

## Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes is not an Aboriginal Song



Photo By Illawarra Storm Chaser  
Via Pete Brandtman Monday 19  
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Jodi Edwards  
John Hobson  
University of Sydney

- Graduated and lecturer from the Master of Indigenous Languages Education program at the University of Sydney
- Student research project
- Based in concerns that current revival songs are mostly Western (English) based:
  - conveying Western musical culture and concepts,
  - fostering word-by-word translation,
  - clashing with Aboriginal prosody (stress and vowel length),
  - potentially fostering further language shift.

## An Example

- The Gamilaraay word for kangaroo is *bandaarr*
  - In a formulaic approach:
    - Tie me kangaroo down, Sport
- becomes
- Tie me *banda'a* down, Sport
  - Stress shifted, glottal inserted, and trill lost

## Songs

- are central to traditional Aboriginal culture and learning
- help break down language barriers between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people
- Songlines cross Aboriginal language barriers and foster language learning.

Photo By Ludo Kuipers  
Wed Sep 11 1996



## The Research

- effectiveness of traditional music as a pedagogical tool within the language classroom
- song is widely regarded as a successful language teaching method
- uniqueness of Aboriginal music and traditional language
- grammatical patterns, word structure and related vocabulary

## The Research

- Dharawal language from the South Coast of New South Wales
- two groups from neighbouring secondary schools taught in tandem:
  - mixed gender
  - 13-15 years
  - all Aboriginal
  - 16 students each

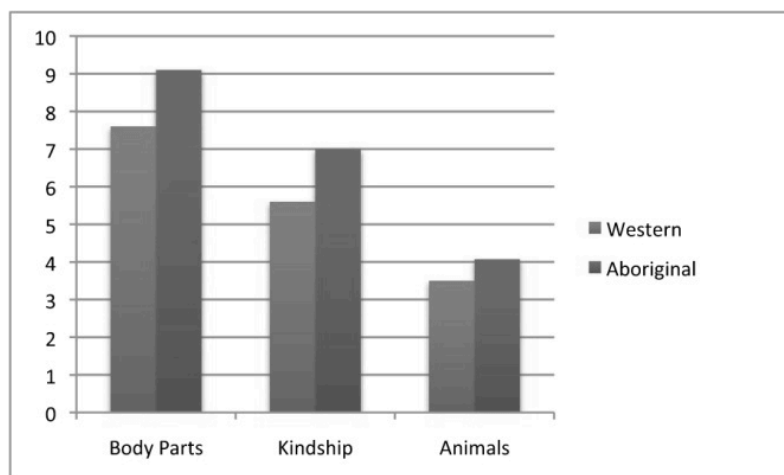
*Walar njidigangguli Wadhanhay?*  
*Head yours where is*

*Gunduyin nundhagarri yanba.*  
Tree brown snake come from

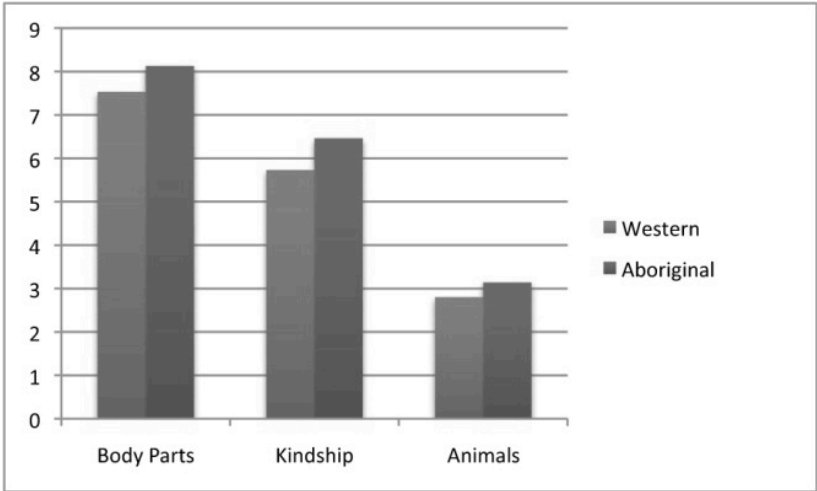


Taliah King  
[www.abcradio.com](http://www.abcradio.com)

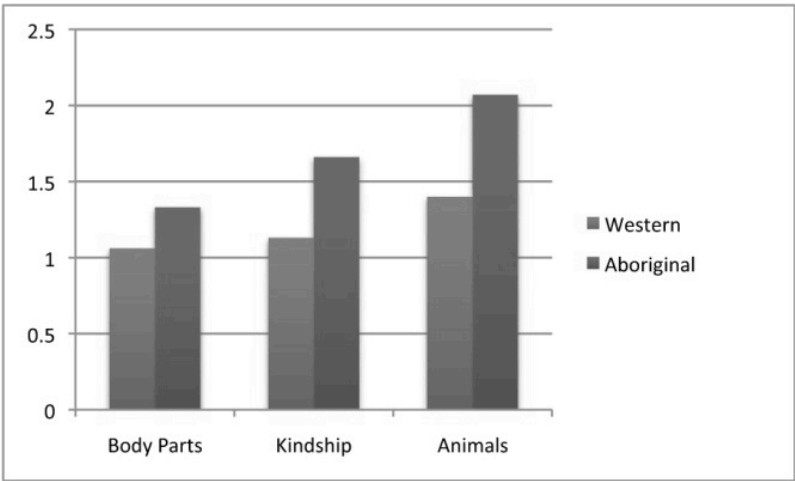
## Post Test



### Delayed Post Test



### Pronunciation Test



## Results

- Aboriginal style of music taught learners effectively.
- It also allowed for looser acquisition of language.
- Stress and tone patterns closely replicated fluent speakers.
- Traditional music created a sense of culture.

## Results

- Aboriginal music students more engaged and focused on the tasks.
- Allowed quicker transition through curriculum stages requiring an additional topic.
- Engagement was strong
- Attendance was increased

## Students' Comments

- It was a fun learning experience. I liked the singing and the games.
- Singing is a millions times more fun than book work.
- Using books gets boring, but you can learn by singing. I never knew that.
- There is so much you can learn about culture that you don't from books.

## Conclusions

- Aboriginal music styles can be used for second language acquisition within the classroom.
- Aboriginal music styles are an effective tool to engage Aboriginal students.
- Teachers should utilise Aboriginal music styles.

## Conclusions

- Teachers should develop platforms to initiate teaching plans that incorporate quality teaching methodologies and professional frameworks utilising Aboriginal music.