Australian Aboriginal English in Indigenous-Authored Television Series: A Corpus Linguistic Study of Lexis in *Redfern Now*, *Cleverman* and *Mystery Road*

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Abstract:
This article analyses Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) in three recent Indigenous-authored television series: *Redfern Now*, *Cleverman*, and *Mystery Road*. Television series and movies have traditionally introduced and reinforced negative attitudes about speakers of minority/minoritised English and nonstandard language varieties. Representations of these varieties of English tend to be selective and inaccurate. However, most linguistic research to date has examined representations in older Hollywood movies. In Australia, there has been a recent growth of Indigenous-authored television drama as well as in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander characters on television. For viewers, such characters can be an important source of information, especially if they do not regularly interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is the case for many Australian audience members, and even more so for international viewers of Australian television series that are exported overseas—as is the case for all three analysed series. This study employs lexical profiling analysis (with AntWordProfiler) to compare the use of AAE lexis across the three programs. Results show *Mystery Road* contains the most variety of AAE types as well as the highest proportion of AAE tokens. *Cleverman* includes the least variety of AAE types and the lowest proportion of AAE tokens, but the most "less-familiar" AAE lexis (engaging with the Dreaming). *Redfern Now*'s use of AAE tokens is only slightly lower than *Mystery Road*, and it features a higher variety of AAE types than *Cleverman*. The study demonstrates that the use of such lexis is no barrier to "mainstream" popularity, critical acclaim, and international success.

Keywords: Australian Aboriginal English; corpus linguistics; *Redfern Now*; *Cleverman*; *Mystery Road*; Indigenous-authored television

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistic studies have shown that "telecinematic discourse" (Piazza et al.) plays a significant role in establishing, reflecting, recycling, and changing sociocultural norms, values, and language ideologies (see overview in Bednarek, *Language and Television Series* 23-31). This article focuses on the use of Australian Aboriginal English (henceforth: AAE) in three recent television series. AAE has long been recognised "as a valid, rule-governed dialect of English" (Eades, *Aboriginal Ways* 2), although it is in fact best regarded as "a cover term for overlapping varieties of the dialect(s) of English spoken by Aboriginal people" (Eades, *Aboriginal Ways* 3). Some scholars therefore prefer to speak of Aboriginal English*es* or use specific terms for local varieties. From a historical perspective, AAE has been influenced by preceding Australian pidgins and creoles that developed due to colonisation, but other input varieties such as Irish English also played a role (Troy 4; Malcolm 159ff). Overviews of AAE can be found in Eades (*Aboriginal Ways*; "Aboriginal English"), Malcolm, Dickson, and Rodríguez Louro & Collard. In this article, I use the term as a very broad label, and focus specifically on AAE lexis.

While film dialogue has been used as stimulus material in language elicitation tasks in Australia (e.g., Ponsonnet), very little linguistic analysis has been undertaken of scripted or mediated

AAE. However, there is some relevant research on other minority/minoritised Englishes as represented in Hollywood productions, mostly in older movies. Overviews of this body of research are provided in Stamou, Planchenault, or Bednarek (*Language and Television Series* 23-28). These studies have shown that the representation of minority/minoritised and nonstandard language varieties is problematic, selective and inaccurate and may reinforce negative attitudes about speakers. Traditionally, we can observe the reinforcing of a *standard language ideology* (see Lippi-Green). As an example, in the article "And the Injun Goes How," Meek studied "American Indian (Native American)" as constructed in three television episodes, eight Hollywood films and two greeting cards (produced between 1936 and 1997). She identifies a racialised and racist style of speech she calls "Hollywood Injun English," made up of "a limited set of tokens to serve as indexes of 'Indianness'" ("And the Injun Goes How" 95), including certain grammatical markers, metaphorical flourishes and specialised vocabulary (e.g., *chief, tepee, squaw, how*). This style has some commonalities with historical descriptions of American Indian Pidgin English but, crucially, differs from actual American Indian English varieties and "indexes an image of Indians as foreign victims, eloquent yet unsocialized" (Meek, "And the Injun Goes How" 121). Furthermore, in Westerns, disfluency and linguistic incompetence are normalised as dimensions of Indianness (see Meek, "Racing Indian Language").

Even where media representations are not quite as problematic, the dialogue of nonstandard speakers is traditionally characterised by the use of a few marked linguistic features without the variation found in "real" life (Queen 165). The use of easily recognisable features which are ideologically salient or iconic means that viewers can easily and quickly assess and categorise characters (Queen 165). The participation framework of film and television dialogue—the fact that the dialogue is ultimately designed for a ratified, overhearing audience—helps to explain this general tendency (Bednarek, *Language and Television Series* 25). However, given the paucity of relevant research on more recent data and on television series rather than on movies, it is unclear whether contemporary television continues this trend. Emerging research suggests that it may perpetuate inaccurate or negative representations, but that there are also exceptions (e.g., Bell; Coupland; Lopez and Bucholtz). The New Zealand series *bro'Town* for instance features appropriate linguistic variables and represents variations within Pasifika English (see Gibson and Bell). The Australian series *Redfern Now* also features linguistic variation in character speech and arguably does not engage in Othering Indigenous characters (see Bednarek, "Keyword Analysis").

In fact, both New Zealand and Australia are recognised as "leaders in producing a consistent and growing body of compelling and high-quality Indigenous work" in film and television (De Rosa and Burgess 14). This explains the focus of this study on three Australian Indigenous-authored television series: the drama *Redfern Now* (Dale and Dear), the sci-fi/supernatural drama *Cleverman* (Griffen et al.) and the crime drama *Mystery Road* (Jowsey and Simpkin). All three are "mainstream" programs, and as such they likely address "local, national and transnational audiences that include Indigenous, settler and migrant peoples," as Collins ("Blackfella Films" 219) explains in relation to *Redfern Now*. As a (white) migrant Australian myself, I am a member of this target audience and it is from this non-Indigenous perspective that I approach this study. All three programs were sold to other countries (De Rosa and Burgess 14) and therefore have international audiences as well as Australian ones. They are also available on services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube or iTunes. Other media programs that are perhaps aimed more exclusively at Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people can be found in Australia on the free-to-air television channel National Indigenous Television (NITV). Because the aim of this article is to study how AAE is transmitted to broad,

mixed audiences, the three chosen series are appropriate—which does not distract from the value and significance of NITV.

Regarding the topic of this special issue, this article aims to move away from a deficit lens and therefore does not focus on the analysis of negative representation of Indigenous characters or the creation of scapegoats as a way of dealing with fear and risk. Rather, it explores the linguistic effects of Indigenous creative agency, assessing its impact on the presence and use of Australian Aboriginal English lexis in mainstream television series. More specifically, I use lexical profiling analysis to compare *Redfern Now* with *Cleverman* and *Mystery Road*, building on a previous study of *Redfern Now* (see Bednarek, "Keyword Analysis"). The method and corpora are explained below, while the next section first provides a fairly extensive non-linguistic analysis of the three series. This is necessary for three key reasons: (i) to justify the selection of these three programs for this study; (ii) to show the extent of Indigenous creative involvement; (iii) to provide appropriate background for readers unfamiliar with the programs. In addition, this analysis also shows the type of in-depth engagement with the Australian past, present, and future that is present in the three programs.

2. The three programs

While this article cannot give full justice to describing the plots of each series, relevant information is readily available online. Here I focus on describing all three series in terms of their narrative and generic aspects, the social, political, and historical issues they address, and their cultural significance. Before presenting further detail about each series, Table 1 lists relevant production details (summarised from Screen Australia's *Screen Guide*). Following the Screen Guide, Indigenous creatives are marked by a superscript "I", with any known errors from the Screen Guide corrected.[1]

From a narrative perspective, both *Cleverman* and *Mystery Road* feature storylines that develop across a season, with recurring characters in each episode. *Redfern Now*, on the other hand, is what is generally called an "anthology" (Douglas 15). This means that each episode typically features a storyline with different main characters. Only some storylines continue across the two seasons and only a few characters appear across episodes. *Redfern Now* therefore features a wide range of characters appearing in different plots, while the other two series feature characters appearing across episodes of a particular season, with major characters appearing across both seasons.

Redfern Now is a drama in the mode of "social realism" (Warner), focusing on "the urban present" (Collins, "Rachel Perkins"). It is a "social drama series" (Davis 232) that features six stories in each of its two seasons, which centre on different individuals, families, and households in the Sydney suburb of Redfern, telling stories about contemporary Indigenous lives in the inner city ("Redfern Now" press kit). In each story "an everyday situation quickly escalates into a crisis, requiring ethical choices to be made" (Collins, "Rachel Perkins"). These stories are multifaceted, ranging from a schoolboy refusing to sing the national anthem, to a young man dying in custody or a vet suffering from PTSD from serving in the Vietnam war, to name but a few. While there are some white characters, the focus is on the Indigenous characters (see Nelson 48), who are the central protagonists with whom viewers align and whose perspective they are invited to share (see Collins, "Blackfella Films"; "Rachel Perkins"). Strong women feature dominantly (see Nelson 49), but the series also explores "multiple intersecting Aboriginal masculinities" (Riseman 41).

[1] For example, Miranda Dear has an "I" for season 1, but no "I" for season 2 and information about her careers suggests that she is from the UK. Jada Alberts is a Larrakia, Yanuwa, Bardi and Wardaman woman, but has no "I". It is possible that other errors exist in the *Screen Guide*.

TV series	Season	Year	Production company	Crew
Redfern Now	Season 1	2012	Blackfella films	Directors: Rachel Perkins,[I] Catriona McKenzie, [I] Wayne Blair, [I] Leah Purcell [I] Writers: Michelle Blanchard, [I] Jon Bell, [I] Adrian Russell Wills, [I] Steven McGregor, [I] Danielle MacLean [I] Producers: Darren Dale, [I] Miranda Dear Executive producers: Sally Riley, [I] Erica Glynn [I] Director of photography: Mark Wareham ACS Editor: Dany Cooper
	Season 2	2013		Directors: Wayne Blair, [I] Leah Purcell, [I] Rachel Perkins, [I] Beck Cole, [I] Adrian Russell Wills [I] Writers: Steven McGregor, [I] Adrian Russell Wills, [I] Jon Bell, [I] Wayne Blair, [I] Leah Purcell [I] Producers: Miranda Dear, Darren Dale [I] Editor: Dany Cooper
Cleverman	Season 1	2016	Goalpost Pictures Australia Pty Ltd; Pukeko Pictures Limited Partnership (Australia-NZ co-production)	Directors: Wayne Blair, [I] Leah Purcell [I] Writers: Michael Miller, Jon Bell, [I] Jane Allen Producer: Ryan Griffen, [I] Rosemary Blight, Lauren Edwards, Angela Littlejohn Executive producers: Sally Riley, [I] Kylie du Fresne, Ben Grant, Martin Baynton, Adam Fratto, Jan David Frouman, James Baker, Amelie Kienlin Director of photography: Mark Wareham ACS
	Season 2	2017		Directors: Leah Purcell, [I] Wayne Blair [I] Writers: Ryan Griffen, [I] Stuart Page, Jane Allen, Justine Juel Gillmer, Jada Alberts[I] Producers: Ryan Griffen, [I] Sharon Lark, Jane Allen, Rosemary Blight Executive producers: Kylie du Fresne, Angela Littlejohn, Wayne Blair, [I] Ben Grant
Mystery Road	Season 1	2018	Bunya Productions Pty Ltd	Director: Rachel Perkins[I] Writers: Kodie Bedford, [I] Steven McGregor, [I] Michaeley O'Brien, Tim Lee Producers: Greer Simpkin, David Jowsey Executive producers: Sally Riley, [I] Ivan Sven, [I] Kym Goldsworthy Director of photography: Mark Wareham ACS Editor: Deborah Peart
	Season 2	2020		Directors: Wayne Blair,[I] Warwick Thornton [I] Writers: Tim Lee, Kodie Bedford, [I] Steven McGregor, [I] Blake Ayshford, Danielle MacLean [I] Producers: David Jowsey, Greer Simpkin Executive producer: Ivan Sen [I] Director of photography: Warwick Thornton [I] Editor: Nick Holmes

Table 1. Summary of production details

Cleverman is a modern reimagining of Australian Aboriginal mythology (see Menadue), centrally embedding "stories, characters and rituals from the Dreaming - cultural belief systems about how the world was created by spiritual beings" (see Ndalianis and Burke).[2] It "depicts a deeply conflicted and anxious society, fearful of a minority group, endowed with extraordinary physical traits, living among them" ("ABC TV & Sundance TV to Premiere Cleverman"). These are the "Hairypeople" or "hairies", a species different to homo sapiens (Patrick). They are "superhumans … , who are persecuted and ghettoized by the dominant white culture. Their chances for survival are dependent upon the intervention of the legendary 'Cleverman'" (Menadue 117). According to Ford, the Cleverman is a Dreaming figure variously known as Mann'gur (Medicine Man), Kgun'diri (Forecaster), and Kgai'dai'chi (Spirit Man). In the series, a troubled young man, Koen West, inherits the powers of the Cleverman from Uncle Jimmy. The series also depicts Koen's struggles with his half-brother Waruu ("Sundance TV and Australian Broadcasting Corporation to Globally Premiere Season 2").

Mystery Road centres around Indigenous detective Jay Swan. As described in the ABC's media kit from 2018 ("Mystery Road"), in season 1, Jay tries to find out what happened to two young farm hands who disappeared from an outback cattle station. To solve the case, Jay works with a local (white) police officer, Emma James, from a wealthy pastoral family. Throughout the narrative, Jay also has to confront personal issues and relationships, including with his daughter Crystal and ex-wife Mary. Importantly, the investigation of the case reveals "deep secrets, a previous crime and a major miscarriage of justice perpetrated a hundred years earlier" ("Mystery Road" media kit). Season 2 takes place in a different location, a remote coastal community, where Jay has to solve a murder involving drug trafficking. In so doing, "Jay must reconcile the law and deep lore" ("Australia's Favourite Drama"). Again, Jay's relationship with Mary is important to the narrative, while there is also a major sub-plot involving a Swedish archaeologist who is wrapped up in her attempts to find Indigenous artefacts.

The three programs are hence distinguished by their different modes and genres: As Warner explains, *Cleverman* is magical realist speculative fiction, while *Redfern Now* is in a realist mode. *Mystery Road* appears similarly realist. Genre-wise, the Screen Guide classifies all three as dramas, but *Cleverman* has also been described as a hybridisation of fantasy, science fiction and superhero genres (Lomax; Ndalianis and Burke) or as a "futuristic dystopian drama" (Menadue 117). Similarly, *Mystery Road* illustrates genre hybridity, having been referred to as mystery and western (Hale; *The Screen Guide*), crime drama ("Australia: World Premieres"; IMDb entry), and as "tropical outback gothic noir" (producer David Jowsey, qtd. in Dubecki). It has been compared to the US series *True Detective* and *Fargo* (De Rosa and Burgess 32).

Moving on to settings, *Redfern Now* is "firmly located in an *urban* Aboriginal community" (Collins, "Blackfella Films" 217, italics in original), set in Sydney's central suburb of Redfern. *Cleverman* similarly features an urban setting, an unnamed Australian city in the near future, and was filmed in Sydney's Redfern and La Perouse (see Menadue).[3] Season 2 includes locations in Sydney and surrounds, including nearby bushland, having been filmed in Redfern, Coogee, The Rocks, North Ryde, and the Southern Highlands (McManus). In contrast, *Mystery Road* takes place in outback towns in the North-West of Australia. Season 1 is set in the fictional town of Patterson and was shot in the East Kimberley town of Kununurra in Western Australia (Hale), while season 2 takes place in the fictious northern coastal town of Gideon and was filmed in Broome and the Dampier Peninsula (Dubecki; Mercado). As far as linguistic diversity

[2] Importantly, showrunner Ryan Griffen was sensitive to Australian Indigenous cultural protocols and consulted with many Elders, gaining permission for these stories (Ndalianis and Burke).

[3] The location is presented as "an urban space that can effectively represent any Australian city" (Lomax).

is concerned, *Redfern Now* does not feature any dialogue in traditional Australian Indigenous languages, and *Mystery Road* features only minimal dialogue in a few scenes (including dialogue spoken in Arrernte and Miriwoong). In contrast, *Cleverman* includes a significant amount of dialogue in Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung.

Thematically, all three series tackle issues important to Australian society, around identity, history, community, culture, and its dark sides of inequality, prejudice, colonialism, genocide, government control, and racism. They do so directly or indirectly, for example through allegory or metaphor (see, for instance, Warner). The stories in *Redfern Now* conceptually deal with important social issues including racism, gambling addiction, domestic violence, mental illness, crime, death in custody, motherhood, gay rights, and the Vietnam war. The series also engages with white hegemonic masculinity (see Riseman), Australia's history of colonisation and hegemony (see Warner), and tensions between loyalty to culture/community vs loyalty to family (see Nelson 7). It explores notions such as Aboriginal identity and an emerging Indigenous middle class (see Nelson 48). The main characters are shown embedded in their Redfern community but having to navigate non-Indigenous institutions such as education, welfare, and law enforcement (Collins, "Rachel Perkins"). Some of the characters, such as policeman Aaron, have a foot in both worlds (see Nelson 47).

Cleverman is a commentary on a wide range of issues: the "colonisation of Australia, Indigenous land rights, racism, police brutality, the unethical use of genetic experimentation for personal and corporate gain, government corruption, the incarceration of refugees, environmental destruction" (Ndalianis and Burke). The series alludes to the history of systemic abuse, segregation, and incarceration experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander people as well as to Australia's use of detention centres for refugees (see Ford; Warner; Lomax; Atkinson; Menadue). Episode titles such as "Terra Nullius" and "First Contact" directly reference historical trauma, and the series can be understood as a contribution to competing tellings of the past, challenging dominant white Australian history (see Ford 33-34). The program tackles colonial assumptions of racial supremacy and evokes racist policies such as the Stolen Generations and the Victorian Half-Caste Act (Ndalianis and Burke), also exploring the ghettoing of Indigenous peoples (Lomax) as well as both violent and peaceful resistance (see Gallagher 41). It contains an implicit critique of mechanistic, commercialised and commodified Western biological and scientific research, with negative representations of genetics and biological manipulation (Atkinson). Since the Cleverman inhabits both the ancient, mythological and the modern, present world, he embodies the relationship and interaction between Aboriginal people and Indigenous mythology (Lomax).

Mystery Road also tackles Australia's colonialism and genocidal history, the tension between white and Indigenous cultures, the ownership of history, and Indigenous heritage, including issues such as Indigenous recognition and the repatriation of Indigenous artefacts held overseas (Dubecki; Buckmaster). In *Mystery Road*, it is detective Jay who embodies a dual identity caught between traditions, cultures, and worldviews. However, he is arguably more similar to policeman Aaron in *Redfern Now* than to Koen in *Cleverman*. The series alludes to the question of how to reconcile "Indigenous heritage with a modern, white person-oriented society" (Buckmaster). Christian religion as well as law and lore are important themes for the narrative (Buckmaster), which also deals with questionable land deals and child sexual abuse (Hale) as well as the massacres of Indigenous people committed by the colonists. While the series deals with a number of crimes, "the deep crime is often a crime of Australia" (writer Kodie Bedford, qtd. in Reich).

Each of the programs is culturally significant: *Redfern Now* is widely regarded as a landmark production and was the first drama project produced by the Indigenous Department of Australia's national public broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation ("Redfern Now. About the Show"). Importantly, it was Australia's first major television series commissioned, written, acted, directed, and produced by Indigenous industry professionals (see Nelson 46). It created many job opportunities for Indigenous creatives, from producers, to directors, writers, set designers, actors and (post-)production (see Davis 244). The drama has been argued to challenge standard media representations, where Indigenous Australians are presented as ancient or timeless rather than contemporary (see Warner), and where Aboriginality is conflated with "remote Aboriginal communities" (Collins, "Blackfella Films" 217). It has also been argued to be subverting the colonising gaze through its immersive style (Collins, "Blackfella Films" 219). Educational resources are available for both seasons, for example study guides by Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM).

This is also the case for *Cleverman*, which has an associated ATOM study guide as well as activities in *Screen Education* (Ford), and was featured in a television special of *Compass* (a weekly program focusing on faith, religion and ethics) dedicated to exploring its underlying Indigenous cultural belief systems. It also attracted a special exhibition at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image: *Cleverman: The Exhibition* (December 2018-April 2019). *Cleverman* can be regarded as "an education on the Dreaming" (Bizzaca), teaching viewers about Indigenous culture (Gallagher). *Cleverman* is also significant for Australian screen history, since "it was the first time … that over 80 per cent of a cast and crew were of Indigenous descent" (Ndalianis and Burke) and that an Australian television series had its premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival (Ndalianis and Burke).

Incidentally, *Mystery Road* (season 2) also premiered at this important film festival, as one of only two Australian TV series selected ("Australia: World Premieres"). Season 1 screened at film festivals around the world (Hazelton; Bunya Productions). In the words of Andrew Mercado, "*Mystery Road* could not be more Aussie and is one of our most iconic exports." Another commentator, Luke Buckmaster, argues that the series has "an authenticity and urgency unmatched by any other Australian crime series; perhaps any Australian series full stop." In the wake of widespread international protests in 2020 against racist police brutality and associated critiques of Hollywood police procedurals, *Mystery Road* was praised for offering a different model, contributing to diversity and innovation in this genre (Reich).

Two of the three programs have been nominated for or won multiple Australian awards. To offer a selection, season 1 of *Redfern Now* was nominated for Best Television Drama Series (2013 AACTA awards), and won the Silver Logie for Most Outstanding Drama Series (2013), while season 2 won Best Television Drama Series (2014 AACTA Awards). Season 1 of *Mystery Road* won many awards, including best drama series (2018 AACTA Awards), most popular drama program (2019 Logie Awards), and best TV drama miniseries (Australian Writers Guild). Season 2 won best drama series at the 2020 AACTA awards, with many other awards in 2020 cancelled due to covid-19. *Cleverman* has been less successful in terms of awards, but was, for instance, nominated for Best Television Drama Series (2017 AACTA Awards). Ndalianis and Burke state that the series "was received with great acclaim internationally and locally." However, Menadue proposes a more mixed reception, and links "the open reception given overseas and less sympathetic Australian reporting and commentary" to casual racism. He cites *Cleverman* showrunner Ryan Griffen "on the difficulties of achieving recognition in Australia, when international audiences have been more positive" (Menadue 123). This also corresponds to lower Australian viewer figures in relevant ratings for *Cleverman* (114,000-

452,000) compared to *Redfern Now* (449,000-721,000) and *Mystery Road* (525,000-786,000).[4] In fact, *Mystery Road* was the most watched Australian drama series in 2020 (Quinn and Lallo) and the highest-ever played programme on the ABC's streaming service iview excluding children's television (Bunya Productions). According to De Rosa and Burgess, the series attracted on average 846,000 viewers per episode on ABC, and 246,000 online views on iview (32).

A final sign of their cultural importance is the scholarly reception these programs have attracted. The two slightly older series have been examined in disciplines such as Film, Television, Media or Cultural Studies. The movies associated with the television series *Mystery Road* have attracted similar attention (e.g. Rutherford; Kirkpatrick). The series itself is perhaps too new for similar research.

3. Corpus and methodology

3.1. Corpus

There are two seasons for each of the three programs, consisting of six episodes each (between 52 and 60 minutes in length). *Redfern Now* also has an associated telemovie, *Redfern Now: Promise Me* (Perkins), while *Mystery Road* is a television spinoff of Ivan Sen's movies *Mystery Road* (2013) and *Goldstone* (2016). *Cleverman* has an associated comic book (Gestalt Comics' *Cleverman*). However, the comic book and movies will be disregarded, since the focus is on serial television.

More specifically, the corpus consists of edited online scripts/transcripts taken from the now defunct website https://www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk/ as well as of transcripts created from scratch. For all 12 *Cleverman* episodes, 11 of 12 *Redfern Now* episodes, and six *Mystery Road* episodes, online scripts/transcripts were available (excluding any speaker names, therefore most likely automatically extracted subtitles). These were edited by research assistants to produce accurate transcripts by checking the online texts against the respective episode, adding speaker names to utterances and correcting text where necessary (see Figure 1). For the remaining seven episodes (*Redfern Now* season 2, episode 6 and all six episodes of season 2 of *Mystery Road*), dialogue was transcribed from scratch. In the case of *Redfern Now* this was done with the help of an official post-production script kindly provided by Blackfella Films.

For the transcripts produced from the online material, the punctuation and spelling for interjections (e.g., *Arggh!*) and pronunciation variants was retained (e.g., '*em, dunno, nah, thinkin*'). To make the transcripts that were newly created comparable to those created from editing the online materials, the spelling conventions in respective subtitles were used. However, any errors or omissions were corrected. While the 36 final transcripts cannot be used for the study of pronunciation variants, they can be used for the study of lexis.

Although the corpus has not been annotated for demographic variables such as gender, age and ethnicity, utterances by specific speakers are identified through XML tags, with <u who="…"> showing the identity of the speaker and </u> marking the end of the relevant utterance. Utterances usually correspond to all dialogue spoken by a specific character before another

[4] Data from Zuk's Australian Television Information Archive and Wikipedia (citing media reporting); additional viewer data can be found in De Rosa and Burgess. Excludes app or DVD views and may not include regional viewers. For example, both Wikipedia, the Australian Television Information Archive and De Rosa and Burgess (34) provide the figure of 452,000 viewers for the opening episode of *Cleverman*, while a media article suggests that this is the "metro" audience only, with an additional 191,000 regional viewers (Dyer). Figures differ between sources depending on calculation; e.g. De Rosa and Burgess state that season 1 of *Redfern Now* averaged 1.05 million viewers per episode (33).

character's turn, but in certain cases (e.g., where a new, different scene starts or where a lengthy pause occurs because of a non-verbal action sequence), dialogue by the same speaker was identified as a new utterance. Non-dialogue sections (e.g., scene descriptions) were either not included or were placed within tags so that they can be excluded where appropriate. Table 2 shows the composition of the corpus in number of words ("tokens in text": hyphens allowed in words but not characters, which separates *don't* into *don* and *t*; any elements within tags ignored).

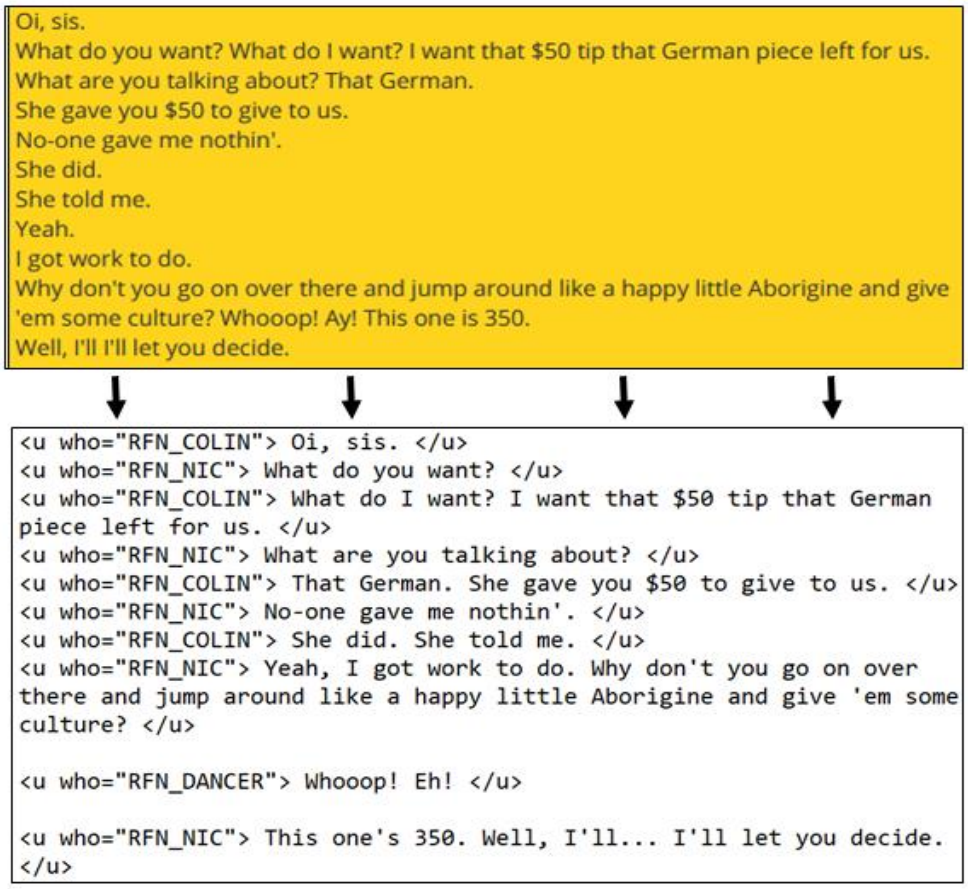

Figure 1. From online to final transcript

Episode	***Redfern Now***	***Cleverman***	***Mystery Road***
Season 1, episode 1	4,814	3,466	3,865
Season 1, episode 2	4,419	3,973	4,160
Season 1, episode 3	5,475	3,088	3,668
Season 1, episode 4	4,333	3,514	3,209
Season 1, episode 5	4,296	3,494	3,060
Season 1, episode 6	4,346	3,069	3,380
Season 2, episode 1	4,215	2,581	3,109
Season 2, episode 2	5,071	3,281	2,669
Season 2, episode 3	4,470	2,683	3,232
Season 2, episode 4	2,994	2,665	3,006
Season 2, episode 5	3,468	2,766	3,589
Season 2, episode 6	3,581	2,598	2,349
Total	51,482	37,178	39,296
Combined total	127,956		

Table 2. Corpus size

3.2. Methodology: Lexical profiling analysis

This study uses Laurence Anthony's AntWordProfiler program to compare the use of AAE lexis in the three series. This software establishes the lexical coverage of a text or corpus, usually with the aim of measuring their complexity. In essence, the words in the corpus are compared with selected wordlists to identify which of the words on these lists occur in the corpus. I used the program to identify the presence, frequency and distribution of potential AAE lexis in *Redfern Now*, *Cleverman* and *Mystery Road*. To do so, I first created two wordlists based on existing linguistic descriptions of AAE lexis, as explained in Bednarek ("Creation of Australian Aboriginal English Word Lists"). *AAE* is used here in a broad sense and, following Arthur's book *Aboriginal English*, the lists include:

- words that are found in other Englishes, but are used with different senses in AAE (e.g., *business, clever, sorry*)
- words that are found in other Englishes, but have particular significance in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures (e.g., *community*)
- words that are no longer used in other Englishes in Australia (e.g., *humbug*)
- words from traditional Indigenous languages used in an AAE context (e.g., *moorditj, jarjum*).

The lists therefore include words with a special connection with an aspect of Indigenous identity, history, and culture, even if these can be found in mainstream Australian English (e.g., *Aboriginal, corroboree*; kinship terms). The lists include words referring to traditional ways of living (e.g., arranged marriage) and historical roles/entities (e.g., missions), as well as regionally restricted lexis (e.g., Northern Australian words).

The word lists are structured into headwords (~ lemmas) and sub-entries (word forms of a lemma, spelling variants, or alternatives). List 1 includes entries where the headword is *not* underlined by the WORD spellchecker for Australian English. This should capture words that are also in use in mainstream Australian English but are used in specific ways in AAE. It may also include AAE words or words from traditional Indigenous languages that are codified in the dictionary and are perhaps relatively familiar in mainstream Australia. List 2 includes entries where the headword *is* underlined by the WORD spellchecker. This should capture mostly words that are not codified in mainstream Australian English. This list may also include some words from a traditional Indigenous language (e.g., *kumanji/ kwementyeye*). The words on list 2 are arguably more unique to AAE than the words on list 1 or are less familiar in mainstream Australia. There are different versions of both lists; this study used the versions current as of 19 October 2020. List 1 contains 842 word forms (300 headwords), e.g. *dreamtime, gammon, humbug, Koori*, while list 2 contains 612 word forms (189 headwords), e.g. *goomie, gubbariginal, kartiya, migloo, tidda.* By doing a lexical profile of the three programs against these two word lists, it becomes possible to identify which AAE lexis is used and whether the programs use more of the familiar words (from list 1) or the less familiar words (from list 2). We can also identify word forms and headwords that are the most frequent and the most distributed. For the lexical profile analysis, utterances not in English (e.g., utterances in Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung in *Cleverman*) were excluded from the corpus (whether subtitles in English were present or not; subtitles were not included where present).

The output of AntWordProfiler consists of word lists and associated quantitative information, which is purely based on form recognition.[5] This includes information about the distribution or *range* (Nation and Waring) of words across the corpus. Below, the notation r=31 indicates that the feature occurs in exactly 31 episodes, while the notation r≥20 eps indicates that the feature occurs in 20 or more episodes. Range can also refer to the distribution across series rather than episodes.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative results

Tables 3-5 show the quantitative results for each series. The token column shows how many tokens in the corpus occur in the relevant word list. For instance, 2,639 tokens in *Redfern Now* occur in list 1. The token% column presents the percentage of tokens in the corpus that occur in the relevant list, indicating that 5.13% of all tokens in *Redfern Now* occur in list 1. The cumtoken% column shows the cumulative percentage of tokens in the corpus that occur in the relevant list, in essence adding up the two rows from the token% column (e.g., in *Redfern Now* 5.13% + 0.03% = 5.16%). Next, the type column indicates how many types in the corpus occur in the relevant list. For example, 257 types in *Redfern Now* occur in list 1 and 9 types occur in list 2. The types here correspond to all the different entries in the word lists, including headwords and sub-entries. The type% column presents this information as a percentage and the cumtype% shows the cumulative percentage, again adding up the rows of the previous type% column. The final three columns (group, group%, cumgroup%) provide similar information but with respect to "groups", where a group represents a headword together with all its subentries. As noted above, a group is often but not exclusively a lemma.

LEVEL	TOKEN	TOKEN%	CUMTOKEN%	TYPE	TYPE%	CUMTYPE%	GROUP	GROUP%	CUMGROUP%
List 1	2639	5.13	5.13	257	7.46	7.46	157	4.69	4.69
List 2	15	0.03	5.16	9	0.26	7.72	9	0.27	4.96

Table 3. AntWordProfiler results for *Redfern Now* (51,486 tokens)

LEVEL	TOKEN	TOKEN%	CUMTOKEN%	TYPE	TYPE%	CUMTYPE%	GROUP	GROUP%	CUMGROUP%
List 1	1468	3.94	3.94	210	5.89	5.89	135	3.88	3.88
List 2	204	0.55	4.49	14	0.39	6.28	9	0.26	4.14

Table 4. AntWordProfiler results for *Cleverman* (37,238 tokens)

LEVEL	TOKEN	TOKEN%	CUMTOKEN%	TYPE	TYPE%	CUMTYPE%	GROUP	GROUP%	CUMGROUP%
List 1	1596	4.06	4.06	234	8	8	152	5.35	5.35
List 2	23	0.06	4.12	7	0.24	8.24	5	0.18	5.53

Table 5. AntWordProfiler results for *Mystery Road* (39,329 tokens)

Together, Tables 3-5 suggest that all three series use words from list 1 much more than words from list 2. This finding applies across the board, whether we look at tokens, types, or groups. In other words, there appears to be a clear tendency to use familiar words. *Cleverman* uses the most words from list 2, with respect to tokens and types, but is similar to *Redfern Now* with respect to groups. If we consider cumulative coverage (for both lists), *Redfern Now* features the largest token coverage (cumtoken%: 5.16%), while *Mystery Road* has the most type (cumtype%: 8.24%) and group coverage (cumgroup%: 5.53%). At the same time, the

[5] Settings for AntWordProfiler: Hide angle tags; show statistics, word types and word groups (Families). Sort level 1 = frequency; sort level 2 = word. Batch process = No.

observable differences between the three programs are small, and in general they are very similar to each other as far as these form-based results are concerned.

Next, we will consider which of the groups ("headwords", in all caps) and types (word forms, in italics) are the most distributed across episodes and which are the most frequent (for details, see Tables A.1-A.4 in the online appendix).[6] The most distributed groups (r≥31 eps) are RIGHT, SORRY, HOME, HEAR, OWN, MOTHER, LONG, FATHER, EH, FAMILY, OLD, WRONG. The most distributed types (r≥30 eps) are *right, sorry, home, long, own, eh, family, old, wrong, big, bit.* The most frequent groups (f≥116) are RIGHT, FATHER, MOTHER, SORRY, BROTHER, EH, HOME, HAIRYMAN, FAMILY, KILL. The most frequent types (f≥102) are *right, sorry, dad, eh, home, mum, family, big, son, brother*. While it is useful to consider both frequency and distribution, frequent groups or types may only occur in one series—this is the case for HAIRYMAN which only occurs in *Cleverman*, where it is, however, very frequent as it refers to an important group of people in the narrative.

These distribution and frequency results confirm findings from prior research on *Redfern Now* (Bednarek, "Keyword Analysis"), namely that the tag *eh* and kinship terms are important for Indigenous-authored television drama. In fact, 59 of the 354 different types from list 1 that occur in the corpus are examples of kinship terms (in a fairly narrow definition, i.e., including *kin* and *family*, but excluding *mob*, *clan*, *community*, *elders*, etc), occurring a total of 1,421 times. Table A.5 in the online appendix presents all relevant types with their frequency and distribution. Reflecting differences in genre and narrative concerns, kinship is more important in *Redfern Now* (52 types, 851 total instances) than in *Cleverman* (29 types, 286 total instances) and *Mystery Road* (32 types, 284 total instances). The overall most distributed kinship terms are *dad*, *mum*, *mother*, *family*, *uncle*, *brother* (occurring in at least six episodes [50%] in each series), followed by *bub* and *father* (occurring in at least five episodes). Relationship expressed through kinship terms is one of the "key features of this English dialect that make it distinctly Aboriginal" (Ober and Bell 73). However, many of the uses of terms such as *mum* and *dad* would be similar to mainstream uses. But AAE-specific uses clearly do occur in the corpus, such as the use of *aunt(ie/y)* and *unc(le)* to refer to respected people (Butcher 637). To investigate these and similar AAE uses quantitatively would require analysis of all relationships between characters who address each other with kinship terms—which is not possible. Instead, Table 6 shows the results of a search for AAE-specific compound words (according to Arthur; Malcolm) for *cousin* (e.g. *cousin brother*), *boy* (e.g. FN + *boy*), *girl* (e.g. *aunty girl*), *mum* (e.g. *auntie mum*), and *mother* (e.g. *granma mother*). While these are rare overall, *Redfern Now* includes the most occurrences, followed by *Mystery Road*.[7]

Kinship compound word	**Occurrences**
cousin brother	1 (*Redfern Now*)
brother boys	1 (*Redfern Now*) 1 (*Mystery Road*)
sister girl	1 (*Redfern Now*)
daughter girl	2 (*Redfern Now*) 2 (*Mystery Road*)

Table 6. Kinship compound words

[6] Available at https://osf.io/ue9a6/?view_only=01baec6debb8491ba6f61e9088c4432d.

[7] *Daughter girl* is not listed in Arthur or Malcolm, but was included as it appears AAE-specific. An instance of *baby girl* was not included.

However, the most distributed/frequent groups and types also include entries unrelated to kinship, such as RIGHT/*right*, SORRY/*sorry*, HOME/*home*, HEAR, OWN/*own*, LONG/*long*, OLD/*old*, WRONG/*wrong*, *big*, *bit*, and KILL. It is important to remember that these results are form-based. Instances of these groups/types can be used with specific AAE meanings or not. For example, *sorry* occurs 232 times across the corpus (f=131 in *Redfern Now*; f=52 in *Cleverman*, f=49 in *Mystery Road*), but concordancing of all instances only discovered three AAE-specific uses, which all occurred in *Mystery Road* (*sorry business*; *sorry place* [2x]). This is a general problem with the results presented in Tables 3-5 and it is therefore necessary to undertake qualitative analysis to study word usage. To do so, relevant concordances were examined using WordSmith (Scott), as explained in the next section.

4.2. Word usage

4.2.1. List 1

As Tables 3-5 show, there are a total of 5,703 combined tokens from list 1. This corresponds to 354 different types which occur with a raw frequency of between one and 316. Subtracting the 59 kinship terms (1,421 instances)—because they have already been discussed above—leaves 295 types with 4,282 instances. To analyse these instances efficiently, I used WordSmith's Set function which allows users to first classify concordance lines and then to sort them according to classification. Every instance was classified as Y ("yes"), i.e., AAE-specific usage, or N ("no"), i.e., not AAE-specific usage. To give an example, instances of the adjective *deadly* would be classified as Y if they occur with the AAE meaning "great, fantastic, terrific" (Arthur 94) and as N if they occur with other meanings (e.g., "able to cause death"). Usage in AAE-specific compounds (e.g., *sorry* in *sorry business*) would also be coded as Y. In general, the classification was based on existing linguistic descriptions of AAE, mainly by Arthur, but also by Malcolm. Classification was based on the meaning of the word in its co-text, regardless of the identity of the speaker. Once all concordance lines were classified, frequencies of AAE usage were tallied in an Excel file, summarised in Table 7.[8]

	Redfern Now	***Cleverman***	***Mystery Road***
Types	41	34	58
Tokens (rf)	289	114	242
Tokens (nf per 10k)	56.1	30.7	61.6
Top ten most frequent	eh, black, Aboriginal, fella, fellas, blackfellas, deadly, mob, Indigenous, community	cleverman, eh, mob, black, boomerang, fellas, community, dreaming, fella, old	eh, mob, law, community, black, country, boss, Aboriginal, business, shame, fella/fulla
r=3 (series)	Aboriginal, big, black(s), blackfella(s), community, country, cultural, culture, eh, fella(s), flog(ged/ging/gin'), Indigenous, mob, story(ies)		
r=2 (series)	Aborigine(s), boomerang, boss, camp(ed/s), ceremony, coconut, deadly, elders, gammon, law, old, owners, right(s), shame, smok(e/ed/ing), strong, traditional, whitefella(s), yarn		

Table 7. AAE lexis

[8] There are several cases where two or three word forms that occur as part of the same nominal phrase were all coded as AAE, such that e.g. *traditional owners* was counted as two types and two tokens, and *gammon big cultural man* was counted as three types (*big*, *cultural*, *gammon*) and three tokens. However, even if such nominal phrases are only counted once, the tendencies remain the same: *Redfern Now* adjusted rf 280 (nf 54.4); *Cleverman* adjusted rf 110 (nf 29.6); *Mystery Road* adjusted rf 234 (nf 59.5).

As Table 7 shows, *Mystery Road* has the highest variety in types, followed by *Redfern Now* and *Cleverman*. It also has the highest normalised frequency, again followed by *Redfern Now* and *Cleverman*. Pair-wise comparisons using the log likelihood and effect size calculator available at http://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html show that the difference in token frequency between *Redfern Now* and *Mystery Road* is not statistically significant (LL = 1.13), whereas relevant differences between *Redfern Now* and *Cleverman* (LL = 32.25) and between *Mystery Road* and *Cleverman* (LL = 40.25) are (further details in Tables A.6-A.8).[6] Considering both frequency and range, alongside the tag *eh*, it appears that words relating to identity, community, and culture are particularly important across series. Other important words include *flog*, *deadly*, and *gammon*, which likely index characters' Aboriginal identity (from a stylistic perspective, they act as characterisation cues). However, further qualitative analysis would be necessary into the different functions of these words for the televisual narrative.

4.2.2. List 2

We will now examine the occurrences of the less familiar words from list 2, with 242 total tokens. Table 8 shows the results with nine irrelevant words crossed out: In *Redfern Now*, *Chooky* and *Mookie* are the names of characters, while *piggy* is used in an intertextual reference to the nursery rhyme *This Little Piggy*. In *Cleverman, Gub* is the name of a character, while *York* is used in a reference to the *New York Mets* and *loan* refers to a bank loan. In *Mystery Road*, *Cove* occurs as part of the name of a motel (*Palmer's Cove)*, *co-* occurs in *co-authors* and *hairy* pre-modifies *cowboys*.

Redfern Now		***Cleverman***		***Mystery Road***	
Word form	**Raw frequency**	**Word form**	**Raw frequency**	**Word form**	**Raw frequency**
~~*Chooky*~~	~~4 (r=1)~~	*hairy*	77 (r=12)	*mook*	16 (r=4)
~~*Mookie*~~	~~3 (r=1)~~	*hairies*	62 (r=12)	~~*cove*~~	~~2 (r=1)~~
~~*piggy*~~	~~2 (r=1)~~	*ngaluunggirr*	25 (r=3)	~~*co*~~	~~1 (r=1)~~
binangs	1 (r=1)	*hairypeople*	11 (r=5)	~~*hairy*~~	~~1 (r=1)~~
bulli	1 (r=1)	~~*gub*~~	~~7 (r=3)~~	*kartiyas*	1 (r=1)
Gadigal	1 (r=1)	*nulla*	6 (r=2)	*mookie*	1 (r=1)
gungie	1 (r=1)	*muya*	5 (r=2)	*nother*	1 (r=1)
gunjabulls	1 (r=1)	*namorrodor*	3 (r=3)		
Wonnarua	1 (r=1)	~~*loan*~~	~~2 (r=2)~~		
		~~*york*~~	~~2 (r=1)~~		
		budhoo	1 (r=1)		
		hairyman	1 (r=1)		
		hairypeoples	1 (r=1)		
		hairyperson	1 (r=1)		
Total	6	Total	193	Total	19

Table 8. Word forms (types) from list 2

If we consider the remaining word forms, all occurrences in *Cleverman* except for *budhoo* (used as term of address) relate to the stories and characters from the Dreaming that are central to its plot. This explains why *Cleverman* uses the most tokens and types from list 2 when compared to the other two series. In *Redfern Now* (Figure 2), the six relevant instances are all uttered by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander characters, both main (Grace, Ray) and minor (man, woman), with three instances referring to the police (*gunjabulls, bulli man, gungie*) and two instances referring to Aboriginal groups (*Gadigal, Wonnarua*).

Considering *Mystery Road*, most tokens are occurrences of *mook*, which is always used as *mook-mook* or *mook-mook eyes* to address the season 2 character Fran, with *mookie* occurring once as a variant (Figure 3). Instances of the nickname are uttered by five different Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander characters across five season 2 episodes. Of the remaining two instances, one is a label referring to white people (***Kartiyas*** *getting their way as usual*), while the other (*You mob '**nother** kind but good way*) could be considered an aspect of pronunciation but corresponds to an entry for an adjective in Arthur (210).

Together, the results from the qualitative analysis of both lists do confirm that two of the three series use words from list 1 more than words from list 2 (*Redfern Now*: 289 vs 6 tokens; *Mystery Road*: 242 vs 19 tokens) but show that *Cleverman* uses words from list 2 more than words from list 1 (193 vs 114 tokens). This derives from the significance of the Dreaming for this narrative. Results also indicate that the three shows are in fact more different to each other than the purely form-based results suggested.

1	to? It's my turn. </u> <u who="RFN_GRACE"> Malakai, give your sister a turn, and bring your runners here , please. Did you hear me, Malakai? Oi. Are your **binangs** painted on, boy? </u> <u who="RFN_MALAKAI"> I just have to finish this level. </u> <u who="RFN_GRACE"> Now, Malakai! </u> <u
2	. No-one deserves this more than you do. </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> Really, Pete? Not even Derek, mate? </u> <u who="RFN_WOMAN"> Raymond is a proud **Wonnarua** man who's lived most of his life in Redfern. Having a history of incarceration and a youth of trouble, Raymond managed to turn his life around
3	Good on ya! </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> Thanks. First, I'd like to pay respect to the traditional owners of the land where we are today, the **Gadigal** people. Wow, I wasn't expecting this, you know. </u> <u who="RFN_MAN #1"> Yeah, you did! </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> I enjoy what I do. Sorry. I
4	We need to talk! Come on, Charlie. Let me in, brother, please? We need to talk. </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> Charlie... </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> Gunjabulls. **Bulli** man. </u> <u who="RFN_AARON"> Hey, you want a lift home there, Ray? </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> No, thank you, I'm good. </u> <u
5	We need to talk! Come on, Charlie. Let me in, brother, please? We need to talk. </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> Charlie... </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> **Gunjabulls**. Bulli man. </u> <u who="RFN_AARON"> Hey, you want a lift home there, Ray? </u> <u who="RFN_RAY"> No, thank you, I'm
6	of shit. We just stay calm, we find the bloke who had the fight with Lenny... and we'll be sweet, mate. Settle down. </u> <u who="RFN_MAN"> Look out, the **gungie's** here. </u> <u who="RFN_MAN"> Fuck off, you dog. No-one wants you here. </u> <u who="RFN_MAN"> Yeah, pretty boy, you got a cheek showing

Figure 2. AAE lexis from list 2 in *Redfern Now*

1	Lock her up! </u> <u who ="MR_LEONIE"> Youse in your portaloo! </u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> Come on! </u> <u who ="MR_AMOS"> You're going to do it, **mook-mook?** </u> <u who ="MR_JAY"> What's your name? </u> <u who ="MR_AMOS"> Amos. </u> <u who ="MR_JAY"> Put that rake down, Amos. </u>
2	<u who ="MR_LEONIE"> This is my mother's country. </u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> Leonie. Leonie! Stop! Stop! </u> <u who ="MR_LEONIE"> Too good there **mook-mook** eyes. </u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> You wanna tell me what's going on? </u> <u who ="MR_LEONIE"> Protecting my land. And my people. </u> <u
3	your sister, Franny. And let's not mention you discharging your firearm. </u> <u who ="MR_LEONIE"> Told you, Detective. Allegedly. See you at home, **mook-mook** eyes. Love ya guts. </u> <u who ="MR_MARY"> Oh, fuck. How are you, Jay? </u> <u who ="MR_JAY"> Good. You? </u> <u who
4	</u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> You know anyone who's been out there lately? Any families fishing? Charters? </u> <u who ="MR_OSCAR"> And who this one, **mook-mook** eyes? This your husband? </u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> Hey, you wanna pull up there, now, Uncle? This is Detective Jay Swan. </u> <u who
5	projects this will bring to the community. The attention. Gideon will be on the map. And all because of what we did here. </u> <u who ="MR_LEONIE"> Hey, **Mook-Mook**. Where's the big man protector? What's this? </u> <u who ="MR_FRAN"> It's roo stew. You touch me again, it will be you who goes in the
6	I'm not dealing with this shit. </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> Oi, come on. Calm down. I can help . </u> <u who="MR_PHILLIP"> How you gonna help, **Mook-Mook?** </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> Just sit down. Let's talk about this. </u> <u who="MR_PHILLIP"> About what? </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> I know
7	<u who="MR_JIMMY_2"> Not from me, you didn't boy. </u> <u who="MR_JAY"> Nice to meet you, Jimmy 2. </u> <u who="MR_AMOS"> What do you want, **Mook-Mook?** </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> I want to talk about Zoe Mead. </u> <u who="MR_EMILIO"> Detective Swan. </u> <u who="MR_JAY"> What are
8	don't have a problem. </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> Hey, Dad. </u> <u who="MR_MERVYN"> Hello, daughter girl. </u> <u who="MR_LEONIE"> Making friends, **mookie**. You should try it. Shoulda known. You look like you've had a full-on day. </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> The bones weren't Zoe's. </u> <u
9	We gotta go. Now! Get the bags. Tell me in the car. </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> Hey, I need to speak to you. </u> <u who="MR_PANSY"> Again, **mook-mook?** Haven't we been over all this? </u> <u who="MR_FRAN"> I want to know about the bones that were found at the church. </u> <u

Figure 3. Use of the nickname *mook-mook (eyes)/mookie* in *Mystery Road*

5. Conclusion

Across the world, there is a growing demand for Indigenous screen stories and content (De Rosa and Burgess 9), and there is a clear need for comparing the different strategies and styles of Indigenous screen creatives (see Davis 233). Accordingly, this study compared AAE lexis in three Australian Indigenous-authored television drama series. In sum, viewers who watch *Mystery Road* will encounter the most variety of AAE types as well as the highest proportion of AAE tokens. Those who watch *Cleverman* will encounter the least variety of AAE types and the lowest proportion of AAE tokens, but the most "less-familiar" AAE lexis (engaging with the Dreaming). Finally, *Redfern Now*'s use of AAE tokens is only slightly lower than *Mystery Road*, and it features a higher variety of AAE types than *Cleverman*. No doubt, these comparative results are influenced by the generic and narrative factors reviewed above, such as settings, characters and storylines (and the presence of dialogue in Gumbaynggirr and Bundjalung in *Cleverman*). But across all three shows there is some evidence for the importance of kinship terms, the tag *eh*, and words relating to identity, community, and culture. It is also likely that many of these words are easily recognisable, familiar and ideologically salient cues for an Australian audience (see Bednarek, "Keyword Analysis").

In general, it seems as if there is relatively low AAE usage across all three series, which is partially explicable by the fact that all three are "mainstream" programs which aim to appeal to their target audience and be generally "intelligible, accessible, and comprehensible" (Bednarek, *Language and Television Series* 19). It is perhaps also an attempt to avoid Othering Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander characters, but whether this is indeed a conscious strategy by screen creatives is as yet unclear. Television series can be investigated from several perspectives, including production/creation, product/outcome, and reception/consumption (see Bednarek, *Language and Television Series*). Here, the focus was on the product/outcome, in the form of television dialogue. What I have not investigated is the creation of this dialogue, nor have I examined its reception by different groups of viewers. In addition, the way in which dialogue in both AAE and in traditional Indigenous languages is treated in subtitling is worthy of further investigation. In the process of creating the corpus for this study it became clear that subtitles do not appear to identify the specific traditional Indigenous language that is used by characters, which may perpetuate false assumptions among viewers regarding linguistic diversity in Australia.

The study did not analyse variation between speakers or the identity of interlocutors. Words identified as AAE in this study are at times used by white characters (e.g., *the traditional owners*; *eh*; *the elders*; *walkabout*; *us whitefellas*). The methodology itself therefore comes with limitations, including a very broad usage of the term *AAE*, and a focus on individual word forms rather than longer expressions such as *shame job*, *big boss man*, or *sorry place*. In terms of the topology for analysis of discourse proposed by Bednarek and Caple, the study is purely intrasemiotic (monomodal) and constitutes an "across-text" analysis, with aspects of conversational structure not investigated. Finally, the analysis did not incorporate a raciolinguistic approach (see Meek, "Racing Indian Language") and is furthermore limited by its non-Indigenous perspective on the data. These and other unexplored aspects are a matter for future research.

In order to provide a full picture of minority/minoritised Englishes in the media, it is necessary to analyse recent and contemporary television series, including Indigenous-authored dramas, so that we can move beyond "a deficit perspective" (Charity Hudley et al. 216). Analysis of content from specific countries such as Australia can help inform Indigenous screen-based content worldwide, providing examples of success stories, and identifying factors behind such success (see De Rosa and Burgess). Enhancing our understanding of language diversity and

Aboriginal English in the media is crucial for debates around diversity, representations of minorities, Indigenous programming and media literacy. This study of three programs showed that the (albeit limited) use of minority/minoritised English from a particular country is no barrier to "mainstream" popularity, critical acclaim, and international success. Arguably, these and similar Indigenous-authored media productions are important channels for showcasing diversity and are starting to have positive effects regarding language diversity in mainstream television drama—even if there is clearly scope for improvement. Such programs allow room for a diversity of Indigenous voices and linguistic representations and offer new models for spreading linguistic awareness and challenging the denigration and stigmatisation of minority/minoritised Englishes. As Marcia Langton states in her influential anti-colonial cultural critique of Australian film and television, "One of the important interventions is the act of self-representation itself and the power of aesthetic and intellectual statements" (10).

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Language note
I use "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander" because I do not know the specific language groups, peoples, or nations of the individual characters. Importantly, Torres Strait Islanders as Indigenous peoples of the Torres Strait Islands are culturally distinct from the diverse Aboriginal peoples in Australia. The specific identity of some characters can remain unclear in the narrative, and there is the possibility that at least one of the television characters in the three examined TV series could theoretically be Torres Strait Islander or be both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In the article, I use "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people" rather than "peoples" because I refer to individuals rather than nations. The term "Indigenous" is used to avoid too much repetition and typically means "Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander". None of the terms is meant to imply homogeneity or to reify and essentialise people at the expense of diversity and variation. For further reading on terminology, readers may be interested in Zac Roberts and colleagues' "guide to writing and speaking about Indigenous People in Australia".

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