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LANGUAGE IN AUSTRALIA provides a comprehensive account of the present linguistic situation in Australia, primarily from a sociolinguistic perspective. The focus is mainly on description, and the chapters aim to provide a comprehensive overview and summary of what is known about Australia's languages as well as a guide to current areas of research interest.

The volume is divided into five parts. The first four contain chapters dealing with Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous languages, and the fifth is devoted to public policy and social issues related to the languages of Australia. There are also sketches of each of the major language types in Australia. These include Aboriginal languages, pidgins and creoles, Aboriginal English, and community languages such as Greek, Italian and Serbo-Croat.

No other book offers such a broad survey of the language situation in Australia. Linguists as well as non-specialists will find in this volume, a companion to *Language in the USA* and *Language in the British Isles*, a guide and reference source to the linguistic heritage of Australia.

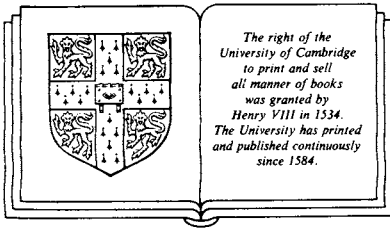
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Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	page ix
<i>List of tables</i>	xi
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Preface</i>	xvii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xix
Introduction SUZANNE ROMAINE	1
Part I Aboriginal and Islander Languages	25
1 Overview of indigenous languages of Australia MICHAEL WALSH	27
2 Language in Aboriginal Australia: social dialects in a geographic idiom PETER SUTTON	49
3 Aboriginal English – an overview IAN G. MALCOLM AND SUSAN KALDOR	67
4 Communicative strategies in Aboriginal English DIANA EADES	84
5 Language and communication in Aboriginal land claim hearings HAROLD KOCH	94
6 Warlpiri in the 80s: an overview of research into language variation and child language EDITH L. BAVIN AND TIM SHOPEN	104
7 A sketch of Kalaw Kawaw Ya KEVIN FORD AND DANA OBER	118
8 Understanding language shift: a step towards language maintenance PATRICK MCCONVELL	143
Part II Pidgins and creoles	157
9 Overview of the pidgin and creole languages of Australia PETER MÜHLHÄUSLER	159

Cambridge University Press
 0521339839 - Language in Australia
 Edited by Suzanne Romaine
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
10	Queensland Kanaka English PETER MÜHLHÄUSLER	174
11	Torres Strait creole ANNA SHNUKAL	180
12	Kriol – the creation of a new language JOHN W. HARRIS	195
13	A sketch of the structure of Kriol JOHN SANDEFUR	204
	Part III Transplanted languages other than English	213
14	Overview of ‘immigrant’ or community languages MICHAEL CLYNE	215
15	Dutch in Australia: perceptions of and attitudes towards transference and other language contact phenomena ANNE PAUWELS	228
16	German and Dutch in Australia: structures and use MICHAEL CLYNE	241
17	Modern Greek in Australia ANASTASIOS TAMIS	
18	Language variety among Italians: anglicisation, attrition and attitudes CAMILLA BETTONI	249 263
19	First generation Serbo-Croatian speakers in Queensland: language maintenance and language shift JACQUES DOUCET	270
	Part IV Varieties of Australian English	285
20	A survey of regional usage in the lexicon of Australian English PAULINE BRYANT	287
21	Finding a place in Sydney: migrants and language change BARBARA M. HORVATH	304
22	Gender differences in Australian English ANNE PAUWELS	318
	Part V Public policy and social issues	327
23	National language policy and planning: migrant languages ULDIS OZOLINS	329
24	Social class differences in the lexicon DAVID CORSON	349
25	Plain English: some sociolinguistic revelations ROBERT D. EAGLESON	363
	<i>References</i>	373
	<i>Index</i>	401

Illustrations

Figures

1.1	Ergative and accusative marking in relation to the animacy hierarchy	<i>page</i> 39
1.2	Competing case systems in Yidiny	39
1.3	Example of an Australian phonological inventory	41
1.4	Basic phonological inventory of a hypothetical Australian language Gunaarlpeylu	41
1.5	Expanded inventory of Gunaarlpeylu	41
2.1	Preliminary statement of genetic relationships, Wik Group	60
8.1	Model of language choice in bilingualism	151
8.2	Social arenas relevant to codeswitching at Daguragu	153
13.1	Phonemes of Kriol	205
17.1	Number of overseas-born Greek–Australians in Victoria	252
17.2	Evolution of modern Greek in Australia	260
21.1	The linguistic structure of the sociolects in the periphery	309
21.2	The linguistic structure of the sociolects in the core	310
21.3	Distribution of the social characteristics across the core sociolects	311
21.4	The sociolinguistic relationship between migrants and their hosts: an intergenerational model	316
24.1	Line graph illustrating group means recorded on the measure by age and social group (N = 129)	355
24.2	Line graph illustrating group percentage means recorded on the G–L instrument by age and social group. Descriptive task-oral language (N = 129)	357
24.3	Line graph illustrating group percentage means recorded on the G–L instrument by age and social group. Explanatory task-oral language (N = 129)	357

Cambridge University Press
 0521339839 - Language in Australia
 Edited by Suzanne Romaine
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

x *List of illustrations*

24.4	Line graph illustrating group percentage means recorded on the G–L instrument by age and social group. Descriptive task-written language (N = 80)	358
24.5	Line graph illustrating percentage means recorded on the G–L instrument by age and social group. Explanatory task-written language (N = 80)	358

Maps

1.1	Approximate location of languages referred to	28
1.2	Major classifications of Australian languages	34
2.1	The Wik region	54
2.2	Clan countries	58
2.3	Language associations by clan estate, Wik Region	63
7.1	The Western Torres Strait, showing major dialect boundaries	119
11.1	Torres Strait showing inhabited islands	
20.1	Regional distribution of Cheerio-Frankfurt etc.	181
20.2	South-East regional distribution of Dink-Dinky-Donkey	294
20.3	Slide	296
		300

Tables

6.1	The traditional Warlpiri system for Bound Subject Pronouns	<i>page</i> 107
6.2	The traditional Warlpiri system for Bound Subject Pronouns, analysed into morphemes for person and number	108
6.3	The forms most frequently used by young Warlpiri speakers for Bound Subject Pronouns	109
10.1	Number of male and female Melanesians in Queensland	176
11.1	Phonological inventory of TSC	186
14.1	Home use of languages other than English: total numbers for first 14 community languages and Aboriginal languages	217
14.2	Percentage language shift	218
15.1	Contingency between the A-test and the Attitudinal test	237
15.2	Contingency between the B-test and the Attitudinal test	237
16.1	Language shift in the first and second generations: German and Dutch	243
16.2	Percentage of syntactic transfers – proximity-motivated or SVO generalisation	247
17.1	Number of regular users of Modern Greek in Australia by state	250
17.2	Medium of communication normally used by second generation claimants	252
17.3	Number of students attending Modern Greek classes in Australia	253
17.4	Parental evaluation of the linguistic skills of their older and younger children	254
17.5	Attitudes towards language maintenance, by generation	255
19.1	Media variables	274
19.2	Written items	274

Cambridge University Press
0521339839 - Language in Australia
Edited by Suzanne Romaine
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xii	<i>List of tables</i>	
19.3	Printed items	276
19.4	Listening practices	276
19.5	Domains of language use	278
19.6	Dominance configuration	279
21.1	The phonetic variants of selected AE vowels	307
21.2	Percent distribution of vowel variants in the peripheral sociolects	309
21.3	Percent distribution of Anglo-Celtic speakers over the three varieties of AE	312
21.4	Percent distribution of Greek and Italian speakers over the three varieties of AE	312
21.5	Percent distribution of all ethnic groups across the four core sociolects	313
22.1	Gender and major differentiators of AE varieties	321

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Cambridge University Press
 0521339839 - Language in Australia
 Edited by Suzanne Romaine
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xiv *Notes on contributors*

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Cambridge University Press
0521339839 - Language in Australia
Edited by Suzanne Romaine
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Notes on contributors xv

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Preface

The impetus for this book came from the publication of *Language in the USA* (Ferguson and Heath 1981) and *Language in the British Isles* (Trudgill 1984). This volume is a companion and complement to these two. The purpose of *Language in Australia* is to provide a comprehensive account of the present linguistic situation in Australia, primarily from a sociolinguistic perspective. There are at present no other books which offer such a broad survey of the language situation in Australia, although there are now works which cover selected aspects of it, for example, Clyne (1976), a sample of studies on Australian English, migrant and Aboriginal languages, Clyne (1982) on the position of community languages, Clyne (1985) on language contact, Blair and Collins (1989) on varieties of Australian English, and the surveys of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages by Dixon and Blake (1979), Dixon (1980), Blake (1981), and Yallop (1982). These and other publications are, however, important indications of the recent considerable interest in the languages of Australia.

This volume is divided into five parts. The first four contain chapters dealing with Australia's indigenous and non-indigenous languages and the fifth is devoted to public policy and social issues related to the languages of Australia. There are also sketches of each of the major language types in Australia. The chapters are mainly descriptive. They aim to provide a comprehensive overview and summary of what is known about Australia's languages as well as a guide to current areas of research interest.

Throughout, the contributors pay special attention to issues arising from the sociohistorical situation in which Australia's languages and language varieties coexist. As in the other major English-speaking countries, English is a relative newcomer to a linguistic scene which was already very diverse and heterogeneous. Present-day Australians speak a wide range of languages making Australia, as Clyne (1985) suggests, a meeting place of languages. While most Australians are English monolinguals, as are the majority of Britons and Americans, the continent's original inhabitants

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0521339839 - Language in Australia
Edited by Suzanne Romaine
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xviii *Preface*

were largely multilingual and many still are today. The languages spoken by the descendants of the original inhabitants of Australia include the following: surviving Aboriginal languages, a creole, for example, Kriol or Cape York Creole, Aboriginal English, and a variety of Australian English. There are also many other bilingual Australians who have settled more recently and still maintain knowledge of a language other than English, for example, Greek, Italian, German, Dutch, and Serbo-Croatian, to name only a few of the new 'community' languages dealt with in part III of this volume.

The editors of both *Language in the USA* and *Language in the British Isles* lament the fact that many people are relatively uninformed about the language situation in their own countries. While it may seem tedious to repeat this complaint here, it is no less true of Australia than of Britain and the United States. This volume is dedicated to the spirit of linguistic and cultural diversity and the hope that non-specialists will also find in this volume an appreciation of the rich linguistic heritage of Australia.

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