MUSIC-BASED LANGUAGE LEARNING
IN REMOTE AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In response to the disproportionately low educational outcomes of students in remote Indigenous schools, this study examined the potential for musical activities to provide a platform for the learning of Standard Australian English (SAE) in these contexts. The study also investigated ways in which the same or similar approaches may contribute to the maintenance and revival of Australian Indigenous languages. Conducted as a qualitative multi-case study, this research analysed interview data collected from nine participants, including classroom teachers, ethnomusicologists and music educators, each with relevant professional experience and knowledge. Findings demonstrated the capacity of music-based learning to facilitate meaningful immersion in both SAE and Indigenous languages, and to interface with Indigenous pedagogies and perspectives. Music-based approaches were seen to promote engagement in language learning through experiences that students perceived as valuable and purposeful. Equally, music-based learning provided students with a sense of ownership over learning and opportunities for personal and cultural validation. In addition, the findings identified several factors that often place limitations on remote schools’ capacity to facilitate music-based learning. The need to develop local capacity in remote Indigenous communities was recognised as vital in order to provide students with an education that is both holistic and sustainable.
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Australian Indigenous people’s first experiences with Western education, beginning in the late 18th century, took place in mission schools in which curricula were constructed upon an agenda of assimilation. In many cases these attempts were abandoned prematurely, primarily due to the belief that students’ lack of “success” was the result of racially inherent intellectual incompetence (Partington, 1998). The perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples led to the instating of government “Protection” policies between 1880 and 1951 (Australian Museum, 2009a, 2009b), which mandated that many Indigenous groups live within the confinement of designated reserves and districts. Though schooling was provided in Aboriginal reserves, students were taught predominately by untrained teachers and rarely provided an education beyond the lower primary level (Partington, 1998). Similar conditions were also reflected in Torres Strait Island (TSI) schools during this time (Wemyss, 2011).

This history remains a pertinent factor in the current poor educational outcomes of many Indigenous Australian students. Moreover, past education policies have played a critical role in the subordination of Australian Indigenous peoples and contributed to the large scale erosion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages (Dunn, 2001; Schmidt, 1993).

It is argued by many that maintaining Indigenous cultures, and fostering the long term independence of Indigenous communities within contemporary Australia, must involve the negotiation of avenues through which Indigenous Australians can attain fundamental Western skills (Batten, Frigo, Hughes, & McNamara, 1998; CESCEO NATSIEP Working Party, 2001; Christie, 1990). Champagne and Abu-Saad (2006) support this argument, asserting that any indigenous community wielding proficiency in the language of its nation state has a louder political voice and a more sustainable future. Though written in reference to TSI contexts, Nakata’s (2003) sentiments further express the urgency of this reality for all remote Australian Indigenous communities:
Our communities are literally "a drop in the ocean". We do not have many avenues for leverage with governments. English literacy and understanding the world beyond our communities, beyond our local and cultural context, is as critically important for our future survival as understanding our traditional pathways. Anything that diverts us from the urgency of achieving educational success for future generations should be avoided. (p. 10)

The literature also reveals strong aspirations amongst remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for their children to receive a high quality Western education for reasons that reflect the aforementioned benefits (Batten et al., 1998; Blitner et al., 2000; Wemyss, 2003).

Most important for these communities, however, is an education that does not result in further dispossession of Indigenous languages and cultures (Tait et al., 2010; York, 1995). In support of this view, Harris (1990) argues that culture loss need not be an outcome of bicultural practices. His two-way schooling model promotes bilingual education and a balance of local and Western content in remote Indigenous school curricula. In this way, Harris envisages that “new skills learned from another culture can be added to a person’s primary cultural makeup, rather than displace it” (p. 1). Successful implementation of Western education, therefore, seeks not to marginalise communities. Instead, it establishes a constructive interface that provides Indigenous Australians with equal opportunity to participate in national and international societies.

**Significance**

Although improvement is evident, Indigenous students (as a national cohort) remain below national literacy benchmarks (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). Statistics reported by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008) show that literacy outcomes are even lower amongst remote Indigenous students than those living in provincial and metropolitan areas. For many Indigenous Australians living in remote communities Standard Australian English (SAE) is a second, third, fourth or foreign language. Yet, despite multilingualism having been a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures even prior to colonisation (Beckett, 1987; Dunbar-Hall, 2004), spoken fluency in SAE still remains uncommon within remote
communities (NLLIA South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre, University of Adelaide, & University of South Australia, 1996; Shepherd, 2003).

In 2008, a controversial decision made by the Northern Territory Minister for Education and Training mandated that “the first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools ... be conducted in English” (Scrymgour, 2008, p. 2). This policy replaced the bilingual education structures existent within many remote Northern Territory (NT) schools with the intention of “improv[ing] attendance rates and lift[ing] the literacy and numeracy results in ... remote Indigenous schools” (Scrymgour, 2008, p. 2). However, limiting access to bilingual education is recognised by many as a severe handicap for students in remote Indigenous communities, as students’ acquisition of SAE is made increasingly difficult without support in their first language (Black, 1993). Even in remote areas of Australia where government policies do not restrict the use of Indigenous languages in schools, the lack of appropriate human and teaching resources often makes adequate bilingual education an impossibility (Simpson, Caffery, & McConvell, 2009). Moreover, Walton (1997) asserts that “equitable education does not necessarily mean providing the same education” (p. 45) and that Indigenous academic success is best engendered through curricula that include Indigenous cultures, languages and perspectives.

The limited functionality of SAE within remote communities is cited as another fundamental obstruction in students’ acquisition of SAE oracy and literacy skills (Harris, 1990; Nakata, 1999). As school is often the only setting in which students are required to speak, write and/or read SAE, many students may perceive the language as devoid of purpose, or bearing only abstract qualities (Shnukal, 2003). In response to this issue, many educators have advocated a need to attach SAE learning to contexts and experiences that carry purpose and meaning for Indigenous students (Frigo et al., 2004; Nakata, 1999). Music offers one such avenue through which remote students may be immersed in SAE usage in a manner that is purposeful and culturally sensitive (Bryce, Mendelovits, Beavis, McQueen, & Adams, 2004).

Equally, music may offer a platform for the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages. Prior to the colonisation of Australia, approximately 250 Indigenous languages are believed to have been spoken, many of these with several different
dialects. Of these languages, approximately two-thirds are now extinct. Within the remaining third, only 20 have a clearly foreseeable future, as they are spoken fluently by children within these language groups (McKay & National Board of Employment Education and Training, 1996; Schmidt, 1993; Walsh, 1993). In the same way as SAE, therefore, many surviving Indigenous languages are limited in their social function within remote communities. As with SAE, this functionality may be diversified through music.

Traditionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have used music to foster connection to “country” and to communicate aspects of history, knowledge, law and spirituality (Ellis, 1985; Neuenfeldt, 2002). Music in Australian Indigenous communities continues to provide a vital outlet for expression of cultural identity and act as an important channel for both inter- and intra-cultural communication (Magowan & Neuenfeldt, 2005; Marett, 2005; York, 1995). In the past several decades, many Indigenous musicians have also willingly drawn inspiration from a diverse range of Western popular styles, resulting in an Indigenisation of these genres (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004; Wemyss, 1999). Irrespective of sounds promoted by Indigenous artists, Kral (2010) states that burgeoning access to music via digital and online platforms has seen global music cultures increasingly permeate the identities of Indigenous youth, including those forged by children and adolescents growing up in remote communities.

Using music-based pedagogies to teach SAE is not a new idea within Indigenous Australian education. Reflecting the priorities of the era, the 1952 Provisional Curriculum for use in Coloured Schools (Education Department Western Australia) suggests the use of singing to improve students’ pronunciation, listening games to aid language acquisition, and other musical activities to engage Indigenous students in learning. In the early 1970s, an “experimental language development program” implemented in several Queensland Aboriginal schools demonstrated success in teaching oracy and literacy skills to children in their first year of school (Department of Education Queensland & Bernard Van Leer Foundation Project, 1972). The program, whilst exploiting various approaches to language learning, included a diverse range of musical activities.
Ferguson’s 1977 study, *Using Music as a Teaching Medium in Aboriginal Schools*, discusses a range of strategies to integrate music into all areas of the primary curriculum within remote schools. Meanwhile, similar suggestions appear in other journal articles, policies and curriculum documents published in the 1970s and 1980s (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1982; Russo, 1978; South Australia Department of Education, 1979; Spring, 1980).

Despite the substantial evolution of these ideas in more recent practice\(^1\), only a limited number of formal studies have investigated the effectiveness of using music-based approaches to teach SAE in remote Australian Indigenous schools. Fewer still have considered the use of music-based approaches in Indigenous language maintenance and revival. In its examination of these ideas, this study aimed also to explore potential links between music-based learning and Indigenous pedagogies, as a means of establishing culturally congruent teaching practices. Furthermore, this study sought to understand the impact of music-based learning on students’ engagement and attendance in remote Indigenous schools.

**Research Questions**

The following questions constituted the starting points for this investigation:

1. How is music-based learning currently being used in remote Indigenous Australian schools to teach SAE and Indigenous languages? How effective are these strategies?
2. How can music-based language learning support Indigenous pedagogies?
3. In what ways does music-based learning influence student engagement and/or attendance in remote schools?

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\(^1\) Discussed in Chapter 2.
Definitions

Indigenous/indigenous: where this word appears with a capital “I” it refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Where this word appears with a lower case “i” it refers to indigenous populations residing in all parts of the world.

*Language*: where this word appears in italics it refers to Australian Indigenous language(s).

Language learning: in this context, this term refers holistically to the learning of literacy (reading and writing) and oracy (verbal fluency) in SAE and/or Indigenous languages.

“Healthy”, “weakening” and “dying” languages (Schmidt, 1993, p. 2):

A healthy language is one which is transmitted to children and actively spoken by all generations in a wide range of social contexts .... Children have command of the whole language ... and do not rely on English or another encroaching language to fill in gaps in their language knowledge.

A weakening language is one which is not fully transmitted to younger generations – the language transmission link has been broken or severely disrupted .... A weakening language has limited social function ... and, apart from some words and phrases, is not actively spoken by the younger generation.

A dying language is one whose demise is imminent. For example, only a handful of older speakers retain the language; few or none of the younger generation have an elementary command of the language; the language is not actively spoken or has extremely limited use.

Language maintenance: “efforts to promote the *continuing use* of a language in all its forms and in a wide range of contexts” (Pollard & Boson, 1995, n.p.).

Language revival: “attempts to *increase* or *bring back into usage* aspects of patterns of usage that have fallen into disuse” (Pollard & Boson, 1995, n.p.).
Acronyms

ESL – English as a Second Language
LEA – Language Experience Approach
MOF – Music Outback Foundation
NALP – National Accelerated Literacy Program
NSW – New South Wales
NT – Northern Territory
NTMS – Northern Territory Music School
SAE – Standard Australian English
TSI – Torres Strait Islands/Islander
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter begins with a synthesis of approaches to music-based language learning commonly encountered within the literature. These practices are subsequently analysed in connection with contemporary literacy learning models and Indigenous pedagogies. Lastly, the potential for these approaches to engender greater student engagement and attendance is evaluated.

Music and Language as an Interdisciplinary Strategy

Interdisciplinary education is the deliberate connection of two or more subject areas within a single learning experience, or across a series of related lessons. Broadly, interdisciplinary teaching may adopt the lens of one domain to gain understanding within another, purposefully integrate elements of different subject areas to provide students with unique insights, or promote understanding of a central concept through exploration of this theme across multiple disciplines. Interdisciplinary education can also allow students to more fluidly transfer knowledge and skills across the school curriculum (Barrett & Veblen, Forthcoming, 2012; Goldberg & Scott-Kassner, 2002).

The literature identifies singing, songwriting and lyric deconstruction as the most common interdisciplinary language learning approaches involving a musical basis. These approaches are analysed separately but are frequently combined with each other. As a consequence of the lack of research on this topic conducted within Australian Indigenous contexts, this section synthesises literature pertaining to West-centric, English as a Second Language (ESL) and Australian Indigenous education settings. It is not implied that findings derived from the variety of contexts correlate directly with remote Indigenous contexts, or that remote Indigenous contexts may be treated homogeneously. Comparison does, however, provide an insightful basis upon which further research may expand.
Singing

Songs commonly contain recurring, predictable and memorable structures that are useful in fostering language acquisition and developing literacy skills (McDougall, 1996; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Singing songs provides a unique mode of language immersion, as it involves repetitious language practice without feeling laborious (R. G. Smith, 2000; Standley, 2008). The literature emphasises the advantages of learning song lyrics orally, as this provides a solid basis with words before connecting them to text, especially for students intimidated by reading (Barclay, 1999; Harp, 1988; Kolb, 1996; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Frigo et al. (2004) and Wemyss (2003, 2011) identified many Indigenous students’ familiarity with oral learning, particularly within remote contexts, as an additional benefit of using such approaches with Indigenous students.

Within two separate music-based programs implemented in NT schools – Boys Business (for adolescent Indigenous boys) and the Indigenous Music Education Programme (implemented by the Northern Territory Music School for upper primary and adolescent students in Aboriginal schools)² – anecdotal observations supported the rehearsal of popular song as an engaging vehicle for language acquisition (Bryce et al., 2004; Tait et al., 2010). Within both programs, incidental interactions with printed lyrics during the course of student-centric rehearsals were identified by teachers and students as contributing to students’ reading competency.

Marsh (2011) described lessons in an Aboriginal homelands primary school in which songs in Mudburra were used as “primary vehicle[s]” (p. 23) for the maintenance of this language. Aboriginal language programs implemented in Kuranda State School (north Queensland), Docker River School (remote NT) and Kaurna Plains School (Adelaide) also included singing activities (Johnson, 1994; Lanham et al., 1994; Pollard & Boson, 1995; Varcoe, 1994). Wemyss (2011) observed similar practices in TSI schools, where traditional songs were often used as part of orally teaching TSI languages. Within both Marsh and Wemyss’ studies, singing activities (in some instances) also facilitated interaction with written forms of Indigenous languages.

² In both programs a small number of participating students were non-Indigenous.
Performing songs with accompanying actions can also aid students’ comprehension of song lyrics and is a common technique in primary ESL education (Marsh, 1984; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Studies conducted by Tait et al. (2010), Marsh (2011) and Wemyss (2011) provide evidence that action songs have also been used within remote Indigenous education contexts in the learning of SAE and Indigenous languages. The successful incorporation of “action oriented” songs (Bryce et al., 2004, p. 24) within the Boys Business program suggests that action songs may also be configured as age appropriate activities for adolescent students.

Singing and other musical activities that promote listening skills may also enhance students’ phonological and phonemic awareness (Butzlaff, 2000; Hansen & Bernstorf, 2002), and help students to recognise rhythms, intonations and grammatical structures common in speech (Dunbar-Hall, 1991; Li & Brand, 2009; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Support for these claims is evident in the learning outcomes of members of a remote Indigenous children’s choir, for whom regular singing practice of English language songs engendered visible improvement in their oral comprehension and pronunciation of standard English sounds (Winkler, 2009). Furthermore, Tait et al. (2010) described a variety of singing and instrumental activities used successfully to teach remote Indigenous early childhood students aspects of oral nuance in SAE and Indigenous languages.

**Songwriting**

While singing provides rich linguistic practice, songwriting facilitates language learning through the creative manipulation of words, as observed in multiple remote Indigenous education contexts. Mitchell (1993) described Indigenous students in a remote secondary school constructively engaging in song composition in both Pitjantjatjara and SAE. Similarly, Tait et al. (2010) observed young adult students in a remote community learning centre eagerly approach opportunities to write songs in local Aboriginal languages. Additionally, R. G. Smith (2009) identified the “proliferation of youth music and bands across the Top End [of NT]” (p. 90) as providing vast opportunity for language learning through songwriting.
In the primary context, Marsh (2011) described Mudburra language songs composed informally and collaboratively by students and community members as “a form of cultural transmission” (p. 25). She observed that the consequent performance of these songs within language lessons allowed multiple teaching and learning roles associated with kinship and societal roles to permeate the classroom, forming an essential part of the learning. Tait et al. (2010) also observed spontaneous song composition featuring naturally in the daily lives of primary students in a remote NT community. The authors noted that capitalising on these abilities within the classroom helped forge students’ understanding of SAE and Indigenous languages.

Other popular classroom approaches for language learning through song composition include adapting studied narratives or picture books into original song (Howell, 2009; Rossi, 1997; Whitaker, 1994) and writing original lyrics to familiar tunes (Barclay, 1999; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Wemyss (2011) affirmed the benefits of the latter technique within TSI schools, commenting that the activity “required students ... to assemble meaningful sentences using accurate syntax” and that “students also became increasingly aware of appropriate rhythm and stress in SAE” (p. 163).

Lyric Deconstruction

Most often partnered with singing, lyric deconstruction involves either analysis of lyrics’ meanings, or literacy activities and games linked to the lyrics of learnt repertoire. The latter commonly includes tasks addressing comprehension, vocabulary, reading, letter sounds, word recognition, rhyme, creative writing and drama. Evidence of such activities being used successfully has been observed in Indigenous, West-centric and ESL education settings (Darrow et al., 2009; Hughes, More, & Williams, 2004; Li & Brand, 2009; McDougall, 1996; Rossi, 1997; R. G. Smith, 2000; Wemyss, 2003).

Analysing the meaning of lyrics may involve simple deconstruction of words, phrases and stories contained in song texts, or extend to more in-depth understanding of literary techniques and lyricists’ intentions. Hill’s (2009) Hip-Hop

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3 These techniques are evident in many of the studies cited in the previous paragraph.
Lit course, delivered to high school students in a predominately African-American suburb, presents a unique example of critical lyric analysis. Throughout the course students engaged in silent and group reading of song texts, wrote journal responses to songs and participated naturally in passionate discussion about meaning in hip-hop lyrics. While English was the first language of all students in Hill’s study, a music therapy program conducted in a Brisbane high school shows evidence of similar approaches achieving positive results in the ESL context (Cheong-Clinch, 2009). In this program, writing activities and group discussions about repertoire acted as a supplement to the rehearsal and performance of popular songs, which were chosen by students. Involvement in the program visibly improved students’ confidence in English language usage, thus perpetuating their willingness to be involved in the program’s learning processes.

**Linking Music-Based Learning to Contemporary Literacy Models**

In recent decades many forms of literacy education have focused on holistic and constructivist approaches, taking into account the socio-cultural contexts in which literacy develops and children’s meaning-making within these contexts. These approaches involve meaningful and purposeful interactions with text, and more recently with multiple forms of text, including digital and visual texts (Beecher & Arthur, 2001).

Included in these approaches is the Whole Language model, which respects texts as whole and meaningful entities (as opposed to phonics-based methods) (Whitaker, 1994). Whole Language teaching also advocates exposure to “real literature”, such as song texts and students’ original work, as compared with decontextualised teaching resources (Harp, 1988). Connected to the Whole Language paradigm is the Language Experience Approach (LEA). Though predating some other current approaches, this model prioritises “personal and familiar experiences” (Dixon & Nessel, 1983, p. x) using students’ existing vocabulary to generate original texts through which reading and writing skills are learnt. Additionally, the National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP), a model designed specifically for Indigenous students, “works directly at
giving Indigenous students access to literate discourse through intense engagement with age appropriate literate texts” (Gray, 2007, p. 4).

These social constructivist views of literacy learning are philosophically aligned with social constructivist music education models, which recognise that:

making music is an individual process but also a cultural process ... in that both the product created and the processes involved in its creation are embedded in a particular cultural milieu, including the nature of the musical system involved and the socio-cultural contexts within which it resides. (Wiggins & Espeland, Forthcoming, 2012, n.p.)

Wiggins (2009) warns that, where educators utilise interdisciplinary strategies involving the arts, “there is the danger that ... important objectives of arts curricula will get lost in the process” (p. 271). However, parallels between the aforementioned learning models may allow students to concurrently engage in both meaningful language and musical learning. Additionally, these models for music and language learning are largely congruent with aspects of Indigenous pedagogies, as discussed in the following section.

**Linking Music-Based Learning to Indigenous Pedagogies**

Indigenous pedagogies do not refer to Indigenous students’ learning styles, nor do they promote certain ways of teaching as universally appropriate for Indigenous Australian students (Harris, 1990; Harrison, 2008; Hooley, 2009; Hughes et al., 2004; Yunkaporta, 2009). Instead, Indigenous pedagogies are adaptable models that serve to incorporate Indigenous perspectives as a means of “decolonising” the classroom environment (Biermann & Townsend-Cross, 2008, p. 152). Fostering Indigenous perspectives has also been shown to promote student attendance (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Peacock, 1993) and engagement\(^4\), as doing so allows for development of personal and cultural identity (Dwyer, 2002; Munns, Martin, & Craven, 2008).

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\(^4\) These issues are discussed further in the following subchapter.
The following section identifies connections between music-based language learning approaches and Indigenous pedagogies. Whilst drawing on broad reading, this discussion is structured in connection with Yunkaporta’s (2009) 8ways framework, which identifies eight common Aboriginal “ways of learning”, referred to as: Community Links, Land Links, Story Sharing, Non-Linear, Deconstruct/Reconstruct, Symbols and Images, Learning Maps and Non-Verbal (pp. 10-13).

Community and Land Links

Linking learning to the community is perhaps the most heavily emphasised Indigenous pedagogy (Batten et al., 1998; Dwyer, 2002; Harris, 1990; Hudspith & Williams, 1994; Hughes et al., 2004; Munns et al., 2008; Wemyss, 2003; York, 1995; Yunkaporta, 2009) and arguably the pedagogy music offers the greatest potential to support. As outlined earlier, music itself plays a crucial role within Indigenous cultures, serving to communicate cultural and spiritual identity, connect peoples to land and pass on history and knowledge (Ellis, 1985; Marett, 2005; Neuenfeldt, 2002). Music-based learning, therefore, presents limitless opportunities to include and create repertoire that connects to the identities of Indigenous students and communities.

Included in Community Links is a preference for collaborative learning, which is also greatly encouraged within music education via singing, performance and group composition. Furthermore, music education programs have the potential to invite community members and parents into the classroom, which has generated positive learning outcomes in many remote Indigenous schools (Mitchell, 1993; R. G. Smith, 2009; Tait et al., 2010; Wemyss, 2003). In their study of 13 desert schools, NLLIA South Australian Teaching and Curriculum Centre et al. (1996) observed a considerable difference between schools with and without community involvement in their curriculum, arguing that these connections are crucial to student learning. Community involvement is also positioned as a central tenet in the Department of Education, Science and Training’s (n.d.) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

5 This policy is current as of 2008 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations).
Story Sharing

Attaching learning to students’ lived experience may also be achieved through storytelling and narrative-based pedagogies (Hooley, 2009). Storytelling through music represents another feature of Australian Indigenous cultures (Ellis, 1985; Lawe Davies & Neuenfeldt, 2004), which may be facilitated in the classroom through the composition and performance of original songs. As discussed earlier, the powerful capacity for Indigenous students to learn through songwriting is evidenced within the literature (Mitchell, 1993; R. G. Smith, 2009; Tait et al., 2010; Wemyss, 2011). Furthermore, pre-existing repertoire (whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous) provides an infinite body of stories from which learning experiences may be derived.

Outside of Indigenous Australian contexts, American students enrolled in Hill’s (2009) Hip-Hop Lit course demonstrated eagerness to learn through reciprocal storytelling, inspired by their strong identification with the stories and themes contained in hip-hop texts. Given the more recent connection between hip-hop and Indigenous youth identity (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004), such an approach may allow for similar opportunities in the Indigenous classroom.

Non-Linear Learning

Non-Linear pedagogies approach learning from multiple perspectives, constructing meaning from a range of experiences that do not adhere to deliberate sequence. Music education supports this process in that, from a single source, learning may be derived through performance, analysis, composition, listening and/or movement. In addition, music may constitute a starting point for non-musical creation, an end product built upon other learning, or be otherwise integrated at any stage along the learning continuum (Jeanneret, 2008; R. G. Smith, 2000). Non-Linear processes may also be supported by facilitating “informal learning”, a student-centric music education framework in which aural learning in the creation and recreation of music are prominent (D'Amore, 2009; Green, 2008).
Deconstruct/Reconstruct

This form of pedagogy refers to aspects of Indigenous philosophy that emphasise understanding of holistic concepts prior to comprehension of inherent details. This opposes a standard Western approach to learning, which commonly begins with deconstructed parts and moves toward understanding of the “whole picture” (Batten et al., 1998; Harris, 1990; York, 1995). In this way, holistic learning is closely aligned with Whole Language and LEA models for literacy learning.

Symbols and Images, Learning Maps and Non-Verbal Learning

Symbols and Images and Learning Maps refer to Indigenous visual literacies that can function as effective learning aids. These may be viably incorporated into music tasks such as planning or graphically notating a composition. Although they do not offer practice in written literacy skills, they provide “legitimate tools [that work] towards print-related literacy development” (Procter, 1988, p. 226). Similarly, Non-Verbal pedagogies, which favour “hands-on” and “trial and error” approaches to learning, do not offer practice in spoken language. These strategies, however, have been observed to strongly engage Indigenous students in musical activity (R. G. Smith, 2009; Wemyss, 2003) and may constitute a positive starting point for such learning.

Engagement and Attendance

Low levels of engagement and frequent non-attendance are cited as common and interrelated issues within Indigenous education (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004; Munns et al., 2008). Reasons for these problems represent a complex web of historical, cultural, socio-economic and political issues, about which detailed discussion can unfortunately not be accommodated within this thesis.

Outlined in the literature is a generalised support for music-based learning to promote active participation in school life due its potential to engender enjoyable and creative learning environments and connect to students’ personal identities (R. G.
Smith, 2000; Cheong-Clinch, 2009). It can also facilitate social and collaborative learning opportunities and provide a more familiar mode of communication within the unfamiliar context of language acquisition (Goldberg & Scott-Kassner, 2002; Howell, 2009; Paquette & Rieg, 2008). Moreover, the literature contains numerous accounts of music-based learning contributing positively to students’ engagement and attendance within Indigenous education settings. Whilst encouraging, Munns et al. (2008) assert that curricula must attract the interest of Indigenous students without abandoning high expectations of achievement.

Overwhelmingly, observations recorded within Indigenous contexts emphasise the positive results seen where educational environments value students’ cultural identity and provide tools for students to express and develop this identity. Ernst (1987) discussed a profound change in students’ attendance and self-esteem at an Indigenous pre-school near Cape York after traditional dance and costume making became a regular part of daily activities. Equally, the opportunity to address personal and cultural themes through songwriting was recognised as a primary reason for increased student engagement, attendance and confidence in separate accounts provided by Mitchell (1993) and Tait et al. (2010). An extensive variety of school-related performance opportunities have also been evidenced to positively affect the attitude towards learning of Indigenous students of all ages (Bryce et al., 2004; Chadwick & Jrurrambu, 2004; Faulkner, Ivery, Wood, & Donovan, 2010; Mitchell, 1993; Tait et al., 2010; Wemyss, 2003, 2011).

Indeed, the establishment of school as a place of enjoyment, expression and creativity entails boundless positive ramifications for students’ education, far beyond music and/or language (O’Toole, 2008). Spillane (2009) recounts the transformation of boys in a rural Australian primary school following the implementation of a school-wide music program. The program (which included instrument making, ensemble experience, public performances and the opportunity to broadcast a weekly program on community radio) generated a decrease in misbehaviour, increases in student engagement and confidence, and an obvious improvement in students’ literacy and numeracy results. This case demonstrates the potential for music-based

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6 Students were not necessarily Indigenous.
learning to inspire improvement in students’ overall schooling, beyond the direct context in which lessons are taught.

Conclusion

The literature reveals a great diversity of approaches to music-based language learning within an equally diverse range of educational contexts. Analysis of the literature also identifies a number of similarities between music-based learning approaches, contemporary literacy learning models and commonly recognised Indigenous pedagogies. In addition, these approaches demonstrate strong potential to engender positive attitudes towards language learning. Most importantly, the literature identifies a need for further investigation of the effectiveness of these strategies within remote Indigenous educational contexts.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Indigenous Research and the Qualitative Paradigm

Although there is a long history of imperialistic research conducted in and about indigenous communities worldwide (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Piquemal, 2006), in the contemporary context:

research ... is very gradually coming to be seen as a potential means to reclaim languages, histories, and knowledge, to find solutions to the negative impacts of colonialism and to give voice to an alternative way of knowing and of being. (L. T. Smith, 2008, p. 91)

Furthermore, although the researcher’s status as a non-Indigenous Australian places certain limitations on this study (Battiste, 2008), L. T. Smith asserts the importance of:

retaining the connection between the academy of researchers, the diverse indigenous communities, and the larger political struggle of decolonisation because ... [these] connections, for all their turbulence, offer the best possibility for a transformative agenda that moves indigenous communities to someplace better than where they are now. (p. 88)

As qualitative methodologies focus on “the subjective experience of human beings” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. x), they provide valuable means through which the complexities of indigenous issues and contexts may be explored in-depth and be more accurately represented (L. T. Smith, 2008). Within this study, the use of qualitative methodologies was also vital in accessing detailed understanding of participants’ individual perceptions of, knowledge about, and experiences within remote Indigenous educational contexts.
Research Design

Multi-Case Study and Case Selection

This study adopted a multi-case study design in which each participant constituted a single case. Through the framing of individual cases, Burns (2000) states that “investigation ... retain[s] the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events” (p. 460). Furthermore, through the comparison of diverse cases, Stake (2005) asserts that researchers may derive “better understanding, and perhaps better theorising, about a still larger collection of cases” (p. 446).

Using purposive and snowball sampling (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Liamputtong, 2009), participants were selected for their experience in, and/or knowledge about, delivering music-based language learning experiences to students in remote Indigenous schools. Included in the sample are a range of classroom teachers, music educators and ethnomusicologists. Table 1 provides a short description of each participant’s professional experience.
Table 1: Participants’ professional experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Professional experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve Berry</td>
<td>Founder and Classroom Facilitator, Music Outback Foundation (see description following).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Mackinlay</td>
<td>Ethnomusicologist whose research experience includes examinations of the role of music and music education in the lives of Aboriginal people living in remote and urban areas of NT. In particular, Mackinlay has conducted research in Maya Hill* community and school (pre/primary/middle), in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria, NT. This community has suffered high levels of cultural dislocation resulting in varying levels of interest in traditional musical culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Minehan</td>
<td>Classroom teacher with experience in several remote schools throughout NT, working predominantly with secondary age students. She is currently located in an eastern Arnhem Land school. Despite no formal music training, Minehan’s classroom practice has included various music-based strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Mison</td>
<td>Current Principal of the Northern Territory Music School (see description following).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lia Pa’apa’a</td>
<td>Programs Manager, Music Outback Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Smith’</td>
<td>Former Music-In-Schools Adviser to the NT Department of Education and Training. Smith has also worked extensively with Indigenous adolescent boys throughout NT in various music education contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myfany Turpin</td>
<td>Ethnomusicologist and linguist with research experience in Aboriginal music and languages. In collaboration with Music Outback Foundation and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Turpin has been actively involved in a Kaytetye language and music program at Asha Creek School*, a pre/primary/middle school near Barrow Creek, NT. Kaytetye is a weakening Aboriginal language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mal Webb</td>
<td>Classroom Facilitator, Music Outback Foundation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Wemyss</td>
<td>Researcher in TSI music education. Wemyss is also a music and generalist teacher at Sandy Island Campus*, a pre/primary school in the central group of islands in the TSI. The Sandy Island community continues to maintain traditional music and dance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Pseudonym used to protect schools’ identities.

As outlined in Table 1, the sample also includes representatives from two third-party organisations – Music Outback Foundation (MOF) and Northern Territory Music School (NTMS). MOF is an independent philanthropic organisation that operates in

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7 Referred to as R.G. Smith in Chapter 2.
nineteen Indigenous community schools across three separate regions – remote NT, APY Lands\textsuperscript{8} and remote western NSW. Through the provision of week-long songwriting and performance based workshops, delivered once per term within each school, MOF work to:

- Support literacy and numeracy learning
- Support local language and culture
- Encourage attendance at school
- Train Indigenous staff
- Build relationships between schools and their communities

(Music Outback Foundation, 2006a, n.p.).

NTMS is a division of the NT Department of Education and Training, and provides a range of music education services throughout urban, regional and remote areas of NT. Within remote communities, NTMS offer a variety of school and community-based workshops which focus on developing performance, songwriting and music technology skills. Workshops are based on “models that are flexible and that can be sustained” (Andy Mison, interview). Through musical activities, workshops also aim to encourage attendance and engagement with school, as well as promote extra-musical learning, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

MOF and NTMS are only two of many third-party organisations that provide music education to students in remote Indigenous communities across Australia. Appendix A identifies a number of these organisations and briefly describes the programs they deliver. Interviewing representatives from all of these organisations was not possible for reasons including pragmatic considerations and the availability and willingness of representatives to participate. Additionally, not all organisations offer programs aligned with the research interests of this study. Moreover, it was not the agenda of this study to specifically evaluate the effectiveness of third-party systems and structures. Rather, data collection focused on the learning experiences provided by MOF and NTMS, which were analysed alongside those discussed by other interviewees within the sample, allowing for valuable comparison of differing learning contexts. These comparisons also allow for greater transferability of findings.

\textsuperscript{8} Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (remote north-western South Australia).
Regrettably, no participants in the study were Indigenous Australians. This is by no means reflective of deliberation on the part of the researcher; rather, it is a by-product of the disproportionately low number of Indigenous educators and professionals in Australia. All participants, however, are professionals who collaborate intensively with the Indigenous communities in which they work. In this way, the data, to a large extent, is representative of the interests of these communities, albeit as perceived by the participants.

**Data Collection**

**Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants and constituted the primary form of data collection in this study. Due to the range of geographic locations in which participants lived and/or worked, all interviews were conducted via phone and audio recorded. Dates of interviews are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2: Interview dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve Berry</td>
<td>March 7, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Mackinlay</td>
<td>March 21, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Minehan</td>
<td>March 26, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy Mison</td>
<td>March 11, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lia Pa’apa’a</td>
<td>March 18, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Smith</td>
<td>April 1, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myfany Turpin</td>
<td>March 15, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mal Webb</td>
<td>March 18, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathryn Wemyss</td>
<td>January 11, 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The benefits of semi-structured interviews are noted by Burns (2000), who states that they allow for “greater flexibility ... [and] a more valid response from the informant’s

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9 Except for Kathryn Wemyss’ interview, which was conducted in person and audio recorded.
Fontana and Frey (2005) also endorse this mode of inquiry for its ability to provide “contextually based results” (p. 698). In this way, semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to access the in-depth experience, knowledge and perspective of each participant. Given the diversity of participants’ professional roles, semi-structured questioning also permitted the exploration of overarching issues within the context of each individual’s professional experience.

The opportunity to “clarify, confirm and modify the participants’ comments with the participant” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 154) during semi-structured interviews also improved the credibility of this data. In some cases, email clarifications were made with participants following interviews, in an effort to facilitate further reflexivity. Field notes made following all interviews also helped to contextualise the responses of participants and enhance credibility (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Document Collection and Analysis

To a much smaller extent, document collection (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) provided an additional data set. This included the analysis of online multimedia, such as videos and student work samples made freely available via the MOF website and YouTube channel (Music Outback Foundation, 2006b, n.d.). Analysis of this data, and similar content available on the websites of other relevant third-party organisations, allowed further insight into the nature of their music education programs and identification of existent trends. Student work samples and unit of work outlines provided by one classroom teacher were also included in this analysis. The analysis of multiple forms of data improved the dependability of findings (Burns, 2000).
**Triangulation**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the terms “credibility” (in place of internal validity), “transferability” (in place of external validity) [and] “dependability” (in place of reliability)” (p. 219) are more accurately representative of the aims of naturalistic inquiry. The forms of triangulation of data utilised within this study functioned individually and jointly to enhance credibility, transferability and dependability of the research findings. Within-method triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007) was observed through the use of a uniform data collection instrument for multiple participants. The sample allowed for space triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007) as, collectively, participants’ professional experience covered a large number of diverse remote Australian Indigenous contexts. Although the researcher acknowledges the great diversity of Australian Indigenous cultures and the importance of developing community specific solutions (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2000), space triangulation allows, to some extent, for the transferability of the research findings within remote Indigenous Australia.

**Data Analysis**

Transcribed interview data and collected documents were analysed following a standard grounded theory approach, involving open, axial and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This frequent interchange between data collection and analysis allowed the researcher’s evolving understanding of incoming data to continually navigate the direction of consequent research (Boeije, 2010). Furthermore, this mode of inquiry facilitated constant comparison of perspectives within the data, as well as comparison with those perspectives established within the literature, thus allowing for the development of in-depth, critical understandings (Ezzy, 2002). These understandings are outlined and explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter begins by analysing the extent to which the various music-based approaches encountered during the research provided legitimate language learning experiences. This discussion applies both to the learning of SAE and Indigenous languages. Issues pertaining more specifically to language maintenance and revival are addressed in the subsequent section. From this basis, the analysis critiques the relevance of intersections between Indigenous pedagogies and music-based learning. Following this, the potential to improve student engagement and attendance through music-based learning is explored. Finally, the preparedness of remote schools to deliver music-based learning independently of third-party organisations is evaluated.

Comprehending Language Through Musical Activity

The data revealed a wide variety of music-based language learning experiences. As observed in the literature, activities fitted into three broad categories: singing, songwriting and lyric deconstruction. Most prominent in the data were approaches involving singing and songwriting; lyric deconstruction predominantly functioned as an extension of these activities and different approaches were frequently used interchangeably within lessons.

All participants recognised singing as an engaging opportunity for language practice and immersion. Many, however, expressed concern that using singing as a language learning tool in isolation would be likely to result in less meaningful, rote style learning:

Minehan: What kids do is they can learn a song ... from hearing it .... They learn the words to a song but what I found was they don’t know what those words are .... [For example], the word “just” ... if you’re not literate, if you’re oral in your orientation, that’s just a noise.

Myfany Turpin commented on the need to connect singing with other non-musical learning processes in order to capitalise on the learning opportunities provided by singing:
The songs are fantastic for [oral language practice] because children tend to sing and sing and sing ... [but] language is a communication, you know, you can’t just sort of reel off learnt lines of a song .... You actually have to learn how to put things together to say what you want to mean. And that’s where the songs are good as a starting point, you can say, “Well you know how in this song we said ‘Go to the creek’, now let’s put ‘Go to the house’, ‘Go to the shade’, ‘Go to the shop’,” and you create exercises based on a structure they’re familiar with .... The songs are a missed opportunity unless you have some sort of thought of what’s going on in those lines .... You need that other stage of analysis to turn it into something that’s more akin to speaking.

Memorising song lyrics was, however, acknowledged by a number of participants as a powerful starting point for connecting oracy to reading:

Berry: Because there’s already a bit of memory involved if they’ve sung the song several times, it’s a nice stepping stone to the ... task of being able to read something that you see for the first time. A good stepping stone is being able to read something that you already slightly know.

Kathryn Wemyss described initiating learning from an oral perspective as “the most important” consideration when teaching language to students belonging to an oral culture, particularly where students had limited or no reading experience. Similarly, Kate Minehan offered an anecdote demonstrating the potential to alienate orally-orientated students by asserting written text too early into language learning:

One day I typed out all the words for [a song] thinking this would help them learn the words. We read through it together and they suffered me explaining the words to them but finally they just said, “Leave us to listen to it a few times and we'll learn it.” I left them to it and they did learn the words. (Email, May 27, 2011)

Wemyss also asserted the importance of class discussion and, in particular, bilingual structures in assisting students’ comprehension:

We do talk about the meanings of songs and one thing that I do a lot ... is that I have my Indigenous teacher aide [do] a lot of translation because at that [early primary] level it’s very important that they get the meaning. So for instance when we have a story ... she’ll sit there and she’ll just translate it into Yumpla Tok.10 And since we started doing that I can’t tell

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10 Also known as Torres Strait Creole.
you how much quieter story time [is] because the kids are actually able to engage with it .... And so similar thing when we’re doing ... musical activities or songs ... I’ll often get her to translate what those songs mean into Yumpla Tok.

Combining musical learning with visual learning provided further opportunity to reinforce the meanings of songs. This included performing actions to songs, writing songs based on video stimuli and creating original picture books based on students’ original songs. Producing video clips for original and popular songs, which often involved students in filming literal re-enactments of the actions, events and/or themes described in song texts, was another common and engaging way of reinforcing lyrics’ meanings.

While singing necessitated “that other stage of analysis” (Myfany Turpin, interview) to enhance students’ comprehension of song texts, songwriting appeared to provide an opportunity to encapsulate a variety of non-musical learning experiences (such as discussion, brainstorming, reading and writing) within an overarching creative musical process. This is evidenced in Steve Berry’s description of his standard approach to facilitating whole-class songwriting:

> You tend to do this sort of brainstorming thing and develop word lists and ideas that get spit out by the kids .... Essentially you get the kids to tell you as much as possible ... and as they tell you that, you write it up on the board ... and then as the facilitator you tend to sort of group them .... Depending on how old the kids are you can talk to them about why you’re grouping them and categorising them ... and get into that sort of depth of language work as you develop the content.

Mal Webb also acknowledged students’ involvement in the songwriting process as positively affecting their comprehension of the words and concepts discussed within the lyrics:

> We’re used to that thing of ... you write a song with the kids and then [another class] learn it, but they haven’t learnt it in the same way as the kids who have [written] it and so they end up not actually knowing what it is [about].

Furthermore, Berry emphasised the importance of composing song texts with a logical structure when facilitating group songwriting activities:
Something that’s certainly a critical stage ... is to come up with an overarching concept of the song that will generate the chorus. So it could be “community life”, or “our community”, or whatever ... but essentially the idea being that whatever you sing in the chorus needs to relate to the whole song and the actual story/narrative is told from verse to verse.

Therefore, by embedding the central theme of the song in the chorus (which is repeated throughout the song) and expanding on various facets of this theme across separate verses, popular song structure provided a transparent schema through which cognition of an unfamiliar language may be made more accessible. Using a narrative format was equally seen to provide a “good, simple structure to follow” (Steve Berry, Email, May 22, 2011).

Language comprehension was further supported via the contextualisation of learning experiences. Although this was commonly achieved by incorporating students’ personal and cultural contexts into music-based activities, in many cases, learning experiences were embedded within a unit of work or text being studied within class:

Wemyss: We [read] a book called *I’m The Biggest Thing In The Ocean* .... So for instance ... all the songs [we learnt were] based ... around the sea and ... the kids were making up compositions using the sea animal names.

Students’ prior knowledge of the themes and ideas contained within a unit of work or text were seen to provide a familiar and shared basis upon which music-based language learning could expand. In particular, songwriting allowed students to creatively draw on this prior knowledge, resulting in more consolidated understanding of language:

Webb: We do quite a lot of songs where we’re just basing it on a book that they’re studying at the time. And it’s great ... when you take it from this other angle of writing a song about it, it forces them to understand it ‘cos they then have to dissect it and put it back in a different form. So it’s forcing them to not just be rote learners or readers.

These findings support Harrison’s (2008) assertion that in the cross-cultural classroom:

11 A children’s picture book by Kevin Sherry.
the problem of prior knowledge can be overcome, to some extent, by recreating the learning context within the classroom rather than relying on students to bring their prior knowledge and culture with them. (p. 38)

In this way, through the clear establishment of context, whether real or imaginative, teachers provided students with an anchor for learning which allowed students greater opportunity to comprehend the unfamiliar language contained within song texts.

Though unacknowledged by the participants, many of the aforementioned music-based language learning experiences adhere closely to LEA. This is frequently observed in the data where students were involved in the creation of original song lyrics about familiar topics. Furthermore, by learning songs orally first (whether original or pre-existing), lyrics were absorbed into students’ vocabularies before reading and writing of these words took place; thus, honouring the tenets of LEA. Dixon and Nessel (1983) argue that LEA also assists with language acquisition, as writing:

is preceded by discussion of the subject or stimulus for the story [or song]. The learner has the opportunity both to listen to what others in the group are saying and to participate verbally in the discussion, thereby practicing oral language in a natural communication setting. (p. 3)

Similarly, Mal Webb acknowledged the benefits of interacting with a fluent speaker of an unfamiliar language through the songwriting process:

You learn heaps about English as long as you’re writing with someone whose English is good .... [As a facilitator] I’ll say, “Well, let’s just change that a little bit so it’s actually proper English but still in a way that you guys are cool to sing it” ... and in doing so you can teach a hell of a lot of that English.

At the same time as involving students in meaningful language learning, the data demonstrated that these same learning experiences, in many cases, included opportunities for skill development in the areas of singing, instrumental and ensemble performance, songwriting/composition and aural awareness. This was achieved through practically-based learning experiences that involved students in meaningful musical making, such as learning to create and perform original songs
with instrumental accompaniment, and activities involving interaction with music production and recording software. The data, therefore, provides evidence that language-learning aims and musical-learning aims are not mutually exclusive.

Music-Based Language Maintenance and Revival

The nature of music-based activities involving Indigenous languages varied depending on the status of individual languages within communities.\(^\text{12}\) Opportunities for singing and songwriting in healthy languages sought not to teach these languages, but to provide additional outlets for their use in students’ lives and the community at large. Meanwhile, in the case of weakening languages,\(^\text{13}\) music-based activities necessarily reflected a stronger didactic agenda. To differentiate, the former situation is referred to here as “language maintenance”, and the latter as “language revival” (Pollard & Boson, 1995, n.p.).

Music-based language revival was most often restricted to singing-based activities, as most students were unable to compose original song texts in weakening languages; however, participants noted that this was sometimes age dependant. Equally, participants stated that many teachers lacked the fluency to facilitate class songwriting in weakening languages. Therefore, songs in weakening languages were often composed outside of the classroom by musicians and community members specifically for use in the classroom as language teaching tools.

At Asha Creek School this process sometimes occurred in connection with bush excursions led by a local Elder:

Berry: [The Elder] takes the kids ... out on an excursion to a particular piece of country ... and he’ll tell [a] story that he wants to tell. It’ll be in the local language and ... we’ll film that talk .... We can then go back to the school and, working with the [various community members], we’ll transcribe the language ... [and create] a song in language that the kids can then learn. And that song is holding the very traditional stories that the old man felt were most important to collect and to have the kids hear.

\(^\text{12}\) See Schmidt’s (1993) definitions of “healthy”, “weakening” and “dying” languages in Chapter 1.

\(^\text{13}\) No dying languages were represented within the data.
Myfany Turpin described the Elder’s involvement as a crucial element in the success of these learning experiences:

What I think works about it is the authority of the song is therefore attributed to the Elder .... Theoretically the women could have easily come up with those songs but what’s significant is that it’s sort of attributed to [the Elder] .... I mean, the most successful song has, I think, six different words in it. You know, really, really simple. So that’s a long, long way from [the Elder’s] narrative but what is maintained is that it’s a song based on [his] story.

Traditional songs were also used in some cases to teach weakening languages. Kathryn Wemyss stated that at Sandy Island Campus this practice also involved community members during times when students were preparing for cultural festivals:

The community come and work with the ... Indigenous teacher aides to select material that they’re going to [perform]. Then [the] community come and they provide the singing and the music and they train the dancers .... They explain to the dancers the meaning of the words and pronunciation if it’s in the traditional language that the kids aren’t speaking.

Elizabeth Mackinlay noted, however, that such practices would not be appropriate or successful in all remote communities:

If I wanted to teach Yanyuwa language at Maya Hill it’d be virtually impossible for me to just go in; well, it’d be too much for me to expect to walk into that classroom and sing traditional songs with [the students] because it’s just so far out of their life experience and their life world .... Even though they live on a remote community, it’s not something [the community] value as much as they once did .... So you’d have to walk a really fine line between making sure that the vehicle you were using was one that was part of children’s life worlds, first and foremost. And then once you’ve got them there, then you can lead them towards something else. But it would be a really hard ask to say, “We’re going to learn traditional singing and you’re going to learn your language.” It’d be much easier to start with a ... 2Pac\textsuperscript{14} song and translate it. You know, really, the kids would jump right on that.

\textsuperscript{14} A popular African-American rap artist.
In line with Mackinlay’s suggestion, learning experiences involving the translation of songs between SAE and Indigenous languages were apparent in both language maintenance and revival practices. Such activities demonstrated particular value, as they simultaneously enriched students’ understanding of SAE and local languages. Examples included singing the same song in SAE and Indigenous languages, and writing songs in which verses or individual lines were translated and sung to the same melody within the same song. Kathryn Wemyss suggested that by using an identical melody to perform translated lyrics “[it] really imprints with the kids that we’re singing the same thing but we have these different ways of doing it”. Steve Berry acknowledged that translating lyrics to fit a predetermined melody can present challenges, particularly in relation to the representation of Indigenous languages:

Indigenous languages tend to have ... longer words and more syllables to say the same thing that English does. You have to often just try to work out ways that you can shorten a phrase down without, obviously you don’t want to butcher the language, you’ve gotta treat it with respect, but at the same time recognising that we take that sort of poetic licence in English all the time. And if you’ve got the local speaker as the reference point ... you can [ask], “Are there any words here that we can take out and it’ll still sound okay to say it?” .... And so you can make these suggestions and always check in with the local speaker to see if that actually still sounds alright and nine times out of ten they’re fine. And if it’s a bit weird they’ll say so and you just find a different way to do it.

While practices such as writing original songs containing internal translations, and translating English songs into Indigenous languages were recognised by participants as valid, Kathyrn Wemyss stated that attempting to translate traditional Indigenous songs into SAE raised issues, as “some of the language ... is not directly translatable”. This comment also calls into question the cultural authenticity of SAE translations when one considers the interrelationships between text, melody, rhythm and dance in much traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander repertoire (Ellis, 1985; Marett, 2005; Wemyss, 2003). In the case of traditional Aboriginal songs from central Australia, for example, Turpin (2007) states that “substitution of a different text while maintaining the same melody and rhythm would be regarded as either incorrect or a different song” (p. 101). Changing the text of songs originally written in traditional language may not be inappropriate in all contexts, however, as
witnessed in certain TSI cultures where *kores*\(^{15}\) songs often use “recycled” melodies and “sometimes the words of well-known ... popular songs” (Neuenfeldt, 2008, p. 170). The appropriateness of such approaches can therefore only be assessed in relation to specific cultural contexts. Further considerations of cultural context are discussed in the subsequent section in relation to Indigenous pedagogies and perspectives.

**Indigenous Pedagogies and Music-Based Learning**

The aforementioned learning experiences described by participants often maintained strong links to a number of commonly recognised Indigenous ways of learning. This included learning that was linked to the land, community and familiar contexts, and pedagogies that emphasised collaborative, oral, holistic, non-linear, practically-based and narrative-based learning strategies (Yunkaporta, 2009). In many cases, participants did not explicitly acknowledge Indigenous ways of learning in discussing their reasons for implementing music-based approaches. This, however, does not necessarily rule out the relevance of these pedagogies in relation to students’ learning within the data. Indeed, the presence of these connections may be the result of a philosophy commonly held amongst participants, that accommodating students’ personal and cultural perspectives is best achieved when enacting a role closer to that of a facilitator, rather than a teacher per se. This attitude is highlighted in the following comments:

Smith: You can’t expect a whitefella to go into a community and teach necessarily in a style that’s Indigenous and yet it actually happens because the sensitive ones ... let the stuff happen around them ... Good teaching is not about standing in front of a group of people and telling them how to do things, is it? That’s a pretty old fashioned idea now. Effective teaching happens when the learners and the so-called teacher are actually doing the whole process together ... And in an Indigenous setting you can’t actually work in any other way because the kids won’t let you .... So I would argue that anyone who goes into an Aboriginal

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\(^{15}\) Derived from the English word “chorus”, *kores* are “modern evangelical songs – post-1960s – and are sung in Kala Lagaw Ya, Meriam Mer, Torres Strait Kriol ... English or other languages such as Tok Pisin from Papua New Guinea” (Neuenfeldt, 2008, p. 169).
community ... and use[s] a process that’s based on a West-centric pedagogy is not going to get a look in. It doesn’t work like that.

Webb: It’s [about saying], “Okay, well, these kids live in this community and [these are] the resources they have and this is what input they have into their lives,” and trying to fit in with that in terms of how it’s [going to be] best received.

Therefore, although commonalities between participants’ pedagogical approaches and Indigenous pedagogies were observed, more important was participants’ recognition of the need to “teach kids on a case by case basis” (Andy Mison, interview). Similarly, Elizabeth Mackinlay stated that the relevance of individual Indigenous pedagogies would vary between Indigenous contexts:

Depending on your community, [it] would make good sense to link [music-based learning] more closely with what we think of as song as pedagogy in Aboriginal communities. But if you’re not in a situation like that and you’ve got kids who, for whatever reason, are dispossessed, disengaged, or not linked up in the same way to language, ceremony, country, things like that, then you’d want to find, “What is it about music that engages them?” and work from there. And it’s not necessarily going to be anything to do with Indigeneity. It might be something quite different but once you start at that base you’ve got something to build on.

While the nature of pedagogy may impose or include cultural perspective, so too may the presence of music within the classroom. Bob Smith alluded to some of the differences between Indigenous and Western perspectives of music and the relevance of these perceptions within music education contexts:

Much of what happens with Aboriginal people in traditional settings is they don’t see music as a separate thing. They don’t see language as a separate thing. Everything is integral to living. And that’s, for outsiders like us, that’s often quite a hard thing to come by, or to work with, because we’ve moved ourselves so far away from the objects that we’re actually learning about that we can abstract and sit in a classroom and talk about things that are a hundred thousand kilometres away. With Aboriginal people, it’s the actual experience of being there and touching it and working with it, and I think this is something about what their songs are about.

In this way, it is important that music-based approaches, particularly those involving activities such as performing and songwriting, are inclusive of students’ cultural
perceptions of music and music making. Smith also noted, in reference to his observations of male adolescent Aboriginal musicians in remote communities, the common status of music as a collaborative activity within Indigenous cultures:

They tend not to work individually on things. They like working with others ... They’ll come up with an idea ... and play with it and play with it, and they’ll sing it over and, I mean, the rehearsal process is really worth seeing .... If you watch them working ... [it’s] not totally the way that musicians in a Western band might work ... [where] I think that often one of them would come up with the idea ... and then take it back to the band and they play with it that way. But these kids will tend to work together from the very beginning of the process. At least that’s been my experience of what I’ve seen.

The practical and collaborative approaches described by Smith, as well as the sense of communal ownership over music making, are clearly visible in many of the approaches discussed by participants.16 As outlined by Mackinlay earlier, however, the role of music within communities cannot be treated homogenously.

Beyond cultural perceptions of music itself, the tendency toward using Western popular genres as learning tools, as observed within the data, raises potential concerns about the erosion of Indigenous musical cultures via such practice. Several factors, however, can be seen to minimise this concern. Most obvious is the proliferated Indigenisation and popularisation of many Western genres within contemporary Indigenous contexts (Dunbar-Hall & Gibson, 2004; Kral, 2010; Wemyss, 1999). Participants also discussed measures which allowed students’ musical identities to direct learning, such as learning through repertoire that students selected themselves. Such approaches are clearly found in other third-party music-based programs operating in remote Indigenous communities. Reflecting on a song recorded by a group of Aboriginal students as part of a recent hip-hop workshop conducted in the remote NT community of Nyirripi (in collaboration with InCite Youth Arts17 and Mt Theo Program18), Australian musician Marc Peckham19 stated:

16 These ideas are expanded upon further in the subsequent section.
17 See Appendix A for more information.
18 An Aboriginal corporation that has “has dedicated itself to developing strength, health, meaningful pathways and leadership in Warlpiri youth” (Mt Theo Program, 2011, n.p.).
19 Known professionally as MonkeyMarc.
The important thing about ... doing workshops and recording young kids in [Indigenous] communities is really letting their voice shine through and not taking over .... Obviously we kind of give them a little bit of help this way and that way with writing the music and writing the lyrics, but they really took hold of that song and you can really feel it. Like it’s got that natural, youthful ... spirit of Nyirripi community in there. (ABC Alice Springs, 2011, May 19)

Similarly, in facilitating class songwriting, Mal Webb stated:

Often, to get the melody, I’ll just get [one of the students] to say [the lyrics] and then just take the melody from that. And that’s something I’m quite passionate about ‘cos it means you don’t just fall into the same melody all the time .... [It’s] a cool way to mean you’re respecting how the kids would say it and trying to translate it as directly into music as possible.

Steve Berry also acknowledged that within the MOF program:

depending on what level [students] are at will determine how much you rely on them to contribute musical ideas and how much you just generate yourself ... [but] we certainly get into having the kids develop the music ideas as well.

Elizabeth Mackinlay identified community consultation as a further important consideration in maintaining and respecting local musical culture:

I think you probably could Indigenise the way that English literacy is taught. And that would be something ... you’d talk in consultation with local community about .... [But] if you need to use Western music to teach ... languages and that’s the vehicle that [the community] think is appropriate then that’s good.

In this way, the strong involvement of community members and musicians evident within various programs can be seen to provide local sanction for the nature of music-based learning experiences. Additionally, it may be assumed that in providing a learning environment that allows room for students’ cultural perspectives, teachers are also providing a more engaging learning environment. Following is a discussion of other factors that were seen to affect students’ engagement with music-based learning experiences.
Engaging Students Through Music-Based Learning

Issues of engagement were discussed predominantly in relation to SAE learning. All participants noted the strong potential of music-based approaches to engage remote Indigenous students in SAE learning. This was attributed primarily to the capacity of these approaches to offer learning that students perceived as valuable and purposeful. Equally, music-based pedagogies were, in many cases, seen to promote a sense of ownership over learning and create opportunities for students to validate their personal and cultural identities.

Several participants acknowledged that the minor role of SAE within students’ daily lives often resulted in minimal willingness to learn SAE at school:

Mackinlay: One of the things that I can see is that kids find it hard to understand what value there is in learning [SAE] ‘cos they get along just fine in their community speaking the type of English that they speak. So it’s hard for them to understand, “Well, I don’t see many people speaking our own Aboriginal language, it’s not taught at the school [and] I don’t need to learn proper English because I don’t have any books in my house anyway ... ” So kids, I think, find it difficult to find a foothold on, “Well, what should I be valuing?”

Music was, therefore, seen to provide learning in SAE through a medium that students valued:

Minehan: The thing is there’s no qualitative difference in the brain of anyone .... The difference lies in the value that you place on certain things .... Now the only occasions on which I’ve been successful [are] when the students themselves value what it is I would be trying to teach them. So that’s why music is useful .... [It’s] something that universally is valuable to teenagers, to adolescents, to a lot of people right across the community.

Furthermore, Minehan stated that music allowed students to explore language and literacy concepts through age-appropriate material. In this way, Minehan also noted the potential to connect such learning to the NALP:
Minehan: Even though [a] student’s literacy level might be at a Year 1 level, their chronological age might be seventeen .... [So] I can actually, through music, teach a concept that is age/stage appropriate to a seventeen year old student, rather than having to rely on the base word[s]. And even though the words are very difficult in certain ways, you’ve got a hope of a person being interested enough to bother to hear the explanation and understand the concept ...

Cotton: Yeah, because obviously no Year 11 student is going to want to read a book that was written for a Year 1 child.

Minehan: ... That’s right and that’s the dilemma. Their level of reading is actually that low. But what you have to do is you have to try and jump the entire gap ... and the only way you’re going to do that is through engaging their interest .... Otherwise you’re still going to be talking in terms of Year 1 words but you can’t keep doing that. You can’t keep banging on about that from Year 1 through to Year 11. You must at some time take the leap .... So that’s probably the main reason for the use of ... popular song for accelerating the literacy.

By involving students in musical activities, teachers were also able to facilitate use of oracy and literacy skills in a manner that students regarded as purposeful:

Berry: I think just creating something that has meaning beyond the actual learning process itself ... is really important as a general starting point with practically any style of teaching and practically any subject .... So the focus for [the students] is the writing of the song and the fact that they can sing it and get excited about it and perform it. That actually is what they see, but as the teacher what you’re doing is ... using that as a medium for the teaching of concepts and language ... through which that basic [literacy] learning can come alive and actually have meaning for the kids.

The provision of performance opportunities within schools and at local festivals also commonly engendered a greater sense of purpose for learning. This included MOF’s Mobfest, a three-day music education festival held annually in each of the regions serviced by MOF:

Berry: Participating schools ... come to the festival and camp out for a few nights and they do a much broader range of really interesting workshops during the day .... And then at night ... we have major concerts on a big stage outside under lights and all the rest .... Each class will get their chance to sing their songs either with a backing band [or] sometimes with the kids themselves playing instruments if that sort of learning has been going on as well.
Myfany Turpin noted that Mobfest and similar events are often used as a “carrot” for school attendance because they are enjoyable and make students feel proud. Furthermore, Turpin observed that it was not only students that benefitted from these events:

When [the adult community members I work with] go to regional language and culture workshops and they can see what other people are doing, and other people see what they’re doing, that gives them a lot of confidence and helps them continue on. ‘Cos sometimes there’s some pretty hard barriers to come up against for ... the community, the teachers, the parents ... so, in a similar way, the opportunity to share what they do with other people in the region, other schools ... I’ve been quite amazed at how much the women talk about those events and how much confidence it’s given them.

Many participants also identified a link between student engagement and ownership of learning experiences. In particular, songwriting provided an avenue for students to validate their personal and cultural identities. In relation to this point, Elizabeth Mackinlay described a series of music workshops run by Shellie Morris that she observed in Darwin schools:

Shellie did a lot of work ... in those workshops with literacy, in the sense of getting kids to connect their life experiences with singing and songwriting and then writing their own lyrics .... So when she had come into the school and done that you could see a shift in the ways that the Indigenous kids felt about school and their excitement [and] engagement with school was quite different.

Additionally, within the MOF program, the creation of original songs was shown to promote pride within the broader school community, particularly through the production and distribution of CD recordings of school repertoire. In the liner notes of a CD produced collaboratively by MOF and Ti-Tree School (remote NT) appears a statement from Seraphina Presley-Haines, an Indigenous teacher at the school:

Singing in Anmatyerr and Warlpiri makes us feel strong and proud about who we are. This is the first time we have made new songs in Anmatyerr and Warlpiri. It is something we will keep doing. We collect information,

20 A popular Aboriginal singer/songwriter.
ideas and knowledge from Elders. We are writing this down in songs that the students learn so the knowledge can continue to be passed on. (Music Outback Foundation, 2005)

Lia Pa’apa’a noted the particular value of singing and songwriting opportunities in Indigenous languages:

To have things in language and to have those cultural activities are just ... gold because it’s like, “To do well is to speak English.” And just that whole mindset and how a 5 year old processes that ... I can’t even begin to imagine.

Her comments also suggest that by placing equal value on Indigenous languages, knowledge and cultures within the school environment, students may be more likely to respect and participate in this environment, and thus invest themselves more heavily in other areas of school learning.

**Promoting Attendance Through Music-Based Learning**

Although there is a lack of quantitative evidence to indicate that music-based learning increases student attendance in remote schools (even outside of this study), many participants offered anecdotal evidence that supported this claim. Andy Mison commented that shifts in attendance were most obvious when third-party music programs visited remote schools:

Wherever you go ... music programs [in remote schools] ... are always fabulously well attended. But usually that’s because of the big bang thing. It’s a bit harder to prove regular, consistent attendance.

Mison’s reference to “the big bang thing” suggests that these spikes in attendance may be partially owed to a certain novelty factor attached to third-party program visits, which cannot be sustained during the normal school term. Furthermore, Mison noted that:

There are so many social and other factors that influence kids’ attendance .... It’s also a bit silly to look at one particular activity as the solution to all your problems. You know, you have a footy match at school, well
straight away it’s probably not going to interest that many girls is it? It’s the same with arts. Not every kid wants to be a musician. So to me it’s [about having] a range of things.

Several participants also discussed the potential for school music to engender greater parental support for their children’s schooling:

Berry: Parents ... [in remote communities] tend maybe not to approach attendance to school the same way [mainstream Australian society] do[es], simply because they’ve only got their own experience to base it all on and in many instances there weren’t even schools when they were kids .... So the parents, on a cultural level, they need to have good reasons for their kids to go to school, as well as for them to get in and support the school. And at that level, getting music programs going ... that’s a fit for them. They really appreciate that sort of thing happening in the school. It’s as important as anything else. And with the language work and the traditional culture work as part of it, then it becomes something that’s of great interest to them. And when you have the parents and the grandparents supporting stuff that’s going on at the school, and even being a part of it through that sort of songwriting [and] language work ... that’s when you’ll really get them fully engaging with the kids to get them to school and to make sure that they stay there.

Whilst she supported this notion, Elizabeth Mackinlay acknowledged that there were often “complexities” surrounding the inclusion of community and family members within the physical school environment:

Indigenous people have various experiences with schooling and some people are going to want to come into that environment and be engaged and be a part of that ... and some people are never going to want to enter into that space .... And it’s not to say that it shouldn’t be tried ... [but] if you think about a performance as being an engagement with self and with others then, while ... it might be validating what those children are learning, it’s also important for them to get that recognition and that value given to them ... by their families and their community. So how well that happens will depend on how much there is community and family buy-in to the school and to the process ... and that will be different in every community .... [But] I think that it’s really positive that people are trying this ... because more than anything else [arts education is] one area where people from outside school will feel like they’ve got ... an open door.

Whilst it was widely acknowledged that music can help to increase attendance, the data demonstrates that its impact is variable between individuals and communities. In
addition, this impact alone cannot entirely counter attitudes towards schooling that result from negative inter-generational experiences, among other social and cultural factors. Moreover, if music is to have a significant effect on attendance it must constitute a regular and intrinsic part of school life. The following section evaluates the feasibility of this within remote Indigenous contexts.

**Issues of Practicality**

Evident in the data was a heavy reliance upon third-party organisations to provide music education, of any kind, to students in remote Indigenous schools. This observation suggests that remote schools are inherently limited in their capacity to offer music-based learning experiences. Participants identified several factors contributing to this situation, including the limited prior musical experience and training of school staff, high teacher turnover, systemic attitudes, lack of professional development, and inadequate funding or resources.

In any school, curriculum is, to a large extent, limited by the capabilities of the resident staff. Lia Pa’apa’a stated that this reality posed particular restrictions in the remote context:

> One of the pitfalls of remote living is that you only have the teachers that you have and if there’s three teachers in the school then you get their skills and their passions and they’re not able to deliver that kind of holistic program that a larger school in the city would.

Furthermore, it was commonly noted that the high level of teacher turnover in remote schools, combined with the short supply of musically trained staff in remote areas, presented further challenges in establishing ongoing music programs:

> Mison: It sounds very simple to say, “Oh well, we’ll just replace that teacher,” but it isn’t that simple because the Northern Territory just doesn’t have the population to provide an endless supply of fully qualified music teachers. And not only fully qualified music teachers but appropriately qualified if you know what I mean.
In defining “appropriately qualified”, Mison stated that the remote context “lends itself to a particular skill set”, including experience in popular genres and instruments.

Several participants suggested that the lack of systemic endorsement of arts-based education represented an additional influence on teachers’ classroom practice:

Wemyss: I think the tradition of Western education has tended to really segment these subjects into discreet entities and so that overflow is not encouraged in ... [the] ways that curricul[a] are set up.

Berry: If these methods were more widely embraced ... on a policy level ... there would be no shortage of [music-based practice] happening in the classroom.

Participants, therefore, outlined a need for greater professional development in relation to music-based learning. As a classroom teacher with no musical training, Kate Minehan stated that her use of music-based approaches was the result of ideas shared with her by colleagues. She suggested that many teachers were willing to use such approaches but that, without a strong musical background, they were often unsure about how music-based learning might be achieved:

Nearly everyone’ll do it ... but you’re sort of limited by ... like, none of us are music teachers .... It’s just getting an idea from someone else, because who else will give us an idea? We just have to teach each other ways to survive in a classroom.

In this way, the presence of third-party organisations throughout remote schools was seen to function as a mode of informal, or unofficial, in-service training:

Berry: Most of the people we come across out there when we do our work haven’t had an experience doing the sorts of things we do, but when they see it in action in the classroom ... they can see its value and its importance and ... that’s the point at which it does become a regular part of the curriculum.

Equally, Lia Pa’apa’a acknowledged the positive outcomes seen as a result of the inclusion of local Indigenous staff in MOF workshops:
[Writing songs in local languages] kind of directly builds in, in a comfortable way, [an avenue] for all the [Indigenous] support staff to be sitting there ... leading the session. And ... [because] they’ve actively been involved in it through the bilingual stuff ... they’re quite comfortable to go and teach that ... and then develop those things on their own without [our staff].

The often limited availability of funds and/or musical equipment within remote schools to support music-based learning was identified as a further limitation. Again, this trend was seen to be partially linked to the low-priority placement of the arts at a policy level. Andy Mison stated that although the benefits of the arts within schools were beginning to “slowly dawn ... on politicians and bureaucrats” he was “getting a little bit tired of having to justify every arts program as a vehicle for literacy and numeracy”. Mison’s frustrations echo those of many music educators worldwide who are “constantly in the position of having to justify the need for their subject in schools” (Reimer, 1999, p. 42). In promoting the potential for extra-musical learning, therefore, educators and policy makers must avoid diminishing the value of music education for its own sake.

Lia Pa’apa’a identified the need to “build local capacity” as the only sustainable solution to these collective issues:

For me it’s about Indigenous empowerment. [Third-party organisations] shouldn’t have to be [there] .... Communit[ies] should be able to deliver this [themselves] .... I don’t know the answers but ... trying to build up the capacity of that local mob is at the forefront.

Furthermore, several participants suggested that systemic support for music programs, particularly in relation to funding, would be likely to improve where communities were able to demonstrate sustainable human resource structures.
Conclusion

The diversity of participants’ experience and knowledge provides a detailed picture of both the potential and limitations of music-based language learning in remote Indigenous schools. The final chapter summarises the issues explored in this study and evaluates music-based approaches as a model for language learning within the remote Indigenous context. In addition, it considers cultural and practical implications for educators and looks toward potential future initiatives.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In response to the disproportionately low educational outcomes of students in remote Indigenous schools, this study examined the potential for musical activities to provide a platform for the learning of Standard Australian English (SAE) oracy and literacy skills in these contexts. The study also investigated ways in which the same or similar approaches may contribute to the maintenance and revival of Australian Indigenous languages, which are in many cases severely threatened. The potential to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and ways of learning through music-based approaches was explored. In addition, the effect of implementing music-based language learning on students’ engagement and attendance was considered.

Conducted as a qualitative multi-case study, this research analysed interview data collected from nine participants, including classroom teachers, ethnomusicologists and music educators, each with experience in, and/or knowledge about, delivering music-based language learning experiences to students in remote Indigenous schools. Representatives from two third-party music education organisations currently operating in remote Indigenous communities were also included in the sample. Document collection supplemented this data set. As much as possible, analysis of data aimed to generate findings that were transferable to some degree across remote Australian Indigenous contexts.

Evaluating Music-Based Language Learning

The findings demonstrate the capacity of singing, songwriting and lyric deconstruction activities to meaningfully immerse remote Indigenous students in the use of SAE and Indigenous language skills. Furthermore, musical activities showed clear potential to integrate non-musical learning processes within musical experiences, as well as interface with Indigenous pedagogies and established literacy learning models.

In recognising the merits of music-based approaches, the researcher is not suggesting that such methods will result in deeper learning than other established models for
language learning. However, the findings indicate that music-based learning should not be regarded as an inferior language learning model, but instead, as an equally viable strategy. Music-based learning is, however, limited in the same way that all approaches to oracy and literacy development are, as holistic acquisition of these skills requires their use within a wide range of situations and contexts (Beecher & Arthur, 2001). Equally, Battiste (2008) asserts that, although schools may play an important role in the maintenance and revival of Indigenous languages:

schools cannot and should not be ... solely responsible for reviving Aboriginal languages, even if they could. Indigenous knowledge is diverse and must be learned in the similar diverse and meaningful ways that the people have learned it for it to have continuing vitality and meaning. (p. 501)

Music-based learning can, therefore, valuably contribute to the development of students’ language skills alongside a range of strategies that cater to the diversity of students’ identities and learning styles.

Thus, the primary advantage of current music-based approaches within the remote Indigenous context can be seen as their capacity to promote a high level of student engagement with language learning. Musical activities achieved this through the provision of experiences that students perceived as valuable and purposeful, that promoted a sense of ownership over learning and provided opportunities for students to validate their personal and cultural identities. Musical activities also fluidly involved community members and musicians within learning experiences. Though inconclusive, the findings indicate that music-based learning can increase student attendance and engender greater parental support for schooling. Furthermore, it is evident that language-learning aims and musical-learning aims are not mutually exclusive and that, therefore, music-based language learning can simultaneously contribute to students’ development as musicians.

A number of factors were, however, seen to commonly place restrictions on remote schools’ capacity to deliver music-based learning. These included the limited prior musical experience and training of school staff, high teacher turnover, systemic attitudes, lack of professional development, and inadequate funding or resources. It
must also be acknowledged that, irrespective of cultural context, musical activities cannot ever engage all students within a given cohort to the same degree.

**Implications for Practice**

Outlined in both the literature and findings is a need to approach remote Indigenous education from an individual community basis. Further to this, educators must recognise the diversity of students’ needs within communities. These necessities are seen at multiple levels in relation to music-based learning experiences.

When incorporating cultural perspectives into learning, educators must recognise the diversity of Indigenous pedagogies between communities and that the relevance of Indigenous ways of learning will differ in each of these contexts. Equally, as the role of music within individual communities will presumably have a bearing on students’ perceptions of music and music making, these perceptions should also be developed within music-based learning experiences. In this way, students’ and communities’ own musical cultures will be allowed to flourish within a school context.

Enabling these musical cultures to have a direct impact on learning was also integral to the strong engagement engendered by music-based learning experiences. Empowering students to select repertoire for use in lessons and allowing students to be actively involved in the songwriting process ensured that learning experiences connected to students’ musical interests. The often practical and collaborative nature of music-based learning experiences further empowered students and communities in the act of music making. While the findings included successful examples of the use of traditional Indigenous music within language learning experiences, participants noted that, due to the dislocation of Indigenous musical culture within certain communities, such an approach may not always represent appropriate practice. Furthermore, the findings identified a need to observe local protocols in relation to the use of traditional repertoire within educational contexts.
Holistic and Sustainable Education

Although the findings demonstrate strong potential for music-based approaches to support language learning in remote Indigenous communities, it remains clear that this potential alone cannot overcome the complex challenges facing students in these contexts. Music can, however, function as a powerful catalyst for learning that allows students to access the depth of opportunities available within schools and the wider community. If we consider the elements that contributed to the success of music-based approaches – learning that was valued and purposeful, created a sense of ownership and opportunities for personal and cultural validation – then educators and researchers must endeavour to identify other learning contexts that create these same opportunities, and in doing so, work toward holistic solutions.

Overwhelmingly, the findings point toward the development of local capacity as the only long-term, sustainable solution to educational disadvantage in remote Indigenous communities. Further research should, therefore, analyse existing examples of educational sustainability within remote Indigenous communities, through which models for successful practice may be identified and adapted for use within other remote contexts. Most importantly, the development of sustainable, holistic and culturally appropriate systems must actively involve Indigenous peoples, as “to act otherwise is to repeat that familiar pattern of decisions being made for Indigenous people by those who presume to know what is best for them” (Battiste, 2008, p. 503). Only through independence will Indigenous communities repair the damages of colonisation and invest the full force of their cultures within the next generation of Indigenous Australians.


Education Department Western Australia. (1952). *Provisional curriculum for use in coloured schools*. Perth: Education Department Western Australia.


Partington, G. (1998). "In those days it was that rough": Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and education. In G. Partington (Ed.), Perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education (pp. 27-54). Katoomba, NSW: Social Science Press.


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Appendix A: Third-party organisations operating in remote Indigenous communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description of remote Indigenous music education program(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australian Children’s Music Foundation</td>
<td>Several “intensive” workshops per year in which “students are taken through the process of songwriting, recording and the end result is an illustrated book of their songs” (Australian Children's Music Foundation, 2011, n.p.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA)</td>
<td>A variety of school and community workshops incorporating performance, songwriting, dance, music technology and music industry training. Programs also aim to encourage school attendance and promote extra-musical learning (Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desert Pea Media</td>
<td>A range of programs including the Hip-Hop Literacy program which involves students in writing and recording original hip-hop music with a focus on developing literacy skills and “creating stories about identity, culture and country” (Desert Pea Media, n.d., n.p.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InCite Youth Arts</td>
<td>A range of arts and culture based programs, including hip-hop music and dance, which “provide ‘Desert Perspectives and Limitless Horizons’ for young people's creative expression in the Central Australian community” (InCite Youth Arts, 2011, n.p.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Little Foundation</td>
<td>“The Thumbs Up! Schools Program is aimed at Indigenous children aged 5-16. A creative environment using music and new media workshops in schools and community concerts is employed to promote healthy eating education and information in partnership with local stores and local health services.” (Jimmy Little Foundation, 2010, n.p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Outback Foundation</td>
<td>(See description in Chapter 3.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Territory Music School</td>
<td>(See description in Chapter 3.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Dust Role Models</td>
<td>Four-day music workshops with “school children and older youth”, including video production and a culminating concert. Workshops use “music as a platform to express messages of good health, pride in culture and community and in helping youth with self-expression” (Red Dust Role Models, 2011, n.p.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinnyfish Music</td>
<td>“Undertake community development projects that ... elevate music as a tool for community development / community capacity building [and] provide opportunities and outlets for Indigenous people and communities.” (Skinnyfish Music, 2011, n.p.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Song Room</td>
<td>“Provides tailored [music] programs to ... Indigenous communities both in urban and remote rural regions.” (Song Room, 2011, n.p.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Please note the table identifies only the music education services these organisations provide to remote Indigenous communities. In many cases, organisations also provide other services to Indigenous communities and/or other services to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians living in other areas of Australia.
Appendix B: Ethics Approval Letter

Ref: IMPE

3 December 2010

Dr James Renwick
Sydney Conservatorium of Music – C41
The University of Sydney
Email: jrenwick@sydney.edu.au

Dear Dr Renwick

Thank you for your correspondence dated 26 November 2010 addressing comments made by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The Executive Committee of the HREC, at its meeting of 30 November 2010, considered this information and approved the protocol entitled “Effects of music education and music integration on non-musical educational outcomes in remote Indigenous Australian schools.”

Details of the approval are as follows:

Protocol No.: 13262
Approval Period: November 2010 to November 2011
Authorised Personnel: Dr James Renwick
Mr Hugh Cotton

Approved documents
Parental (or Guardian) Consent Form (Version 2, 23/11/2010)
Participant Consent Form (Version 1, 30/09/2010)
Interview Protocol: School Staff
Interview Protocol: Community Members
Interview Protocol: External Educators
Student Focus Group Protocol

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. A report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Your report is due by 30 November 2011.

Special Condition of Approval

1. It is a condition of approval that the letter of approval from the Queensland Government Department of Education, Training and the Arts is forwarded to the Ethics Office.

2. It is a condition of approval that a letter of support is received from the [blank] and forwarded to the Ethics Office.

Human Ethics Secretariat:
Ms Patricia Engelmann  T: +61 2 8627 8172  E: patricia.engelmann@sydney.edu.au
Ms Kala Retnam  T: +61 2 8627 8173  E: kala.retnam@sydney.edu.au
3. It is a condition of approval that certified translations of the public documents into Torres Strait Creole are provided to the HREC for approval.

Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours for clinical trials/interventional research.

2. All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.

3. Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement: Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); + 61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

5. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms and provide these to the HREC on request.

6. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

7. The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.

8. A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Associate Professor Ian Maxwell
Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee

Copy: Hugh Cotton    hcot2719@uni.sydney.edu.au
Appendix C: Ethics Modification Approval Letter

Address for correspondence:
OFFICE OF ETHICS ADMINISTRATION
LEVEL 6
JANE FOSS RUSSELL BUILDING – G02
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY NSW 2006

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION

1. Principal Investigator: Dr. James Renwick
Department: Sydney Conservatorium of Music
Address: Building C41, University of Sydney, NSW, 2006

2. Project Title: Music integration in remote Indigenous schools

3. HREC Approval No.: 13262

4. Names of Students/Co-Investigators: Hugh Cotton

5. Project Description:
Please provide a one paragraph lay summary of your original project.

The study aimed to examine the potential of music education and music integration to improve non-musical educational outcomes in remote Indigenous Australian schools. Through case study, the investigation sought to document the role of music education and integration at a primary school in the Torres Strait, and analyse its capacity to improve students’ Standard Australian English (SAE) literacy and language acquisition, reclaim traditional language and culture, and foster Indigenous pedagogies. Furthermore, consideration of how these factors influence students’ engagement, attendance, learner self-esteem and motivation was to form another part of analysis.

6. Any previously approved minor amendments? □ Yes □ No
If YES, please briefly outline

7. Nature of and reasons for amendment(s)
Please provide details of the changes you propose to make to the project and explain why they are necessary. Please justify any increase in sample size.

Fieldwork will no longer be taking place in due to inability to obtain required local permission from . Investigation will continue to focus on the potential of music education and music integration to improve non-musical educational outcomes in remote Indigenous Australian schools. Data collection will, however, involve 30 – 60 minute interviews with educators with relevant professional experience working with Indigenous school students. This interview sample will include approximately 10 participants. Interviews will take place either in person or via phone and will be audio recorded and/or supplemented by email for remotely situated participants. Participants will be recruited via snowball/network sampling. Participants will have the option to remain anonymous or to be identified in final thesis.

Modification Form
Appendix D: Participant Information Statement

Title of project: Effects of music education and music integration on non-musical educational outcomes in remote Indigenous Australian schools

(1) What is the study about?
This study aims to examine the potential of music education and music integration to improve remote Indigenous students’ Standard Australian English (SAE) literacy and language acquisition and foster Indigenous pedagogies and culture in the classroom environment. Furthermore, analysis will consider how these factors influence students’ engagement, self-concept and attendance.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Hugh Cotton, a student at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Music (Music Education) (Hons) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh, Music Education Unit.

(3) What does the study involve?
The study will involve Hugh interviewing educators and other professionals with relevant experience in provision of music to Indigenous students in remote school settings. Interviews will be audio recorded with participants’ permission.

(4) How much time will the study take?
Interviews will last for approximately 30-60 minutes.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?
Being in this study is completely voluntary. You are not under any obligation to consent and – if you do consent – you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researchers or The University of Sydney. You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

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(6) **Will anyone else know the results?**
All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. Findings will be reported in thesis format, but individual participants will not be identifiable in the final thesis if they do not wish to be.

(7) **Will the study benefit me?**
No.

(8) **Can I tell other people about the study?**
Although the results and materials of the study will be kept strictly confidential, participants are allowed to tell others about their knowledge and involvement in the study if they wish.

(9) **What if I require further information?**
When you have read this information, Hugh will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Associate Professor Kathryn Marsh, Music Education Unit, on (02) 93511333 or Hugh Cotton by email (hcot2719@uni.sydney.edu.au).

(10) **What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ......................................................... [PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project.

TITLE: Effects of music education and music integration on non-musical educational outcomes in remote Indigenous Australian schools

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney, now or in the future.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity unless I give permission.

5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.

6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.
7. I consent to:

   i) Audio-taping        YES           ☐ NO       ☐
   ii) Being identified in the final thesis  YES  ☐ NO       ☐
   iii) Receiving Feedback    YES  ☐ NO       ☐

   If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback Question”, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: __________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Email: __________________________________________________________

Signed: ........................................................................................................

Name: ........................................................................................................

Date: ..........................................................................................................
Appendix F: Interview Protocol

* Please briefly describe your role in the program(s) you are involved in.
* Please describe some typical music-based language learning experiences within the program(s).
* Have you found particular music-based learning experiences more effective than others for language learning?
* To what extent are Indigenous pedagogies considered in the program(s)?
* To what extent is Indigenous language and culture a part of learning experiences?
* To what extent are community members involved in program(s)?
* Have learning resources been developed as part of the program(s)? Please describe if so.
* To what extent is musical learning a consideration in the program(s)?
* In your experience, does music-based learning have an impact on students’ engagement and/or attendance?
* How viable is music-based learning in the context(s) in which you work (in terms of staff and/or resources)?
* To what extent can music-based learning experiences be used to teach language?
* Why do you believe music-based learning is successful with students’ in the remote Indigenous context?
* Do you have any further comments?