

Language and Culture Policy in Multicultural Australia

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The Presenter

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I INTRODUCTION

Most Australians pride themselves on belonging to a multicultural society in which people of any racial or ethnic origin can live together in harmony and identify themselves as Australian. A popular national song, *I am Australian*, which is frequently sung on national occasions, starts with these words:

*We are one, but we are many,
And from all the lands on earth we come
We share a dream
And sing with one voice
I am, you are, we are Australian.*

Even following the events of 11 September, 2001 and the bombings in Bali on 12 October 2002, when certain religious and ethnic groups were held responsible for the atrocities, the most frequently heard cry in Australia (other than deploring the events themselves and expressing sorrow for the victims) was that we should not allow such events or the perpetrators of them to undermine Australia's multicultural harmony or create antagonisms towards fellow Australians. However, it has not always been like that and, at different times in Australian history, efforts have been made to try to turn Australia into a white, Anglo-Saxon, English-monolingual nation – a bit of old Britain stuck on the underside of the globe, in the Antipodes.

In a paper presented at Akita University in August 2000, the present writer referred to key policy papers that mark significant points in the evolution of multicultural and language education policy in Australia [Ingram2000]. The present paper inevitably repeats some of that but takes a historical perspective from the earliest periods of Australian history to the present day. Though the discussion is in the context of Australian multiculturalism, the focus here is on the author's principal interest, language and language education policy.

II To the Early 20th Century

Though the perception of Australia both from within and from outside has, in recent history, been mostly of a white, English-speaking country, in reality, for virtually all its history, it has been one of the most ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse nations on earth. Before Europeans settled in Australia in the late 18th Century, it is estimated that there were some 300,000 Australian Aboriginal people, speaking approximately 250 different languages and some 600 dialects [cf. SSCEA 1984: 80]. Of these, at least a

hundred languages have been lost and at least another hundred are considered to be endangered, i.e., they are spoken by only a few old people and are in danger of being lost forever when their few speakers die [cf. Clyne 1991: 1, Lo Bianco 1987: 10, SSCEA 1984: Chapter 8, DEETa 1991: Chapter 5]. For the present purpose, it is important to note that, even before 1788 when the first Europeans settled where Sydney now stands, Australia was multilingual and multicultural and that diversity amongst indigenous Australians remains today even though in a depleted and parlous state and adds both to the cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia and to the urgency of strong cultural and language policies designed to ensure that the current linguistic resources are maintained and developed and the rights of the people to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritages ensured.

Even within the immigrant and former immigrant community, cultural and linguistic diversity has always existed. Michael Clyne, undoubtedly Australia's leading sociolinguist, provides a detailed account of the evolution of Australian attitudes to multiculturalism and to community languages other than English in his book *Community Languages: The Australian Experience* [Clyne 1991]. He comments:

... it is not only in the post-World-War-II period that Australia could be described as a multilingual society. Ethnolinguistic diversity existed, and, in fact, thrived in some parts of Australia from the early days of European settlement. There were periods during the past 200 years when multilingualism was recognised, or even promoted. There were others when it was ignored, or outlawed. [Clyne 1991: 1]

Subsequently, Clyne goes on to give a detailed account of the changes in attitude to immigrants and their languages. When Europeans first settled in Australia on 26 January, 1788, there were at least 250 Aboriginal languages and most of the population at that time would have been multilingual. The first European settlers were convicts evicted from British jails but, by the first years of the 19th Century, free settlers were also arriving, a process that was accelerated when gold was discovered in the middle of that century. By the 1860s, the main languages, in addition to Aboriginal languages, were English, Irish, Chinese, German, Gaelic, Welsh, French, the Scandinavian languages, and Italian [cf. Clyne 1991: 7]. Indeed, rather than Australia's focus on Asian languages being a modern phenomenon, it is estimated that the Chinese-born population was second only to English speakers though German speakers (both first and second generation) were probably slightly more numerous. From as early as the 1830s, community languages were emerging, often, especially in Victoria and South Australia, in identifiable communities where, for instance, German was the main language of communication and bilingual schools were established. In the mid-19th Century, community language newspapers were common (especially in German but also in such languages as Chinese, French, Gaelic, Scandinavian and Welsh) [cf. Clyne 1991: 7 – 8]. Bilingual education was established in many schools, especially in Victoria and South Australia, where it was estimated that there were some one hundred bilingual schools by the end of the 19th Century, and the learning of both languages was projected as a valuable asset for both language groups [cf. Clyne 1991: 8]. The languages of these schools included English together with German, Gaelic, Hebrew, French and the policy was sufficiently successful that one visitor to Australia in 1890 commented on the "marvellous facility" of Australian children in learning languages [cf. Clyne 1991: 8 – 9]. Even Queensland, where there were few bilingual schools and none that lasted very long, was marked by great ethnolinguistic diversity with, by the start of the 20th Century, significant groups of

speakers of German, Scandinavian languages, Italian, Russian, Greek and Chinese [cf. Clyne 1991: 9 – 10].

It is significant that even in the second half of the 19th Century the concept of an “Australian” allowed for diversity of language and cultural origin, while still identifying as “Australian”. This attitude re-emerged in the second half of the 20th Century but, by the early years of the 20th Century, world political pressures with the occurrence of conflicts such as the Boer Wars and the first World War led to the emergence of a dominant Anglophile view in which being Australian was linked to loyalty to the British monarch and English monolingualism [cf. Clyne 1991: 11 – 12]. This, together with antagonisms to the large numbers of Chinese who had come to Australia during the goldrushes and opposition after Federation in 1901 to the use of Pacific Islanders (known as kanakas) as forced (almost slave) labour in the Queensland sugarfields led to an increasingly discriminatory immigration policy even when, following the Second World War, a large scale migration programme was adopted. This “white Australia policy” served to try to reinforce Australian identity as white, English monolingual and “British”. Within education, these tendencies, reinforced by antagonism to Germany and Germans after the first World War, also led to the demise of bilingual education and, in some States, legislation that specifically endorsed an “English only” education, banned the use of other languages in education, prohibited publications in German, and even led to placenames being changed.

III The 1940s to the 1960s

The trends in favour of seeing Australia as a largely white, English-monolingual society of British origin were further strengthened by the Second World War so that, by the beginning of the second half of the 20th Century, education was aggressively monolingual. Though foreign language education in the secondary schools was almost universal (and non-existent at primary school level), its justification was in terms of what constituted a “good” (essentially British) education, its principal content was grammar, translation and laboriously translated literature, and it focussed on the classical languages of Ancient Greek and Latin together with those few European languages taught in Britain, especially French.

Immigrants, almost entirely from Europe, were encouraged to learn English rapidly and to drop their languages of origin; the migrant languages were rarely available in the schools, their use was actively discouraged both at home and in public places, few, if any, translation or interpreting services were available, and very few services (public or private) were available in languages other than English (except for some highly restricted offerings in ethnic newspapers and on commercial radio) [see Clyne 1991: 15 – 18]: the social policy was one of assimilation intended to Australianise immigrants as rapidly as possible. The attitudes at this time were well summed up by the then Prime Minister who stated that 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, A. E. Monk, 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]

Even as late as 1969, the Federal Immigration Minister, Billy Sneddon, is quoted as stating:

We must have a single culture. We do not want pluralism. [Cited in Clyne 1991: 19]

Nevertheless, even though it occurred in this context of turning immigrants into good Australians, Australian language education showed some progressive and, indeed, highly innovative features. All immigrants were entitled to free English language tuition and the Federal Government funded a large-scale ESL education system for adult migrants, the Adult Migrant Education Programme. At its peak, the AMEP had over 100,000 students in it more or less continuously and, in order to cater for the linguistically diverse classes, a new methodology was developed in which all the teaching was in English and the learners' own first language was not used. This approach was known as the Australian Situational Method and was published in the AMEP coursebooks, *English for Newcomers to Australia* and, subsequently, *Situational English*. The Australian Situational Method was an analytic approach that owed much to structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology. It reduced language teaching to the teaching of small segments of language (principally short sentences) whose meaning could be conveyed unambiguously by constructing "situations" and using a clever set of drawings, teaching realia and hand signs. It remained in place, officially if not in practice, as the preferred methodology and course materials until a major review of the AMEP took place in the late 1970s and led, under the present writer's guidance as academic adviser, to new "on-arrival and "on-going programmes" based on a form of communicative, proficiency-focussed, and theme-based language teaching.

IV The Late 1960s and the 1970s

In terms of social development, for those Australians committed to an equitable multicultural and multiracial society, this was the most exciting period in Australian history. It was followed in the 1980s by, and undoubtedly gave impetus to, an equally exciting period in the area of language policy. Such rigid attitudes as those described as characteristic of the 1950s and 1960s could not last long in the face of a large and increasingly diverse immigration programme. The immigration programme was motivated, not so much by compassion for persons from nations torn apart by the Second World War, as by Australian self-interest: the need for a workforce for such large-scale development projects as the Snowy Mountains Hydroelectric Scheme and realisation that the Australian population was too small to support strong economic growth and too small to justify retaining or even to be able to defend the vast Australian continent. The slogan "populate or perish" justified the migration programme but, as the migrant sources in Europe dried up as economic and social conditions improved, new sources of migrants had to be found. At the same time, as peace settled over Europe, new areas of social and political turmoil became salient around the globe and became prospective sources of immigrants and refugees for Australia. In addition, Australia had been seduced by old colonial and anti-communist arguments to become involved in the Vietnam War alongside the United States and this set up the groundwork for a situation in which, out of a sense of guilt over

its aggression in Vietnam and out of concern for the large numbers of people displaced by the Vietnam War, Australia suddenly received a larger influx of people of non-European origin than it had ever received in its demographic history. All these events or the groundwork leading to them meant that, even without significant formal policy change through the 1950s and 1960s, the racial, cultural and linguistic pattern of the migration programme had changed and, by the early 1970s, official policy was increasingly outdated and inappropriate. At the same time, there were increasingly strong economic pressures on Australia to change its orientation. Europe was becoming more united through the emergence of such organisations as the Common Market, the European Economic Community, and the Council of Europe and so Australia found its traditional markets in Europe, especially in Britain, fading away and it was obliged to turn elsewhere. The newly independent Asian nations with their emerging economies became increasingly the target for Australian trade and for Australian foreign aid and political attention.

The changing focus towards Asia had been signalled in the last years of the 1960s by two events: first, when Harold Holt became Prime Minister in the mid-1960s following the arch royalist Robert Menzies, his first trip abroad was to Asia, an event whose symbolic importance was widely recognised in Australia. Second, in the last years of the 1960s, the Australian Government initiated a major enquiry into the teaching of Asian languages and cultures in Australia. This report was published in 1970 [Commonwealth Advisory Committee 1970] and strongly reflected Australia's growing realignment towards Asia. Although it discussed the changing pattern of Australian trade with Asia and stated that Australian businesses were at a disadvantage in not speaking Asian languages, it gave very little attention to the economic significance of skills in Asian (or any other) languages. The report and its surveys demonstrated strong public support for the study of Asian languages and cultures but contrasted this support 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. However, it did not attempt to embed those views within a systematic language or language education policy or to seek to change the view of language learning from an essentially intellectual or literary pursuit towards more societal or utilitarian views. In the light of the growth that shortly started to occur in the Asian economies, it is ironic that, apart from the notion of a "good education", the main justification for the development of Asian language skills in Australia seemed to be seen as providing assistance to the foreign aid programme. In fact, the report had little impact on language education in Australia.

The strongest political sign that the Australian people were ready for a major change of direction came in 1972 with the election of the first Labor Government at the national level for more than twenty years. Significantly, its electioneering slogan for the Federal election in 1972 was "It's time". The period of the Labor Government from 1972 to 1975 is especially significant in the context of the emergence of multiculturalism as a deliberate government policy and an increasingly accepted premise of the Australian people. In practice, as Clyne has noted [Clyne 1991: 19], it was realised in a growing recognition of the rights, cultures and languages of all people in Australia and acceptance of all the cultures as part of the shared culture of all Australians. In other words, multiculturalism came, not without birth pangs, to recognise, as the words of the song quoted earlier say, that Australians are "one", i.e., they share the country, share certain common values, and are loyal to Australia but they are "many", i.e., they or their ancestors come from many different parts of the world with many different cultural and linguistic heritages, that they all

have the right to identify as Australians and to expect the same level of service and the same rights as all other Australians. Clearly such a notion has profound implications, which have not always been met but are aspired towards, for language and education policy as well as for such other services as translation and interpretation, library resources, entertainment, interaction between officialdom and the public, and so on.

In language education policy, it increasingly was realised, first, that many young Australian residents came to school with little or no English and needed specialist ESL teaching and, desirably, the opportunity to enter into bilingual education programmes. Second, it was recognised 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. Consequently, both bilingual education and language maintenance programmes started to appear and government support was offered to ethnic schools. 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 and programs were provided to encourage adults (especially professionals dealing with people from the communities) to learn “community languages”. 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]

Other initiatives to support and develop multiculturalism and the languages and cultures of the community included funding for ethnic radio and television to broadcast in the languages of the Australian community; ethnic newspapers were encouraged; interpreting and translating services were developed, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters was established and standards and assessment schemes for interpreters and translators were developed to provide quality assurance. At the same time as these services were being developed and programmes to educate the community on the benefits of multiculturalism were commenced, international covenants to counteract racism and recognize human rights and ethnic equality were signed, legislation outlawing discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or race was put in place, commissions to counteract racism were established, and community organisations such as the Australia-wide Consultative Committees on Community Relations were created with the task of intervening in the event of acts of racial discrimination in order, by negotiation, to try to eliminate racism and improve community attitudes.

Though these initiatives were commenced under a Federal Labor Government, the momentum was maintained when an otherwise divisive change of government occurred in 1975 and, indeed, probably the most significant of the reports generated during this period was produced by a national committee of review on programmes and services for migrants. The Galbally Review, released in 1978, comprehensively reviewed multicultural

policies and, in the language area, 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]

In tabling the report in the national Parliament, the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, stated:

Australia is at a critical stage in developing a cohesive, united, multicultural nation ... [The government] will foster the retention of the cultural heritage of different ethnic groups and promote intercultural understanding. [Hansard, 30 May, 1978, cited in Clyne 1991: 19]

This period ended with much vigorous activity to advocate, develop and serve the concept of multiculturalism but there was equally vigorous activity amongst advocates of more systematic language and language education policies.

V The Language Policy Era: the Late 1970s to 1996

V.1 Promoting the Concept: Despite the rapid development of policies to foster the notion of Australia as a multicultural society in which the cultural and linguistic heritages of all the people were respected, recognised, and encouraged to flourish and despite the announcement of policies to encourage all Australians to learn the languages of their fellow citizens, 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. It became increasingly clear that the language education initiatives, however admirable each may have been, were too uncoordinated and too unsystematic to cause 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 and for the creation of a national body, a national language information and research centre, to oversight language policy. 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.

V.2 The Senate Inquiry: 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 Inquiry was strongly supported within the Australian community. It received well over four hundred written submissions and other documents and interviewed almost a hundred personal witnesses [SSCEA 1984: x, 235 – 246], more, indeed, than any Senate inquiry had previously received in Australia. Equally significant was the manner in which the Inquiry was carried out: in addition to receiving submissions and interviewing witnesses, the Inquiry specifically encouraged individuals, community organisations and professional associations to hold public meetings, to canvass ideas and community views, and to foster public discussion. Consequently, by the time the report was tabled in Parliament, there had been much intensive public discussion of the issue of a national language policy and strong community support for the notion had evolved.

The Report was delayed by a Federal election but was eventually tabled in the Federal Parliament in 1984. The nature of a national language policy was summed up in the statement that:

... a national language policy should take a comprehensive view of and balanced approach to matters of language use and language learning in order to meet Australian needs on both the domestic and the international scene. [SSCEA 1984: 1]

The Senate Committee in its report dealt very broadly with language issues in Australia. Its chapters discussed the nature and development of language policy, language use in Australia, the place of English as the national language, the teaching of English (as first and second languages, in adult literacy, and as a foreign language), Australian Aboriginal languages, the language needs of persons with communication handicaps, language in international relationships, the teaching of languages other than English, and various language services (including interpreting and translation, libraries and the media). The report surveyed the submissions the Inquiry received and made some 117 recommendations strongly supportive of systematic language policy development, improved language education, the maintenance and development of the languages in the Australian community (both indigenous languages and migrant languages), and the provision of greatly expanded and improved language services. The first and most basic recommendation stated:

Language policies should be developed and co-ordinated at the national level on the basis of four guiding principles, namely:

- *competence in English;*
- *maintenance and development of languages other than English;*
- *provision of services in languages other than English;*
- *opportunities for learning second languages.* [SSCEA 1984: 224]

V.3 The First National Policy: Following the tabling of the Senate Committee's report in December 1984, some delay occurred as a result of national elections and further community consultations. Joseph Lo Bianco was appointed to develop a national policy and, eventually in 1987, the first national policy on languages was adopted [Lo Bianco 1987]. In the intervening years, the strong public interest and debate that had occurred from the late 1970s led to the fact that, by the time the national policy was adopted, most States and Territories had developed and adopted their own language and language education policies and reformed their language education programmes. On its release, however, the *National Policy on Languages* [Lo Bianco 1987] rapidly became the standard against which State and Territory policies could be compared. Not least, it was seen as 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* [Lo Bianco 1987] lie in 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. Like the Senate report, it sought to deal comprehensively with language issues in Australia with chapters on the rationale for a national policy, elaboration of a policy covering the status of English and other languages, the teaching of English and other languages, Aboriginal languages, and provision of language services (including translating and interpreting, the media, libraries and language testing). It recommended the formation of a national advisory council on language policy and briefly discussed the contribution of the States and Territories. The Policy's 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 and AFMLTA 1982] 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. Second, 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. Third, 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]. Fourth, 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. 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].

V.4 The Australian Language and Literacy Policy: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy (ALLP) was less comprehensive than the 1987 policy but placed greater emphasis on English literacy and on the economic relevance of language skills. It was important in confirming the national commitment to a formally articulated language education policy and the growth in the maintenance and development of language skills but, reflecting the prevailing economic rationalism that has increasingly dominated Australian politics since the 1980s, it perhaps over-emphasised the economic reasons for language education and started the trend towards valuing languages of economic significance over those of cultural or multicultural significance, a trend given further impetus by the subsequent and supplementary national policy on Asian languages (to be discussed next).

The Australian Language and Literacy Policy focussed around English literacy, the learning of English and other languages as second or foreign languages, Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal literacy, and gave some attention to language services (including interpreting and translation, library services, and the media). Its final chapter addressed some implementation procedures and advisory mechanisms including the formation of the Australian Language and Literacy Council as the principal advisory body on language policy to the Federal Education Minister. This Council functioned successfully from 1992 to 1996, when it was abolished along with all other education advisory bodies when the current government first came to power. The present discussion concentrates on 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 saw 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, the driving force behind the 1987 policy and the advocacy that had led to the first national policy, the Australian Language and Literacy Policy placed less emphasis on community languages and most on the economic and international reasons for language teaching. The policy also tried to balance the practical need to set priorities against the desirability of encouraging all language learning and so it identified a number of national priority languages while also offering 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 other priority languages justifiable on traditional, community or economic grounds. These were Aboriginal languages, Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Russian, Spanish, Thai, and Vietnamese. Asian languages were given particular priority 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. This is a small proportion by international standards but, if achieved, it would have meant that Year 12 enrolments would have trebled over the years 1991 to 2000. Such growth was not achieved and could not have been achieved without much more systematic attention to the number and quality of language teachers. 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.

The Australian Language and Literacy Policy 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 needs, clearly stated goals, implementation strategies, evaluation, and on-going monitoring. Consequently, it contains inherent weaknesses which, twelve years on, has undermined its success. In particular, it failed to give systematic attention to the implementation of the policy, not least in the pivotal area of language teacher quality and supply. Consequently, the success of the ALLP has been seriously mitigated by the fact that too little attention was paid to the need to find ways to encourage people to train as language teachers, the opportunity to find innovative ways to draw on the considerable

language resources in the community in order to staff language education programmes, and the need to ensure that all teachers, both existing and new, had appropriate levels of language proficiency and the specialist skills of language teaching methodology.

V.5 The National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools: The Australian Language and Literacy Policy was supplemented in 1994 by a major report on the teaching of Asian languages and cultures entitled *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* [COAG 1994]. This report was thorough in its approach and strongly continued the trend towards economic justifications for language learning. It emphasised that it did not seek to play down the role of European languages in Australian education [COAG 1994: 4] but it stated:

... it is critical that Australia attaches the highest priority to the adoption and implementation of a long-term strategy to ensure that the Australian workforce of the future is equipped with language skills, and associated skills of cultural awareness, of direct relevance to our national economic interest. Specifically, this will mean targeting the principal languages of Asia. [COAG 1994: 14]

The terms of reference set by the Council of Australian Governments (i.e., the meeting of the Prime Minister and State Premiers) noted Australia's strong economic interests in East Asia and set four fundamental issues to be considered:

- *East Asia is critical to Australia's economic future;*
- *a comprehensive understanding of the principal languages [and] cultures of this region is important if Australia is to maximise its national economic interests in the region;*
- *a strategy must be developed and implemented through the school system in order to achieve this objective; and*
- *such a strategy is regarded by the Heads of Government as a "matter of national importance" requiring "urgent, high level attention at a national level".* [COAG 1994: 5]

The report (and the policy initiatives that it represents) sought to adopt a more rigorous approach to policy development and design than had earlier reports. Its strengths lay in its recognition of the importance of the teaching and learning of Asian languages, amongst which Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and Korean are identified as of highest priority. Rather than speak vaguely and abstractly about the value of language skills, the report sets proficiency targets to be achieved in schools (ISLPR 2 or 3 by Year 12). To help to achieve practically useful proficiency levels of this order, it advocates that foreign language learning commence in early Primary School (by Year 3, about age 7). It also recognises 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 report was adopted as policy and implemented by all State and Territory Governments and by the Australian Government. As admirable as it was in drawing attention to the economic significance of Asian languages and cultures to Australia and as thorough as it was in its design and presentation of policy, it was not without its defects, as has been evident in its implementation. Its heavy emphasis on economic rationalist

reasons to justify language learning has been accused of neglecting the other educational, cultural and societal reasons for language learning though, in reality, such criticism is only valid if the report and the ensuing policy are taken out of the broader context of language and language education policy in which it was specifically set. More seriously, even though its attempt to set specific proficiency targets and to develop implementational strategies to reach them is to be commended as giving some rigour to policy design, the report was unduly optimistic about how long it would take to achieve those levels. The total school time it 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 by Year 12 [COAG 1994: xiii].

The report's most serious flaw was undoubtedly the one that has continually dogged language policy initiatives in Australia: to achieve the large enrolment levels it seeks, it would have been necessary to recruit large numbers of teachers proficient in the priority languages and well schooled in language teaching methodology. Without major changes in teacher recruitment including substantial incentives to attract persons with language skills into the teaching profession, it was impossible to achieve such a dramatic increase in teacher numbers or in teacher skill levels.

VI From 1996 to the Present Time

Since the election of the present Australian Government, initially in 1996, there has been a lack of language policy leadership from the Federal Government. When it came to government, it abolished the Australian Language and Literacy Council, its principal advisory body on language policy, along with all its other educational advisory bodies established over previous years under the overarching supervision of the National Board for Employment, Education and Training. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy, adopted in 1991 by the previous government, remained the *de facto* policy though it was neither reviewed nor funded. Funding was also all but stopped for the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia, which had been the principal avenue for the conduct of language and language education research since its commencement in 1990.

Nevertheless, despite the present Federal Government's lack of support for language policy in general in Australia, the National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy had continued to be supported until this year (2002) when funding for this policy also was abolished. Critics of this action continue to point to the importance of language skills and cultural understanding to Australia and, not least, observe that the current world tension increases rather than decreases the desirability of fostering intercultural understanding amongst the Australian people. Rather than reducing the need for language skills, there are many issues critical to Australia's national and international well-being which the attainment of language skills and improved cultural understanding could only assist, not least the on-going controversy over immigration and refugee policy, the need to strengthen economic performance at a time of worldwide economic difficulties, and the global concern over terrorism which, fundamentally, is a concern over intercultural understanding and tolerance.

The Australian Government's response to such criticisms would undoubtedly be that education, including language education, is a State and Territory responsibility. However,

immigration and policies responding to needs that result from it have always been seen as Federal responsibilities as are such issues as international trade, defence and international relations. Though all States and Territories have developed in some form or other their own language education policies, historically, it was the national government that has given the lead on language and language education policy. It is not unreasonable to conclude that, following the exciting developments in language policy through the 1980s and early 1990s, there has been a lack of leadership and that language and language education policy have fallen into decline since 1996.

However, in the course of 2002, the Federal Government announced a long-overdue review though, rather than take a broad and rational view of language education and attempt to situate it in a systematic notion of what should determine policy, the review, as reflected in its title, is restricted to being a "Review of the Commonwealth Languages Other than English in Schools Programme". The terms of reference for the review include:

- *the current provision of languages programmes in schools and in after-hours ethnic schools*
- *issues related to the successful implementation of languages programmes*
- *work on languages education being undertaken through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [and]*
- *recommendations for future national strategic directions for the Commonwealth Schools Languages Programme.*
[<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/languagereview/index.htm>]

Public submissions have been sought and the review is due to report by 2 December, 2002.

VII OTHER POLICY ISSUES IN LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND MULTICULTURALISM

This paper has focussed around the broad policy issues in Australia in relation to language, culture and multiculturalism as they have evolved over the last 200 years. There are many corollary issues that have required or still require attention within the context of multiculturalism and language and culture policy. In drawing to a close, this paper will briefly identify some of these issues.

The principal focus of the paper has been on language education policy but it should also be emphasised that the concept of multiculturalism is well-established in Australia. Despite the debate that sometimes flares, in recent times around such issues as refugees and global terrorism, Australia's on-going need to expand its population and, consequently, its large and diverse immigration programme make a policy of multiculturalism inevitable. For multiculturalism to succeed, the most fundamental need is for the people to accept the concept, to accept the cultural, linguistic and hence ethnic diversity of others who equally identify as Australian, and, hence, accept and respect the rights of others to be different but still to identify as Australian. Despite the much publicised and self-interested actions of politicians who have at times in recent years sought to gain electioneering advantage by cynically appealing to racist fears, the Australian people have largely accommodated the escalating diversity of the population peacefully and positively, seeing that a policy of multiculturalism adds cultural and

linguistic wealth to the community. Nevertheless, multicultural rights can exist only where those rights are respected and where inter-cultural attitudes allow them to exist. Consequently, an ethnically diverse society needs to be vigilant both to ensure that inter-cultural attitudes are positive and conducive to a mutually fulfilling and harmonious life in a diverse society and that there is legal recourse where individuals' rights are infringed. Consequently, it is vital that the education system seek to foster positive inter-cultural attitudes and, in this, language policy and language education have vital roles to play, as the present writer has discussed in other papers [e.g., Ingram 2002, 2000/2001, 2000a, 1999, 1999a, 1995, 1992, 1980a, 1980b, 1978c, Ingram *et al* 1999]. It is also vital that there be legal recourse where individuals fail to respect the rights inherent in multiculturalism and, consequently, laws have been introduced at State, Territory and Federal levels to seek to ensure equity irrespective of ethnicity and commissions such as the Human Rights Commission have been established to intervene and to impose penalties where those rights have been infringed.

Language education policy can be successful only if there are sufficient well-trained and language proficient teachers to implement the policy. Consequently, another pivotal issue in Australia has been and remains that of the quality and supply of language teachers. In 1996, the Australian Language and Literacy Council released its major review of this issue, *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy* [ALLC 1996]. The Council drew attention to a serious lack of teachers of the priority foreign languages and the inadequate language proficiency and teaching skills of many of those currently employed. This remains a critical problem, no adequate solution has been found by which to increase the supply of well qualified, language proficient teachers, indeed, many schools have retreated from the aims of universal second language learning because of their inability to find suitable teachers and, in many instances, the quality of the programmes in languages other than English offered in Australian classrooms is unsatisfactory [see ALLC 1996].

The issue of quality in the teaching of languages other than English contrasts strongly with that found in the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. As noted earlier, Australia has, for a long time, been innovative in responding to the needs of immigrants for English language skills. In addition, since the mid-1980s, Australia has sought to capitalise on the quality of its ESL teaching by encouraging universities and other institutions to offer English language programmes to students from overseas. This has been seen both as a valuable service to be provided to other countries, especially but not exclusively in the Asia-Pacific region, and it has become an increasingly substantial source of export earnings. It is also a necessary component of the "export of education" programme under which Australia sees education as a commodity to be sold to students from around the world. Since the Australian government changed its laws in the mid-1980s to encourage educational institutions to seek to attract full-fee-paying overseas students and to ensure that the quality of what was offered remained high, education has rapidly expanded as an industry and as an export earner, to the point where it is now a larger export earner than such traditional Australian industrial icons as the sheep or wheat industries and, from a global perspective, despite Australia's being a relatively small nation in terms of population, it is third only to the United States and Britain as a global education provider.

Another area of increasing interest in the context of language policy and multiculturalism in Australia has been the growth of interest in industry in taking advantage of language skills and the international contacts that are available through the multicultural community.

The present writer has written extensively on the role of languages in Australian industry [Ingram, in preparation; Ingram 1991, 1987; Stanley, Ingram and Chittick 1990]. The Australian Language and Literacy Council also reviewed the role of languages in industry in its publication *Speaking of Business* [ALLC 1994]. One reflection of the increasing realisation of the value of language skills in promoting Australian exports and in both serving and capitalising upon the multicultural community has been the massive growth in demand by Australian industry for language skills. Surveys conducted by the present writer showed an increase of some 4000% in job vacancy advertisements seeking employees with language skills from 1980 to 1992 [Stanley *et al* 1990, ALLC 1994: Appendix 3] and, indeed, one of the reasons for the shortage of language teachers is that many language proficient graduates are attracted into better paid jobs in industry rather than becoming language teachers.

Finally, a fundamental issue that has been referred to in passing in this paper is the design of language and language education policy. Australia undoubtedly led the English-speaking world in language and language education policy-making from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s but, in most instances, the policies have lacked the desirable degree of rigour in evaluating needs, developing policy, and identifying implementational needs. We have already noted that this lack of a rigorous and systematic approach to language policy design and implementation has led to such critical deficiencies as an inadequate supply of teachers proficient in the priority target languages other than English. To ensure that language and language education policy are more than “warm words” policy must be rigorous and rational, firmly based in an understanding of the *nature of the society* and the *society’s language-related needs* through specified *goals and objectives* to specific *policy proposals*. In turn, these policy proposals must be traced through specific *implementation recommendations*, and evaluated in practice to provide *on-going policy evaluation, review and development*. All aspects of this policy development pathway should be justified with a specific *rationale* and, in the present writer’s approach to policy development, presented in a set of *rational frameworks* which clearly demonstrate the inter-relationships between each phase of the policy development and implementation from the nature and needs of the society through to the enunciation of the policy, its implementation and its evaluation. The present writer has written at length about this approach to policy design and has illustrated it in major language policy submissions and in the Queensland language education policy produced in 1990 [see Ingram 1994, 1993; Ingram and John 1990; AFMLTA 1982].

VIII CONCLUSION

This paper has provided a brief and necessarily cursory overview of language and culture policy in Australia within the context of multiculturalism. It has inevitably been biased towards issues of the author’s principal interest of language education. However, in any serious attempt to accommodate ethnic diversity, it is essential that language be seen as central since it is undoubtedly the principal pivot on which an individual’s cultural identity turns. In addition, if a nation is to communicate successfully with the rest of the linguistically and culturally diverse world, it must ensure that its people learn to understand and communicate with those different cultures. In any case, the better a nation understands the markets to which it is selling, the more effective it is likely to be in designing products to fit the market’s needs and the more effective it is likely to be both in international negotiations and in marketing its products. Consequently, economic and

political self-interest also dictate that a nation such as Australia with its diverse population, trading with an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse market, should develop systematic language policies both to serve the needs of its people and to facilitate successful international relations, whether they be in trade or politics. In its linguistically diverse population, Australia has a major resource on which to draw to serve such purposes but it is equally essential that it ensure that each generation of children passing through its education system develop those cross-cultural attitudes and language skills that are pre-requisite to a successful, harmonious and rewarding life in its multicultural society interacting with an even more diverse, multicultural, multiracial and multilingual world.

The history of multiculturalism in Australia has been one of fluctuations, swinging at times towards English-monolingual conservatism and swinging at other times towards some of the most progressive language and culture policies anywhere in the world, especially in the English-speaking world. Through the 1980s and early '90s, that swing was towards enlightened culture and language policies; since 1996, the swing has been not so much towards more conservative policies but to a lack of policy and leadership with, at times, cynical political exploitation of the latent fears which ethnic differences and cultural change bring in all societies but which have rarely found serious or sustained expression in Australia, especially during the language policy era. Despite the fears that cynical politicians have generated around elections in recent years and the inevitable fears caused by international terrorism, one can be optimistic that multiculturalism in Australia will survive and that language and language education policies, as unstable and, at times, tortuous as their history has been, will continue to develop to serve the multicultural community and its unavoidable need to interact globally.

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