

Definitions

Here are three terms you need to learn. When your teacher mentions them, during the *Flytrap* rap and from now on, you will be expected to know what they mean.

Aboriginal English

Aboriginal English is not a different language. It is the way Aboriginal people speak English. It is not just the dropping of the 'h' from words. It is not an uneducated or wrong way to speak English. It is the way Aboriginal parents have taught their children to speak and it is a powerful way of identifying with each other as Aboriginal people. It is important to value this dialect of English. There are rules that it consistently follows, some of which we will look at during this rap. Other words or concepts you will learn about are: grammar, articles, double negatives, double subjects, plural marking, auxiliary verbs, past tense singular, consonant clusters and voiceless consonants.

Standard Australian English

Standard Australian English is the version of English brought to Australia by Europeans. It has evolved slightly since the arrival of white people (colonisation). It is the language used by institutions and is therefore the language of power. It is formal English. It is the language you need to use at school and the language you may need in the workplace. In some situations, Standard Australian English may get all 'blokey' and turn into slang and informal greetings and phrases. Standard Australian English is not 'proper' English. It is the version of English that everybody must be able to use in important situations, e.g. using a bank or insurance company. It is used in writing.

Look at these two examples:

Aboriginal English:

"We bin lookin' for 'im hones'. 'E said 'e was goin' to tha basketball stadium. Dey' been waitin' here all dis' time".

Standard Australian English:

"We have been looking for him, honestly. He said he was going to the basketball stadium. They have been waiting here all this time."

Code-switching

Code-switching is when you switch from one way of speaking to another. You may be an Aboriginal person who speaks Aboriginal English at home, but when you go to the bank and fill out a home loan application form, because you want to buy a house, you will code-switch. You would want to speak to the bank manager in Standard Australian English as well, as this may increase your chances of getting the loan. Alternatively, you may be a non-Aboriginal Australian person who is talking to a group of Aboriginal friends. You need to use some Aboriginal English to fit in. If you use too many big words they may think you are a big-noter and that you are trying to be flash. They may laugh at you, and at the very worst, you or your friends may feel uncomfortable.

It is important to use language that fits your audience. For now, you need to write Standard English at school, and your teacher should accept Aboriginal English as a way of speaking English.