

Language Policy and Language Education in Australia

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CONTENTS

- I Introduction: Brief Historical Background
 - II The First National Policy on Languages in the English-Speaking World
 - III The Australian Language and Literacy Policy
 - IV The NALSSAS Report
 - V Other Policy Issues
 - VI Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages (CALL)
 - VII Conclusion
- References

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I INTRODUCTION: BRIEF HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

From the early 1980s to 1996, Australia probably led the English-speaking world in systematic language policy-making. Prior to that period, as in most English-speaking countries, there had been no serious attempt to systematically address language issues. When language issues had been considered, only really in the context of education or immigration, they were piecemeal, responding to isolated areas of need or driven by a vague traditional notion of some intellectual or literary value in the study of another language.

Traditionally, Australians had seen themselves as belonging to a British outpost in the South Pacific with family, political and trading links predominantly with Europe and North America. It was largely assumed that English was the national and only necessary language and that it was sufficient for international communication purposes, especially since most of Australia's international links at that time were with English-speaking countries. Within schools, language education was based around English as the mother tongue together with some teaching of French, German and the classical languages of Latin and ancient Greek. Even after a large-scale immigration programme was commenced (a programme that still continues fifty years on), not only was English regarded as sufficient but migrants were strongly encouraged to learn English and, until the early 1970s, to stop using their own first languages. There was no concept of multiculturalism as there is today and, in the words of the Australian Prime Minister at the time, the society that was sought for Australia was one that was "devoid of foreign communities" and hence one where only English was spoken [Martin 1972: 14]. The President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions also expressed the views of the time (in the 1950s and 1960s) when he expressed a fear that

the presence of foreigners [would] undermine our own way of life

and he asserted that

Australian men and women are not re-assured by hearing foreign languages spoken in public places. [cf. Bostock 1973: 41]

Although in the period up to the end of the 1960s, there was little change from the traditional classical and literary approach to the teaching of languages in schools, in the area of the teaching of English as a second language, there were very significant developments. In order to enable the thousands of migrants and refugees arriving in Australia from different parts of Europe to

assimilate more readily, a large scale programme to teach English as a second language was commenced. In fact, throughout its history, the Adult Migrant Education Programme has been very innovative in its approach to language teaching. It had to be: elsewhere in language education, the basic approach was the traditional one of lecturing students on the grammar of the language, working translation exercises, and reading and translating works of literature. Such an approach could not work where a monolingual English-speaking teacher was teaching a class of immigrants speaking a dozen or more different languages. Consequently, new situational methods were developed in which language was presented and learned in “situations” from which the learner was to deduce the meaning and usage. For many years, these methods were incorporated in a series of books called, first, *English for Newcomers to Australia* and later *Situational English*. These methods eventually had some impact on the teaching of other languages but, for a long time, the teaching of English was seen as different from the teaching of other languages and the impact of the important linguistic, psychological and pedagogical research that contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the migrant English teaching was slight on the teaching of other languages in schools.

The first significant attempt to direct language education policy towards Asia came in 1970 with a review of the teaching of Asian languages and cultures published in 1970 [Commonwealth Advisory Committee 1970]. The timing of this review reflected Australia’s growing political realignment towards Asia though it gave little attention to the economic significance of skills in Asian languages. The report contrasted the strong public support shown in its surveys for the study of Asian languages and cultures with the unwillingness of industry and business to recognise the need for Asian language skills or to employ people with them [cf. Commonwealth Advisory Committee 1970: 17, 20]. The report advocated a substantial increase in the teaching of Asian languages and cultures but it did not attempt to provide a systematic language policy or to change the view of language learning from an essentially intellectual or literary pursuit towards more societal or utilitarian views.

The 1970 report on the teaching of Asian languages and cultures had little impact on language education in Australia. From the early 1970s, a much stronger influence started to be felt, an influence that came from the sudden realisation that the nature of the Australian population had changed dramatically as a result of the immigration programme. This new realisation that Australia had become probably the world’s most multicultural society led to many new policies, amongst which were many unsystematic attempts to reform the language education system. It was realised that Australia had, almost accidentally, imported numerous language skills which would be wasted if steps were not taken to enable them to survive and be used. It was also realised that many children entered school speaking a language other than English and that, if their education was not to suffer, they needed an opportunity to commence their education in a language other than English. Consequently, bilingual education programmes and language maintenance programmes started to appear. At the same time, it was realised that, if Australia was to remain cohesive, the different ethnic groups needed to learn to understand and communicate with each other and so the teaching of the so-called “community languages” was made available to all children of any background. Enquiries and reports into multiculturalism proliferated and generally included some attention to the role of languages and language education. Thus, for example, the Committee on the Teaching of Migrant Languages in Schools advocated in 1976 that

All children should be given the opportunity to acquire an understanding of other languages and cultures from the earliest years of primary school.

Particularly for migrant children entering school with inadequate knowledge of English, there are strong educational and social reasons for continuing the learning of their own language...[Department of Education 1976: 35]

Significantly also, the very concept of what it is to be an Australian was changing with the realisation that people could accept common values but still draw on cultural heritages from many different parts of the world to contribute to a country and culture increasingly enriched by that great array of cultures. It was also accepted that Australians whose languages and cultures were other than English had the right to the same level of services as English speakers enjoyed. Consequently, although language policy initiatives remained largely unsystematic, there were many valuable initiatives taken which amounted to a *de facto* policy rather than a systematic and coherent policy. Some of these initiatives (most of which continue in some form today) included grants to schools to establish "community language" programmes and funds to support ethnic schools (afternoon or week-end schools run by the ethnic communities to teach their languages to their own children); funding was allocated for ethnic radio and television to broadcast in the languages of the Australian community; ethnic newspapers were encouraged; interpreting and translating services were developed and the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters established; and legislation and commissions were created and international covenants signed to counteract racism and to recognize human rights and ethnic equality.

Perhaps the most significant of the reports during the strongly "multicultural" period of the 1970s was the Galbally Review, released in 1978, which comprehensively reviewed multicultural policies and advocated support for language maintenance programmes and expanded community language learning in schools, encouraged language learning by professionals, and recommended the employment of bilinguals in public contact positions. This report's essential position was signalled in these words:

...every person should be able to maintain his or her culture without prejudice or disadvantage and should be encouraged to understand and embrace other cultures...
[Galbally Review 1978:4].

And later,

...We are of the opinion...that the cultural and racial differences which exist among us must be reflected in educational programs designed to foster intercultural and inter-racial understanding. [Galbally Review 1978: 104 - 105]

II The First National Policy on Languages in the English-Speaking World

Despite all this activity stimulated by multiculturalism in areas relevant to language policy, the overall result for language teaching was disappointing: the rhetoric and the unsystematic distribution of funds failed to halt the overall decline in language enrolments in Secondary and tertiary education and prompted only limited and usually temporary increases in Primary School language enrolments. Increasingly it became clear that the initiatives, however admirable each may have been, were too uncoordinated to support permanent changes in language education, and too many aspects of the language teaching system (not least teacher supply) were left largely untouched. Consequently, a number of people and organisations started agitating for a more systematic and comprehensive approach to language and language education policy-making. In

1978, the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, started advocating the development of a national policy on languages and the foundation of a national institute to oversee its development and implementation [Ingram 1978, 1978a, AFMLTA 1982]. This call was also endorsed by organizations such as the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia and was advocated by senior personnel in the Australian Department of Immigration. Eventually, on 25 May 1982, the question of "The Development and Implementation of a Coordinated Language Policy for Australia" was referred by the Australian Senate to its Standing Committee on Education and the Arts with terms of reference that included guidelines for a national languages policy, the role of English, the use of languages in Australia, the needs of Aboriginal languages, the state of language teaching, the adequacy of existing policies and practices for the development of Australia's language resources, international needs, the needs of the deaf and others with disabilities, stimulating public awareness, interpreting and translation services, adult illiteracy, and the implementation of a national language policy [SSCEA 1984: 234].

The Senate Standing Committee's report was released in December 1984 and, after some delay caused by intervening Federal elections and extensive community consultations, the first national policy on languages was adopted as Federal government policy in 1987 [Lo Bianco 1987]. During the years between 1984 and 1987, a great deal of public interest was generated in the issue with the result that, by the time the national policy was adopted, most States and Territories had moved to develop their own language and language education policies and programmes. On its release, the *National Policy on Languages* [Lo Bianco 1987] rapidly became the standard against which State and Territory policies could be compared and, not least, it marked probably the first attempt in the English-speaking world to produce a comprehensive and systematic national policy on languages.

The distinctive features of this first *National Policy on Languages* lie in the significant milestone it marks in language policy development in the English-speaking world, the stimulus it provided to renewing language education in Australia, the wide-ranging nature of the recommendations made, and the breadth of the social context in which the policy was placed. Its deficiencies were few but significant. Most fundamentally, while it contained many good ideas, it nevertheless lacked the sort of rigorous framework that the present writer has advocated in other papers [e.g., Ingram 1994] with the result that gaps in areas such as teacher education, teacher supply, and the on-going evaluation of the policy and its programmes were inevitable. Secondly, its prime focus was on serving the multicultural community with the result that child and adult literacy received limited attention, became matters of growing concern in subsequent years, and provided one of the major stimuli to the development of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in 1991. Thirdly, though the report makes some reference to the role of language skills in the development of industry and trade, the attention given to this crucial issue was slight. In subsequent years the Federal Government commissioned a number of reports that looked at these issues and urged more attention to be given to the role of language skills in fostering economic development [e.g., Garnaut 1989; Ingleson 1989; Leal et al 1991; Stanley et al 1990]. Fourthly, the main way in which funding was distributed to stimulate the teaching of other languages was through projects rather than through a systematic approach to amending the language teaching system. Unfortunately, projects funded in this way tend to disappear when the funding dries up and the long-term effect is negligible. Finally, in the model of language policy-making that the present writer has argued for, on-going monitoring and evaluation have an integral role so as to ensure that the policy is continually evolving in response to emerging needs. This was lacking in the 1987 policy and this deficiency contributed to the need, within a few years, for a comprehensive review, undertaken by the Federal Department of Employment, Education and Training, and leading to a new policy being adopted in 1991, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy [DEET 1991, 1991a].

III THE AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERACY POLICY (ALLP)

The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP), which is *de facto*, still the official national policy on languages in Australia, is less comprehensive than the 1987 policy but lays much stronger stress on English literacy and on the economic relevance of language skills. It was important in signalling the national commitment to a formally articulated language education policy, contains some excellent and innovative ideas, but, reflecting the prevailing economic rationalism that has dominated Australian political thinking since the late 1980s, it is unbalanced in the weighting it gives to economic reasons for language education and languages of economic rather than cultural or multicultural significance. It is essentially a language education policy rather than a language policy and fails to situate the education policy within general language policy. Like the 1987 document, the ALLP, is also deficient in structure with too little attempt being made to integrate the policy into a rational framework involving societal and individual need, clearly stated goals, implementation strategies, evaluation, and on-going monitoring. The ALLP has also been in place now for almost ten years and is overdue for review but the present Federal government shows no inclination to look further at language policy other than continuing to fund an Asian language teaching component.

The ALLP encompasses both English literacy and the learning of English and other languages as second or foreign languages. It devotes one chapter to Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal literacy and also considers language services (including interpreting and translation, library services, and the media). Its final chapter outlines implementation procedures and advisory mechanisms including the formation of the Australian Language and Literacy Council which functioned successfully from 1992 to 1996 until it was abolished along with all other education advisory bodies when the current government came to power in 1996. In what follows, most attention will be paid to the teaching of languages other than English.

The basic policy position was summed up by the Minister in a foreword:

We should all aspire to an Australia whose citizens are literate and articulate...

Australian English...is our national language. But Australia's cultural vitality is also the product of other languages spoken in our community...

...as important as proficiency in Australian English is for Australians, we also need to enhance our ability to communicate with the rest of the world. We must increase our strength in languages other than English in order to both enrich the intellectual and cultural vitality of our population, and to help secure our future economic well-being... Many more Australians need to learn a second language. [DEET 1991: iii - iv]

The policy identifies four goals:

Goal 1: All Australian residents should develop and maintain a level of spoken and written English which is appropriate for a range of contexts, with the support of education and training programs addressing their diverse learning needs.

Goal 2: The learning of languages other than English must be substantially expanded and improved to enhance educational outcomes and communication within both the Australian and international community.

Goal 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages should be maintained and developed where they are still transmitted.... Other languages should be assisted in an appropriate way ... These activities should .. occur for the benefit of the descendants of their speakers and for the nation's heritage.

Goal 4: Language services provided through interpreting and translating, print and electronic media and libraries should be expanded and improved. [DEET 1991: 4, 14, 19, 20]

It is very significant that the policy seems to see the main justification for fostering language skills as their contribution to economic reform. Despite the value attached to multiculturalism and the maintenance and teaching of community languages as indicated in the goals, the policy places less emphasis than previously on community languages and most on the economic and international reasons for language teaching. The policy also tries to balance the practical need to set priorities against the desirability of encouraging all language learning. It does so by identifying a number of national priority languages but also offers various support mechanisms to other languages (including funding for ethnic schools, curriculum development, a national assessment scheme for community languages not readily available in the school system, and encouragement for new learning modes such as distance education). The national priority languages included Australian English as the “national language” and fourteen others as national priority languages which are justifiable on traditional, community or economic grounds: Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese. There was particular priority attached to encouraging the learning of Asian languages with the policy wanting all Australian children to have access to Asian language teaching.

The policy aimed to increase substantially Australia's language resources and, for that reason, set a target of 25% of Year 12 students to be engaged in language learning by the Year 2000. Though this is a small proportion by international standards, if achieved, it would have represented almost a trebling of Year 12 enrolments since 1991, a figure that has not yet been achieved. Various financial incentives were proposed to encourage the State education systems and independent schools to encourage students to continue language study throughout their secondary school years. In addition, there was some encouragement given to the teaching of languages in Primary Schools, a move that was much strengthened over subsequent years and in subsequent amendments to the policy.

IV THE NALSSAS REPORT

Though the Australian Language and Literacy Policy has not been superseded, it was supplemented in 1994 by a major report entitled *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* [COAG 1994]. This report was one of the most thorough in its approach though it was unduly optimistic about some critical issues in language policy.

The admirable things in the report (and the policy initiatives that it represents) include the importance it attaches to the teaching and learning of Asian languages, in particular the four priority languages of Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean. The report emphasises (some

would say over-emphasises) the economic value of language skills as tools that facilitate more competitive international trade. The report also courageously sets proficiency targets to be achieved in schools (ISLPR 2 or 3 by Year 12) and, to help to achieve practically useful proficiency levels, the report gives strong encouragement to commencing foreign language learning in early Primary School (by Year 3, about age 7). Very desirably, also, the report recognises that language teaching can be effective only if the teachers have high levels of proficiency in the target language and if they have appropriate teaching skills. To this end, the report recommends that a nationally agreed minimum skill level be specified for Asian language teachers.

The deficiencies in the report lie not so much in what is said or not said as in the excessive optimism that it has about achieving the targets it sets. To achieve the large enrolment levels it seeks, it would be necessary to recruit large numbers of teachers proficient in the priority languages and well schooled in language teaching methodology. Most people active in the area of language policy and its implementation believed at the time the report was released that it was unlikely that such a dramatic increase in teacher numbers or in teacher skill levels could be achieved and subsequent events have proven their scepticism to be correct. A further criticism that can be levelled at the report is that it over-emphasises the economic reasons for language learning and neglects the more traditional cultural and intellectual values (though the views of the present writer are that these values can come out of any language learning no matter what the motivation of the policy-makers in supporting it). The third defect that will be mentioned here is that, while it is to be applauded that policy-makers try to set proficiency targets, the total school time that the report recommends for Asian language learning is about half that (approximately 2,500 hours) which the best available evidence would suggest is necessary to reach minimum vocational proficiency (ISLPR 3), which the report sets as the desirable target for at least some learners.

In brief, the current policy addendum on the teaching of Asian languages in Australia is an admirable attempt to encourage Australian students at all levels to acquire skills in Asian languages and an understanding of Asian cultures. The policy is still being supported by the present Federal government but, like the Australian Language and Literacy Policy, it is overdue for review and, in particular, for more realistic goals to be set in the light of time available in the curriculum but, most of all, in the light of the gross under-supply of teachers of the priority Asian languages who have high levels of proficiency in the target languages and have specialist language teaching skills.

V OTHER POLICY ISSUES

This has been a brief and necessarily cursory look at some key language policy issues in Australia. In parallel to the policy papers referred to here, there have been many other reports that have examined aspects of language policy in Australia. In particular, the Australian Language and Literacy Council, which was the main advisory body to the Australian Minister for Education from 1992 to 1996, examined many key policy issues and produced useful, if sometimes provocative, books on them. In particular, in its book *Speaking of Business*, the Council discussed the role of English and other languages in industry [ALLC 1994]. In *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy* [ALLC 1996], the Council examined the supply and quality of language teachers and drew attention to the gross lack of teachers of the priority foreign languages and the inadequate language proficiency and teaching skills of many of those currently employed. This critical problem of increasing the supply of well qualified, highly proficient language teachers is still far from being solved in Australia.

It should also be emphasised that Australia is a federation and education is primarily the responsibility of the States and Territories and not of the Federal Government. In other words, even though national policies on education may be proposed by the Federal Government in Canberra, that government can only encourage the States and Territories to implement them, generally by offering financial incentives. Nevertheless, the widespread public discussion of language policy issues through the 1980s led all States and Territories to give attention to their own language policies, especially to language education policies. All States and Territories have formally articulated their own language education policies and, though each of these is different, each has been influenced by the national debate and national policies and essentially seeks similar ends. In particular, they all aim to rapidly increase the number of students learning languages other than English, they all seek to raise the levels of English literacy, they all identify priority languages with, in most instances, a strong tendency to favour Asian over other languages, they are all influenced by economic rationalism, they all aim to have learners acquire higher levels of proficiency, they all give greatly increased emphasis to starting languages in Primary School, and, in most cases, they effectively make foreign language study compulsory at least in upper Primary and lower Secondary School. The common and most serious problem is in the supply and quality of language teachers.

There is one area of language policy of increasing importance in Australia that has not yet been mentioned. Since the mid-80s, successive Australian governments have strongly encouraged universities, schools and private institutions to offer English as a second language to students from overseas. This has been seen as a valuable service to be provided to countries in the Asia-Pacific region, it has been seen as a useful source of export earnings for Australia, and it has been seen as an essential complement to Australia's "export of education" programme. Under this programme, overseas students are offered the opportunity to study in Australian schools, colleges, universities and private institutions. One of the outcomes of this policy has been a rapid growth in the number of English language centres either attached to Australian universities, colleges and schools or standing alone as private colleges. One example of a language centre attached to a university is the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages at Griffith University. This centre is, however, different from most English teaching centres in being more diverse in what it does and, in particular, in situating its English language programmes (loosely known as the Griffith University English Language Institute), within an academically strong centre where the language teaching is complemented by research and advisory services in applied linguistics, in particular in language policy, language assessment, language teaching methodology, and curriculum design.

VI CENTRE FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY (CALL)

The present writer has outlined the history, nature and management of the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages at length in his forthcoming book, *Language Centres*, which discusses the roles, functions and management of language centres and is to be published later this year by John Benjamins, the eminent academic publishers based in Amsterdam [see Ingram forthcoming]. Here only a brief oversight of the Centre will be given, with emphasis on the English language programmes that are available.

The Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages (commonly known as CALL) commenced operations in 1990 when the present writer was appointed founding Director. The mission of the Centre is described thus:

The mission of the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages is to serve Griffith University and the wider community of language interests through

- *the development of high quality second and foreign language learning programs,*
- *excellence in the development and implementation of applied linguistic theory and practice, and*
- *the promotion and development of applied linguistics through the provision of high quality training programs, research and consultancy services.*

In other words, the Centre's main activities are to teach languages (especially English as a second language to overseas students), to provide advice to education, government and industry on language policy and language education, to teach courses in applied linguistics (in this instance, the principles and practice of second language teaching), to undertake research in applied linguistics (especially language policy, language assessment, and all aspects of language teaching), and to supervise doctoral students undertaking research in areas of applied linguistics or language education.

The Centre's activities fall into two broad parts:

- Language programmes
- Applied linguistics.

The **language programmes** include courses in languages other than English provided on contract to government departments and agencies and to industry. However, the largest part of the language programmes section of CALL constitutes what, for marketing purposes, is called the Griffith University English Language Institute (GUELI). Within GUELI, the largest language programmes are *English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students* (ELICOS). These programmes operate throughout the year in five- or ten-week modules. Students can take one or more module depending on their proficiency when they arrive and what level of proficiency they wish to achieve. A few students stay just ten weeks but most stay for anything up to 45 weeks or even more.

The largest ESL course is *General English* which students can enter at any level from zero upwards. Students who wish to go on to other university studies in Australia can take *English for Academic Purposes* when they reach a proficiency level of about ISLPR 2+ or IELTS 5. To enter most degree courses they require a proficiency of IELTS 6 or 6.5. Since most Australian and British universities require students to take the IELTS Test before they are accepted into degree programmes, success on the IELTS Test is very important and so the Centre also provides *IELTS Preparation* courses. In addition, the Centre offers courses in *English for Special Purposes*, the nature of the course varying according to the special interests of the students and the number of students available with the same interests. Some courses of this type of particular interest are the ones taught for students in the recently formed Griffith University International Institute of Sport (GUIIS). For international students undertaking sports training in GUIIS, the English language courses will provide English teaching that is relevant to their sports but also relevant to the roles that they are planning in their chosen sports (e.g., competition, coaching, management or, eventually perhaps, sports medicine).

Another large activity in the area of English language teaching is what are called *Australian Study Tours*. These are generally short courses taken by groups of overseas students during their university vacations. The centre plans these in liaison with the students' home institutions and according to the specific needs that their university expresses. In most cases, about half the time is spent in English language study but, in addition, there are activities such as tourism, leisure or recreational activities, work experience, or academic studies. Typically students wanting tourism or recreational activities will visit places of interest in Queensland (perhaps the very beautiful and interesting Great Barrier Reef), they visit theme parks such as Movieworld or Dreamworld, they might spend some time on an Australian farm or cattle station, and, of course, they have opportunities to "cuddle a koala" and to see other native Australian animals. Sometimes students who come on AST programmes stay for up to twelve weeks or more and their English course contributes to their degree programmes in their home universities. In such cases, the Centre provides formal assessment according to the requirements of the students' own universities as well as providing our own certification or giving them the opportunity to receive an international certificate of proficiency using such tests as IELTS or ISLPR.

Some overseas students wishing to take a degree programme may need to strengthen their English skills and their academic training before they commence their degree studies in an Australian university. For such students, the Centre offers the Foundations programme (for students entering undergraduate courses) or the Post-Graduate Qualifying Programme (for students entering a Masters degree programme). These courses basically go for one or two semesters and provide, on successful completion, automatic entry into the students' desired degree programmes.

In the area of **applied linguistics**, CALL staff have undertaken a vast range of *research* in applied linguistics, especially in the areas of language assessment, language policy, language education planning, second language teaching methodology, and second language curriculum development. Members of CALL's academic staff are well known internationally, especially for their research and writing in language policy, language education planning, and language assessment. Several of them have, for example, developed or participated in the development of two of the world's most widely used language tests. The present writer was the Australian representative on the joint Australian-British team that developed the International English Language Testing System, the IELTS test, in 1987-88 and he was Chief Examiner (Australia) from the test's release in 1989 for the ten years to the end of 1998. Most British and Australian universities now require overseas students to take the IELTS test, it is accepted by many Canadian and American universities as an alternative to TOEFL, immigration departments in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada require applicants for migration to those countries to take it as part of the selection process for migration to those countries, and vocational registration authorities in those countries and in Britain use IELTS to check whether people wanting to be registered to work in some vocations have enough English. Other members of CALL's staff, in addition to the present writer, have been involved with IELTS either in helping to develop it, as itemwriters preparing new versions of the test, or as assessors. In addition, the present writer and another CALL staffmember, Elaine Wylie, are the authors of the International Second Language Proficiency Ratings or ISLPR, the proficiency scale and assessment scheme that has become the standard way of stating proficiency levels in Australia [Ingram and Wylie 1979/1999].

In addition to research and advisory services, the Centre offers a number of award and non-award courses in aspects of applied linguistics. Most of these courses are available either in classes taught face-to-face in Brisbane or overseas or by distance education from anywhere in the world using both hard-copy materials and on-line teaching. *Non-award courses* are developed and offered in any area of applied linguistics or second language teaching but regular ones available include

training programmes in the use of the ISLPR and “Professional Programmes”, short courses in second language teaching methodology, language assessment, and language policy.

The Centre also offers *award courses* in applied linguistics at the post-graduate level. The Graduate Certificate in Second Language Teaching provides basic training in how to teach a second or foreign language. Many teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language take this course but also teachers of many other languages (including Chinese and Japanese). Another popular Graduate Certificate is the Graduate Certificate in Language Assessment taken by people who want intensive training in language testing. The Centre also offers students an opportunity to undertake research programmes that lead to the university’s highest degrees of Master of Philosophy in applied linguistics or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in applied linguistics. Recent Ph.D. students, for example, have undertaken or are undertaking research leading to the preparation of theses on such topics as models of translation, strategies of language use in immersion language courses, computers in the teaching of reading in Korean language classes, aspects of phonological development in learning to read, oral proficiency assessment, and language policy.

In addition to the courses just outlined in English, in other languages, and in applied linguistics, the Centre is always willing to develop other programmes relevant to these areas to meet other needs. In everything it offers, however, it insists on providing courses and other services of high quality, well grounded in a thorough understanding of applied linguistics, that is, of how language is most effectively taught and learned. The staff employed by the Centre reflect this determination to provide high quality programmes and services. The language teachers must meet the minimum standards set by the Australian government’s accreditation system for ELICOS programmes but, in fact, the vast majority greatly exceed that and, in addition to excellent teaching experience, many of them have at least four or five years of teacher education including Graduate Diplomas, Masters degrees, or doctorates in applied linguistics or a related field.

The Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages is located in two places. The main branch is on the Nathan Campus of Griffith University in Brisbane but there is also a branch off-campus in Southport on the Gold Coast, a famous holiday resort just south of Brisbane. The Nathan campus is about fifteen minutes from the heart of the quite large city of Brisbane but it is set within a State forest and, even quite close to the buildings, one can often see what seem to most overseas students to be quite exotic plants, small animals and birds. The Gold Coast branch is in especially attractive facilities that look out over a large inlet from the sea called the Broadwater and then across to the famous surfing beaches of the Gold Coast and such attractions as Seaworld.

The climate in South East Queensland where the Centre is located is undoubtedly one of the best in the world. The summer temperatures are usually around 30° C while the winters range from 10 to 20° C. The mild temperatures, blue skies, beautiful beaches, exotic rainforests and many tourist attractions make this part of Australia one of the most popular tourist resorts in the world. Yet Queensland is also one of the fastest growing economic regions of Australia with industries based on farming, sheep and cattle raising, mining (especially coal, bauxite for aluminium, gold and other minerals), and with dramatic growth in modern industries such as education, information technology or microbiology.

Of particular importance for overseas students, Queensland offers a very secure environment where it is safe to move around without fear of the sort of personal violence that too often occurs in other parts of the world. Most visitors say that they find Queensland people friendly and helpful. This is especially important for the students who come to the Centre to learn English because one of the best ways for students to improve their English skills is to live with an Australian family while they

study in the Centre. For this reason, many of our students ask for homestay accommodation. Homestay families provide a place to stay, they provide meals, often they assist with transport to and from the University, and many of them go out of their way to make the overseas students welcome and to show them around South East Queensland. Most of all, they talk to them in English and give the overseas students an opportunity to experience the real, everyday Australian culture by living with an Australian family.

VII CONCLUSION

This paper has outlined aspects of language policy in Australia. It is widely accepted in applied linguistics that Australia has led the English-speaking world in its attempts to address language needs and to develop systematic State and national language and language education policies. At the same time as developing policies to serve the needs of the Australian people, Australia has sought to offer educational opportunities to students from around the world. In particular, it provides opportunities for them to come to an English-speaking environment where they can learn English from well-qualified and experienced teachers, associate safely with native English speakers both in the universities and in the community, and practise their English skills by living amongst friendly and accepting English speakers. They also have the opportunity to learn about and come to understand at first-hand the culture of the Australian people.

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