CHAPTER ELEVEN

SEMANTIC CHANGE, INTERSUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIAL KNOWLEDGE IN *THE SYDNEY MORNING HERALD*

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The article addresses the debate on language and change in postcolonial contexts by focusing on the connection between semantic shifts and intersubjectivity in the Australian newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Following the proposition that language change is influenced by external factors, such as language in use in a community, contact and negotiation of meaning, and interlocutors building common ground, the article contends that semantic shifts contribute to the construal of shared meaning and social knowledge in contact settings. To this end, semantic shift realizations will be analysed in relation to Indigenous Australian sovereignty claims, since in this context culture bound terms have greatly contributed to the realization of semantic shifts.The latter are often based on a non-reciprocal relation since they are often influenced by the target readership/audience knowledge and apprehension of familiar and reassuring cultural markers, hence semantic shifts reveal changes in social knowledge (Riley 2007, 30-31).Moreover the selection of semantic shifts in newspaper discourse may be analysed in terms of the intersubjective construal of the reader-in-the-text (Thompson 2012, 81). With these aims, the paper will focus on semantic shift by analysing two corpora from the Australian newspaper, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, based on the years 2000 and 2008, which have been pivotal in the movement for the emanation of the Australian national apology to Indigenous peoples.

Semantic Shift in Australian English Varieties

Semantic shift may be defined as a shift in meaning, which can reveal itself in synchronic polysemy and in diachronic semantic change. Syn-

chronic polysemy and diachronic semantic change are two aspects of one and the same phenomenon: indeed a semantic change from one meaning to another normally involves a transitional phase of polysemy during which a form holds both meanings (Taylor 2004; Hopper and Traugott 2003). According to Zalizniak et al. (2012), realizations of semantic shift involve the following types of realization:

- Syncronic polysemy: A and B are meanings of a polysemous word;
- Diachronic semantic evolution: the evolution of a word in one language or from an ancestor language to a descendant language.
- Grammaticalization: a semantic shift of a lexical item resulting in a grammatical meaning, often within a specific construction.
- Cognates: meanings A and B belong to words of two sister languages diachronically going back to one and the same root in their common ancestor.
- Morphological derivation: meaning B is represented by a morphological derivative from the word which has meaning A.
- Borrowing: B is the meaning of a borrowed word, while A is the meaning of its source in the donor language.
- Semantic calquing or loan translation: a borrowing of a semantic shift from another language.

The article focuses on semantic shifts pertaining to contact-induced lexicalisation and lexical change in which the integration of substrates, superstrates and adstrates results in lexical acculturation, i.e. how lexemes adjust to new objects and concepts. Much work needs to be done in establishing the direction of semantic shifts since an important issue is that the direction of shifts between Indigenous and non-Indigenous strands cannot be ascertained. As Leitner aptly notes, lexical expansion proceeds in several directions, and waves of lexical expansion reflect periods of contact,

> The inherent dynamism of contact and interaction recycle, so to speak, and the earlier outcomes feed back into the languages and varieties whose development is under way. As contact languages, for instance, are emerging and stabilize, they go on modifying English and indigenous languages and thus create sediments that reflect the period of contact (Leitner 2004a, 22).

In mainstrean Australian English semantic shifts often designate the concepts and expressions of some indigenous languages and have later been extended to the pan-Indigenous Aboriginal community as in the case of the "dreaming". The dreaming, or dream-time, a loan translation of the Central Desert Arrerndic term *alcheringa* was coined by the anthropologist Baldwin Spencer in 1899. Aboriginal English varieties of the Central

Desert tend to favour the term "dreamings", which denotes the plurality of the ancestral beings, of the stories and of the songs which recount the beings' actions, or the sacred objects, designs, and sites in the landscape which those actions brought about, and, often, the semantic shift "law". Yet, the term "dreaming" in mainstream Australian English has stabilized through the marketing of festivals and events, through the plastering of Indigenous art across aeroplanes, walls, umbrella stands, paper napkins, T-shirts, key racks, wine bottle labels and all manner of domestic and commercial objects (Langton 2003, 86-87).Conversely, Aboriginal social movements, such as the Land Rights Campaign have used semantic shift as a form for political empowerment, often taking terms in the English language to re-use them in empowering ways.

Moreover, as Leitner and Sieloff found, semantic distinctions in donor Indigenous Australian languages have been lost in Australian English, as in the case of *dingo* and *warrigal,* which in the Dharuk language respectively indicated a domesticated and wild dog while in mainstream Australian English a dingo refers to a "wild dog", and in some cases loanwords from indigenous languages have developed non-indigenous meanings as in the case of *corroboree* as a denotation of a "noisy gathering". Cases of overlexicalisation in which variation in speech communities has led to several terms for the same referent are also frequent as in the case of *budgerigar* and *love bird* which refer to a "small green and yellow parrot"(Leitner and Sieloff 1998, 155).

Therefore, while the dependence of mainstream Australian English on Indigenous languages is often assumed to lie solely in borrowed lexicon pertaining to flora and fauna, cross-cultural fertilization was a two-way affair. Australia, according to Collins and Blair (2001), and Trudgill (1986), is an example of dialect mixture and koinezation, i.e. the mutual adjustment of lexical and phonological usage to facilitate understanding. Studies on lexical expansion in mAE varieties have often remarked that the selection of features was typically decided in the first phase of contact and thus the "founder effect" played a role in the formation of Australian varieties, yet as the article wishes to demonstrate the selection of linguistic features is ongoing and proceeds through "imperfect replication", both vertically (with an offspring generation copying their parent generation's usage) and horizontally (with speakers who interact with each other continuously influencing each other) (Mufwene 2001). Through selection from language ecology pools speakers continue to define and express a social linguistic identity, an alignment with other individuals and an accommodation of speech behavior (Leitner 2004; Schneider 2003, 2007; Trudgill 2004; Sharifian 2006).

Intersubjectivity

During the last two decades, interest in intersubjectivity has steadily increased in the field of Discourse Analysis. The latter broadly involves viewing discourse as dialogistic, i.e. constructed fundamentally in terms of exchanges between interactants in communicative events in which each interactant shapes a message to accommodate and affect the other (Thompson 2012, 78). Elizabeth Closs Traugott has further distinguished diachronic studies of semanticisation understood as the development of meanings that express speaker attitude or viewpoint as subjectification, and studies on the diachronic study of semanticisation of intersubjectivity as the development of the speaker's attention to the addressee's self-image as intersubjectification (Traugott 2007; 2010). In her definition, in subjectification meanings are recruited by the speaker to encode and regulate attitudes, while in intersubjectification meanings are recruited to be centered on the addressee.

Diachronic studies have also been particularly useful in testing how given text types have exploited intersubjective choices and attitudinal lexical items to enact interaction with an intended audience. Choices from different linguistic resources in newspapers often reveal the so-called reader in the text. According to Martin and White's Appraisal Framework, lexico-grammatical resources may be employed explicitly to *inscribe* and/or implicitly to *invoke* appraisal, affect and evaluation not in order to prevent and prescribe them but to *intensify* and *diffuse* them (Martin and White 2005; Tilakaratna and Mahboob 2013). As Martin and White note declarations of "attitude are dialogically directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared value and belief" (Martin and White 2005, 95).

Newspaper discourse may be analysed in terms of the use of semantic shifts to convey attitude towards socio-political issues (Tilakaratna and Ahmar Mahboob 2013, 64). It is impossible, as John E. Richardson (2007) notes to select and compose news without a conception of the target and intended audience. Accordingly, newspaper content may be viewed as bearing the imprint of social needs and uses, yet it may also be analysed as a durable record of semantic shifts in connection to intersubjectification. Patterns and/or frequencies of meaning across a large sample of texts may be tested, alongside analyses which may reveal pragmatic or illocutionary functions of the texts.

Yet, this study would also like to create a bridge with the definition of intersubjectivity as shared meaning, which goes back to the founder of phenomenological sociology, Alfred Schutz, who insisted that individuals

recognize the world as intersubjective, that is, shared with people with whom they share reciprocal perspectives. According to Schutz (1967), individuals assume they can communicate with others, understand their motives, make themselves understood, and coordinate action across shared typifications of time and space. The common world is common to the extent that shared knowledge, culture and language allow individuals to establish a reciprocity of perspectives or definition of the situation through dyadic couplings. News discourse is often based on scripts, which according to Fowler are a portion of knowledge often shared unconsciously within a group of people and drawn upon in making sense of the world. In this sense, broadcast media contribute to the creation of intersubjectivity as a state of shared meaning (Riley 2007, 33). As Nuyts further contends, " An evaluation is intersubjective if [the issuer] indicates that (s)he shares it with a wider group of people" (2005, 14). Yet in entering the intersubjective space, power relations are often but not always made effective by the absence of reciprocity and mutual recognition of cultural difference. As Langton explains, "From inside, a culture is 'felt' as normative, not deviant" (1993, 37). The assumption of sameness underlying the standardisation of the settler variety of English as Standard Australian English, and the misrecognition of Indigenous varieties of English, reveals the absence of reciprocity in entering the social knowledge system and the lack of a widespread acknowledgement of Indigenous Australian cultures as reciprocally different, indicating that Australia remains in many ways "an unfinished Western colonial project as well as a land in a permanent state of decolonization" (Hage 2001, 350).

Thus, semantic shift in news discourse, as language in use, may also provide the terrain for analysing the negotiation of meaning in the formation of social knowledge. As the Russian linguist and critic, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, most famously argued, every utterance is aligned or disaligned with previous utterances, and meaning is always "half someone else's":

> As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exists in a neutral or impersonal language … but rather it exists in other people's mouth, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. ([1935] 1981, 293-294)

Context

Standard Australian English in the present day is recognized as the official language of Australia. It is the language of law cases, of international business, of diplomacy, and broadcasting (Delbridge 1999). Surely one might presume that this has facilitated the understanding of intercultural communication in a country largely defined by multilingualism and by the co-habitation of many English varieties. On the contrary, the assumption of cultural sameness embedded in the national institutionalization of standard codes may have nourished the illusion that the cultural difference of Australian speakers of English can be easily bridged (Bassnett 2004, 53).

Although findings have demonstrated the internal differentiation of Australian English (Leitner 1992), the colonial claim of property over the origins of English, based on the denial of the constitutive alienability and dialogic facets of language, is persistent in the Australian social knowledge of the English language. The developmental and evolutionary perceptions of language contact and change , which lie at the foundation of the widespread colonial representation of post-colonial Englishes as the illegitimate product of British colonial expansion, significantly erase the memory of the contact formation of Old and Middle British speech conduct and of standardised English varieties (Fennell 2001). Moreover, as Salikoko S. Mufwene contends, it is significant that the lexifiers involved in colonial contact ecologies were non-standard varieties themselves, with attendant basilectilization (2001; 2008). Language varieties and mixture were the norm of the imported language (Schneider 2007, 119; Kiesling 2004, 418-425).

Even though Standard Australian English is now well established in academic and official usage, it was initially parodied or demeaned as in the first accounts of the language, such as Samuel McBurney's contribution to *Early English Pronunciation* (1887) which simply labelled Australian English as "cockney", or Karl Lentzner's *Colonial English: A Glossary of Australian, Anglo-Indian, Pidgin English, West-Indian, and South African Words* (1891)[1] which defined it as "slang" (see Delbridge 1999, 259). Correspondingly, the first systematic attempts to record Australian English are largely apologetic. Edward E. Morris's introduction to the first lexicographical account of Australian English, *Austral English: A Dictionary of Australasian Words Phrases and Usages* (1898), reveals a great degree of uneasiness related to the mainstream devaluation of Australian English as slang or incorrect speech, and is enlightening in the

[1] Later reprinted as *Dictionary of the Slang-English of Australia* (1892).

revelation of its editorial conception as the emancipated colonial offspring of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Since in the introduction, Morris feels compelled to offer the reader a series of justifications for the work, yet he also recounts how he was pushed to begin his collection by an official invitation of the Philological Society of the *Oxford English Dictionary* to compile an extension of the latter and later decided to develop an independent dictionary. Significantly, Morris concludes his apology through an affirmation of the creole nature of English lexicon,

> It may be thought by some precisions that all Australasian English is a corruption of the language … English has certainly a richer vocabulary, a finer variety of words to express delicate distinctions of meaning, than any language that is or ever was spoken; and this is because it has always been hospitable in the reception of new words. It's too late a day to close the doors against new words. This *Austral English Dictionary* merely catalogues and records those whichhave already come in. (1898, xvi)

Morris's decision to collect an independent vocabulary is arguably part of the spirit of the 1890s republican movement, which worked towards the 1901 declaration of independence and did not conceal its interest in the instrumental development of an Australian national idiom.

Since the 1890s, the Australian national vocabulary, based on the idiom of the settlers, has been one of the most important markers of Australia's white national identity. One of the first legislative measures of the Federal Parliament was the 1905 Aborigines Act which made provision for individuals who had dissolved their Aboriginal associations to become exempted from the application of legislation pertaining to the control of the Indigenous population which included the removal of children from the custody of their families. Renouncing Indigenous languages was part of the exemption. As the Jagera/Nulinbara linguist, Jeanie Bell recounts, the White Australia government policies forced Murri people living in Brisbane to "speak English and forget their traditional languages" because they wanted them to "believe that the only acceptable form of communication and lifestyle was one that mirrored the white one" (1994, 48).

The twentieth century has witnessed the representation of the Australian nation as "white", self-dependent, rooted in her territory, closed towards the Asia-Pacific environment, until the 1970s-1980s, a decade marked by a new wave of acceptance of immigration and acknowledgement of Indigenous cultures and languages. Yet the cultural nationalism of the 1970s, which aimed at severing the ties with colonialism, went hand in hand with the acceptance of Australian English (Moore 2001; Leitner 2004a). In 1976, Graeme Johnston's *Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary*

appeared and was followed by Arthur Delbridge's *The Macquarie Dictionary* in 1981, which was devised, as the lexicographer notes, as an "unashamedly national dictionary" (1999). In 1988, the *Australian National Dictionary* was edited by William Stanley Ramson according to the historical methodology of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

These formal acknowledgments were followed by a series of national policies which completed the stabilisation and standardization of Australian English. In 1987, the *National Policy on Languages* provided a strengthened strategy to promote literacy and language learning in Standard Australian English (Delbridge 1999, 267). The use of Standard Australian English in national broadcasting and in legal procedures, government reports and commerce, training and employment, are an evident sign of its new role as the language of the nation (Moore 2001, 45).

Thus, Australian English has undergone a process of "standardization". Yet, while the social knowledge of language and the multidirectional claims of language property have been considerably redressed by the consideration of language as constitutively created in contact, "White English Vernaculars" such as Standard British English, Standard American English and Standard Australian English have become the norm and often continue to be unmarked as creoles, acting as a "marker" of correctness (Mufwene 2001). The colonial claim of English language property is articulated on the level of discourse and biopolitics,[2] and its mobility – its privilege based on racism, its move from a basilectal to an acrolectal form, its unmarked creolization and normative positioning – interestingly shows a set of linked dimensions which have been defined by the American sociologist Ruth Frankenberg as pertaining to the social organization and construction of "whiteness",

> Whiteness has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint", a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others and at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.… The material and discursive dimensions of whiteness are always interconnected.…I have found most useful those analyses that view race as a socially constructed rather than inherently meaningful category, one linked to relations of power and processes of struggle, and one whose meaning changes over time. In asserting that race and racial difference are

[2] In lectures and writings during the late 1970s, Michel Foucault introduced the concept of biopolitics to define the ontology of power outside of the juridical model of sovereignty. In the context of this research, Foucault show how the emergence of new disciplines ofknowledge gave birth to population as an object of power and knowledge.

> socially constructed, I do not minimize their social and political reality, but rather insist that their reality is, precisely, social and political rather than inherent or static. (1993, 1-11)

Whiteness is, of course, a figment of the imagination, yet, as George Lipsitz argues, the possessive investment in whiteness is a social fact that provides those who introvert and pass on the spoils of discrimination to the succeeding generation with property, power, and opportunities, such as insider networks that channel employment opportunities, housing secured through discriminatory markets, unequal education opportunities (1998, vii). The English language is arguably part of Australia's possessive investment in a knowledge-driven modern economy where the generation, circulation, and operationalisation (including materialization in texts such as dictionaries, textbooks and literary texts) of language organizes and reproduces social inclusion/exclusion.

As a time for both recollection and projection, the last thirty years in Australia have been characterised by a reflection on Indigenous Australian sovereignty. This is also evident in the ever more frequent use of the renaming of Aboriginal people as Indigenous Australian peoples, which is increasingly used by Indigenous writers and intellectuals to substitute the erroneous colonial naming of the many groups of people inhabiting the Australian continent, such as the Yolngu, Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, and Waka Waka, as Aboriginal (Grossman 2003).

The English language has borne the connotation of colonial property since its introduction in Australia: it has arguably functioned as an inalienable "insignia of colonial authority" (Bhabha 1985, 144). Conversely, colonial language policies have been fiercely directed towards Indigenous languages for they constituted counterfactual evidence to the claim of *terra nullius*. The *National Indigenous Languages Report* (2005) has found that only twenty of the approximately 230 Indigenous languages which were spoken in Australia before invasion are still spoken in their full form and only a hundred are spoken by older people. Minority languages are still represented as handicapping the children of minority groups and Standard Australian English is promoted as "the power language", which enables the acquisition of education, employment, and, in short, a "fair go" in the lucky country (2005, 19). The ideology of "monolingualism" or "linguicism" is arguably part of the Australian definition of productive citizens (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 1994). English entry tests, such as IELTS, are employed as effective border devices as they are a necessary requirement to obtain Australian citizenship and temporary residence visas, especially within the General Skilled Migration programme available to people who have specific skills which meet the na-

tion's demand. Moreover, the "Australian Values Statement", which must be signed in applications for permanent and temporary residence visas, clearly defines the English language as one of the most important unifying elements of the nation: "the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society". Moreover, there is still scarce recognition of Indigenous Australian English Varieties as the "norm-setting epicentres" (Leitner 1992) which form the Australian English continuum.

Since the early years of settlement until, in some states, as late as the 1960s, the Australian government tried to regulate the life of Indigenous people. In the second half of the nineteenth century the different states of the Australian federation established Aboriginal Protection Boards and ruled Indigenous Australian lives according to the Aborigines Act, which enforced what was termed as a policy of protection. As historian Jackie Huggins notes, a system of police protectors and reserve superintendents was established "to control the movements of Aborigines, to enter employment contracts, to hold any funds and control their spending. The Act assigned Aborigines inferior status, and regarded them as slave labour without entitlement to the wages enjoyed by their white counterparts" (Huggins 1988, 4). Moreover, in 1905 the Aborigines Act was amended and set up a special system of control over Aboriginal families and children including controls over marriage, freedom of movement, where families could live, employment and guardianship of children. The Aborigines Act also enforced a child removal system according to which Police officers had legal authority to remove children under 8 on their own initiative; there were no legal criteria setting out conditions for removals and no court committal process (Haebich 1989).

In 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that the nation should undertake a formal process of reconciliation. That same year, the formal process of reconciliation was established by the Commonwealth Parliament by a unanimous vote and the Australian Parliament passed the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act. The Council promoted a process of reconciliation and a National Document of Reconciliation. During its first and second terms (1991-94 and 1995-97), the council undertook and encouraged a wide range of local, regional and national initiatives, including meetings, negotiated agreements, cross-cultural awareness and cooperation, and working with Education Authorities to incorporate reconciliation ideals in their curricula. In 1997, the Premier of the New South Wales Parliament, Bob Carr, made an official apology to the members of the Stolen Generations and in 2001 half a million people participated in a reconciliation walk which was met by

the refusal of Australia's Prime Minister John Howard to apologize for his ancestors' actions against the Indigenous peoples of Australia. The recent national apology of the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to the descendants of the Stolen Generations (February 13, 2008) was felt by many as an important historical event. Yet many feel that since the same government has implemented a policy of Intervention in Indigenous communities and has not moved forward in recognizing Indigenous Australian peoples' land claims, it hasn't achieved the goal of reconciliation.

Data and analyses

The data consists of two sets of articles from the news and features section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* digital archive. The *Sydney Morning Herald* may be defined as broadsheet print media**.** The news and features section includes reporter voices and correspondent voices. Thus there are no instances of authorial inscribed judgements, but judgement is attributed to some external, cited sources. Moreover, except for single lexemes code-switching in Indigenous Australian varieties is reserved to cited sources. Factors, which may have a strong impact in the scarce use of Aboriginal semantic shifts and loanwords in Australian broadsheet newspapers, are that journalists may find it hard to use uncommon, low-frequency and specialised words. Aboriginal expressions and concepts have additional problems; they are low in frequency; many are abstract terms; they tend to be specialised and used in specific domains as flora, religion/culture, politics and creative arts (Leitner and Sieloff 1998). The corpora each total almost exactly 110,000 words, and comprise respectively 100 and 95 articles. The analysis was carried out manually using Wordsmith 6. The two corpora, one from the year 2000 and one from the year 2008, were respectively named "Howard" and "Rudd", and were compiled with the keywords I/indigenous, A/aboriginal, Koori and Eora. The latter decision was taken since the orygonym "Aborigines" has been the subject of debate among and has been replaced by many Aboriginal spokespeople and intellectuals with Indigenous Australian, regional group names such as Koori and language names such as Eora.

As a crude indication of the differences, the content words which appear in the 100 most frequent words in each corpus reveal a shift towards the use of the term I/indigenous ranked at 12 with 934 occurrences in the Howard corpus and 10 with 1,120 occurrences in the Rudd corpus, while Aboriginal is ranked 18 with 630 occurrences in the Howard corpus and 36 with 430 occurrences in the Rudd corpus. Aborigines is significantly ranked 82 in the Howard corpus with 162 occurrences and has been

dropped below 100 with only 64 in the Rudd corpus. Eora and Gadigal, which refer to the indigenous nations of the Sydney area, are remarkably low in frequency (respectively 2 and 0 in H, and 3 and 1 in Rudd) and so is the regional pan-Indigenous anthroponym Koori (3 occurrences in both corpora).

As Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl have found, anthroponyms are sometimes enough to perform racist or ethnicist slurs on their own as they connotatively convey disparaging, insulting meanings, without any attributive qualification, yet a close study of predicational strategies of newspapers reveals how the term Aboriginal has undergone a semantic shift that may be defined as an Elevation /Amelioration, a shift in the sense of a word towards a more positive value in the minds of the users. In the following cases, the use of the term "peoples" is influenced by evaluation on behalf of the reporter through externalised proposition – attribution. In ex. 1. the proposition is distanced from the text's internal authorial voice, i.e. "the argument goes" attributes values to an external voice and the use of the term "peoples" further contributes to making space for alternative voice. In ex. 2 the internal voice of the text attributes the proposition to an external voice through the communicative process verb "has never given up on the idea", yet the alignment with the term "treaty" and the choice of the term "first peoples" reveal that the internal voice strongly concurs with the proposition. Similarly, in ex. 3 the choice of the term "peoples" by Kevin Rudd in the "Apology speech" reveals an intentional intensification of the term which is metaphorically linked to the division between indigenous and non-indigenous Australian people:

1. After all, the argument goes, the Aboriginal **peoples** never were a single nation with whom a treaty could be signed, and are even less so now.
   —Clive Archer, "Howard and a black treaty", 30/05/2000 (Howard corpus)

2. However, he has never given up on the idea that there should be a treaty, or in less catchy words ``power-sharing arrangements'', between the descendants of the first **peoples** and of those who arrived over the past 212 years.
   —Debra Jopson, "With a treaty back on the agenda, Debra Jopson discovers that the word evokes differing emotions on both sides of the fence", 03/06/2000 (Howard corpus)

3. There comes a time in the history of nations when their **peoples** must become fully reconciled to their past if they are to go forward with confidence to embrace their future. Our nation has reached such a time.
   —Kevin Rudd, Parliament Speech, 13/02/2008 (Rudd corpus)

In the Howard corpus, the collocation profile of "peoples" reveals that 46 out of 50 occurrences of the word "peoples" denote Indigenous Australian peoples, similarly in the Rudd corpus, 16 out of 20 occurrences of the word "peoples" are referred to Indigenous Australian peoples, revealing that the collocation of the term "peoples" may be based on cognitive-cultural lexical expansion procedures (Sharifian 2006). Similarly the widely attested semantic shift "mob", which in Indigenous Australian varieties of English indicates an Indigenous group of belonging and more recently group membership, entailing an amelioration of the term, is nearly absent and interestingly confined to quotations, as in the following examples:

1. For Simpson, it is an alternative to alienating Australia Day celebrations, a highlight in the indigenous calender and a chance "to get together with our **mob**".
   —Janine Israel, "Sobriquet to bouquet: Stiff Gins turn racist insult around", 27/01/2000 (Howard corpus)

2. Ricky Tilmouth, the medical centre cultural administrator, said he was well aware of government pressures to cut funding for Utopia's outstations but said none of "the government **mob**" has actually been to see how people lived.
   —Richard Skelton, "At a remote Northern Territory outstation, Russell Skelton reports on the desperate plight of an Aboriginal community living in squalor", 01/03/2008 (Rudd corpus)

The use of the semantic shift "mob" only in quotations by Indigenous Australian speakers may be due to the reporter's wish to avoid the alienation of the wider readership. As Dennis McDermott remarks, in Indigenous Australian culture, there are widespread testimonies of trauma, which in many cases result in "an attempt at an exclusionary identity" (McDermott 2002, 273-274). Indigenous Australian English varieties also often avoid English when referring to non-Indigenous people and prefer loan words. For instance, "white man" is *wajala* in Western Australia, *migaloo* in Queensland, *balanda* in Arnhem Land (Northern Territory).

Following a methodology based on cognitive conceptualisations it may be argued that the semantic shift "mob" is also based on the influence of the well documented Indigenous ontological relationship between place of belonging, kinship ties and speaking positions. Group identity is also reinforced by semantic shifts such as "aunt" and "uncle" used to refer to elders, who are temporarily responsible for knowledge and custodianship of specific places due to particular "social positions" and kinship connections (Sharifian 2006: 15). In the Howard Corpus the semantic shift of the word "uncle" appears in two articles, both by the investigations award winning

team journalist, Debra Jopson. The journalist initially alerts the reader to the semantic shift through quotation marks and periphrastic glossing and gradually incorporates it through an evident mainstreaming exercise, while she does not flag the Aboriginal meaning of the word "aunt" in the second article.

1. The chairman of the Dunghutti Elders Council, Mr Harold "**Uncle** Blue" Smith, is waiting for written confirmation of verbal assurances he says he was given by senior Department of Corrective Services officers that the jail would provide jobs for local Aborigines […] "**Uncle** Blue" said racism had lessened marginally. When he was a youth, Aborigines were barred from the high school and roped off at the cinema […] Just before Christmas, 28 locals signed a petition against an Aboriginal family renting a house in their neighbourhood. They lost. The family was now living there quietly, **Uncle** Blue said.
   —Debra Jopson, "The town with the death rate of a war zone", 22/04/2000

2. The team found grandmothers and **aunts** stretching their budgets to care for children. They also discovered a widespread practice among the financially squeezed of borrowing money from Centrelink or their local ``work-for-the-dole schemes", as well as a system of sharing, to get everyone through the lean ``off-pension" weeks. […] Most of the mothers, as health worker Vanessa Villaflor says, are 14, 15 and 16 years of age, and basically have no mothering skills at all. Fortunately, there is a strong tradition within Aboriginal communities that family members help raise the children, so everyone grows up surrounded by many aunties. But that still leaves room for little practical advice.
   —Debra Jopson, "All in the family", 30/11/2000

In the following first example of the Rudd corpus, there is an explicit distancing of the authorial voice from the claim of the external voice ("who identified herself as Aunty Valerie"), while the subsequent three display the collocate term "elder",

1. One woman, who identified herself as **Aunty** Valerie from Yuendemu, 300 kilometres north-west of Alice Springs, vented her frustration with the intervention. "We know how to look after our kids," she said. "We don't want to be treated like animals. We want to be treated like human beings."
   —Yuko Narushima, "Thousands protest against federal intervention in NT", 13/02/2008

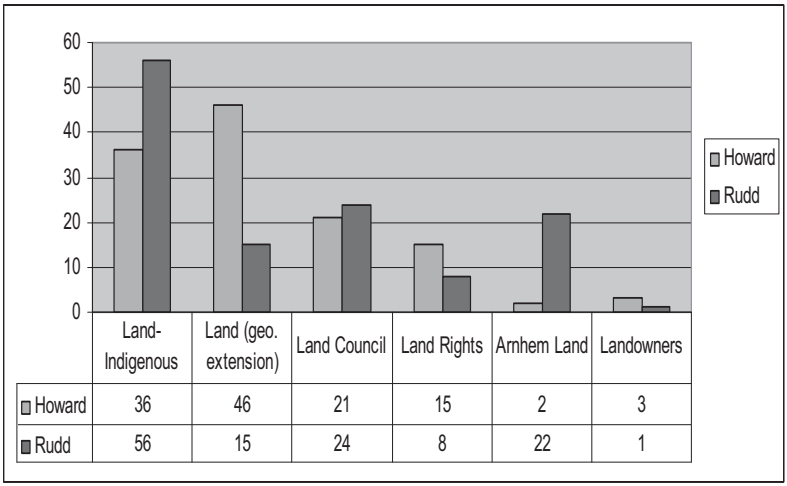
2. "I can speak for a lot of our **elders** who feel the same as I do, and I look at it this way, it's reconciliation. It brings two cultures together instead of pulling away from one another, which we used to do, says **Aunty Fay Green, a local elder.**
—Joel Gibson, "Talking in tongues", 29/03/20

3. The women are recognised at a Powerhouse Museum exhibition called Yinalung Yenu - women's journey. It features five indigenous women, including Marilyn and Marlene, the lawyer Larissa Behrendt, the **Tingha elder Aunty Sue Blacklock** and the Balmain artist Bronwyn Bancroft, and coincides with the arrival at the museum of the indigenous director, Dawn Casey.
—Joel Gibson, "Sisters celebrate a remarkable journey", 31/03/2008

4. **Uncle** George Rose, **a Dharriwaa elder** describes the youthful procession as: "Babies pushing strollers, babies having babies."…Sometimes Uncle George says young fathers, seldom seen any other day, get behind the strollers. He refers to them as one-day dads, offering a much-needed hand when the sniff of money is around.
—Russell Skelton, "Where babies are a mixed bonus", 17/05/2008

Aboriginal English functions as a focus for Aboriginal identity, partly replacing lost ancestral languages of which it has preserved cognitive organizational principles referring to spirituality (Malcolm 2001, 23). Thus, it is not surprising that semantic shift in mainstream Australian English has often interested words from these conceptual mappings. Semantic shifts which have been introduced in different periods or have acquired new relevance are the abovementioned dreaming and law, land and the collocates unfinished business, sorry business, Men/Women business. Words such as land realise semantic shift through narrowing so that the word can be used appropriately only in fewer contexts than before the change. Land in indigenous Australian cultures is a semantic shift which expresses spiritual and social belonging rather than ownership, thus it is inalienable. A battle over the meaning of the word land has been at the center of sacred sites surveys and land claims ever since the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (1976), since land claims are argued in terms of European legal systems.Thus, it is the most frequent semantic shift in this investigation and many realizations are related to its use as an attribute as in the case of Land Rights and Land Council, or in toponymy as in the case of Arnhem Land.[3]

[3] c.f. 1. First entry 1839 used *attributively* in combination, not always exclusively Australian, with reference to the colonial occupation and tenure of land: land



	Land-Indigenous	Land (geo. extension)	Land Council	Land Rights	Arnhem Land	Landowners
Howard	36	46	21	15	2	3
Rudd	56	15	24	8	22	1

As the graph shows, the use of the Aboriginal meaning of land greatly increases in the Rudd corpus and is more frequent than the mainstream Australian English term land used to refer to the ownership of a geographical extension. Moreover, 83% of the realizations in the Howard corpus

agent, board, boom, boomer, commissioner, court, jobber, -jobbing, mania, order. First entry for Land Council 1973 *Commonwealth. Parl. Papers* no. 138 41 "It is recommended that two Aboriginal landcouncils be set up in the Northern Territory: one for the central region, based on Alice Springs, and the other for the northern region, based on Darwin"; 1964*Anthropol. Forum* Nov. 294 What is at issue here is the actual acknowledgment of Aboriginal landrights as having any contemporary relevance at all. 1967*Smoke Signals* Mar. 26 The concern for Aboriginal land rights, based as it is on the moral rights of the original occupiers of the land, the social need for Aboriginal self-respect and a sense of security and belonging in a situation of rapid social change; and the desperate need for economic capital by Aborigines, necessarily involves a concern for mineral rights. 1970*Ibid.* Dec. 9 Although land rights is seen as a major pre-requisite in the advancement of Aborigines, there is an unanswered ambiguity in the proposals that are frequently made. 1976 *Bulletin* (Sydney) 16 Oct. 16/3 For land rights to have any meaning to these people, the title to the land which belongs to any one group must be given immediately and directly to the group through its traditional leader. 1984*Age* (Melbourne) 16 Aug. 11/2 Nearly 24 percent of the Northern Territory population is Aboriginal (or 29,088 people) and they have been granted about 32 per cent of the Territory in land rights. 1986*Canberra Times* 3 Mar. 2/7 Aborigines in Western Australia have stated they will not give up their land-rights aspirations. From the *Australian National Dictionary,* [1988] 1997Oxford University Press.

are related to an external voice and occur in quotations by an Aboriginal spokeperson as in the following example:

> Shelter has been inspired by the paintings of Rover Thomas and the late Aboriginal artist Emily Kame Kngwarreye, work that evokes an aerial observation of the land.
>
> "I am always inspired by the land, and traditionally the people are inspired by living from the land, whether it's through medicine or law or through a paint up [painting of the body] or ceremony," Page says.
>
> "It is really about the mother spirit just nurturing the land.
>
> —Bronwyn Watson, "Celebration of a nation", 01/07/2000

On the other side, the use of the semantic shift in the Rudd corpus is in 55% of the realizations directed towards aligning the addressee into a community of shared belief and practice, as in the following example where the Aboriginal meaning of land is amplified through the noun Daguragu and the adjective ancestral, against the long line of "promises" by Australian Prime Ministers:

> All had tried, as Rudd now promises, to solve the enormous disparity between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples. The promises began in 1975, when Whitlam poured sand from the Daguragu land into the hands of Vincent Lingiari, symbolising the handing back of 3236 square kilometres of ancestral land.
>
> —Stephanie Peatling and Mark Metherell , "None of this will be easy", 16/02/2008

Conclusions

Research on semantic shifts in newspaper discourse may contribute to the understanding of the diachronic growth and change of shared communities of meanings. Moreover, analysing newspaper discourse may reveal that the marked and unmarked use of such lexical items betrays interesting intersubjective positions rather than just transparent translatability into the normative code of Standard Australian language.In resisting the erasure of Aboriginal English, the use of semantic shifts creates a series of intercultural reading relations.

Situated at the crossroads of society and language, semantic shift entails language appropriation, providing an interesting case for discussing the inherited authority of who "owns" meaning. To this end, it may be fruitful in testing pre-conceived representations of the English language, opening up endless possibilities on the roles the "users of the English language can play, and – attitudinally – above all, how others view the

importance of this use" (Kachru 1990, 4). While colonial discourse is monological in its authoritative representation of linguistic competence, languages are inherently dialogic in their permeability to the social conditions of usage. The possessive investment in English is disrupted by language variation and change which demonstrate the inherent alienability of language. Semantic shift as a realisation of meaning that consciously operates within the context of intersubjective relationships opens up the lexicogrammar for a creative exploitation. It creates the need for constant reappropriation as a consequence of the intersubjective relations created by social knowledge. In the words of the Murri writer Alexis Wright,

> This is the price we pay for being un-Australian, for wanting recognition of words like multi-culturalism, stolen generations, treaties, Aboriginal government, Aboriginal sovereignty, Aboriginal self-determination…. I wonder what words I could use to speak of the wretchedness of their lives and communities…. [T]he dominant society creates a consumption of fantasy in the mass media with the use of words like "freedom", "democracy", "love", "glory", "happiness", or "a peaceful country". Think about how these words and others are used in this country to deny, squash and destroy the relevance of our real voice .... I have to remember the power of words. Our words are weapons too. All we have to do is wait for a delayed reaction. We only have to wait and one day we will see change. (2002, 10-20)