

Concepts underpinning innovations to second language proficiency scales inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners: a dynamic process in progress

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This paper discusses the concepts underlying two proficiency scale innovations which include and describe the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners of Standard Australian English (SAE). Both scales, developed in Queensland, are adaptations of the *National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) ESL Bandscales* (McKay, Hudson, & Sapuppo, 1994). The revisions attempt to describe very complex terrain: the development of SAE by cohorts of Indigenous students, whose first languages are for the most part generated by language contact (English-lexified creoles or related varieties) in a range of language ecologies (second or foreign language or dialect learning situations), and who are undertaking their schooling in whole-class, mainstream curriculum contexts with SAE as the medium of instruction (Angelo, 2013). This work is of both national and international significance due to the growing awareness of the need for more valid language assessment of the diverse cohorts of students who have complex language backgrounds in relation to a standard language of education, such as non-standard dialects, contact languages, or 'long-term' language learners from indigenous or ethnic communities undergoing language shift. The concepts discussed suggest ways to capture students' learning trajectories which are otherwise not visible in standardised L1 (literacy) assessments nor in typical L2 proficiency tools.

Key words: Indigenous education, second language assessment, proficiency scales, language education, contact languages

Introduction

For over a decade, an ongoing cycle of second language proficiency scale development, implementation, reflection and innovation has been underway in Queensland in order to provide useful diagnostic information to classroom teachers about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are learners of English as a Foreign or Second Language/Dialect (EFL/ESL/ESD), or English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) in current national terminological parlance. Literacy (and numeracy and other curriculum content) progress maps and scales designed for first language (L1) speakers of Standard Australian English (SAE) inadequately describe second language (L2) learner pathways because they are predicated on a native-speaker-like command of English. To fill this gap for school-aged ESL learners in Australia, the *National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA) ESL Bandscales* (McKay, Hudson, & Sapuppo, 1994), henceforth NLLIA Bandscales, an internationally respected L2 proficiency scale, was developed. However, only those ESL learners with overseas language backgrounds were described in the NLLIA Bandscales. Although these scales had attempted to include the range of all ESL learners, the Introduction states that a description of the characteristics of the ESL learning of 'Aboriginal learners' fell outside the expertise of the Project team and the task was assigned for further research and development (NLLIA, 1994, pp. A5, 11). This paper reports on two such cases.

1.1 Background on two proficiency scale developments

The development of the *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners* (Education Queensland [EQ], 1999/2002), henceforth Indigenous Bandscales or IB in citations, addressed the omission of Indigenous ESL learners from the NLLIA Bandscales. This first Queensland adaptation on the NLLIA Bandscales was produced through a project initiated by teachers in Queensland schools, particularly from the far north and the Torres Strait. In these schools, some, much or the entire student cohort identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (culturally) and there was a growing acknowledgement that some, many or all of these Indigenous students were also learning SAE as an additional language or dialect. These teachers reported that they required additional assistance to the existing NLLIA Bandscales in assessing this cohort due to linguistic context factors, such as English-lexified

contact languages as students' first language or dialect (L1/D1) and their unrecognised ESL learner status, plus a range of unsupported L2 learning contexts and assumptions about students' prior learning.

The second Queensland innovation was the *Bandscales for English as a Second Language/Dialect (ESL/D) Learners* (EQ, 2008a), henceforth ESL/D Bandscales² or EB in citations. They were produced in accordance with the principle of a 'curriculum-for-all' in Queensland's new P-12 Curriculum (EQ, 2008c). These ESL/D Bandscales were produced for non-specialist classroom teachers with ESL/D learners. Their linguistically diverse cohorts included student populations who were 'invisible' because they were not 'obvious' ESL learners (not easily identifiable through recent arrival in Australia and/or their L1 backgrounds), as well as ESL/D learners with limited school literacy backgrounds and/or trauma requiring a longer ESL pathway of development. The Indigenous Bandscales became the base document for the 2008 ESL/D Bandscales because they had already begun the task of grappling with some of these issues. The ESL/D Bandscales drew strongly on the conceptual underpinnings of the Indigenous Bandscales, but also benefited from the ongoing development of these concepts in the intervening years since publication and the learnings resulting from their operationalisation in the school domain.

All three sets of scales, NLLIA, Indigenous and ESL/D, can be aligned according to the original NLLIA levels (Appendix 1), and none serve a purpose as an ESL curriculum. The Indigenous Bandscales contain rich contextual descriptions in the tradition of the NLLIA Bandscales (see Appendix 2, Sample extract from Indigenous Bandscales). Again, following in the steps of the original NLLIA Bandscales, the Indigenous Bandscales also serve both a strongly diagnostic function and a teacher development purpose. This is evident to an even greater degree in the Indigenous Bandscales because of the focus on non-specialist users in complex contact language ecologies, with messages for teachers embedded within the indicators, at the end of the scales and in separate sections in the Junior Primary scales on level-specific Teaching Emphases (the latter due to teacher request).

The subsequent ESL/D Bandscales serve the same diagnostic purpose. Although the indicators were reduced in number, the scale was still highly contextualised

² Readers should be alerted to the fact that electronic documents in the schooling domain undergo constant revisions and renewals. In the case of this particular 'lineage' of *Bandscales*, it is only the contextual information surrounding them that has been varying. For example, these are in the process of becoming redesignated as 'Bandscales for EAL/D learners' as familiarity with ACARA terminology increases, e.g. Department of Education, Training & Employment (DETE QLD) (2013). In any case, the reference here is to the first version published in 2008.

and was prefaced by an introduction containing essential concepts and accompanied by general teacher ESL guidelines (EQ, 2008b). For the ease of manageability of the non-specialist mainstream teacher, these 'summarised' ESL/D scales are displayed on one landscape-oriented A3 page per each of the four modes, with all the levels of a mode arranged left to right in a table, of increasing proficiency levels (see Appendix 3 for a sample page). To compensate for the loss of detail the summarised version also serves a strong administrative purpose, the lack of which was seen by many administrators to be a weakness in the original NLLIA scales (McKay, 2006, p. 313). The manageability of the document has meant that it has now become part of the statewide electronic recording and reporting system, One School, facilitating schools' ability to collect and report data on the full population of EAL/D learners, including Indigenous EAL/D learners. As with the original scales, however, valid and reliable data depends on professional development, so that users gain understandings of the underlying concepts and the 'code' in which these are rendered in such assessment tools. A common understanding about the descriptors and the overall levels is integral to consistent judgements.

1.2 Role of proficiency scales in Indigenous education contexts

Despite the vast literature on the limitations of proficiency scales (e.g. Chalhoub-Deville, 1997; and see more recently McNamara & Elder, 2010), developments in proficiency scales for the Indigenous EAL/D cohort are an important endeavour. As Angelo (2013a) shows, the L2 learner status and proficiency levels of Indigenous EAL/D learners are visible nowhere else. A dearth of EAL/D recognition in policy, learning contexts and assessment surrounds Indigenous EAL/D learners, notably in their achievement data in standardised testing. Tools such as L2 proficiency scales that describe this cohort of EAL/D learners and reveal their L2 learner characteristics and trajectories are vital as Indigenous students are very much in the public eye due to a significant proportion of 'under-achievement' when viewed through the lens of literacy and numeracy tests standardised for L1 speakers of SAE. These learners can then be subjected to ill-suited literacy interventions which do not take into account their EAL/D proficiency levels (e.g. Angelo, 2012, 2013b). L2 proficiency is all too easily rendered invisible as an operative variable in Indigenous student achievement in improvement agendas awash with English literacy performance data or socio-economic statistics (Dixon & Angelo, in press). And if L2 learning is invisible, then it will remain unaddressed in curriculum, teaching approaches and other education documentation (e.g. McIntosh, O'Hanlon, & Angelo, 2012).

1.3 Significance for language testing and assessment

The NLLIA Bandscales demonstrably tapped into a language education assessment niche. Indeed, they have formed the basis for an entire 'family' of scales³ and outside that 'family' their influence is visible in many frameworks both at home and abroad (e.g. National Association for Language Development in the Curriculum [NALDIC], 2009). The Queensland innovations are thus but two of a large number of second language (L2) assessment frameworks for school aged learners which have appeared in the last two decades (some thirteen in Australia alone). Yet, despite this proliferation, discussions about the underlying conceptual issues are rare (see, however, NLLIA, 1994; papers by McKay [e.g. McKay, 2000, 2007]; Scott, 2009; Jang, Wagner, & Stille, 2011). Even rarer are those that relate to Indigenous learners (although see the introduction to the Western Australian *ESL/ESD Progress Map* (Department of Education & Training [Western Australia], 2009). Three papers by Turnbull (2001, 2002) and Turnbull and Hudson (2001), however, provide useful insights into the adaptations made to the original NLLIA Bandscales through the Indigenous Bandscales project in Queensland. This paper aims to add to the theoretical discussion of L2 proficiency scales in schools, a discussion which is highly relevant in relation to education policy initiatives involving proposed alignments of L2 frameworks across states as in the United States (Linguanti & Cook, 2013), or 'syntheses' of frameworks across states as in Australia (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2011).

Although it would be difficult to imagine that any future national EAL/D assessment framework in Australia would not claim to be inclusive of Indigenous learners, this inclusiveness is comparatively recent and it would be fair to say that the EAL/D field would be largely unaware of the discussions of the issues and underlying concepts relating to L2 assessment and this cohort. At conferences, for instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education is often treated as a 'special interest', with the result that there is a tendency to group papers about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues together, or even in a section of their own. As a result, new research tends to go unnoticed by EAL/D migrant and refugee specialists, who nevertheless have a strong influence on newly inclusive EAL/D policy and resource developments. The

³ Reference in this paper is not made to *The NLLIA ESL Bandscales Version 2* (McKay, Hudson, Newton, & Guse, 2007). Although the original Bandscales, the two adaptations and Version 2 can all be aligned according to the original levels, Version 2 was not written as an update of the Indigenous scales and does not incorporate its concepts, e.g. the problem of the 'invisibility' of non-overseas L1 contact language background learners and associated issues of time and rate of progress.

discussion in this paper serves to inform the language assessment community of the issues related to the assessment of EAL/D Indigenous learners as well as the multi-disciplinary research that has been brought to bear to address them. As such it builds on Angelo's (2013a) previous paper in this journal describing the assessment contexts of Indigenous EAL/D learners and urging the language testing and assessment community to engage deeply in this area.

The conceptual underpinnings outlined in this paper warrant serious consideration by the language testing and assessment field in any future or even national enterprise. If claims are made that scales are inclusive of the L2 proficiency of Indigenous learners, without consideration of these very concepts, there is a danger that such claims could be ill advised but nevertheless accepted at face value, or worse still, regarded as a *fait accompli*, as if all the complex issues addressing inclusion of this cohort have been 'solved'. Paradoxically, such scales would then serve to reinforce the 'invisibility' of Indigenous (and other hidden) EAL/D learners. In an era when educational accountability is emphasised, those involved in L2 scales development can attempt to maximise 'positive impact' (McKay, 2007, p.17) by taking part in a reiterative process of research and revision in relation to proficiency descriptions. The clarification of salient features of Indigenous EAL/D learners' L2 progress in proficiency scales presented in this paper is just such an endeavour.

1.4 Notes on terminology

Readers' attention is drawn to the following explanation of terms used in this paper. This paper sometimes employs the term 'Indigenous', and this is with the intention of including both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in respectful acknowledgement of them as First Peoples in this country. Readers should also be aware that the subject matter of this paper crosses several terminological time zones. ESL was the common term in the Australian context at the time of writing the NLLIA Bandscales. ESL/D gradually entered common usage with the increased focus on including Indigenous learners of SAE as a D2 –and this will be discussed further below. EFL, an apt description of the English language learning contexts in many remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, did not, however, consistently enter language assessment documents. These terms are currently all conflated by ACARA (e.g. ACARA, 2011) under the terminology of EAL/D. When referring to students in current settings who are in the process of adding SAE to their other language repertoires, this paper will use the term 'EAL/D', whilst use of the other terms

will be an indication of a particular context—of either a historical or language ecology nature.⁴

Conceptual issues: a work in progress

The key concepts informing the NLLIA Bandscales approach to describing L2 proficiency development are retained by both the subsequent adaptations, the 1999/2002 Indigenous Bandscales and the 2008 ESL/D Bandscales. These guiding principles are outlined in the Introduction (NLLIA, 1994) and include a communicative language ability (CLA) basis (see, for example, Bachman 1990, 1991), theories of L2 acquisition and development (drawing on Cummins' [1978, 1984] work on social and academic language among others), contextualisation according to age, task, teaching support and stage of L2 acquisition and separate scales according to phase of schooling. (It should be noted, however, that unlike the NLLIA Bandscales, for local reasons relating to curriculum provenance, neither of the Queensland Bandscales innovations described senior secondary years).

As with the NLLIA ESL Bandscales, the Indigenous Bandscales had a strong research base. In setting out to describe not only speakers of traditional Indigenous languages but also speakers of contact language varieties, the developers drew on consultation with Indigenous teaching personnel and assistants to draw out their personal experiences and observations as well as on input from experienced classroom teachers of Indigenous ESL/D learners. Published research on Torres Strait Creole, Kriol and Aboriginal English also informed the development of the Indigenous Bandscales, particularly about the use of these varieties and about ESL/D learners with these language backgrounds in school education contexts.⁵ Among others, the scales drew particularly on research by Shnukal (1983, 1991, 1992) on Torres Strait Creole; Eades (1999) on Aboriginal English; Malcolm and Education Department of Western Australia (1992) on *Two Way English* and particularly the acknowledgement of the socio-cultural influences on the education of Aboriginal learners; Berry and Hudson (1997) on recognition of Kriol as a real language and the significance of language awareness in education as a

⁴ Although we have found this a somewhat clumsy terminological solution, we have worried that using EAL/D in discussions ranging across the past two decades could encourage a revisionist interpretation of the history of L2 proficiency scale development which could obscure the rationale for this paper, namely that the identification and inclusion of full cohorts of 'ESL' learners in documents for non-specialists represent recent, complex and ongoing preoccupations.

⁵ Research identified in Turnbull's (2001, 2002) papers, and in C. Hudson's collection of research papers as a member of the writing team and in the references to the scales themselves.

foundation for 'separating' (teaching and learning about linguistic differences) Kriol through contrast with SAE to achieve fluent code-switching (using both Kriol and SAE) in Kimberley schools. More generally it was informed by research on pidgins and creoles, such as Mufwene (1988) and the use of creoles in education (for example, Hudson, 1984; Nakata, 1995; Siegel, 1992, 1997; Kephart, 1992; and Ovington, 1992). Links were also made by the Indigenous Bandscales writing team between this research and aspects of Cummins' (1984, 1996, 2000) and Collier's (1989) work on L2 acquisition in schools which had been a component of the theoretical framework underlying the NLLIA Bandscales.

A number of key concepts emerged in the process of adapting the NLLIA Bandscales to reflect Indigenous ESL/D learners and their pathways in the Indigenous Bandscales.⁶ Some applied notions in the original Bandscales to the complex language situations of Indigenous students, such as recognising and valuing the first language (L1) background and using it as a rich resource for learning. Some introduced notions related to research on contact language backgrounds. Some expanded original notions, such as the emphasis on the socio-cultural practices of the learner's L1 background. Some disrupted the original notions which related for the most part to overseas-born, L1 literacy background students immersed in an English speaking context. For example, there was a need for extra levels to show progress and the issue of time to develop proficiency was raised.

The following discussion of these key concepts is divided into two sections: one addressing concepts associated with L1 backgrounds, and the other with duration of L2 acquisition. Each of these sections discusses a number of particular concepts that have arisen and been addressed in the innovations, perhaps to have opened up new issues yet to be resolved. The paper resists any attempt to construct conceptual 'givens', but seeks to highlight a dynamic conceptual field.

2.1 Re-engaging with 'first language' backgrounds

The language ecologies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities in Queensland are characterised by a widespread shift in language use away from traditional languages over to English-lexified contact language varieties (see Angelo, 2013a for a detailed discussion). Describing the language backgrounds of Indigenous EAL/D learners has

⁶ The background papers to the Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners by Turnbull (2001, 2002) remain an invaluable source.

emerged as an essential but not unproblematic enterprise. The description of the far-reaching influence of these language backgrounds on Indigenous EAL/D learners' acquisition of SAE began to be engaged with in the Indigenous Bandscales and this work informed—often with modifications—the subsequent ESL/D Bandscales and is reported here.

2.1.1 Terminological markers

A number of terminological choices were designed to indicate a paradigm shift in the Indigenous Bandscales. The original NLLIA Bandscales use the terms L1 and L2 as central dichotomous terms in describing learners' bilingual development. L1 is used in relation to the learners' initial language and learning backgrounds and to describe the language of similar speaking peers. This terminology functioned in the original Bandscales to make distinctions about ESL learners with typologically 'obvious' language backgrounds related to geographically distinctive origins. However, in the Indigenous Bandscales, the umbrella term HL (Home Language), rather than L1, was adopted to cover the diversity of languages spoken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESL/D learners (i.e. dialect, creole and/or traditional), and the fact that SAE may be a third or fourth language for some students. The role of HL and HL-speaking adults in students' concept development was highlighted. HL was contrasted with SAE rather than English as in the original NLLIA Bandscales, explicitly indicating the national standard variety of English which speakers of English-lexified contact language varieties will acquire in school contexts and in addition to their HL. The change from L1/English to HL/SAE also emphasised the existence and acceptance of different kinds of 'Englishes' (i.e. SAE, and English-lexified contact varieties), signalling that different does not indicate deficient or less valued.

Since then HL has perhaps become a superficial means of suggesting inclusion of Indigenous learners' language backgrounds. As it differs from the previous terminology, L1, it flags the recent inclusion of Indigenous learners of SAE (somewhat similar in effect to adding the 'D' for dialect to ESL or EAL). Nevertheless, it remains a highly non-specific reference, which could even be construed as sanctioning vagueness about Indigenous students' L1/D1s, rather than an expectation of informed awareness of the diversity of Indigenous students' language backgrounds and the complexity of the relationships between these language varieties and SAE. HL also leaves the issue of proximity or distance to SAE in the various linguistic sub-systems untouched and hence the distinction between dialect/creole/traditional languages. At the same time, SAE is now often co-opted in education documents purely for the formal and academic area of its use whereas this variety is obviously used for

communication in domains beyond education, and in a variety of registers, including informal.

Although the term HL is used in the later ESL/D Bandscales, concerns remain about the 'uptake' of HL and SAE in education documents and their 'application' in schools, as these terms have not necessarily been proven to add clarity about Indigenous EAL/D learners. A particularly worrying interpretation of HL has been to delimit the domain of usage of students' L1/D1 to the home (i.e. you only speak that way at home), rather than to describe a variety in terms of one typical domain of use and the reason for its acquisition as a L1/D1 (i.e. how you usually speak with your family at home and elsewhere). For the sake of clarity for the reader, the discussion will proceed with the conventional terminological forms 'L1' and 'L2' usually employed in the language testing and assessment field, but this should not be interpreted as a comment on the status of this HL/SAE discussion.

2.1.2 L1/D1 backgrounds of Indigenous ESL/D learners

The NLLIA Bandscales emphasise the L1 background of learners related to learners' identity, the value of their L1 for learning and the benefit of L1 support for their L2 acquisition and development. However, the Indigenous Bandscales recognised that for speakers of Indigenous contact language varieties there were particular hurdles for even recognising students' L1/D1s. Translating the NLLIA emphasis on L1 backgrounds into the Indigenous context needed to confront the invisibility or negative valuing in educational and wider social contexts, where these (contact) languages had often been considered both by educators and speakers alike as 'slang', 'rubbish' or 'incorrect' English (Berry & Hudson, 1997, p. 8; Malcolm et al., 1999; Shnukal, 1992, p. 4, all as cited in Turnbull, 2002, p. 4). Thus, an essential basic and defining concept of the Indigenous Bandscales was the recognition and acknowledgement of Torres Strait Creole (TSC) and Aboriginal English (AE) as legitimate, rule-governed varieties with inherent communicative and cultural value despite their differences from SAE. This stance was in opposition to those negative perceptions towards contact languages which might not have even acknowledged their existence or legitimacy or might have seen no place for such varieties in education. Within the scales (in descriptors and and/or notes) this is shown by constant non-deficit reference to and explanations of 'L1/D1' in classroom use. For example:

- 1) Is developing use of prepositions—inaccuracies occur because of generalisations in the use of known prepositions. Teachers need to be aware that prepositions may be used differently in HL, and should check whether the child's 'mistakes' are actually

grammatically correct in their HL, e.g. Ai prait from the dog (I'm frightened of the dog) [IB_JP_S_Level4_Descriptor]. (see Appendix 1 for key to citations).

- 2) May be confident to share features of Indigenous language variety (e.g. vocabulary, gestures, ways of responding, giving information). Alternatively, may choose not to share aspects of language due to family's historical experiences of language loss [IB_MP&MS_S_Level4_Descriptor].

However, the understanding of contact language varieties in Queensland as represented in the Indigenous Bandscales was of its time. The recognition of TSC and AE as the only contact languages of Queensland has since been expanded (see Angelo 2004, 2006c, 2013a; Angelo & McIntosh, in press; Dixon & Angelo, in press; EQ, 2008a, 2008b; DETE QLD, 2011, 2013; McIntosh et al., 2012; Sellwood & Angelo, 2013). Use of a single term, AE, erroneously conveyed the idea of a homogenous linguistic entity, spoken by Aboriginal peoples across Queensland and standing in an unproblematised 'dialect' relationship to SAE. This blanketed over significant differences between contact language varieties spoken by Aboriginal Queenslanders. Furthermore, the binary distinction between TSC and AE unwittingly and erroneously aided linguistic backgrounds to be confounded with ethnicity in Queensland, with (all) Torres Strait Islanders seen as speakers of Torres Strait *Creole*, despite the description of a Torres Strait *English* by Shnukal (2001); and (all) Aboriginal people believed to be speakers of AE, despite a number of creoles already described on the Queensland mainland, such as Kriol (Sandefur, Gumbali, Daniels & Wurramara, 1982), Cape York Creole (Crowley & Rigsby, 1979) and 'a pidginised variety' at Kowanyama (Mühlhäusler, 1996).⁷ This is not a simple nomenclature issue. Contact languages are categorised as creoles because they are so *very* different from their lexifier. Student access to a curriculum delivered through SAE is thus significantly hindered if their L1 is towards the creole end of the spectrum of English-lexified contact varieties, but is less affected (or affected in different ways) if their D1 is an ethnolect towards the dialect end of the spectrum (see Angelo, 2013a for a fuller explanation). For all these reasons, the need to differentiate Indigenous students' language backgrounds to indicate this range has become apparent *since* the Indigenous Bandscales.

The introduction to the ESL/D Bandscales therefore explicitly discusses language contact and shift processes that have shaped Aboriginal and Torres

⁷ Interestingly, however, in the Indigenous Bandscales production period (1997-2002) there was no awareness of an NLLIA report by Young (1997) on AE which problematised the field of research—a lack of awareness at the time that does not seem to have been confined only to the Bandscales writing team, but more generally in educational and even linguistic circles.

Strait Islander students' language backgrounds (EQ, 2008a, pp. 1-2) and includes traditional languages, creoles and related contact varieties. This same section also problematises identification of ESL/D learners through self-declaration of L1/D1, explaining how contact language varieties might not have a standardised nomenclature. For this reason, the accompanying ESL Guidelines (EQ, 2008b) describes an identification process reliant on self-declaration at enrolment, as well as an alternate process that relies on ongoing assessment. The original NLLIA Bandscales acknowledged that identification of some ESL learners could be difficult focussing on Australian born ESL learners in general, and specifically those in Australia for over six years at Level 5 Speaking (an advanced intermediate level) who 'May go unidentified in class because of Australian accent' (NLLIA, D p. 20). Particular reference in the notes at the end of Level 5 in all modes is made to *Low literacy background learners* and *Learners transferring from primary school* 'who may go unnoticed because of the apparent ease in personal, social and general school contexts' (NLLIA, D pp. 9, 21, 35, 48). However, these identification 'alerts' in the NLLIA Bandscales were included on account of particular L2 characteristics of some ESL learners, unlike those in the ESL/D Bandscales which address attributes of some ESL/D learners' L1/D1s and hence pertain from the earliest levels and throughout.

2.1.3 *Semantic transparency between contact languages and their lexifier language*

Issues relating to 'semantic transparency' were a central point of focus in the Indigenous Bandscales, drawing on Shnukal's research on TSC (e.g. Shnukal, 1996). Items of vocabulary in TSC superficially resemble lexical counterparts in SAE with the result that both learners and teachers may not recognise that TSC and SAE are fundamentally different languages. Semantic distinctions and grammatical differences may not be perceived. Turnbull (1999, p. 5) refers to the TSC example where 'draun' (historically from the English 'drown') means 'to submerge the head under water but not die'. Such 'transparency' between TSC and SAE forms can encourage a degree of assumed comprehensibility between speakers of TSC (or other English-lexified creoles) and SAE, so that 'Conversations may be superficially understood by an English-speaking listener especially if the context is known' (Turnbull, 2001, p. 4). However, this apparent transparency is also deceptive so that differences (and significant meanings) are often obscured. 'Sometimes understanding what Kriol/AE speakers are saying is more difficult because of the English base. It can lull the unwary into a false sense of security because similarities are heard but differences are missed' (Berry & Hudson, 1997, p. 7, as cited in Turnbull, 2001, p. 4). In the Indigenous Bandscales, the major point was to alert teachers that students may appear to be proficient in English—or at least more proficient than they actually are—due solely to effects of transparency, for example:

- 3) Are still limited in their comprehension by the amount of vocabulary they have encountered so far both in oral interactions and in their reading. Students who speak TSC/AE may still have difficulties because of the meaning differences due to transparency [IB_MP&MS_R_Level4_Descriptor].
- 4) Be aware that, due to successful communication, the interlocutor may mistakenly overrate the child. When assessing the child, it is important to listen to how the child speaks as well as the message they are communicating [IB_JP_S_Level2_Additional Background Information].

The notion of transparency is embedded in the ESL/D Bandscales in indicators such as those cited as examples 10-13 below, and as part of the 'Implications' included at the end of both the Early Phase and the Middle Phase scales sets, encompassing all levels to Level 4:

- 5) Some students, e.g. students who speak creoles, may plateau at level 3 in listening because of the lack of understanding that the language they speak is not SAE. That is, it may be erroneously assumed by both students and teachers that the students are SAE users and therefore they 'should' be able to understand what is being said in the classroom [EB_EP_Levels1-4_Implications].

Subsequent to the development of the Indigenous Bandscales, understandings of transparency have been augmented in a number of ways. Firstly, a more nuanced understanding of the spectra of English-lexified varieties in Queensland has fed into the acknowledgement of gradations of transparency (or degrees of surface level similarity) (see 2.1.2 above). Secondly, in order to understand the different categories of contact languages (L1 or D1), linguistic sub-systems such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics in addition to the lexicon needed to be introduced into considerations of transparency between students' L1/D1 and SAE (e.g. EQ, 2008a, p. 1). Descriptors containing pointers about the need to move beyond the lexical layer in assessing and teaching ESL/D students are scattered throughout the Indigenous and ESL/D Bandscales (e.g. example 10 below) but it would be reasonable to assert that a more thoroughgoing incorporation of transparency beyond 'mistaken L2 proficiency' has yet to be accomplished. Transparency is relevant to determining the relationship of a D1 versus a L1 to SAE (e.g. more versus less shared morphosyntactic material), how learners of either variety might be recognised, how these might differentially impact on learning or how linguistic features could be analysed as more or less relevant for teaching purposes.

2.1.4 Untangling L1 from L2 learner approximations

During consultations on the Indigenous Bandscales, transparency phenomena were often cited as leading both teachers and learners to make mistaken judgements about learners' ability with SAE. It was common knowledge that erroneous assumptions about these ESL/D learners' proficiency in SAE were often made because transparency alongside other contextual cues made Indigenous ESL/D learners with contact language backgrounds more communicatively operational than their actual level of proficiency in SAE should allow. Non-interactional data, such as student achievement in decontextualised reading comprehension, were then often 'surprisingly' low to educators who were not yet abreast of the influence of transparency on Indigenous ESL/D learners' (apparent) L2 learning trajectory. As in the original Bandscales, the L2 acquisition concept of 'interlanguage' is used in the Indigenous Bandscales to explain learner approximations (errors) as a normal part of L2 development and to discourage continuous, deleterious corrections in speaking and writing. These explanations appear as comments in both the Junior and Middle sets of Speaking and Writing scales at Levels 3 and 4, for example:

- 6) Constant face-to-face correction of students' SAE at this stage may impede language development and hinder risk-taking which is necessary for further development. Making approximations to the target language is a recognised step in second language development [...] [IB_MP&MS_S_Level3_Comments: Respect for Interlanguage].

However, where differences between TSC/AE (in the now superseded parlance of the Indigenous Bandscales) and SAE are not always obvious, the question arises as to how teachers who have no proficiency in a student's HL are to know whether a student is attempting SAE or speaking home language (Turnbull, 2002, p. 4). Given these linguistic intricacies, the Indigenous Bandscales contain various recommendations, including the involvement of bilingual adults in L2 assessments of spoken language, raising (often non-Indigenous, non-local) teacher awareness about Indigenous language varieties or even postponing an assessment until student output contains more (irrefutable) evidence of SAE learning, as in

- 7) Assessing students who speak AE/Creole is likely to be more difficult if high frequency AE/creole vocabulary is comprehensible to the SAE speaker. Assessment may need to be suspended until students have developed more SAE language [IB_MP&MS_S_Level2_Comments: Transparency].

In the ESL/D Bandscales, which function as a 'summary' style document, the specific challenges facing SAE-speaking teachers for untangling contact language speaking students' attempts at the target versus their use of L1 has been subsumed in descriptors dealing with 'language awareness' more generally.

2.1.5 The critical role of Language Awareness

The notion of 'language awareness' was added to the existing NLLIA theoretical framework as an underpinning concept in the Indigenous Bandscales, drawing particularly from the work of Berry and Hudson (e.g. 1997). On Berry and Hudson's code-switching stairway, language awareness was the initial step on which subsequent steps of separation, code-switching and control were based. Language awareness involved developing understandings about language processes such as language contact and language shift so as to explain the origins of language varieties that had clearly been influenced by English, but despite this influence, were spoken (exclusively) by Indigenous Australians, and were obviously different from SAE. The concept was introduced into the Indigenous Bandscales in specific descriptors of learner behaviour, in messages to teachers about their role in developing students' language awareness and expanded on in 'Comments' below the indicators to enhance teacher knowledge. For example, describing learners' language awareness behaviour plus flagging teachers' role in promoting this:

- 8) Are beginning to demonstrate explicit knowledge of differences between HL and SAE (Given that this is being explicitly taught) [IB_JP_W_Level3_Descriptor].

or in comments for teachers:

- 9) Teachers need to develop awareness of language varieties and language differences in the community (e.g. SAE, AE, TSC) so that the listening needs of their learners can be identified and addressed [IB_JP_L_Levels1-3_Comment].
- 10) Learners may plateau at this level because of lack of understanding of transparency (similarity between creole/Aboriginal English and SAE), and have difficulty moving to Level 3 [IB_MP&MS_L_Level2_Comment].

This body of knowledge was subsequently systematised as the *Language Awareness Continuum* (Angelo, 2006a), a staged model of language awareness for teachers and learners (and which included critical language awareness, as Siegel [2010] was to recommend). Of particular concern to Angelo was that the development of language awareness (in the Australian context at least) took considerably more time than most educators envisaged. Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander speakers' of contact languages often do not experience acceptance or valuing of their L1/D1, and if one educator's message happens to acknowledge their L1/D1, another might just as easily not (see Sellwood & Angelo, 2013 for Sellwood's own account of being an unrecognised TSC speaker and L2 learner of SAE). Taking as an endpoint a sophisticated level of knowledge such as would be required to answer all a new teacher's questions, Angelo backward mapped the knowledges required (see Appendix 4 for a diagram summarising the content of the Language Awareness Continuum). The development of language awareness became a critical component in L2 teaching and learning approaches with Indigenous ESL/D learners to enhance their SAE acquisition. Language awareness in this context constituted a complex mediated process operating between learners and their communities and teachers and in reverse. For Angelo (2006a, 2006b), the Indigenous Bandscales could not stand alone without a continuum for Language Awareness.

As a result, the role of teacher language awareness continued to be highlighted in the 2008 ESL/D Bandscales development, as in this example:

- 11) Is developing awareness (if creole speaker) of differences in language varieties (i.e. SAE v Home Languages) and needs assistance from teachers to expand these early understandings to avoid the student adapting HL rather than learning SAE [EB_MP_L Level2_Descriptor].

Moreover, while Angelo's work arose from experiences in Indigenous communities that had undergone extensive language shift away from traditional languages and over to contact languages, the producers of the 2008 ESL/D Bandscales hypothesised that her work on language shift and language awareness transferred to the mass of 'invisible' ESL learners, including Australian born, and Pan Pacific heritage, and also some 'English' speaking overseas born students (e.g. from Liberia).⁸ Thus, the *Language Awareness Continuum* was introduced in Bandscales training sessions as a tool to be used with the scales with these populations, and was included in the curriculum guidelines accompanying the ESL/D Bandscales (EQ, 2008b, pp. 20-22). The key concept was that these learner populations were not obvious L2 learners of SAE, because of language contact and shift experienced within their family or speech communities in Australia or overseas. Siegel's (2010) emphasis on the difficulties speakers of contact language varieties, ethnolects and other 'non-

⁸ In addition, speakers of World Englishes –non-native speakers of English as a national lingua franca or for international communication purposes– are also growing in number, as are their target models and varieties of English (e.g. Kachru, 1992). Varieties other than SAE are therefore becoming increasingly represented in Queensland schools classrooms.

standard' dialects face in learning the dominant standard variety in classrooms, clearly articulates notions underlying indicators in both the Indigenous Bandscales and the following examples from the later ESL/D Bandscales:

- 12) Requires support and explicit teaching if creole/dialect speaker in understanding the differences in vocabulary and grammar [EB_EP_R_Level3_Descriptor].
- 13) May appear to understand SAE, but may use non-standard forms of taught formulaic SAE which provide evidence of being an ESL learner (e.g. says 'Goldilocks an da tree bear'). [EB_EP_L_Level2_Descriptor].

2.1.6 *Explicit language teaching?*

The Indigenous Bandscales contain references to many key teaching strategies for promoting classroom learning for ESL/D learners with contact language backgrounds, including delivering/discussing content in HL, developing student confidence as multilingual learners, valuing HLs, acknowledging cultural backgrounds, building language awareness, contrasting differences between HL and SAE, carefully staging classroom work and modelling and scaffolding tasks (see for example Comments following each level of the Middle Primary & Middle Schooling Listening scales). In the years following the publication of these scales, however, it became clear that the high profile of these strategies may have indicated to non-specialist classroom teachers that these comprised the (entire) 'toolkit' of language teaching practices. It is a curious fact that explicit language teaching has no real prominence in these strategies. For example, a (perceived) emphasis in the Indigenous Bandscales on contrastive analysis (highlighting differences between students' HL and SAE) was probably reinforced by language awareness and transparency 'alerts'. As a result, attention was given to some obvious and key language differences (such as plurals, simple tenses, temporal and spatial prepositions), but these were not associated with students' demonstrated needs or classroom task requirements nor was there a sense of addressing (eventually) a full scope of target language structures.⁹ And returning to the actual recommendation of contrastive analysis, it was doubtful whether non-local teachers were reliably able to pick up on many differences between HL and SAE.

⁹ To illustrate with a language such as German, it is possible to explain a 'difference' between the target language and a HL, say SAE, through the HL medium. e.g. "German has 'der', 'die' and 'das' words, but we just use 'the'." This contrastive analysis does not result in learning any German. The approach also overlooks the fact that a teacher of German might not know how articles work in learners' (various) L1(s), but could nevertheless devise explanations and practical exercises to begin teaching the target language system of articles.

So, while the Indigenous Bandscales included numerous examples advising teachers to address linguistic differences such as

- 14) Continue to raise awareness of the difference between HL and SAE at appropriate times [...] [IB_JP_S: Teaching Emphases_Levels2-3] (with essentially the same advice included in Level 1 but worded as 'Need to...').
- 15) Explicitly teach differences between HL and SAE [IB_JP_S: Teaching Emphases_Levels4-7] (the recommendation of 'tense, prepositions' in Levels 4-5).

in the ESL/D Bandscales, such notions were included in the actual scale descriptors of learner behaviours (and needs), accompanied by pertinent information such as the purpose of explicit language teaching, or ramifications of teacher inaction. See for example (11) above and also the following:

- 16) Requires support and explicit teaching if creole/dialect speaker in understanding the differences in vocabulary and grammar [EB_EP_R_Level3_Descriptors].
- 17) Needs explicit language teaching (word order, grammar, unfamiliar vocabulary) and literacy teaching (phonemic awareness, graphophonics, word attack skills) or may plateau at decoding level [EB_EP_R_Level3_Descriptors].

This provides an example of how the ESL/D Bandscales benefitted from the practical experiences of implementing its predecessor, the Indigenous Bandscales, with non-specialist teachers.

2.1.7 Socio-cultural usages

In consultations during the development of the Indigenous Bandscales, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and their experienced non-Indigenous colleagues reported that Indigenous ESL/D learners had often been assessed to be performing 'below standard' with tools mismatched to their linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. The Indigenous Bandscales, and their ESL/D Bandscales successor, took an advocating stance towards performance assessment, ensuring students' rich, complex and distinctive knowledges were made visible, to combat erroneously deficit perspectives arising from inappropriate assessment. As part of emphasising the language background in the Indigenous Bandscales, the richness of HL oral language traditions was recognised, as were home literacies outside the narrow definition of school print literacy. This is embedded in the indicators in the beginner level. Recognition is also given to structural and stylistic differences between narrative genres in oral-based cultures and Western print culture (e.g. use of parsimony (Malcolm, 1994, p. 298; Malcolm et. al. 1999, p. 32, as cited in Turnbull, 2001, p. 9) and this is incorporated into the scale indicators.

Both the Indigenous and ESL/D Bandscales urge against a narrow demand of schematic discourse organisation for classroom purposes, or genres, which may be socio-culturally exclusionary. For example, teachers are alerted that Western narrative generic form and features are not an expected nor requisite sign of development at Level 4, a sensitive stage for sustained writing (see examples 20-21 below) and Malcolm et al. (1999, p. 75) are cited on Hymes' (1980, 1996) argument for 'narrative thinking and storytelling rights'. Similarly other possible differences in the socio-cultural context of Indigenous learners and learning behaviours in relation to Western cultural assumptions and understandings (e.g. value on cooperative rather than individual achievement, use of silence as part of a conversation) are embedded in the Indigenous Bandscales, which after all aimed to describe a particular group of previously unacknowledged ESL/D learners. Nevertheless, there was simultaneously an attempt to highlight the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, so that remote, rural and urban contexts were acknowledged (and differences within these broad categories). Descriptors of this kind (and many others) begin with 'May' rather than with the 'Can' of outcomes style indicators typical of that era. In order to become aware of diversity teachers are urged to 'engage with and develop partnerships with their Indigenous communities to learn about their local community cultures and their own cultural understandings' (Turnbull, 2001, p. 8).

The 'context-embedded' (McKay, 1995) nature of the NLLIA Bandscales—rather than decontextualised outcomes—made them a suitable tool to embed features of Indigenous ESL/D learners' language and cultural backgrounds in the Indigenous Bandscales adaptation. However, since then, it has emerged that very careful wording of these socio-cultural descriptions is needed in order to avoid static and immutable interpretations by users of scales. For example, guidance intending to encourage respect for learners' socio-cultural differences could instead encourage traditionalist 'givens' or stereotypes or even purvey unreliable information (see for instance Moses & Yallop's [2008] suggestive study about Aboriginal students asking questions).¹⁰ Indeed, Wilkins (2000, p.

¹⁰ Moses and Yallop (2008) provide data indicating the inaccuracy of common-place advice to teachers about customary avoidance of questions by Aboriginal people, advice which has been promulgated through a variety of ethnographic, anthropological, sociolinguistic and educational sources (pp. 31-33). In their longitudinal study, Aboriginal caregivers and young children at Yakanarra reveal copious use of questions, including in ways which contravene previous assertions about Aboriginal non-use of and non-response to questions. For example, 'display questions', often cited as culturally unfamiliar or inappropriate, comprise over a third of all questions asked by caregivers (see discussion pp. 46-49). Caregivers also often actively follow up children's unanswered questions, despite widely held beliefs that (culturally) Aboriginal people are not obliged to answer questions (see discussion p. 50). The authors suggest that,

70) was already warning against 'hypertraditionalising tendencies' in explanations and descriptions which deny more complex contemporary identities.

Socio-cultural information was provided in the Indigenous Bandscales to promote understanding of Indigenous ESL/D learners, but perhaps because this document related to specific ethnic groups who have been targeted in policies as 'underperforming' (e.g. Angelo, 2013a) or perhaps because of a predisposition to generalise about Indigenous peoples (see McIntosh et al., 2012) some discourses promoted different cognition and/or culturally determined language use amongst Indigenous students to such an extent that it might be seen as at odds with these students developing EAL/D capabilities. Thus, while there are frequent 'alerts' concerning possible HL cultural behaviours and usages in the Indigenous Bandscales, for example:

18) May use patterns of HL storytelling (narrative in their writing, e.g. introducing new, 'unexpected' characters/events, repeating and rephrasing a statement or constant use of conjunctions (e.g. use of "and") within a passage which may cause SAE reader to reread/predict /ask for clarification [IB_MP&MS_W_Level4_Comments: Respecting Cultures and Narrative Forms: Note].

in the EQ Bandscales, this is expressed in a less 'hypertraditionalising' way as:

19) May be innovative with genre and language models and/or follow own socio-cultural text structures which should be valued as a sign of language and literacy development [EB_EP_W_Level4_Descriptor].

This more nuanced information contrasts with overly traditionalist descriptions of Indigenous ESL/D learners in SAE teaching/learning situations. Whilst allowing for socio-cultural influences in student writing, this ESL/D descriptor also mentions the possibility of individual learner agency. A more dynamic perspective on ESL/D learners is presented, where students are given information about the target language and culture by the teachers, so that they can take up and add to their existing language repertoires, according to their level of proficiency. Difference is flagged not deterministically, but purely in terms of informing teacher response.

contrary to previous beliefs, (these) Aboriginal children's upbringings would appear to prepare them well for 'question and answer' routines in the classroom. They hypothesise that when Aboriginal children do not use or respond to questions in the classroom context this might be due to their lack of proficiency in SAE coupled with their teachers' lack of training in TESOL methodology, and not to any inherent cultural orientation (pp. 52-53).

2.2 Rate of progress and the 'How long' question

There are powerful discourses relating to time and rate of progress in the field of TESOL in schools. Estimations such as Cummins' two years for conversational proficiency and five to seven years of school exposure as 'necessary for second language students to achieve as well as native speakers in academic aspects of English' (Cummins, 1994, p. 39), have been used widely to justify the need for differentiated teaching support and alternative assessment tools. Estimations of time from other researchers vary, with up to ten years given, depending on age and amount of first language schooling background (Garcia, 2000). However, to our knowledge such research applies only to speakers of 'obvious' languages other than 'English'. In relation to the Indigenous scales, Turnbull warned, in 2002, that given the variety of learning contexts for Indigenous learners, discussions about time must be purely speculative, and suggested durations should be treated very tentatively until there is long term research.

More than a decade later, however, such long term research is yet to be done in Australia. In general terms, Siegel believes that for creole speakers in former British colonies proficiency in the lexifier-standard-target is rarely achieved: '[...] a goal of the education system is proficiency in standard English. But because of various difficulties for creole-speaking students this goal has largely not been met' (Siegel, 2010, p. 167). There is some evidence that the time estimations much quoted in TESOL literature throw little light on the proficiency patterns of Indigenous learners in Queensland. For example, teachers have had to work hard to advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous learners in English for ESL learners as a senior subject, because the years of school exposure would exceed the accepted time estimation 'givens'. Additionally, teachers involved in both Bandscales adaptations also noted students clustering at post-beginner proficiency levels, a situation at odds with time estimations. Angelo's (2012) analysis of narratives generated by a composite Year 4-5 class of creole-speaking students in a remote EFL context provides evidence that after five or more years in English-medium schooling¹¹ no student is producing academic English as 'well' as a native speaker.

Whether five, seven or ten years, such time period estimations however invaluable in arguing for differentiation for school-aged L2 learners of SAE, have led to unintentional consequences. The extended time period estimated for

¹¹ In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community contexts in Queensland, most children attend part-time Pre-Prep between about 3.5 and 4.5 years old, commence full time school in Prep at approximately 4.5-5 years old, and enter Year 1 subsequently.

academic proficiency can generate counterproductive 'red herrings', distracting attention away from the various contextual factors which can indeed act as a brake on development of L2 proficiency unless appropriate curriculum and pedagogical initiatives are implemented. So whether, for example, Indigenous EFL learners from contact language backgrounds, in whole-class mainstream curriculum contexts undifferentiated for their L2 learning needs, with no specialist support or language curriculum would take five, seven or ten years to achieve academic proficiency is hardly the point. Rather, given such a constellation of factors, the question should be 'how best to respond' so as to enable classroom learning for these L2 learners. Worryingly, 'time to academic proficiency' can be used to justify lack of progress in mainstream contexts where there is no explicit language teaching and no second language services, because, apparently, little should be expected for five, seven or ten years. Both the Indigenous and the ESL/D Bandscales adaptations represent a 'thinking shift' away from assumptions about individual progress as the explanatory focus for development, to a greater emphasis on the context of the learner's L1 background, the role of the teacher and the context of teaching and learning.

2.2.1 Extra levels

Additional levels at the lower ends of the Indigenous Bandscales were included to 'enable the monitoring of the finer gradation of language development and student progress' (Turnbull, 2002, p.4), although they maintained alignment with the levels and skills described in the original NLLIA Bandscales (see Appendix 1). The extra levels describe the growth of L2 learners with oral language traditions and little or no experience of L1 print literacy and schooling, as these factors had been observed by educators of these learners as requiring a more extended period of learning. The extra levels account for possible slower progress in EFL situations (described in section 2.2.3 below) and also for what was seen as the need to develop awareness of language differences when engaging in L2 learning (Berry & Hudson, 1997, pp. 25-32, as cited in Turnbull, 2002, p. 4). The additional levels were adopted into the ESL/D Bandscales. These extra levels vary from similar attempts in other frameworks (e.g. ESL Bandscales [NLLIA, 2007]; EAL/D Learning Progression [ACARA, 2011]) in that they extend beyond the initial descriptions of beginner levels. For instance, a Pre-Level 3 has been added at what is often called the post-beginner or pre-intermediate stage, so in the Early Phase for writing, ESL/D learners' trajectory from Level 2 through to Level 3 is captured with descriptors such as:

20) Copies from environmental print [...] to label pictures
[EB_EP_W_Level2_Descriptor].

21) Begins to write to accompany drawings, formulaic simple sentence/s or own telegraphic captions [EB_EP_W_LevelPre-3_Descriptor].

22) Begins to write their own very short texts [EB_EP_W_Level3_Descriptor].

They thus challenge assumptions that when these learners acquire very basic literacy skills, their L2 progress will necessarily merge with the trajectories of ESL/D learners of other backgrounds, such as those with high-print literacy, with experience of schooling in an L1, having immersion in the target language or who are speakers of L1s clearly separated from the target, SAE.

2.2.3 Context-dependent exposure/input

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D learners are acquiring SAE in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning context where interactions using SAE seldom occur outside of the classroom. Real-life exposure to social SAE is unlikely in remote Indigenous community contexts, where students live and learn amongst speakers of the same L1s (with the sole exception, often, of their teachers). As they use SAE almost exclusively in the classroom only, 'second language learning is unlikely to occur as quickly as in immersion contexts' (Turnbull, 2002, p. 4). This concept in part underlay the addition of the extra early levels in the Indigenous Bandscales which were also adopted in the later ESL/D Bandscales. Again the introduction of EFL contexts into the subsequent adaptations of the NLLIA Bandscales has not proven unproblematic. Although the extra levels were mapped out, extra teaching guidance for classroom teachers in Queensland (i.e. generalist teaching personnel rather than TESOL specialists) in these EFL contexts came later (see Angelo, 2006b), and curricula change is yet to come at the national and the Queensland state level, despite its importance for this cohort who 'by very definition [...] only have access to the target language in the classroom, so curriculum, resources and training would be vital for optimal L2 learning' (Angelo, 2012, p. 52).

Further and problematically, there is a tendency in most second language assessment frameworks in Australia (even the most recent) to describe tasks at the lower levels which match what learners 'can do' at those levels, if they are in a well-supported, ESL-informed teaching context. EAL/D Indigenous learners in both EFL and non-EFL contexts, however, are in mainstream teaching/learning contexts attempting standard curriculum tasks with non-specialist teachers with little or no explicit language support. In the Indigenous and even more so in the ESL/D Bandscales there is an attempt at least by Level 4 in reading and writing to describe learners' performance in relation to

mainstream curriculum texts and tasks, and setting the mainstream classroom as the teaching context for engagement, as for example in

- 23) Repeats content of short, teacher-selected fairly simple and explicit factual mainstream school texts which contain some argument and persuasion (e.g. texts on pollution, whaling) with ESL-informed support [EB_MP_R_Level4_Descriptor].

However, there are tensions therefore between giving 'clues' to teachers about inclusive ESL descriptions, avoiding deficit 'can't do' statements, and working a way through an educational policy environment of a 'curriculum for all'. In the early levels below level four (the intermediate level), this tension remains largely unresolved.

Further development of L2 assessment indicators to satisfactorily include the EFL context is a significant future task, which hopefully will lead to the ability to gather more valid data on the language needs of EFL learners. While the factor of geolocation (specifically 'very remote' and 'remote') has been suggested as 'an approximate but reasonable indicator' of Indigenous EFL learners in disaggregations of national standardised testing data (Angelo, 2013a, p. 91) harnessing such a non-linguistic category to identify a linguistic characteristic tends ultimately to obscure the job at hand: namely, reliably assessing data of students' L2 proficiency levels for correlating with accurate information on local language ecologies to determine EFL/ESL language learning contexts, in order to evaluate teaching responses in terms of their efficacy for promoting student learning. Finally, an unintended consequence of the recent adoption of the term EAL/D by ACARA and the TESOL field in Australia has been to obscure differential ESL/EFL pathways altogether.

2.2.4 Plateauing: Plateau level to plateau levels

The early stages of English L2 acquisition can entail quite rapid and dramatic progress for school age learners who are speakers of an L1 obviously separated from the L2 target, when they have strong L1 print literacy backgrounds, and are immersed in English and learning in intensive L2 learning contexts with a curriculum supporting explicit, level-appropriate language instruction. In such contexts, the NLLIA Bandscales first identified plateauing rather late in the scales at Level 5, which is often described as an advanced intermediate level. In these scales, plateauing also appears after a pathway of apparently expeditious L2 progress, signalling an extended period between a level of some ease in general proficiency and attainment of a level of independent academic language ability. For Indigenous speakers of English-lexified contact language varieties, a more complex acquisition pathway had to be mapped out.

The Indigenous Bandscales engaged with plateauing, another facet of learners' time and rate of progress, by mapping the possibility of a number of possible plateauing levels into the scales rather than the single plateau at Level 5 in the NLLIA Bandscales, commencing with Level 2, a beginner level (see examples 4 and 10 above). In a sense, the 'extra levels' described above also acknowledge a form of plateauing, in that some Indigenous ESL/D learners take longer to move through the original NLLIA 'single level' (see Appendix 1 for an overview of levels with 'pre-levels'). In addition, the possible effects of teacher (in)action on plateauing in L2 learning is factored into descriptors, as in example 10 above, or the 'alerts' about misdiagnosing some oral communicative ability as a sign of L2 progress in classroom tasks, as in example 4 above (and see also Turnbull & Hudson, 2001, p. 3).

The ESL/D Bandscales focus on the possibility of plateauing at Level 3 (a post-beginner or early intermediate level), the level at which classroom teachers have observed plateauing in many of their Indigenous learners, as in examples 5 and 19 above. The ESL/D Bandscales reflect, even further than the NLLIA Bandscales (see Moore, 1996) and the Indigenous Bandscales, an understanding of L2 learning and assessment as a mediated process (see Hudson, 2010; Lantolf, 2000), providing non-specialist classroom teachers in complex language contact situations with prompts about their active role in their students' (language) learning and academic performance. For example, the following indicator at Level 3 Listening in both the Early Phase and Middle Phase starkly underlines this conceptual point:

24) Relies on teacher knowing they speak another language [EB_EP, MP_L_Level3_Descriptor].

This is but one of the many indicators containing 'alerts' about the role of teacher 'language awareness' from which teachers may disentangle many of the variables in students' linguistic productions where contact languages are concerned. Through these means, the later ESL/D Bandscales have become yet more interactional and less developmentalist in their descriptions (Hudson 2010), and as such providing an alternative to 'individualistic models of proficiency' (see McNamara, 2006, p. 551).

Conclusion

This discussion of the conceptual underpinnings of two proficiency scale developments, the Indigenous Bandscales and the ESL/D Bandscales, based on the original NLLIA Bandscales shows that both retain key indicators from the original. As a result, the proficiency levels of all three can be aligned despite the

subsequent adaptations and additions. Similarly, the later 'revisions' maintain the guiding principles of the original Bandscales in relation to richly contextualised descriptions according to age, teaching/learning context and L1 backgrounds. Again, like the NLLIA Bandscales, the later Bandscales focus on the development of additional English/SAE language proficiency (ESL, EFL, ESL/D, EAL/D) rather than literacy development.

However, the analysis here reveals that not only is the inclusion of Indigenous learners in descriptions in L2 proficiency scales a relatively recent phenomenon, it is also no small undertaking. Additionally, new non-specialist users and new non-specialist purposes have been included in the Indigenous Bandscales, and addressed even more in the later ESL/D Bandscales. Traversing each new terrain presents new and ongoing sets of challenges, so all pertinent and distinctive conceptual issues have certainly not been definitively fathomed nor fully played out. As operationalisation takes effect, different ramifications will arise.

For these reasons, the conceptual underpinnings relating to the SAE acquisition and development of Indigenous learners (a very diverse group) need to be openly discussed as a work in progress. It is important that current research is not over-generalised, reified and given exaggerated weight in educational documents, thus masking the true state of the research field. There remains a need for extensive research on acquisition and development, including long-term research, in spite of and, in many cases because of, a recent flowering of community-based and academic research about Queensland's Indigenous language ecologies (e.g. Angelo, 2004, 2006c; Language Perspectives, 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013; Munro, 2012; Mushin, Munro, & Gardner, 2012); and about how this is reflected in data and education spheres (e.g. Angelo, 2012, 2013a, 2013b; Angelo & McIntosh, in press; Dixon & Angelo, in press; McIntosh et al., 2012); and an ambitious research program in the recent commonwealth project, Bridging the Language Gap (Angelo, 2013c) to build schools' capacity in identifying, teaching and assessing EAL/D learners.

Language education assessment can be marginal to mainstream curriculum purposes, and compromises are made in frameworks such as the Education Queensland ESL/D Bandscales or the national ACARA EAL/D Learning Progression when the EAL/D field is invited to the policy table and inclusiveness is part of the agenda. 'Inclusiveness' is a double-edged sword. There are benefits to Indigenous EAL/D learners being included as language learners (leading hopefully to their language learning needs being addressed), but there is the danger that their distinctive characteristics may be submerged (to the detriment of their identification as EAL/D learners and/or their

teaching/learning). Claims to 'inclusiveness' would need to reflect a consideration of—at least—the conceptual issues related to Indigenous language backgrounds and rate of progress described in this paper.

Education policy is generally in constant change so 'openings' can fortunately be found to revise and introduce new concepts as research develops. Policy-driven assessment—for all its shortcomings in relation to validity—can provide an avenue to making the L2 language needs of Indigenous EAL/D learners, as well as other EAL/D learner cohorts, visible in education. Thus, ongoing document iterations driven by constant policy and curriculum 'churn' may actually be of assistance, because such EAL/D proficiency work constitutes a 'dynamic process in progress': it involves the complex interaction between research (second language acquisition, descriptive linguistics, contact linguistics, education, languages teaching, TESOL, etc.) and schooling (policy, administration, funding, classroom teaching, preservice teacher education, resources, curriculum, data, etc.). There is a necessary reality that needs to be openly acknowledged here, to wit, that of exceedingly complex terrain. EAL/D proficiency scales serve both diagnostic and professional learning roles and grapple with operationalising specialised concepts still in need of significant investigation in their application to a wide range of linguistic and schooling contexts, for various educational and administrative purposes, by a variety of personnel. Greater validity of L2 proficiency assessment documents for school-based purposes will be achieved only if research is shared about, and included in, these ongoing cycles of implementation and revision. Emergent research should feed into the on-going reformulations of EAL/D proficiency assessment documents, as 'dynamic processes in progress', through a reiterative process of application, review and re-evaluation of their conceptual underpinnings and their real-world operation.

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Appendix 1: Alignment of NLLIA, Indigenous and ESL/D Bandscales (with guide to abbreviations)

McKay, Hudson & Sapupo, 1994												
NLLIA Bandscales												
Junior Primary	Listening		1		2		3	4	5	6	7	8
	Speaking											
	Reading											
	Writing											
Middle & Upper Primary	Listening		1		2							
	Speaking											
	Reading											
	Writing											
Secondary	Listening		1		2							
	Speaking											
	Reading											
	Writing											
Education Queensland, 1999, 2002												
Indigenous Bandscales (IB)												
Junior Primary (JP)	Listening (L)		1		2		3	4	5	6	7	
	Speaking (S)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Reading (R)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Writing (W)	Pre - 1				Pre - 3						
Middle Primary & Middle Schooling (MPMS)	Listening (L)		1		2							
	Speaking (S)				Pre - 2							
	Reading (R)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Writing (W)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
Education Queensland, 2008												
ESL/D Bandscales (EB)												
Early Phase (EP)	Listening (L)		1		2		3	4	5	6		
	Speaking (S)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Reading (R)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Writing (W)	Pre - 1				Pre - 3						
Middle Phase (MP)	Listening (L)		1		2							
	Speaking (S)				Pre - 2							
	Reading (R)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							
	Writing (W)	Pre - 1			Pre - 2							

Source: Adapted from Education Queensland (2008b), Appendix 5.2

Guide to Abbreviations:

Queensland Bandscales Adaptations

- Indigenous Bandscales (in text) or IB in (citations) refers to Education Queensland (1999/2002) *Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learners*
- ESL/D Bandscales (in text) or EB (in citations) refers to Education Queensland (2008a) *Bandscales for ESL/D Learners*

Age phases in Bandscales

- in Indigenous Bandscales: Junior Primary (JP), Middle Primary/Middle Schooling (MPMS)
- in ESL/D Bandscales: Early Phase (EP), Middle Phase (MP)

Modes in Bandscales

- Listening (L)

- Speaking (S)
- Reading [& Viewing] (R)
- Writing (W)

Organisational elements referred to in citations (unabbreviated in citations)

- Levels
- Descriptors
- Comments
- Additional Background Information
- Implications
- Teaching Emphases
- Notes

Appendix 2: Sample extract from Indigenous Bandscales: Middle Primary and Middle Schooling, Writing, Level 4

Middle Primary and Middle Schooling Writing: Level 4

Applying understandings of writing to experimenting with longer and more structured discourse: drawing on knowledge of the world in HL, and on HL and culture (to varying degrees.)

Are able to write simple, coherent texts on familiar topics (e.g. narratives, reports, recounts, procedures) modelled on those read with and/or by the teacher (but with HL features as described below).

Will see themselves as writers and will have success.

May be able to express complex thoughts (e.g. explanations, giving reasons) but in doing so, the text may become less coherent and less accurate (a sign of language growth) and require more on the part of the reader to comprehend intended meaning. This risk-taking is to be encouraged as it enables progress.

Will need strong ESL support (e.g. pre-task and post-task talk, modelling, joint construction of texts, conferencing by teacher, provision of vocabulary) and need more time than their SAE-speaking peers to complete written tasks.

Will have had enough positive experiences with writing to take bigger risks when writing themselves. Will use their knowledge of text gained through reading a variety of texts when structuring their writing or phrasing an idea. (Will often apply chunks of language internalised through repeated readings in their writing).

Will understand that there will be an audience and will therefore make explicit choices about language used in written texts. (i.e. fine tuning their text using more appropriate language for the purpose e.g. using textual and stylistic features to emphasise meaning, e.g. dialogue in narrative; BIG, L O N G , small).

May use patterns of HL storytelling (narrative) in their writing, e.g. introducing new, 'unexpected' characters/events, repeating and rephrasing a statement or constant use of conjunctions (e.g. use of "and") within a passage which may cause SAE reader to reread/predict/ask for clarification. (See Note)

Will have difficulty making more than initial attempts at editing on their own, after prior teacher feedback on their drafts, even with taught straight-forward language features and structures.

- May have greater speed and fluency in writing because of their growing knowledge of SAE language and culture; with teacher support, are prepared to take more risks because of this, i.e. will continue to keep ideas going and complete the text knowing that their first draft will contain errors.

Appendix 2 (cont.)

- May use growing range of language structures, e.g. greater use of connectives and verb forms, conditionals (He said that if we...), cause and effect (If you've got a dinghy, then...).
- Will have uneven control of sentence structure, particularly when they attempt to write complex thoughts.
- May write texts which sometimes lose comprehensibility due to HL features, (e.g. tense [time orientation] difficulties).
- Will sequence thoughts before writing.
- May demonstrate pride in writing by ensuring neatness (e.g. over-editing, tearing pages out of book and starting again).
- Will write with the characteristics of their spoken language (e.g. spelling reflecting pronunciation).

Additional Notes for Upper Primary/Junior Secondary Students

- Will write longer, descriptive texts, simple film review and information texts (e.g. reports) if provided with extensive ESL-informed support (e.g. explicit teaching of topic, text structure and selected language features, text deconstruction, joint construction of text, etc.). Paragraph and sentence structure may be uneven, and application of syntax rules and cohesive devices elementary. May conform closely to teacher's modelling and will have, as yet, little independence.

Source: Education Queensland (1999/2002, pp. 16-17).

Appendix 3: Sample extract from ESL/D Bandscales: Middle Phase, Listening

The ESL/D Bandscales document is approximately 12 A3 pages (with slight variations in length due to ongoing updates to system, student, curriculum and pedagogical contextual information included).

Listening			
	New to Standard Australian English (SAE)	Beginning to comprehend familiar SAE	Beginning to comprehend classroom SAE
	Level 1 student is new to SAE and draws on knowledge of their world in HL.	Level 2 student is beginning to comprehend routine social language in their immediate, familiar environment and to explore learning in SAE.	Level 3 student is developing listening competence in SAE for a range of social and classroom events and moving into learning through SAE.
Descriptors	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises a few key familiar words supported by context, gestures, real objects, visuals. • Watches carefully what others are doing, often following their actions, and interpreting what is meant by gestures and intonation. • Comprehends through non-verbal cues given by the speaker which match own culture or when visually supported, particularly in a face-to-face situation. • Joins in an activity but may not speak. • May tune out easily and avoid tasks that require a response. • May be unable to sustain concentration and may be very tired in early stages of learning. • Experiences a social and emotional 'orientation phase' (overwhelmed with new learning situation, impact of trauma, need to develop trust in classroom relationships with teachers and peers e.g. may feel other student HL talk is about them), which may be prolonged. • Needs respect for age and HL socio-linguistic competence. 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehends and responds to high frequency greetings, courtesy phrases and simple directions. • Relies heavily on face-to-face contact and accompanying body language, with repetition and/or simplification on the part of the speaker. • Responds physically and verbally to simple directions and instructions if supported by gestures, repetition and rephrasing as needed. • Needs time to process what is heard. • Has very limited understanding of interactions amongst SAE speakers in class activities and amongst peers. • Does not perceive certain sounds in SAE or certain combinations of sounds due to HL consonant/vowel configurations (e.g. not hearing consonants at the ends of words, not hearing middle vowel sounds for rhyming words). • May cue into classroom activity (e.g. song) by following words on a page with finger, though comprehension should not be assumed. • May appear to understand SAE, but may use non-standard forms of taught formulaic SAE which provide evidence of being an ESL learner (e.g. says '<i>where da fores' meet da sea</i>'). • Is developing awareness (if creole speaker) of differences in language varieties (i.e. SAE v Home Languages) and needs assistance from teachers to expand these early understandings to avoid the student adapting HL rather than learning SAE. 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to comprehend and use a range of social and classroom spoken interactions which are short, simple and on familiar topics. • Comprehends best in face-to-face contact, and when repetition, simplification and paraphrasing are provided by the teacher. • Continues to need time to process what is heard. • Comprehends and responds (e.g. yes/no) to routine enquiries with little difficulty. • Has difficulty following interactions at SAE speaker speed, or if there is noise. • Follows a short and familiar sequence of instructions (e.g. Teacher says '<i>open your English books and write these sentences</i>'). • Has limited comprehension of a range of grammatical features such as prepositions, verb tenses, pronouns and adverbs in addition to content words. • Needs one-on-one assistance after teacher instruction to clarify the task when commencing learning activity (e.g. writing tasks, group activities). • May rely on HL with peers for clarification around classroom tasks. • Relies on teacher knowing they speak another language.

Appendix 3 (cont).

Developing comprehension of SAE	Consolidating comprehension of SAE	Becoming competent in SAE
<p>Level 4 student is extending their range of language beyond their own immediate social environment and is experimenting with learning through SAE.</p>	<p>Level 5 student is consolidating SAE in an expanding range of social contexts but is limited in ability to comprehend complex ideas in SAE learning activities.</p>	<p>Level 6 student is becoming a competent user of SAE in most social contexts and a sound user of SAE in learning contexts but with gaps that need filling.</p>
<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands social SAE in most familiar contexts but still needs additional help from SAE speakers (e.g. gestures, modified speech, provision of wait-time). • Begins to comprehend in academic learning activities if help is given by the SAE speakers (as above) and if contextual support (e.g. reference to pictures, diagrams, materials, and so on) is provided. • Follows instructions within the classroom learning activity if explained and presented clearly (i.e. with clear steps, modelling of the task, logical sequencing of steps) but will often rely on further repetition of instructions on a one-to-one or small groups basis. • Continues to need processing time. • Requires intensive scaffolding and bilingual assistance to comprehend spoken input in tasks containing an abstract level (e.g. comparison, classification; science concepts such as magnetism, strength, force, orbit; maths concepts such as maths formula, algebra and trigonometry; history concepts such as exploration, distance travelled). • Misses precise details of teacher talk (e.g. part/whole vocabulary such as collar, cuff, seam as parts of shirt). • Misses basic information due to levels of background noise. • Requires constant scaffolding to process classroom learning, even though surface social spoken fluency suggests that such scaffolding is not necessary. 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehends SAE in most social situations. • Comprehends most extended teacher and peer talk in academic learning activities on familiar topics, if contextual support is available, however will lack 'depth' of comprehension of more complex discourse. • Grasps the sense of new topics delivered with extensive contextual and teacher support though will lack precision, and need paraphrasing and explanation. • grasps the connection of ideas, and details within an extended spoken discourse on a new topic only if extensive support and time to process are provided (e.g. viewing 'Behind the News' with teacher introduction, pre-listening focus activities and multiple viewings broken into sections). • Continues to have some difficulty comprehending extended teacher talk at normal speed. • Experiences difficulty comprehending complex ideas in learning activities when they are expressed through complex SAE language. • Has difficulty distinguishing relevant information due to background noise (e.g. in a school assembly). 	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehends social SAE with ease. • Understands extended teacher talk on familiar and new curriculum topics (within the range of ability expected at their phase of schooling) with only occasional lapses of understanding, though lapses will generally not affect overall comprehension. • Sustains understanding of main ideas in group discussions involving an increasing number of interactions, but will have some gaps in comprehension where there is quick interaction of ideas.

Source: Education Queensland (2008a, p. 8).

Appendix 4: Language Awareness Continuum

Hierarchy of language awareness understandings	Levels	Which languages are spoken and why	How these languages are structured
	target level 7	Explain linguistic, historical and current relationships between contact and other non-standard varieties to standard languages	
	6	Study historical and present socio-economic factors in language shift	Contrast different languages' ways of fulfilling the same functions
	5	Research history of language use in the community	Analyse features of languages spoken by students and community
	4	Investigate language varieties spoken in the community	Compare 'home language' and 'standard English' at all linguistic levels
	3	Identify factors involved in making language choices	Differentiate 'home language' from 'standard English' using language features
	2	Negotiate names for the different kinds of language in students' lives	Recognise obvious markers of linguistic differences in language use in the classroom
	entry level 1	Notice different kinds of talk used by familiar people in everyday contexts	

Source: Angelo (2006a).