

Interculture in contemporary environmental education

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*My grandfather taught me
that the river is the river
and the sea is the sea. Each
has its own complex
patterns, origins and
stories, and even though
they come together, they
will always exist in their
own right. Non-indigenous
Australians cannot be
expected to learn or
understand the lessons of
my grandfather, but simply
to respect that they are
central to my identity.*



Patrick Dodson
The Australian 13.09.96

2001 Native Title Report documented customary relations to sea country
http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/nt_report/ntreport07/chapter10.html

- **named** places including archipelagos, rocks, reefs, sand banks, cays, seagrass;
- **named** zones of the sea defined by water depth;
- bodies of water associated with ancestral dreaming tracks;
- sacred sites that are the physical transformation of the dreaming ancestors themselves or a result of their activities;
- cloud formations associated with particular ancestors;
- sacred sites where power of the dreaming ancestors is extant (e.g. important places on reefs that can be used either to create storms or make them abate);
- ceremonial body painting and other painted **designs** using symbols of the sea (such as the tail of a whale, black rain clouds over white foaming waves, reefs, sandbanks, islands, foam on the sea, a reef shelf);
- particular kin groupings having a special relationship with tracks of the sea (by virtue of their inheritance of the **sacred stories, songs**, ceremonies and sacred objects associated with it and by exercising control over that area).

Australian Human Rights Commission

2007

**Kuku Yalanji blokes
Cooya beach...**

Language and
culture are
*unthinkable
without the other*

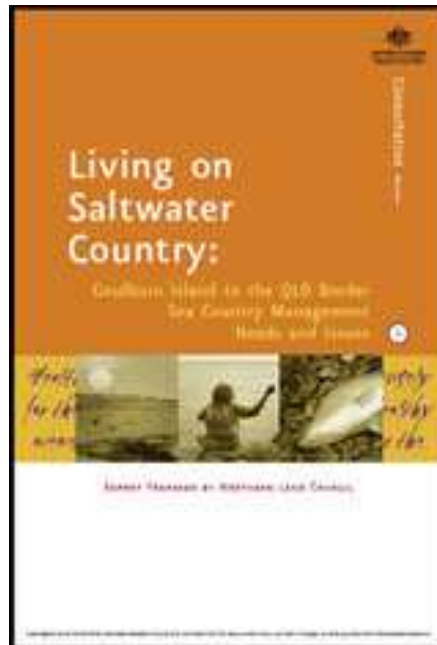
(Bourdieu 1996)



Language is at the centre of cultural practice.

Language cannot be analysed or understood in isolation from its cultural context and the social conditions of its production and reception.

(Jenkins 2002)



Bourdieu argued any 'standard language' is only one of many versions, socially highly specific and *generally bound up with a history of state formation*

We can investigate language, culture and education together, because, *they are all concerned with the manner in which domination is achieved by the manipulation of symbolic and cultural resources and with the collusion of the dominated*

(Jenkins 2002)

'Standard' Australian English is a derivative of a dialect from the south-eastern part of the United Kingdom.

The fact this dialect derivative became the language of formal education in Australia in a continent with about 600 original languages from 250 language groups at the time of British settlement in 1788 ...

is a matter of power and politics and not a matter of linguistics

(Tripcony 2000).

*Languages are not merely systems of rules ... they are also vehicles of social interaction and badges of social identity ... shaped by socio-cultural forces ... conditioned by social practice, social relationships and **attendant ideologies***

(Winford 2003, 35)



“Lasiman” language (impolite but useful when thinking about categories and definite articles)

English is a logo-centric language

Hangs in time not place (Muecke 1996)

... which probably explains its success as a global language, as not linguistically tied to any geography

Noun markers in English do not mark place characteristics, edibility, aliveness, relationships between nouns or noun gender

“Lasiman” language (impolite but useful when thinking about categories and definite articles)

English employs unspecific noun markers

THE and THIS

In environmental education discourse (and flourishing in EE/EfS research discourse) ...

THE environment is held to be *the* singular central subject and object of environmental education.

The natural/environment is NOT locatable in place – this language gives you no clues to *where* or *what* you are referring

Jirrbal and Girramay people of Jumbum (1992)

(Upper Murray, Wet Tropics WHA)

Four recorded noun markers = THE

- Bala = noun marker for inanimate objects
- Balam = noun marker for edible objects
- Balan = marker for feminine nouns and nouns associated with fire, water and danger
- Gayi = noun marker for masculine nouns

- In Standard Australian English one marker, THE

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Intercultural discourse of Country and Sea Country emerging
in environmental education and environmental management



Sea Country Guardians aims to foster stewardship and a community culture of caring for the Great Barrier Reef in Indigenous communities, particularly amongst young people.

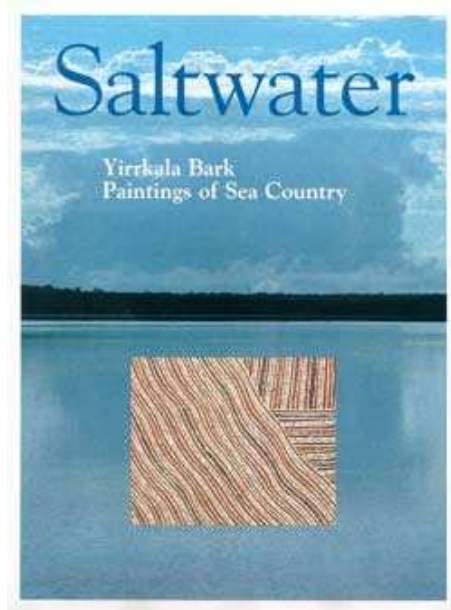
[This program] expands on the highly successful Reef Guardian Schools Program and is currently in its developmental phase, with implementation stages through 2010.

By using *cultural knowledge linked to [established western scientific] environmental knowledge*, **Sea Country Guardians** will help children care for the Reef and connected ecosystems through creative activities.

The program [was instigated and] will be led by [Cape York] communities to develop future community leaders and managers for their sea country and the Great Barrier Reef.

http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/corp_site/info_services/education/sea_country_guardians

Using terms
*Country and Sea
Country* in English
in place of *The
Environment* is an
appealing
discursive move ...



In any emerging intercultural space ... Things are not clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western ... [but] multiple and interconnected discourses, social practices and knowledge technologies which condition ... how we come to know and understand our changing realities in the everyday, and how and what knowledge we operationalise in our daily lives. Much of what we bring to this is tacit and unspoken ... assumptions by which we make sense and meaning of in our everyday world.

(Nakata 2007)

The cultural interface is constituted by points of intersecting trajectories ... that cohere in the everyday to inform, constrain, or enable what can be seen, or not seen what can be brought to the surface or sutured over, what can be said or not said, heard or not heard, understood or misunderstood...legitimised or marginalised...

(Nakata 2007)



In place of The Environment
try thinking **Country** – see what happens...

