THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LITERACY IN ARRERNTE

A case study of the introduction of writing in an Aboriginal language and the implications for current vernacular literacy practices

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Inge Kral, declare that this thesis comprises only my original work, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other materials used. This thesis does not exceed 15,000 words in length, exclusive of bibliographies, footnotes and appendices.

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td></td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</td>
<td></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td></td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Importance of the study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The development of literacy in English</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Literacy in social context</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2.1</td>
<td>Literacy acquisition and transmission</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Cross-cultural studies and vernacular literacy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3.1</td>
<td>Diyari literacy</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Vernacular languages in education</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Vernacular literacy in Aboriginal bilingual education</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>Language maintenance</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Preface
CHAPTER 3  METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction 31
3.1 Methodology 31
  3.1.1 Reliability, validity and limitations 33
3.2 Ethics and anonymity 35

CHAPTER 4  HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.0 Introduction 37
4.1 Institutionalisation and schooling 37
4.2 Self-determination and education 41
  4.2.1 Santa Teresa 41
  4.2.2 Alice Springs 42
  4.2.3 Yipirinya School 42
  4.2.4 Adult education 43
4.3 Hermannsburg mission 46
4.4 Literacy practices at Hermannsburg mission 47
  4.4.1 Lutheran Christianity and the role of 'text' 48
  4.4.2 School literacy practices 49
  4.4.3 Christian literacy practices 53
  4.4.4 Everyday literacy practices 56
  4.4.5 Letters 57
4.5 Conclusion 59

CHAPTER 5  CURRENT ARRERNTE LITERACY PRACTICES

5.0 Introduction 71
5.1 The contemporary context 71
  5.1.1 The visual literacy environment 74
  5.1.2 The availability of text 76

Preface
5.1.3 Language as icon 77

5.2 Literacy practices 79
  5.2.1 Employment 81
  5.2.2 Christian practices 83

5.3 The social transmission of oral and literate practices 85
  5.3.1 Oral practices 86
  5.3.2 Literate practices 88

5.4 Conclusion 91

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction 100

6.1 Socio-historical context 101

6.2 Current vernacular literacy practices 102

6.3 Implications of the study 103

BIBLIOGRAPHY 106

Appendices

Appendix A: Arrernte orthographies 123
Appendix B: Interview questions 126
Appendix C: Arrernte interviewees 129
Appendix D: Letters and translations 131
Appendix E: Family Profile A and Individual Profile B 139
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Enrolments in SAL courses, 1981-1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Estimated number of adults literate in Arrernte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Summary of current usage of Arrernte texts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Map of Central Australia showing distribution of Arandic dialects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Old school house, Hermannsburg mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Inside old school house, in the 1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Aranda school primer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Aranda Christian text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Inside old Hermannsburg mission church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Gravestones, old Hermannsburg mission cemetery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Aranda Lutheran Hymnal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Aranda-English Catechism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Albert Namatjira’s writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Signs at Hermannsburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Signs in Alice Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Translated pamphlet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><em>Apmere Akerte Ayeye</em>: Native Title Newsletter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the introduction and development of vernacular literacy in Western, Central and Eastern Arrernte, closely related dialects of the Arandic group of languages spoken by Aboriginal people in and around Alice Springs in Central Australia. Writing in the vernacular was introduced to the previously non-literate Arrernte over two periods. Firstly, Lutheran missionary linguists at Hermannsburg mission introduced writing in Western ‘Aranda’ from the 1880s, primarily for the purpose of Christian conversion. Secondly in the late 1970s and early 1980s writing in Central, Eastern and Western ‘Arrernte’ was introduced in conjunction with aspirations for Aboriginal self-determination and the advent of bilingual education programs.

For this study I have used a case study methodology which has incorporated the collection of historical material and interviews with twenty one Arrernte literates and six non-Aboriginal educators and linguists. I have sought to explore the acquisition, retention and transmission of Arrernte literacy from the perspective that a description of literacy must take account of the socio-historical context of literacy use and the embeddedness of literacy practices in other social and cultural practices. At Hermannsburg mission ‘Aranda’ literacy was interconnected with Christian cultural practices and was acquired, and to a limited extent retained and transmitted, in this context.

The short history of the development of ‘Arrernte’ literacy in a post-colonial context has resulted in the minimal saturation of literacy practices across the Arrernte speaking community. Nevertheless Arrernte literacy bears affective significance as a symbol of language and culture maintenance. For this reason
Arrernte literacy teaching is important, however the expectation that Arrernte literacy can be learnt only through formal teaching does not heed the importance of a social context for meaningful vernacular literacy use, and the role of the family in the acquisition and transmission of literacy practices.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank first and foremost the individuals who willingly consented to be interviewed. I hope I have done justice to their stories. Thanks also goes to Yipirinya School Council who supported this research project, Ntaria Council for giving me permission to visit Hermannsburg, and to the staff at the Strehlow Research Centre, Alice Springs, for their assistance.

It is not possible to thank everyone by name. In particular though, I would like to express my gratitude to Veronica Dobson, Carmel Ryan, Margaret Heffernan, Veronica Turner, and my students, for without our shared work on vernacular literacy programmes over the years, these ideas would never have surfaced. I would also like to thank Robert Hoogenraad, Jenny Green and David Wilkins for the important discussions on vernacular literacy issues and Brenda Thornley for assistance with the map on Page 1. Lastly, I wish to thank Gary Stoll, Ilona Oppenheim, Helene Burns, Gavan Breen and all those who have given me their valuable time, feedback and support, including Brenda Thornley at IAD Press for providing the map on Page 1.
Figure 1  Map of Central Australia showing distribution of Arandic dialects
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Arrernte speech community can be found in Central Australia (Figure 1). Arrernte families in Alice Springs (Mparntwe) generally reside either on special purpose lease ‘town camps’ or in housing commission homes. Other families live in bush communities, or have chosen to return to outstations close to their traditional land. Many also alternate between places. Central and Eastern Arrernte people tend to be affiliated with communities at Santa Teresa (Ltyentye Apurte), Amoonguna (Amwengkwerne), Alcoota (Engawala), Harts Range (Artetyerre) and Bonya (Uthipe Atherre), as well as outstations within the area (Wilkins 1989; Henderson and Dobson 1994a). Western Arrernte speakers are predominantly affiliated with Hermannsburg (Niaria/Nihareye), various small communities in the Ntaria Land Trust area and Jay Creek (Iwepatheke).

Of the approximately 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken in Australia at the time of colonisation, only about one third are still spoken today (Schmidt 1990; Commonwealth of Australia 1992, 1996).
Central, Eastern and Western Arrernte are dialects belonging to the Arandic group of languages, a sub-group of the Pama-Nyungan family of languages (Wilkins 1989). This group of languages is still spoken over a wide region in Central Australia (Figure 1). There is no traditional name for the overall group which includes the dialects or varieties known as *Mparntwe Arrernte* (Central Arrernte), *Ikngerripenhe* (Eastern Arrernte), *Tyuretye Arrernte* or *Arrernte Alturlenye* (Western Arrernte), *Pertame* (Southern Arrernte), *Anmatyerr*, *Alyawarr* and *Kaytetye* (Breen 1984:51; Hobson 1984:3). Although some of these dialects are closely related and mutually intelligible (Henderson and Dobson 1994a:8), languages at either end of the dialectal chain are not (Wilkins 1989:6-14). Compared with other Aboriginal languages, some Arandic varieties are still relatively strong, with an estimated 4,500 speakers in all. This includes around 1,500 to 2,000 speakers of Central and Eastern Arrernte (Henderson and Dobson 1994a:8) and approximately 1000 speakers of Western Arrernte (Gavan Breen pers. comm.). Nevertheless there is concern that the language is endangered (Schmidt 1990; Commonwealth of Australia 1992; 1996).

In Central Australia, a language or dialect may be identified as belonging to a particular place and people 'may be affiliated to a place that is one's conception site, birthplace and/or the place to which they have traditional responsibilities through kinship' (Wilkins 1989:1). An individual's 'rights' to know and use an
Aboriginal language are governed primarily by kin and dreaming associations.

The Arrernte language, according to Wilkins (1989:8),

is a property of a particular area of country. The ideal speakers of a language are not living, but are the Dreamtime ancestors of that stretch of country. The people who are responsible for the language are the same traditional owners who are responsible for that country. Fluent speakers of the language are often unable to say anything about how the language should be taught or disseminated because they are not the ‘owners’ of the country and its associated Dreaming.

Arrernte speakers have maintained a strong connection with traditional land, culture and associated ceremonial and kinship obligations (Heppell and Wigley 1981; Wilkins 1989; Green 1994; Henderson and Dobson 1994a). Traditional religious beliefs and ceremonies are still very much at the forefront of everyday existence. People

...maintain that they are descended from totemic ancestors... This descent is not so much fictional as symbolic and it involves the passing on of the creative techniques that the totemic ancestors first used. So, for example, the songs with which the ancestors created the world were not lost: they were surrendered to the next generation, who in turn surrendered them to the next generation, and so on. The process of transmission is closely associated with the performance of ritual, particularly various forms of male and female initiation, and performances that have come to be known as increase rites... These rituals, which are extremely complex and which involve the use of myriad forms of poetry, music, graphic arts and drama (all called tjurtunga) [tywerrenge], are thus faithful reproductions of
ancestral existence, although they are, at the same time, more than mere reproductions...

(Morton 1992:31-32)

The ongoing significance of *tywerrenge* is reinforced in this quote from Wenten Rubuntja, a respected Western Arrernte elder:

We don’t forget about *tywerrenge*. We still keep going, singing, and the ceremonies all the time, singing all the time and painting all the time, shield and dancing. What belongs to this country, belongs to the Aboriginal culture, we never lost, keep going ahead.

(Green 1988:12)

Despite this strong traditional connection, the socio-political status of the Arrernte as a ‘dispossessed indigenous minority people’ encapsulated within post-colonial Australian society (Rigsby 1987:361) has contiguously resulted in a standard of living lower than that of mainstream non-Aboriginal Australians. High rates of unemployment, alcohol abuse and imprisonment, as well as health problems and low school attendance, are the everyday reality for this embattled community (ATSIC 1995).

The tenacity of Arrernte language, despite its marginalised status and the encroachment of English, therefore attests to the ongoing strength of Arrernte culture. The spoken vernacular acts as an important symbol of cultural identity (Henderson and Dobson 1994b); similarly, written Arrernte is strongly
emblematic and is viewed by some as a mechanism for language maintenance. The community today, although essentially bilingual in Arrernte and English as a second language, could not be described as biliterate. The majority of adult Arrernte speakers do not read and write in the vernacular and the opportunity to engage with written Arrernte text is limited. In addition, levels of adult literacy proficiency in English are generally low.

The history of the development of written Arrernte is relatively short when compared with European languages. Western Arrernte was the first dialect to be written down using an orthographic system developed by German-speaking Lutheran missionary linguists at Hermannsburg mission in the 1880s, primarily for the purpose of converting the Western Arrernte to Christianity through a Christian education using translated Christian texts. Early grammars and dictionaries used the orthographic variant *Aranda* (Kempe 1891; T.G.H. Strehlow 1944; and Pfitzner and Schmaal 1981). Several orthographic variants of the language name will be used in this thesis: *Aranda, Arunta, Arrarnta* and *Arrernte* (see Appendix A). The variant in the current Finke River Mission orthography is *Arrarnta* (Oberscheidt 1991).

It was not until the late 1970s, with the advent of bilingual education in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory (Gale 1990; Harris 1995), that a
writing system for Central, Eastern and Western Arrernte began to be developed.
This orthography has since been standardised in various published and
unpublished texts produced primarily by Central Australian Dictionaries Program,
the Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD), Yipirinya School and Santa
Teresa School. There is still further variation in the orthographies used in other
Arandic dialects and standardisation of the various writing systems would be
difficult as a pool of written resources has been established and people are
resistant to change⁵.

In general the history of the teaching of alphabetic reading and writing in Arrernte
has been one where vernacular literacy has been introduced to Arrernte speakers
who have little or no experience of a social context for vernacular literacy use. In
addition, prior English literacy skills have mostly been minimal. Vernacular
literacy was taught at Hermannsburg mission from the 1880s till around the
1970s. Although formal vernacular literacy teaching at Hermannsburg school has
ceased, incidental teaching takes place and adult evangelists and pastors still
receive vernacular literacy training. In Alice Springs and Santa Teresa vernacular
literacy classes for Central/Eastern Arrernte-speaking children and adults have
only been available since the late 1970s. This is a short history of vernacular
literacy teaching and a brief period for the development of a meaningful context
for adult vernacular literacy use beyond the classroom.
Literacy research (Cook-Gumperz 1986; Levine 1986; Resnick 1990; Maybin 1994; Graddol, Maybin and Stierer 1994; Barton and Hamilton 1998) in Western countries has raised an awareness of the significance of a social context for meaningful literacy use and the acquisitional aspect of literacy development (Reder 1994). The role of the family in developing the antecedents for successful literacy acquisition (Heath 1983, 1986; Olson 1984; Moerk 1985; Wells 1985) has also been foregrounded in recent developments in literacy research. Social literacy research and theory will be discussed further in the review of the literature in Chapter 2. This social theory of literacy will also be examined in the Arrernte context, where literacy was only relatively recently introduced to a previously non-literate group that has remained socially and politically marginalised from the dominant language culture. It will be argued that if literacy in a minority indigenous language is to be successfully acquired, retained, and transmitted, then it is necessary also to understand the historical development of that literacy, and the social context for the cultural practice of vernacular literacy use.

Ethnographic studies (Spolsky and Irvine 1982; Reder and Green 1983; Spolsky et.al. 1983; Schieffelin and Gilmore 1986; Ferguson 1987; Reder and Wikelund 1993) of literacy practices in cross-cultural contexts have informed our understanding of comparable situations where literacy has been introduced.
However in Australia, the literature on Aboriginal adult vernacular literacy practices in social contexts is sparse. Goddard (1990) and Gale (1992, 1997) have described the development of writing in Aboriginal languages and shown the necessity for the development of adult functions for vernacular literacy, but they have not documented adult literacy practices in detail. There is a need for studies which look at how vernacular literacy has been used beyond the classroom and the attitudes of Aboriginal language speakers to vernacular literacy.

1.1 Research question

The purpose of this research has been to investigate: a) the socio-historical context of Arrernte literacy development, b) the function and meaning of current adult Arrernte literacy practices, and c) the intergenerational transmission of oral and literate practices. This thesis seeks to describe the actual adult Arrernte literacy practices from both a diachronic and synchronic perspective and then to draw conclusions. It does not endeavour to determine the success or failure of bilingual education in the Australian Aboriginal context, nor to analyse either the discourse structures of Arrernte speech styles or the adaptation of oral genres to written forms (see Tannen 1982; Halliday 1985; Reynolds 1988; Kilham 1990). This thesis also does not investigate the cognitive effects (Scribner and Cole 1981) of the introduction of Arrernte literacy. These questions would require a different research paradigm.
The research does, however, attempt to explore the relationship between the following questions:

What is the socio-historical context of Arrernte literacy development?
What are the current adult Arrernte literacy practices?
What are the implications for Arrernte literacy acquisition, retention and transmission?

1.2 Importance of the study

The motivation for this study has arisen out of two concerns that I have encountered in my work in Aboriginal education. Firstly, a growing sense that just teaching vernacular literacy in classrooms is not sufficient input for developing real world literacy skills. Secondly, from observing how assumptions about literacy, transferred from a highly literate Western context, can lead to mismatched expectations of adult vernacular literacy competence by both Arrernte and non-Aboriginal speakers. The concern is that these mismatched expectations can lead to failure, and this failure may be interpreted either as an individual deficit or the failure of bilingual education to deliver vernacular literacy outcomes. Hence, this thesis aims to disentangle Arrernte literacy from assumptions about literacy transferred from a Western context where literacy is ‘purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices’ (Barton and Hamilton 1998:7). It aims to correctly situate Arrernte literacy in a
developmental continuum that currently traverses only a few generations. It also seeks to describe actual adult literacy practices and the current context for vernacular literacy use beyond the formal learning environment.

As stated earlier, there is a lacuna in studies which not only trace the development of writing in Aboriginal languages, but also look at actual vernacular literacy practices. As Ferguson (1987:223) has claimed, there are few descriptive studies of the introduction of literacy into non-literate societies. This thesis seeks to contribute just such a descriptive study. It also seeks to respond to Heath’s (1986:216) call for more studies of ‘what happens to basic literacy skills once a formerly non-literate group attains such skills’ and how these skills can be ‘extended and interrelated with social needs and functions so that they can be retained’.

It is my hope that this research will contribute to an increased awareness of what is needed for successful vernacular literacy acquisition, retention and transmission.

1.3 Organisation

The organisation of the thesis is as follows. In Chapter 2 the academic literature will be reviewed in order to contextualise Arrernte literacy development within
the framework of current social literacy theory and comparative cross-cultural literacy research. In particular I will discuss the introduction of vernacular literacy to the Diyari Australian Aboriginal language group last century, as this provides a relevant comparison with the Arrernte situation. In Chapter 3 I will describe the research method that I have used in order to provide a closely detailed account of the whole cultural context in which literacy practices have meaning (Street 1995). The historical development of Arrernte literacy will be outlined in Chapter 4, including a detailed description of the Hermannsburg case, as this provides a rare opportunity to analyse the consequences of the introduction of vernacular literacy to a previously non-literate group over one hundred years ago. In Chapter 5 I will present the findings on current Arrernte literacy practices gathered from interviews with Arrernte literates and non-Aboriginal educators and linguists. Chapter 6 will then draw together the conclusions and the implications of the findings will be discussed.
1 Arrernte refers to three Arandic dialects: Eastern, Central and Western Arrernte.

2 As the distinction between Central and Eastern Arrernte is for some speakers minimal (Henderson and Dobson 1994a:8) and the two are mutually intelligible, these two dialect names will be written as Central/Eastern Arrernte (Wilkins 1989:9). Wilkins (1989:14) has claimed that Western Arrernte should be recognised as a different language.

3 'Tywerrenga' is the modern orthographic representation of Spencer and Gillen's (1927) *churinga*, which became a reasonably well-known term in Australian anthropology. Strehlow (1947:xiii) notes that "tjurunga" refers not only to the sacred stone or wooden objects that figure in Arrernte religious life, but also to the "the ceremonies and chants and practically everything associated with the sacred ceremonies". As we see in Wenten Rubuntja's quote, *tywerrenga* may also refer to the country itself. This term also applies to traditional Dreamtime narratives' (Wilkins 1993:91).

4 A 'vernacular' is the everyday language of a speech community. Vernacular writing reflects the language, pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar of the speech community (Barton 1994; Street 1994; Tabouret-Keller et al. 1997). In this thesis the 'vernacular' refers to either Central, Eastern or Western Arrernte.

5 The orthographic variant *Arrernte* will be used throughout unless reference is being made to a text written in a specific orthography.

6 This was observed at the Arandic Spelling Workshop in Alice Springs in May 1998.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter I will briefly trace the development of English literacy and situate Arrernte literacy in a comparative continuum. I will then review the academic literature which provides the theoretical underpinning for the position I take: that literacy is embedded in and interconnected with cultural practices (Resnick 1990; Walton 1996; Barton and Hamilton 1998) that people acquire, engage in and transmit (Reder 1994) within a social context, and that these cultural practices are historically situated and patterned by social institutions and power relationships (Barton and Hamilton 1998). I will also review the development of vernacular literacy internationally, including cross-cultural contexts where vernacular literacy has been imposed on an ‘involuntary minority’ (Ogbu 1990) by a colonising dominant culture. In addition, the factors that may lead to successful vernacular literacy acquisition, retention and transmission will be outlined. Lastly, I will discuss the development of vernacular literacy in Australia.

2.1 The development of literacy in English

The implications of the short history of the development of Arrernte literacy may
be better understood when compared with the length of time it has taken for literacy in English to develop and become standardised.

In 597 AD a writing system in (Old) English was introduced for the purposes of Christian conversion (Strang 1970), and vernacular manuscripts began to be written mainly by clerics in scriptoria (Strang 1970:215) using non-standardised spelling systems (Crystal 1995). The Norman conquest in 1066 saw the 'gradual decay' of Anglo-Saxon literacy practices as scriptoria passed out of English control (Crystal 1995:30) but Anglo-Saxon literacy survived as it had 'a considerable written literature and a strong oral tradition' (Crystal 1995:31). The 12th and 13th centuries saw a shift to a reliance on written records (Barton 1994; Olson 1994). By the end of the 14th century literary languages were standardised regionally (Crystal 1995), literacy in (Middle) English then emerged in schools around 1348-9 (Strang 1970:219), and 'a class of secular professional scribes' evolved (Strang 1970:157). In 1476 Caxton introduced the printing press to England and this event initiated a gradual national standardisation in printed English. Nevertheless, 'even a generation after Caxton the English writing system remained in a highly inconsistent state' (Crystal 1995:66).

According to Eisenstein (1985:21-2) 'print not only encouraged the spread of literacy', it also 'changed the way written texts were handled by already literate
groups'. Printing replaced the oral aspects and 'memory arts' of scribal culture.

For many centuries prior to this, oral and literate practices were not seen as 'contrastive categories' (Olson 1994:63), as reading had been 'an oral, often collective activity' rather than a private silent activity (Graff 1994). Writing was 'thought of and used merely as a mnemonic device' (Olson 1994:61) and memory was conceived of as 'writing on the mind'. Literate churchmen composed sermons in the mind and 'texts were not scrutinized so much as used as a record against which to check memory' (Olson 1994:61-62). Thus until the 16th century, England has been described as neither a 'wholly literate' nor a 'wholly illiterate society' (Schofield 1968:312-13), as those who could read often read aloud to others and everyone participated in literate practices. The oral aspects of a developing literate culture are pertinent for the resemblance that they bear to the development of literacy in Arrernte.

By the 1750s it is claimed that more than half the English population was literate and by the end of the 18th century spelling, punctuation and grammar had evolved to close to what we have now (Barton 1994; Crystal 1995). Before the introduction of compulsory schooling in 1870, literacy teaching was done by family members, or in Sunday schools (Barton 1994:127) and by that year it is claimed that ninety percent of the English population was literate (Barton 1994:126).

Hence it took over one thousand years for written English to become standardised
and for literacy to become widespread, although claims of near-universal literacy are still questionable. It may therefore be possible to surmise that a period longer than merely a few generations may be needed to saturate the Arrernte community with Arrernte text (Robert Hoogenraad pers. comm.) and for the concomitant literacy skills to develop. Associated with this is the development of what Heath (1991) calls 'literate behaviors' and a 'sense of being literate', that is more than just individual literacy skills and practices, but also 'an essential harmony of core language behaviors and certain critical supporting social relations and cultural practices' (Heath 1991:6).

2.2 Literacy in social context

It has come to be understood in recent times that there is no longer a 'single accepted definition' (Halliday 1996:339) of literacy. Researchers are now demanding a paradigm which seeks to define literacy as more than an 'individual technical skill' (Street 1995) or a 'single unified competence' (Levine 1986) but rather as 'literacy events' (Heath 1982, 1983) or 'literacy practices' (Resnick 1990; Barton and Ivanic 1991; Barton 1994; Barton and Hamilton 1998) that operate within a social context (Cook-Gumperz 1986; Maybin 1994; Graddol, Maybin and Stierer 1994; Street 1993,1995).

Street (1995) has drawn a distinction between what he terms the 'autonomous'
model of literacy and the ‘ideological’ model. This distinction posits the autonomous model as a cognitive, technical skills approach to determining the nature of literacy, as opposed to an ideological model which cannot detach literacy from its inherently social and political functions. Critical social literacy theorists (Kalantzis and Cope 1987; Gee 1990) have advocated the explicit teaching of language and literacy with an awareness of the socially embedded nature of literacy. Barton (1994:32) has proposed an ‘ecological approach’ to literacy acquisition which ‘aims to understand how literacy is embedded in other human activity, its embeddedness in social life and in thought, and its position in history, language and learning’. This has been further refined (Barton and Hamilton 1998:7) into a theory which situates literacy practice as social practice:

- Literacy is best understood as a set of social practices; these can be inferred from events which are mediated by written texts.
- There are different literacies associated with different domains of life.
- Literacy practices are patterned by social institutions and power relationships, and some literacies become more dominant, visible and influential than others.
- Literacy practices are purposeful and embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices.
- Literacy is historically situated.
- Literacy practices change, and new ones are frequently acquired through processes of informal learning and sense making.

Other literacy research has resulted in a blurring of the distinction between oral and literate practices (Heath 1982, 1983, 1984, 1991; Tannen 1982) and a
lessening of the strict dichotomization, the so called ‘great divide’ (Gee 1994),
between ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ practices (Goody and Watt 1968; Ong 1982).
According to Walton (1996:85), this dichotomy is being replaced with an
‘alternative construction’ of both oral and literate practices ‘in variable ways in
variable contexts’. In addition, there have been calls for the recognition of the
possibility of multiple literacies (Levine 1986; Heath 1983; McKay; 1993; Street
1994, 1995) or multiliteracies (The New London Group 1997). In the Australian
context, Walton (1996:95) claims that literacy has been ‘defined narrowly to
include only written forms’ and it thus ‘denigrates Indigenous meaning-making
systems’. Throughout this thesis I use ‘literacy’ to mean alphabetic literacy,
although in Chapter 5 I will refer to other semiotic systems (Muecke 1992).

The above theories provide the underpinning for the following investigation of the
social context of Arrernte literacy practices. The term ‘literacy practice’ will be
used throughout the thesis in accordance with Resnick (1990), Barton (1994) and

2.2.1 Literacy acquisition and transmission

Research (Heath 1983, 1986; Leichter 1984; Moerk 1985; Wells 1985; Olson
1977, 1984; Auerbach 1989; Barton and Hamilton 1998) on the antecedents to
literacy acquisition has shed light on the relationship between family literacy
practices and the social transmission of the kind of literate orientation that leads to successful literacy acquisition and retention. In much of this literature the conclusions are that middle class homes are the most conducive to the development of the prerequisites for successful literacy acquisition. If this is so, then there may be implications for literacy acquisition in minority indigenous languages. This topic is touched on, however, it has not been possible to explore it in sufficient detail within the scope of this thesis.

Reder (1994:46-7) has suggested that literacy is acquired through a process of social transmission and he has opposed the traditional assumption that literacy development is a ‘learning rather than acquisition process’. His acquisitional approach to literacy development ‘holds that individuals acquire literacy through participating in various literacy practices’ and the quality of an individual’s ‘engagement’ in particular literacy practices can ‘hinder or facilitate literacy acquisition (Reder 1994:48-9). I hold with Reder’s position and will seek to show that concentrating primarily on the formal learning of Arrernte literacy is not sufficient if there is not also a meaningful acquisitional context.

2.3 Cross-cultural studies and vernacular literacy

The 1980s saw the emergence of ethnographic studies which describe cross-cultural literacy practices. These draw on research and theory from social
anthropology, sociolinguistics and critical ethnography. The beginnings of an ethnographic approach to literacy studies can be sourced to Hymes' (1974) sociolinguistic work on the ethnography of communication and Szwed's (1981:15) assertion that any definition of reading and writing must include 'social context and function'. Significant cross-cultural studies include Scribner and Cole's (1981) study of the cognitive consequences of schooled and non-schooled literacy found amongst the Vai in Liberia, as well as Street's (1984) study of Islamic literacy practices in Iran. Street distinguishes the learning of different literacies, including 'Qu'ranic' rote learning, in contexts other than the institution of schooling. Also of importance is a study of literacy development among the Aleut in Alaska (Reder and Green 1983; Reder and Wiklund 1993) which found that the role of literacy was tied to the social meanings of various practices.

Other research has analysed the success or otherwise of the introduction of vernacular literacy to previously non-literate indigenous cultures (Spolsky and Irvine 1982; McLaughlin 1989; Spolsky et al. 1983; Huebner 1987; Ferguson 1987; Kulick and Stroud 1993). Of particular relevance are studies in contexts that are similar to Central Australia as these can provide comparable examples of the conditions necessary for vernacular literacy to 'take hold' (Ferguson 1987).

In the United States, Spolsky and Irvine (1982) found that the 'Navajo people
may be maintaining the integrity of their traditional culture by not accepting literacy in their own language' (1982:79). In contrast McLaughlin (1989:286) found many 'indigenous' functions for Navajo literacy and it was this process of indigenization that 'underpinned the acceptance and use' of literacy. Huebner, in a comparative case study in the Pacific, suggests (1987:179) that it is the 'types of knowledge valued in preliterate society and types of literacy introduced' as well as the impact of changing social, political and economic conditions that influence the degree of success in the introduction of vernacular literacy. Kulick and Stroud's (1993) study of literacy practices in a village in Papua New Guinea found that it was not so much that vernacular literacy 'took hold', but that the villagers 'seized hold' of the aspects of literacy for which creative functions were found.

Various conditions necessary for the successful introduction of vernacular literacy have been posited by researchers. Spolsky et al. (1983) have based their theories on research done in Tonga, so the conditions do not compare with the Australian context. Their suggestions (Spolsky et al. 1983:466) include 'the establishment of native functions for literacy' and the support of vernacular literacy by an education system 'under local control'. The conditions suggested by Ferguson (1987), on the other hand, are more relevant as they do pertain to factors affecting a minority indigenous language encapsulated within a dominant culture context (Rigsby 1987). His theory is drawn from research on vernacular literacy in
Diyari, an Australian Aboriginal language. Ferguson (1987:232) has suggested that the successful introduction of vernacular literacy must:

1) build on an existing pattern in the host society
2) meet some apparent needs in the society
3) be closely connected with another complex that is being successfully introduced.

Furthermore, Ferguson (1987:234) has suggested that there should also be 'a culturally anchored mechanism of intergenerational transmission'.

2.3.1 Diyari literacy

Ferguson’s (1987) case study of vernacular literacy in Diyari is of interest because of the direct congruence with the Arrernte situation. Lutheran missionaries at Killalpaninna in northern South Australia (Figure 1) introduced vernacular literacy in the late 1800s for the purpose of converting the Diyari to Christianity. Ferguson (1987:224) claims that this is 'one of the relatively rare instances of some form of vernacular literacy taking hold in a hunting-gathering society'. He (1987:224) defines vernacular literacy as the 'ability to perform reading and writing behaviors in one's native language as a means of exchanging messages within a social group' and claims that literacy 'took hold' because it became 'part of the shared cultural resources of the society', and 'not merely a marginal phenomenon activated only by direct involvement with an impinging alien culture'.
According to Ferguson, the factors that account for the success of Diyari literacy include the interest and competence of individual missionaries in Diyari language and culture, the centrality of the regular literacy practices of the missionaries, and the values encoded in these practices. It must be stated however, that Ferguson did not witness actual adult Diyari literacy practices and he bases his argument for the success of Diyari literacy on the existence of written texts. These texts include not only material written by native speakers of the language comprising letters, postcards, and a series of Diyari legends published in 1937 (Austin 1986), but also other translated religious texts. Austin (1986:175) has also asserted that this material indicates that there may have been a ‘well-established tradition of vernacular literacy’². This is further corroborated in the biography of Ben Murray (Austin et.al.1988), a Diyari speaker, who learnt to read and write Diyari at Killalpaninna mission and retained it well into adulthood (Austin et.al. 1988:177).

Despite the evidence that Diyari literacy took hold and was retained by Diyari adult literates, I suggest that it is not possible to ascertain whether in fact Diyari literacy practices could have been acquired and transmitted over subsequent generations without the pedagogical influence of the missionaries. The last Diyari to learn vernacular literacy was born in 1891 and the Diyari population has now decreased substantially (Ferguson 1987:230). In comparison, the case of Arrernte literacy provides a more substantial opportunity to investigate diachronically and
synchronously the introduction of literacy in the vernacular to a previously non-
literate society and to determine whether it ‘took hold’. Most importantly we can
observe whether it has subsequently been acquired, retained and transmitted and
the contemporary factors relevant to this success or otherwise. These issues will
be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

2.4 Vernacular languages in education

The contemporary notion that it is important to learn to read and write in the
vernacular may be traced back to UNESCO’s 1953 axiom that the best medium
for teaching is the mother tongue or vernacular of the pupil (Bull 1964; Engle
1975). This axiom has been substantially criticised over recent years. Street
(1995:29) has stated that an ‘autonomous’ model of literacy acquisition became
dominant in UNESCO and other agencies concerned with literacy in minority
vernacular language contexts and that this model isolated literacy as an
‘independent variable’. Other criticisms have included the implied assumptions
firstly, that ‘the applications of the skills of literacy should be similar wherever
they are introduced’ (Carrington 1997:82), regardless of whether they are
transferred from a highly literate Western language context to a previously non-
literate indigenous language; and secondly, that a ‘nonliterate society will become
literate overnight if it is only provided with literacy training’ (Coulmas 1984:7).
Furthermore, Fishman (1989:467-468) has questioned the ‘functional sense’ in
beginning childhood literacy in a language if there is no adult literacy in that particular language. These criticisms also have relevance in the Arrernte context.

2.5 Vernacular literacy in Aboriginal bilingual education

The inception of vernacular literacy teaching in bilingual education programs in Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory in the mid to late 1970s followed UNESCO’s 1953 axiom (Harris 1995). It was also supported by bilingual theory which asserted that if proficiency in first language literacy was developed, this would lead to improved second language literacy competence (Cummins, 1978, 1979, 1981; Cummins and Swain 1986; Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins 1988). An early recommendation for ‘the most rapid and effective attainment of literacy in the vernacular’ in Aboriginal bilingual schools was to ‘flood the place with literature’ (O’Grady and Hale 1974:3). In most cases this also necessitated the development of a Roman alphabet-based orthography or the revision of the mission introduced writing system. These theories and recommendations were based on certain assumptions: a) that the two literacies would be of parallel socio-political status; b) that family literacy practices and the community literacy history would be equivalent in both languages; and c) that both languages share a similar ‘world view’ (Harris 1990a; Harris 1995; Carrington 1997).

However the discordance between the culture of literacy in English, and that of Aboriginal languages, has remained an irresolvable factor. Now, some twenty five years after the introduction of bilingual education the outcomes are,
according to some educators, that ‘Aboriginal languages are not being written very much’ (Harris 1990b:43) and that ‘very little in the way of vernacular literacy or literature’ (Christie 1994:44) has been produced. Harris (1990b:43) has stated that the reasons are in part due to concentrating too much on vernacular literacy for children rather than adults, and that ‘truly indigenous functions for written Aboriginal languages have not yet grown up’.

The ‘autonomous technical’ model of literacy teaching prevalent at the commencement of bilingual education has since been criticised for assuming that literacy skills could be transferred so easily and for suggesting that the social function of literacy would be the same in all cultural and linguistic contexts (Walton 1996). Gale (1997:35) has traced the development of writing in Aboriginal languages in the Northern Territory and South Australia and contends that ‘non-Aboriginal observers and researchers should be careful not to make assumptions about the emergence and functions of written vernacular in Aboriginal communities formulated on the basis of the Western experience of English literacy’.

Goddard (1990:27), in his study of emergent genres in Pitjantjatjara, has argued that ‘the potential of vernacular writing has been largely stifled by the priorities of outside decision-makers who focus on children, schooling and religion, rather
than on adults, community development and politics'. This latter observation is useful as it shifts the focus away from concentrating primarily on childhood literacy practices and places vernacular literacy in a broader social context.

2.6 Language maintenance

An additional rationale for vernacular literacy has been the perceived capacity for it to assist in Aboriginal language maintenance (McKay 1982; Commonwealth of Australia 1992; Gale 1992; Black 1993). McConvell (1986:118) has observed that literacy in the Kija language in the Kimberley has increased its status as a language, recorded material for future generations and is believed by some to be an instrument for language maintenance. There is however, debate in the literature regarding ‘whether vernacular literacy in fact promotes or destroys oral culture’ (Rhydwen 1993:156; see also Thieberger 1988:72; Fesl 1993). Other factors such as dispossession of land and enforced institutionalisation must also be assessed when determining the causes of the erosion of oral traditions (David Wilkins pers. comm.).

In his assessment of the impact of literacy on indigenous minority languages in the Pacific and Australia, Muhlhausler (1996:215) has claimed that ‘literacy in all cases has been an agent of social and linguistic transformation, whose linguistic outcome interestingly is not a strengthening of the local languages but the
acceleration of their decline'. Muhlhausler’s position has been criticised by Siegel (1997:224-5) who cites examples of successful vernacular literacy programs in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere in the Pacific initiated by indigenous people ‘which they believe will contribute to the survival of their languages’ (Siegel 1997:233). I would suggest that Muhlhausler has attributed more potency to the consequences of literacy than is warranted in the Central Australian context.

It has been posited (Thieberger 1990:337) that ‘calls for language maintenance may include claims about the role of language in identity’, that is identity at either an individual or a group level, with language constituting a ‘core value’ in most cultures (Smolicz 1984:39). The relationship between cultural identity and literacy has been explored by Ferdman (1990) and his assertion is that literacy is ‘culturally framed’. Thus a group’s ‘cultural identity involves a shared sense of the cultural features that help to define and to characterize the group’ and the ‘group attributes are important not just for their functional value but also as symbols’ (Ferdman 1990:190). Moreover, Ferdman (1990:195) argues that cultural symbols have an ‘affective significance for the individual’ and that the process of becoming literate will ‘tap into these feelings’. The most important factor to emerge here is that there is a belief that vernacular literacy contributes to language maintenance. Thus it is the attributed symbolic value of vernacular
literacy that is of significance.

2.7 Conclusion

The most pertinent themes related to this thesis have been foregrounded in the literature review. In conclusion, the overriding theoretical tenet that will underpin this thesis is that literacy must be seen not just as an ‘autonomous technical skill’ (Street 1995) or ‘unified competence’ (Levine 1986) that is learnt only in a formal learning environment. Literacy is also embedded in, and interconnected with, cultural practices (Resnick 1990; Walton 1996; Barton and Hamilton 1998) that people acquire, engage in and transmit (Reeder 1994) within a social context. In addition, these cultural practices are historically situated and patterned by social institutions and power relationships (Barton and Hamilton 1998). This social theory of literacy will be applied to the following investigation of the historical development of Arrernte literacy and the current context of vernacular literacy use.

1 See also (Edwards 1969; Goddard 1990; Gale 1992, 1997) for descriptions of the introduction of Pitjantja ceremony in the 1940s at the Presbyterian mission at Ernabella, in the north-west of South Australia.

2 A collection of letters in Diyari, written by native speakers to ex-missionary staff for a period extending up to the 1960s, has also been found in the Berndt archive at the University of Western Australia.

3 The Northern Territory Department of Education bilingual education programs are now in jeopardy with an announcement in December 1998 by the Northern Territory Government calling for the phasing out of bilingual education to make way for English as a Second Language programs only.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

An integral aspect of the research methodology used in this thesis has been my background in Aboriginal education. My interest in pursuing this case study derives in part from questions that have arisen since 1983 when I began work as an English literacy teacher at Strelley School in Western Australia and subsequently as a teacher linguist at Yipirinya School in Alice Springs. I have also worked in Aboriginal adult literacy at Warburton Community in Western Australia. I am currently co-ordinating an adult advanced English and vernacular literacy course for bilingual Aboriginal language speakers in Alice Springs. The methodology that I use builds on this experience.

3.1 Methodology

I have used a case study (Yin 1984; Merriam 1988) research paradigm. This case study is semi-ethnographic, that is, I sought to study the ‘culture/characteristics of a group in a real-world’ setting and to let ‘insights and generalisations emerge from close contact with the data’ and thus to construct a ‘rich descriptive and interpretive picture of the complexities’ (Nunan 1992:55). I collected evidence from ‘multiple sources’ (Yin 1984) including archival research, document collection, interviews, personal communication and informal observation in order to achieve triangulation. I constructed a set of ‘standardized open-ended
interview questions' (Patton 1990; Spradley 1979) which were used as a guide (Appendix B), although in many interviews incidental extra questions arose. The interviews were conducted in English, tape-recorded and then transcribed in full on computer. The interview transcripts, historical material, collected documents and diary notes on the site observations were read, analysed and sorted into 'categories' and 'thematic connections' (Seidman 1991).

I collected documents and archival material from: the Strehlow Research Centre, Central Australian Dictionaries Program (IAD) and Alice Springs Town Library. I made informal observation visits to Hermannsburg (Ntaria/Nhareye) community, school, heritage precinct and old cemetery. In Alice Springs (Mparntwe) I visited: Yipirinya School, IAD, Yirara College, Finke River Mission, Imparja Television, Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, Tangentyere Council, Centrelink, Old Hartley Street School, and various bookshops and art galleries. An initial visit was also made to Santa Teresa mission (Ltyentye Apurte) to ask permission to conduct interviews, however due to time commitments and the increasing breadth of the data collected, it has not been included as a specific site.

I interviewed the following non-Aboriginal participants: a) a linguist who taught Arrernte literacy with the School of Australian Linguistics; b) an Arrernte literacy teacher at Yirara College; c) an educator at Hermannsburg; d) an evangelist trainer, translator and ex-Superintendent from Hermannsburg; e) a linguist at
Central Australian Dictionaries Program; and, f) a linguist at Summer Institute of Linguistics, Santa Teresa.

I interviewed the following Arrernte speakers: a) five Eastern/Central Arrernte speakers in Alice Springs and Amoonguna; b) eight Western Arrernte speakers in Alice Springs; c) four Western Arrernte speakers in Hermannsburg; d) two Western Arrernte speakers at a Jay Creek family outstation. (See Appendix C). References will be made throughout the thesis to information in the appendices which summarises the interview data. In particular two ‘literacy profiles’ (Appendix E) will be referred to. These literacy histories are compilations from the interviews which contextualise the development of Arrernte literacy.

Personal communication was also made with: a) Helene Burns, daughter of Pastor F.W. Albrecht, Hermannsburg missionary and superintendent from 1926-1961, who grew up at Hermannsburg mission; b) Ilona Oppenheim, daughter of H.A. Heinrich, an early lay missionary teacher at Hermannsburg from 1917-1932; c) Gary Stoll, a previous superintendent at Hermannsburg for 26 years and a current evangelist trainer; d) David Roennfeldt, an educator at Hermannsburg; e) Jenny Green, Robert Hoogenraad, Gavan Breen and David Wilkins, linguists in Central Australia; f) Ely White, Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics, Batchelor College; and, g) Mandy Paul, a Central Australian historian.

3.1.1 Reliability, validity and limitations

Issues of reliability and validity (Yin 1984, Nunan 1992) in a study such as this
can be problematic. In order to address this I collaborated with a literate Arrernte speaker to ascertain the best way to approach the interviews and then followed up with discussions at the interpretation and writing up stage. The draft was also shown to members of Yipirinya School Council for approval upon completion. These factors notwithstanding the interpretations are from my own perspective.

More Western than Central/Eastern Arrernte speakers were interviewed; primarily because I interviewed literates at Hermannsburg but not at Santa Teresa. Not interviewing Eastern/Central Arrernte literates at Santa Teresa may have led to an unintentional skewing of the data. This is nevertheless the most balanced and representative sample that I could attain. In addition, I did not seek to gain a gender balance in the interviews. More women than men were interviewed and this may be because women take a more active role in the school domain and are more likely to continue with study beyond primary school. Although Western Arrernte male literates were interviewed, Eastern/Central Arrernte men were not; the central role of Western Arrennte men in the Lutheran church would account for this disparity. Further research could address the implications of this gender imbalance and the transmission of literacy practices within the family.

There were limitations that may have affected the reliability and validity of the study. Firstly, interviews were conducted in English as the Arrernte participants spoke English as a second language. To conduct the interviews in Arrernte would not have been feasible given that I was the primary researcher and my Arrernte
fluency is limited. This may have been a limitation as nuances that could have been expressed in the vernacular may have been missed. Secondly, literacy levels in Arrernte were not assessed, primarily because no valid scale exists. Instead participants were chosen because they defined themselves as literate in Arrernte. They were, however, asked to do an informal vernacular reading and writing activity and to rate their literacy skills in Arrernte and English using a ‘Likert-type scale’ (Hatch and Lazaraton 1991) ranging from very low to very high. Although the findings of this self-assessment (Appendices B and C) are interesting and warrant further investigation, this is not possible within the confines of this particular study.

Finally, it has not been possible to accurately determine the number of literate Arrernte speakers as no statistics are available. Consequently, in order to build up a picture of the literate community, interviewees were asked to estimate how many people they thought could read and write in Arrernte. The results (see Table 2 in Chapter 5) suggest that the number of adult Arrernte speakers who can read and write in the vernacular is small. In conclusion, it must also be stated that the topic was large for the scope of a Masters minor thesis. Accordingly I have had to leave out some important themes raised in the interviews. This leaves open the possibility of future further research.

3.2 Ethics and anonymity
An awareness of both the underlying power relationships between researcher and
informants, and the potential for bias in the interpretation of data, is essential in ethnographic educational research in applied linguistics in a post-colonial context (McLaren and Giarelli 1995; Street 1995). I commenced this research project mindful of the myriad of ethical and ideological considerations (Wilkins 1996) associated with positioning of myself as yet another non-Aboriginal academic observer. After informal discussions with Arrernte speaking associates I was given sufficient verbal assurance that the project and the methodology were appropriate. So after approval was granted by the University of Melbourne Ethics Committee I was also granted official permission by the Ntaria Council Chairman and the Yipirinya School Council to conduct interviews with adult Arrernte speakers at Hermannsburg and in the broader Yipirinya School community.

Furthermore, I decided not to observe literacy practices in people’s homes as this approach would have been intrusive. Instead interviewees were asked to describe their own practices (see Table 3 in Chapter 5). Anonymity may be an issue in research such as this so I have endeavoured to keep people’s identities as confidential as possible, although I am fully cognizant of the limitations in a small community. All Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants were contacted individually, with the majority known to me personally, and all signed official consent forms. It must also be stated that some Aboriginal participants expressed pride in the recognition of their contribution to the development of Arrernte literacy.
CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will integrate the results of the library and archival research with some data from the interviews with literate Arrernte speakers and non-Arrernte educators and linguists\(^1\). I will outline the socio-historical context for the development of Arrernte literacy whilst also alluding to political events that have shaped the history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations in Central Australia. Then I will describe vernacular literacy practices at the old Hermannsburg mission. This description will provide the background for exploring how Arrernte literacy was acquired and engaged in as a cultural practice after it was introduced by Lutheran missionaries to a formerly non-literate group. In the subsequent chapter I will discuss whether vernacular literacy has been successfully transmitted and retained after this initial introduction.

4.1 Institutionalisation and schooling

The history of non-Aboriginal intervention has determined the contemporary division of Arrernte people into three broad affiliations:

i) Central or Eastern Arrernte speakers, many affiliated with Santa Teresa mission;
ii) Western Arrernte speakers, many affiliated with the Hermannsburg region;

iii) 'town mob' living in Alice Springs who identify as Arrernte people but speak English as a first language.

Current literacy practices can be linked directly to socio-political events in the recent past beginning with the colonisation of Arrernte country in 1860 when the explorer John McDouall Stuart first passed through Central Australia. This event opened up the region for the erection of the Overland Telegraph Line in 1872 and subsequent European settlement. The town of Alice Springs (originally Stuart) was later established 3 kilometres to the south of the Telegraph Station. From the 1870s onwards, pastoralists moved into the Alice Springs region (Duncan 1967) precipitating a period of conflict between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Kimber 1991). In 1910 the South Australian *Northern Territory Aboriginals Act* was the first legislation to regulate specifically the lives of Aboriginal people in the Territory. In 1911 the Commonwealth Government took over the Territory and the Chief Protector assumed legal guardianship of Aboriginal children. The 1918 *Aboriginals Ordinance* led to the declaration of institutions for Aboriginal children. Regulations under this Ordinance, and the subsequent *Welfare Ordinance* required that, up to 1964, Aboriginal people hold passes or exemptions to enter Alice Springs, although from 1951 onwards Aboriginal people of mixed descent were exempt (Donovan 1988:271; Mandy Paul pers. comm.).
The arrival of Lutheran missionaries at Hermannsburg on the Finke River, 120 kilometres west of Alice Springs, in 1877 led to the introduction of the first instance of institutionalised schooling for (Western) Arrernte speakers. Meanwhile, after 1915 other Arrernte speakers, particularly those of 'mixed descent' (Donovan 1988), were housed, and educated in English, in the institution known as the 'Bungalow' (Austin 1993:61), initially in Alice Springs, then in Jay Creek. Finally in 1932 the Bungalow was relocated to the then empty Telegraph Station buildings in Alice Springs (Donovan 1988; Coughlan 1991; Austin 1993). For these children and many who were later sent away to institutions interstate, especially when the Bungalow institution closed during the Second World War (Austin 1993), the consequence was significant Arrernte language loss.

By the end of 1935 the Catholic church had established schooling primarily for Central/Eastern Arrernte people resident in Alice Springs (Wilkins 1989:22). In 1936 a school was erected at the Catholic Little Flower mission at the southern end of the Bungalow reserve (Coughlan 1991:48). The spoken vernacular remained strong for Central/Eastern Arrernte speakers in spite of the insistence 'that all children learn and speak English, and completely refrain from using their mother tongue' (Harmsen 1993:64). During the Second World War Alice Springs became a military centre. In 1942 Central/Eastern Arrernte speakers at the Little Flower mission were shifted to Arltunga, 110 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs (Donovan 1988). At school the main subjects were English reading,
writing, arithmetic and religious instruction; there were, however, ‘no books or notebooks - only slates, chalks and a blackboard’ (Harmsen 1993:117). The girls were housed in dormitories until they were abolished in 1968 and children were still not allowed to speak Arrernte either there or in school (Harmsen 1993:154).

_Ayenge arrwekele awemele atere nthurre irreke, tyemeyele ilerleng anwerne school-ke iirpetyeke Arltunga-werne alpetyeke...Ayenge ampe kweke 5 years old anerlenge dormitory-ke akwerneke ayenge lhwarrpe irreremele arneke. Ayenge ahentyanetyekenhe dormitory-le anetyeke._

I got very frightened at first when I heard my grandfather say that we had to go to Arltunga for school...I was a little child five years old when they put me in the dormitory. I felt sad and cried. I didn’t want to stay in the dormitory.

(Dobson 1986:15)

In 1953 the Catholic mission moved to its permanent site at _Lyentye Apurte_ (Santa Teresa) 85 kilometres south-east of Alice Springs where all literacy education continued in English (Wilkins 1989; Harmsen 1993) (see also Appendix E, Profile B).

In the meantime, in Alice Springs a school had been re-established at the Bungalow by the Native Affairs Branch in 1950 and some Arrernte people moved back to Alice Springs so that their children could attend (Mandy Paul pers. comm.).
I first went to school at old Bungalow, that's the old Telegraph Station now...I went to Kindergarten there, then to Grade 1 and 2. That's when we started to learn to read and write, we learnt in English...we'd speak Arrernte all the time [camping with family around the Bungalow] and when we go to school we got to speak English. (A18)

In 1960 all the Aboriginal residents of the Bungalow, as well as many people still camping around town, were forcibly removed to Amoonguna settlement (Coughlan 1991:63) about fourteen kilometres south-east of Alice Springs. Many different language groups were mixed up at Amoonguna and schooling was conducted in English regardless of the language backgrounds of the children. Amoonguna was not an entirely satisfactory place for people to live and many people drifted back to fringe camps around Alice Springs (Heppell and Wigley 1981:25).

The late 1960s saw a period of increased politicization amongst Aboriginal people across Australia as assimilationist welfare policies were rejected and replaced by aspirations for self-determination.

4.2 Self-determination and education

4.2.1 Santa Teresa

The election of a Labor government in 1972 changed the course of educational policy towards Aboriginal people. Shortly after the election it was announced that
‘Aboriginal primary school children living in distinctive Aboriginal communities will be taught in their own language’ (Dixon 1980:90). In 1975 the Northern Territory Department of Education (NTDE) went to Santa Teresa mission to introduce the concept of bilingual education. However the Department’s offer of bilingual education was refused and the community’s response was ‘We will look after the language/culture business ourselves. Your job is to teach us English and all we need to know for life in your world’ (Reynolds 1979). Nevertheless by 1978 the community had perceived a need for Arrernte literacy and began developing their own bilingual program within the Catholic education system (Appendix E, Profile B).

4.2.2 Alice Springs

The 1970s also saw the genesis of significant Aboriginal organisations in Alice Springs, including an Aboriginal health service (Congress), the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service and the Central Land Council (CLC). The 

Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act was passed in 1976. In late 1977 Tangentyere Council was formed to establish and provide facilities on town camps for Aboriginal people living in Alice Springs (Coughlan 1991).

4.2.3 Yipirinya School

Yipirinya School Council was formed in 1978 to provide independent bilingual schooling for town camp children in Alice Springs who were not attending the
mainstream schools; this included speakers of Central/Eastern and Western Arrernte (see Appendix E, Profiles A and B). Initially the school was opposed by the NTDE and official registration was not granted until 1983 (Harkins 1994:11). At first schooling was held in tin sheds on the town camps with lessons in English as no vernacular material was available. Then during the 1980s classes were conducted in temporary buildings at Tangentyere Council and a fully fledged bilingual program was developed based on a ‘two way schooling’ model.

The children must learn to read and write Aboriginal way, white man’s way. We tell the teachers they must teach two ways.

(Eli Rubuntja, School Council President in Allen 1984:12-13)

In the two way model initial literacy is introduced in the children’s first language and is maintained alongside English up to post-primary,

It’s important that they learn their own language because it’s their language. If they’ve got their own language they should learn and be taught in their own language so they can learn more quickly. It’s their first language. It makes it strong for themselves. They’ll be fluent to speak it and to write it.

(Ferber 1988: ABC Radio National transcript)

4.2.4 Adult education

The 1970s also saw the prioritisation of adult education with a focus on language and culture maintenance as the employment potential of literate Aboriginal language speakers increased. The Institute for Aboriginal Development (IAD)
was established in 1969. It has been the umbrella organisation for many of the initiatives in vernacular literacy including the Central Australian Dictionaries Program, and interpreting and translating in Aboriginal languages, including Arrernte, from the early 1980s (Robert Hoogenraad pers. comm.).

The School of Australian Linguistics (SAL) was established in Darwin in 1974 with the aim of training ‘well-motivated native speakers of Australian languages in the principles of linguistics and of bilingual curriculum development so that they could analyse their own language, write orthographies and grammars, and devise suitable teaching materials.’ (Dixon 1980:93). Courses began in Central Australia in 1981, although one student had commenced at Batchelor in 1979. Appendix E, Profile B traces the story of a woman who is still recognised as one of the most literate Arrernte speakers. Students generally came with only a basic primary school education in English and were often the only ones in their family with literacy skills (Appendix C). The courses were initially conducted at Yipirinya School as ‘Yipirinya was then in its early stages and was trying to get bilingual programmes in the local languages established’ (Breen 1989:1).

*I did that training and I started working at Yipirinya then, and that’s when IAD were setting up adult education, like setting up interpreting training and literacy courses in languages. That’s when I really started to read and write my language. That made me feel great you know, proud, proud to read and write my own language.* (A1)
Though it is shown in Table 1 that enrolment numbers at SAL were high, only eight Arrernte students graduated with SAL certificates\(^2\) between 1981 and 1985 (\textit{Ngali} 1985). Although more graduated overall, these were the only available statistics. From my observations, the majority of adults now literate in Arrernte (excluding those who learnt ‘Aranda’ at Hermannsburg) were taught at SAL during the 1980s and early 1990s. The question to be explored in Chapter 5 is whether vernacular literacy skills learnt at this time have in fact been retained by the nearly two hundred adults who started learning at SAL.

Table 1 Enrolments in SAL courses, 1981-1991.
(Breen: SAL Reports)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Western Arrernte</th>
<th>Central/Eastern Arrernte</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Aboriginal Languages Fornight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal Languages Fornight</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Yipirinya School Course</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>CAAMA/Catholic H.S. Course</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 1/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>112</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Hermannsburg Mission

The final section of this chapter will describe the development of Aranda literacy practices at Hermannsburg mission. After its establishment in 1877, the Hermannsburg Lutheran mission provided refuge from the ‘violence of the frontier’ (Harris 1990) for Western Arrernte speakers. However by 1891 the last of the original missionaries had left and the mission fell into decline until it was taken over by Carl Strehlow from 1894 till his death in 1922. During this time religious instruction in the vernacular was promoted (Radford 1992:80) with Strehlow producing prodigious numbers of religious texts in Arrernte for teaching in the school and Sunday school, as well as for training adult male evangelists.

Friedrich. W. Albrecht took over as mission superintendent from 1926 until 1961 (David Roennfeldt, pers. comm.). The 1920s heralded a change in direction for the mission with ‘an acceptance that further linguistic work would be secondary to evangelism and the extension of industrial training’ (Radford 1992:83), although reading in Arrernte was still taught in the school and in training evangelists. In 1953 the school moved from the one room schoolhouse in the old mission precinct and is now situated within the community.

During the 1960s the mission still prioritised education but always working ‘hand in hand with the pastoral ministry of the Mission’ (Leske 1977:94). The school remained an independent church school even though it followed the curriculum
set by the Department of Welfare for Aboriginal schools (Leske 1977). Arrernte literacy teaching gradually faded out through the period 1960 to 1970 (David Roennfeldt pers. comm.). In 1973 a government advisory group (Watts, McGrath and Tandy 1973) recommended Hermannsburg school as one of the inaugural bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory. This never eventuated however, as at this time schooling was English only and was oriented toward schools for family groups on the new outstations. Also the new community and mission philosophy had determined that families should be responsible for teaching Arrernte language and culture (David Roennfeldt pers. comm.). In the 1970s, opposition to the mission-run schools grew. By 1985 the transition to an English-only NTDE school had commenced with the last mission teachers leaving the outstation schools in December 1989 (David Roennfeldt, pers. comm.). In 1982 the Finke River Mission (FRM) management of Hermannsburg relinquished control to the Western Arrernte traditional owners and the Ntaria Council took over responsibility for running Hermannsburg town community and five Land Trusts (Mulvaney 1989).

4.4 Literacy practices at Hermannsburg mission

In this final section archival material and the memories of people who were at Hermannsburg mission are used to describe the introduction of vernacular literacy practices and their function and meaning in the life of the community.
4.4.1 Lutheran Christianity and the role of 'text'

The pedagogical practices of the early Lutheran missionaries in Australia can be situated in a continuum of Lutheran Christian instruction, originating in the 16th century (Strauss 1978), where text has played a pivotal role. The Christian society envisaged by early Lutheran reformers depended upon education as one of the primary forces of indoctrination with little differentiation between the objectives of religious education and the aims of formal schooling (Strauss 1978:176). In pre-Reformation times, a textual community would be formed with the reader giving a 'somewhat idiosyncratic' interpretation of the religious text for a group of believers (Olson 1994:59). By contrast in the Lutheran tradition the 'historical or literal meaning' was to be found in the text if read carefully and was not 'to be dependent upon church dogma' (Olson 1994:153). Lutheran pedagogy included the use of ABC primers, moving from oral repetition of letters, syllables and words, to the memorization of tracts of catechism and the singing of hymns (Strauss 1978). Strauss states that the Reformers recognised the 'mnemonic power' (Strauss 1978:232) of religious texts set to music and relied on the intergenerational transmission of oral traditions to impart the Christian message.

Strauss (1978:189) also remarks that 'the rote memorization encouraged by this procedure seems to have left many youngsters less than fluently literate'. Graff (1994:159) states that 'reading literacy' was required under law by the Lutheran Church from the 17th Century onwards, resulting in claims of 'remarkably high
levels of literacy' without any associated development of a 'functional or practical employment of literacy'. In the wake of the Reformation in 19th century Sweden, claims of near universal levels of literacy were made, however 'systematic evidence' indicates that a 'great many persons who had attained high levels of oral reading skill did not have comparable ability in comprehension of what they read' [emphasis in original] (Graff 1994:161).

There are distinct similarities between these older Lutheran pedagogical traditions and those practised at Killalpaninna and Hermannsburg missions in Australia. At the end of last century it was the official policy of the Lutheran Mission Institute in Germany for missionaries to devise a vernacular writing system and translate Christian texts into the previously unwritten vernacular 'to facilitate a Christian education' (Stevens 1994:202). This was enacted initially in Diyari at the Lutheran mission at Killalpaninna from 1866 to 1915, and subsequently amongst the Western Arrernte. Strehlow, who had been assisting with the translation of the New Testament into Diyari, and a school teacher H. Hillier witnessed these practices at Killalpaninna (Stevens 1994) and both were later transferred to the new mission at Hermannsburg.

4.4.2 School literacy practices

Schooling commenced at Hermannsburg in 1879 with a separate schoolhouse constructed by 1896 (Figure 2). Daily schooling was organised 'partly to educate
and partly to segregate the children from the influence of the adults’ (Harris 1990:397). Early regular school attendance has been attributed to the harsh disciplining of the children (Harris 1990:391). It has been surmised (Schmiechen 1971:76) that it was the provision of rations that enticed children to attend school rather than the ‘desire to learn’. At this time lessons were held in the morning before handing out the rations and ‘many parents where [sic] quite willing to leave their children in the school when food was scarce only to reclaim them during the good seasons’. Prior to the departure of the first missionaries in 1891, the teachers used Bible texts which had been translated by the missionaries and these,

were repeated word for word, first individually, and then as a class at the end of the lesson...At the end of 1888, the program at the school comprised the following: Bible history, reading, writing, geography, and singing.

(Leske 1977:16)

Schooling recommenced after Strehlow’s arrival in 1894. He implemented morning classes for the children under the tuition of the lay missionary teacher H. Hillier, who was employed from 1906 to 1911. Strehlow’s duties included teaching in the school, Sunday school and baptismal classes, where he was assisted by Hillier (Henson 1992:213-15). According to Hillier’s record, Arrernte reading and writing were integral to the school program:
The first class reads portions of the New Testament every day...and then have English and Aranda translation. Every day new English words are learned (with their Aranda equivalents), and all mistakes in spelling written out and re-learned and heard.

(Leske 1977:29)

H. A. Heinrich, a lay missionary teacher, taught at Hermannsburg from 1917 to 1932. At this time the children were classed in six grades (Heinrich 1928a) and shared the one small schoolhouse (Figure 2). Again it has been suggested (NA4) that corporal punishment accounted for regular school attendance. An older Western Arrernte man remembered those schooldays (Appendix E, Profile A):

Reading and writing Arrernte too, got'em lessons too in our language, that's why learning. Reading in Arrernte with old what'sername Heinrich, long time ago, that's a long time ago...Oh yes, I know him, properly we bin learn. When he got whistle, one whistle, if two, we get this one [indicates a cane hitting his hand]...you could hear, you got to hear'em, only one whistle...They bin run, mhm...Reading book Arrernte, mmm, some in Arrernte too eh! That Arrernte Bible's mostly language, Ntaria language, Hermannsburg language. (A17)

Heinrich described a typical day,

Their lessons begin with the singing of several verses of an Aranda hymn and a short prayer which they all recite together. The first lesson every day is religious instruction which is given in Aranda. One hour each day is devoted to Aranda lessons, the other the English language. 5 Aranda and 11 English subjects are taught...Three hours of school are kept every day...Bible History is taught largely by the use of Bible Pictures...The Old
and New Testaments are dealt with in rotation; one year the Old and the following year the New. Verses printed in “italics” the grown-up (bigger ones) learn off by heart...Luther’s Catechism they learn round their campfire at night and the following day recite same in school.

(Heinrich 1928a:342)

A school primer (Figure 3) was written by Strehlow and published in 1928. It consists of single letters, syllables, words, and lastly simple texts. The later chapters are divided into subjects: firstly a chapter on Arrernte bush foods, followed by short Bible stories, catechism and hymns. The methodology for teaching literacy using this primer concentrated on repetition, rote learning and memorisation with some blackboard and slate-work as well (Heinrich 1928a).

The school program changed little over the years according to the Albrecht children’s governess Ruth Pech,

I took over the running of the Hermannsburg School of 60 pupils...School conditions were primitive, being just one room with seven long desks in a row. There was a plentiful supply of slates and slate pencils for the students to use...They nearly all learned to read and write in Aranda and English...Formal schooling was only three hours in the morning.

(Fiebig 1996:83)

The centrality of schooling in Arrernte during the old mission days is expressed in the following quote, everybody read Arrernte because we all went to school in Arrernte (A11). Once formal Arrernte literacy teaching ceased, literacy acquisition depended more upon engagement with Christian cultural practices,
Lakenhe [like that]...from that old people they taught them reading and writing, but after that...a long time yeah, but other, like maybe half the mob did reading and writing in Arrernte. But before us nothing you know, it just stopped. Then we just learned from, like from singing.

(A8)

4.4.3 Christian literacy practices

Strehlow worked in vain to destroy the traditional religious practices of the Arrernte, he ‘forbade...ceremonies in the vicinity of the Mission’ (Jones 1992:120) and disregarded the significance of tywerrenge,

Aware of their potency, Carl Strehlow confiscated tjurunga when the opportunity arose and sold them to German museums using the money in a symmetrical substitution to purchase altar cloths and vestments for the Mission church.

(Jones 1992:120)

However, as was pointed out in Chapter 1, traditional spiritual beliefs have remained strong for the Western Arrernte, and for many people a parallel integration with a Christian belief system has been realised⁴. As Christian cultural practices were assimilated into the life of the community, opportunities to observe literacy practices and engage with translated Christian texts increased. In addition to Sunday morning services where,

besides catechisting [sic] the children as well as the grown ups in the morning sermon a repetition of Luther’s Katechism [sic], we have conjointly discussed and read the Epistles of St. Luke and St. John⁵.
Heinrich has also described how on ‘Sunday afternoons the children all have to attend Sunday School which the missionary and myself take alternately, he in Aranda and I in English’ (Heinrich 1928b:355).

Christian practices using translated Arrernte texts continued during Albrecht’s time (Fiebig 1996). Evangelists and pastors were trained to run services in outlying communities as well as in Alice Springs and they were ‘given every opportunity to present bible stories to the children in their Aranda tongue’ (Leske 1977:94). Helene Burns (pers. comm.) remembers older men coming to her father’s study to learn to read and write Arrernte so that they could teach in Sunday school. Christian rituals were absorbed into community life especially on the Christmas days, we used to read and talk in the Christmas program (A11) when Albrecht would type out and duplicate ‘a script of readings so all could take part’ (Henson 1992:212). Also at Christian funerals he would ‘read the burial service, giving a short address based on a chapter of the Bible in Aranda’ (Fiebig 1996:42), and gravestones were inscribed with Arrernte wording (Figure 6).

Text remained a central aspect of the proselytising process as exemplified in the following statement by Albrecht in celebration of T.G.H. Strehlow’s 6 1944 revised translation of the New Testament:
...if we and our ancestors have received abundant blessings through the Scripture, we may expect nothing less for our Aborigines. Much of our hope for their future centres around this Book.

(Henson 1992:200)

According to Henson (1992:186), T.G.H. Strehlow had ‘wanted to produce a translation that would incorporate and preserve the highest of Aranda tradition and language’. The New Testament was not distributed to the community until after 1956 (Leske 1977) and a decline in Arrerrete literacy proficiency has been attributed to the difficulty of T.G.H. Strehlow’s translation (NA4). The Lutherans also capitalised on the traditional use of song. The preface to the *Arrarnta Hymnal* (FRM Board 1988:vii) overtly states that the Lutheran missionaries ‘soon found out that singing played an important part in the religious observances of the Aranda’ and ‘due to their instinctive love of music it was not difficult for the Arandas to acquire a sense of harmony and an appreciation of Christian hymnody’ (Figure 7). Helene Burns (pers. comm.) also recalls people reading the hymn book in church and valuing it.

Christian cultural activities provided a context outside of formal schooling where learning to read became synonymous with repeating and memorising the few translated Christian texts that existed. This is particularly evident in people’s memories of regular baptism or confirmation classes,

*From 5 we learned to sing, then I was learning for baptism...Pastor gave us this little book, catechism book, to read ourselves and*
learn...We had to try and work it out, but we had someone to teach us a little bit, our assistant teacher, Aboriginal, he was an evangelist...He was teaching all the children then, we all learned to read Arrernte just from singing and catechism. (A8) (Figure 8)

These classes were taught every afternoon after school (A12) and also at baptism services where young people would have to stand up and read their learnt texts out loud (A12).

4.4.4 Everyday literacy practices

Scherer’s (1988) description of a typical day at Hermannsburg reveals few literacy practices in Arrernte, despite one hundred and eleven years of exposure to the literacy practices of the missionaries. Helene Burns (pers. comm.) remembers little out of school writing, only stories written in the sand, although she believes that people thought that the written word was important even though they didn’t spontaneously write non-religious texts. An older Western Arrernte woman remembers her father teaching her to read by writing on the ground, sometimes we run out of paper, we used to have paper only in the school (A10). It is also known that Albert Namatjira was taught to read and write in Arrernte as a child (Burn and Stephen 1992:257). An arts monograph (Mountford 1944) reproduced an example of his handwriting in Arrernte (Figure 9) possibly to reinforce the ‘image of the Aborigine as skilled and literate’ (Burn and Stephen 1992:263).
4.4.5 Letters

Letters and postcards written by vernacular writers in other contexts have been invaluable as items for linguistic (Austin 1986; Besnier 1993) or historical analysis (Cane and Gunson 1986). During the research period, a collection of letters written in Arrernte was found which confirms that people at Hermannsburg mission had developed sufficient competence to participate effectively in this literacy practice, a factor comparable with the Diyari at Killalpaninna (Austin 1986; Ferguson 1987). These include letters written to the Heinrichs after their departure from Hermannsburg in 1932 as well as correspondence to both Carl and T.G.H. Strehlow dating from 1903 to 1962. Interviewees remembered vernacular letter-writing practices at Hermannsburg. One woman talked of writing to our [missionary] friends in Adelaide...cause they understand (A10). Likewise Helene Burns (pers. comm.) recalls that her father often wrote to people in Arrernte after he had retired and had replies from them.

Most of the letters that were found are at least one page in length with a number between two and three pages long, and all appear to have been composed and handwritten by Arrernte writers. Some letters (Appendix D) are of interest because of references to literacy practices in the mission. The contents of the letters are personal and friendly, with references to the health and well-being of friends or family, work, shared experiences and often requests for difficult-to-obtain items. The earlier letters contain an evident lack of punctuation and
paragraph marking and some English words are used: please, Englisch [sic] and
German and Aranta, as well as other words for which there is no direct Arrernte
equivalent: donkey, Christmas, cabbages, March, gramafona. Also of interest is
an example of what may be German and Arrernte code-mixing in the word
‘dankilama’ for thank you (danke – German: thank you, ile+me – Arrernte:
making/‘causative’ + present tense). Finally, another observation is that the letter-
writing conventions for farewelling change over time. For example a letter
written in 1911 closely resembles oral discourse:

Nana ankama unkwanguna tjina unkwanga tara
Your two friends are saying this to you
(Appendix D, Letter B)

In contrast in a letter that was written in 1962 (Appendix D, Letter D), the
translated farewell is more consistent with a contemporary written convention: ‘I
am your very good friend”. In this letter the Arrernte is less legible.

Unfortunately the ephemeral nature of letter writing means that verification of
correspondence between Arrernte speakers is based only on oral accounts. An
older Western Arrernte man recalls,

..mother, oh proper ‘Aranda’ she could read. When I was at Tempe
Downs or Areyonga, she always send’em letter to me. Letter! My mother!
[laughter] I was thinking! Alright!...In ‘Aranda’ language, ‘Aranda’...I
always send letters out from mother, make me happy, eh? Mum long
way, eh? But I was bin send’em letters. Aah, talk to me now eh [the letter
talked to him], ask me “How are you?”. From letter! Aah!  (A17)
The oral communicative function of the letter is apparent in this quote.
Letter-writing between Arrernte and non-Aboriginal correspondents thus provides tangible evidence of vernacular literacy having 'taken hold' outside of formal schooling and Christian cultural contexts at Hermannsburg.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the development of the social context of literacy in Central/Eastern and Western Arrernte from an historical perspective.

Firstly I showed that vernacular literacy has been on the periphery of the Central/Eastern Arrernte community for only around twenty-five years, that is merely for one or two generations and not in all families. During that time a standardised written language has been evolving and few written resources have been available. In addition bilingual education programs and adult vernacular literacy classes have been the primary sites for the introduction of literacy practices. The implications of the limited saturation of vernacular writing in the community will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Secondly, I described Hermannsburg mission as a case study for examining the introduction of vernacular literacy to a previously non-literate group. I have sought to show that vernacular literacy was accepted by the Hermannsburg community. Evidence for vernacular literacy successfully 'taking hold' can be found in the letters written by Arrernte literates.
I will discuss the factors related to this success by referring to the conditions
posed by Ferguson (1987) for the successful introduction of vernacular literacy
described in Chapter 2.

Firstly in the Hermannsburg case it can be claimed that literacy became part of the
'shared cultural resources of the society' (187:224) through the valued association
with Christian cultural practices, even though the texts were primarily written by
speakers of Arrernte as a second language. Hence literacy was 'closely connected
with another complex' (1987:232), that is the introduction of Lutheran
Christianity. Secondly, to a certain extent the traditional Lutheran methodology
of repetition, rote learning and memorisation did build on an 'existing pattern'
(Ferguson 1987:232) of repetition and memorisation in traditional Aboriginal
ceremonial life. Nevertheless, although the use of repetition and memorisation
appears to parallel traditional Arrernte sacred and profane learning styles (Hardy
1992:143), it also strongly resonates centuries of Lutheran pedagogical practice
which emphasised oral reading ability without equal attention to reading
comprehension or the provision of non-Christian functions for adult literacy
(Graff 1994). Thirdly, analogous to the situation at Killalpaninna, the interest of
missionary linguists in Arrernte language and culture, and the modelling of
literacy practices, may have been factors in the success of Arrernte literacy at that
time.
However it cannot be concluded that the introduction of vernacular literacy was successful because it met some ‘apparent need’ for literacy in the society (Ferguson 1987:232) as it was initially imposed on an ‘involuntary’ indigenous minority (Ogbu 1990) seeking refuge in the mission. Nor is there is any evidence of the ‘seizing hold’ of literacy for other ‘creative’ (Kulick and Stroud 1993) or ‘native’ (Spolsky et al. 1983) functions.

Finally, whether this initial successful introduction of vernacular literacy has resulted in the ongoing acquisition and retention of vernacular literacy practices through a ‘culturally anchored mechanism of intergenerational transmission’ (Ferguson 1987:232) has yet to be seen and will be discussed in Chapter 5.
Figure 2.1  Old school house, Hermannsburg mission (1998)

Figure 2.2  Inside old school house in the 1920s
(Collection of Ilona Oppenheim)
Figure 3 Aranda school primer (1928)

Chapter 4
Ipepa sekonda.

I. Urbutja testamenta inkulubera.

§ 1. Gen. 1

Tjentisa Aljirala akira, ariira ahimata. Ariira urumijia naka, inkarkara gua, ipitsa talotala naka, wamujia Aljirala kwaja katungala iihimata.


§ 2. Gen. 2


Figure 5  Inside old Hermannsburg mission church (1998)
Figure 6  Gravestones, old Hermannsburg mission cemetery (1998)
Figure 7  Aranda Lutheran Hymnal

Chapter 4

67
ARANDA-ENGLISH CATECHISM
Luther's Small Catechism with Explanations

edited by
Paul G.E. Albrecht

Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide

Whoever loves his father or mother more than me is not fit to be my disciple; whoever loves his sea or daughter more than me is not fit to be my disciple. 
Matt. 10:37

Do not love the world or anything that belongs to the world. If you love the world, you do not love the Father. 
1 John 2:15

What human nature does is quite plain. It shows itself in immoral, filthy, and indecent actions; in worship of idols and witchcraft. People become enemies and they fight; they become jealous, angry, and ambitious. They separate into parties and groups; they are envious, get drunk, have orgies, and do other things like these. I warn you now as I have before: those who do these things will not possess the Kingdom of God. 
Gal. 5:19-21

4. In this commandment, what does God tell us to do?
He tells us to put him first in our life. This means:
# we should trust him more than anything else.
# we should fear him more than anything else.
# we should love him more than anything else.
# we should obey him more than anything else.

4. As in this commandment, what does God tell us to do?
He tells us to put him first in our life. This means:
# we should trust him more than anything else.
# we should fear him more than anything else.
# we should love him more than anything else.
# we should obey him more than anything else.

Figure 8  Aranda-English Catechism

Chapter 4
Dedication

*Mr J. K. Moir
Aa ngana
Dankilama Alname
Albert Namatjira.*

*Mr. J. K. Moir,
I you thank sincerely.
Albert Namatjira.*

Figure 9 Albert Namatjira’s handwriting (Mountford 1944)
Quotes from interview transcripts will be written in italics followed by the interview code number in brackets. (A) = Aboriginal interviewee, (NA) = Non-Aboriginal interviewee.

SAL Certificates were: Certificate in Literacy Attainment; Certificate in Transcription; Certificate in Literacy Work; Certificate in Translating/Interpreting (Ngali 1985).

This was also the policy of the Moravian missionaries, or 'United Brethren', who established missions in many countries around the world in the 18th and 19th centuries, including Australian missions in Victoria, Queensland and Kopperamana (Coopers Creek) near Killalpaninna in South Australia. The Moravians originate from the Reformist movement of Jan Hus in Bohemia and Moravia, now the Czech Republic. In the late 15th century the Moravians were the first to print the Bible in their own vernacular rather than Latin (Disbrey 1997).

See also a discussion on the relation between Arrernte Law and Catholic Law in Harmsen 1994; Wilkins 1994; Harmsen 1995; Wilkins 1995.

From a letter sent by Heinrich to the Lutheran Missionary Committee in January 1926. This letter is in the personal collection of Ilona Oppenheim.

T.G.H. Strehlow is the son of Carl Strehlow and known for his linguistic ability in Arrernte (Henson 1992).


Historical examples of letter-writing in Aboriginal languages include Diyari letters (Austin 1986; Cane and Gunson 1986; Ferguson 1987; Stevens 1994). A collection of letters written in Diyari has also been found in the Berndt archive at the University of Western Australia. Further another set of postcards is in existence including correspondence between Pastor Riedel and his wife in Diyari. Disbrey (1997:34) refers to letter-writing practices in Victoria, although these were written by non-Aboriginal writers. Goddard (1990) refers to letter-writing practices in Pijantjatjara.

Ilona Oppenheim has six letters in her collection and these have been translated into English by David Roennfeldt.

Nine letters are in the archives at the Strehlow Research Centre including two postcards in Arrernte from Carl Strehlow to his wife Frieda. These have been translated into English by Gary Stoll.
CHAPTER 5

CURRENT ARRERNTÉ LITERACY PRACTICES

5.0 Introduction

Although many important themes emerged from the interviews on contemporary Arrernte literacy practices with Arrernte literates and non-Aboriginal educators and linguists, only the most salient of these have been distilled for discussion. In this chapter I will describe the contemporary context. I will then focus on two major themes, firstly the interface between Arrernte literacy and the broader community, and secondly the social transmission of oral and literate practices.

5.1 The contemporary context

In Santa Teresa, a Catholic education bilingual program, accredited by the NTDE, has continued up to this day. The program follows a ‘step model’ where literacy is introduced in Arrernte in the early years, followed by the transition to English in the later years. Eastern Arrernte written resources have been produced for use in the school. In Hermannsburg, the old mission buildings have become a heritage precinct and tourist destination. The school is not bilingual, although a skeletal literature production centre does produce some materials in the FRM orthography. The FRM continues to give Arrernte literacy training and support to Aboriginal evangelists and pastors who conduct church services and Sunday
school programs, as well as confirmation classes (Leske 1977). It also manages Yirara College, an Aboriginal secondary boarding school on the outskirts of Alice Springs, where literacy classes are conducted using Christian texts in the vernacular (NA2).

In Alice Springs SAL has become the Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics (CALL) at Batchelor College (Commonwealth of Australia 1992). Vernacular literacy is taught as a component of CALL courses, although few Arrernte speakers have participated recently (Ely White, pers. comm.). Yipirinya School continues as an independent Aboriginal controlled school and has been in permanent school buildings for ten years. It has produced a collection of vernacular literacy texts across a range of genres (many based on English texts), as well as the Yeperenye Yeye newsletter. Vernacular literacy in Central and Western Arrernte is still taught at Yipirinya, mainly by teachers who learnt literacy through SAL in the 1980s. Literacy in Central/Eastern Arrernte has also been taught at the Alice Springs Catholic High School, with the trialling of an Australian Indigenous Languages Framework senior secondary Arrernte curriculum for first language speakers in 1994. A recent initiative in the Arrernte schools has been the Intelyape-lyape Akaltye (Butterfly learning) early childhood Arrernte curriculum development project’ (Dobson, Hartman and Riley 1997) which culminated in the development of a NTDE accredited curriculum (Hartman and Henderson 1994; Morrish and Dobson 1996). IAD remains an Aboriginal-
controlled language resource and adult education centre. It continues to teach Arrernte language classes. Central/Eastern Arrernte has been taught to second language learners in Alice Springs schools by IAD teachers since 1982. A junior secondary Arrernte as a second language curriculum (Kral, Dobson and Jackson, 1999) was accredited by the NTDE in 1998. IAD also manages the Aboriginal Translating and Interpreting Service and has recently introduced an ‘advanced’ English and vernacular literacy course, which incorporates Central/Eastern and Western Arrernte. IAD Press has also published a small number of books that contain Arrernte text.

As discussed in Chapter 2, although there are around 1,500 to 2000 speakers of Central/Eastern Arrernte and approximately 2000 speakers of Western Arrernte, it has not been possible to determine accurately the number of adults who are literate in the vernacular. I interviewed twenty-one Central/Eastern and Western Arrernte speakers who self-define as literate. From my experience the level of competence generally ranges from a primary to lower secondary school literacy standard. Nevertheless it should be pointed out here that the self-rating shown in Appendix C indicates that Arrernte speakers who completed an SAL course generally gave themselves a very high rating in vernacular literacy competence. This is because they are the most competent in comparison with other speakers and their reading and writing sets the standard. This point and the question of what constitutes competence warrant further study in the future.
Table 2 shows the number of adults estimated by interviewees to have a perceived ability to read or write in Arrernte. As can be seen the estimates differ widely.

The findings suggest that the higher estimates are more likely to be of the general type who could most reasonably be expected to be literate. That is, either older Western Arrernte speakers who most likely learnt at Hermannsburg mission, or the number of people who enrolled in SAL courses in the 1980s and early 1990s (i.e. 190 shown in Table 1), whereas the lower estimates may be a listing of actual people known to be literate. This number may correlate with some of the eight (or more) SAL graduates noted in Chapter 4.

Table 2 Estimated number of adults literate in Arrernte

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Estimated number</th>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Estimated number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/E Arrernte</td>
<td>200 or more</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>W. Arrernte</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptions of literacy | Estimated number | W. Arrernte | 50 |
| Non-Abor’l > C/E Arr. | 6-10 | W. Arrernte | 60 |
| Non-Abor’l > C/E Arr. | 15 | W. Arrernte | 60 |
| Non-Abor’l > C/E Arr. | 20-30 | W. Arrernte | 10 |
| Non-Abor’l > W. Arr. | 20 | W. Arrernte | Many |
| Non-Abor’l > W. Arr. | Older church-goers | W. Arrernte | Many |

5.1.1 The visual literacy environment

The ‘visual literacy environment’ (Barton and Hamilton 1998:40) gives a ‘visual impression’ of a written language and provides ‘traces of literacy practices’. I
observed the visual literacy environment in Hermannsburg and Alice Springs and gained the following impressions. In Hermannsburg the few public representations of written Arrernte display little of the ongoing vibrancy of oral Arrernte. *We haven't got signs in Arrernte in the office or wherever because we got no Arrernte signs, only English* (A10). The only obvious contemporary public sign is a 'no grog' warning encountered when entering the Hermannsburg land trusts, whereas within the heritage precinct old ‘Aranda’, English and German text can be found (on the chapel walls and in the cemetery) blending in with the modern English and German signage for tourists. This example of intertextuality highlights the prominence of written ‘Aranda’ in the old mission days (Figure 10). Some Arrernte text is also visible in the school especially in small books, songbooks, calendars, wordlists, and a newsletter.

In contrast, the visual literacy environment in Alice Springs does display references to Arrernte language and culture. These include signs (Figure 11) for: *Yeperenye* (caterpillar) Shopping Centre; Imparja (*impatye* - track) Television Station; Arunta (Arrernte) Bookshop and Art Gallery; Mbantua (*Mparntwe*) Art Gallery; Aboriginal organisation names (*Tangentyere* Council); town camp signs and sacred site signs (Brooks 1991) Some street names are also in Arrernte, often with non-standard spellings (*Gnoilya* Street: *akngwelye* - dog). This visual symbolism has the potential effect of representing Arrernte as a written language replete with attendant community literacy practices.

75
5.1.2 The availability of text

Additional information was gathered on the availability of other forms of Arrernte text in Alice Springs. This revealed that only a small amount of text is publicly available and this is not regularly accessed by Arrernte readers (Appendix E, Profile B). The main bookshop stocks a few published books with Arrernte text generally for the consumption of interested tourists and educators (staff member, pers. comm.) A few Christian texts are available at the FRM office. The Alice Springs Town Library has a small collection of Arrernte books, although these are rarely accessed by Aboriginal language speakers (librarian, pers. comm.). Yipirinya School produces its own texts but they are not available in the library for general borrowing. The IAD library also keeps a small collection of published and unpublished texts that can be borrowed by students and staff. Songs in Arrernte are available on cassettes and CDs at the CAAMA shop but there is no accompanying Arrernte text (staff member, pers. comm.). Free newspapers and newsletters are produced by Aboriginal organisations and these sometimes contain Arrernte text, mostly transcribed interviews. Translated information posters and pamphlets are also available from Aboriginal organisations and government offices (Figure 12).

The interviews with Arrernte speakers indicate that the majority thought mainly of ‘books’ when asked about the availability of Arrernte text in the community. People had difficulty determining where these could be accessed, as borrowing or
buying books is not normal practice. Some thought *there should be some books in the library* (A5) and that books could *probably* be found at the mission block (FRM), Yipirinya School, Yirara College, IAD and the church. When asked about other forms of available text few could recall noticing signs:

Q. Where can Arrernte be read in town?

*Nowhere I suppose, nuh..No only [signs] in the town camps.* (A4)

One woman talked of reading signs at sacred sites when she goes on school excursions, but when asked who else reads signs or pamphlets she said *only the ones who bin learn like reading and writing in Arrernte* (A5). According to the estimates of Arrernte literates this may be a small number of readers (Table 2). A linguist thought that,

> there is frequently a misconception that just by translating things and putting them on posters that the message is going to get through...the fact that most people are not literate in the vernacular is not really noticed by a lot of people who put a lot of energy and heartfelt effort into trying to make things multilingual. (NA5)

These findings indicate that functional everyday engagement with text is not an aspect of the social context of Arrernte literacy.

### 5.1.3 Language as icon

The interaction with written Arrernte in the public domain does not appear to be a practice where it is necessary for text to be decoded or comprehended in order to gain information, rather it functions as a ‘cultural symbol’ (Ferdman 1990).
Q. Where can you find written Arrernte in town?
   *In galleries, them tourist information, Desert Park.*

Q. Would you read it?
   *No*

Q. Who is it written for?
   *Them people, tourists...They probably have English translations so they can see it's all in Arrernte.*

Q. Why?
   *It's Arrernte country! So they can see there's something written in language. (A2)*

In the above comment the emblematic value of the text is accentuated, indicating to a non-Aboriginal public that Arrernte carries the prestige of a written language. For Arrernte people it symbolises a positive cultural identity (Appendix E, Profile B) hence foregrounding the relationship between literacy and identity (Thieberger 1990; Ferdman 1990).

Examples of written language functioning as an icon include, a) the CAAMA mascot 'Yamba the yerrampe' (honey ant), with slogans on clothes, key rings and fridge magnets; and b) the logo for Imparja Television ‘Rtterrke Atnyenetyeke - Keeping Strong’ (Figure 10). This turning of potentially functional text into icons can lead to misleading semantic errors remaining unchecked. A misspelt slogan on a T-shirt was described thus: *unless they actually knew that it was an icon...if they actually read it they would get the wrong message* (NA5). The burgeoning
Aboriginal art and tourism industries also label products with words or phrases in Arrernte that promote the exotic authenticity of the object or the experience.

Artists at Hermannsburg, for example, engage in the practice of labelling their ceramics with a word or two in Arrernte gleaned from the dictionary or a language specialist (A8, NA3). This further perpetuates the notion that written language is merely an icon as the text *authentically describes the object* (NA5) and henceforth increases the value for both consumer and artist, irrespective of whether the label is ever meaningfully decoded or comprehended.

### 5.2 Literacy practices

The overriding impression from the interviews is that outside of work or church related activities, literacy in Arrernte is not integral to people’s everyday lives as *we’re not really into writing Arrernte language...we don’t use much, we just talk straight out* (A19). Furthermore, *people don’t read the writing, only some locals, Arrernte people, only some know the writing of Arrernte, like a couple of people who teaches some of that* (A2). Even young people (A14, A15, A16) who went to Yipirinya School talked of having done no writing (in English or Arrernte) since leaving school, with the exception of signing forms. Table 3 shows a summary of the interviewees’ current usage of Arrernte texts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Reader</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Arrente Bible</td>
<td>Missionary plus Arrente speakers</td>
<td>Western Arrente pastor / evangelist</td>
<td>Church service</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymnals</td>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>Church-goers</td>
<td>Church service / home</td>
<td>Nightly / weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other religious songs</td>
<td>W. Arrente literates</td>
<td>Hermannsburg Choir</td>
<td>Church service / Cassette recording</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel readings</td>
<td>Linguist / Arrente literate</td>
<td>Linguist C &amp; E Arrente Congregation</td>
<td>Catholic service / A/Springs</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>Arrente teachers / students / literacy workers</td>
<td>Arrente students Non-Ab'l educators</td>
<td>School / IAD</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories / informational texts</td>
<td>Linguist / Arrente literate</td>
<td>Tourists / Non-Ab'l educators</td>
<td>Library Bookshops</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books (published)</td>
<td>Linguists</td>
<td>Arrente students Non-Ab'l educators tourists</td>
<td>Adult education</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictionaries / Grammars</td>
<td></td>
<td>Arrente students Non-Ab'rent students</td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching materials</td>
<td>Linguists / Arrente teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>Arrente literate or Linguist</td>
<td>Arrente literate or Linguist</td>
<td>Aboriginal organisation or Government Dept.</td>
<td>Translations written frequently but read infrequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translations (English to Arrente)</td>
<td>CAAMA News</td>
<td>CAAMA</td>
<td>Central Australian Dictionaries Project</td>
<td>No longer write/read news in Arrente</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language research transcribed text</td>
<td>Linguist Literate Arrente researcher</td>
<td>Linguist Literate Arrente researcher</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Posters or pamphlets</td>
<td>Translator for Organisation or Government Dept.</td>
<td>Arrente literate</td>
<td>Aboriginal organisation or Government Dept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Organisation Newsletters</td>
<td>Arrente translator or linguist</td>
<td>Arrente literate</td>
<td>Aboriginal organisations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs - non religious</td>
<td>Arrente translator or linguist</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Cassette recording</td>
<td>One example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs</td>
<td>Arrente translator or linguist</td>
<td>Arrente community Non-Ab'rent &amp; tourists Non-Ab'rent community Tourists</td>
<td>Alice Springs Art galleries: Alice Springs, Santa Teresa, Hermannsburg</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art labels / catalogues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Letters</td>
<td>Arrente literate or Linguist</td>
<td>Linguist or Arrente literate</td>
<td>Interstate / o'reas Between communities</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messages</td>
<td>Arrente literate</td>
<td>Arrente literate</td>
<td>School / Work</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary / Journal</td>
<td>Arrente literate</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Reminders at home</td>
<td>One example</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2.1 Employment

Some Arrernte speakers in Alice Springs are employed as ‘language specialists’ to do language teaching, literacy production, curriculum development, translating or language research. These workers are often requested to do an extensive range of divergent and highly skilled tasks. One language specialist described how she used her vernacular literacy skills out on land claims, sites and stuff like that, or even at meetings, teaching, CAAMA, curriculum, high schools, dictionary and now research (A1). Most notably, employment was largely reflected upon as the only place where reading and writing has been done. The majority described having used their literacy only for courses at IAD, translations, interpreting or teaching language. One woman (A18) talked of writing in Arrernte only when you’re teaching some adults to read like at IAD...that’s the only time I’ve found it useful to write’em down. An ex-Yipirinya School teacher (A7) said the only place I done it was at Yipirinya. A current Yipirinya teacher (A21), who recently taught herself to read some Arrernte, talked of not writing Arrernte outside work. She commented that she only writes stories for school labelling stuff...I never really write long sentences as it’s too hard. A linguist (NA1) remarked that since the 1980s, when there was an initial wave of enthusiasm, Arrernte literacy has only been used by a handful of people at Santa Teresa, in schools, and for translating and dictionary making.
Work is the most public and demanding environment for literacy use and a high level of bilingual literacy competence is expected. An Arrernte translator commented that,

...people from outside IAD would come in with translating for a poster or government pamphlet, they would just say "Have it ready for the next day!" What are we? Flash Harry? Translation takes time and it's really hard work. Although I have a lot of experience in my language I still need to learn a lot more about translating and putting ideas together using longer words. (A2)

Work is often the interface between non-Aboriginal expectations of literacy competence and the performance of actual Arrernte literacy proficiency. Non-Aboriginal interviewees talked of very few people having the kind of complex advanced literacy in Arrernte required of some translating and transcribing tasks. They can be very good at speaking their language but they don't have the training, or experience, or opportunity to use that in a work sense (NA5). I have observed that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal expectations of literacy competence may be mismatched, leading to potential stated or unstated conflict on both sides. There is a sense that some Arrernte speakers may be set up to fail because of an expectation of competence assumed by well-intentioned highly literate non-Aboriginal people. Yet with few opportunities to engage with extended texts outside of a work context this would seem a misplaced expectation. The following quote perhaps sums up the situation:

Our languages are not really sought after yet...like Europeans are not interested in [our] language so how can we be reading them when

82

Chapter 5
nobody is listening to you...we haven’t got up to that point yet. (A18)

5.2.2 Christian practices

For the Lutheran-affiliated Western Arrernte speakers, interaction with translated Christian texts was a recurring theme. It is for many the link between public vocational literacy practices and private Christian cultural practices. The extent to which Arrernte literacy is used by Arrernte-speaking pastors or evangelists in a vocational context is not widely recognised outside of the Lutheran community. A pastor (A17) in Alice Springs described how every Sunday he walks to nearby town camps to preach, while another (A13) talked of holding weekly services at his family outstation. When asked how he prepared for the service one pastor said,

*I’ll get’em this one [Arrarnta New Testament 1997] I’ll write it down which text, Sunday read. I got to read’em one week, got to learn, start again and I can keep’em in mind.* (A17)

Western Arrernte speakers often mentioned attending church services run by Aboriginal pastors where the *Arrarnta Hymnal* is the main text used by the congregation. The pastor helps them to sing the hymns as *he always say that letters, say the name and we sing after him* (A14). It is mainly middle-aged and older speakers who can read the text, but younger people (A14, A20, A21) still talked of hymn singing as one of their few regular engagements with Arrernte text (Appendix E, Profile A).
Most importantly, people talked of actually acquiring reading skills through repeatedly singing the same hymns. A young woman described how her mother was learning from singing *she reads it, picks it up from the book by herself* (A20). Another person explained how when *you go in the church and you see some books there, some hymn books, that's how we follow up you know, in service and that's how we learn and keep our language strong* (A13). An older man (A11) at Hermannsburg also regularly reads his hymn book at home, *I'm busy reading on the Arrernte. I read like on Sunday today, and on Monday morning, Monday afternoon, Monday evening and the same on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday*. In contrast, few people possess the Bible and it is usually the pastor who reads from it as the text is too complex for most readers:

*the hymn book that's easy, the other one the Bible book's got all the main words, that's the one now that's a bit hard for our younger people to read it too* (A11).

Nevertheless it was expressed that the existence of written Arrernte in the Bible gave the language status *we got writing in our language Arrernte, well we got book, like English book* (A13).

It must therefore be concluded that for the majority, uses for literacy outside of church related activities are minimal as *in our day there wasn't any other book, only this book [Arrarnta Hymnal]* (A11). As one educator remarked,
At Hermannsburg and the whole Western Arrernte scene, the whole context of literacy has been very much church-based. I don't think people conceive of a very strong use for it outside the church and liturgical teachings. (NA2)

A similar observation was made about the Catholic affiliated Central/Eastern Arrernte speakers, as their history of literacy was embedded in Catholicism, that's the model and that's the function (NA6). Catholics who attend the Ngkarte Mikwekenhe Catholic chapel in Alice Springs also talked of singing hymns by following the words projected on the screen. Also, despite the presence in the service of a small number of Arrernte literates, any special Arrernte readings are done by a non-Aboriginal speaker (NA1).

5.3 The social transmission of oral and literate practices

A theme that wove its way through all the interviews was the powerful ongoing connection people have with traditional land or 'country', the kinship system, ceremonial life and traditional stories. Inextricably linked are the patterns of intergenerational oral language transmission. However, the transmission of literacy practices within the family are minimal although the distinction between solely oral or literate activities is in some cases unclear, especially in the case of Western Arrernte Christian practices.
Overwhelmingly people talked of the importance of passing the language and culture on to future generations, they used expressions like *keeping language alive, keeping the language strong, keeping it running* and *not losing it*. The family was presented as being responsible for passing language on, as

*everything’s going to English now, modern, so you got to keep your language and culture going. You got to tell them...my son’s gonna grow up, my daughter’s gonna grow up and teach their kids about things.* (A6)

For the minority literacy is considered an aspect of language and culture maintenance as *it’s about keeping things together and families together* Arrernte literacy is (A6) and the *language itself upholds the culture and heritage of the Arrernte people, so us older people reckon our kids should be learning to read and write in Arrernte* (A18).

### 5.3.1 Oral practices

Despite the impact of English, some Arrernte oral traditions continue and are interconnected with the maintenance of cultural practices. People talked of story telling\(^2\) especially at night-time and they reflected on how this is an important factor in the transmission of cultural information (Appendix E, Profile A). A Central Arrernte woman described how she might,

*...tell them a dreamtime story when it’s bedtime, the next day they’ll ask me “Can you tell that story again?” and they’ll understand it then. Cause when I was little I used to hear about the little boy that used to*
crawl to the waterhole. I used to hear that and I loved it and when I grew up I started to write about it. (A5)

In spite of the recognition that storytelling is an important cultural practice some older people lamented that it’s not happening now like should be, some people used to tell the stories to kids to make them sleep you know, my time, but not much this time (A13) (Appendix E, Profile B). A linguist (NA6) has observed a change in perception regarding storytelling. He commented that whereas previously people were sitting round at night telling stories, repeating the same stories, and stories were memorised and passed on, now people say that’s gone. In its place is a new form of retelling\(^3\) that ensures transmission: retelling and getting it recorded on tape and making a book out of it because it’s not being told, because they want the kids to be able to remember it.

The tradition of telling of sand stories\(^4\) was also described. This cultural practice exemplifies the use of an alternative semiotic system (Muecke 1992) or visual literacy (Walton 1996; The New London Group 1997) for the dissemination and transmission of cultural information. One woman (A1) described how sand stories are told and wiped out and in the process the main stories could be passed on,

There was never anything written, it was all just drawn on the sand by them telling stories about how this one marries this one...by listening
to people telling stories and taking notice of what they tell you about places, sites, how the laws may have been and that.

In this way information is encoded in the drawing as old people,

sit down and do drawings that fix in the children’s minds, when they’re talking about it they draw figures that’s like writing in books, that’s one part, one of the ways you can carry on teaching language (A18).

5.3.2 Literate practices

The interviewees were asked to recall their memories of reading and writing from childhood as well as to describe their current literacy practices (see Appendix E for two literacy Profiles).

Many Western Arrernte speakers remembered family literacy practices that were centred around Christian cultural practices. One woman recollected how,

Dad used to have some at home, hymn book and Bible book, he used to use it in Arrernte language. He knew reading...[and] he’d just call us and read it to us, all us kids, might be I think every evening and sing hymns. (A7)

This it seems, was not uncommon. A Western Arrernte man recalled how,

Nana and Grandpa used to sing hymns in Arrernte and that’s how I became to read in Arrernte and to write it...even stories I can read without looking at the book, that’s how my Nana and Grandpa was. It was old ‘Aranda Catechism Book’...just by stories, he’d give us little booklets and like teach us at home when we were small. (A6)
This same man is now teaching his own children to read in a similar way. Most notable here is the equating of memorising text with ‘reading’. A non-Aboriginal educator (NA2) who teaches Western Arrernte literacy to teenagers in Alice Springs described her surprise at discovering two students who could already read in ‘Aranda’ despite not having been to a bilingual school. When she asked them about how they had become such good readers, one said that her grandmother had taught her from the hymn book I think, and the other said her auntie had taught her to read from the hymn book.

In contrast memories of family literacy practices among Central/Eastern Arrernte speakers were negligible (Appendix E, Profile B) as the introduction of literacy has been too recent.

In general, literacy practices are not enacted in the town camp environment in Alice Springs as few homes offer the privacy or comfort conducive to reading and writing activities. A linguist (NA1) stated that he thought that the vast majority of people came from homes where there wasn’t one book in the house in English, let alone in Arrernte. Treasured possessions such as hymn books and, rarely, some personal papers may be kept in suitcases or locked rooms. A Central Arrernte woman keeps a family tree she has been working on with a visiting linguist in her handbag (Appendix E, Profile B). People talked of the difficulty of having reading and writing materials at home, partly because they cost too much money
(A17) as well as the difficulty of looking after them, as you can't stop kids from picking up things (A18). An additional factor is the mobility of people's lives, we've been losing our family and that and we've been moving around a lot, so it's very hard for me to keep things together (A18). Literacy practices that were mentioned include song writing (A6) and newsletter reading as shown in Table 3. A Central Arrernte woman (A18) described the oral collective practice of reading a newsletter. The family challenged me to read it out (Native Title Newsletter, Figure 13) ... before I read it out they said "You're a good woman!", cause there aren't many who can do that [read in Arrernte].

In many of the practices described above there is a blurring of the distinction between oral and literate ways of handling text. The major exception is in the description given of very specific 'literate' practices by an Eastern Arrernte speaker (A1) who lives in a housing commission house and works as a respected and experienced language specialist:

I seem to read more in Arrernte now because I've just gotten used to reading in Arrernte and I'm proud of actually reading in my own language as well as English... I write more in Arrernte because I feel a lot more comfortable... I write little stories and maybe a letter or two. I send letters out to my cousin at Santa Teresa... I do keep family records in Arrernte in a sense, not all the time, when I remember, just keep little books and things like that, notes in Arrernte, just little notes reminding myself about meetings or going to the doctor... because I prefer to read it in Arrernte, I've just got in the habit of it.
5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the results of the interviews in the form of a series of themes. In this way I sought to describe the current social context of Arrernte literacy in order to understand the implications of the historical development on the current literacy practices. This description can inform our understanding of how vernacular literacy is acquired, engaged in as a cultural practice, retained and transmitted in the Arrernte community today.

The simple conclusion is that there is not a broad social context for Arrernte literacy as there are few functions for vernacular literacy outside of vocational and Christian contexts. Literacy has not been incorporated into the repertoire of everyday cultural practices despite the existence of many initiatives in vernacular literacy teaching over recent years. For the majority Arrernte literacy is not ‘embedded in broader social goals and cultural practices’ (Barton and Hamilton 1998:7) as it is not essential to the socio-political reality of the everyday struggle for the basics of life. Also literacy proficiency has not been retained to a significant degree amongst people who learnt in the past, but do not regularly engage in literacy practices, as the opportunities to use, and therefore retain, literacy after formal learning are minimal. The potential for vernacular letter-writing to emerge once more as an important contemporary form of communication has been mitigated by the advent of the telephone as a more direct form of oral communication (Goddard 1990). Unlike at Hermannsburg mission
the recent introduction of Arrernte literacy in Alice Springs has had to contend
with the dominating influence of English and the growing obsolescence of writing
as a form of social communication.

However, this simple conclusion belies the importance of what is indicated in the
research findings. Firstly, it is the emblematic value of Arrernte literacy as a
cultural symbol of identity and language maintenance (Thieberger 1990; Ferdman
1990) that matters to Arrernte speakers. This factor is of sufficient importance to
warrant the ongoing investment of time and effort in translating and writing
Arrernte text. Secondly, although it is not clear that any ‘truly indigenous
functions’ (Harris 1990b) for writing have evolved at a broad community level,
individual instances of the incorporation of Arrernte literacy into everyday life
have been described. An important point here is the high level of participation in
collective Christian literacy practices where oral and literate ways of handling text
merge, with participants neither wholly literate nor illiterate. Parallels with the
development of literacy in English should be noted here, as outlined in Chapter 2.
Thirdly, and most significantly, the findings highlight the role of the family in the
retention and transmission of literacy practices through Christian cultural
practices, especially with Western Arrernte speakers where formal learning has
recently played a minimal role in the acquisition of Arrernte literacy.

Nevertheless, despite individual examples, it can not be claimed that there is a
‘culturally anchored mechanism of intergenerational transmission’ (Ferguson

Chapter 3

92
1987:232) outside of formal learning. Many of the literacy practices that have been transmitted over the generations originate from the initial exposure to literacy at Hermannsburg. I would suggest that this has also defined the model of literacy that vernacular literacy teachers and families still call upon.

The final point for discussion is the manner in which people perceive literacy and I will elaborate further at this juncture. When people were asked to describe some of the strategies that they use for learning or recalling text their responses at first seemed incongruous. A Western Arrernte pastor (A17) explained how he had to learn [the Bible] and keep ‘em in mind. Another man (A6) described how he can read without looking at the book [Aranda Catechism], and a woman (A4) talked of remembering her literacy. A Central Arrernte woman (A18) talked of fixing information from sand drawings in children’s minds, and learning to get things in their head. She also described her own reading strategies,

*I like to go over it before I start reading it. I have to get the hang of the language that’s written and got to memorise it and it’s very hard doing that. So never mind that I went and got my Certificate [in Literacy Work from SAL], but I haven’t been doing this job...I’ve lost it for a while and I’ve lost track of some of the words.*

Again, although she is not from the Western Arrernte tradition, her reading is associated with memorisation. An associated corollary that emerged is the notion that the written word is not to be trusted, *it’s not safe, letter* (A13), as it is an impermanent form of communication compared to memory and oral transmission.
Writing is putting in type like this, it’s important, but more important thing is people got to keep ‘em in their head because what if we put in type or in paper. Might burn any time, but important is if you know, if that thing burn like in fire, bushfire, you know you still got it. (A11)

These memorising strategies seem to be reminiscent of reading strategies activated in the process of the development of ‘literate behaviours’ (Heath 1991) as described in Chapter 2, rather than a contemporary notion which incorporates decoding unfamiliar, decontextualised texts.. Here reading resembles the Lutheran method of repetition and memorisation discussed in Chapter 4 (see also Street 1984, 1995 on Qu’ranic reading strategies) and writing also appears to be used more as a ‘mnemonic device’ where memory is thought of as ‘writing on the mind’ (Olson 1994:61-62). These connections can only be speculated upon at this point and are beyond the scope of this thesis. Further research is needed in this area before any firm conclusions could be drawn.
Figure 10  Signs at Hermannsburg (1998)
Figure 11  Signs in Alice Springs (1998)
Family Court Counselling Service

The Family Court Counselling Service helps families at times of family trouble, for example, when parents fight and go their separate ways. The Counselling Service helps people sort out fights over children and to work out who children should live with and what contact children will have with the parent and family they do not live with. The service also helps sort out disputes over children involving parents and other family members, such as aunts or grand-mothers. Counsellors do not have any powers to make decisions about families and they cannot tell families what to do. Counsellors though can help families talk about problems and sort out their problems in their own way. Counsellors will respect the privacy of the family and the Aboriginal way of doing things.

The service employs a Counsellor and male and female Aboriginal workers. If you need the help of a counsellor talk to the Administrator of your community or phone the Counselling Service on 8952 8222. You can also call in and talk to a counsellor during office hours upstairs, Centrepoint Building, Hartley Street, Alice Springs.

Artwye nhenge-kenhe Court Counselling Service

Artwye nhenge-kenhe Court Counselling Service, Mparntwe-le aneme itne alpeme ileme anewen- nhenge-iverrelenge. Counselling Service nhene ikwerele warrke ireme arelehe, artwe ankentye akerte.

Counsellors nhene itne menhengenhenge akngeye-nehenge-ke arrakenthere ingkerreke-ke angkeme akurne nhene ikwere arente-ke angwenenhenge ampe ngkwinhe anenyenhe-ke mpwele arle iwerreme iperrenge, nthakenhe arle akwele ampe anetyenheke angwenhe ikwerenge iperrenge, nthakenhe arle akwele ampe anetyenheke angwenhe akngeye, meyenge akepe. Counsellor nhene nhene itne akewele ileme ngenhe, ngkwinhe arteweye arike nthakenhe re akewele mwerrentye ampe arnte-arnte aretyeke. Unite akepe akewele Counsellor nhene ikwere angketye ahentye nhenhe-ke angketye Administrator-ke, Community Advisor apmere ngkwinhe-le aneme-ke phone-me ilemele Counselling Service Mparntwe-le aneme (number nhenhenge 8952 8222) unte akewele apetyemele Counsellor-ke angketyeke, upstairs, Centrepont Building, Hartley Street, Alice Springs between 9.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday.
Native Title-le Unit arenye mape itne akarelheme Government mape-engetyele awetyeke aye ye kele ime re itne apmere artweye mape-ke antene letter yememelive antenie reps mape-arike ilememe anwenere awethe angkerememe Government ikwere wenere. Arrantherpe peke ahentye aneme awethe awetye number nhenheware ringememle 89555-044 ante nhenhew mape-ke ankele Brian Stirling, Darryn Wilson ante ayenhe ampere Native Title nhenhe aneme 25 Sturt Heway-le, Mpamtwo-le.

**Mparntwe, Antulye and Irlpme update**

The first part of the Mparntwe hearing was held at CAAPU in 1997. During the first hearing the Judge heard evidence from both sides. The Judge was taken on trips around Alice Springs visiting Sacred Sites. After three weeks, the Court finished until early this year.

The Court hearing started again on Tuesday 3rd of Feb 1998, Justice Olney began hearing the second part of the Mparntwe Native Title claim at the Red Resort Centre in Alice Springs. The Federal Court heard the Traditional Owners give strong evidence and they showed Justice Olney some of the important sacred sites around Alice Springs. The Northern Territory Government lawyers asked the TO's questions relating to Mparntwe.

The Mparntwe hearing finished on the 6th March 1998. Judge Olney will be looking into all the evidence given to him by the TO's before hearing final submissions in August 1998.

**Mparntwe, Antulye ante Irlpme akerte aye ye.**


**Land Rights Act Review**

Late last July the Federal Government said they would look into the Land Rights Act. Mr Reeves QC was picked to look into the Land Rights Act. The first public hearing was in Tennant Creek but many Aboriginal people wanted more time and asked Mr Reeves to come back and listen to them at a later date.

The next communities which Mr Reeve visited were Utopia and Ti-Tree. The Aboriginal people from the Utopia region spoke strongly and did not want any changes to the Land Rights Act. They supported having one main land council and did not want to see smaller land councils.

The next hearing was held in Alice Springs on 25th February. Before the hearing CLC gathered with Aboriginal people to tell them clearly what the review was talking about. At the Council Chambers Mr Reeves heard many voices such as pastoralists, the Desert Wildlife Park, Congress and many other organisations. Many local Aboriginal people strongly supported the Land Rights Act and Central Land Council.

However there were some arguments about break away land councils and other changes to the Act. Mr Reeves conducted public hearings at Yuendumu and Papunya. At Yuendumu and Papunya many people spoke strongly about their support for the Land Rights Act and the issues involved in the review, however they felt Mr Reeves needed to spend more time at the communities talking about the review. Many of the people who spoke strongly voiced their opinions of mistrust towards the Northern Territory Government. They believed that the Land Rights Act should not be weakened, but should be strengthened.

**Figure 13 Apmere Akerte Aye Ye: Native Title Newsletter (1998)**
1 This project was organised jointly with Yipirinya School, Santa Teresa School and Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School in Alice Springs.

2 Wilkins (1991:214) states that ‘most of the traditional dreamtime narratives may be considered travelling narratives...personal histories, tales about hunting, made up stories to use in children’s readers and monster stories all typically map major events into the framework of a journey’.

3 The preface to a book on Arrernte bush foods (Turner-Neale and Henderson 1994:iv) exemplifies this:


   I’m making this book for the ones who are growing up now to read, so that they will be able to look at it in school and learn about what the people before them had, so that you will know all these things.

4 According to Wilkins (1991:217) adults ‘will often accompany stories to children with sand drawings, and these drawings...take an aerial view of events and map spatial relations amongst fixed entities as well as depicting motion paths. As a story is told the teller maps the events and entities into the sand before them...’

5 The photograph of the ‘Mpwetyerre Territory Tidy Towns Camp’ translates the message ‘No Grog’ firstly into a version of Western Arrernte Ngwarle Ithyye which does not use a standard orthography (a rendering in the Common Arandic orthography would be Ngwarle Itye), then Wama Wiya - a translation into a Western Desert dialect.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

In this thesis I have sought to present theory which situates literacy as more than an 'autonomous technical skill' (Street 1995) or 'unified competence' (Levine 1986) learnt only in a formal learning environment, but also as social (Barton and Hamilton 1998) or cultural practices (Resnick 1990) that people acquire, engage in and retain in a social context. From this theoretical perspective the acquisition of literacy is aided by a process of social transmission. Furthermore it is historically situated and patterned by social institutions and power relationships (Reder 1994; Barton, 1994; Barton and Hamilton 1998). In addition I discussed the various factors posed by researchers (Spolsky et al. 1983; Ferguson 1987) as contiguous to the successful introduction of vernacular literacy to a previously non-literate indigenous minority group.

I have sought to show that it cannot be assumed that literacy can easily be transferred from a Western cultural and linguistic context to a previously non-literate indigenous minority language group (Walton 1996; Carrington 1997). Although the introduction of English literacy outlined in Chapter 2 is clearly dissimilar to the Arrernte situation, parallels can be drawn to the slow
development of a 'sense of being literate' (Heath 1991). These include oral and literate ways of handling text, the use of memory, and the participation in literacy practices regardless of actual literacy ability. It has been unrealistic to expect that high vernacular literacy competence and widespread literacy practices could be achieved in only a few decades when the socio-political reality of Arrernte as the language of a dispossessed indigenous minority group militates against this possibility. In this respect I concur with Coulmas'(1984) criticism of the assumption that a non-literate society will rapidly become literate if only given literacy training.

6.1 Socio-historical context

The evidence suggests that at Hermannsburg mission, despite its introduction by an 'impinging alien culture' (Ferguson 1987), vernacular literacy 'took hold'. It was accepted by the community and became part of the 'shared cultural resources of the society' (Ferguson 1987:224) through Christian literacy practices. The existence of letters written by Arrernte writers indicates that that people had 'the ability to perform reading and writing behaviors' (Ferguson 1987:224) in their vernacular for social and communicative purposes. A factor that may account for the acceptance of vernacular literacy may be the traditional Lutheran methodology of repetition, rote learning and memorisation which in part built on an existing pattern (Ferguson 1987) of repetition and memorisation in traditional Aboriginal
ceremonial life. As was noted in Chapter 4 however, a high level of oral reading skill does not necessarily lead to a comparable ability in comprehension of what is read (Graff 1994), particularly in a context where:

a) there are few encounters with unfamiliar texts,
   b) communication is still primarily oral and information does not have to be gained from the written word,
   c) there is a sense that the written word is not to be trusted.

In conclusion, the success of vernacular literacy at Hermannsburg mission can be attributed to the following factors: 1) regular school attendance achieved by the use of inducements such as the provision of rations or the fear of corporal punishment; 2) faith in the values encoded in literacy attainment by the missionaries; 3) the integration of literacy into distinctively ‘Aranda’ Christian cultural practices; and 4) the paternalistic order of mission community life prior to the social and political changes following the 1970s (especially the devastating effect of alcohol on Central Australian Aboriginal life).

6.2 Current vernacular literacy practices

A possible difficulty with the teaching of Arrernte literacy is that it has been taught primarily as an individual technical skill and assumptions have been made about the transfer of literacy from a highly literate Western context. It has been assumed that first language literacy can be acquired without an understanding of the social context of Arrernte literacy use and how vernacular literacy practices
may be retained outside of formal learning. Furthermore, the artefacts of literacy
(books, pamphlets, signs) have been produced with limited attention to whether
they are actively used by the community for whom they have been produced.
Nevertheless they have an important emblematic or symbolic value. Thus the
‘affective significance’ of Arrernte literacy to Arrernte speakers is as a symbol of
cultural identity and language maintenance (Thieberger 1990; Ferdman 1990).
This is sufficient justification for the continued teaching of Arrernte literacy and
the production of Arrernte texts in various forms. Muhlhausler’s (1996:215)
claim that the linguistic outcome of vernacular literacy is the ‘accelerated decline’
of the language cannot be supported by the Arrernte case, as it would seem that
here, vernacular literacy represents a strengthening of cultural identity that is
predicated on oral language use.

6.3 Implications of the study

The findings highlight the role of the family and the cultural practice of Christian
worship in the social transmission of literacy practices. This supports Reder’s
(1994) theory of literacy development, which holds that literacy is an
acquisitional, as well as a learning process, and depends on individuals engaging
in various literacy practices, and on the quality of that engagement. The fact that
a small degree of Arrernte literacy has been maintained at Hermannsburg, in spite
of the minimal role of formal schooling in teaching childhood vernacular literacy
over recent years, testifies to this. The implications of this study are that if Arrernte people, and educators, want the Arrernte literacy skill level to rise, then some of the following may need to eventuate in the future:

a) the awareness of the significant role that families have to play in the acquisition and transmission of literacy should be increased;
b) this awareness needs to include an understanding of the ‘quality’ of the engagement in literacy; that is, the experiences need to be regular and meaningful;
c) for literacy to be retained after formal learning it must be understood that literacy learning is a life-long process of regular and meaningful engagements with a wide range of texts;
d) more emphasis should be placed on developing adult functions for Arrernte literacy, therefore the range and complexity of reading material for Arrernte literates, and the opportunities for vernacular writing, may need to be expanded in order for literacy practices to have greater meaning in people’s lives;
e) Arrernte literacy should not be judged on whether it has the same range of functions as English literacy, or whether the average level of proficiency is comparable, but understood within its developmental continuum;
f) the inter-relationship between oral, literate and other semiotic systems should be understood further.

These conclusions by no means preclude the formal teaching of vernacular literacy, whether in schools or adult vernacular literacy classes. However these learning experiences must be contextualised and related to the practice of vernacular literacy use in the world beyond the classroom. In addition, a greater
recognition of vernacular oral practices is called for, with an emphasis on developing teaching methodology that incorporates traditional oral approaches to transmitting cultural and conceptual information. Further research is needed on what happens to vernacular literacy in Australian indigenous languages once students leave formal learning, and how these practices are retained and transmitted intergenerationally.

Lastly, I have drawn attention to other ways of perceiving literacy in Chapter 5. I am, however, wary of the growing interest in ‘multiliteracies’ (The New London Group 1997) whereby Aboriginal educators, overwhelmed by the difficulty of vernacular literacy teaching, substitute non-alphabetic literacy activities and label them ‘visual literacy’ (The New London Group 1997:33). More research is needed in this area.

It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to an awareness of the importance of having a social context for the development of literacy practices, as well as cognizance of the history of writing in Arrernte. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to the achievements of Arrernte literates. May the skills of current readers and writers in Arrernte be passed on to future generations in the hope that vernacular literacy will, in fact, contribute to language and culture maintenance.
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## Appendix A  Arrernte orthographies - consonants (Hoogenraad 1988:4).

<table>
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**Appendices**
Appendix A  Arrernte orthographies - vowels (Hoogenraad 1988:5)

In the diagram below, the orthographies are in the following order:
I.P.A.
Strehlow
Finke River Mission
Common Arandic Writing System

Notes
1. Depending on context, Strehlow’s $u$ sometimes represents $\omega$ before another vowel, (see consonant chart above).
2. Common Arandic orthography always represents $\Upsilon$ as rounding on preceding consonant.
3. Common Arandic orthography treats this as a diphthong (see diphthong chart below).
4. Strehlow and FRM orthographies represent ‘schwa’ (neutral vowel) as the (short, neutralised) vowel perceived, i.e. (’x’=): $i/1, u/u, e/e, o/o$ and $a/a/\Lambda$.
5. The schwa (neutral vowel) can have different vowel ‘colouring’ depending on context: $i/1, u/u, e/e, o/o, a/a/\Lambda$.

Appendices
Appendix A  Arrernte orthographies - diphthongs (Hoogenraad 1988:6)

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Notes
1. Strehlow marks long vowels thus: - (e.g. ă), primary stress thus: - or - (e.g. ă), secondary stresses thus: (e.g. ă). A stressed diphthong is written thus, e.g. ă

2. In the Common Arandic Writing System, words can only end in the vowel e (although this vowel has no contrastive significance, it is always written). Words that appear to end in another vowel, e.g. i, are written ending in a glide plus e, e.g. iye. That is the Common Arandic Writing System treats all words as ending in a consonant followed by e (schwa).

3. Because Strehlow’s diacritics are easily omitted accidentally by printers, it is not always clear in printed works what Strehlow’s intentions were: this may explain why Strehlow renders ă by r rather than ă.
Appendix B  Interview questions

Respondent A __  M/F  E/C/W Arrernte

1. How old are you?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where do you live now?
4. What languages do you speak?
5. What languages do you understand?
6. What language did you speak with your family when you were a child?
7. What is/was your mother’s language?
8. What is/was your father’s language?
9. Which language do you identify as your language?
10. Where did you go to school?
11. About how old were you when you left school?
12. What memories do you have of reading or writing activities when you were a child?
13. a) What language did you learn to read and write in?
   b) Where did you learn?
14. Can you read and write in Arrernte?
   a) Who taught you?
   b) How did they do this?

15. How would you rate your literacy skills in Arrernte:

   1 = very low  2 = low  3 = in the middle  4 = high  5 = very high

   Reading       1  2  3  4  5
   Writing       1  2  3  4  5

16a. Can you briefly write something about yourself:

16b. Which Arrernte story is a good reading level for you:

   1  2  3

Can you read the story and tell me what it is about?

Central / Eastern Arrernte 1

Central / Eastern Arrernte 2

Central / Eastern Arrernte 2

126

Appendices


Western Arrernte (Common Arandic Writing System)


17. Do you feel comfortable reading in Arrernte?
18. Do you feel comfortable writing in Arrernte?
19. What sort of things are easy for you to read in Arrernte?
20. What sort of things are hard for you to read in Arrernte?
21. What sort of things are easy for you to write in Arrernte?
22. What sort of things are hard for you to write in Arrernte?
23. When do you notice that reading in Arrernte is useful?
24. When do you notice that writing in Arrernte is useful?
25. If you identify as a ____________ language speaker, which language is the language you are literate in? Why?

26. Have people been specially chosen to be the readers / writers in Arrernte or can anyone learn and become say a teacher or an interpreter?
27. Does knowing how to read one dialect of Arrernte make it easy to read another dialect of Arrernte? Why / why not?
29. Is Arrernte reading / writing used for traditional activities? What?
30. Can you read / write in English?

How would you rate your literacy skills in English:

1 = very low  2 = low  3 = in the middle  4 = high  5 = very high

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Writing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

127

Appendices
31. Do you read more in Arrernte or more in English? Why?
32. Can you tell me the sort of things you read in Arrernte?
33. Could you read this/these in English also? How is it the same/different?
34. Do you write more in English or more in Arrernte? Why?
35. Can you tell me the sort of things you write in Arrernte?
36. Could you write this/these in English also? How is it the same/different?
37. Does knowing how to read/write in English make reading/writing easier in Arrernte?
38. Could you describe how you use reading or writing in Arrernte at home?
39. Can you describe the Arrernte literacy activities that you do with the children in your family?
40. Are other people in your family literate in Arrernte? Who?
Where did they learn?
41. What sort of things do they read?
42. What sort of things do they write?
43. Where else do you read or write in Arrernte? Work/study?
44. What kind of work/study have you done where you have used Arrernte reading or writing?
45. How have you used Arrernte literacy in your work/study?
46. What sort of things written in Arrernte do you keep with you in your personal possessions?
47. Do you keep personal/family records in Arrernte? If yes, what?
48. Where can you find things to read in Arrernte?
49. If you see posters, pamphlets, T-shirts, TV subtitles that have been translated into Arrernte do you read the Arrernte? Or do you read the English?
50. Is Arrernte literacy important? Why?
51. Can you tell me the reasons why people should learn to read and write in Arrernte?
52. What can Arrernte literacy be used for?
53. What do you want to use Arrernte literacy for?
54. How many adults do you think can read/write in Arrernte?
55. Hermannsburg Western Arrernte: Do you think more people could read and write Arrernte in the old days? Why?

What Arrernte literacy material is there in your life?

E.g. for:
church business, personal writing, communication, household business, education, work, clubs, sport, recreation, pleasure, information, record keeping, celebrating important events, TV/video, story telling.

Your role as: parent, relative, student, worker, shopper, bill-payer, community member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Writer</th>
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</thead>
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Appendices
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<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Identified language</th>
<th>Birthplace</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
<th>Arrernte literacy acquisition</th>
<th>Intergenerational literacy</th>
<th>Current place of residence</th>
<th>Self-rating* Arrernte English</th>
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<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Eastern Arrente</td>
<td>Arltunga</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>R W R W</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Teresa H.S. in Victoria &gt; Year 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father: semi-literate (Arr/Eng)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 4 3 3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>A2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Eastern Arrente</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>3 2 3 3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Teresa &gt; Grade 7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father: semi-literate in English</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 5 4 4</td>
<td></td>
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<td>A3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Central Arrente</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>5 5 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aroonang P.S. Traeger Park P.S. A/S H.S. &gt; Yr 11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father: church reading and singing</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 5 4 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Central Arrente</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>5 5 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Teresa &gt; Post Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father: church reading and singing</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 5 4 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Western Arrente</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>As a child: Regular reading of religious texts with grandparents. Grandfather was a Pastor.</td>
<td>Grandparents: Literate in Western Arrente. Non-Aboriginal family member: literate in English.</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>5 5 3 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Western Arrente</td>
<td>Hermannsburg</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>5 5 5 5</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hermannsburg Traeger P.S. &gt; 15 yrs old</td>
<td></td>
<td>Father: church elder, reading and singing in church and at home. Children: Western Arrernte literacy at Yiririnya School / Yirara College.</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 5 5 5</td>
<td></td>
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| A7         | Female | 45  | Western Arrente    | Hermannsburg | As a child: Reading, Singing, catechism for baptism. | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Hermannsburg | Herma...
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<th>Birthplace</th>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Jay Creek</td>
<td>Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As a child: Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As a child: Reading - church literacy and baptism. As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Outstation - Jay Creek</td>
<td>3321</td>
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<tr>
<td>A13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Tempe Downs</td>
<td>Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As a child: Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As an adult: evangelist/pastor training</td>
<td>Children: Literate in vernacular and English. 3 adult daughters have taught W. Arr. literacy at Yipirinya School.</td>
<td>Outstation - Jay Creek</td>
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<tr>
<td>A14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>Yipirinya School Alice Springs H.S. &gt; Year 10</td>
<td>As a child: Yipirinya School</td>
<td>Grandfather: literate in church Aranda. Mother: literate in Arrernte.</td>
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<td>2222</td>
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<td>A15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>Yipirinya School Yiews College &gt; Year 10</td>
<td>As a child: Yipirinya School</td>
<td>Grandfather: literate in church Aranda. Mother: literate in Arrernte.</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
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<td>A16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>Yipirinya school Alice Springs H.S.</td>
<td>As a child: Yipirinya School</td>
<td>Grandfather: literate in church Aranda.</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
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<tr>
<td>A18</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Central</td>
<td>Yambah Station</td>
<td>Bungalow school Santa Teresa &gt; Post Primary</td>
<td>As an adult: SAL course</td>
<td>Mother: non-literate Father: non-literate Daughter: SAL course</td>
<td>Amoonguna</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A19</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Hermannsburg</td>
<td>Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As a child: Hermannsburg mission school</td>
<td>As a child: Reading - church literacy</td>
<td>Father: Aranda church literacy. Daughter: vernacular literacy IAD</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A20</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>P.S. - Alice Springs H.S. - AS &gt; Yr. 9</td>
<td>As an adult: Vernacular literacy IAD</td>
<td>Mother: Aranda church literacy. Non-Aboriginal father: English literacy.</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>4555</td>
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<tr>
<td>A21</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Western</td>
<td>Hamilton Downs</td>
<td>P.S.-Alice Springs H.S.-Adelaide</td>
<td>As an adult: Self-taught: Yipirinya School</td>
<td>Father: Aranda church literacy. Son: Arrernte literacy at Yipirinya School</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>4333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Self-rating: 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = in the middle, 4 = high, 5 = very high.
Appendix D  Letters and translations

Letter A

1903

Mr Strelow

My friend and my pastor,
I cried a lot when I was here and saw you leaving.

I (am) Sara

Letter B

April 30 1911 Sunday

Mr Strehlow my friend. I have already seen your letter today. I thank you. Yes you are asking us about Warlpiri men. There are no Warlpiri men coming here at the moment. They are waiting for later on. They’re staying in their own country up north. A few men received baptism recently. It wasn't Mr Liebler that taught them. Moses is the only one that taught them. At school Moses is the only one who teaches the children. Sometimes I [Nathanael] go to school to help. I teach the children to write on slates. Mr Liebler only teaches/preaches in God’s house. Not much, just a little bit. He doesn’t know many Aranta words. All of the children, both girls and boys are with Mr Liebler. There they sing a lot of hymns in English and German and Aranta.

Your two friends are saying this to you.

Nathanael   [approx. 38 yrs. at the time]
Moses       [approx. 33 yrs. at the time]
Appendix D  Letter A

Mr. Serei

I'm not sure how to translate this. It seems to be a letter written in a script that I cannot decipher. It appears to be a request or statement, but the text is not clear enough to provide a meaningful translation. If you have more context or a clearer version of the text, please provide it for a more accurate translation.
Brecll 30 1911 Sunrav
Mr. Streblow zjina nukai ta bipa
Kalavaka lata ta ngana dantilama
wa renta nunana anarama
Attwibera ka elbira atua lata etja
nunana bitjima etna amma
Zjimbalama etna amma ekhala
-jirara marirama atua arinji lata
lata ffaljiribuufy enakya etnana
etja ba ka zr. Sieblera galjintaka
mama Mosala ba galjintaka
etnana. So & Schulka la Katja
enkaraka na Mosala wara galjintan
arbunaraanga jinga tuba tang€tjk-
la lama la faljiriberaña
x & tabala rentalili la na galjintan
Mr. Sibblera era Aljiraka etta
wara -galjintanam etja knara
kurha wara era arondaka ankaja-
etja ntjara hattja amma
Katja enkaraka hwaraba wara
nta Mr. Siebleratala marirama
zana etna amma tél bi džimin
džilama & English and Germaine
and xaranta tuta
Sán na ankama unkwanga
zjina unkwanga fara Nathanael
elosis
Appendix D

Letter C

(Probably written in the mid-late 1930s)

Mr H.A. Heinrich

36 Sevenh [sic] Street
Gawler South

I received a letter from you and I’ve already sent one in return. Maybe you received it, maybe not. It might have been lost in the mail. My supply of paper was gone, I couldn’t write to you. Then Mr Albrecht asked if I’d like some paper from him. I am no longer working with them: my work position no longer exists. Your letter came today, I’m so happy to hear about you all and that you’re well. But I’m saddened to hear that you have no work. I myself have felt poorly too of late. I’ve just made one saddle for Mr Bowman and I’ll go again today to see him. Maybe he’ll give me more work, maybe not. If he has work for me I will send you that money that I promised you. I was short last time and so didn’t send it. The other thing is I’ve bought two more horses so I have four horses. Everyone is well again now, just a few are a little bit weak. Pinina is well again also, however she has lost some weight. Carma has been slowly improving of late, she experiences some pain, internally in her bones. She can’t get around much, also she still has sores and the infection is only gradually disappearing. Elsie and Kristina are in good health too. We thought and talked a lot about you a great deal when we were sick, “Oh he’s no longer with us”. We miss your patience and sympathy and some of us really empathise with you and with Mrs Heinrich. We vividly recollect the good old days. You have both earnt our respect. Your name is still treasured by many of the family. We don’t forget you, when we look at your photo tears come to our eyes. Lately Abel and Mr Petering have been teaching the schoolchildren. Mrs Albrecht has planted a lot of cabbages and they are growing nicely, she shares that produce with those who are sick.

this I am writing

your friend, affectionately

Theodor
Mr. L. A. Heinrich

To papu unkwangana ninta ranga inaka ta
unkwanga tula ninta ranga y pepa kala jina:
tunga unta lena pepa baka inaka tunga ija i:
tunga eva jaiola jeraka nuka kuta pepa ija inta:
unkwanguna wota intaliliika jingga ija anja
naka Mr. Albrechtana Umaritika era jingan.
papa ntiyika tatalbula jingga etnaka ta ija
urkaburumanga nuka jobi tatalbula ija intama
ta pepa unkwangana lata inkala jingga argana
nana ragankorebera urumala rankuru larunk
mara namanga jingga bula kurka l'arka nama
unkwangana jobi ija intamanga jingga kula:
lata very poor inova nama ninta ranga
ta Mr. Bowmansaka sadle urkaburuka jingga
lata wota bama erina viljika / tunga baka
ta jingana wota job ntiyina tunga ija

Tunga eva jingana job intamanga ta lena
money lentiyo unkwangana jainjina lata
time nuka xija enough money Xinta
unkwangana jainjika nagakwia ta nanto ta:
wota skuranga baimuka nuka lata nan
four nama / lata rela intapaka wota
l'arkna mara nama urbulja wota kurka
taltja nama ntema lena mentebena

Rinina kala l'arkning mara nama

Appendices

135
era buta kurka tsoalwera ntemana. Karma lata kurka maverana unkwana kwana iware nkala nama era ija mara ndulabuma skura nama ija fira kula buta Gotama kurka iware. Elsie Kristina tuta mara nama nuna inkaraka la unkwangibera kunaka ankariraka miza nama jekai ajua lata ija nana nunakali nuna monjamonjilitika urbutja manking lela unkwangibera kunaka buta knara ilbankaka imankibera kunkai mfala atnana knara monjamonjilaka etna ngan knara anbanama lathulula nuna itja ra'angankarebera knurevama nuna ndalja unkwanga ramala akholga ratana tli Abel Mr. Petering tavela katjibera schoola galitjintama. Mr. Allrechtala Cabbage gawopala knara inkainaka mord manakama tuta era menterberana tuta kurka ndama.

nana intalilam
 Gina kankiypala

Theodor
Appendix D

Letter D

The University of Adelaide
February [sic] 4th 1962

Mr T.G.H. Strehlow my friend

I am writing just a short letter to you for you to see. I have also sent a short letter to Pastor P.A. Scherer. I want you to know that I have left Ntarea [sic]. Today I plan to leave to go north. Not for a long time mind you. At the end of March I will come back again. Pastor Scherer sent word to ask me to help him with the translation of hymns, psalms and liturgies. Mr T.G.H. Strehlow, when are you going to send those hymns to us? I thank you very much for the presents you gave me for Christmas and also for your greetings. I also want to ask you. Perhaps you could send me an old gramophone. I want to be able to play it for the children to hear. For their sakes I’m asking about the new hymns. Please my friend, send me an old gramophone if you’re happy to do so.

I am your very good friend

Colin Malbangka
The University of Adelaide

Mr. T. G. H. Strechlow tsina muka: February 14th 1902

Ata ankata burka wara

nykwana era inte lelama bukta milika ata bakwe
yona swena Pastor P.A. Scherenska jairaka burka wara
minta galaju milika. Jijataka 5 hterzama rataka jata
jiya zerabamana kita kita antja nama, ita antala
kpanala kala. Mante, jeryoana yala jinya bula jepi jala
nastema Pana, ankata Pastor S. Scherenska, nama
jejia tejita yala miyika gelinyama yala Palma
kala.

Leku, Mr. T. G. H. Strechlow, silayana sweta numa ka
belejume, etlama jenimunia site jie jie numa
hejuna, jeryoana kameriteqiu kensa, jinya numa mokakalanja.

Christu intake abanima, nykwana buna kagwa
ntu. Jai atte ujana jemaitiya omuyana. Ini baka
sweta Cramafors baka jikueq maka jainamana jineta
ntu. Nana, ateta jeta. Nyirama, bakire ankabila
ntu. Ati, jeryoana kameriteqiu kensa, jinya numa gelinyama
jenimunia. Jeryoana kameriteqiu. Please numa nketa Cramafors
nykwana bakire jinya sweta antja numa baka

Jinya, Pana. Zina, jyakala

Unywa yala Colin Melbonyaka
Appendix E  Family profile - Profile A

Grandfather

I am 76, I was born Hermannsburg, mother and father real Arrernte, proper Western Arrente. Mother, oh proper ‘Aranda’ she could read, and speak German, sing German too, Christmas songs. I went to school in Hermannsburg, I learnt our language, mostly our language, didn’t English then, ‘Aranda’ reading and writing too got’em lessons too in our language, reading in ‘Aranda’ with old what’sername Heinrich. When I was in church, confirmed, then reading Bible. When we read this one you see’em what Ingkarte ngkeme (pastor saying), we got to learn first, I got to learn, till I can got to tell the people then, same way again lakenhe (like that), and becoming pastor then, Ingkarte (pastor). I can read the whole lot, every book, every week, every day too. And wriemileme (writing) for service, I got to write’em first what songs, what words I got to write’em down, what words God tell us to speak to people you know? That one I got to write’em in ‘Aranda’. A lot of writing hmmm, half a page I write’em got to change’em again. I’ll get this one [Bible] I’ll write it down which text Sunday read, I got to read’em one week, got to learn, start again and I can keep’em in mind. Preaching proper reading so people can understand what you preaching. I write every day, I sign my name every day from Monday to Friday [at work at Tangentyere Council]. I like to look after them workers, but I got to do writing for that, for all the workers. Write it down times, you know what time and which work you bin doing this morning and all that. That’s how I learn a little bit at Tangentyere in English. Only ‘Aranda’ reading or singing or preaching.

I taught one daughter to read ‘Aranda’, she’s got a station now, she always using this one [Bible], sometimes Sunday, she got to read Sunday for the family you know. Awe (yes) she was first, she was born here, she bin grow up here. They bin ‘Aranda’ mob like learm, she bin do’em that way, ‘Aranda’. Other daughter nothing. [Two other daughters attended SAL courses in the early 1980s]. When we start that Yipirinya after few years go round kid mob, talk to them send them to Yipirinya, that’s the work I bin do. School [Yipirinya] we had first here in the camp, eldest granddaughter can write a little bit Arrernte. Reading in Arrernte important for the kids, when he grow up he can do something then, teaching other people too. Important reading and writing that somebody, you might send a letter when you on station. They got to learn strong Arrernte, and at home tell stories in Arrernte, something dreaming, this one from before, what whitchety travel from there to there, come back, that sort of story, you got to tell’em kids Arrernte.

139
Grandchildren

I remember my grandfather tell stories about his olden days and he sings about what old people sing. Yeah we all went through Yipirinya School, [then one to Yirara College till Year 10, and the other to Alice Springs High School till around Year 9]. When there was school in town camp auntsies used to help with reading and writing. At Yipirinya we especially learn about English and when we go to Western Arrernte class we read about Western Arrernte in language. We remember English mostly cause when we get off the bus we go to English class first and after recess we had to go to Western Arrernte class, but after lunch we had to go back to English classes again. We like having Aboriginal teachers for Arrernte, it was better at Yipirinya [than an English only school] 'cause you can learn two ways, in Arrernte my language and English. I'd send my kids to Yipirinya so they learn more, I'll be choosing my daughter to go to Western Arrernte class. Yipirinya School that's the only school I know.

We never used any reading and writing in Arrernte since school, forget about it, we only sing in 'Aranda' in church, pastor [grandfather] gives us one book and we try to read it. There was one [newsletter at home] in Arrernte from Yipirinya School. You know they used to give a sort of newspaper in Arrernte and English, that's one I remember but my grandfather threw it away a couple of months back. No-one else can read and write Arrernte in the family, not that I know of, my grandfather used to write in Western 'Aranda' way, in church way. I read comics in English, only need to write my name, only work was CDEP, cleaning old people's houses. Never use Arrernte reading and writing, maybe learn again, more Arrernte reading to learn my kids, so when they grow up they can use it in two ways, so when my daughter grows up if they ask her what's her language and all that, so she can say she's really Western Arrernte.
Appendix E  Individual - Profile B

As a child I spoke Central Arrernte from my mother’s side and Anymatyerr from my father’s side. I identify Anymatyerr as my language, from my father’s side because I’ve got to follow him. I learnt the alphabet and how to write a bit of English at the Bungalow school, but I don’t remember much. I was about ten years old when I went to the dormitory at Lyentye Aparthe. The new mission had just started there at Santa Teresa. The nuns taught us more about how to read and write. I always went to visit my family at the weekends in one of their camps around the mission. That’s how I kept my language strong. We took sentences home to show all our mothers and fathers. My mother and father couldn’t read so we read to them. They didn’t understand what reading and writing was. I think they were proud of us, “They can read whiteman’s writing!” Proud of us to go in to shops and ask for anything we wanted like merne (food), kere (meat), tea and sugar. The first book I ever saw was the New Testament. Sometimes we read the Bible in church, and the nuns used it in school. But I never read the Bible much, too big, too hard. The nuns would explain it to us though and we tried to understand. I was in the dormitory until I was about twenty. After I left the dormitory I lived in Lyentye Aparthe and in holiday times travelled around to Aileron and Napperby, my father’s and father’s father’s country, and Yambah my mother’s country. I learnt about country and medicines and lots of other things that the old people passed on to us. I lived for a while in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and I still live here now.

They chose me first to learn to read and write in our language for school. I met one Preschool teacher at the mission, she came down to camp and she would like to sit with me and talk and I started to tell her my stories. I once heard my parents and grandparents telling those stories to me and my brothers and sisters. It was very important to hear all that story. But nowadays I never hear all that story, people don’t do it now. Telling those stories is really important that’s what we need to find out. So then one day this teacher asked me to come to Preschool to tell my stories to the little kids and we both saw that telling stories for the little kids was good. She saw that I can tell my stories for them and they can go to sleep and she told the Sister Robyn [Reynolds]. They took notice of me coming up and telling kids every day.

So Sister Robyn and the Council out there talked to me and asked me to go and do that course in Batchelor [SAL], which I did in 1977. The Arrernte that I spoke had never been written before and I wondered why I should know how to write English but not my own language. Gavan [Breen] and I worked together and he helped me to write that language, my mother’s language, the
language of Yambah [an outstation] and Mparntwe too. That’s the first time that language was written, at least by its own people. I was used to writing letters to family and friends in English and I’d write some other things, but it took time for me to learn to write Arrernte. I was always slow and a bit unsure and there are many words that I’m still not sure of. I couldn’t read the words I wanted to write anywhere, so I didn’t have any idea of what they should look like. Gavan would get me to think of how they should sound and say them to myself and think about what letters go with those sounds I was making and hearing. Those linguists really made me think, and I liked to learn about how sounds were made and to write my language for the first time, and to see people working on our languages and understanding how important it is to us and all Aboriginal people. I was happy to get that certificate [Certificate in Literacy Work] and to learn about language and to work with it.

I started teaching with Sister Robyn at Santa Teresa after I first went to Batchelor. I taught both white people and our own kids. I taught some of those women who are now important in the school in Lyentye Apurte. I taught them when they were just girls. It must have been in the 1980s when Sister Robyn and I started teaching how to write Arrernte. No-one else in my family can read and write Arrernte. In 1981 I came to town here when they was getting ready to start Yipirinya School. Thomas Stevens went to see Eli and recommended that I teach and make books in Arrernte. Eli got me to work at the school at Hidden Valley, I was teaching my children in the classroom but I taught them nothing after school. I’ve been happy to make books for Yipirinya and I was happy when David [Wilkins] came to work with us to learn the language and help make books and listen to how we wanted to teach the kids our way. Kids should learn to read, and they should learn our stories Altyerriperre (Dreaming-after) stories.

You’d see lots of English back in those days and I’d think why can’t we see the language of our country. It’s good nowadays because you can see Arrernte in lots of places, on signs, on shirts, on buildings. We can feel proud about that. Yipirinya and IAD helped a lot to spread that writing, make it important. The linguists taught people. There’s still not much to read, just what we write ourselves. For me it’s always useful to read in Arrernte because I need to see it to show kids and other people. When you read it in books or in news from school, like Yipirinya put out report of school days, they give everyone, friends, and mothers and fathers and families from Yipirinya. Sometimes I read in newspapers at Tangentyere [Council], mission news, report from school and IAD. Sometimes I was writing letters to my friends [non-Arrernate] and Arrernte friend living in the Top End, and I’d send cards for friends in Ernabella in my own language, some other birthday cards, little things not long sentences. And I keep some papers with me that I was doing

Appendices
with my friend [a linguist]. Me and my friend are working on a family tree together, different to Land Council, they just pile up names from top and bottom. I want to do mine in a circle. My idea. I was thinking about future to kids. I read English though, I read newspapers and I'd read a lot of comics. My favourites were Batman and Robin and Superman. Anything really. I wasn't much interested in reading big books. But we got to know what's going on in the world and read bills and signs and the Centralian Advocate [local newspaper]. But Arrernte reading and writing can be used to let all Arrernte people know what's happening to our country and language.
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