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Does language reflect culture? Evidence from Australian English*

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to demonstrate direct links between Australian language and other aspects of Australian culture. The existence of such links – intuitively obvious and yet notoriously hard to prove – is often rejected in the name of scientific rigor (“if they can’t be proved then it is better either to assume that they don’t exist or at least not to talk about them”). Nonetheless, the problem continues to exercise fascination over scholars, as it does over the general public. The author proposes ways in which the linguist’s methodological tools can be sharpened so that the apparently untractable and yet fundamental issues of “language as a guide to social reality” can be studied in ways which are both linguistically precise and culturally revealing. Linguistic phenomena such as expressive derivation, illocutionary devices, and speech act verbs are related to the literature on the Australian society, “national character,” history, and culture. (Ethnolinguistics, Whorfian hypothesis, Australian English, speech acts, expressive derivation, names)

INTRODUCTION

To many, a positive answer to the question formulated in the title of this paper would be axiomatic.¹ To others, however, the question is much more problematic – as I found out when I gave a paper to the Sydney Linguistic Circle on linguistic differences between English and Polish, which, I argued, reflected differences between Anglo-Saxon culture and Polish culture.² (For a published version of the paper in question see Wierzbicka [1985b].)

My claims were challenged by Michael Halliday – not so much on empirical grounds as from a methodological standpoint. Is it justified, he asked, to link individual linguistic phenomena with nonlinguistic aspects of culture directly? He acknowledged that in some cases direct links do seem to exist, but he was inclined to confine such cases to the lexicon. As far as the grammar is concerned, he was more cautious. He agreed that, for example, the rich systems of honorifics in languages such as Japanese do appear to reflect aspects of culture, but he

was reluctant to accept a similar claim concerning rich systems of affectionate diminutives in Slavic languages, and on the whole he was sceptical of any search for direct correlations between language and “social reality,” à la Whorf. In particular, he raised the following difficulty: If one language (e.g., Russian) has three genders, another (e.g., French) has two, and yet another (e.g., English) has none, would it be justified to try to link these differences with some extralinguistic differences in culture? Presumably not? So at best, it is only some, selected features of grammar which one might seek to correlate with something outside language. But how do we decide which linguistic phenomena can be legitimately interpreted as culturally significant *outside language itself*? Can it be done on a principled basis? If genders don’t reflect extralinguistic culture, what gives us the right to suggest that honorifics or diminutive do?³

I think that the question is interesting and worthwhile, but perhaps not quite as forbidding as Halliday seemed to suggest. After all, doesn’t the same apply to the lexicon? Certainly, lexicon tends to change more quickly than grammar in response to changes in the “social reality.” Nevertheless, lexicon, too, is subject to conservative forces, and not all lexical differences between languages reflect current differences in culture. Presumably, however, we wouldn’t want to deny, on this basis, that some lexical differences are readily open to cultural interpretation.

For example, English distinguishes lexically between arms and hands, between fingers and thumbs, and between fingers and toes, whereas Polish doesn’t. I am not aware of any contemporary extralinguistic differences which could explain these lexical differences between the two languages, and perhaps no such explanation exists, on a synchronic level. But there are many lexical differences between Polish and English whose contemporary cultural significance couldn’t be reasonably doubted. For example, in addition to words for Saturday and Sunday, English has a special word for weekend, which Polish doesn’t have (so that Polish immigrants in English-speaking countries had to borrow the English word *weekend* to speak in Polish about weekend-related aspects of their life in those countries). Could one doubt that this has something to do with the fact that in Poland people generally work on Saturdays, or did do so before the days of Solidarity?

And a second example, this time one illustrating differences in attitudes rather than in the “objective realities.” Both Polish and English have pejorative words for Germans (*Jerries*, *Szwaby*), but only English has a pejorative word for the Japanese (*Japs*), and only Polish has several pejorative words for Russians and things Russian (*Ruscy*, *Kacapy*, *sowiecki*, *ruski* [adj.]). Could anyone doubt that this reflects differences in collective historical experiences and in political outlook?

Is it “unscientific” to claim that lexical differences such as those concerning negative words for different nationalities directly reflect culture and history? Wouldn’t it be rather “unscientific” to close our eyes to such facts?

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I think that what applies to the lexicon applies also to grammar, in the broad sense of the term. It seems to me that it is perfectly legitimate to seek in grammar equivalents of "Jerries" and "Japs," and that this doesn't commit us in the least to the claim that there is nothing in grammar but "Jerries" and "Japs," so to speak. It seems to me that it is perfectly possible that honorifics and diminutives are like "Jerries" and "Japs" (as are also references to the Australian kinship systems which permeate the grammars of Australian languages; cf. Hale [1966]), whereas genders are perhaps like "fingers" and "toes"; a way of doing something within language for which no external cause or correlate is evident.

As a general guideline, I would say this: The more varied and rich our linguistic evidence is, the stronger our case. If we can explain a considerable number of differences between two languages in terms of one, or of a complex of, independently posited cultural differences, then our case will be fairly strong.

Furthermore, time is clearly a relevant factor. Presumably, grammatical features inherited from earlier centuries will not reflect very recent cultural facts. Conversely, linguistic innovations which go hand in hand with historical and cultural changes will have a good claim to being a reflection and an expression of sociocultural phenomena. For this reason, Australian English, which the present paper is primarily concerned with, constitutes a particularly inviting field to study and can perhaps be regarded as an interesting test case.

Is it possible to predict which areas of language are most likely to reflect the living culture?

I would venture to suggest two general hypotheses in this regard. First, optional grammatical categories are likely to be more revealing of the ongoing culture than obligatory ones. For example, affectionate diminutives are entirely optional: It is up to the speaker to use them or not. If the cultural need for expressing attitudes embodied in diminutives diminished, or ceased to be felt, the speakers could quietly and imperceptibly stop using them, without at any point having to struggle against the pressures of the system and without running the risk of being misunderstood.

If, on the other hand, a grammatical distinction is obligatory (as is the contrast between the three nominal genders in Slavic languages), then it is less likely that it will be able to change quickly in response to changes in the speakers' outlook, and so it is less likely that it will be directly related to the ongoing culture.

Second, those parts of language, including grammar in the narrow sense of the term, which have to do with the relationship between the speaker and the addressee, are, I suggest, among those most likely to reflect the living, ongoing culture.

For example, distinctions embodied in the third person personal pronouns may be less likely to reflect the ongoing culture than those embodied in the second person personal pronouns. Thus, the fact that Turkish or Finnish don't have a distinction analogous to that between *he* and *she* in English, doesn't seem to lend itself to convincing cultural interpretation. But distinctions in the second person

pronouns do seem to mirror the culture directly and do tend to change in response to a changing cultural context (cf., for example, Brown & Gilman [1960], Friedrich [1966], Wierzbicka [1985b]).

Generally speaking, it is the pragmatic aspects of grammar which seem to be particularly culturally revealing. It seems reasonable to conjecture, therefore, that the pragmatic aspects of grammar would also be among those which would be most likely to change fairly quickly – possibly, in response to social and cultural change.

On a more specific level, among the aspects of language which would seem to be particularly revealing of social attitudes and of the style of social interaction, I would single out the following four: 1) forms of address; 2) expressive derivation; 3) illocutionary devices of different kinds, such as interjections and particles; and 4) speech act verbs.

It seems to me remarkable that in all these areas Australian English has developed its own linguistic devices, which can be seen as uniquely suited to what is generally regarded (by the man in the street as well as by serious students of Australian society) as the (Anglo-)Australian ethos and the (Anglo-)Australian style of social interaction. In what follows, I will support this claim with illustrations from each of these four areas, concentrating, however, on the first one.

FIRST NAMES

The proposition that Australian English is fond of abbreviations is commonplace.⁴ But the common belief that the facts behind this truism are well known and well understood is, in my view, a fallacy. From a semantic point of view (as well as from others), Australian abbreviations fall into a number of different, though related, categories. Each of these categories embodies a distinct meaning and, I suggest, reflects a characteristic Australian attitude.

One such category comprises abbreviated forms of first names, usually ending with a consonant, such as the following ones.⁵

Mare	[mæ]	for Mary
Marz, Mars	[ma:z]	" "
Mare	[mɛə]	" "
Marz, Mars	[Mɛ:z]	" "
Baz	[bæz]	for Barry (or Basil)
Tez	[tʰɛz]	for Terry
Gaz	[gæz]	for Gary (or Gavin)
Caz	[kʰæz]	for Caroline (or Catherine)
Kez	[kʰɛz]	for Kerrie
Iz	[ɪz]	for Isa (or (Isobel)
Muz	[mʌz]	for Murray
Shez	[ʃɛz]	for Sheridan

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Shaz	[ʃæz]	for Sharon
Juz	[dʒʌz]	for Justine
Al	[æɫ]	for Alice (or Alison)
Cor	[kʰɔə]	for Cora
Laur	[lɔə]	for Laura
Ange	[æŋdʒ]	for Angela
Tash	[tʰæʃ]	for Natasha
Sophe	[sʌəf]	for Sophie
Dim	[dɪm]	for Dimity
Rache	[rʌɪtʃ]	for Rachel
Man	[mæn]	for Mandy
Ness	[nɛs]	for Vanessa
Jule	[dʒuɫ]	for Julie
Julz, Juls	[dʒuɫz]	" "
Tone	[tʰʌʊn]	for Tony

It is hard not to notice that many forms in this list end in the consonant *-z*, and also that this word-final *-z* tends to replace an *-r* of the base form. It might seem, therefore, that apart from the truncation, a simple phonological process is involved (a substitution of *-z* for an underlying *-r* in a word-final position). However, the fact that forms such as *Marz*, *Julz*, and *Gaz* (for Gavin) are also used indicates that the word-final *-z* is in fact a suffix. But this is a problem to which I will return later.

Leaving aside, however, forms such as *Marz*, *Julz*, or *Gaz*, one may easily form the impression that forms such as those listed above are identical in status and in function with standard pan-English abbreviations such as *Bob*, *Sue*, *Pam*, *Kate*, *Tim*, or *Liz*. In fact, however, this impression is deceptive. What makes forms such as *Shaz* or *Mare* particularly interesting is that they are not standard abbreviations, in the sense that they are not used as unmarked personal designations. A person could be introduced and commonly referred to, informally, as "Bob Brown" or "Pam Smith"; but normally, people could not be introduced or commonly referred to as "Shaz Jones" or "Mare Peterson." Forms such as *Bob* or *Pam* are informal and rather friendly, but they are not affectionate. By contrast, forms such as *Shaz* or *Mare* ARE affectionate, and their affectionate force stems largely from the fact that they are perceived not as standard personal designations but as fond "distortions" of a person's "normal" name.

Thus, in a group of Australian schoolgirls, names such as *Pam*, *Kate*, and *Sue* would normally be treated on a par with forms such as *Mary*, *Isa*, *Caroline*, *Sharon*, or *Justine*, and not on a par with forms such as *Mare* or *Marz*, *Caz*, *Shaz*, or *Juz*.

The affectionate character of forms such as *Caz* or *Shaz* is particularly clear when one considers heavy restrictions on their use in self-reference. One can say on the phone "Pam speaking" or "Bob speaking," but usually one would not

say "Caz speaking" or "Shaz speaking."⁶ (Moreover, one could say "I hate Pam" but hardly "I hate Shaz.")

From this point of view, affectionate abbreviations such as *Caz* or *Shaz* must be seen as analogous to affectionate diminutives such as *Pammie* or *Katie* rather than to standard designations such as *Pam* or *Kate*. There is one proviso: Forms homophonous with diminutives such as *Pammie* or *Katie* (*Debbie*, *Suzie*, *Cindy*, etc.) are often used as basic, everyday forms (and sometimes are even bestowed on children as their canonical Christian names). If so, then they can of course be used in self-reference, without any self-caressing connotations. But forms such as *Caz* or *Shaz* are usually not used in this way.

But if the standard everyday designation doesn't have a diminutive form, for example, if a girl is normally called *Pam* or a boy *Bob*, then the speakers would not introduce themselves on the phone or otherwise refer to themselves, seriously, as *Pammie* or *Bobby*.

Given this parallel between affectionate diminutives and affectionate abbreviations, it is all the more interesting to note that from a semantic and sociocultural point of view, the category of affectionate abbreviations differs profoundly from that of affectionate diminutives. Since the affectionate diminutives (of first names) constitute a pan-English phenomenon, whereas the affectionate abbreviations (of first names) present a characteristically (though not uniquely) Australian one, it is reasonable to infer that the latter category may embody characteristically Australian attitudes.

To compare attitudes encoded in specific linguistic forms or constructions, especially on a crosslinguistic or crosscultural scale, one needs a suitable formal framework. I believe that such a framework is available in the form of the semantic metalanguage based on natural language, which I have developed (Wierzbicka 1972, 1980, 1985, a, b, c, and many other publications). Using this framework one can represent the force (or, I would say, meaning) of the diminutive forms such as *Pammie* or *Suzie* as follows:⁷

speaking to you/ speaking of person X
I feel good feelings towards you/towards X
of the kind that one feels towards small children

By contrast, the force (or meaning) of affectionate abbreviations such as *Caz* or *Mare* can be represented, at least in part, as follows:

speaking to you
I feel good feelings towards you
different from good feelings that one feels towards small children

What I am suggesting is that Australian abbreviations such as *Caz* or *Mare* are, in effect, antidiminutives: The speaker wishes to emphatically dissociate himself or herself from the kind of emotional attitude which goes with diminutives.

Diminutives imply something like tenderness; by contrast, Australian abbreviations imply a kind of affectionate "toughness" or "roughness."⁸ To put it

differently, by using a form such as *Shaz* or *Mare* the speaker shows that he or she wishes to avoid giving the impression that the addressee is treated like a child. By doing so, the speaker conveys also the implication that he, or she, is not a "softie" either.

Furthermore, the speaker wishes to emphasize that he or she has a close relationship with the addressee. (As one informant put it to me: "I know a Gary. We call him Gary, but his mates call him Gazza or Gaz.") To account for this aspect of the meaning, or force, of Australian abbreviatory names, I would posit the following component:

speaking to you

I don't want to use the long word

that other people do, who don't feel towards you the way we feel towards each other

The "antidiminutive" intent of Australian abbreviatory names is highlighted by their form. Clearly, it is not an accident that Australian abbreviatory names are monosyllabic and not disyllabic as most English diminutives (*Suzie*, *Pammie*, *Bobby*, etc.). The notorious Australian antiintellectualism as well as the Australian love of informality express themselves, among others, in a dislike for long words and make for an association between friendliness and short words, and between long words and psychological and social distance.⁹

Nor is it an accident that in their canonical form Australian abbreviatory names tend to end in a consonant. Standard English abbreviatory names can end in a vowel (for example, *Sue*, *Joe*, *Flo*, and so on); but Australian abbreviatory names typically don't.¹⁰ (*Sue*, *Di*, *Joe*, etc., are of course used in Australia, too, but they don't have the affectionate and solidary force of *Suze*, *Dize*, or *Shaz*, and can be used freely in self-reference.) It seems possible that it is this preference for abbreviated forms ending in a consonant which is responsible for the apparent substitution of a *z* for an underlying *r* in names such as *Baz* or *Tez* (given that Australian English doesn't have a word-final *r*). I suggest that the reason for this preference for abbreviations ending with a consonant is to be sought in their antidiminutive function: Ideally, names of this kind should look as if they were back formations from diminutives, that is to say, they should "proclaim" by their very form that they have cast away the "soppy," "wet" diminutive suffix.

Some names of this kind are indeed back formations from diminutives or from forms homophonous with diminutives (as when, for example, a girl whose standard name is *Debbie* is called *Deb* by her close friends). Most, however, are not. For example, *Juz* is derived from *Justine*, not from *Juzzie*, and *Caz*, from *Caroline* (or *Catherine*), not from *Cazzie*. Nonetheless, names of this kind function as if they were derived from diminutives. In support of this claim I would adduce the fact that it is above all names whose final segment is homophonous with the diminutive suffix which are widely used in the "Australian

abbreviatory form." This applies in particular to masculine names (*Barry, Terry, Murray, Gary*), in which any hint of "soppiness" is particularly abhorrent to the Australian ear (that is to say, to the Australian ethos).

According to my observations, Australian abbreviatory names are particularly frequently used by teenagers, certainly more so than by small children. For example, I noticed that since my daughter Mary has passed from primary school to high school, the frequency of the form *Mare* and *Marz* used to address her has greatly increased. At the same time, her circle of friends has changed from one including a *Beckie*, a *Shelie*, a *Jackie*, and a *Tammie*, to one composed of a *Juz*, a *Caz*, an *Al*, an *Ez* (from *Ellen*), and even a *Suz* (from *Sachiko*, i.e., from a Japanese name!).¹¹ Moreover, her old friend Dimity, whom Mary has known almost from birth and whom she used to call *Dimmie*, has now become, predominantly, *Dim*.

The fact that teenagers may feel a need to display their friendships in "tough," "nonbabyish," antisentimental ways, is of course quite understandable. But the fact that Australian culture as a whole betrays a similar need and that Australian English caters to this need, having developed suitable linguistic devices, is far more remarkable. The combination of friendliness and antisentimentality has always been regarded, by all observers, as a characteristic feature of Anglo-Australians. But impressions of this kind, however strong and widely shared, are often dismissed by scholars as purely subjective and uncorroborated by intersubjectively verifiable evidence. It seems to me that linguistic facts of the kind discussed here provide such evidence.

The stereotype of "what Australians are like" includes another crucial characteristic which, I think, is also reflected in the affectionate abbreviations. This characteristic has to do with the much-commented-on ideal, and practice, of "mateship," of solidarity shaped by common experiences and expressed in shared attitudes.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that Australian affectionate abbreviations tend to be used reciprocally (whenever the names of the people in a group lend themselves to such use). Drawing again on my own experience, I would like to cite the following facts.

My daughter Mary calls her friend Justine *Juz* and is called by her *Muz*; and she calls her friend Dimity *Dim* and is called by her *Mare*. (It is inconceivable, however, that the teachers should address them as *Dim* and *Mare*, as they address other girls as *Pam* or *Kate*.) Similarly, my mother-in-law, Alice, often addresses her sister Isa (a lady in her seventies), as *Iz* and is reciprocally addressed by her as *Al*. (It must be stressed, again, that *Iz* and *Al* are not used by these ladies, or by their friends, as standard abbreviations, on a par with *Pam* or *Kate*. They are used as marked, fond "distortions" of the "normal" forms *Isa* and *Alice*.) Another relative, "Auntie Cora," is often addressed by her sisters-in-law as *Cor* and addresses them, reciprocally, as *Al* and *Iz*. And I know of one married couple

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in Canberra whose names are *Terry* and *Marilyn* and who regularly call one another *Tez* and *Maz*.

It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that the Australian affectionate abbreviations carry with them a connotation of in-groupness and of shared attitudes. If so, an appropriate component should be added to their semantic representation. This can be done, perhaps, as follows:

speaking to you
I feel good feelings towards you
different from good feelings that one feels towards small children
I assume that you feel the same way towards me

I should add that the expectation of shared attitudes is more important than a strict reciprocity of the linguistic usage. Affectionate abbreviatory names are used not only among friends, but also in a family circle. For example, I know a family where the parents call their daughter *Ec* (from *Eckie*, from *Erica*), whereas she calls them, naturally, *Mum* and *Dad*. And my husband, John, frequently calls his aunts Cora and Isa *Auntie Cor* and *Auntie Iz*, whereas they call him simply *John*.

The explication sketched for Australian abbreviatory names treats them as if they were primarily vocatives, forms of address (rather than referring expressions). And indeed, according to my observations, the use of such forms in reference is rather limited. For example, although I hear the two forms *Mare* and *Dim* regularly and the forms *Al* and *Iz* fairly often, I have only rarely heard them used in referring. I realize, however, that to say this is not to say much, in view of the inherent mutuality which such forms imply. For example, I am told that in the circle of friends whose members frequently address each other as *Mare/Muz*, *Dim*, and *Juz*, these forms can also be used referringly. Thus, speaking to me, my daughter Mary refers to her friends Dimity and Justine as *Dimity* and *Justine*, but speaking to Dimity about Justine, or to Justine about Dimity, she does sometimes refer to them, warmly, as *Juz* and *Dim*.¹² To account for this usage, the semantic formula proposed initially should be expanded to include the following possibility:

speaking to you about person X
I feel good feelings towards X
different from good feelings that one feels towards small children
I assume that you feel the same way towards X
(I assume that we all feel the same way towards each other?)

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the lengthened variants of Australian abbreviatory names, an example of which (*Gazza*) was mentioned earlier. Other examples that I have heard include *Tezza* (from *Terry*), *Bazza* (usually from *Barry*), *Dazza* (from *Darren*), *Lazza* (from *Larry*), *Muzza* (from *Murray*), *Wazza* (from *Wallace*), *Chazza* (from *Charles*), and *Kezza* (from *Kerrie*). As

these examples show, in this category of names a final vowel is added on to a form ending with a *z*, where *z* tends to (though doesn't have to) be substituted for an underlying *r*. It appears that the addition of that word-final vowel is felt as a further jocular "distortion" and as a further sign of a "special relationship" between the speaker and the person addressed and/or spoken of. In my judgment, this further "distortion" is not only a stylistic device, increasing the atmosphere of informality and in-groupness, but also a semantic mechanism, introducing a further semantic component: roughly speaking, a component of congenial (and a bit rough) good humor. This component can perhaps be represented as follows:

speaking to you (speaking of person X)
 I feel in a good mood
 I assume you feel the same way

It is worth noting that the suffix *-za* is typically used in masculine names and only rarely in feminine ones. But I do know of at least one girl whose name is *Kerrie* and whom her cousins call *Kezza*; and an acquaintance tells me he has a friend called *Shazza* (from *Sharon*).

The suffixes *-z* and *-za* are of particular interest as they seem to be uniquely Australian. Other affectionate abbreviations, in particular those derived by chopping off the diminutive suffix (*Debbie* → *Deb*, *Vicki* → *Vick*, *Beckie* → *Beck*, *Franny* → *Fran*), do seem to be used in some other regional varieties of English, although not as widely as in Australia. (For example, forms such as *Mare* for *Mary* or *Sophe* for *Sophie* sound abhorrent to my non-Australian informants.) But the suffixes *-za* and *-z* (as in *Gaz* for *Gavin* or as in *Julz* for *Julie*) do seem to be innovations of Australian grammar, as well of the Australian "ethnography of speaking" (cf. Hymes 1962).¹³

One could perhaps suggest that the emergence of the suffixes *-z* and *-za* has codified grammatically, in an unambiguous form, what would have been, otherwise, an ambiguous and somewhat opaque category. After all, when one hears forms such as *Al* or *Sal*, one can't be sure – without knowing the participants and their personal conventions – if they are meant as fond "distortions" or as standard personal designations, analogous to *Val* (for *Valerie*) or *Pam* (for *Pamela*). But a form such as *Gaz* or *Marz* is quite unequivocal. The existence of such equivocal forms gives a status of a separate grammatical category to all affectionate abbreviations, including those like *Al* or *Sal*, which out of context could lend themselves to two different interpretations.¹⁴

I would add that just as the Australian love of abbreviations seems to reflect the Australian antiintellectualism, "toughness," and informality, so the Australian propensity to add with one hand what one has taken away with the other (as in forms such as *Bazza*; but also in forms such as *Tommo*, *Sallo*, or *Bronno* for *Tom*, *Sal* and *Bron*; i.e., for abbreviated forms of *Thomas*, *Sally*, and *Bronwyn*; and in forms such as *mozzies* and *slippies* for *mosquitoes* and *slippers*, to be

discussed below), reflects the Australian need to express "congenial fellowship" and good-natured good humor.

Commenting on the Australian tendency to abbreviate words, and otherwise "tamper with the forms of words," in a number of different ways, Baker (1970:375) describes it, perhaps jocularly, as a manifestation of a characteristically Australian temptation to "distort" words, for the sake of sheer distortion.

Such abbreviations are fairly general in all languages, but there is a special feature in Australian speech on which comment must be made. We have seen some part of this in the previous Section in such an example as *Chrissie prezzie* for a Christmas present. This can be looked on as (1) baby talk or (2) woman's talk, but in terms of fact it extends far beyond this. True, one can feel fairly sure that a woman will be heard saying, "*Dins* will be ready in a *min*" (i.e., dinner will be ready in a minute), but it is not impossible that you will hear (as I have heard) a man referring to his main meal of the day as *din-din*, that he will say *ta* for thanks and *ta-ta* for good-bye. Since, if you listen closely, it is more than likely that you will hear the same man using such expressions as *kern oath!*, *bullsh*, *cowsh*, *frogsh*, *filmsh*, *shouse* and *touse*, it is difficult to regard such terms as other than manifestations of our lasting discontent with leaving words as they are.

I think, however, that there is a great deal of logic to this seemingly perverse linguistic behavior. The urge of abbreviate names can be seen as an expression of the Australian cult of "toughness" and the Australian dislike of articulated, intellectual, "cultured" speech. But the urge to extend, in a new way, what has previously been shortened, can be seen as an expression of the Australian need to express affection and friendliness – and to do it in a clearly "nonsentimental" way. The suffixes *-o* and *-za* (*Sallo*, *Bazza*), added on to a truncated form of the name, fulfill both these needs.

Thus, both the "chopping off" of the "sentimental" diminutive suffix *-ie*, and the introduction of the "antisentimental" suffixes *-o* or *za*, constitute a parallel to the much commented on phenomenon of friendly insults. To quote Harris (1962:65–66),

the interesting thing about the Australian attitude to human relationship is the special forms it has to take to avoid coming into conflict with our basic antipathy towards the public expression of sentiment and emotion. Because we are unsentimental and cynical towards the emotions, Australians have to express their social affection in some way which is not on the face of it self-revealing. Thus, there has evolved the principle of "rubbishing" your mates and chynacking the stranger. In an atmosphere of reciprocal banter or "rubbishing" Australians can express mutual affection without running any risk of indecently exposing states of feeling.

AUSTRALIAN ‘‘DEPRECIATIVES’’

Australian English has an interesting morphological category which, while akin to the diminutive, differs from it in a revealing way. This category could be called the ‘‘depreciative.’’ A noun in the depreciative form constitutes an abbreviation of the standard noun, combined with a pseudodiminutive suffix. Thus, the depreciative form of *present* is *prezzie*, of mosquitoes is *mozzies*, of *mushrooms* is *mushies*, of *barbecue* is *barbie*, of *lipstick* is *lippie*, of *sunglasses* is *sunnies*, and so on. Forms of this kind are often referred to as diminutives. In fact, however, they are not really diminutives and have a function quite different from the main function of diminutives (although it is of course a simplification to speak of diminutives as if they had only one function). Formally, they differ from English diminutives because they are abbreviations: Baby words such as *birdie*, *fishie*, or *doggie* add a diminutive suffix to the full form of the base word; but words such as *barbie* or *lippie* add a suffix to a truncated form of the base word. Semantically, they differ from diminutives in expressing, essentially, not endearment but convivial good humor. Their use is quite different from that of diminutives. For example, one man can easily say to another: ‘‘I always clean the car on a Sunday morning and do a bit of pottering in the garden. Bit worried about those rhodies’’ (Humphries 1981:18). But one could hardly expect one Australian farmer to say to another that he is ‘‘bit worried about the horsies.’’ In Canberra, when the spring comes and the numerous local magpies become aggressive and start attacking passersby and cyclists, one can often hear the good-humored complaint: ‘‘those bloody maggies!’’ but it is inconceivable that anyone should say ‘‘those bloody birdies!’’ Forms such as *birdie* or *horsie* belong to baby-talk, and are normally not used among adults, let alone among men. But forms such as *maggies*, *rhodies* (for rhododendrons), or *pozzie* (for *position*) are commonly used by Australian men. Thus, the common notion that forms such as *maggies* are ‘‘diminutives’’ in the same sense in which forms such as *birdies* are diminutives, is, in my view, completely wrong.¹⁵

But to capture and to show subtle differences in meaning in a precise and explicit way, we need a semantic metalanguage. Using the metalanguage based on a simplified and standardized version of natural language, we can portray the contrast between diminutives and ‘‘depreciatives’’ as follows (cf. Wierzbicka 1980, 1984, & 1985b):

diminutives (e.g., *birdie*)

I think of it as of something small
talking about it to you I feel good feelings (towards you) of the kind one
feels towards small children

‘‘depreciatives’’ (e.g., *prezzie*)

I don’t think of it as of a big thing
I assume you and I think of such things in the same way
talking about it to you I feel in a good mood

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Thus, calling mosquitoes *mozzies*, the speaker is jocularly dismissing the problem; s/he does not think of *mozzies* as small and endearing, but s/he does not think of them as a “big thing” either, and s/he expects that the addressee would share this attitude. As I argued in Wierzbicka (1984), the semantic complex explicated above reflects many characteristic features of the Australian ethos: antisentimentality, jocular cynicism, a tendency to knock things down to size, “mateship,” good-natured humor, love of informality, and dislike for “long words” (Slavic or Romance diminutives are typically much longer than the base words; but Australian abbreviations are normally shorter than the base words, and Australians feel that this formal brevity is somehow functional).

For all these reasons, a linguistic category like the genuine diminutive would not be particularly well suited to the expressive needs of Australians. The depreciative, on the other hand, is most congenial.

The functional difference between the Australian abbreviations (misnamed “diminutives”) and the genuine pan-English diminutives was well captured in a piece which appeared recently in the Australian magazine *The Bulletin*. The author wrote,

This strange Australian practice of coining diminutives by the addition of “ie” or “y” to hundreds, if not thousands of words is made the more incredible when we consider the fact that we are inclined to inwardly wince at the sound of grown Englishmen referring to “Mummy” and “Daddy.” In our own speech, from kindy on, these two words are almost totally absent. By school age we want “Mums” and “Dads” or we feel bubsy. There is a need to prove we are now biggies. (Serisier 1981)

In view of the extreme popularity of the suffix *-ie* in Australian English, the author proposed to mark it with a special letter, for example with a @, in the following way,

. . . washed the wool@s, ironed the hank@s an night@s, and put away the und@s. Watered the chrys@s and gladd@s, made a samm@, and watched a soap@. Put on some lipp@, and rushed up to the dell@ for some soss@, then Wooll@s for some veg@s before picking up the kids from the foot@.¹⁶

Another, closely related linguistic device which has developed in Australian English and which reflects the Australian ethos, is the abbreviation with the suffix *-o*, as in *demo* (demonstration), *compo* (workers’ compensation), *anthro* (anthropologist), *acco* (academic), *leso* (lesbian), or *muso* (musician). The popularity of this suffix in Australian English is reflected in the following satirical passage:

Thommo, a commo journo, who lived with his preggio wife from Rotto in a fibro in Paddo, slipped on the lino taking a dekko at the nympho next door. He missed out on compo, so worked for a milko, then a garbo, and took a bit part

in a panto. His wife ran off with a muso, and Thommo got dermo and gastro. When he couldn't even pay his rego, he tried to shoot himself but had run out of ammo. If the Salvos hadn't found him and called the ambo, he could have ended up a derro on metho. (Serisier 1981).¹⁷

I must stress that the force of the suffix *-o* in the words used in this passage is different from that of the suffix *-o* in first names, such as *Johnno* or *Sallo*. The latter are affectionate, but the former are not. The meaning of the suffix *-o* in words such as *acco* or *demo* can, I think, be represented as follows:

I don't think of it as of something special
 I am used to it
 I assume that you think of it in the same way
 talking about it I don't want to use long words (as people who think of it as something special do)

The person who says *anthro*, *journ*, or *demo* rather than *anthropologist*, *journalist*, or *demonstration* is not trying to minimize the things s/he is talking about (as one minimizes a barbecue by calling it a *barbie* or mosquitoes by calling them *mozzies*), s/he is just showing his (or her) familiarity with them. The message s/he conveys could be formulated, informally, as follows: "For me, these are household concepts; I don't need big words (long words) to talk about these things." A message of this kind would be incompatible with words familiar to everybody and referring to trivial concepts such as *mushrooms* or *mosquitoes*. For this reason, forms such as **mozzos* or **mushos* (for *mozzies* and *mushies*) are quite inconceivable. But a form such as *leso* or *muso* makes perfect sense, conveying toughness, informality, good humor, and antiintellectualism – all quintessentially Australian values. They suit wonderfully the "markedly anti-intellectual tenor of Australian society" and the Australian "cult of informality" (Horne 1964:34).¹⁸

I hope it has by now become clear what I meant when I spoke earlier of the cultural significance of expressive derivation. If one compares Australian "depreciatives" (such as *mozzies*) with Slavic and Romance diminutives (such as *ptaszek* 'birdie' in Polish) or with Japanese honorific forms of nouns and adjectives (such as *okaze* 'respected cold' or *oakai* 'respected red'), one can get insight, it seems to me, into the prevailing emotional tone of a culture and into the prevailing tone of social interaction in a society. In a highly stratified, "vertical" society such as the Japanese one (cf. Nakane 1970), it is hardly surprising that the most important interpersonal attitude to be grammatically codified seems to be that of respect. In an egalitarian society of descendants of co-convicts and of frontiersmen, with strong pioneer traditions but also with plenty of sun and plenty of luck, such as Australia, (cf. Horne 1964), it seems hardly surprising that cultural ideals such as "mateship," "toughness," antisentimentality, and "congenial fellowship" (Lieberman's term; cf. Lieberman 1982) have found their way into the grammatical system of the language (in the form of

expressive nominal derivation). As for the links between rich systems of affectionate diminutives in a language such as Polish and other aspects of the corresponding culture, I must refer the reader to the detailed study mentioned in the Introduction (Wierzbicka 1985b).¹⁹

FIXED EXPRESSIONS

Among the most characteristic Australian expressions I would single out the following two: *no worries* and *good on you*.

No worries is an ubiquitous saying in Australian life – so much so that it has been referred to (quite justly, in my view) as “the national motto” (King 1978:24). It is often used in response to apologies, thanks, requests, and in a number of other contexts. One part of its illocutionary force is signalled clearly by its form and can be roughly spelled out as follows:

I want you not to worry about this

However, a doctor seeking to reassure patients or their families could not say to them “no worries,” although s/he could well say, “I want you not to (I don’t want you to) worry about this.” To predict correctly the range of the use of the expression in question, a further component has to be added – roughly, “I don’t worry about this.” The full illocutionary force can be spelled out, still roughly, as follows:

I don’t want you to feel anything bad because of that

I don’t feel anything bad because of that

I assume we want to feel the same thinking about it

I want you to be sure that there is no reason why anyone should feel anything bad because of that

The expression *no worries* reflects some important aspects of the Australian ethos: amiability, friendliness, an expectation of shared attitudes (a proneness to easy “mateship”), jocular toughness, good humor, and, above all, casual optimism.²⁰ Its importance in Australian life is highlighted by its large family of derivatives: *no problems*, *no probs*, *no troubles*, *no hassles*, and so on.

The same characteristically Australian propensities are reflected in the expression *good on you* (often *good on you, mate*). In many contexts, *good on you* is interchangeable with *congratulations* or with *well done*, but this is not always the case (quite apart from the stylistic differences such as the fact that *good on you* is a working-class expression). For example, if an old man or a sick man shows signs of resilience, stoicism, moral courage, or “toughness” (say, by announcing his decision to fight his illness), it would be appropriate to say *good on you* but not *congratulations* or *well done*. Similarly, if an impecunious friend announces his decision to go on a trip around the world, despite the seemingly insurmountable difficulties that such an undertaking would involve, one might say to him, with approval, *good on you*, but not *congratulations* or *well done*.

Very tentatively, I would suggest that *good on you* refers to an ATTITUDE displayed by a certain action rather than to the action itself. It refers to a set of values shared by the speaker and the addressee. Saying *good on you*, the speaker indicates that the addressee has displayed, in a conspicuous way, an attitude which the speaker assumes both s/he and the addressee admire.

The focus on the addressee's attitude rather than achievement seems clear in this example: " 'Good on you, mate', he said, 'We'll have a go' " (from Arthur Wright's *The colt from the country* [1922:171], cited in Wilkes [1978]).²¹ Thus, the semantic difference between the Australian expression *good on you* and the pan-English expressions *congratulations* and *well done* seems to provide striking linguistic confirmation of the view that the Australian ethos values attitudes (such as "toughness") more than success.²² According to the Australian ethos, the important thing is not so much to live and to succeed as to

. die hard, die game,
die fighting, like that wild colonial boy,
Jack Dowling, says the ballad, was his name
(a poem by John Manifold, quoted in Ward [1958:217]).

The emergence in Australian English of the expression *good on you*, with its peculiar semantics, gives substance to the legend. It may be hard to verify whether in fact "swagman and bushranger die hard, die game, die fighting"; but the fact that such attitudes are admired in Australia, and that they are valued as much, or more, than sheer achievement, can be verified, to some extent, by linguistic evidence.

The expression *well done!* implies, among other things, the following idea:

I perceive that you have done something good that one couldn't expect everyone to be able to do

The expression *congratulations!* is a bit less specific, since it can refer to "happy events" (such as the birth of a child) as well as to "impressive actions." Nonetheless, in congratulating someone we still seem to assume that the addressee has done something which caused (at least in part) the happy event. For example, if a friend completely unexpectedly receives an inheritance, it would be impossible to say to him or her (without irony) *Well done!*, but it would also be a little odd to say (without irony) *Congratulations!*

One can portray this aspect of *congratulations* as follows:

I know that something good has happened to you

I assume it wouldn't have happened if you didn't do something good

But the expression *good on you* doesn't imply that something good has happened to the addressee or that the addressee has done something impressive. Rather, it implies that the addressee has shown that he or she is a kind of person who could do impressive things. Achievements can be due partly to luck (not to mention ruthlessness, dishonesty, etc.). The expression *good on you* conveys admiration

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not for achievements but for the evidence that the addressee is the kind of person who could do impressive things (given the right circumstances).

According to an old Australian ballad, “‘I’ll fight but not surrender’, said the Wild Colonial Boy” (Wannan 1963:16), and one can well imagine hearing “‘good on you, mate!’” as a response to what the Wild Colonial Boy said. But of course neither *well done!* nor *congratulations!* would be appropriate.

I suggest that the illocutionary force encoded in the expression *good on you!* can be represented as follows:

I perceive that you can do things that one couldn’t expect everyone to be able to do

I think, because of that, that you are a kind of person that you and I would want people to be but couldn’t expect everyone to be able to be

I feel good feelings towards you because of that

I say this because I want to show what I think about it and what I feel thinking about it.

Generally speaking, I would suggest that the set of commonly used interjections and illocutionary fixed expressions of a given language reflects in an illuminating and remarkably reliable way the “national character” and the prevailing ethos of the users of this language. Rigorous semantic analysis of such expressions may therefore enable us to find some hard evidence to support purely impressionistic observations about such matters, often dismissed as vague and subjective.

SPEECH ACT VERBS

As I have argued in detail elsewhere (Wierzbicka (1985c), the set of speech act verbs which a language has is usually a valuable source of insight into the culture associated with that language. For example, the fact that Australian Aboriginal languages don’t have verbs corresponding to *thank* and *apologise* (cf. Harris 1980), but do have numerous verbs referring to attitudes based on kinship (such as, e.g., “demand in the name of kinship rights” [cf. Hudson 1985] or “call someone by a kinship term” [cf. Dixon ms.]) is highly revealing. (References to kinship permeate both the lexicon and the grammar of Australian languages, and reflect the central role of kinship in Aboriginal culture. The absence of verbs for “thank” and “apologise” seems to reflect the fact that even favors given or received tend to be seen as consequences of kinship-based rights and obligations rather than as “free” gifts from one individual to another [cf. Harris 1980].)

No less telling is the fact that Japanese has no verb corresponding to *resign* (Junko Morimoto, personal communication). Apparently, from a Japanese point of view, to resign would be to unilaterally and “inconsiderately” or “arrogantly” terminate a contract which could be expected to last, and which involves and affects another party, who could be expected to be treated with

respect. The English verb *resign* reflects a culture which insists on the rights of the individual; the absence of such a verb from the Japanese lexicon reflects a different ethos, a different hierarchy of values, and a different style of social interaction.

Australian English, too, has developed a number of characteristic speech act verbs, intimately related to Anglo-Australian culture. Among such verbs, *dob in* seems to me particularly interesting.

Dob in is related to *inform on* in implying that the speaker is breaking the principle of solidarity of a group. Unlike *inform*, however, it doesn't imply that the people in question belong to a "special" group, set aside from the rest of the society by being subject to the power of some special authorities (such as, e.g., prison authorities). Thus, *dobbing in* is not restricted to special groups, such as groups of prisoners; it is open to anybody. For example, in the following passage, an outraged husband reproaches his wife (whom he had beaten up) for "dobbing him in" to the police:

KENNY (to FIONA): You bitch! Go and dob me in because I gave you a bit of a shove! (Williamson 1972:66)

Unlike *informing on*, *dobbing in* doesn't imply that there is some kind of quasi-contractual relationship between the speaker and the addressee, or that the act is kept secret. It suggests a spontaneous activity, which is likely to be motivated by sheer malice ("I say this because I want you to know it"), rather than by a desire to gain the favors of the authorities ("I say this because I assume you would want to know it"). It doesn't have the self-righteous ring characteristic of *denouncing*, and it doesn't pretend to be motivated by the conviction that the addressee "should know" ("I say this because I think you should know it").

The addressee of *dob in* doesn't have to represent the "authorities": S/He is at least as likely to be the culprit's boss as a policeman; but s/he must have power over the addressee and must be able to cause something bad to happen to the culprit. Presumably, the speaker does realize that the activity s/he is engaging in will be condemned by other people but s/he doesn't seem to care (and s/he is not relying on secrecy). Moreover, the concept of *dobbing in* seems to emphasize not only a violation of group loyalty, but also a violation of normal expectations: It reflects the assumption that people wouldn't expect anyone to pull such a dirty trick on a "mate." It seems likely that it is this reference to the code of "mateship" which makes the concept of *dobbing in* so important in Australian culture as to warrant its lexical codification, since "mateship," combined with contempt for authority, is one of the core values in this culture.

It is interesting to note in this connection that the idea of solidarity and loyalty seems much more prominent in *dobbing in* than in *informing on*. The *Macquarie dictionary of Australian English* defines *dobbing in* via *betraying* (and so does the *Supplement to the OED*, which classifies *dob in* as "Australian slang"), and I think that this is a helpful hint. An *informant* plays the role of a member of a

group, participates in the group's life and exploits his or her status of the participant, playing at the same time a different and incompatible role as an eye and an ear of the local authorities. In other words, s/he acts under false pretences: S/He is "planted" within a group. If s/he is trusted by his or her comrades, that's because they don't know who s/he really is. A *dobber*, on the other hand, is a genuine and natural member of a group of people, who misuses and betrays the trust to which s/he was originally entitled. Typically, one *informs on* a whole group of which one pretends to be an ordinary member; but one *dobs in* a "mate." Moreover, *dob in* implies that the "mate" has indeed done something bad, but that one would never expect one's "mate" to report it. *Inform on*, on the other hand, doesn't imply that the act is bad, but merely that it is of a kind disapproved of by the authorities.

It might be added that Australian children also use widely the verb *dob on*, unknown to the older generation, which is, semantically, a kind of cross between *telling on* and *dobbing in*. Characteristically, it implies the same condemnation of "betrayal of a mate."²³

To summarize all the differences between the concepts of *inform on* and *dob in*, the following semantic formulae can be proposed (for justification of the first-person format, cf. Wierzbicka [1985c]):

Inform (on)

I think of you as of someone who represents the people who have power over us

I say: person X in my group has done something that you don't want us to do

I say this because I assume you would want to know it

I assume that you will cause something bad to happen to X because of that

I know that people think that it is a bad thing to say things of this kind about

someone else in [the] group to people who have power over the group

I know that you will not cause other people in the group [to] know that I've said this to you.

Dob in

I think of you as someone who has power over person X and me

I say: person X has done something bad

I say this because I want you to know it

I assume that you will cause something bad to happen to X because of that

I know that X wouldn't expect me to say something bad about him/her to someone who has power over us

I know that people think that it is a bad thing for people to say bad things about one another to someone who has power over them

I don't care

It is worth noting that *dob in* has also another meaning in Australia: roughly, doing a bad turn to a "mate" by "volunteering" for something on his or her behalf, against his or her wishes. This meaning is related to the first one insofar

as it implies saying something about a “mate” to a person in charge, causing something bad to happen to the “mate,” and thus violating the expectation of loyalty and mutual support. The main difference between the two meanings consists in the fact that in one case, one says something bad about the mate, whereas in the other, one says something unfounded and embarrassing: namely, that s/he is willing to do something which in fact s/he is not.

CONCLUSION

Does language reflect culture? In many ways, it undoubtedly does, although it is not always easy to determine which aspects of the culture reflected in a given language pertain to the present and which to the past; possibly, a remote past.

The dangers of subjectivism and arbitrariness involved in a search for such correlations are no doubt real enough. But to abandon the search because of these dangers is, to my mind, analogous to saying, as Bloomfield did, that linguistics should stay clear of meaning because all attempts to study meaning are fraught with dangers of subjectivism and arbitrariness.

As I see it, the important thing to do is to try to sharpen our analytical tools, and to develop safeguards for the study of the “dangerous areas.” A semantic metalanguage for a crosscultural comparison of meanings seems to me, in this respect, a requirement of the first priority.²⁴

NOTES

*I am very grateful to Pauline Bryant, Jean Harkins, Alan Dench, and Jane Simpson, who read the first draft of this paper and offered many valuable comments.

1. A more accurate title of this paper would read: “Does language reflect culture, as well as being a part of culture?” I have no doubt that all the distinctions drawn by a language – whether lexical or grammatical – are themselves cultural facts, and as such are potentially of considerable importance, regardless of their links with extralinguistic aspects of culture. If I have, nonetheless, decided to refer to the issues involved under the heading “language and culture” rather than under the more correct “language and the rest of the culture,” I have done so only for simplicity’s sake. I hope that this will not occasion any misunderstandings.

2. The literature on the links between language and culture is far too extensive to be surveyed in the present paper. If just a few references were to be mentioned here, in symbolic recognition of the vastness of the field that this paper is building on, I would include in this list von Humboldt (1903–1918), Vossler (1925), Sapir (1949), Levi-Strauss et al. (1953), Whorf (1956), Greenberg (1957), Hoijer (1954), Hymes (1964), and Geertz (1975).

3. Cf. also Sapir ([1912] 1949:89–103) for a similar position, later changed (discussed in Hymes [1983: Ch. 4, pp. 150–58]).

4. The Australian love of abbreviations is commonly attributed to the Australian “laziness” (according to one Australian stereotype, “an Australian is a lazy boozier” [Horne 1964:4]); to the Australian “antiintellectualism” and distrust of all “verbosity” (in the view of the ordinary Australian, “most of what is pumped out of the word factories is ‘bullshit’” [Horne 1964:4]); and to the Australian “toughness” (in Australia, “the phlegmatic understatement will almost always command greater attention than over-statement, terseness more than volubility, the short vulgar word more than the polite polysyllable” [Baker 1959:51]).

5. All the names given here are either known to me firsthand, being used by people whom I know

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personally, or were given to me by acquaintances, friends, and relatives as names which are used regularly in their own circles of acquaintances. Most of the names cited here were given to me independently by several informants.

6. I must note, however, the following advertisement which appeared in the *Canberra Times* on December 2, 1984 (I am grateful to Alan Dench for drawing my attention to it):

Christmas gift tags, hand-made. \$1.20 a packet. Ph Maz 663863 (bh).

I rang the number provided and found out that the name of the person who called herself "Maz" was in fact Marilyn.

7. In essence, my method of analysis consists in paraphrasing the word, expression, or construction under consideration in a metalanguage based on intuitively intelligible natural language, and in simple terms, which make possible a precise comparison of both the similarities and the differences between different concepts. Furthermore, the semantic metalanguage, though based on a particular ethnic language, has to be maximally language independent and culture independent.

In this regard, the basic point, as I see it, is this: Not all English words are equally language specific and culture specific. Generally speaking, the simpler a concept is, the less culture dependent it is going to be, and the wider the range of languages is going to be in which it has been lexicalized. If we could assume that relatively basic concepts such as "say," "want," "think," "good," and "bad" are lexical universals (i.e., that they have been lexicalized in all natural languages), then the answer to the methodological dilemma would be very simple: We can get at all human ideas and human experiences using English words such as *say*, *want*, *good*, and *bad*, because these words stand for concepts which are not culture specific. In other words, if the English lexicon includes a subset which has analogous subsets in the lexicons of all other human languages, then we can use this subset as a language-independent semantic metalanguage, suitable for comparing meanings encoded in different cultures.

8. Pringle (1965:20) says that Australians are "rough rather than tough," and I think that in many ways this is a fair comment. Linguistic evidence of the kind discussed in the present paper certainly points to a good deal of friendliness, good humor, and fellow feeling, as well as antisentimentality in the Australian national character.

But of course the Ned Kelly ideal of "dying game" (see Wannan 1963) is one of "toughness" rather than "roughness." Generally speaking, one could say that the Australian ethos requires that one should be "tough" in the face of misfortune and "rough" in relation to one's friends.

9. Note, however, the existence of the extended variant *Gazza*. Forms of this kind will be discussed later.

10. Nonetheless, affectionate abbreviations ending in a vowel (other than those of the *Mare*-type) are occasionally heard. For example, in Williamson's (1974) play "Jugglers Three," one of the main characters, who is always referred to as *Graham*, is sometimes addressed affectionately as *Grah*. I have also been told that *Fee* is used as an abbreviation for *Fiona*, and *Dee*, for *Deirdre*.

11. The emergence of forms such as *Suz* for *Sachiko* (or *Pabz* for *Pablo* [Tim Shopen, personal communication]) indicates that the morphological processes under discussion are productive. To say this is not to deny that there may be some phonological constraints in this area. For some interesting observations on the phonology of Australian abbreviations see Simpson (ms.).

12. Referential use of affectionate abbreviatory forms is also illustrated in the following characteristic song, sung by "me and a few great old mates of mine from school" (Humphries 1981:80):

.....
We kicked off with a liquid lunch
Though the frost was cruel,
Drinking glühwein with a bunch
of beaut young blokes from skew-ell.
.....
Tone and Russell, Drew and Bruce,
Sue and Sal and Jude
Drank vodka and tomato juice
Then went outside and spewed.

13. As for the Anglo-Australian "ethnography of speaking," one of its most striking features is undoubtedly the widespread insistence on a reciprocal use of first names among people who are not

intimates and who differ in social status. For example, in Australian universities, undergraduates commonly address their lecturers by their first names. Journalists interviewing celebrities usually address them, and are addressed by them, by their first names. Politicians make a point of repeatedly addressing the interviewers by their first names. And perfect strangers, such as salesmen of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, can hardly wait for the front door to open to address the host and hostess with some phrase such as "Hello John, hello Anna. I am Max."

Presumably, this is another manifestation not only of the Australian superegalitarianism, but also of the much commented on cultural assumption that people are all essentially the same and can be treated on a person-to-person basis as fellow human beings. To quote Horne again (1964:35): "Since Australian friendliness often lacks knowledge of social forms and ceremonies it can sometimes seem so strange to be taken for rudeness, usually for the one reason: that most Australians are bereft of feelings of difference; they think that all people are the same, that what is good for oneself is good for anyone else. Their openness and friendship-seeking is based on this belief." (But one is also reminded, in this connection, of D. H. Lawrence's comment about the "aggressive familiarity" of the Australians, quoted in Pringle [1965:34]).

14. I find it very surprising that the emergence of the suffixes *-z* and *-za* is not mentioned in any of the standard works on Australian English – and not even in a monograph devoted specifically to the morphology of Australian English (Dabke 1976). The fact that the category of hypocoristic abbreviations such as *Dim* or *Iz* is not mentioned in the literature is easier to understand, given their superficial similarity to pan-English abbreviations such as *Pam* or *Liz*.

First names with the suffix *-o*, such as *Johnno* or *Sallo*, have often been commented on in the literature on Australian English, but first names with the suffixes *-z* and *za* seem to have hardly been noted at all. A partial explanation for this discrepancy in the scholarly attention may lie in the fact (if it is a fact) that the suffix *-o* (in the relevant function) is older. In fact, the use of the suffixes *-z* and *-za* seems to be increasing, whereas the use of *-o* (in first names) seems to be decreasing. These are, however, purely impressionistic observations and may be wrong.

15. The "male flavor" of many Australian abbreviations was noted by Baker (1970:375; see the passage quoted in the present paper on p. 359), and this is of course to his credit. I believe, however, that it is important to go beyond such informal observations and to sort out in a rigorous manner the different morphological categories involved, assigning to each of them an explicit semantic representation.

16. Translation: "washed the woollen clothes [usually sweaters], ironed the handkerchiefs and the nightdresses, and put away the underwear. Watered the chrysanthemums and gladioli, made a sandwich, and watched a soap opera. Put on some lipstick, and rushed up to the delicatessen [corner store] for some sausage, then Woolworths for some vegetables before picking up the kids from the football."

17. Translation: "Thompson [or Tom], a communist journalist, who lived with his pregnant wife from Rottnest Island in an asbestos-fibreboard house in Paddington slipped on the linoleum floor taking a look at the nymphomaniac next door. He missed out on compensation, so worked for a milkman, then a garbage collector, and took a bit part in a pantomime. His wife ran off with a musician, and Thompson got dermatitis and gastroenteritis. When he couldn't even pay his registration, he tried to shoot himself but had run out of ammunition. If the Salvation Army workers hadn't found him and called the ambulance, he could have ended up as a derelict [drinking] on methylated spirits."

18. The Australian antiintellectualism (due in part to "the roughness of the early conditions, the need to stay alive, the comparative rarity of cultivated gentlemen" [Horne 1970:80]) is often linked with the traditional Australian cult of "toughness." The link is illustrated in the following statement: "I'm Australian through and through. I hate queers, commos, and students" (Emerald Hill Theatre Revue, 1966, quoted in Gibbs [n.d.:24]).

The preference for "the short vulgar word" rather than for "the polite polysyllable," mentioned in Baker (1959:51), highlights the link between the cult of informality, the cult of "tough masculinity," and the dislike of social, verbal, and intellectual graces.

19. Max Harris has made the following comment on the "Australian civilization" (quoted in Horne 1964:35): "Mateship became an attitude to human relationship, an easy readiness to strike up contact with fellow human beings in a warm and casual way. This often strikes outsiders as evidence of vulgar over-democratization . . . In fact the Australian has a rough but ready capacity for immedi-

ate affection, a quality which, oddly for an Anglo-Saxon breed, he shares with some of the Mediterranean peoples."

I think that minute semantic analysis of the kind illustrated in the present paper helps to capture, with some precision, the differences, as well as the similarities, between the Anglo-Australian and the Mediterranean style of affection. The fact that in both cultures affectionated forms of first names are commonly used (e.g., *Baz*, *Bazza*, *Tone*, or *Mare* in Australian, and *Carmencita*, *Juanito*, or *Pablito* in Spanish) highlights the similarity pointed out by Harris. But the fact that the Australian forms carry an "antidiminutive" force, portrayed in the semantic formulae proposed in the present paper, highlights the difference between an uninhibited "Mediterranean" display of emotions and the Australian style of friendliness, which is antisentimental and good humored rather than openly emotional.

20. Horne (1964:44-45) calls Australians "cheerful and practical-minded optimists . . . Suggest to an Australian that you spend some time investigating a practical problem in detail and outlining rational procedural patterns and you bore him stiff. 'She'll be right', he will say. 'We'll just give her a go'. Talking too much about what you are doing is 'bullshit' . . . In the narrow shaft of clear, bright sunlight where Australians think, there is little room for the view in which we all just seem to bump around in the shadows with little understanding of what it is all about. Australians think they have life taped."

Elsewhere, Horne links the Australian optimism with the common Australian belief that things could be changed for the better, ". . . even during the flat decades, one of the basic promptings of Australians seemed to be that men and things could be improved. There was the sardonic humour of the absurd frontier, but there was also the optimism produced by the 'assimilation' of a significant number of the ex-convicts" (Horne 1970:16).

King (1978:24) writes about the Australian optimism more sharply: "No matter what else is happening around the world, in Godzone country everything is basically right. . . . The strength of this belief was affirmed for all time by the RSL Club drinker interviewed on the ABC's This Day Tonight programme in November 1976 who said 'Australia is the best bloody country in the world and I feel sorry for any poor bastard who doesn't live here'."

And in Conway's (1971:256-57) words, "the Australian mind . . . is certainly deficient in the tragic view of life . . . The point that suffering and crisis may throw some clearer light on the design of existence, that it might be the way the mindless ones are supposed to reflect and grow a little before they die - this is a proposition to which so many Australians are likely to retort: 'bloody lot of rubbish', and stalk irately away."

21. Wilkes (1978:160) describes the expression *good on you* as "expression of approval, congratulation, goodwill." The gloss is sound, but hardly sufficient as a guide to usage or as a statement of meaning.

22. Cf. in this connection the following comment by Horne (1964:31): "There is little public glorification of success in Australia. The few heroes of heroic occasions (other than those of sport) are remembered for their style rather than for their achievement. The early explorers, Anzac Day: these commemorate comradeship, gameness, exertion of the Will, suffering in silence. To be game, not to whinge - that's the thing - rather than some dull success coming from organization and thought."

23. O'Grady (1965:34) offers the following comment: "Australians are noted for a deep-seated reluctance to report any fellow-citizen to anyone in a position of authority. Police, bosses, foremen, wives, etc., must do their own detecting. Anybody who 'dobs in' anybody else is a 'bastard' - in the worst sense of the word." And Baker (1959:15) mentions "a totally unforgiving attitude towards 'rats', 'scabs' and betrayers in general" among the most distinctive features of the "Australian character." "The essence of the tradition is loyalty to one's fellows, and the strength of its appeal may be seen in the restraining power of the term 'scab' in an Australian union" (Crawford 1970:137). According to Ward (1958), quoted in Crawford (1970:135), "the combination of loyalty to one's fellows with disrespect towards superior orders [and the] enduring disrespect for authority [may be] traced back to the convicts."

24. I wholeheartedly agree in this respect with the following remarks by Hymes (1961:46): "The interpretation of cognitive styles, and even acceptance of their presence, has suffered from friends, who too often have treated the problem apart from the kinds of control that are usually observed in culture-historical work, or who have given it too great an import, one that the known facts of history

would seem clearly to refute. The problem must be divested of such associations, and recognized for what, in the first instance, it is: the problem of describing and interpreting an aspect of culture, one among the other aspects of culture, which can be handled empirically and historically, and which must be handled, if any historical or evolutionary theory of culture is to claim adequacy.

"There is precedent for linking the matter of cognitive styles to typology in the work of Sapir. The value of the link is that the typological context may impose needed rigor on the study of cognitive style, while concern with cognitive style may enhance the place of the semantic dimensions of language in typology. With a concept of cognitive styles, linked to typology, and a framework for interpretation of languages as historical products, perhaps one can be philosophically neutral, linguistically precise, yet a little adventurous too."

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