Assistant Teachers, we re-conceptualised our roles, resulting in greater equity of responsibility through shared planning, teaching and assessing of students, as they learnt through two languages. Each adult took responsibility for the learning of 14–15 students of the 72 students in total. The teaching was distributed amongst us.

Empowering English for Bilingual Competency in Academic Learning and the Development of Walking Talking Texts

To teach oral English, we were provided with a program made up of a series of scripted lessons, organised by strict grammatical structure; i.e., beginning with the verb 'to be' in present tense. The approach was 'situational' and we were tasked with creating contexts for oral English using the provided script. Trying to role-play real-life situations (such as formal introductions in English) in a Tiwi-speaking community, where such a specific cultural activity did not exist, was not effective. We could see these children thinking, "I know her name. She doesn't have to tell me again"! This mode of teaching English may have suited older learners, who may have understood the purposes of these artificially created English-language 'situations' that were not part of their personal life experiences elsewhere. However, it failed to take account of the socio/psycho-linguistic and communicative needs of the language learners. The oral English lessons were decontextualised and isolated from the rest of the day's activities. They had no pedagogical or conceptual link to the literacy skills being taught in Tiwi, or to other learning in the classroom. Repetition of words and phrases, with little comprehension of the utterances or their social purposes, predominated. It took a skilled teacher to create meaningful, motivational contexts for learning that linked to the child's interests and reality. This couldn't be guaranteed, given the high teacher turnover and the fact that most teachers were familiar only with teaching English-language-speaking students through English (still the case today). Thus, although the intention to establish oral English prior to bridging to English literacy had integrity, it wasn't effective in delivering the planned outcomes for academic achievement in two languages; i.e., for students to become competent bilinguals.

Crucially, children were missing the frequent, early, rich, scaffolded engagement with literacy practices and knowledge that precedes independent literacy in literate cultures. The desire to innovate pedagogy was led by a number of disconnects—decontextualised oral English and its link to life outside, other learning within the classroom and literacy instruction; the graphophonics program for Tiwi language and literacy learning and its link to the socio-cultural purposes of literacy in an oral culture; and finally, there was no clear link between teaching and learning for oracy and literacy. Pedagogical innovations of the time triggered our reflections. In the 1980s I and other colleagues were increasingly influenced by emerging English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL) theories that supported engagement by learners with meaningful print in authentic interactive learning contexts. These provided ways to explore the textual content and its cultural purposes, along with the syntax, semantics and the structure of texts. Movements in languages policy and practice in Australia, and in teaching EAL, led by linguists and academics such as Angela Scarino and Penny McKay reached us also (Scarino et al. 1988; Scarino and McKay 1991a, b). The early work of Cummins (1977, 1980, 1981), with concepts such as 'Common Underlying Proficiency' (CUP), and the difference between 'Basic Interpersonal

Communication Skills' (BICS) and 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP) would guide my thinking and ongoing development of methodology, as we set the NT Bilingual Program in the broader international context (McMahon and Murray 1999). Functional Systemic Linguistics would raise our awareness of text types, genres and language structures and features (Halliday 1985; Martin 1990). The work of Joshua Fishman brought into relief critical matters such as socio-linguistic aspects of bilingualism, language learning and language maintenance (Fishman 1972). Finally, in developing approaches to learning we were influenced by the Vygotskian theory of scaffolding and the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotsky 1978). Thus we became aware that equipping children with conversational oral English and home language literacy was important, but not enough for educational success, as evidenced in the 'bridging to English literacy' process in Year 4. The socio-cultural context in which the students were learning English was a 'Foreign Language' one, whereas the language demands of school required 'English for Academic Purposes'. The Walking Talking Stories/Texts approach was a response to this and was driven by the need to innovate a method on site.

Initially, there were reservations by Bilingual Program administrators to children being exposed to written English before Year 4. Permission was sought to integrate literacy experiences into the oral English program. Thus began the development of 'Walkin' Talkin' Stories'. This text-based approach used a rich piece of literature as the focus experience and incorporated frequent, language-rich exposure to and active engagement with written texts for the explicit teaching of oracy in this context. Informed by Vygotskian concepts of scaffolding, and Cummins BICS and CALP distinction (1980, 2000), a 'Petal Planner', with pedagogical descriptors was developed as the oral English program (Fig. 10.1). It comprised 17 communicative (listening and speaking) and practice activities, which developed interpersonal and academic oral language around a text/topic, in a scaffolded sequence. As such it broadened what had been a narrow and compartmentalised approach.

At this stage, the program was for young children learning Oral English. It did not teach independent literacy skills. The methodology was further developed into the Column Planner (Murray 1995) for students bridging to English literacy in Year 4, with a series of 42 teaching activities and exercises set out in a planned, scaffolded teaching sequence to teach interpersonal and academic language, including active literacy in English. Both planners integrated curriculum content using planned and explicit language teaching. The underlying philosophy of the methodology remains *Active Teaching and Learning* (Murray 1995, Fig. 10.2).

The 'Column Planner' for Years 4 and up added the active and explicit teaching of reading and writing in English to an oral language base. Through the sequence of activities and exercises as applied to the written text, teachers introduced, taught and contextualised new language for academic learning purposes. Students were actively scaffolded through authentic and iterative language learning activities, allowing them to learn and use language for learning, in a range of interactive learning contexts (academic modes).

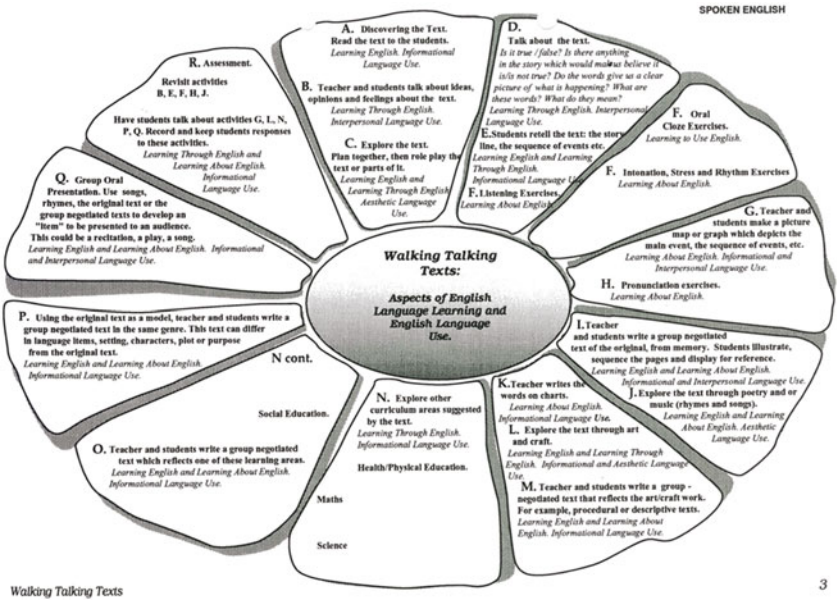

Fig. 10.1 Petal Planner (Murray 1981)

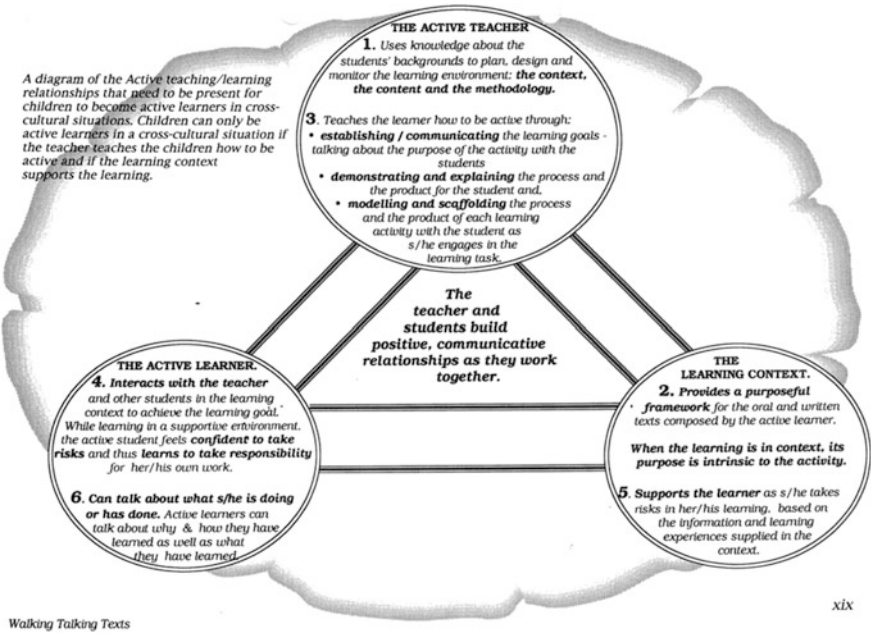

Fig. 10.2 Active teaching-learning triangle (Murray 1995)

These hallmarks were further emphasised in the revised version, 'Walking Talking Texts' (reprinted, 1995 NT Dept. Ed). In addition, the work of Functional Systemic Linguistics (Halliday 1985) had drawn attention to the range of genres beyond narratives and the importance of explicit teaching of the full range of text types (recount, procedure, exposition, report) for a range of audiences and purposes. While language analysis had always been a feature of the planning, this school of applied linguistics emphasised the importance of knowledge about textual structure in the range of (English) text types, thus the change in name from 'Stories' to 'Texts'.

An Active Role for HL in Learning and for Tiwi Teachers in Teaching

When I started teaching at Murrupurtiyanuwu School, Wurrumiyanga in 1978, the pedagogies used to teach initial literacy in Tiwi language and literacy learning did not reflect research on, and evidence of best practice in *language learning and literacy acquisition*. These advocated more interactive, integrated teaching/learning approaches for literacy as/for learning. Tiwi students come from oral (academic) home cultures. As such, purposes and contexts for 'print-based' skills/knowledge outside of the classroom did not exist, in contrast to the experiences of many bilingual students learning literacy in other education contexts.

When the program first started, the materials for teaching initial literacy consisted of five Tiwi reading 'Primers' based on the Gudschinsky Method (Gudschinsky 1973). This is a phonics-based, word-level approach, where students are taught to 'read' a word broken down to syllables. Words are constructed from syllables and known words became 'sight words'. These were combined for practice in reading phrases and sentences. The method was used to train speakers in third world countries to teach vernacular literacy to adults. While the content in the text (Tiwi creation stories) may have been familiar, the purpose of the phonics-only methodology for literacy learning did not seem clear to young learners, nor was it in fact effective (see Meehan, this volume). Children could read the words in the primers, but continued to struggle with unfamiliar text and additional content, as their exposure to print was limited to a few sentences learned through a grapho-phonic method, and one primer for many weeks at a time.

This literacy learning method did not reflect the experience-based and culturally embedded approaches that foregrounded cognitive engagement with and social purposes for literacy. These aspects of literacy acquisition were promoted by educational thinkers who had become influential at this time (Clay 1975, 1982; Holdaway 1979; Freire 1985; Vygotsky 1978). We saw no similarities between the Gudschinsky method and these social, cognitive, academic and collaborative, 'learning by doing and being' theories and philosophies of these practitioners and academics. We now understand the role of enculturation in relation to the acquisition of initial literacy in literate societies, and thus the need to teach literacy as a

cross-cultural activity to students from oral cultures (Cummins 2000). The methodologies of the time saw literacy as a skills acquisition process only. Further, the context for learning bore no resemblance to speakers of Standard Australian English (SAE) acquiring literacy in mainstream contexts. The existing pedagogy did not empower Tiwi teachers as teachers or Tiwi children as learners. It was a scripted approach demanding correct immediate recall by students, with no immediately applicable contextual/purposeful use of the skills. We needed to rethink the pedagogy. The development of additional materials and approaches required interplay between research and theory perspectives from outside and much exploration, practice and negotiation on the ground between local and non-local teachers.

In the mid-1980s I was the school's teacher-linguist, working with the Tiwi and non-local staff to implement the curriculum through two languages, and the Walking Talking Texts (WTT) methodology across the school for English language and literacy learning, in addition to supporting the integration of the Tiwi cultural program. Tiwi teachers observed the children engaging with the Walkin' Talkin' Stories methodology to learn English. They wanted to develop and teach a similar Tiwi program so that theirs would be more linguistically interactive and engaging. They wanted children to learn Tiwi knowledge and language in addition to literacy, from the texts they read. I began to work with Tiwi staff to develop Tiwi teaching programs, using rich written texts that engaged children in interactive, contextually relevant language and literacy learning experiences. As a result, the Tiwi teachers became actively engaged, especially as the group-negotiated Tiwi texts were constructed and displayed on the walls. Tiwi teachers and children revisited (Fig. 10.4) these regularly to engage in literacy practices and behaviours.

From Two Parallel Teaching Programs to a Bilingual, Bicultural Teaching Program

Developing the knowledge and skills needed by children demanded that appropriate pedagogies be developed for literacy and academic learning, including teaching both Tiwi and western concepts, as appropriate, through HL and English across the curriculum.

The 'Walking Talking Texts' (WTT) methodology evolved from classroom practice as a quest to improve oral English instruction. I had developed the 'Walking Talking Texts' methodology from the 'ground up', from my classroom practice, to improve oral English teaching. The evolution of the methodology was informed by the research in language and literacy learning at the time. In the 1970s the bilingual program focused on home language solely for HL literacy learning. It became clear in the 1980s that the HL was also needed for content and skills instruction across the curriculum.

The WTT methodology had shifted pedagogy from teaching reading by rote, to teaching listening, speaking, reading and writing as modes of learning. Crucial to this was integration across curriculum learning areas and explicitly using language

Fig. 10.3 Planning Together in a Bilingual Teaching Team

for academic purposes. The Do-Talk-Record strategy (Graham 1983) was included within WTT for cross-curriculum learning in both languages. This simple but effective cycle ensures the centrality of planned language teaching within a learning experience. Curriculum integration occurs at a given point in the WTT sequence. After the language for learning has been introduced and taught, it is linked to learning contexts and curriculum content. In our *Learning Together* and *Planning Together* sessions, the bicultural teaching teams began to plan the teaching of curriculum content integral to the concepts in the English and Tiwi texts (Fig. 10.3).

All curriculum learning began to be planned for and implemented through Tiwi in the early childhood grades in an integrated manner. This continued into the primary and secondary years for the time allocated in the staircase model. An example is the teaching of some initial western mathematical concepts in HL so that subsequent, symbol-based abstract mathematics concepts would have a conceptual base. This led to the development of a linguistically based mathematics scope and sequence at MCS to guide teaching teams in the choice of language of instruction for each Math's topic. In *Learning Together* sessions and daily planning, concepts were discussed to decide whether there were helpful analogous concepts across languages and cultures, or whether a concept was better taught though English. For instance, concepts of time were well taught in Tiwi, through moon cycles and seasons. This conceptual knowledge did not have to be replicated but later, when Western concepts of time were taught in and through English, the teachers could presume that students had a sufficient grasp of basic temporal concepts to move on to western notions of time measurement assisted by effective EAL/D teaching strategies.

Fig. 10.4 Tiwi teacher taking students on a classroom print walk based on teaching through a rich Tiwi text

The bottom line is that learning is started with and through something that the learners already know; i.e., their first language, and unfamiliar things, such as the second language, are introduced gradually and learned after a solid foundation in the first language has already been accomplished. A relevant metaphor here, is that of a bridge (UNESCO). Each side of the bridge represents a different language and culture. Members of both languages and cultures cross the bridge from their own starting points. The bridge facilitates members of either culture in crossing to and engaging with the other language and culture, strong in the knowledge that they can return to their own language and culture as their base at any time (UNESCO 2006).

The inclusion of conceptual learning in Tiwi allowed focused language instruction and exploration of some sophisticated Tiwi concepts and knowledge that would have been learned previously in more traditional living contexts, but to which the children were getting less exposure.

By the 1980s some language shift was evident at Wurrumiyanga. It was clear that children were developing a range of language styles and that Tiwi was under great pressure from English. At school, a dynamic language setting, it was important to have good planning for language use; i.e., it was important to be clear about which language and what level of language should be spoken to whom, when and by whom in learning. To provide as effective learning input as possible, school policy discouraged individual teachers from mixing languages in instruction, given the language shift occurring. The content of lessons determined the choice of instructional language and areas of the classroom were defined for language floods

in both languages. Surrounding children with rich written text that reflected the teaching and learning was essential to the methodology.

The uptake of Walking Talking methods by the Tiwi teachers impacted on their teaching practice. It moved them from a scripted, skills-based approach to an interactive, iterative approach based around a rich written text (Fig. 10.4). The purpose of developing a more engaging and research-based methodology was to help children achieve age-for-grade reading abilities in Tiwi, to enable them to bridge to English literacy at the same level, given a sound oral English base. Later results in literacy in two languages would demonstrate this, and were recognised in the 2004 National Literacy Awards.

The cross-cultural *Learning Together* sessions helped staff to share broader pedagogical knowledge about different ways of knowing and doing, and to develop a both-ways or two-ways understanding. In these sessions we built on new methods for teaching spoken English and incorporated additional teaching strategies for developing independent literacy in HL. Other schools such as Bamyili followed suit in collaboration with us. In this way 'the extended' petal planner became the conduit for teaching HL literacy in other communities. As other schools learned of the pedagogical shift at MCS, they used different visual forms of the methodology to distinguish between themselves and the Tiwi bilingual program: the Petal Planner changed form to the Turtle planner, the Goanna Planner, or the Snake planner and became the method for language, literacy and content teaching in home language in other bilingual schools across the NT for Kriol, Arrernte, Warlpiri and Yolngu Matha languages.

At MCS, the school Literature Production Centre (LPC) became a busy place with staff writing, illustrating and printing Tiwi literature including narrative, recount and factual/expository texts, for classroom use. Previously the focus of the LPC had been to make word and syllable cards according to the Gudschinsky method. The demand for Tiwi reading material increased in volume and also complexity, as teachers sought a greater range of content and higher level materials, as the students' knowledge and language skills developed through the grades. Indeed in many NT bilingual programs by the mid and late 1980s, Aboriginal people were beginning to use vernacular literacy to tell their own stories and knowledge, and there was an explosion of dreaming stories, information texts, procedural texts and many different visual texts representing cultural knowledge and practices (Gale 1994; also Bow, Christie and Devlin; Christie; Disbray and Devlin; Ross and Baarda, this volume).

At MCS, the additional literature allowed for broader content teaching in Tiwi by Tiwi teachers, and also for Tiwi cultural knowledge to have a place in the teaching and learning program. Previously, Tiwi tended to be used for teaching and learning Western skills (literacy transfer, explanation of some curriculum concepts), with some Aboriginal knowledge and skills. There had been some 'cultural time' when Tiwi teachers took the class for story-telling, dancing in family groups, and informing about the environment for a couple of hours per week. Until the development of the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework—Indigenous

Language and Culture (NT Department of Education and Training 2002), this cultural knowledge was recognised as additional to and outside of the curriculum.

The development of the Walking Talking Texts methodology and the growth of Tiwi literature and developing pedagogy for teaching across the curriculum expanded the range, content and contexts for teaching in and through Tiwi. This gave students important exposure to increased depth and range of topics, and the use of both languages for learning. This was a significant contribution to aspirations for language maintenance and development. More importantly, it enabled a schooling experience that engaged children cognitively by using a language that the children understood whilst they were learning an additional language. A detailed School Languages Policy ensured continuity of the processes and practices established, for many years to come, until central policy changes impacted negatively.

Closing

This chapter has tracked aspects of the development of successful bilingual and bicultural pedagogy. It has focused on the development of Walking Talking Texts, as a method for teaching English-as-a-Second-Language, and, in parallel, for teaching HL literacy, resulting in new formulations of the role of HL literacy in learning, and in Tiwi language and culture. Through the same pedagogy, students further developed their spoken Tiwi by engaging with texts on familiar and new topics, while learning initial literacy. They were taught spoken English through active engagement with visually and conceptually inspiring texts, enabling familiarity with the Western culture of schooling, its academic purposes and literate practices. The children became familiar with similar purposes, processes and products of literacy and language learning practices across two languages.

The Walking Talking Texts methodology empowered teachers (Tiwi and English L1 speakers), through knowledge about planning for, teaching and assessing students, through effective EAL pedagogy and explicit teaching of and through HL as facilitated by bicultural teaching teams. It also became the ‘way in’ to EAL teaching by English-speaking teachers untrained in this field. The WTT Column Planner was adopted as the EAL methodology for English-only schools as well as Bilingual Schools. WTT methodology’s biggest impact was in the power shift from the English-speaking teacher to shared power and responsibility within the teaching teams. Each teacher had the professional scope to deliver the unit of work in ways that met learners’ needs and reflected individual teachers’ strengths and abilities. For the first time, Tiwi teachers had control over their planning and the delivery of unscripted lessons in which children were engaged, and Tiwi teachers felt respected as teachers.

Recent policy shifts have seen these phases of innovation, capacity building and languages’ teaching thwarted, resulting in a narrowing of teaching and learning to test-driven literacy performance, and a recycling of original ineffective

methodologies, and in the 'foreign language' only. The use of English-only for learning is a rejection of effective teaching, and of the language maintenance and bilingual aspirations still held by many remote Aboriginal people.

Final Word

> *In contemporary society our children need to understand the significant things in our culture and in our traditional values and beliefs. It is important to keep our language strong and be able to use it effectively and influentially in our lives.*
>
> *We believe that our Tiwi children need quality education in Tiwi language and in our own traditional value and beliefs. (Leah Kerinaiua (RIP), Tiwi Principal, Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School, Bathurst Island, NT 2007)*

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