

Abstract
Dawes' Laws generalised: cluster reduction in the Sydney Language
David Nash (ANU)

The records of the Sydney Language have enough detail to allow a number of inferences about properties of the language. This paper assembles the evidence for just one: the simplification of nasal+stop clusters in the ancestry of the coastal dialect, generalising unpublished observations made by Lt William Dawes in 1791.

What can be dubbed Dawes' Law is in his notebook's comparative table of six pairs of roots showing

- (1) there is a regular correspondence between intervocalic *-nd-* in inland Burubirangál with *-n-* in coastal Iyura (Reproduced in Steele 2005:156, and Wilkins & Nash 2008:489)

This paper proposes that Dawes' Law can be generalised to all points of articulation, namely:

- (2) there is a regular correspondence between intervocalic homorganic nasal+stop (in the inland dialect and other Pama-Nyungan languages) and the corresponding intervocalic nasal (in coastal Iyura)

Examples include **dundi** ~ **duni** 'scorpion', **bumbi-** ~ **bumi-** 'to breathe', **gunydia** ~ **gunya** 'hut', **banju** ~ **banu** 'phalanger'.

What can be dubbed Dawes' Rule is an assimilation rule in the coastal dialect (Iyura):

- (3) a suffix otherwise **b**-initial is **m**-initial after **n** (cf. Troy 1994:27)

In the late 1980s Wilkins noticed that Dawes' Rule could be generalised:

- (4) In the coastal dialect, there is a morphophonological rule which changed the initial stop consonant of a suffix to the homorganic nasal when that suffix was attached to a stem ending in a nasal. (Wilkins & Nash 2008:488)

The generalised Dawes' Rule could be the synchronic consequence of the sound change behind generalised Dawes' Law, if the sound change were:

- (5) spread nasal Manner in any nasal+C cluster

The correspondence (2) follows from (5), assuming automatic degemination. This account predicts that in the coastal dialect heterorganic nasal+stop clusters would also be eliminated, but there is some evidence of **nb** clusters (at least) in the coastal dialect.

References

- Steele, Jeremy Macdonald. 2005. The Aboriginal language of Sydney : a partial reconstruction of the indigenous language of Sydney based on the note books of William Dawes of 1790-91, Thesis (Master of Arts (Research), Macquarie University ResearchOnline <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.14/738>. With CD-ROM 'Bayala Databases'.
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- Wilkins, David P. and David Nash. 2008. The European 'discovery' of a multilingual Australia: the linguistic and ethnographic successes of a failed expedition, pp.485–507, Chapter 18, in *The history of research on Australian Aboriginal languages*, edited by William McGregor. Pacific Linguistics 591.