

Notes On The Translation Process

Jandamarra portrays four distinct linguistic worlds:

- The Bunuba people in their own camps, speaking the Bunuba language;
- The white pastoralists and police, talking English amongst themselves;
- The overlap, where Bunuba people and whites talk to each other in Pidgin English;
- The other overlap, where Bunuba people talk to other Aboriginal people who are non-Bunuba speakers in Kriol, which is a complex language in its own right, quite distinct from Pidgin.

Those scenes, and parts of scenes, in which Bunuba and Kriol are the appropriate languages have been translated from the original English version. The scenes between white and Aboriginal characters have been left in English.

Bunuba Translations: The translation work was done in Fitzroy Crossing in August and December 2006, and August 2007. The writer worked with Mona Oscar, Patsy Bedford, June Oscar and Selina Middleton. Mona is a Bunuba elder with experience in translation and interpreting work. Patsy, June and Selina are Bunuba women who are all literate in the language. The orthography and spelling system was developed by the Bunuba people, working with the Kimberley Language Resource Centre.

The writer is indebted beyond words to these dedicated and highly skilled women. The task involved much more than straightforward translation. The process can never be exact, as the vocabularies of the two languages only partially overlap, and each contains concepts and implied attitudes which are not shared by the other. The original English version contained language and metaphors that simply did not translate into Bunuba, and at times the writer's imagination of the traditional Bunuba world was lacking, or simply wrong. We were able to work together to find new ways to convey the information and emotion necessary for the drama in a form true to the Bunuba world view. As such, the work was dramaturgy as much as translation; an exciting and intellectually stimulating challenge.

The English translation of the Bunuba components of this script are "back translations" of the agreed Bunuba version. In many cases the result is something quite distinct from the original English. The outcome is an English version that the audience will ultimately view as surtitles which is much more closely reflective of a Bunuba sensibility than the writer could possibly have achieved on his own.

Kriol Translations: The Kriol translation was a more straightforward process, but equally important in terms of creating a world that rings true to the people of the Kimberley. Kriol is widely spoken across northern Australia, with many regional variations. Initial translations were done with Patsy Bedford, Danny Marr and June Oscar. Michelle Martin assisted with the orthography and spelling, using the authorised Kimberley version.

June Oscar is the chair, and Patsy Bedford and Michelle Martin are employees of the Kimberley Language Resource Centre, an Aboriginal organisation dedicated to supporting Kimberley languages.

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