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Appendix 1:

The effect of deficit/difference perspectives on Aboriginal education in Australia

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THE EFFECT OF DEFICIT/DIFFERENCE PERSPECTIVES ON ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

1 INTRODUCTION

A primary point of departure in developing pedagogy with Aboriginal children has been upon the clash between 'deficit' and 'difference' perspectives carried in the critique Labov (1969) drew with respect the work of Bereiter and Englemann (1966) and also Bernstein's restricted and elaborated codes (eg. Bernstein 1962, 1965, 1971, 1972, 1973).

In the face of the 'deficit' perspective of Bereiter and Englemann (1966), Labov (1969) proposed an alternative 'difference' perspective which took as its basic working premise the assumption of logical equivalence between non-standard minority dialects and standard English. This new perspective was accompanied quite naturally by a rise in the educational influence of linguistics and linguists in Aboriginal education and a decline in the influence of educational psychologists who were largely associated with the deficit viewpoint. In their place arose a sociolinguistic tradition that took as a major research concern the establishment of the legitimacy of Aboriginal English and Aboriginal languages/dialects in general.

These developments provided the prevailing educational context within which the program at Traeger Park (eg. Gray 1980, 1985) evolved. In fact, Labov's (1969) study maintains, even today, a major influence on the field of Aboriginal education in Australia. It is useful therefore, to trace the development of both deficit and difference perspectives in Australian language research which has also attempted to draw implications for the education of Aboriginal children in mainstream schooling.

2 PSYCHOLINGUISTIC 'DEFICIT' APPROACHES TO ENGLISH LITERACY EDUCATION

In 1973, in response to movements in official Commonwealth Government policy away from one of assimilation based on notions of social evolution dating back into the latter half of the nineteenth century, Kearney, DeLacey and Davidson published *The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians*. In this book, these authors tried to bring together psychological and

psycholinguistic research which they saw as contributing towards the new vision of Aboriginal people as equal partners within a newly emerging multicultural Australia.

At the time the psycholinguists began their work, Australian linguists were not concerned to explore questions of the relationship between language and educational success. For example, Kearney, De Lacey and Davidson (1973) point this out in introducing the section of 'psycholinguistics' in their book, *The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians*.

It is noted that traditional linguists at work in remote Aboriginal communities are more concerned with recording intricate linguistic variation, than with those specifically Aboriginal dimensions of language and thought which appear to affect so much education and social adjustment. (Kearney, De Lacey & Davidson 1973:148)

The tradition in Australian linguistics was essentially descriptive and focused strongly on the documentation of Aboriginal languages and dialects. The psycholinguists, therefore, saw themselves to be working in partnership with linguists. Because of their concern with the measurement of cognition they considered that they could fill the thinking niche in the investigation of the relationship between language and thinking that traditional linguistics was ignoring.

2.1 THE VISION OF 'DIFFERENCE' HELD BY AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCHERS

It is interesting to note that Australian studies which employ assumptions and strategies that Labov characterised as 'deficit' saw themselves as attempting to define a position of 'difference' rather than 'deficit' in interpreting the failure of Aboriginal children in mainstream schooling. In the introduction to their book, Kearney et al (1973) refer to a '*now general acceptance of Aborigines as being **different but equal***' (p.x) . They also point to a marked upturn of interest in exploring an understanding of 'difference' as the goal of cross-cultural research. Therefore, it is useful to consider in what sense the notion was embraced by these authors. The approach to this issue taken by virtually all authors in Kearney et al's text was coloured by the then prevailing arguments about the genetic basis of inter-racial intelligence arising from the work of Jensen (1969). Kearney et al. (1973) and most other authors in the text they edited, saw themselves as countering Jensen's (1969) argument that intelligence differences as measured on IQ tests for American Negro children represented an instance of genetic inferiority.

The counter explanation these researchers proposed in place of the notion of genetic inferiority was that the failure of Aboriginal children on psychometric tests was a product of the children's home environment, in particular, the assumed 'culture of poverty' and dispossession in which the children were raised. Their position was that Aboriginal children were in a genetic sense both fundamentally and potentially equal to their mainstream peers who succeeded in schooling. However, assumed disadvantages Aboriginal children experienced in their environment ensured they were 'different' and less competitive. Thus,

the assumption of cognitive deficit remained although the presumed cause of this 'deficit' was now in some sense 'outside' the child (environmental) rather than inescapably intrinsic (genetic). This particular focus on difference as 'deprivation' was strongly evident in both of the studies listed by Kearney et al. as 'psycholinguistic' (ie. Nurcombe & Moffitt 1973; Hart 1973). Both of these studies focused directly on the 'inadequacy' of the Aboriginal English spoken by the children they studied and located the causes as *'the cultural deprivation which characterises this minority group within our community'* Hart (1973: 162).

In relation to the assumption of a 'culture of poverty', it can be said there is little doubt that poverty often creates conditions in which the exposure to and acquisition of 'literate' discourses is limited (eg. Huston 1991). Moreover, poverty contributes to disruption and disintegration of constructive social behaviour in families and this also creates situations that may limit exposure and control over literate discourse. It is also clear, even to the most casual observer, that the majority of Aboriginal people in Australia are consigned by mainstream society to the lower end of the socio-economic ladder. In fact many Aboriginal people, particularly those in remote country towns and settlements are forced to live in the most intolerable conditions of poverty. However, to characterise Aboriginal culture or even a 'community culture' as 'a culture of poverty' is erroneous.

Even at the present time, the tendency to characterise poverty and dispossession as 'culture' is not uncommon, as McLoyd and Wilson (1991) state in reviewing various social theories which employ this concept.

The centerpiece of many of these theories, especially those growing out of the 'culture of poverty' framework, is the personality characteristics of the parents. These characteristics are seen as stable, deficient, and maintained by intergenerational transmission of lifeways independent of poverty, even though they are thought to have developed initially as adaptations to the life conditions of poverty. (McLoyd & Wilson 1991:128)

Ultimately, as McLoyd and Wilson (1991) point out, the notion of a 'culture of poverty' is, in reality, an illusionary construct which provides a convenient mechanism for blaming the victim. In the culture of poverty perspective, the responses of individuals to conditions imposed upon them by the wider society are taken instead to be characteristic of their behaviour in general – to become cultural 'traits' symptomatic of a generalised way of behaving in any context.

McLoyd and Wilson (1991) propose that there is little empirical support for such a perspective and that it results largely from middle class prejudice. In studying the dysfunctional effects of poverty on mental health, psychological stress and child rearing practices among poor parents, they argue that what are essentially 'normative and situational responses to economic hardship' cannot be characterised as 'stable 'cultural' traits' (McLoyd and Wilson 1991:128).

Unfortunately, the psycholinguists' over reliance on the validity of their tests in establishing 'intelligence' as a general factor underlying cognitive performance led them to conclude that

Aboriginal children entering school came with a diminished cognitive capacity to deal with other than basic levels of complexity in communication in general.

The following sections 2.2, 2.3. and 2.4. will explore assumptions made by psycholinguistic studies in terms of Labov's (1969) critique of 'deficit' approaches to teaching non-Standard English speaking children. That is, they will focus on:

- 2.2. assumptions about the nature of language made by psycholinguistic researchers.
- 2.3. assumptions about teaching methodology made by psycholinguistic researchers.
- 2.4. assumptions about the nature of teaching content made by psycholinguistic researchers.

2.2. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE MADE BY PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCHERS.

The primary language assessment instrument employed by Nurcombe & Moffitt (1973) and Hart (1973) was the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities or ITPA (McCarthy. & Kirk 1961; Kirk, McCarthy & Kirk 1968). The ITPA was based on a theoretical model of the communication process that attempted to isolate the functions of various communication 'channels' (eg. auditory, visual, manual, vocal). Each channel was assumed to function in receptive and expressive modes. Subtests (ie. nine in the first edition and twelve in a revised edition) attempted to measure 'pure' functioning on each of these channels for both modes. For example, to measure visual decoding, children were shown a picture of an object, person or animal on one page and asked to select one that was similar from an array on another page. Some subtests attempted to measure 'integration' between pairs of channels. For example, in visual-motor association children were shown a picture of an object such as a guitar or a tea cup and asked to act out what they would do with it.

Researchers using the ITPA with mainstream children had found a significant level of correlation between performance on the ITPA and academic attainment, particularly with literacy (eg. Hart 1970; Bateman 1963; McLeod 1967; Kass 1966). The ITPA was also used extensively in the early seventies to assess the so called 'cognitive linguistic' ability of Australian Aboriginal children. In all cases, significant patterns of difference were found between mainstream Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal children with Aboriginal children scoring well below their mainstream culture peers (eg. Hart 1968; Foggitt 1969; Teasdale & Katz 1968). However, since these early studies, the validity of the ITPA has been seriously questioned even with mainstream culture children and the test has now fallen from use (eg. Sigmon 1987). This decline was largely due to the fact that the appropriateness and effectiveness of language development programs based on the model were comprehensively criticised (Hammill & Larsen 1974; Kavale & Mattson 1983; Myers & Hammill 1982; Newcomer & Hammill 1976; Mercer 1987).

It is, however, useful to speculate on why such large 'deficits' were found when the test was used with Aboriginal children. It is proposed here that for the most part assumptions to do with generalisability of test items were particularly misleading. There is, for example, an assumption that all testees come from a context in which it is potentially possible for them to acquire the content knowledge that is tested by the test. In this regard, the ITPA failed badly because many of the items contain a high level of cultural bias.

Moreover, in many ways, the administration of such a test to Aboriginal children represented the type of reasoning problem proposed by Luria 1934, 1976; Harris 1980; Scribner & Cole 1981. In these types of problems, respondents with control over 'literate' discourses adopted a specific 'decontextualised' focus on 'what the words mean' within the text itself (Wertsch 1990). This can be compared to a 'contextualised' focus which tried to make sense of the questions in a manner that privileges the child's experience over the specific wording of the text. For example, Harris (1980) posed the following syllogism to both remote area Aboriginal and urban non-Aboriginal children,

All Wallabies on Groote Eylandt are Yellow
I went to Groote Eylandt and saw a Wallaby,
What colour was it?

Harris found that Aboriginal children tended to answer *brown* while non-Aboriginal children were more likely to say *yellow* because they were prepared to accept the pretend world of meaning created by the words. This work replicated findings reported by Luria (1934, 1976) among non-schooled peoples in Central Asia. It has also been replicated in a number of other cultural contexts and shown to be developed through exposure to schooling (refer Wood 1988). This second answer indicates a privileging of the 'logic' that is internal to the text rather giving priority to the logic of contextual reality. Both responses are logical. It is just that the assumption of premises as a point of departure creates two different 'rationalities' – one of which is located solely with reference to the wording (decontextualised) and another which ignores the wording and relies on common sense experience (contextualised).

If this understanding is carried over to, say, performance on the Auditory Association subtest of the ITPA a parallel can be drawn. On this subtest, a child who is presented with the questions '*grass is green, sugar is...?*' or '*an elephant is big, an ant is...?*' must accept, as ground rules for responding, that the second statement is to be interpreted on terms set by the first (ie. decontextualised or academic/literate assumptions). Consequently, the child must respond with '*white*' in the first instance because the response parameters are set by the choice of colour (*green*) in the first part of the question. Likewise, the child must respond with '*little*' in the question about ants because the category (*size*) is set by the first statement. They can not draw from their commonsense experience and say for example '*sugar is sweet or sticky etc.*' because these will not be accepted in the marking protocols (ie. they must pay attention to 'what the words mean' in the manner of literate/academic discourses. This

feature biases the test such that it evaluates 'induction into literate discourses' rather than what the psycholinguists thought of as a generalised 'intelligence'.

Furthermore, in a more general sense, when the same children who do not adopt a focus on 'what the words mean' also do not interpret questions as a means through which knowledge is displayed and shared in the manner of academic/literate discourses, their confusion is likely to be compounded even further (Harris 1980; Heath 1982; Unsworth & O'Toole 1993; Gray 1990).

When such factors are considered, it can be argued strongly that the poor performance of Aboriginal children on the ITPA is essentially an artefact of their inexperience with literate discourses. Support for such an interpretation can be found in other studies that have explored the impact of decontextualised literacy on test performance with mainstream children. It has been proposed (eg. Donaldson 1978; Goodnow 1981; Olson & Torrance 1983; Light 1986; Wood 1988) that the performance of different groups of children on Piagetian tests of cognitive development does not measure the development of 'intelligence' in any generalised sense. Rather, these researchers claim performance differences can be interpreted in terms of the kind of orientation to language adopted by the children in framing and responding to Piagetian learning tasks. This argument is significant, given the results of research into the performance of Aboriginal children on Piagetian tests which show them to function significantly below that of their Anglo-Australian age peers (eg. Seagrim & Lendon 1980).

However, at the time of the early psycholinguistic research discussed above, no substantial critical analysis of tests such as the ITPA was available. The psycholinguists discussed above, therefore, saw the ITPA as identifying and measuring fundamental cognitive deficits in dealing with language processing in a generalised sense. Consequently, Aboriginal English was easily seen as a language form through which these deficits were communicated. And, in the early seventies, a major effort was mounted to develop teaching programs based upon these psycholinguistic assumptions.

Two initiatives, in particular, strongly influenced the national agenda for the education of Aboriginal children. These two programs will be discussed briefly in this study. The first project was the 'Project Enrichment of Childhood Experimental Preschool' located at Bourke in north western New South Wales (eg. Moffitt, Nurcombe, Passmore and McNeilly 1973; Nurcombe and Moffitt 1973). This project aimed at early intervention for Aboriginal children and was commonly referred to as 'Project Enrichment' or 'The Bourke Project'. The second was the Queensland Department of Education Van Leer Program (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1970). This program also focused on early childhood intervention and was based on the research of Hart (1973). It was developed by a team of curriculum developers in the Queensland

Department of Education and funded by the Van Leer Foundation. It was a major and highly influential program in Australian Aboriginal education (eg. refer Kaldor and Malcolm 1982).

Each of the above programs adopted somewhat different approaches to achieve their goals, although they both ultimately drew on similar assumptions about the nature of the language difficulties faced by Aboriginal children in mainstream schools. Because of this the reality of their presentation to children was much the same.

In developing a perspective on the language of Aboriginal children, the members of the research team developing the Project Enrichment of Childhood, for example, Nurcombe and Moffitt (1973), simply moved from the information gained through the ITPA to the acceptance of assertions about 'disadvantaged' language by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) that were directly criticised by Labov (1969). Nurcombe and Moffitt did not study the language of Aboriginal children. Rather, they directly translated Bereiter and Engelmann's statements about Black English speakers to the Australian context. For example, they constructed the following 'typical' image of the 'culturally deprived' Aboriginal child.

His parents, moreover, are poor language models. Not only is his vocabulary limited, but his syntax is impoverished. He lacks efficient schemata of transformation (sic) by which word combinations can be manipulated in the service of rational thought. His communication skills are therefore limited and predominantly descriptive in nature. His capacity to discriminate between sounds, words and phrases is poor and he appears to 'hear' sentences or phrases as wholes or 'giant-word units' (Bereiter and Engelmann, 1966). There is little corrective feedback from those around him. (Nurcombe & Moffitt 1973:131)

This quotation constituted a synopsis of the perspective developed in Bereiter and Engelmann (1966).

The Queensland Van Leer Program, in contrast, did draw upon extensive comparative data collected from Aboriginal and mainstream children. However, the relationship assumed between *language, thought and action* (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971:iii) was identified as similar to that proposed by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) and represented a very superficial interpretation of Bernstein's (1962, 1965, 1971, 1972) notion of restricted and elaborated codes following Bereiter and Engelmann (1966).

It has been shown that different social systems are characterised by a diversity of relationships. This gives rise to different linguistic codes. For example, where a social system emphasises need to maintain rapport and solidarity within the group, this gives rise to a restricted linguistic code. On the other hand, a structure which emphasises individual differences and long term goals leads to a more elaborated code.

Children whose language is of the latter type are better able 'to explain, to describe, to instruct, to enquire, to hypothesise, to analyse, to compare, to deduce and to test' (Bereiter and Engelmann 1966) (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971:iii)

Here, restricted code was taken to be reflected in the difference between the word and word sequence use by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children. It was assumed that if Aboriginal children were taught the language structures of SE (Standard English) "*then this accomplishment should facilitate their cognitive development*" (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971:iv).

However, in the Van Leer Program there was some recognition of the need to move away from the strict Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) perspective. This possibly reflected attempts to accommodate to the kinds of criticism of compensatory programs provided by Labov (1969), for the Van Leer Program developers claimed,

The children will continue to live their lives in their home settings. It is not the intention of the program to alienate them from their own people or to diminish the potency of their Ab.E. (*Aboriginal English*). If this were to happen, the children would lose the ability to communicate readily with their parents and other members of their own community; this would result in loss of feelings of security and would lead also to emotional impoverishment. Teachers must ensure that they avoid any impression of derogating Ab.E. (Dept of Ed, Qld. 1971:iv)

Under no circumstances should the teacher convey to the child a suggestion that his spontaneous language forms are not acceptable. The continuing aim is the encouragement, not the inhibition, of the child's desire to talk. (Dept of Ed, Qld. 1971:vii)

The validity of the children's own form of communication must not be questioned. Their experiences are regarded as something of infinite worth to be used as the starting point of the program. (Dept of Ed, Qld. 1971:xi)

It is difficult to know what to make of such statements when they are taken in conjunction with the earlier one which clearly proposes that Aboriginal English as a language system is inferior. Moreover, despite the rhetoric of acceptance, when the ideological positions discussed above were translated into classroom programs, the reality was very often little more than a direct attack on the children's dialect. This issue is examined below.

2.3. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT TEACHING METHODOLOGY MADE BY PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCHERS.

Once again both the Project Enrichment of childhood and the Van Leer Program employed methodology that was fundamentally similar although considerable superficial difference appeared to exist. Following Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), the teaching methodology employed in the Bourke Project adopted what has come to be known as a direct instruction approach. This approach concentrated on the teaching and drilling of syntax with what can only be referred to as minimal regard for meaning and context. Syntax was not presented as part of any functional discourse or text.

The following examples give some indication of the nature of the approach. The first extract deals with the teaching of 'identity statements' at the start of the teaching program.

1. Adopt a stereotyped procedure.

- a. Present an object and give the appropriate identity statement. **'This is a ball'**
- b. Follow the statement with a *yes-no* question. **'Is this a ball?'**
- c. Repeat the question and encourage the children to answer it.
- d. Introduce *what* questions after the children have begun to respond adequately to the *yes-no* question. (Bereiter & Engelmann 1966:140)

In these activities, meaning exists in the sense that the statement is accompanied by an appropriate object. However, the syntax is certainly not presented as part of any purposeful interchange. As the teaching activities progress, this difficulty is exacerbated to a confusing degree. For example,

Introduce the undetermined *if-then*. This one is very important in logical thinking. Refer to the big squares of the model presented at the beginning of this section. Present the appropriate *if-then*. 'If a square is big, a square is white. Then pose the problem. 'I'm thinking a square that is not big. What do you know about it?' The children may indicate that it is not white. Correct them. Point out 'You don't know. Maybe it's not white, and maybe it is white. If it's not big it's little. And if it's little, it's white, *or* it's red.' (Bereiter & Engelmann 1966:184)

or the following,

The verbs of the senses should be differentiated from each other in the different kinds of experience they describe. 'Does this hat *sound* red?...No this hat does not *sound* red; this hat *looks* red. Does this hat *smell* red? (etc)'. These distinctions may be further dramatised by objects that elicit contradictory sense impressions - things that look heavy but feel light (Bereiter & Engelmann 1966:189)

The poverty of this focus on solely on syntax is striking. Children were presented with a sea of essentially meaningless elements of syntax and left to their own resources to build from them an effective 'tool' for constructing meaning. Moreover, at the same time, they were denied the important cultural knowledge about language use in literate discourse.

Because it derived from similar assumptions about the nature of the relationship between language and thinking, the methodology of the Van Leer Program at least in its original conception, was in most fundamental respects similar to that employed in the Bourke Project.

One area, however, in which the Van Leer Program did differ from the Bourke Project was in the emphasis given to the teaching of reading. However, in the main, children were presented with reading activities which provided no access to literate discourse. This was because writing activities were structured around the reading and writing of what was essentially 'oral language written down'. For example, in a mime game called *What am I doing?*, the children were encouraged to mime an activity and then to say first who they were, *I'm Peter etc.* and then what they were doing, *I'm skipping etc.*'

when each child has announced what he was doing, his story is written down and 'read' by the group. At the end of the game, all the stories are re-read by the children and the teacher. (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971:30-31)

Similarly, books, poems and songs were written to contain various 'language sequences' children were using in oral activities. The difficulty with this approach was that none of these 'Standard English' language patterns represented the kind of members' resources important for serious for control over literate discourse.

Moreover, even though the Van Leer Program attempted to provide a broader and more flexible basis for teaching than that which was typically considered to represent the 'direct instruction' model of Bereiter and Engelmann, the reality in application was quite different. This occurred despite attempts to make activities more relevant and interesting through disguising them as games. For example, the following lesson format is proposed for developing use of 'plural s'.

'Which One Went Away' Memory Game

(Language unit: plural 's')

....Three or four cards illustrating plural forms are placed in a row and are named by the children. To give further practice in the use of plural 's', the

children may name pictures as teacher or a child points, eg. *cats, trees, babies*.

The children are then told to look 'hard' at the pictures because one of them will go away. While children's eyes are closed, the teacher removes one of the pictures. The children open their eyes and the teacher asks, 'Which of the pictures went away?' In answering a child must use the final 's'. eg.

Teacher: Which picture went away?

Child: Cat

Teacher: We didn't have 'cat' in this game
Here it is in the box. (Display singular form)
Now try again. Think hard. Which picture went away?

Child: Cats

If one child cannot supply the plural form, another child may be able to assist. Throughout the game, children are given experience both in listening to and saying the plural form. (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971:34)

This activity employs, in fact, the 'stereotyped' procedure described previously in relation to the Bereiter and Engelmann approach. Moreover, it illustrates one of the most damaging features of this kind of approach to teaching within artificial activities, with language that is 'disembodied' from meaningful function.

Activities such as those illustrated above, make it difficult for teachers to implement the earlier provisos that "*Under no circumstances should the teacher convey to the child a suggestion that his spontaneous language forms are not acceptable*" and "*The validity of the children's own form of communication must not be questioned*". This kind of teaching interaction, in fact, poses a direct challenge to the children to replace use of one structure which is functional within their normal everyday language system with another, for no apparent reason except to comply with teacher authority to demand change. Thus, not for the first or last time, teachers were given an ideological interpretation and then encouraged to employ strategies that in the reality of the classroom conflicted strongly with it.

2.4. ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF TEACHING CONTENT MADE BY PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCHERS.

Labov, in elaborating the erroneous steps of reasoning he criticised in 'deficit' programming assumptions, pointed to the fact that any structure present in middle class speech was taught to Black English speakers without any regard for relevance. In making this point, Labov (1969) drew attention to the haphazard range of language structures that were presented to the children in compensatory programs.

An indication of just how haphazard such selection was is demonstrated if one considers the limited amount and narrow scope of language knowledge that was presented the Bourke and Van Leer Programs. Following the Bereiter and Engelmann (1966) program, Moffitt, Nurcombe, Passmore and McNeilly (1973) summarise the teaching content of the Bourke Project in the following manner.

The minimum goals of the structured programme are to develop the ability to use both affirmative and *not* statements in response to question and command; the ability to use polar opposites (eg. *fast,-slow*) ; the ability to use the prepositions *on, in, over, under and between* ; the ability to name positive and negative instances in four categorical classes (tools, clothes, furniture and food); the ability to perform simple *if-*

then deductions; the ability to use *not* and *or* in simple deductions; the ability to name basic colours plus black, white and brown; the ability to count objects up to ten, to count aloud to twenty, and to one hundred with help at the decade points; and the ability to distinguish printed words from pictures. (Moffitt, Nurcombe, Passmore & McNeilly 1973:138-139)

While the writers specify these as 'minimum', the use of this term in this context is essentially precautionary rather than signifying the core of a far more extensive program. The point remains that such a limited set of teaching goals cannot provide any realistic basis for educational success.

In concert with the Bourke Program, the Van Leer Program can also be criticised in relation to the amount and nature of the language knowledge offered to the children. If one inspects the paucity of content taught over the first year, for example, the picture in terms of providing access to 'literate' discourse is quite alarming. The following table (1) is extracted from the first three teaching manuals of the Van Leer Program, (Dept of Ed. Qld. 1971, 1973, 1973a. This table outlines the schedule for the introduction of new language structures to the children over the first year of the Program.

Table 1
Schedule for the introduction of new language structures, Van Leer Program first year

VAN LEER PROGRAM- INTRODUCTION OF ORAL LANGUAGE STRUCTURES BY WEEK FOR FIRST YEAR				
(five week blocks-each column contains structures for one week)				
Weeks 1-5				
I'm	Prepositional phrases	definite article	she	revision
Weeks 6-10				
he's he is I/he/she can't	can you I'm going to	past tense	I went	revision
Weeks 11-15				
I saw	she's she is	it's/it is here's/here is this is	that's that is	revision
Weeks 16-20				
we are we're	feminine gender she/her	(noun) are	you are	revision
Weeks 21-25				
-Inversion quest (beginning with 'is/'are') -phrases introduced by 'at' (at school at the store)	they are use of 'said'	(noun/pronoun) are going to (We are going to..) are you going to	revision	revision
Weeks 26-30				
-possessive 's' (mummy's dress) -possessive pronoun 'my' -phrases introduced by 'to' (to town) (to the jetty)	possessive pronouns my/his/her	use of 'has'&'have' present tense (I have 2 eyes...) (Barbie has...)	possessive pronoun- your	revision
Weeks 31-35				
use of 'not' (It's not round)	simple past tense (I jumped)	(noun/pronoun) + don't -(I don't want/ like/know) (Cars don't float)	pronouns of objective case -him her us you them	revision

Inspection of this list indicates that children were presented with an extremely limited range of linguistic resources.

The question that must be raised once more is the following: 'What do the children actually learn even if they do manage to master the curriculum presented to them?' Moreover, the language structures presented in the programs were so basic that it is difficult to imagine that most Aboriginal children would not be already familiar with them. One is also entitled to ask just how gaining control over so few seemingly trivial aspects of syntax can contribute significantly to educational success.

The net reality of teaching programs framed within the psycholinguistic perspective was that they simply drilled (sometimes under the guise of 'games') an undifferentiated form of 'middle class English' syntax that was characterised as 'standard English' which was of little value to Aboriginal learners in their quest to gain access to academic discourses. Moreover, this new grammar of standard English was presented to the children in such a manner that the children's habitual responses using Aboriginal English were continually confronted in circumstances that were invariably confusing for the children. Consequently, the methodology represented little more than a direct attack on the linguistic competencies that Aboriginal children brought with them to school.

Labov's (1969) critique of 'deficit' methodology, therefore, had considerable impact upon Aboriginal education in the Australian context. However, in providing a strong argument for the rejection of the 'deficit' perspective and its associated methodology, Labov opened questions about the nature of the perspective on language that should replace it. Moreover, it will be proposed that Labov, at the same time, also failed to address issues to do with notions of discourse and discourse access. It is important, therefore, to consider carefully the position taken by Labov on this issue. Furthermore, it is important to follow the effect of Labov's alternative 'difference' perspective on the direction of research on Aboriginal English in Australia. Section 3, below, will review Labov's seminal paper on this issue (Labov 1969). This review will be followed by section 4 which will then explore a range of subsequent attempts to incorporate Labov's 'difference' perspective into research concerned with issues of access to mainstream education for Australian Aboriginal children.

3. LABOV'S ASSUMPTIONS IN DRAWING UP AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE 'DEFICIT' POSITION

Labov's major focus in his 1969 paper was to assert the logical validity of non-standard English as a linguistic system. This discussion will not disagree with the position that non-standard dialects such as Aboriginal English are 'logical' in the sense Labov employed. However, it will be proposed further that the impact of Labov's work on research into the English of Aboriginal children in Australia has produced a mixed blessing. On one hand, it has provided for a greater awareness of the complexity and validity of Aboriginal English by educators. However, on the other hand, it has resulted in lack of attention to and even active attempts to suppress other questions vital to providing access for Aboriginal children to

academic/literate discourses and educational success in mainstream contexts. Moreover, it will also be proposed that constructs such as ‘standard English’ and ‘Aboriginal English’ lack the necessary precision to deal with many important educational questions.

Labov’s construction of ‘logic’ as an undifferentiated property of dialect ignored the distinction drawn between ‘logic’ and ‘rationalities’ drawn earlier (section 2.2). Furthermore, his construction of language difference as little more than stylistic variation without recourse to notions of differing discourse function allowed no scope for the validity of culturally situated concepts of difference such as those proposed by Bernstein (1971). Labov (1969) in effect makes critical reference to Bernstein’s notions of restricted and elaborated codes. Indeed, Labov’s 1969 paper is held by some authors (eg. Harkins 1994) to have significantly undermined the validity of Bernstein’s work. However, it will be proposed that Labov’s ‘critique’ does not engage in any meaningful academic sense with Bernstein’s work and that notions of ‘code’ in the sense that the term is used by Bernstein are fundamental to the development of adequate explanations of cultural difference.

The above introductory section has raised fundamental issues to do with Labov’s 1969 paper which have impacted upon the manner in which questions to do with the education of Aboriginal children have been addressed in the Australian context. These are:

- *The nature of ‘logicality’ established between non-standard and standard English.*
- *The nature of the critique addressed towards ‘middle-class’ speech as well as the nature of the construct ‘middle-class speech’ formulated by Labov (1969).*
- *The nature of the implications for language development in mainstream education arising from Labov’s (1969) critique.*
- *The nature of Labov’s critique of Bernstein’s notions of elaborated and restricted codes.*

The following sections (3.1; 3.2; 3.3 & 3.4) will, therefore, discuss the nature of Labov’s conclusions in respect of each of these issues.

3.1 THE NATURE OF ‘LOGICALITY’ ESTABLISHED BETWEEN NON-STANDARD AND STANDARD ENGLISH.

As the previous introductory discussion has already stated, the central argument developed by Labov (1969) to establish the ‘logic’ of non-standard English drew upon the analysis of a text produced by Larry, a non-standard English speaker. To explore the particular interpretation of the term ‘logic’ that Labov proposed, it is necessary first to reproduce some of his discussion. The main section of text that he analysed is given below.

- Larry: You know, like some people say if you're good an' shit, your spirit goin' t' heaven . . . 'n if you bad, your spirit goin' to hell. Well bullshit! Your spirit goin' to hell anyway, good or bad.
- JL: Why?
- Larry: Why? I'll tell you why. 'Cause you see, doesn' nobody really know that it's a God, y'know, 'cause I mean I have seen black gods, pink gods, white gods, all color gods, and don't nobody know it's really a God. An' when they be sayin' if you good, you goin' t' heaven, tha's bullshit, 'cause you ain't goin' to no heaven, 'cause it ain't no heaven for you to go to. (Labov 1969:341)

Labov then proposed that translating Larry's NNE into 'SE equivalents' allowed access to the logical form of the passage.

Larry presents a complex set of interdependent propositions which can be explicated by setting out the SE equivalents in linear order. The basic argument is to deny the twin propositions

- (A) If you are good. (B) then your spirit will go to heaven.
- (-A) If you are bad (C) then your spirit will go to hell.

Larry denies (B), and asserts that if (A) or (-A), then (C). His argument may be outlined as follows:

- (1) Everyone has a different idea of what God is like.
- (2) Therefore nobody really knows that God exists.
- (3) If there is a heaven, it was made by God.
- (4) If God doesn't exist, he couldn't have made heaven.
- (5) Therefore heaven does not exist
- (6) You can't go somewhere that doesn't exist.
- (-B) Therefore you can't go to heaven.
- (C) Therefore you are going to hell.

(Labov 1969:341)

The format presented above, however, did not correspond to the sequence in which Larry presented his argument. Therefore, Labov demonstrated how the above format could be retrieved from Larry's text. He abbreviated this and simply used the appropriate numerals to represent the propositions.

(C), because (2) because (1), therefore (2), therefore (-B) because (5) and (6). Part of the argument is implicit: the connection (2) therefore (-B) leaves unstated the connecting links (3) and (4), and in this interval Larry strengthens the propositions from the form (2) Nobody knows if there is... to (5) There is no... Otherwise the case is presented explicitly as well as economically. (Labov 1969:342)

Although this is a legitimate way to give this information, the presentation format makes it hard for the reader to follow the argument and therefore interrogate Labov's conclusions. Consequently, the sequence is reconstructed below using the propositions from Labov's earlier 'translation' into 'standard English equivalents' of Larry's argument.

Larry denies (B), and asserts that if (A) or (-A), then (C).

- (C) Therefore you are going to hell.
(If you are good or bad you are going to hell)

because (2)

- (2) nobody really knows that God exists.

because (1)

- (1) everyone has a different idea of what God is like.

therefore (2)

- (2) nobody really knows that God exists.

Part of the argument is implicit: the connection (2) therefore (-B) leaves unstated the connecting links (3) and (4),

- (3) *If there is a heaven, it was made by God. (Implicit)*

- (4) *If God doesn't exist, he couldn't have made heaven. (Implicit)*

therefore (-B)

- (-B) you can't go to heaven.

because (5 & 6)

- (5) heaven does not exist
and

- (6) You can't go somewhere that doesn't exist.

Following this statement, Larry was challenged by the interviewer over the logical 'fallacy' (Labov 1969:342) that his argument leads to the rejection of hell as well as heaven and was

asked 'Well, if there is no heaven, how could there be a hell?' Larry responded to the effect that 'This is hell right here'. Labov interpreted this response as 'quick, ingenious and decisive' and proposed that the '(3-4-5) argument was 'denied since hell is here'. He went on to note the speed and precision of Larry's thinking and commented that he did not wander from the point or indulge in useless verbiage.

The question is: 'What has Labov proved by this analysis?' Labov's primary objective was to dispel the notion that the speech of students like Larry represents,

...a failure to master the use of structural words and inflections which are necessary for the expression and manipulation of logical relationships. (Bereiter & Englemann 1966:42).

It seems clear that Larry's speech cannot, under any circumstances, be characterised in such terms. It is also possible to agree that Larry is, 'a skilled speaker with great 'verbal presence of mind' who can use the English language expertly for many purposes' (Labov 1969:343). However, the demonstration of logic that Larry provides is one that is constructed within a different 'rationality' to that employed in academic discourse which operates upon different ground rules and assumptions for the interrogation of such questions. Consequently, if one examines Larry's argument from an academic perspective it does not stand as a particularly strong one. For example, one can not really get away with arguing that just,

- (1) because everyone has a different idea of what God is like
- (2) therefore nobody really knows that God exists
- (4/5) and finally because of (1) and (2) that God (and by implication heaven) therefore does not exist!

To argue that God does not exist because nobody really knows whether he does or not is tautological. Moreover, the proposition that everyone has a different idea of what God is like could be invoked to argue just as easily that, therefore, God does exist because of the implied universality of the concept despite differences in superficial descriptive detail. Similarly Larry's argument that heaven does not exist because 'this is hell right here' is less than decisive as a means of dealing with the question within the ground rules of academic rationality.

Yet, in comparing this text with the one produced by Charles M, the 'educated' standard English speaker, Labov concluded that Larry's text was in fact logically superior. A point that not everyone (eg. Honey 1988, Edwards 1988) has conceded. Instead, these writers proposed that Labov's interpretation at the very least overstated his case. Edwards (1988) pointed out:

...Labov has overstated his case. Labov feels that the direct, unqualified response of the lower-class adolescent, compared to the qualified and uncertain reply of the middle-class adult, shows the power and, indeed, the superiority of the former. The lower-class patterns are quick and decisive; the middle class ones, verbose and redundant. As I have noted (Edwards 1979), however, qualification and redundancy probably reflect an educated awareness of longstanding complexities attaching to abstract and important problems. This awareness is completely lacking in the Adolescent's jejune comments. (Edwards 1988:195)

The question that arises from these comments is how is the 'logic' of Larry's text to be interpreted? In the sense that Labov proposed, Larry's speech is certainly logical, and demonstrates considerable presence of mind and wit. Although, at the same time, Larry's 'logic' was in other ways rather problematic. In this respect, the relevance of Labov's use of the term 'logic' to make differential judgements about the worth of 'middle class and 'lower class' speech needs to be questioned.

Labov uses the term 'logic' in a kind of absolute sense to make general statements to the effect that one form of discourse is considered more or less 'logical' than another. As earlier discussion in section 2.2 has pointed out, it is possible to produce texts in both oral and literate discourses that can be considered 'logical'. However, the basic assumptions and ground rules upon which the logic is constructed is very different in each kind of text. There are at least two 'logics' (rationalities) involved in making such comparisons:- one which privileges 'what the words say' and treats the text as a 'closed system' and another which privileges 'what the words mean' in the experience of the individual. While Labov demonstrates the logicity of Larry's speech, his formulation of the nature of 'logic' itself does not address such issues.

Consequently, Larry's text can be seen as functional and valid in the sense that it realises the kind of rationality that is functional and highly effective in the kind of 'street rapping' contexts in which the type of 'hypothetical arguments' Labov (1969) refers to take place. In such contexts, it is important to be able to mount a decisive argument in a very direct and absolute manner in order to cut off speakers with potentially challenging counter arguments and so dominate the interaction as much as possible. In this context, a qualified, hesitating argument such as that Labov claims for Charles M would be a distinct disadvantage. Consequently, if such a text were judged in this context it would be largely non-functional.

However, by the same token, when Larry's argument is laid out as a written text and positioned within academic discourse, the immediacy of his response, his categorical decision making and careful orchestration of his peer group status count for little. His argument is open to more careful reflection which, in the context of academic writing, requires the addressing of a different kind of rationality. It is a major deficiency in Labov's analysis that he is not prepared to entertain the notion that different discourses can promote different kinds of rationality and consequently, different kinds of thinking and reasoning. Instead, he employs the notion of generalised 'logic' to stand as an inadequate metaphor for thinking and reasoning.

In fact, it is proposed here that the notion that a text constructed in one discourse can be 'retranslated' into another discourse to demonstrate logical equivalence, other than at the most fundamental level of syntax and meaning, is exceedingly naive. If, for example, 'logical equivalence' holds between discourses in the kind of absolute sense that Labov proposes, why should children be given access to the 'ways with words' which characterise academic

discourse? Labov's perspective glosses this issue in terms of whether non-standard English speakers should be taught 'standard English'. Labov (1969) does, to a degree, respond to this issue although his response is both dismissive and inadequate. He proposes that the issue is essentially one of accommodating to a stylistic convention.

why not write in NNE, then, or in your own nonstandard dialect? The fundamental reason is, of course, one of firmly fixed social conventions. All communities agree that SE is the 'proper' medium for formal writing and public communication. (Labov 1969:343)

However, Labov does add enigmatically (for he never explains why or how it might be so) that:

Furthermore, it seems likely that SE has an advantage over NNE in explicit analysis of surface forms. (Labov 1969:343)

He then promises to return to the issue in a later discussion of 'grammaticality'. However in this later discussion he considers the notion of grammatical difference and logical equivalence with respect to superficial syntactic differences between NNE and SE. From this discussion he concludes that NNE forms are clearly as 'logical' as their SE 'equivalents'. And, while this argument by Labov does serve to refute the simplistic interpretations of deficit in teaching approaches based on Bereiter and Engelmann's (1966) interpretation of NNE, it does not take the discussion beyond that point to consider possible 'advantages' in SE.

Instead of such a discussion, Labov shifts focus and proposes that it would be 'useful' to consider an analysis of 'middle class informal speech'. In making the distinction inherent in this formulation, Labov presumably differentiates between middle class informal speech and other non specified functional speech and written variants (presumably including academic/technical speech/writing). However, he does not carry this differentiation through his following discussion and in the process manages to achieve a rather dubious rhetorical slide from the criticism of middle class informal speech to academic and technical discourse in general. Furthermore, in the process of this critique he manages to dismiss also the work of Bernstein regarding elaborated codes. Consequently, it is proposed here that Labov's efforts both with respect to the critique of middle class informal speech and the critique of academic and technical discourse that he offers by means of association require careful scrutiny. The following section (3.2) will first explore Labov's critique of middle class informal speech. It will then consider the relationship he draws between middle class informal speech and academic/technical discourse. Following this discussion, the following section 3.3 will consider Labov's critique of the work of Bernstein.

3.2 THE NATURE OF THE CRITIQUE ADDRESSED TOWARDS 'MIDDLE-CLASS' SPEECH AND THE NATURE OF THE CONSTRUCT ITSELF

In addition to the different interpretations of 'logic' and 'rationality' discussed above, there is also considerable difficulty concerning Labov's subsequent undervaluing of the role of academic or literate discourse in relation to Larry's speech. Labov achieves this without

directly analysing academic or technical texts but rather through association with the informal speech of an 'educated middle-class speaker'.

In order to construct a more practical discussion of this undervaluing, it is useful to turn to the text Labov (1969) provides from the 'educated middle-class speaker', Charles M. This text is given immediately below. In inspecting this text, it is possible to explore the extent to which it can be considered 'analytical' and representative of literate discourse.

CR: Do you know of anything that someone can do, to have someone who has passed on visit him in a dream?

Charles M: Well, I even heard my parents say that there is such a thing as something in dreams some things like that, and sometimes dreams do come true. I have personally never had a dream come true. I've never dreamed that somebody was dying and they actually died, (Mhm) or that I was going to have ten dollars the next day and somehow I got ten dollars in my pocket. (Mhm) I don't particularly believe in that, I don't think it's true. I do feel that in certain cultures there is such a thing as witchcraft, or some sort of *science* of witchcraft; I don't think that it's just a matter of believing hard enough that there is such a thing as witchcraft. I do believe that there is such a thing that a person can put himself in a state of *mind* (Mhm), or that - er - something could be given them to intoxicate them in a certain - to a certain frame of mind - that - that could actually be considered witchcraft. (Labov 1969:344) (*italics in original*)

For Labov, this text reveals that Charles M is '*something less than a first rate thinker*' (Labov 1969:346). His capacity for logical thought, his rationality and his intelligence is highly questionable. He uses 'OK' (ie. technical) words to cover up his lack of substance and, in effect, is needlessly verbose. In fact, he does not even know himself what he is saying. Those readers who think he does have something to say are simply fooled by their own prejudice. It is simply their '*long conditioned reaction to middle-class verbosity*' (Labov 1969:346) that leads them from the 'truth'.

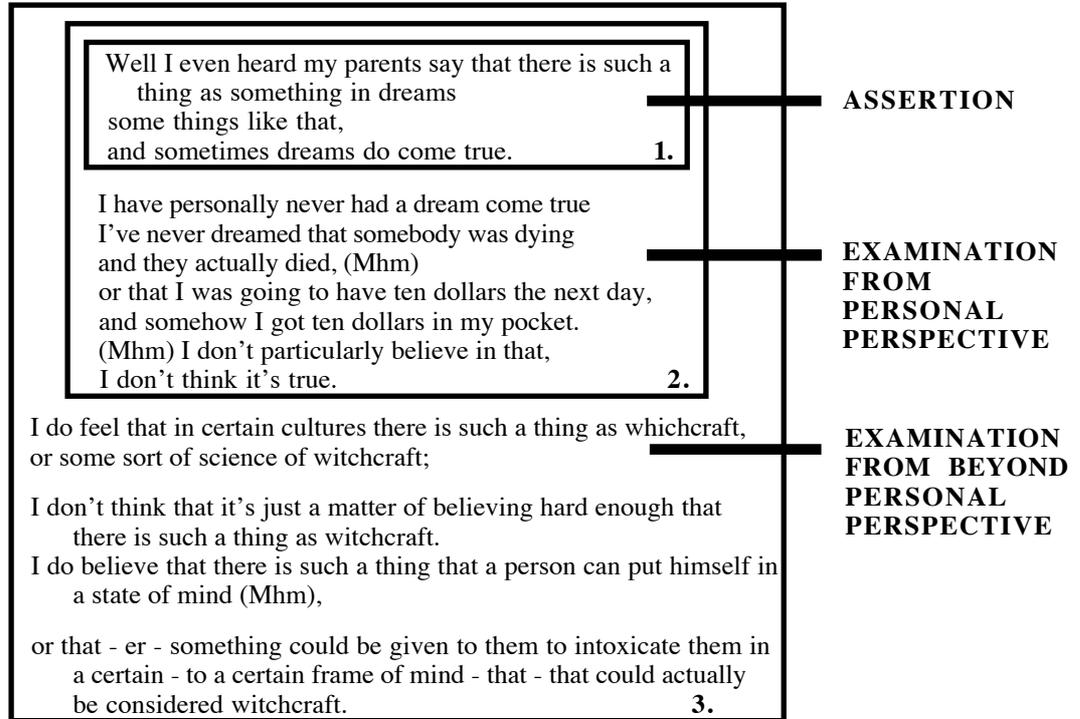
Without the extra verbiage and the OK words like *science*, *culture* and *intoxicate*, Charles M. appears as something less than a first rate thinker. The initial impression of him as a good speaker is simply our long-conditioned reaction to middle-class verbosity: we know that people who use these stylistic devices are educated people, and we are inclined to credit them with saying something intelligent. Our reactions are accurate in one sense: Charles M. is more educated than Larry. But is he more rational, more logical, or more intelligent? Is he any better at thinking out a problem to its solution? Does he deal more easily with abstractions? There is no reason to think so. Charles M. succeeds in letting us know that he is educated, but in the end we do not know what he is trying to say, and neither does he. (Labov 1969:346)

In the face of such a damning condemnation, it seems that Charles M's text has very few redeeming features indeed. It would seem that there is very little chance that such a text could be constructed as 'analytical' in any meaningful sense. However, it is proposed here that it is possible to take such a perspective with this text and that an analysis constructed from this viewpoint contradicts very directly the interpretation imposed on the text by Labov.

In defence of Charles M's text, Honey (1988) points out one feature that is positive in this respect. This is that Charles M manages to produce an extended text in response to a single question, whereas Larry's response is dependent on continued probing and questioning on the part of the researcher. It is useful, therefore, to examine the manner in which Charles M structures this as an extended text which is influenced by his knowledge of literate

discourses. Figure 1 below proposes the text is staged in a 'nested' manner with an assertion and two stages of 'unpacking' or elaboration of the initial assertion.

Figure 1
Text organisation of argument from Charles M. in Labov (1969) – Text taken from Labov (1969:344)



Each stage in the unpacking of this text represents an extension of the generalised assertion in the initial statement. Charles M addresses this assertion first of all from his own personal experience with dreams. He states that he has never had a dream come true and then offers two more explicit examples to illustrate the point he is making. He then draws the tentative conclusion that from the narrow personal perspective he is considering, the assertion is most likely untrue. Charles M is not assertive and definite in the manner of Larry because he acknowledges within the text that his own personal experience is not sufficient evidence to draw a correct inference that would affirm the initial assertion. Because of this realisation, he makes a choice to employ modifiers which specifically target the nature (or manner) of his thinking on the issue, specifically - *'I have personally never had... and I don't particularly believe...'* Choice of these helps to realise the distinction Charles M is making here between personal and other kinds of evidence. He does not treat the assertion in the same manner that Larry does in his text. Charles M's focus here is not his own personal reality in the absolute sense invoked by Larry. Charles M's personal reality comprises just one set of evidence that can be brought to the task of determining 'what the assertion means'. In this sense, Charles M brings a different frame of reference to the task than Larry does: one that is attempting to develop the semantic potential of the text (eg. Wertsch 1990).

This attempt to develop the 'semantic potential' of the text can be seen even more clearly in the second unpacking stage in Charles M's text. In this stage of the text, Charles M seeks to enlarge the semantic reference of the initial assertion beyond his own personal experience to consider the notion that the assertion may be true from other perspectives. He makes a perfectly rational link from the narrow focus of natural dreaming to the kind of artificial 'dreams/hallucinations' that can be achieved through experiences with various states of altered consciousness occasioned through self hypnosis/meditation and the use of drugs. In attempting this, he makes the kinds of language choices found in the statements within the last stage. He employs the phrase '*in certain cultures*' (circumstance of location) as point of departure in an opening clause to thematise explicitly the fact that he is broadening his reference from the previous focus on narrow personal experience. It serves to contextualise a potential new meaning for the initial assertion the text is considering. In moving into this new semantic realm, Charles M recognises the need to define it as an entity within his text. He first of all tries '*such a thing as witchcraft*'. However, he rejects this first attempt at a definition for one which is more precise, ie. '*some sort of science of witchcraft*'. Why does he do this? The answer can be found in the rest of his text. He chooses '*science*' as an appropriate term to use because he wishes to distinguish the interpretation of witchcraft he is applying here from a haphazard simplistic and essentially non-active process that involves merely believing in witchcraft.

I don't think that it's just a matter of believing hard enough that there is such a thing as witchcraft.

The definition of witchcraft he is searching for is a much more considered and systematic process than this. It involves the active and considered practice of witchcraft. So, we see him attempting to develop a suitable definition of the kind of witchcraft he is seeking to construct as an entity within his text.

I do believe that there is such a thing that a person can put himself in a state of *mind* (Mhm),
or that - er - something could be given them to intoxicate them in a certain - to a certain frame of mind - that - that could actually be considered witchcraft.

In seeking to achieve this definition in this last unpacking, Charles M is struggling with the development of suitable language resources through which to construct the meanings he is trying to convey. These resources are represented largely within the embryonic clusters of items which stand as a type of 'complex noun' within his statements. That is,

such a thing as witchcraft
some sort of *science* of witchcraft
a matter of believing hard enough that there is such a thing as witchcraft
such a thing that a person can put himself in a state of *mind*
a certain frame of mind - that - that could actually be considered witchcraft

Each of these 'nominal groups' plays an important role in building what was referred to as 'grammatical metaphor' (Halliday 1985a, 1994, Halliday & Martin 1993). For example, actions such as 'believe' are established as entities 'a matter of believing' within the text - as things

which become referents for further construction of meaning. Here the nature of 'belief' itself becomes a matter for reflection and conjecture within the confines of this particular text. Such building of definitions (in this instance) is one means through which a focus on the 'semantic potential' of the text is realised within the text itself. That is, 'what the words mean' is constructed as an explicit entity within the text.

When Charles M's text is viewed from this perspective, it is difficult to portray it in the derisory terms that Labov employs. It is very difficult to characterise Charles M as someone *'who does not even know himself what he is saying'* (Labov 1969:346). Charles M's oral text may not be as well constructed and complete as one he would write if he were allowed to research, reflect on and rework the topic and produce a written version of his text. However, in the context in which it is produced, this is also its strength. Charles M had been asked to respond with little reflection or research to what he rightly saw as a complex issue, one which involved an extension of knowledge beyond that which he currently possessed. Within the context of a literate discourse, his tentative and qualified 'rough draft' is an appropriate response. It can be said at the same time that Charles M's text would not be functional if he was trying to upstage Larry in front of his peers on a street corner in the neighbourhood but that is not what he was trying to do when he produced the text. In effect it would not construct the kind of rationality required - whether it could be argued to be just as 'logical' would be beside the point.

In responding to Labov's intensely dismissive interpretation of this text, it is difficult not to take the view that Labov's myopia was rather selective and subject to some prejudice of his own. This apparent selectivity adds further to methodological concerns expressed earlier regarding 'retranslation' of texts across discourses in the manner of Labov. For example, he reduces Charles M's text to a series of disconnected propositions that make a complete travesty of the nature of the meaning Charles M is trying to convey:

1. Some people say that dreams sometimes come true.
2. I have never had a dream come true.
3. Therefore I don't believe (1)
4. But I believe in witchcraft.
5. I don't think witchcraft is just a belief.
6. A person can put himself in a state of mind that is witchcraft. (Labov 1969:344-345)

Furthermore, virtually everything else in the text is dismissed as 'verbiage'. He claims that *'Proposition (3) is stated twice for no obvious reason'* yet when Larry does this in his text Labov frames it as *'in this interval Larry strengthens the propositions from the form (2) Nobody knows if there is... to (5) There is no...'* (Labov 1969:342). He makes no mention of the fact that this 'strengthening' from *'nobody knows - to - there is no'* is not a logically acceptable change. Seemingly, where Labov can carefully add implicit propositions to bolster Larry's argument, he demonstrates a rather mystifying lack of sensitivity when he comes to deal with Charles M's text. He cannot see that there is any link between the first stage of the text dealing with dreams and the next stage dealing with altered states of consciousness. In

fact, he claims to not understand the last section at all. For example, he greets Charles M's attempts to develop specificity in the last section of his text, ie.

I don't think that it's just a matter of believing hard enough that there is such a thing as witchcraft.
I do believe that there is such a thing that a person can put himself in a state of *mind* (Mhm),
or that - er - something could be given them to intoxicate them in a certain - to a certain frame of mind - that - that could actually be considered witchcraft.

with dismissive comments such as *'Is witchcraft as a state of mind different from the state of belief?'* (Labov 1969:345). Charles M clearly intended this to be the case and with good reason. Moreover, in relation to the last sentence, Labov comments, *'The vacuity of this passage becomes more evident if we remove repetitions, fashionable words and stylistic decorations'* (Labov 1969:345). This sentence cannot be characterised in this way. Furthermore, removing the repetitions actually improves the sentence, eg. *'or that something could be given to intoxicate them to a certain frame of mind that could actually be considered witchcraft'*. The 'fashionable word/s' appears to be *'intoxicated'*. To remove this word would certainly take away meaning, but that would not be the fault of Charles M. Presumably, Labov means for it to be replaced. However, he gives no suggestion as to what this 'less fashionable' word might be. Finally, the stylistic decoration appears to be *'in a certain frame of mind'*. This, as the previous discussion has argued, is a fundamental component of the definition of witchcraft that Charles M is attempting to build within the text. Other rather wilful misunderstandings abound, to mention just two: the word *'culture'* is introduced because it *'lets us know that the speaker knows about anthropology'* (Labov 1969:345) and Labov challenges *'What is a science of witchcraft as opposed to just plain witchcraft?'* (Labov 1969:345) in a rather gratuitous approach to Charles M's search for precision. It is interesting that most of these 'choices' occur in the last stage of the text in which Charles M is attempting to move away from personal response to dreams.

Labov's argument concerning the nature of the texts from Larry and Charles M, centred as it is around his notion of 'logicality', is clearly inadequate. It does not matter if Larry's text is more 'logical' than that of Charles M, as Labov argues, or if Charles M's text is more 'sophisticated' than Larry's, as Honey (1988) and Edwards (1988) maintain. Larry's and Charles M's texts are simply artefacts of different perspectives on reality. Larry's text may be argued to be effective as a relative example within the oral discourse in which it is functional. Charles M's oral speech may not be as successful as literate discourse when the demands for explicitness and structure appropriate to written text or formal presentations (eg. lectures, talks etc) within that discourse are considered. However, the nature of each of these texts says nothing about the adequacy of the discourses in general. Although, it is possible to claim that, given different contexts of culture, either text may be more functional than the other.

What is significant to the argument in this study is that inspection of Charles M's text indicates that the kind of language resources he brings to the task of interpreting his world differ markedly from those possessed by Larry. Charles M's text reveals an orientation towards the deployment of language resources in a manner that is consistent with the building of meaning generally within the literate discourses. To say this does not mean that Charles M is perfect in this regard. It does not mean, for example, that Charles M necessarily has a significant amount of control over these resources at the level required to engage as a fully initiated participant within a particular academic discourse. However, it is clear that he has access to a particular *way with words* (Heath 1982) which is oriented towards participation in such discourses and which governs his characteristic response to communicating information in the kind of context in which Labov's questioning places him.

Larry's text, on the other hand, makes it abundantly clear that Larry does not possess such communicative orientations. Nor is he likely to be able to marshal language resources in pursuit of these orientations. To this extent, Larry is more likely than Charles M to experience difficulty in engaging with academic/literate discourses such as science, maths, history and so on. As Labov (1969) himself points out, Larry's discourse is antithetical to the educational discourse promoted through schooling

We see many speech events which depend on the competitive exhibition of verbal skills: sounding, singing, toasts, rifting, louding - a whole range of activities in which the individual gains status through his use of language. We see the younger child trying to acquire these skills from older children - hanging around on the outskirts of the older peer groups, and imitating this behaviour to the best of his ability. We see no connection between verbal skill at speech events characteristic of the street culture and success in the schoolroom. (Labov 1969:339)

To propose, in response to the above disjuncture, that the speech of speakers such as Larry is 'logical' is one matter. However, Labov does not leave his argument at that point. He continues on with a rather glib dismissal of the importance of the language in 'technical and scientific books' in his discussion. Consequently, Labov's argument through which he seeks to establish such irrelevance requires careful attention.

Labov's main argument in this regard takes the general position that sometimes texts produced within academic discourses are not well presented or well written.

It is true that technical and scientific books are written in a style which is markedly 'middle-class'. But unfortunately, we often fail to achieve the explicitness and precision which we look for in such writing; and the speech of many middle-class people departs maximally from this target. All too often, 'standard English' is represented by a style that is simultaneously overparticular and vague. The accumulating flow of words buries rather than strikes the target. It is this verbosity which is most easily taught and most easily learned, so that words take the place of thought, and nothing can be found behind them. (Labov 1969:347)

In the light of the previous discussion, it can be argued that this analysis tells us nothing about the functionality of technical and scientific writing. Labov simply asserts that most of the time scientific and technical writing is non-functional. He provides no evidence for this assertion and implies also that it is academic scientific and technical language that is at fault

because some writers do not write explicitly. Such an argument clearly begs the issue concerning the functionality of well written technical and scientific books.

Labov also achieves a rather dubious 'slippage' between 'middle-class speech' and the style of writing in scientific and technical books. In doing this, he manages to construct a decidedly negative image of scientific and technical discourse which the reader is led to believe is also characteristically over particular and vague in a manner which 'buries rather than strikes the target'. This is an unjustifiably dismissive statement even for the time it was written. However, it is particularly so when it is considered in the context of current research into the functional nature of scientific and technical discourse (eg. Martin 1985, 1990; Halliday & Martin 1993).

It is important to note also that this kind of dismissive statement is repeated consistently throughout Labov's 1969 article. In the extract below, for example, Labov moves from 'working-class speech' to 'middle-class speech' to 'academic writing' in a totally seamless manner with no regard for the functional distinctions involved in such a process.

Our work in the speech community makes it painfully obvious that in many ways working-class speakers are more effective narrators, reasoners and debators than many middle-class speakers who temporize, qualify, and lose their argument in a mass of detail. Many academic writers try to rid themselves of that part of middle-class style that is empty pretension, and keep the part that is needed for precision. (Labov 1969:340)

To say that working-class speakers *are more effective narrators, reasoners and debators than many middle-class speakers who temporize, qualify, and lose their argument* begs a whole range of issues and potential qualifications. What can he say about the those 'middle class speakers' who are not incompetent in these areas? Is the reader to assume that education has no effect on the ability to reason and debate? Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Labov's own writing contains much of the temporizing and qualification that he seems to think is so destructive to middle class speakers and academic discourse. This occurs especially when he deals with comparisons between middle class/academic/technical language and working class speech. For example, this can be illustrated even on the previous two quotes by removing some of the language choices which 'temporize' and 'qualify'.

It is true that technical and scientific books are written in a style which is ⁽¹⁾ markedly 'middle-class'. But unfortunately, we ⁽¹⁾ fail to achieve the explicitness and precision which we look for in such writing; and the speech of ⁽²⁾ middle-class people departs maximally from this target. ⁽³⁾ 'standard English' is represented by a style that is simultaneously overparticular and vague. (Labov 1969:347)

⁽¹⁾ often; ⁽²⁾ many; ⁽³⁾ All too often

Our work in the speech community makes it painfully obvious that ⁽¹⁾ working-class speakers are more effective narrators, reasoners and debators than ⁽²⁾ middle-class speakers who temporize, qualify, and lose their argument in a mass of detail. ⁽³⁾ academic writers try to rid themselves of that part of middle-class style that is empty pretension, and keep the part that is needed for precision. (Labov 1969:340)

⁽¹⁾ in many ways; ⁽²⁾ many; ⁽³⁾ many

Removal of linguistic devices for ‘temporizing’ and ‘qualifying’ from the above extracts renders their content vulnerable to easy challenge by removing Labov’s choice to mitigate the absolute nature of his comparison. The use of temporizing and qualifying is clearly functional although it does, at the same time, point to Labov’s need to deal with instances of ‘middle class style’ that are not ‘*empty pretension*’ and which are ‘*needed for precision*’.

Labov continues to link his critique of ‘middle class speech’ to academic discourse in other places. For example, some of his examples are considered below. One example dismisses the speech of middle-class children in school.

In high school and college middle-class children spontaneously complicate their syntax to the point that instructors despair of getting them to make their language simpler and clearer. (Labov 1969:340)

Apart from the fact that this is a rather dubious assertion offered with no evidence at all, an initial point to make here is to ask whether this really is what drives instructors to despair? One might quibble that this is a relatively minor problem when compared to the difficulty teachers face in dealing with children who lack the resources to compose an academic text in the first instance. However, even when this issue is ignored, one can quite properly ask what literate resources are possessed by those children who don’t ‘*spontaneously complicate their syntax*’? Surely those literate resources are the ones to which failing children need to be given access?

A second example focuses on academic discourse. Academic writing is again characterised as dysfunctional.

In every learned journal one can find examples of jargon and empty elaboration - and complaints about it. (Labov 1969:340)

What is a reader to make of such a statement? How does it demonstrate that academic discourse is not functional? One might counter that in every learned journal one can also find examples of incisive and effective critical writing. In fact, in most learned journals, one stands an infinitely better chance of being published if one’s writing is typical of the former rather than the latter. In regard to this example also, a similar question can be posed. That is, what literate resources are required to produce effective academic writing? Furthermore, later in his discussion Labov is once again extremely dismissive of the proposition that there may be some functional purpose in what he terms ‘middle class forms’. For example,

The explicitness and precision which we hope to gain from copying middle-class forms are often the product of the test situation, and limited to it. For example, it was stated at the start of this paper that working-class children hear more well-formed sentences than middle-class children. (Labov 1969:347)

What Labov is trying to achieve with this kind of discussion is never clearly spelt out. Is it that ‘middle class speech’ might be associated in some speakers with muddled thinking and that this consequently constitutes a rationale through which it can be damned by association? There is certainly the tenor of this rhetorical device in Labov’s writing. For example, not once

is there any mention of the possibility that ‘working class speech’ might under some circumstances be inadequate. Two points can reasonably be conceded to Labov’s discussion here. One is that the ‘working class speech’ he presents is logical both in a general sense and within the rationality that it addresses. The second is that ‘middle class speech’ is potentially illogical. However, by the same token, the converse of this statement should also hold. That is, ‘middle class speech’ is potentially logical both in a general sense and within the rationality that it addresses. Moreover, it must be admitted that ‘working class speech’ is also potentially illogical. Likewise, Labov’s implication that there is something wrong with academic and technical discourse because some people do not use it effectively is rather strange.

It has been pointed out (eg. Cazden 1988) that Labov did not deny the need to provide access to academic discourse. In a strict sense this is true. Labov was careful to ‘qualify and temporise’ his statements with respect to this issue as earlier examples have illustrated. However, it is proposed here that the rhetorical style through which he attacked the relevance and validity of academic discourse was overly dismissive. Labov’s critique of academic and technical writing along with his failure to differentiate clearly between discourses of this kind and informal middle class speech carried an extremely negative evaluation of academic discourse that was not mitigated in any way by a concern to understand or admit the potential functionality of middle class speech/ academic and technical speech/writing. In such circumstances it is hard to escape the conclusion that the need to provide access to academic discourse was for Labov essentially a peripheral concession of little significance for the education of non-standard English speakers. This is born out when one examines the difficulty Labov has in deciding what language resources should be provided in the name of promoting academic success in schooling for non-standard English speakers.

3.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

The strength of Labov’s (1969) assertions that academic writing was largely the pretentious use of language made it difficult for him to say what language resources might need to be taught to speakers of non-standard English. Labov does concede that,

There are undoubtedly many verbal skills which children from ghetto areas must learn in order to do well in school situation, and some of these are indeed characteristic of middle-class verbal behaviour. (Labov 1969:339)

However, in attempting to develop this issue Labov is rather vague and quite unhelpful to educators keen to provide these skills to their children. He goes on to name them as,

precision in spelling, practice at handling abstract symbols, the ability to state explicitly the meaning of words, and a richer knowledge of the latinate vocabulary, may all be useful acquisitions. (Labov 1969:339)

In the light of Labov’s focus on difference as a matter of style only, it is interesting to note that even this limited list of literate resources necessary for success in education is qualified

by the use of 'may' indicating the reluctance with which Labov concedes their relevance. The list itself is so vague that it is of little benefit to teachers requiring information on what language resources might be of assistance to non-standard English speakers seeking mainstream education.

The dismissive nature of Labov's approach to this question is again highlighted by his next statement. First of all, he makes the point that not all '*middle-class verbal habits*' (Labov 1969: 339) are necessary for successful education. This is a useful observation especially when taken in context with the indiscriminate drilling of 'Standard English' structure in the 'deficit' programs he was attacking. He then goes on to say that,

Before we impose middle-class verbal style upon children from other cultural groups, we should find out how much of this is useful for the main work of analysing and generalising, and how much is merely stylistic - or even dysfunctional. (Labov 1969:339-340)

This is also, of course, quite useful advice. However, having conceded a need to find out this information, Labov spends the next two paragraphs attacking the 'dysfunction' of what has been represented in this study as literate discourse in comparison to the speech of 'working-class' people. The rationale behind this comparison is again that literate or academic discourse is 'dysfunctional' because some speakers and writers employ it badly.

It is proposed here that the failure to accord other than token significance to the need for minority groups to acquire access to academic discourses is a major weakness of Labov's analysis. However, as later discussion of Australian linguistic research will show (section 4), it is a perspective that has influenced greatly the attitudes and decision making of major researchers who have made recommendations for the education of Aboriginal children.

Moreover, it is proposed that Labov's linguistic constructs of 'middle class speech' and 'working class speech' along with even 'non-standard Negro English' and standard English are inadequate for dealing with issues to do with the notion of discourse. And, it is in terms of the relation between the kind of linguistic system construct employed by Labov and the realisation of particular system constructs in different discourses that Labov's (1969) critique of Bernstein's restricted and elaborated codes needs to be reframed. The following discussion will first review Labov's critique and then outline a more appropriate interpretation of Bernstein's concepts.

3.4 THE NATURE OF LABOV'S CRITIQUE OF BERNSTEIN'S NOTIONS OF ELABORATED AND RESTRICTED CODES

It needs to be remembered that Labov mounted his critique against the simplistic interpretations of the nature of language held principally by Bereiter and Engelmann (1966). It is often assumed by educators that Labov's work represents a definitive critique of the work of Bernstein. In particular, the study is used to dismiss, out of hand, Bernstein's more sophisticated interpretations of the relationships that exist between language and thought even

though at no stage in Labov's (1969) paper does he directly reference any of Bernstein's research. Labov (1969) does mention Bernstein. However, as was the case with Labov's critique of 'middle class' or 'academic' language, criticism is once again mounted through 'association' in the text. This time the critique rests upon others who have taken particular interpretations of Bernstein's concepts.

Is the elaborated code of Bernstein really so 'flexible, detailed and subtle' as some psychologists believe (Jensen 1968 p.119)? Isn't it also turgid, redundant, and empty? Is it not simply an elaborated style, rather than a superior code or system? (Labov: 1969:340)

Labov does indicate that he is aware that differences can be drawn between the simplistic interpretations he selects to critique and those of Bernstein. However, he chooses to dismiss rather than engage with Bernstein's ideas in this respect.

When Bernstein described his 'elaborated code' in general terms, it emerges as a subtle and sophisticated mode of planning utterances, achieving structural variety, taking the other person's knowledge into account, and so on. But when it comes to describing the actual difference between middle-class and working class speakers, we are presented with a proliferation of 'I think', of the passive, of modals and auxiliaries, of the first person pronoun, of uncommon words; these are the benchmarks of hemming and hawing, backing and filling, that are used by Charles M., devices which obscure whatever positive contribution education can make to our use of language (Labov 1969:347)

It is, in fact, not clear from Labov's (1969) paper whether he intended his critique to extend to an attack on Bernstein's work in its own right. If he did, his failure to address Bernstein's work directly renders such an attack as having limited merit. As Hasan (1988) puts it,

I am not impressed by horror stories of how 'a garbled account' of Bernstein's theory has caused havoc in schools (Rosen & Rosen 1973, Burton 1983, etc.); how it has vitiated teaching; and how it has made them denigrate the working class child. It is not that I doubt the veracity of these reports: these things may well have happened, but they are not logically inherent in Bernstein's theory. (Hasan 1988:87)

Earlier discussion of the deficit position in this paper has pointed out (section 2.2) that fundamental to the deficit position was an automatic assumption based on performance in psychometric evaluation (in Australia - primarily with the ITPA) that the supposed 'cultural deprivation' in home environment of Aboriginal children was responsible for a generalised cognitive/linguistic processing deficiency that required compensatory remediation. In conjunction with this, Aboriginal English as a dialect was considered inherently limited and largely incapable of functioning as a complex semiotic system.

The position argued in this paper has, in contrast, to do with the notion that different discourses realise different rationalities or systems of meaning potential. It may be that functioning within an unfamiliar discourse will require a person to acquire new lexicogrammatical structures that the learner may not have encountered before. However, the point of issue exists at a level which is deeper than many generalisations of semantics allow, for example, beyond the level of a speaker's ability to express 'causality' or 'consequence' in some generalised notion of logicity of the kind Labov formulates in his 1969 paper. Fundamentally, access to academic/literate discourses requires access to specific ground

rules and assumptions underlying the construction of rationalities which are realised through the configuration of certain language resources in characteristic ways. Furthermore, it is vitally important to note that all children and not only Aboriginal children must learn a considerable amount of language knowledge and competence in order to control the academic discourses promoted through schooling.

For Bernstein, the distinction between elaborated and restricted codes rests not upon whether the child 'knows' particular language resources in some generalised sense at the level of lexico-grammatical semantics. Rather, Bernstein is primarily concerned with speaker's ability to employ those resources in context. As Bernstein (1973) puts it.

I am required to consider the relationship between language and socialisation. It should be clear from these opening remarks that I am not concerned about language, but with speech, and concerned specifically with the contextual constraints upon speech. (Bernstein 1973:174)

In discussing a comparison of examples of restricted and elaborated codes from 'working' class and 'middle' class children he expands upon this issue.

Again, working-class children have access to a wide range of syntactic choices which involve the use of logical operators, 'because', 'but', 'either', 'or', 'only'. The constraints exist on the considerations for their use. Formally framed contexts used for eliciting context-independent universalistic meanings may invoke in the working-class child, restricted speech variants, because the working-class child has difficulty in managing the role relationships which such contexts require. This problem is further complicated when such contexts carry meanings very much removed from the child's cultural experience. (Bernstein 1973:179)

I must emphasise that because the code is restricted it does not mean that speakers at no time will not use elaborated speech variants; only that the use of such variants will be infrequent in the socialisation of the child in his family. (Bernstein 1973:183) (italics in original)

A code in the sense that Bernstein employs the term can only really be interpreted when one employs a broad perspective towards language as a system for realising cultural meanings such as that inherent in the notion of discourse. A restricted code, for example, is not synonymous with a limited language system in the sense that the speaker has a logically inferior set of language choices. Nor, for that matter, is a code synonymous with the notion of dialect or language variety. Code has to do with the characteristic orientations adopted by speakers as they attempt to negotiate meaning within different discourses. Halliday (1993) points out that the notion of code 'sits above' linguistic constructs such as dialect, variety and register and is located more correctly within the context of culture.

Hasan has interpreted Bernstein's codes, in semiotic terms, using the concept of semantic variation. This is different from functional, or register, variation in one critical respect: in semantic variation there is a higher level constant -- we can talk of semantic 'variants'; whereas in register variation there is not. Registers are ways of doing different things; there is no level of interpretation at which, say, technocratic discourse and casual conversations become signifiers of a common signified. With codes there is; and in this respect, codes resemble social dialects; but whereas social dialects (like dialects in general) realize their higher level constant in the semantic system (that is, within language itself), codes come together only outside language in the culture. It is only at an abstract level in the context of culture that different codes can be seen to realize a common 'signified'. (Halliday 1993:7)

This statement proposes that Bernstein's notion of restricted and elaborated codes has to do with the culturally situated propensity to function in certain ways in various situations which he differentiates in terms of the extent to which they require the deployment of 'universalistic and particularistic orders of meaning'.

Universalistic meanings are those in which principles and operations are made linguistically explicit, whereas particularistic orders of meaning are meanings in which principles and operations are relatively linguistically implicit. If orders of meaning are universalistic, then the meanings are less tied to a given context. (Bernstein 1973:175)

Now, while the notion of elaborated code is not synonymous with notions of decontextualised, academic or literate discourse, a clear association exists in the sense that adopting an elaborated code of the kind required by a literate or academic discourse requires the learner to access members' resources in the sense Fairclough (1989) proposed. As Bernstein (1971) put it,

Elaborated variants involve the speakers in particular role relationships, *and if you cannot manage the role, you can't produce the appropriate speech.* (Bernstein 1971:105 - italics in the original)

Consequently, one cannot gain control over a particular code merely by learning in some isolated way grammatical features that might be employed within that code. A code is accessed when a speaker learns to generalise certain ways of constructing meaning within discourses which require that code.

The most significant effect of the development of a characteristic orientation towards the deployment of an elaborated code in the school context is that it opens the way for access to control over high order linguistic resources such as grammatical metaphor and what Halliday and Martin (1993), (following Bernstein 1975), refer to as the 'uncommon sense' knowledge of academic discourses. If a learner persists in the use of a restricted code in such contexts, movement into the construction of these new rationalities cannot really begin.

In contrast to the above perspective, the simplistic interpretation imposed upon Bernstein's work in Labov's 1969 study is a direct outcome of a failure on the part of Labov to distinguish between the properties of a linguistic system established within a generalised construct (eg. Aboriginal English or middle class English - as dialects) and issues to do with the manner in which such linguistic systems might function characteristically when confronted with the need to negotiate meaning across a range of very differently located contexts of situation. While it may be necessary in confronting prejudice and discrimination to affirm that the construct 'Aboriginal English', for example, is a logical and elegant system for constructing meaning, an educator who seeks to develop access and control over academic discourses finds insufficient support in the mere affirmation of logical equivalence of the kind proposed by Labov.

Halliday (1993) problematises the difference between research centred on the description of dialect and the kind of research needed to address issues of control and access in terms of the need to investigate not only 'the system' but the relation between 'the system' and the

'instance'. He points out that the field of linguistic research has to do with more than just defining 'systems of meaning' of the kind represented by constructs such as Aboriginal English or middle class English mentioned above. In articulating different questions which should be considered within the field of linguistics he comments,

The danger lies in relating the instance to the system, because that is the source of the power. You are safe in studying the system (as linguists traditionally did), because you do not reveal it at work in the form of text. You are safe in studying the text, as a philologist or student of style or discourse, because you do not let it display the power of the system. But if you put the two together the text is revealed for what it is, an act that has meaning because it is not *sui generis*; it is the actualizing of a potential, by means of processes that are patterned -- and therefore, in an important sense, predictable. (Halliday 1993:7)

By 'power of the system' in the above quotation Halliday refers to an acceptance that language as a system functions as a culturally situated semiotic resource to the fullest degree. The adoption of such a perspective means that one must be prepared to consider the extent to which linguistic behaviour is patterned and specific to the culturally situated discourses in which it evolves as well as the extent to which culturally situated language behaviour interacts with other discourses. There is some congruence here with the distinction Hymes (1995) draws between the 'potential' equality between languages and the 'actual' equality between languages.

All normal human beings are equivalent in general linguistic ability, and all human languages can be developed to express new meanings and serve new needs.

There is a fundamental truth to that. It is the truth of the potential equality of languages....

The difficulty is that potential equality is taken as equivalent to actual equality (see discussion in Hymes, 1993a). It is as if history, like class, had no consequences. (Hymes 1995:6-7)

As Halliday points out in his earlier quotation above, it is possible to deal with language 'systems' which embody the assumption of 'potential' equivalence in ways that are 'safe' or relatively uncontroversial. However, in adopting safe perspectives of this kind, one inevitably loses access to issues vital to negotiating meaning within the wider society.

A fundamental distinction here is the one Hasan (1973) draws between dialects and register.

The internal patterns of a dialect, be it temporal, geographical or social, are studied purely descriptively; they are not related in any specific manner to the 'living of life' by the speech community in question. This characterisation of dialect is not presented as a criticism of dialectology in general. The aim is simply to throw some light on the nature of the category 'dialect'. (Hasan 1973:257)

Register, on the other hand targets directly the manner in which choices are drawn from the language system to create the instance that is a particular text which realises a certain context of situation.

In this respect, Hasan (1973) distinguishes clearly the constructs 'dialect' and 'register'.

The difference between registers and dialects lies in the fact that, but for a few immaterial exceptions, the distinctive formal patterns characterizing a dialect cannot be shown to be motivated by the circumstance of the speech community correlating with it; by contrast, but for a few immaterial exceptions, the distinctive formal patterns

characterizing a particular register can be shown to be motivated by the factors which correlate with register distinction.... (Hasan 1973:271)

Hasan (1973) lists these factors which correlate with register distinction as follows,

- (1) Subject-matter of discourse
- (2) Situation-type for discourse
- (3) Participant roles within discourse
- (4) Mode of discourse
- (5) Medium of discourse ... (Hasan 1973:272)

Labov constructs his debate around comparison of dialects as systems undifferentiated with respect to register and discourse. Because of this his analysis lacks the resources to engage with issues to do with what might happen should speakers such as Larry decide that it is in their interest to control discourses outside of those which are their cultural birthright. It is not sufficient in these circumstances to merely affirm the 'logic' of non-standard English in the non-specific manner that Labov employs. Larry, for example, may be an excellent debater and reasoner in some discourse contexts but it is clear that the rationality he characteristically employs to deal with argument will not allow him to mount the kind of detailed academic rationale that Labov employs on his behalf in the writing of his 1969 paper. It is proposed here that the question of how children might learn to participate effectively within academic and other important literate discourses is a fundamental and legitimate concern for schooling and it is perfectly reasonable for schooling to be evaluated with respect to the provision of access to those discourses. For, without provision of this discourse access, other very important issues and initiatives to do with respecting and accepting the language that Aboriginal and other minority children bring to school with them ring hollow.

Because Labov (1969) set out to affirm the validity of working class language as a system and did not effectively address issues of discourse and register, he set up a tension that is virtually impossible for educators to resolve within the parameters of linguistic equivalence he established. The tension exists between issues to do with accepting non-standard English in educational settings and the provision of access to academic/literate discourses in the classroom. It will be proposed, therefore, that the issues have remained unresolved in Australian linguistic research that has attempted to provide information for teachers of Aboriginal children.

4. RESEARCH ON ABORIGINAL ENGLISH AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS FOLLOWING LABOV

Of the recognisably 'linguistic' studies that have been conducted into the nature of Aboriginal English in Australia following Labov's 1969 paper, only a few have set out to offer any substantial directions for teachers seeking to provide access to mainstream schooling for Aboriginal children. The studies which have done this can be divided into two general groups. The first group consists of some of the earliest studies which could be termed 'syntactic' in the sense that they drew upon approaches to language analysis that were confined largely to aspects of language structure with little attention to semantic or functional analysis.

However, even in these studies it is possible to clearly identify attempts to take account of the work of Labov, particularly with regard to recognising the 'legitimacy' of non-standard dialects. The discussion below will consider two studies which have been arguably the most significant and influential, those of Sharpe (1976, 1977a, 1977b) and Kaldor and Malcolm (1982). These studies also had particular relevance to the children attending Traeger Park School.

The second group of studies represents those that have claimed to have attempted to apply some degree of functional or sociolinguistic interpretation on their data. Two of the most significant in this area have both studied Aboriginal children in Alice Springs. These studies are those of Walker (1982) and Harkins (1994). These two studies differ greatly in methodology and are important to the discussion here because their differences are closely connected with the perseveration of arguments developed around the work of Bernstein in Labov's 1969 paper. Harkins' study is also the most recent work of significance in the area. One other researcher concerned with the nature of Aboriginal English, Eades (eg. 1984, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1995) will also be considered here although she has not dealt directly with issues of education. All of these studies represent focal resources which have been or currently are available to teachers working with Aboriginal children in mainstream schools.

4.1 EARLY SYNTACTIC STUDIES OF ABORIGINAL ENGLISH:

4.1.1 Sharpe's study and the provision of access to academic/literate discourses

One influential early study was that of Sharpe (1976, 1977a, 1977b). Sharpe recorded examples of Aboriginal English used by 84 children living in fringe camps and low income residential areas within Alice Springs. Almost all of these children attended Traeger Park School. Sharpe selected children from across the primary grade range.

Sharpe analysed syntactic elements employed by Aboriginal children, for example, regular and irregular past tense forms, negation in verb phrases and elsewhere, conjunctions, prepositions etc. She concluded that Aboriginal English (identified as AbE. in her work) was '*reasonably adequate for school and living in modern society*'.

As I see it, all forms of AbE. in Alice Springs appear reasonably adequate for school and for living in modern society, at least in theory, with the temporary exception of children just learning English..... (Sharpe 1977a:2)

However, despite the rather tentative nature of her statement (eg. '*appear reasonably*', '*at least in theory*'), Sharpe clearly adopted a position similar to that proposed by Labov (1969). She concluded that even though Aboriginal English was less complex grammatically than standard English, the differences were essentially stylistic. That is, the standard English speaker essentially used '*more complex constructions or rarer words to convey the same*

thoughts'. The problem in the classroom, according to Sharpe was mostly that standard English speakers would not accept Aboriginal English and demanded the use of '*different speech conventions*'. Thus, she followed Labov's interpretation of difference as merely stylistic. She added that confusion in any instance was slight. However, she did continue rather disconcertingly that when '*slight*' confusion did occur it was in relation to '*ideas beyond a certain complexity*'.

There is little doubt that some AbE. lacks some of the grammatical complexity of standard English. But nonetheless, the well-used AbE forms can be used efficiently to convey more complex thoughts, even though the SE speaker tends to use more complex constructions or rarer words for the same thoughts.....The problem with AbE speakers is that they are constantly having to interact with SE speakers, who have different linguistic conventions, often to the slight confusion of both when ideas beyond a certain complexity are being handled. (Sharpe 1977a:2)

A point to note in the discussion of these conclusions is the nature of the slippage that occurred between the speech of individual speakers or specific groups of speakers and the generalisation of the conclusions to account for the composition of the language system as a whole. Here, Sharpe was working from the language of a specific group (ie. early primary school age children) yet the language competence of this group was seen to represent 'Aboriginal English'. Moreover, in discussing complexity there was no conception of different kinds of thinking being privileged through different discourses. Consequently, she only dealt with superficial speech differences and did not consider issues such as how the children's 'speech competence' impinged on their potential to control 'literate discourse'. All of this, as was the case in Labov's study, led Sharpe to dismiss the role of language as a factor in educational success.

Sharpe also pointed out that Aboriginal speakers tended to be more economical and less explicit in their use of English in many situations than were speakers of Standard English.

One thing in Aboriginal English is this. When whites are together they like to talk a lot. Aboriginals like to sit together more and they don't use as many words. If you are in a car and someone has to tell the driver which way to go, an Aboriginal will point the way, but a white person has to say 'turn right here', or something like that. An Aboriginal will point to something interesting, but a white person has to say something like 'look at that man over there on a horse - he's got a funny hat on!' White people don't often feel right if they are sitting together without talking, but Aborigines will talk only if they have something to say. (Sharpe 1977b:5)

She found also that a number of differences between Standard English and Aboriginal English amounted to pronunciation effects rather than true structural differences and that these tended to be overemphasised by mainstream non-Aboriginal listeners. For example, omitting /h/ in saying 'he' as /e/.

She also noted that much 'vocabulary' familiar to many mainstream non-Aboriginal children of 6-8 years was unfamiliar to many of the Aboriginal children she studied. She added also that, '*The converse is true to a lesser degree, as important Centralian animals and plants would not be known to most white children*' (Sharpe 1977a:3). She also commented that differences in vocabulary knowledge would also occur with mainstream non-Aboriginal children from some

Alice Springs homes. However, because of her overriding commitment to dismiss language difference as a significant factor in educational success, Sharpe could not draw any of these 'puzzles' together and they were left as essentially isolated observations in her study.

Consequently, as she moved into this area her observations and instructions for teachers became very confused and contradictory. As was noted previously, Sharpe concluded that Aboriginal English was *'reasonably adequate for school and living in modern society'*, yet she concluded at the same time that even when a standard English form is known and used by the children, *'complicated'* use of that structure would confuse them.

It is possible, that even if a SE structure is also a possible AE structure, long or complicated uses may 'overload the computer' and cause lack of comprehension in Aboriginal children. (Sharpe 1977a:3)

This seems a rather strange comment to make if differences in language use are to be represented as simply stylistic with no implications for meaning differences.

Consequently, Sharpe struggled when she attempted to enlarge on what she meant in this regard. She pointed out that, *'AbE speakers often string an indefinite number of clauses together joined by and, but only rarely is there more than one subsidiary clause in the sentence'* (Sharpe 1977a:3). She observed that this will cause problems if Aboriginal speakers are asked *'long involved questions'* and offered by way of explanation a seemingly tangential observation that teachers claimed some children did not *'comprehend prepositions and locatives'*.

One of the grade 6 teachers found a number of children in her class did not appear to comprehend some prepositions and locatives, suggesting that no-one should assume that by grade 2 all children had a command of basic English. (Sharpe 1977a:3)

Such statements are indicative of the apparent confusion Sharpe experienced in coming to terms with her data. On the one hand she proposed that the Aboriginal children she studied had adequate resources for communicating *'more complex thoughts'* effectively. Communication breakdown was presented as simply the result of stylistic difference. Moreover, she claimed that confusion was only slight and that in the few cases in which it did occur it was confined to complex ideas. Yet, at the same time, in statements such as the one above, Sharpe pointed to seemingly fundamental communication breakdown between teachers and children.

Sharpe then went on to suggest remedies for this 'problem' which appeared to be a direct application of the techniques and assumptions of the previously discussed 'deficit' interpretation (refer sections 2.3 and 2.4). She quoted approvingly the suggestion of her 'grade 6 teacher informant' that instructions for Aboriginal children should be broken down into smaller units,

...allowing plenty of drill in prepositions and imperatives (eg. Pick up that book. Take it over to the cupboard. Lift up that magazine. Put the book under the magazine. etc). The lower prep teacher used a similar technique, and while there was evidence that some children in her group came to school with a high level of grammatical

sophistication for their age, the simple instructions and constant repetitions appeared to help the whole class, which included a number with very little exposure to SE or white culture. For example, she did not tell children: 'Line up at the door behind Peter, but Peter you go to the door and stand there. Logan, you go and stand behind Peter. Helen, you go and stand behind Logan. Now Hilary, go and stand beside Peter, etc. etc'. (Sharpe 1977a:3)

It is difficult to know what this advice has to do with dealing with '*long involved questions*', other than to suggest that teachers should break such questions down into smaller steps. This, in turn begs the question of whether teachers do *ask 'long involved questions'* of such complexity that children can't understand what they are saying. Or, what role such questions might play in learning. It also doesn't clarify why children should be drilled in prepositions and imperatives.

Sharpe treats the issuing of instructions purely as a problem of linguistic structure comprehension. However, this in itself has some rather disturbing overtones. Is it that the children can't understand instructions such as, '*Everyone line up at the door behind Peter*'? Or is it that the children don't respond to the command with the procedural precision desired by the teacher and that her breaking down of her command is for the purposes of control and not language development?

Having offered this rather confusing advice to teachers of Aboriginal children, Sharpe returns to her original thesis that language differences are minimal and essentially stylistic and of little account.

In the ultimate, the main problem for AbE speakers in Alice Springs may not be a language one, but a combination of cultural and motivational problems. Children were certainly aware that their form of English was different in some ways from that taught at school. I have met a few Aboriginals in different places, people who have started life speaking an AbE very different from SE, but who have in their teens or Adulthood mastered SE when they saw the need to do so for work, etc., and have done so without rejecting their cultural heritage. I am sure that many of the children I got to know best would have the same ability to learn SE if they saw any advantage in doing so, either in their school years or later in life. (Sharpe 1977a:3)

Here, not only is the issue of the relationship between language and educational success rendered unproblematic, the school is absolved of responsibility for resolving the issue of children's control over the development of mainstream literate resources. Parents are told, in effect, 'Don't worry your children will pick it up when they feel the need!' without due regard for the consequences of that statement on the lives of the children so affected.

Sharpe's (1976, 1977a, 1977b) study represents one of the first Australian attempts to bring Labov's (1969) alternative 'difference' interpretation of the language learning needs of Aboriginal children in mainstream schooling. However, because she accepted Labov's assertion that the 'logic' of Aboriginal English was the same as the 'logic' required for success in schools and because she accepted that differences between Aboriginal English and academic discourses were of stylistic significance only, she could make few constructive recommendations to teachers.

Sharpe was reinforced in her assumptions to a certain degree because her analysis which concentrated only on syntactic and phonological structure yielded differences which were easily dismissed as stylistic. However, in the face of the level of communication breakdown between teachers and Aboriginal children she encountered her suggestions to do with providing access to educational discourse became contradictory and were, in reality, little different from those proposed by earlier deficit researchers. The dilemma is that if one studies syntactic differences and concludes that the differences are of no consequence, then how does one account for communication breakdown in educational discourse and what does one recommend for teachers seeking to help Aboriginal children to provide access to academic discourse? This dilemma is also a theme in other later studies

4.1.2 Kaldor and Malcolm's study and the provision of access to academic/literate discourses

An extensive and educationally influential study into Aboriginal English was carried out by Kaldor and Malcolm (eg. Kaldor and Malcolm 1982). Between 1973 and 1977, Kaldor and Malcolm directed a project to study Aboriginal English in country and remote areas of Western Australia. They collected data from 38 schools across the state. In each school they recorded language from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children over the primary school age range. Language was recorded in informal conversational settings, usually with peers.

Kaldor and Malcolm identified a range of features that were prominent in what they termed Western Australian Aboriginal English (WACE). In part of their report they listed these along with 'Standard Australian English' equivalents. They also found a large variability in the use of these grammatical features across the range of Aboriginal children they surveyed. They located usage along a continuum which commenced with speech which was very close to Creole or Kriol (Sandefur 1972). These they referred to as '*elaborated pidgins which became first languages*' (Kaldor and Malcolm 1982:76). At the other end of the continuum they set Standard Australian English.

Between the end points there are numerous varieties of Aboriginal English imperceptibly merging into each other. An individual speaker may be seen as being located at any point along this continuum. However, it needs to be noted that the same speaker may move in one or another direction along the continuum, depending on the occasion and the person being spoken to. (Kaldor and Malcolm 1982:76)

Kaldor and Malcolm also compared their results with those obtained from other studies in the Northern Territory and Queensland. Prominent in these were those of Hart (1973) and Sharpe (1976, 1977a & 1977b). Kaldor and Malcolm found a high level of consistency between grammatical elements identified in their data and that presented in these other studies. However, because Kaldor and Malcolm's research did not involve a direct comparison between standard and non-standard English speaking children in the manner of earlier researchers such as Hart, their approach was more in harmony with Labov's (1969) critique of 'deficit' research.

Kaldor and Malcolm saw their work as directly supportive of Labov's position on the nature of non-standard English and its comparison to Standard English. In their discussion of 'the teacher's task' (ie. Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm 1982) they reaffirmed this.

Far from being 'impoverished,' non-standard dialects are a rich stores of communication resources. In a famous paper, Labov (1970) demonstrated convincingly that speakers of non-standard dialects can and do express the same fundamental logical relationships in their speech as do speakers of standard dialects. In chapters III and IV we have produced evidence from Aboriginal children's speech to support Labov's conclusions. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:195)

Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm (1982) also drew attention to the variability in Standard Australian English competence they found amongst the children they studied and argued that many Aboriginal children spoke Standard Australian English well and therefore did not require 'special' language development assistance. However, they proposed that special language programs were required for all other Aboriginal children.

All other categories of speakers, however, may face language-based communication problems upon entering school. They all require special language education programs. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:194)

At the beginning of their discussion, Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm (1982) identified the fundamental premises for consideration in English language programs for Aboriginal children. These are listed in abbreviated form below.

- (1) The child's mother tongue (ie. Aboriginal English) must be recognised as a cohesive linguistic system which was the medium for communication prior to school.
- (2) School experience should be an extension of this experience - there should be no 'sharp break'.
- (3) Children's mother tongue must be respected and none are to be considered inferior.
- (4) Schooling can be effective only if two way communication exists. That is, if the teacher listens to and understands the child and if the child listens to and understands the teacher.
- (5) Every Aboriginal child, as does every other Australian child, needs to be given optimal opportunities for developing competence in Standard Australian English which is the medium of higher education and official communication in Australia.

(Abridged from Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:193)

They saw the task of the primary school teacher as helping,

....the child speaker of Aboriginal English develop competence in SAE while making sure that successful and meaningful communication takes place between teacher and child from the first day of school. This can be achieved only if Aboriginal English is seen as a resource and a foundation on which language work with it's speakers is to be based and if it is recognised as a language variety which embodies much of the cultural, social and general learning that child speakers bring to school with them. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:196)

Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm, therefore, paid considerable attention to the need to 'value' and 'accept' Aboriginal English in the classroom. However, how exactly was the teacher to 'value' and accept Aboriginal English while at the same time moving the children into control over SAE? Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm found it difficult to advise in this area. They

considered 'dialect' readers but noted that Aboriginal parents were generally very much against these.

One significant issue had to do with the correction of instances in which non-standard English was used by children. From their perspective they considered that this could not be avoided at some stage if children were to progress to control over SAE. Consequently, they pointed out that teachers needed to explain the requirement for SAE to the children.

....to explain to the children that every person's 'home language' is a perfectly good language but that 'school language' (SAE) is the common language of all the speakers in the school. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:213)

Their rationale in this regard was one which drew on pragmatism. Following Labov (1969), they maintained that Standard Australian English was necessary for Aboriginal children because it was *'the medium of higher education and official communication in Australia'* (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:193). They did not offer any argument that Standard Australian English possessed any functional role in realising academic discourses. Consequently, their inability to appeal to functionality raised the question of how one might explain such things to young children. This was especially so when Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm proposed that language development work should commence with a primary focus on the acquisition of syntactic form.

....at very elementary levels the teaching must begin with 'language exponents (form) eg. syntax and vocabulary, which are then shown to be serving relevant functions which, in turn, are called upon in relevant communication situations. It is only at more advanced levels that it is possible to start off from 'the top', viz. a given communication situation and investigate the functions for which language is likely to be employed in that situation and, in turn, the language exponents required to carry out those functions. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:205)

This is an interesting assertion to say the least. For how are teachers to achieve this initial focus on syntax without breaking Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm's fundamental premises for valuing Aboriginal English set out earlier? The problem here is that, for Aboriginal English speaking children, such primary focus on language 'form' risks directly confronting their Aboriginal English usage in the manner of the 'deficit' programs discussed earlier. To assume that it would be then possible to move on to demonstrate 'functionality' in some abstract sense before locating functionality in actual communication is a highly questionable approach.

Moreover, in reading activities, one accepts what the child says, or does one? The issue according to Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm is complex.

Undoubtedly, in early stages of literacy work it is highly desirable to accept a child's non-standard rendering of a reading passage (eg. the child's rendering of the sentence 'He goes to school' as 'e go to school') as being proof of the child's ability to read and comprehend the passage. However, at later stages this is not so simple.....at more advanced stages, when the teacher is satisfied that the child has acquired oral competence in a given SAE form, he will have to insist on SAE rendering of a reading passage containing that form. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:213)

However, this was not the end of the matter because there was a further qualification on this position in that:

...correction should never be used excessively, indiscriminately and obscurely in any language work. (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:214)

Such potentially contradictory instructions to do with rejecting and accepting Aboriginal English make it very hard for teachers trying to work in classrooms as they struggle along the knife edge that Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm define as 'correct' practice.

Similar difficulties arise with other suggestions by Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm about how to 'shape' Aboriginal English usage towards the Standard Australian English form. For example, they point out that 'when the occasion arises' teachers should expand and elaborate the child's speech, giving the Standard Australian English form of the statement as a model for the child.

Teachers should gently lead the children to the use of SAE forms where appropriate by encouragement, positive attitudes and by modelling SAE forms through their own speech. Teachers would thus mostly use SAE forms, those being their natural means of expression in the enactment of their role as teacher. As the occasions arise, they may expand and elaborate on children's utterances as a parent would in everyday conversation. Thus when a child says 'e got tree dere', the teacher may say 'That's right, there are a lot of trees in this picture. There are also a lot of birds in the trees. Can you see them?' (cf Dwyer 1976:19). (Kaldor, Eagleson & Malcolm 1982:209)

A major problem for teachers here is how they are to know when it is exactly that such an occasion for correction arises. Moreover, while this strategy may work for parents, the dynamics of classroom interaction are typically different from those operant in the home (eg. Sinclair & Coulthard 1975, Sinclair & Brasil 1982). Harkins (1994) claims that her observations of teachers working with Aboriginal children in discussion activities indicate that this strategy has little effect in classroom contexts mainly because, as she puts it, teachers and children have '*different ideas of what the 'classroom game' involves*' (Harkins 1994:135).

They are happy to let the teacher provide elaborated utterances, but see no reason to emulate her. Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm's (1982:209) suggested strategy of expanding and elaborating on children's utterances may not be very effective in the circumstances. (Harkins 1994:135)

This issue of the failure of teacher expansions to promote the extension of children's utterances was also notable in the early observations at Traeger Park school. As Gray (1980) put it:

The only time a teacher's model is useful to a child is when the child himself can see that it will help him achieve what he understands as a legitimate meaning requirement of his interaction role. (Gray 1980:233)

The issue, in fact, is one that cannot be conceptualised at the level of correcting syntax because children will not take up language models when they do not understand the discourse purpose of the models provided.

It is with respect to failure to account effectively for discourse purpose that the notion of Standard Australian English as an explanatory mechanism to account for language goals in mainstream schooling needs to be called into question because the construct 'dialect' is inadequate for dealing with issues more properly considered in terms of discourse and register

(refer earlier discussion in section 3.4). Consequently, Kaldor, Eagleson and Malcolm, like Sharpe (1976, 1977a, 1977b) and Labov (1969) can offer very little information about what Aboriginal children they studied need to learn in order to control academic/literate discourses.

If academic/literate discourse is construed merely as Standard Australian English then the problem is located simplistically in terms of replacing one set of syntactic forms with another. Thus, as the previous discussion in this section as well as that in sections 2.3 and 2.4 has proposed, important principles to do with 'accepting Aboriginal English' are easily distorted in the teaching process for it becomes difficult to provide access without directly confronting the dialect the children already employ. Ultimately, the dilemma that this perspective struggles to overcome is, 'How does one both accept the children's language and simultaneously achieve access to other language competencies?'

4.2 STUDIES WHICH ATTEMPT A MORE SOCIO-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE:

4.2.1 Harkins' critique of Walker and the provision of access to academic/literate discourses

The difficulties associated with commenting on the issue of access to mainstream education for Aboriginal children without attending to the distinctions Halliday (1993) draws between 'the system' and 'the instance' are illustrated by reference to two formally framed linguistic studies of Aboriginal English which specifically focus on access to mainstream education - those of Walker (1982) and Harkins (1994). These two studies can be set in opposition to one another largely because Harkins (1994) uses a critique of Walker's (1982) research as a point of departure for her own arguments. Thus, the interaction between these two studies is interesting for several reasons not the least being that Harkins' study represents the latest significant linguistic research on this issue that is widely available to educators. A further interesting feature is that interaction between these two studies provides a representative sample of the highly complex and confusing debate in this area that classroom teachers are expected to negotiate as they attempt to develop curriculum initiatives for use with Aboriginal children.

The following discussion will consider in more detail the studies of Walker (1982) and Harkins (1994) with particular reference to the critique mounted by Harkins. It will be proposed that reframing the issue of providing access to academic/literate discourses to fit within parameters of dialect equivalence chosen by Labov (1969) is ultimately non productive for Aboriginal learners who wish to achieve mainstream academic success.

Walker's (1982) methodology involved comparing language samples collected via a radio microphone across a range of naturalistic settings, for example, playing before school, in classrooms and other free play settings during the day. He compared three groups of children at school entry level - Aboriginal English speakers entering school at Traeger Park in Alice

Springs (NT) with similar aged Aboriginal children from Cunnamulla (Qld) and their mainstream non-Aboriginal age peers in Urban Brisbane (Qld).

Walker considered that he could move beyond the limitations of earlier ‘syntactic’ studies which only concentrated on syntactic ‘form’ (eg. Sharpe 1976, 1977; Kaldor & Malcolm 1982) to construct an analysis that was capable of relating syntactic form to what he termed ‘pragmatic function and semantic content’ after Wells (1975, 1978). Like Wells, Walker wanted to provide normative data that identified characteristic differences between the language choices made by different groups of language users. He saw computer processing of language corpora as a possible means through which this could be achieved. Thus, a central feature of Walker’s analysis was the aggregation of data obtained from a number of speakers. From this aggregated data, Walker constructed frequency tables which represented the relative occurrence of choices within various grammatical and pragmatic systems such as mood, ‘pragmatic purpose’ (eg. Walker identified these in categories such as, - comment with action, protest action, promise, narrative of events and so on), structural purpose of clauses (eg. identified as, - elaborate, complement or extend), different types of syntactic clause links, time sense, modality & modulation elements, polarity, etc. The following table (Table 2) from Walker (1982) compares percentage frequency of various categories of ‘pragmatic purpose’ recorded in the speech of Traeger Park Aboriginal children with that of a non-Aboriginal sample of the same age recorded in Brisbane, Queensland. The table provides an illustration of Walker’s (1982) approach to analysis.

Table 2

Relative frequency of pragmatic purpose in language samples recorded across a school day for Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal school entry children (from Walker 1982:99)

Traeger Park Sample (Aboriginal)		Non-Aboriginal Sample	
Assert factual information	20.9%	Comment with action	19.8%
Command	19.6%	Assert factual information	18.4%
Speech to self	8.1%	Acquiesce/Object	8.1%
Seek factual information	6.4%	Provide factual information on request	7.7%
Acquiesce/Object	5.7%	Command	6.9%
Comment with action	5.6%	Narrate	6.1%
Provide factual information on request	5.4%	Seek factual information	5.8%
Seek confirmation, factual	5.3%	Seek confirmation, factual	4.4%
Protest action	4.4%	Assert judgement/feeling	4.1%
TOTAL	81.4%	TOTAL	81.3%

In interpreting this table, Walker proposed that the data revealed different communication dynamics surrounding the language behaviour of the different groups of children. For example, he pointed out that the category ‘assert factual information’ was high in frequency for both groups. However, he claimed that with the non-Aboriginal sample the move he labelled ‘assert factual information’ was associated with interpreting physical contexts and actions or intended actions for others while the Aboriginal sample used ‘assert factual information’ moves in association with commands rather than interpreting or offering explanations to others for the speaker’s actions or intended actions.

The picture which emerges, then, is of (a) non-Aboriginal children who used almost half their utterances to interpret the physical contexts they shared with others and their actions or intended actions within those contexts; and Aboriginal children who used the same high proportion of their utterances to interpret physical contexts, but dealt with action, within those contexts by issuing commands rather than interpreting or fore-shadowing action. (Walker 1982:100)

Walker's interpretation of this pattern in his data was that the non-Aboriginal children tended to employ explicit narrative in which the ongoing activity was made public through the contributions of the various participants in play and other cooperative group activities. He claimed that in similar situations the Aboriginal children adopted a more direct style of interaction based on manipulating the behaviour of others through 'command' moves. However, Walker (1982) did not provide examples to demonstrate how these move differences operated in the negotiation of texts. Walker speculated further that because of these different characteristic interaction patterns, teachers who attempted to engage in discussion with Aboriginal children in order to have them elaborate on what they were doing or what they had done during learning tasks would possibly face difficulties. In this instance, Walker was able to refer back to transcripts in his raw data to find instances of classroom interaction that provided supporting evidence that teachers did indeed experience such difficulties (eg. Walker 1981). Walker's comments with respect to the non-response by Aboriginal children to requests for elaboration in classroom interaction were compatible with the findings of other researchers who have addressed classroom interaction mainly through descriptive/ethnographic perspectives, for example, Malcolm (1982) and even Harkins herself (Harkins 1994).

Harkins (1994) contended that, in general, Walker's categorisation system lacked the levels of sensitivity necessary to interpret the interactive behaviour of the Aboriginal children he studied. For example, although Harkins (1994) concurred with Walker to the extent that she proposed that speakers of Aboriginal English in her study employed fewer explicit choices for mood and modality such as *might, could, would etc.*, she questioned many of the assumptions Walker made as a result of that finding. She attacked Walker's apparent presumption of a purpose/mood interrelation between the use of the imperative by Aboriginal children and the 'pragmatic purpose' of 'command'. She argued that choice of imperative in Aboriginal English can frequently realise a polite request rather than a command.

At the illocutionary level, the bare English imperative, *Give me X*, is to non-Aboriginal speakers abrupt, forceful, and marked for lack of politeness. But Aboriginal speakers reanalyse its illocutionary force on the basis of their knowledge of other languages in which the bare imperative is the unmarked form, and they both interpret and use the English imperative as their standard, unmarked form for requests. (Harkins 1994:167)

Critical comments such as those of Harkins (1994) illustrate the potential for a level of interpretive error in the abstraction of data to compile categories of pragmatic purpose in the manner Walker (1982) employed. Walker did not comment specifically on the implications deriving from his interpretation (ie. that Aboriginal children made more use of 'command'

utterances) for informing teachers how to go about staging classroom interaction. However, Walker's finding to do with the high level of 'command' utterances clearly implied that teachers would have to exercise sensitivity in managing interpersonal tenor in classroom interaction. Although, without a deeper understanding of the texts and contexts of situation in which those presumed 'commands' occurred, it was not possible to offer more. Harkins, however, could propose a more finely articulated proposition that teachers who responded to 'requests' employing imperative choices as 'commands' and inferred impoliteness would generally misunderstand completely the Aboriginal child's communicative intent.

However, the most significant point of contention, from the perspective of Harkins (1994) rests upon Walker's (1982) use of the term 'restricted' in the discussion of his analysis. Unfortunately, given the significance of the term 'restricted' in issues within the field of minority language education, Walker chose to employ the term with insufficient definition or qualification. And, given the emphasis that Harkins (1994) placed upon a presumed link between the work of Walker and that of Bernstein, it is important to note that Walker (1982) at no time made reference to Bernstein either with respect to Walker's own use of the term 'restricted' or otherwise.

Walker's particular use of the term 'restricted' adds a potentially complicating and confusing dimension to the deficit/difference issue. On various occasions, Walker can be seen to struggle with the articulation of issues to do with his notion of 'restriction'.

it can be said that the Aboriginal children who entered Traeger Park School Transition class had sufficient mastery of a dialect of English to communicate efficiently with their peers over a wide range of purposes in informal out-of-school situations. However, the purposes for which they predominantly used language and the range of categories of semantic and related syntactic units and combinations of units found within their utterances was restricted in comparison with non Aboriginal children of similar age. (Walker 1982:112-113)

In making statements such as those above Walker (1982) seems to be seeking a distinction between 'informal' and 'informal' contexts for language use. However, he attempts his discussion without the degree of precision employed by Halliday in drawing distinctions between 'oral' and 'written' text or by Bernstein in the distinction he draws between 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes. At the same time, Walker (1982) leaves the reader with the clear impression that 'informal' speech is somehow inferior and less effective as a communication resource per se. In the quote immediately above, for example, his rather loose ambiguous use of the term 'restricted' along with the broad term 'language' when his data only empowers him to refer to the 'explicit' use of language elements and structures promotes such a reading. However, at other times Walker is far more direct and clear in his interpretation of the issues involved.

The 'language' problem of children whose social background differs from that assumed in typical classroom teaching programs is often not so much the availability of particular language structures as the expectation that they use language in ways that are unfamiliar. When young children are expected to move beyond the language uses to which they are accustomed within their own culture, they will face

difficulties; but those difficulties will not be resolved by teaching language structures - to be able to use those structures as needed, they will have to recognise for themselves the social contexts in which they have to function. (Walker 1981:23)

In effect, Walker's 1982 study did offer some supporting evidence of a general kind for the proposal that the Aboriginal children he studied were more strongly oriented towards the employment of restricted codes (in the sense intended by Bernstein) in their everyday interactions than were the non-Aboriginal children (refer section 3.4). For example, the lessened focus on explaining and explicit elaboration coupled with a high degree of ellipsis Walker found in the Aboriginal samples suggests this. These findings are also consistent with findings of all studies of Aboriginal English discussed in this study, including that of Harkins (1994) although Harkins, following a Labovian interpretation of difference at the level of style, certainly did not interpret her findings in this way.

A major difficulty with Walker's (1982) analysis is that Walker does not draw upon notions of dialect and register and, indeed, code in the manner that they are articulated by Hasan (1973). Therefore, his discussion does not adhere to the boundaries of relevance and applicability inherent within each construct. Consequently, at various times, Walker's discussion of his analysis appears to slip without clear differentiation between making claims about the overall potential of the children's language system in general and the potential with respect to performance in school discourse. Walker's (1982) data had to do with frequency of choice for particular linguistic and functional elements in certain school interaction situations. However, Walker (1982), on a number of occasions overgeneralised beyond his data to make pronouncements concerning the overall system knowledge that the children possessed. The apparent confusion in Walker's (1982) analysis concerning issues to do with distinctions between notions of dialect and discourse reflects the fact that Walker, as did other contemporary Australian researchers (eg. Sharpe 1976, 1977a, 1977b; Kaldor and Malcolm 1982) essentially lacked a suitable and consistent means of conceptualising the issues involved.

Walker (1982) placed considerable faith in the fact that he was dealing with a relatively large corpus of recorded language data - for the Traeger Park sample of Aboriginal children, 36.75 hours in total from 9 children giving an average of 4 hours (approx) from each child. However, this magnitude of data could not be expected by any stretch of the imagination to account for the language competence of the Aboriginal children concerned. That this is so comes strongly to the fore upon examination of some of Walker's pronouncements concerning the 'restricted' language system of the group of Aboriginal children in the Traeger Park sample. For example, Walker found minimal use of explicit markers of modality in the sample of language sample recorded from Traeger Park Aboriginal children. More of these explicit modality items (eg. might, could etc.) were used by the non-Aboriginal children he sampled. The conclusion he drew from this was as follows,

it seems likely that these children are not accustomed to referring to degrees of certainty concerning an event or state. It seems that, to them, things are so or they are not so: teachers would need to be highly cautious in assuming that they have the concept of certainty or degrees of certainty, or can interpret that in language. (Walker 1982:107)

Now, while the first sentence in the above quotation represents a reasonable inference from the data Walker was presenting, the statement once more escalates into broad claims that go beyond the limits of his analysis. For example, it is difficult to imagine that any person, including the Aboriginal children that he studied, would not have a concept of certainty or degrees of certainty. To make this claim is very different from saying that the sample of Aboriginal children Walker studied were not oriented towards employing certain kinds of language choices to realise modality or employed them less than did the non-Aboriginal sample in the situations under study. Harkins (1994) also raises the point that Walker did not consider the extent to which the language of the Aboriginal children might have been suppressed artificially by the school context in which they were recorded. In fact, Walker in more descriptive reports of his data did demonstrate that such suppression could occur (eg. Walker 1981). However, he did not explore the effect of this issue in his 1982 analysis.

Further difficulties occur in other circumstances where Walker (1982) employed the term 'restricted'. For example, in concert with the findings of previous researchers, he identified a high incidence of elliptical clauses in the speech of the Aboriginal children he studied relative to the non-Aboriginal children. He interpreted this as indicative of 'a restricted English language system'.

The high proportion of simple utterances of low semantic/syntactic complexity, the occasional omission of some elements, and the relative restriction of range within some sub-systems such as time and modulation, together with this high proportion of elliptical clauses, indicated a severely restricted English language system. However, within the scope of that restricted system, there were few characteristic differences from the 'standard' dialect. (Walker 1982:99)

It does not follow that the pattern of language choices described by Walker should necessarily determine something as loosely described as 'a severely restricted English language system' and Harkins is rightly critical of this statement. However, Harkins (1994) also interprets this statement as a negative judgement on the efficacy of Aboriginal English as a linguistic system in general although this very clearly not the meaning Walker intended.

Walker clearly meant that the Aboriginal children he studied may simply have had less experience with English than the non-Aboriginal children with whom he compared them. The group of Traeger Park children he identified as fringe camp children certainly were competent in languages other than English and for a number of them an Aboriginal language would have been their first language. And, as Harkins (1994) herself acknowledges, many of these children would have been in a position similar to any speakers of English as a second language who have had limited exposure to everyday communicative use. She comments that even though town camp children 'know a lot of English when they start school'.

...children's language development in their own main language is likely to be in advance of their competence in English. (Harkins 1994:194)

This observation adds another potential confusion to the sense in which Walker (1982) employed the term 'restricted' in relation to the language of these children. To what extent were the differences he found characteristic of different orientations to language behaviour or characteristic of differences in exposure and knowledge of English in general? This issue is not resolved in his analysis.

In this respect it is important to note in interpreting Walker's statements that he was careful to focus his comments specifically as having to do with the language competence of children at a particular age range. For example, in a previous quotation (Walker 1982:112-113 above) Walker was careful to specify particular groups of children, *'it can be said that the Aboriginal children who entered Traeger Park Transition class.....in comparison with non Aboriginal children of similar age'* (Walker 1982:112-113). He was not concerned to make statements about Aboriginal English as a dialect in any general sense which refers to the dialect itself as 'restricted' or limited in its capacity to realise logical thinking. Thus, he cannot be interpreted in the manner of the earlier deficit theorists. Harkins, herself, acknowledges this.

To give Walker his due, he emphasises that "we have no reason to believe that the English system of these children is what it is because they lack the capacity to think or learn to speak in certain ways, or because they have certain characteristic predispositions for learning and thinking. To make unjustified assumptions of that kind leads only too readily to convenient excuses for the failure of teaching programs (Walker 1983:73)". (Harkins 1994:140)

However, despite this observation Harkins continually draws associations between Walker's work and that of 'deficit' theorists.

The absence of narrative material from Walker's corpus leads him to suggest that "It is as if their English were geared centrally and almost exclusively to the context of situation of the moment and to commands requiring action in respect of that situation" (1982:109). Such a comment runs the risk of being interpreted as an assertion of verbal and possibly cognitive deficit along the lines of Bereiter and Englemann (1966) and Jensen (1969:118), who characterised the language of the disadvantaged as "a kind of incidental 'emotional' accompaniment to action here and now" (Harkins 1994:139-140)

The rhetorical effect of this type of interpretation serves largely to reframe the argument simplistically and quite artificially within the context of 'deficit versus difference' as it was defined by Labov (1969). While Walker's (1982) interpretation of his analysis was indeed contradictory and confused in places, this kind of reductionism is unhelpful because it does not provide a fair representation of what Walker was saying. Harkins' rhetoric in qualifying Walker's statement as *'runs the risk of being interpreted as an assertion of verbal and possibly cognitive deficit'* illustrates that she knows that it is not a fair representation. Walker was not in any way asserting that the language of the children he studied was *'a kind of incidental 'emotional' accompaniment to action here and now'*. For Harkins to seek such a resolution of the issue is merely to trivialise the debate. In effect, it is proposed here that the positions taken by both Walker (1982) and Harkins (1994) respectively require further consideration.

A good example of the confusion that exists within the work of both Harkins (1994) and Walker (1982) can be seen with the conclusions each researcher drew regarding the extent to which the Aboriginal children they studied could be said to 'narrate' or recount experiences. Walker (1982) found that the Aboriginal children did not engage in any 'narrating' as they went about the activities he studied (refer Table 2 above). He found also that the children in his study referred to the past infrequently.

These children seldom spoke about past events or the state of entities in the past; and when they did, they used only the simple past tense except in three cases of Continuous in the past. (Walker 1982:108)

He interpreted this kind of data with the statement that,

It is as if their English were geared centrally and almost exclusively to the context of situation of the moment and to commands requiring action in respect to that situation. (Walker 1982:109)

In making this statement he implied strongly that the Aboriginal children he studied could not recount experience in circumstances away from the school settings he recorded. The simple fact is he did not possess sufficient data to allow such a statement. However, even so, the issue is not one to do with whether Aboriginal children can or can not narrate or recount experience per se. Rather, it concerns the extent to which those children are able to recount and narrate experience (along with other reality constructions) in a manner that is appropriate for effective participation as a member within the literate/academic discourses rewarded in mainstream schooling.

The distinction made with respect to this point has been illustrated consistently in literature to do with indigenous minority children and education. For example, the point is demonstrated in detail by Scollon and Scollon (1981) in their discussion of the kinds of 'topic-centred' texts characteristic of 'an essayist style of literacy'. They comment upon 'essayist' texts produced by one mainstream culture child 'Rachel' in contrast to those produced by Athabaskan children raised within an 'oral' cultural setting.

The essayist style of literacy can be generally characterized as decontextualized language. There are two areas of decontextualization that we have suggested are central, the creation of an explicit, grammatically and lexically marked information structure which is high in new information, and the fictionalization of the roles of author, audience, and in autobiography of the self. We have presented evidence that before she had reached her third birthday Rachel had made major advances towards control of the essayist orientation. By contrast with other children at Fort Chipewyan, Rachel could be seen as developing in a very different way. (Scollon & Scollon 1981:91)

Walker's (1982) data indicates that the Aboriginal children he studied did not engage in 'narrating' during play activities to the extent engaged in by the non-Aboriginal children in his study. This behaviour may have some relation to the kind of 'essayist' orientation to literacy identified by Scollon and Scollon (1981) and it provides some evidence for an adoption of a restricted code (in the Bernsteinian sense) in such contexts by these children. However, it can not be taken at a simplistic level to mean that these children could not 'narrate' experience in other contexts.

Harkins (1994), for her part, demonstrates a similar lack of concern for the role of context and sets out to demonstrate that Aboriginal children can ‘narrate’ in the most general sense of the term. Narrating in one context of situation is presumed to indicate an ability to narrate satisfactorily in all circumstances. From the perspective identified by Hymes (1995), ‘potential’ ability is taken to be equivalent to ‘actual’ ability. Harkins (1994) provides the following text from her data as evidence of a complex narrative sequence. It must be remarked also that, although Harkins does not give the age or educational experience of the child concerned, it is clearly from a child who is far more advanced in age than Walker’s school entry children. Moreover, the text is by a significant degree more explicit in the sense associated with written as opposed to oral text (see Halliday 1985a; Hammond 1990) than those produced by the other children Harkins recorded in the class concerned (refer Harkins 1994:204-206).

We bin ride a horse, first time, and then we go'n ride a horse we had a good ride, and we bin good fun. And then after that we bin, we tryen to take some horse back in; Alice Spring, ah, we gotta take them horse to Irrentyeye. And them horse, we bin takem, right, but that horse bin turn back and they bin run back, back home, and they bin coming come back home again. And we couldn' chasem, and then after that we bin chasem horse, one horse, and I couldn' take Silver. After that they bin turn and we bin takem back we gotta motorbike and then after that we couldn' takem, we bin wait and then them boys will takem them back tomorrow. And they bin takem, takem back, go to Irrentyeye back, what happen, that's all. (Harkins 1994:122)

Harkins then gives what she terms ‘a more standard paraphrase to make it easier to follow the action’ (Harkins 1994:122). The original text and the paraphrase provided by Harkins are set out below. They are re-arranged here side by side with each original clause and its paraphrase in parallel to allow for comparison.

Original text produced by child

We bin ride a horse, first time,
and then we go'n ride a horse
 we had a good ride,
and we bin good fun.
And then after that we bin, we tryen to take some
 horse **back in**;

Alice Spring, ah, we gotta take them horse **to
 Irrentyeye.**
 And them horse, we bin takem, **right,**
but that horse bin turn **back**
and they bin run **back, back home,**
and they bin coming come **back home again.**
And we couldn' chasem,
and then after that we bin chasem horse, one horse,
 and I couldn' take Silver.
After that they bin turn
and we bin takem **back**
 we gotta motorbike
and then after that we couldn' takem,

 we bin wait
and then them boys will takem them **back tomorrow**

And they bin takem, takem **back,**
 go **to Irrentyeye back,**
 what happen, that's all.

Paraphrase of child's text

First we had a (short) horse ride,
and then we went for a good (longer) ride,

and it was good fun.
After that we tried to take some horses **back in**;

from Alice Springs we were going to take
 them **to Irrenteye.**
 We started off **all right**
but those horses turned **back,**
and ran back **in the direction of home,**
 they were coming **towards home again.**
And we couldn't catch up **with them**
Then we did catch up with one horse, Silver,
but I couldn't take him.
Then they turned (**aside**)
and we took them **back (the way we had come)**
 using our motorbike
After that we couldn't take them (**any further that
 day**),
 we had to wait **there with them**
until the (older) boys would take them **back the next
 day.**
And so they took them **back with them to Irrenteye;**

 that's all that happened.'

(Harkins 1994:190-191) (emphasis added)

One can agree with Harkins' contention that the child produced an effective recount of experience. However, the central issue concerning the development of control over what Scollon and Scollon (1981) identify as essayist literacy and what this study has referred to as academic/literate discourses rests upon the question of why Harkins had to reconstruct the child's text. What exists in the text produced by the child is a simple recount of experience that is highly contextualised. What Harkins achieves in her 'translation' of the text is more than simply replacing and clarifying some unfamiliar (to mainstream readers) lexis and grammar. She creates a text that is much more characteristic of 'written' as opposed to 'oral' in its construction (eg. Halliday 1985a, Hammond 1990). There is, for example, much more careful attention to marking the text staging in a manner that moved the text away from dependence on a need for the reader to share an intimate understanding of the context with the speaker. One way this is done is by varying the predominantly *and/and then* staging structures employed by the child. Harkins chooses to set explicit time markers (eg. *first, after that*) as point of departure for certain clauses. This act immediately provides a more explicit staging sequence for the text. Harkins' and the child's choices in this regard are marked in bold in the text comparison set out above. Another feature more characteristic of written text is the attention Harkins gives to making explicit in her writing, the construction of what are referred to in Halliday's (1985b/1994) systemic functional grammar as 'circumstances'. Here Harkins develops circumstances to do with location (eg. *towards home again* instead of *back home* and *back the way we had come* instead of simply *back*) and accompaniment (eg. *with them*). Choices of this kind are marked by bold *italics* in the two texts above. Further examples of choices appropriate to the construction of written text can be found in the closer attention to lexical choices to provide specificity (eg. *bin takem vs started off*). Why, for example, did Harkins not substitute *took* for *bin takem*? This process includes the building of more complex nominal groups involving embedding (eg. *the way [we had come]*). It also includes the more precise specification of tense and modality differences (eg. *bin turn & bin wait vs turned & had to wait*). In fact, to achieve the meanings Harkins imputes in her translation would require careful attention to patterns of intonation and stress - a resource that has limited application in written text. In this respect, it is interesting to see the level of explicitness with which Harkins is able to define the role of the motorbike in the process of taking the horses back.

and we took them back (the way we had come)
using our motorbike
 After that we couldn't take them (any further that day),

Here the choice of a non-finite clause presents the information as a comment on the manner of the process of taking the horses. Whereas the child has to rely on intonation to achieve such a meaning for his text could easily be interpreted in written form as constructing use of the motorbike as a significant new event in the flow of the recount.

After that they bin turn
 and we bin takem back
we gotta motorbike
 and then after that we couldn' takem,

Consideration of the reconstruction by Harkins of the child's oral recount illustrates that the important issue to do with access to mainstream literacy has little to do with whether one can find an instance of a particular element (*eg. until, after that*) used somewhere by some Aboriginal speaker. It is whether Aboriginal children such as the one singled out by Harkins can marshal the available resources in such a manner that they can construct an explicit text of the kind that Harkins constructs on their behalf. Thus, the educational issue at stake is not **just** one of valuing the child's text. Nor is it one of deciding that the text is linguistically complex or logical in some abstract sense. What remains is the issue of employing resources in a manner suitable for building the kind of realities appropriate to the decontextualised or literate discourses discussed in chapter one of this study.

Harkins' assumption that her translation is simply a matter of inconsequential style change only retains any semblance of validity because she is dealing with a very simple recount of experience. Consequently, it is important to move beyond the rather narrow confines of simple oral recounts such as those discussed above to speculate upon the gap between the application of resources illustrated in the text Harkins exemplifies and those employed in the construction of the type of analytic historical recount employed by indigenous writers such as Cummings (1990), Fesl (1993) to deconstruct their history and that of their people. Even so Harkins' modified text involves a substantial shift towards the building of more explicit 'written' texts of this kind. The relevant issue for access to academic/literate discourses for the child in question here focuses upon the extent to which the child's control over language resources allows him the flexibility to produce such a text.

To clarify further the above discussion, it might be useful to expand upon a point made earlier (section 3.4) concerning the acquisition of control over academic/literate discourses. When learners engage in the process of developing control over various kinds of academic and other types of literate discourses, they acquire far more than knowledge over certain language resources. Amongst other things, they gain access to particular 'member's resources' (Fairclough 1989) or 'ways with words' as Heath (1983) puts it. Bernstein addresses a similar notion through recourse to particular orientations to meaning which are reflected in his notion of 'elaborated code'. Halliday from a similar perspective, refers to language as a 'resource' through which meaning is constructed (or realised) within contexts of situation/culture in contrast to functioning merely as a vehicle for transmission of separately constructed meaning. It is important not to forget that all children (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) entering mainstream schooling will need to acquire new member's resources for participating in academic/literate discourses. That is, they will all need to acquire new grammatical elements at the level of clause and above as well as new lexical resources. Simultaneously and interrelatedly with this development, they will need to acquire new ways of employing these lexico-grammatical resources in the fashioning of meanings which will also be new to them. The problem for educators is that some children commence the schooling process with a more

strongly developed readiness than others to engage and exploit opportunities for entry into academic/literate discourses. Much of the research that has been discussed in this chapter, despite various design flaws and errors in interpretation, can be interpreted as indicating that Aboriginal children are likely to be less oriented towards participation in academic/literate discourses than a significant segment of their non-Aboriginal peers.

While the technical limitations of Walker's study and the confusions in his interpretation of his data, provided Harkins (1994) with a reasonable basis for aspects of her critique, Harkins' subsequent analysis did nothing to demonstrate that the Aboriginal children in her study would find it easy to employ the kinds of elaborated codes necessary within academic/literate discourses and appropriate for success in mainstream education. Instead, Harkins (1994) pursues a different question, notably the issue of whether Aboriginal English is capable of supporting logical thought in the manner framed by Labov (1969) in his discussion of 'deficit' and 'difference'. This issue was not the point of focus or even a point of contention in Walker's study.

It is interesting with respect to the above discussion to consider the implications for teaching that Walker (1983) drew from his research. It is also appropriate in the light of Harkins' (1994) construction of Walker's (1982, 1983) research as 'deficit' in the manner of the earlier psycholinguistic researchers who followed the paradigm articulated by Bereiter and Engemann (1966). Despite the confusion which existed in his study with respect to differentiating issues to do with 'system' and 'instance' in the manner outlined by Halliday (1993), Walker was aware of the danger inherent in literal interpretation and application of the findings of his study through the drilling of syntax, he did not propose a simplistic approach that involved the direct teaching of language elements or functions in the manner that has previously been described as 'disembodied'. Walker collaborated in early observations of classroom practice at Traeger Park and considered the principles developed to be compatible with his view of language education. In Walker (1981), he interpreted these in the following manner.

- Children should be allowed and encouraged to use what they already know, so that they are always working from within their own conceptual framework.
- The language problem of children whose social background differs from that assumed in typical classroom teaching programmes is often not so much the availability of particular language structures as the expectation that they use language in ways and for purposes which are unfamiliar. When young children are expected to move beyond the language uses to which they are accustomed within their own culture, they will face difficulties; but those difficulties will not be resolved by teaching language structures - to be able to use those structures as needed, they will have to recognise for themselves the social contexts in which they have to function.
- To learn to use language structures, children must have an appreciation of the contexts in which those structures have function, and the purposes for which a structure may be used in a particular context. Their language will develop further only as their experience within a culture and their 'need to mean' within particular contexts develop further. Language learning and content learning go hand in hand because both involve interpretation of the contexts within which the children are operating.
- Children learn through 'negotiation of meaning' in which the context against which conclusions are drawn and the language through which those conclusions are

expressed are both subject to discussion. This ensures that non-language experience is interpretable against social context and that language is learnt in relation to function within real contexts. (Walker 1981:23)

Here Walker did not insist that teachers return to the direct teaching of differences in the use of structures in the manner that was proposed in earlier 'deficit' studies. He saw the task facing the teacher as one that was largely concerned with providing access to the kind of language resources appropriate for academic/literate discourses. Moreover, he also realised that gaining control over those discourses required a process of negotiation of meaning between teacher and children in contexts within which the literate resources being learned were clearly seen as functional by the children. Walker's formal linguistic research (ie. Walker 1982), however, was extremely limited in the extent to which it could support teachers who wished to implement the teaching principles he expressed.

Furthermore, Walker's research was very much out of step with current mainstream perspectives carried in the work of Harkins (1994) and also Eades (eg. Eades 1984, 1985, 1991), who is recognised as having carried out the most extensive socio-linguistic research on Aboriginal English. Although Eades has not specifically addressed educational issues, her work is quoted as having significant implications to that end by Harkins (1994). The following section will discuss briefly the orientation taken in the work of Eades and its relevance for issues of access and control over academic/literate discourses.

4.2.3 Eades' studies of Aboriginal English and implications for the provision of access to academic/literate discourses

Eades (1991) identifies her focus, after Hymes (1974), as on 'socially constituted linguistic' study and thus is located largely in the socio-linguistic rather than a formal linguistic tradition. She points out that this perspective reverses the more traditional notion of isolating linguistic structure and then posing questions about social function. Instead, she proposes that the methodology should first move in the other direction from function to form. She draws on the work of Hymes (1974) to illustrate this perspective.

Understanding language usage in the sense of communicative strategies necessitates starting from function and looking for the structure that serves it (Hymes 1974: 197). (Eades 1991:84-85)

Essentially, the functions that are set up in her approach are generic in nature. For example, in explaining the 'indirectness' of Aboriginal English she describes language behaviour across areas such as 'seeking information', 'making and refusing requests', 'seeking and giving reasons' and 'expressing opinions' etc.

The kind of information provided within such functions is illustrated in the following extract on the making and refusing of requests.

Aboriginal people rarely make direct requests. A question frequently serves to make an indirect request, as well as to seek orientation information. For example, a typical Aboriginal way of asking for a ride is to ask a car owner an orientation question, such as 'You going to town?' or 'What time are you leaving?' Questions such as these are

multifunctional, structurally ambiguous and of course, depending on the relationship between speakers, communicatively ambiguous. That is, such questions can be interpreted as information seeking of a kind common in Aboriginal conversations, but they can also be interpreted as a request for a ride. Appropriate interpretation cannot be made without an understanding of the relationship between speakers. Even if speakers understand questions such as these as requests for a ride, the ambiguity enables a person to refuse a request in a similar indirect fashion, for example, 'Might be later', 'not sure'. In this way Aboriginal people can negotiate requests and refusals without directly exposing their motives. (Eades 1991:88)

Eades proposes that the results of such studies are demonstrating the '*strength and vitality of Aboriginal culture in a complex multicultural society*' (Eades 1991:85). She also argues that they provide explanations for the kind of breakdown that occurs in many contexts in which Aboriginal people interact with mainstream culture including educational settings (eg. Eades 1985).

Eades proposes that the knowledge gained from such studies allows for the establishment of communication in situations in which it would otherwise break down. In relation to difficulties in educational settings, she proposes that it is through creating contexts which can accommodate to the communicative strategies of Aboriginal children that effective communication can be achieved.

To a large extent, the sociolinguistic work of researchers such as Eades (1984, 1985, 1991) represents a pursuit of Labov's (1969) quest for demonstrating the validity of non-standard English as an end point for socio-linguistic investigation. It is, consequently, an accommodation that involves directing the research focus away from a concern with relationships between language and educational success towards the purely descriptive analysis of the speech of Aboriginal people in their normal everyday social world. The question of how Aboriginal children are to acquire control over academic/literate discourses necessary for mainstream educational success is left for others to explore.

To the extent that education is concerned with giving control over academic/literate discourses to Aboriginal learners, rather than simply allowing for 'accommodation' and the prevention of communication breakdown in general, the issues are different from those existent in the field of law where much of Eades work has been applied (eg. Eades 1988, 1993, 1995). It can, of course, be argued that the ability of courts to accommodate to Aboriginal English useage is important for assisting Aboriginal people. However, in the field of education, the net effect of not confronting the issue of providing access to discourse control is a return to the situation that brought the psycholinguists into the field in the first instance. That is, relationships between language and educational success within academic/literate discourses are rendered as questions that are not pursued by linguistics (refer section 2.1). In this sense, linguistic research is rendered 'safe' in the manner referred to by Halliday (1993) earlier (section 3.4). The lack of concern for the pursuit of control over other discourses has also been remarked upon by Hymes (1995) in relation to American linguistic research carried out in the Labovian tradition.

... What if children of immigrant workers end up with only impoverished command of two languages; that of their parents and that of their present country (eg. Moroccan children in The Netherlands)?

The practice of most linguists in the United States is not to draw conclusions from such facts. The notion of effective equality for all languages and speakers is too highly valued as a weapon against prejudice and a justification of uniform practice. (Hymes 1995:7)

It is not unfair, therefore, to claim that Australian research which has followed and been influenced by Labov's (1969) paper has, in general, balked at confronting the issue of mainstream educational success for Aboriginal children in any meaningful way. At the heart of that timidity has been a fear of replacing or destroying the language competence of the children concerned. This fear is understandable although, as it is argued here, it has been overgeneralised to the extent that it has distorted the potential for linguistic research to contribute to the issue of providing access for Aboriginal learners to mainstream academic and literate discourses. It is also a fear that is widespread in the field of research touching upon the education of indigenous minority children. Scollon and Scollon (1981), for example, writing about Athabaskan children in Alaska point out clearly that gaining access to mainstream education or, as they identify it, 'modern consciousness' requires the children to gain control over different discourses and their associated ways of thinking. However, having made this point they caution:

If we suggest change we have to be very aware that we are not only suggesting change in discourse patterns. We are suggesting change in a person's identity. If someone says that an English speaker should be less talkative, less assertive, less interested in the future, he is saying at the same time that he should become a different person. He is saying that he should identify less with his own culture and more with another. If someone says an Athabaskan should talk more about plans, should speak out more on his own opinions, or not be so indirect, he is saying that he should change in personal identity and cultural identity. (Scollon & Scollon 1981:37)

It is proposed here, nevertheless, that it is not enough to bring the issue to this point and then disengage. To disengage at this point is to fail to deal with the issue of how it is that the children they studied might learn to take control over academic or literate discourses. Instead, the focus for action becomes one that is primarily to do with avoiding 'confusion' in interaction, for example,

We have observed that both Athabaskans and English speakers sometimes feel that the others do not "come right out and say" things. We do not want to say that either group is more explicit but that they are explicit in different ways at different times, This is what causes the confusion. (Scollon & Scollon 1981:37)

Without attempting to undervalue the importance of understanding the characteristic discourse orientations that different cultural groups bring to interaction, the picture of inter-cultural communication drawn by Scollon and Scollon (1981) invites comment. The interpretation, in effect, presumes that minority culture participants can not learn to control multiple discourses. Thus, an Athabaskan who learns, for example, to be more assertive, direct and explicit in dealings within majority culture settings is presumed unable to be able to return to being indirect and deferential in appropriate contexts within his/her own culture.

This is a presumption that has been strongly challenged by writers such as Delpit (1986, 1988) and Cazden (1995). Hymes (1995), moreover, writing on the issue of ideology and equality refers pointedly to the naivety inherent in this perspective.

The ethnolinguistic tradition, as it developed before the World War 11, thought in terms of a “language” and a “culture”. The world was implicitly taken to be a horizontal map: here a people, language and culture; there a people, language and culture. Difference was difference between separate, autonomous groups. (Hymes 1995:3-4)

At the same time, Hymes points to the relevance of the work of Bernstein to the question.

Bernstein, a sociologist working in a complex society, recognised both linguistic form and social relations, but necessarily in terms of a plurality of styles and social positions. Styles and social positions are only sometimes side by side. More often, they are superimposed, stratified. Some control others. I write in this almost childlike way because this simple idea did not enter into the thinking of most critics of Bernstein’s work. (Hymes 1995:3-4)

In their consideration of this issue, Scollon and Scollon (1981) point out that the choice should be left to the individuals. Certainly the choice to acquire access to other discourses should be left to individuals and communities. However, if linguistic research is going to avoid responsibility for addressing the issue of how minority children are going to be provided with access and control over academic/literate discourses in the first place, to say this is, in reality to offer no choice at all .

It is proposed that there is no evidence in current orthodox linguistic research in Australia that the provision of access to academic/literate discourses for Aboriginal learners has assumed any status as an issue for serious attention. Instead the opposite can be said to be true and there has been very little significant research that even touches upon this area. Harkins (1994) provides the major current study which sets out to make specific recommendations for the education of Aboriginal children. And her position regarding the provision of access is extremely negative. She attacks Walker’s guidelines for the provision of access and accuses him of seeking to ‘change’ the language of the children, an accusation that carries with it the further implication that ‘changing’ can only involve ‘replacing’ the language of the children. Moreover, she takes issue with the notion that the *‘kinds of talk valued and rewarded in schools’* (Harkins 1994:142) should be privileged as educational goals.

Unless the form of English required for success in schools is changed, the only course open is to ‘develop’ (preferably by persuasive rather than coercive means) this form of English in the children, rewarding the use of overt connectives such as because, and discounting other less favoured strategies for expressing reason, causality and the like. This is the direction of Walker’s (1982,1983:72-73) recommendations. (Harkins 1994:142-143)

This quotation cannot be said to represent accurately the considerations for teaching outlined in Walker (1981) above. However, what is even more significant for the provision of access to academic/literate discourses in mainstream classrooms is the manner in which Harkins generalises from her critique of Walker (1982) to mount an even more aggressive attack on the work of both Bernstein and Halliday. The nature of her attack deserves comment

because it attempts to suppress debate concerning what Harkins (1994) interprets as ‘changing’ the language of the children.

4.2.4 Harkins’ critique of Bernstein and Halliday

In focussing upon the work of Halliday and Bernstein, Harkins (1994) exploits the interpretative errors Walker (1982) made in his use of the term ‘restricted’ and generalises them quite inaccurately to the work of Bernstein and Halliday.

...the sociolinguistic model originated by Bernstein and developed by Halliday has muchto answer for. In its early form it led directly, if ‘inadvertently’ as Bernstein (1971:194) says, to the excesses of the verbal deprivation approach to minority education. Bernstein's and Halliday's later work did little to discourage these excesses. (Harkins 1994:140)

Whatever political rhetoric about the need for changes in schools and society accompanies it, the systemic-functional approach offers only two options for education: change the kinds of talk valued and rewarded by schools, or change the kind of talk used by the children to that valued and rewarded by schools (showing one's class sympathies by ‘allowing’ them to keep their own code for use in other contexts). No programme is offered for implementing the former option, and the focus on analysing characteristics, structural and functional, of children's language directs attention firmly toward the latter option. (Harkins 1994:142)

In arriving at these judgements, Harkins, mimicking the earlier approach of Labov (1969) (see section 3.4), proceeds largely through associating the work of Bernstein and Halliday with a researcher (Walker 1982) who is much more vulnerable to superficial attack. In this process Walker’s study is characterised quite absurdly as *‘the pinnacle (or nadir) of this approach to linguistic data’* (Harkins 1994:116). Absurd, primarily because the characterisation of Walker (1982) as either *‘pinnacle’* or *‘nadir’* of Halliday’s approach to language involves a gross misrepresentation. As a justification, Harkins (1994) argues that applying Halliday’s systemic functional grammar involves working from a set of arbitrary categories that essentially come into immutable existence before analysis commences.

Like Bernstein, Halliday first sets up a system of categories, in his case a highly complex system of components that he sees as relating to the linguistic system and the social system (1978:69, 125-126). He then explains how his data (1975) fit into these categories. (Harkins 1994:114)

It is a significant comment upon the superficiality of Harkins’ characterisation of Halliday’s work that the above reference to Halliday (1978) is the latest source that she draws upon. She ignores totally, for example, his fundamental account of his grammar that was first published in 1985 and reprinted extensively. In Harkins’ account of Halliday’s grammar, the characterisation includes interpretations of his work such as the following.

The “sociosemantic” or systemic-functional approach of Halliday (1973, 1978) appears to offer a way of relating linguistic form to functional and social context. However, this method relies upon certain predetermined semantic, pragmatic and discourse (“ideational”, “interpersonal” and “textual”) categories, which may not be applicable across cultures. (Harkins 1994:192)

Having reconstructed Halliday's position to suit her purpose, Harkins continues on to accuse Halliday of the 'obvious' mistakes inherent in her own simplistic misrepresentation of his position.

The imperative form of a verb, for example, cannot be assumed in all cultures or in all varieties of English to convey the same illocutionary meaning ("Command") (cf. Walker 1982:99). Nor can it be assumed that the possible categories of pragmatic or interpersonal meanings will be the same for all cultures or all groups of speakers of English; or that other categories such as modality or modulation, or "logical" connectives, will pattern the same way in all varieties of English. (Harkins 1994:192)

Quite apart from her misrepresentation of Walker's analysis as that of Halliday, Harkins' critique above ignores discussion of the same issue in the introduction to Halliday's (1985b) edition of his grammar. In it, Halliday comments generally on the issue of ethnocentricity in grammatical descriptions.

I remarked earlier on the tendency to ethnocentrism in modern linguistics; and there is a danger of assuming that the categories used here are valid in the description of any language. Material contained in these chapters has been used as a basis for studying a number of languages; and the researcher often begins by finding the same set of categories □ because if one looks for a particular category in a language one will usually find it: early European grammarians found pluperfect subjunctives in languages all over the world. Then he starts again, and asks: how would I have interpreted the grammar of this language if English had never existed? □ and this time he may refuse to see anything in common at all, but in the end a balanced perspective is reached. (Halliday 1985b:xxxiv)

Halliday (1985b) then continues on to elaborate upon the issue using the notion of 'metafunctions' which was pointedly identified by Harkins (1994) as '*predetermined*' in her quote above (ie. through her critique of, "*ideational*", "*interpersonal*" and "*textual*" categories). Halliday's presentation of issues is very different from that which Harkins assigns to him.

This is not to deny that features may be universal; but those features that are claimed to be universal are built in to the theory. An example of this is the 'metafunctional' hypothesis: it is postulated that in all languages the content systems are organised into ideational, interpersonal and textual components. This is presented as a universal feature of language. But the descriptive categories are treated as particular. So while all languages are assumed to have a 'textual' component, whereby discourse achieves a texture that relates it to its environment, it is not assumed that in any given language one of the ways of achieving texture will be by means of a thematic system (Chapter 3). Even if there is such a system, the features in it (the choices) may not be the same; and even if a feature embodies the same choice, it may not be realized in the same way. There might be a thematic system, but one which is not based on the principle of an unmarked choice for each mood; or there might be such a choice, but not realized by the order in which the elements occur. In any case, it is far from clear just how similar a pair of features in different languages should be in order to justify calling them by the same name. (Halliday 1985b:xxxiv)

One would expect that a comparison of Harkins' inferred assumptions (as outlined in her critique above) with the statement of assumptions outlined by Halliday on the same issue would give cause for pause and, at the very least, provoke a more considered engagement with Halliday's model of language than that which Harkins provides. Consequently, the issue of specific detail in Harkins' (1994) interpretation of Halliday's work will not be pursued further at this point.

Instead, it is important to attend briefly to her critique of the work of Bernstein for Halliday is also characterised as a 'linguistic apologist' for Bernstein (Harkins 1994:112). There has already been significant discussion on misinterpretation of Bernstein's work earlier (section 3.4) that is relevant to the critique proposed by Harkins (1994). As is the case with the critique of Halliday, the interpretation is superficial and proceeds through association,

Walker (1982, chap. 6) makes the valid point that his data contain many elliptical utterances whose interpretation relies upon pragmatic support from extralinguistic context of the speech situation. Where he, with other followers of the Bernsteinian tradition, goes wrong is in assuming that this style of communication, used in the very restricted social situation in which his data were gathered, is the only one these speakers have. (Harkins 1994:139)

Reference to earlier discussion concerning Bernstein (section 3.3) illustrates quite clearly that the views ascribed by Harkins above are not those proposed by Bernstein. It is also useful to note again the comment made earlier that Walker (1982), in all 205 pages of his report, did not once reference or even refer to Bernstein. The outcome of Harkins' (1994) selective and decidedly unsympathetic review is summed up by her following dismissive comments.

From the point of view of linguistics, neither of Bernstein's positions would appear, ultimately, to be of much interest. The earlier view that restricted code speakers are limited to a small range of words and constructions and cannot elaborate their utterances was revised because it was clear that working-class speakers of English did not lack the ability to elaborate their utterances. The latter formulation seems to imply social variations in register in different speech situations, a phenomenon much better dealt with by sociolinguistic research on register than by Bernstein's rather vague theorising. (Harkins 1994:113)

This represents an extremely inaccurate characterisation of Bernstein's position in the manner of her characterisation of the work of Halliday. It completely ignores, for example, Hasan's (1973) detailed discussion of the distinction between codes, social dialects and registers in Bernstein (1973) which Harkins cites as a reference. Harkins, moreover, professes confusion concerning Bernstein's presumption of an interrelation between codes and the grammatical choices through which they are realised. She offers this 'confusion' as a major criticism concerning what she interprets as Bernstein's 'latter formulation'.

He then describes these hypothetical processes of socialisation in much detail, without reference to any empirical data (Bernstein 1971, 1972, 1975). But he seems not to be fully committed to this newer notion of "code" as referring to "cultural... controls on the options speakers take up", for he goes on to talk again of "restricted code" as if it were a language variety, asking "what is responsible for the simplification and rigidity of the syntax of a restricted code... why should the vocabulary... be drawn from a narrow range?... why should the meaning of the person be implicit rather than verbally explicit? Why should the code orient its speakers to a low level of causality? (Bernstein 1972:475) (Harkins 1994:113)

Once again Harkins (1994) could have profited from reading and engaging with the discussion on this very issue of the realisation of code as grammatical choice by Hasan (1973) in Bernstein (1973). In her paper Hasan provides a very clear interpretation of why it should be that a relationship would exist between a particular 'code' and the grammatical choices through which it is realised.

Bernstein is not alone in holding this view; ignoring the many sociologists and anthropologists, one could cite names from linguistics such as those of Boas, Buhler,

Firth, Halliday, Pike, Saphir and Whorf who have all supported the hypothesis - implicitly or explicitly - that meanings in language cannot be arrived at without reference to society itself, since they are in the first instance generated by society itself. The various forms or systems of communication only provide the means whereby the totality of social meanings can be encoded and thus made available for transfer to other members. I would suggest that the social origin of meaning would argue strongly for the need to establish a point of contact between elements of social structure and the level of a communication system which is concerned with the meanings that can be encoded through the symbols of the said system of communication. (Hasan 1973:269)

In her discussion, Hasan goes on to develop the issue further and illustrate how it is that the relationship between code and language choice does not hold in the simplistic linear sense that Harkins chooses to impose on the statements of Bernstein (1972). However, this aspect will not be elaborated upon here because it is not the central issue of the present discussion. This central issue is the credibility of Harkins' critique of Bernstein. Quite simply, Harkins assigns to both Bernstein and Halliday a simplistic representation of the nature of language and then dismisses their work with out any serious attempt at engagement with their ideas. It is useful to note that other current Australian writers (eg. Fesl 1993:155) also take a similar unconsidered and prematurely dismissive approach to the work of Bernstein. The lack of considered attention to the work of Bernstein by mainstream linguistics generally has recently been commented upon by Hymes (1995).

The main reasons for neglect of Bernstein by linguists, and sociolinguists in particular, however, are two. First, he has been stereotyped, and misleadingly so. The fact that his work has steadily developed, that his theories have changed and grown, is not known. On the American scene he is understood (if "understood" can be used) as someone who divides the world into two kinds of people, one of which is irrevocably linguistically inferior and likely to be black (as in the account of his work in Crystal, 1987, p.40). A young anthropologist recently told me that as a student she found Bernstein's account of restricted code to describe her own family but was told by a faculty member not to read him. (Hymes 1995:4-5)

It is proposed here that little progress will be made towards providing access to literate/academic discourses until Australian researchers are prepared to engage at depth with the issues that Bernstein and Halliday raise through their work. For Harkins, in contrast to this position, the issue of providing access to academic/literate discourses for Aboriginal learners is of limited moment. Hence her recommendations for educational goals are such that they discount the need to provide serious control of discourses other than those associated with her notion of 'Aboriginal English'.

Their aim is not 'native speaker competence' if that means speaking like non-Aboriginal person. They want communicative competence in English for a variety of purposes, but not at the cost of their identity. Fortunately there are good role models of Aboriginal people who are highly competent users of English, but in a culturally appropriate Aboriginal way, and the expertise of these people should be drawn upon. (Harkins 1994:194)

They will probably want to develop a passive but quite deep understanding of English constructions, styles and registers that they may never choose to use themselves; they want to be able to understand what non-Aboriginal people mean. They may also want to work with other, appropriate, Aboriginal people to develop strategies for using English effectively in culturally acceptable Aboriginal ways, and strategies for cross-cultural interpreting and for dealing capably with sticky situations. (Harkins 1994:195-196)

Having presented her analysis in the manner of Labov and having asserted the validity of 'Aboriginal English' Harkins accepts that because Aboriginal English is 'logical' in the manner that Labov (1969) proposes, it is sufficient for schooling. For Harkins, mainstream schooling requires Aboriginal children to adopt mere stylistic changes that are essentially non-functional (after Labov 1969) and which place unnecessary barriers in the path of Aboriginal children. In addition, difficulties lie with mainstream educators who do not understand Aboriginal English.

This effect is exacerbated when non-Aboriginal listeners are ignorant of the meanings of some of the words, and the rules governing their use in this variety of English, and may therefore lose track of what is meant. (Harkins 1994:123)

It must be recognised that there is an element of truth in such interpretations which serves to confuse discussion surrounding the key issue of access to academic/literate discourses. In the first instance it is necessary to recognise that much of what occurs in schools is often irrelevant to the provision of access to academic/literate discourses. As Labov (1969) has said we need to identify '*how much is merely stylistic – or even dysfunctional*' (Labov 1969:340). A critical question in the education of Aboriginal children must involve identifying the relevance of activities to the provision of access and control over relevant academic/literate discourses. Pedagogy cannot be justified on the grounds of customary school practice.

Furthermore it is important that teachers understand and accept the use of Aboriginal English at all times. It is true that Aboriginal children, all too frequently, suffer the consequences of misinterpretation and misunderstanding generally in schools at a level unimaginable for majority culture learners. Moreover, it is still not uncommon for Australian educators to discourage or refuse to accept Aboriginal English in classroom interaction. At times denigration stems from overt racism but often the process is invisible to teachers who cannot see beyond the limits of their own cultural experience and consider that they are 'treating all children the same' (eg. see Malin 1989, 1990, 1991). However, the existence of such behaviour does not take away the importance for Aboriginal children of learning to control the discourses that are fundamental to educational success. In giving children control over new discourses teachers should not need to issue challenges to the child's dialect, because the teaching should demonstrate clearly to the child the functionality of new language choices in achieving discourse goals.

5 CONCLUSION

It is regrettable that in over thirty years of research history in the application of formal linguistic research reviewed in this paper only very limited insights into the ways and means required for educating Aboriginal children for these ends have been offered. In fact, in many instances the inheritance provided for teachers is simply a mass of confusing and contradictory information.

What is even more alarming is the generalised retreat from confronting the notion of ‘access to academic schooling’ evident especially in the work of researchers such as Harkins (1994). In such perspectives the view of language and difference remains tied to limited notions of ‘logicality’ and ‘equivalence’ defined by Labov (1969). It has been proposed that the effect of Labov’s perspective has been and still is pervasive in this field. The outcome is that certain questions have been taken out of the realm of linguistic concerns. In general research effort has retreated into the ‘safe’ confines of research paradigms to do with the description of dialects or specifying particularly ‘Aboriginal’ ways of meaning. In moving in this direction researchers have centred upon issues which are often eminently satisfying to linguists but which offer little of real moment for promoting academic success and control in the affairs of the wider Australian community.

Inherent in much of the research discussed in this paper has been an inability to distinguish between notions of dialect and register and, for that matter, to see that provision of access to academic/literate discourses is not a matter of replacing Aboriginal English with Standard English. Of course, it is not being proposed here that all useful linguistic research must address the issue of access to academic/literate discourses. However, it is important to note that the overall direction of socio-linguistic research in Australia effectively ignores this issue.

In the light of the above, it is unfortunate that, in Australia, consideration of the work of Bernstein in particular should continue to rest upon the limited characterisation of the work of Bernstein articulated by Labov (1969). As earlier discussion has pointed out, Labov’s (1969) critique of Bernstein was exceedingly dismissive. It is interesting, therefore, to see well over twenty years later a continuation of this position which compounds this dismissal with an even greater vehemence and with the same lack of engagement with the work of both Bernstein and Halliday.

It is proposed here that there is a strong need to develop approaches to linguistic analysis which engage directly with the processes through which access to academic/literate discourses are negotiated in schools with Aboriginal learners. In addition there is also a need to examine what counts as learning goals set in schools.

* References for this paper are included in the bibliography – volume 1