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Summarising: Kral & Morphy (2006), *Language*
Responsibility for the preparation of this research summary rests with the authors of the MCEETYA report *Education, Training and Indigenous Futures: CAEPR Policy Research 1990–2007* and not the original author(s) of the summarised material.

Title of Research:
Language

Research Publication:
In Assessing the Evidence on Indigenous Socio-economic Outcomes: A focus on the 2002 NATSISS B.H. Hunter (ed)
CAEPR Research Monograph No. 26 2006

Name of Researcher(s):
I. Kral and F. Morphy

Time period:
2002

Geographic location:
Australia-wide

Methodology:
A statistical analysis of the Indigenous language-related items contained in the 2002 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS).

Aims:
The purpose of this paper is to assess the quality and scope of information collected about Indigenous languages in the 2002 NATSISS and, where possible, to compare these data with the data collected in the 1994 NATSIS.

Of particular interest was to examine the extent to which Indigenous languages were likely to be maintained into the future.

Selected findings and insights:
Whilst the prime purpose of the paper is to assess the quality and scope of NATSISS data, the paper provides some interesting analyses of information about some aspects of the maintenance of Indigenous languages.

Overall, some 21% of Indigenous Australians indicated that they spoke an Indigenous language, with the largest percentage being in the NT (77%), followed by SA (31%), WA (27%) and Qld. (15%). However:

- only 11% used an Indigenous language as their main spoken language in the home,

which has significant implications for transmitting Indigenous language facility to young children. It was only in the NT where a majority (63%) of Indigenous people spoke an Indigenous language as their main language in the home.

An Indigenous language was spoken more frequently by those living in remote localities compared to those living in non-remote localities – 54% compared to 9%, respectively.
Age had an influence on the ability to speak an Indigenous language and whether an Indigenous language was the main language spoken in the home – the older age group (55+) tended to make greater use of an Indigenous language compared to younger age groups. For example,

- 26% of the older age group spoke an Indigenous language compared to 18% of the 15-24 years age group (for main language spoken at home the percentages were 13% and 10% respectively).

As well as almost a quarter of the Indigenous population speaking an Indigenous language, almost a quarter (22%) spoke some words of an Indigenous language, possibly when using ‘Aboriginal English’ or Standard Australian English. Although only a small percentage living in non-remote localities spoke an Indigenous language, 24% spoke some words of an Indigenous language.

Educational implications:

Whilst only a minority of Indigenous Australians speak an Indigenous language in the home, the percentage is still significant. This impacts upon the Standard Australian English literacy development of a significant number of pre-schoolers and their readiness for formal primary schooling as well as students already at school. As other CAEPR research has shown for those students living in remote Australia, the teaching of English literacy needs to be embedded within everyday social and cultural experiences and hence is a more gradual acquisition of English language skills than would be expected for those students whose home language is Standard Australian English. In urban areas there will still be transient students whose parents are not English literate and where their at home language may be an Indigenous language – both student and teacher are faced with the challenges of ‘code-switching’ that is required when entering the classroom, especially after weekends. [curriculum]

Relevance:

Introductory Topic: Culture, Community and Family Life

Domain 2: School and Community Educational Partnerships

Complexity and diversity of communities

Related papers: