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## **Looking Back – Looking Forward**

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### ABSTRACT

The author has been a language teacher, academic and researcher in Queensland, having taught throughout the Queensland education system from Year 2 to Ph.D.. He was active in MLTAQ and AFMLTA from the early 1970s and was AFMLTA President for 14 years from 1982 to 1996. This paper reviews the progress that has been made in language teaching since the author first became a language teacher more than 40 years ago. It will look at the changes in language education policy and language teaching methodology over this period and note the roles played by the professional association. It will also review the current situation, the burning needs for good language teaching that seem to go unfulfilled, and will look at what is needed if language teaching is to be restored to the place it should hold in the light of its contribution to children's education, the increasingly multicultural nature of Australia society, its global situation, and, not least, the shameful images the nation has presented in relation to other peoples and other races since the mid-1990s.

### THE PRESENTER

David Ingram holds a Chair in Applied Linguistics at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia, where he is also Director of the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages. He was President of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations for 14 years to 1996, Vice-President of the World Federation for six years, and, from 1992 to 1996, a member of the Australian Language and Literacy Council, the principal advisory body on language policy to the Federal Minister for Education. He has been a Fellow and Adjunct Fellow of the National Foreign Language Center, Washington DC, since 1993. He has written extensively in applied linguistics. A recent book is *Language Centres: Their Roles, Functions and Management* [Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2001]. In the Queen's Birthday Honours list in June 2003, he was appointed a member of the Order of Australia "For services to education through the development of language policy, through assessment procedures for evaluation of proficiency, and through research and teaching."

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### I INTRODUCTION

It was a particular pleasure for me to be invited to give the Keith Horwood Memorial Lecture at this conference. Keith was the General Secretary of AFMLTA when, in the early 1970s, I<sup>1</sup> attended my first of many AFMLTA meetings. Indeed, Keith, who had been involved in the AFMLTA from its outset, **was** the AFMLTA at that time.

In this paper, I wish to look back over some 43 years of involvement in language teaching to see where we have come as a profession, to consider our present situation with a Federal Government, which, at least until this year, has seemed antipathetic to LOTE education and State and Territory Governments which, for the most part, have been all too willing to use that lack of Federal leadership to excuse their own relative inaction. The result has been that language education has decayed almost to where it was two decades ago and we are faced with what a concerned High School principal recently described to me as a national crisis in language teaching [Paul Bancroft, personal communication]. Community attitudes have been further aggravated by the feverish eagerness with which some politicians over the last six years have grasped at racism, whether towards Aboriginals, Asians or refugees, to win electoral favour. I also wish to consider what the future might hold for language education and how we, as the language teaching profession, might respond to the present challenges and re-direct the future.

I wish to do this in two ways: first, arrogating to myself the questionable privileges of one's retirement year, I wish to narrate a little about my own career which, I am presumptuous enough to suggest, reflects, in part, the career of the Australian language teaching profession and especially the MLTAQ and AFMLTA over some three to four decades. This narration will, I believe, mark the progress of language teaching from an esoteric and, frankly, amateurish or, at best, dilettante activity to a highly educated profession responding to a variety of cultural and practical needs in Australian society. That period reflects, I believe, the professionalisation of language teaching, not least as its own basic discipline of applied linguistics has emerged and evolved. Secondly, I wish to take up some of the critical issues that we must confront if language teaching is to be restored to its right place in the society and in education.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the personal form of identification of the author is used because of the nature of the paper, which includes personal reminiscences.

## II LOOKING BACK

I grew up in the atmosphere of education in Queensland and have lived my life through its many changes. My father was a Primary School Head Teacher in the days when the Head Teacher lived in the “Schoolhouse” in a corner of the school grounds. Growing up in such an environment, it was inevitable that, like four of my five siblings, I became a teacher - one couldn’t conceive of being anything else. Finishing High School, I automatically went on to the then Queensland Teachers College at Kelvin Grove to train as a Primary School teacher. In those days, the teacher *training* programme (hardly teacher *education*) was one year long, included some wholly irrelevant Psychology and theory of education, a review of the various areas of the Primary School curriculum, weekly teaching practice, and regular lectures on the Queensland Department of Public Instruction regulations, including such enlightening topics as how to write a letter to one’s Departmental superiors. I don’t recall in what grovelling manner the letters were to start but I remember the least offensive of the required endings, which went something like, “I am, Sir, your loyal and obedient servant, ...”.

Needless to say, such training left a High School graduate at the age of 17 totally unprepared to start teaching and quite unable to conceptualise the goals, methods, and content of teaching, let alone how to control, never to encourage, Primary School classes that rarely had fewer than 50 children in them. Over the next 3 years, I “taught” Years 2, 4 and 7 in a Primary School until, around 1960, the Queensland school system was amended to reduce the Primary School to seven years and add a Year 8 to High School. The result was a considerable shift of children from Primary to Secondary Schools and the Education Department canvassed amongst Primary School teachers to re-train for High Schools. Consequently, in 1960, I spent about three months back at Kelvin Grove to “re-train” as a High School teacher, supposedly learning how to teach adolescents but, at most, revising the curriculum in my three teaching subjects of French, English and Geography. I was fortunate to have as my French lecturer, Don Munro, one of the great figures of Queensland language teaching and University administration who impressed me with his logical presentation of French grammar. He may well have presented progressive methodology as well but my knowledge and understanding of the factors that determine how one learns and desirably teaches a language were non-existent: at the best, language teaching methodology remained for me a few asserted precepts and not the rationally determined activity that applied linguistics now reveals it can be.

Such training was typical of most teachers in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century but was not the only training that teachers were expected to have. Any teacher with a commitment to the profession or any ambition was also expected to undertake part-time degree studies and so, from 1958 to 1965, I studied part-time, attended evening lectures, and studied externally (i.e., in “distance mode”) for my B.A. degree and a Certificate in Education (A.Ed.). Later in my career, when students have complained to me about having to work all day and study at night, it has given me some satisfaction to be able to say that, except for two graduate years, all my university studies from A.Ed. to Ph.D. were part-time through evening lectures or in distance mode while teaching, taking the mandatory sport for at least two or three afternoons a week after school, and being active in my professional organisations. Though it seems arduous obtaining one’s

qualifications that way, I never regretted it but often wondered how people who were not teaching during the day retained what they were studying or understood its practical significance.

By 1967, I had gravitated to being a Subject Master (Head of Department) and it was at the start of that experience that, for the first time, language teaching started to appear to me to be a rational activity. That, however, came through several coincidences and had nothing to do with the training available at any Australian teacher training institution. My twin brother, John, who had had precisely the same training as I had had went as an Australian Volunteer Abroad to teach English as a Second Language in a Malaysian Secondary School. For the first time, he encountered what was then a modern approach to language teaching, an audiolingual syllabus based on structuralist linguistics and behaviourist psychology. He set out to find out as much as he could about the approach and, at the end of his first year in Malaysia, was contracted by the United States Peace Corps to train their next intake of Peace Corps volunteers. I spent the 1966-67 Christmas holidays in Malaysia with John and, for a couple of weeks, sat in on the seminar he ran for the Peace Corps. For the first time, I started to get an understanding of language teaching and how methodology and syllabuses could be rationally developed from an understanding of the nature of language and language learning.

The second coincidence came in 1967, when, at the height of the Vietnam War, I applied for and was appointed to a Colombo Plan position to run an English language centre for senior government officials in Saigon. Before departure, I was required to take a three week training course at the Commonwealth Office of Education in Sydney and a nearby English language school for foreign students. The programme was run by Neale Osman and Don Sutherland, the creators of the Australian Situational Method and the authors of the ESL textbooks known initially as *English for Newcomers to Australia* (later published as *Situational English*). Like audiolingualism, the Australian Situational Method was based on a structuralist view of language and a behaviourist view of language learning but its great advantage was its strong focus on meaning and on presenting the language in wholly meaningful chunks with the meaning clarified through "situations" created in the classroom using strictly controlled language, pictures, drawings, gestures, and actual situations. Three days before I was due to leave Sydney for Vietnam, the 1968 Tet Offensive occurred, the Australian Government withdrew all civilians, and I was offered a position teaching ESL in Cambodia. For almost half the time I spent there, the schools were closed, I taught many private classes in ESL and French for which I devised the syllabuses, but I also had a great deal of time to read in applied linguistics. This both increased my understanding of language teaching methodology and whetted my appetite for applied linguistics and so, on my return to Australia, I set out to do further studies in that area. None were available in Australia and so I did the M.A. in applied linguistics at the University of Essex in England. Three years later, when I wanted to do a Ph.D., again there were no suitable opportunities in applied linguistics at that level in Australia and so I returned to Essex for the first year of my Ph.D.. Obviously the years since then have brought a huge development in applied linguistics in Australia with most universities now offering appropriate training, many to the Ph.D. level, with the first Chair in applied linguistics in

Australia being advertised by Griffith University in late 1989, the chair that I have held since then.

On my return from Essex with my Masters degree, I was transferred in 1972 to what was then Mt Gravatt Teachers College and, about the same time, became MLTAQ Secretary. Around the same time, I was also appointed to what was then called the Foreign Languages Advisory Committee of the Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies. Rather presumptuously, I recall thinking at the time that, if I was going to stay in this field, it was necessary to do something about the quality and status of language teaching in Australia and so I adopted a multi-pronged strategy both for my own activities and for the professional association. This multi-pronged strategy was aimed at

- language teachers (through the MLTAs, the teacher education programmes at Mt Gravatt, and further afield through my own writings)
- language students (through the curriculum)
- the general public (through press and media releases and various public events), and
- the education decision-makers, in particular, education administrators at the school and system levels and the politicians (through submissions and personal representation).

The purpose of the strategy was to make all involved, not least the education decision-makers and the general public, aware of the value of language learning and, eventually, to persuade them that it should be regarded as a vital component of the education of all children. The strategy also aimed to raise the quality of language teaching and learning through improved curricula and pre-service and in-service teacher education that gave teachers both a commitment to language teaching and a rational understanding of how to determine their activities: it sought to foster an understanding of what determines language teaching methodology and curricula, to develop practical skills in language teaching, and to inculcate the consciousness of belonging to an internationally respected profession making a vital contribution to society. A great deal of my own subsequent activity and the things that MLTAQ and AFMLTA undertook were aimed at these goals.

One means by which to address several of these issues was seen in 1973 when MLTAQ mounted the first ever State Conference of language teachers in Queensland. One reason for the conference was to show language teachers that, like other professions and community organisations, language teachers could stage a State conference in a lavish venue and could attract the press and media to it. The latter also served one of the other goals, viz. to start to educate the general public about language teaching. The conference was a success and, at the AFMLTA general assembly shortly afterwards, the MLTAQ delegates succeeded, against cynical opposition, in persuading the meeting that it was appropriate to try to hold a national conference; consequently, MLTAQ organised the first AFMLTA National Languages Conference in Brisbane in 1976.

One of the strategies at this time was also to demonstrate that language learning was not just an esoteric field relevant only to “arty” dilettantes and so, at every

opportunity, we sought to have statements in the press and media, both in Queensland and nationally, that argued the value and social relevance of language learning. Indeed, through this period, the aim was to have at least one item in the press or media each fortnight but generally we averaged an item a week. At the same time, MLTAQ mounted many public events that both attracted the general public (as with the dinners we held in the Greek Club and elsewhere) and gave us an opportunity to speak or have an eminent guest speak briefly on relevant issues (e.g., the value of language learning or the nature and worth of multiculturalism and the relevance of language learning to it). There were also other activities undertaken to demonstrate the relevance of languages and language learning to society and across human life generally. So, for instance, at one of the State conferences, an ecumenical church service was held both to show the relevance of languages to Christian faith and to make the point about languages to a different cross-section of society. On another occasion, I volunteered for Music Lovers' Choice, an ABC programme of classical music on a Saturday morning, and filled it with music from different cultures, preaching the language teachers' words in between the music. Similarly but more arduously during the years of Queensland's far right Bjelke-Petersen government but to practically demonstrate the relevance of language teaching to fostering positive inter-cultural relationships, I convened the Queensland Consultative Committee on Community Relations, one of a number of such committees established around Australia by the Commissioner for Community Relations to intervene when acts of racial discrimination occurred. To try to influence the decision-makers, numerous submissions or copies of relevant papers were also sent to as many education administrators and politicians as possible. This was a period of frenzied but, I believe, successful activity, whose success was owed to the wholehearted involvement of the growing number of Queensland teachers who made up MLTAQ at that time.

An important development in the area of curriculum and assessment occurred in the late 1970s in Queensland, developments that, in fact, put Queensland ahead of the rest of the world in the application of the emerging issue of proficiency to school language programmes. During the 1970s, in the context of syllabus development and school-based assessment under the then Queensland Board of Secondary School Studies, there was a focus on competency, which, translated into language terms, meant a focus on the practical ability of students or their "proficiency". About the same time and for purposes related to my Ph.D., I sought to establish the skills that Secondary School LOTE students took into university language programmes in Britain and Australia. It was evident that the approaches to matriculation examinations and reporting in both countries left one unable to say exactly what skills students had after five or six years of Secondary School language study and it was evident that a different approach to measuring and stating those skills was necessary. Shortly after completing my Ph.D., I was asked to act as an adviser to the Adult Migrant Education Programme for the development of new ESL programmes and, again, the need rapidly became evident for an approach to specifying and measuring language skills that would focus on practical ability and be readily interpretable for course design purposes, to stream learners into classes according to their proficiency levels, to specify the skills they had when they left the programme to go into the community, and to meet national reporting requirements. Responding to all these needs (LOTE syllabus design and assessment in Queensland, applied linguistic research, and

the needs of the migrant ESL programme), I set out to develop the first comprehensive proficiency rating scale, now known as the *International Second Language Proficiency Ratings* (ISLPR) [Ingram and Wylie 1979/1999]. Elaine Wylie later joined this project and has, of course, made at least an equal contribution to its development and maintenance ever since. The ISLPR and the implications of proficiency for language teaching contributed over subsequent years to the thinking on Queensland language syllabuses and, by the late 1970s-early '80s and several years ahead of much of the rest of the world, the Queensland LOTE syllabuses started to focus around the concept of language proficiency, its development, and its measurement through direct approaches to proficiency assessment. The factor in Queensland that made it possible to adopt such progressive approaches to curriculum design and assessment was the school-based assessment with its accompanying moderation infrastructure which, by the early '80s, had been firmly in place for about a decade.

Nevertheless, despite all this activity and despite the nationwide progress being made in the concept of multiculturalism, by the end of the 1970s, language enrolments had continued to decline. Community attitudes were reasonably favourable and decision-makers seemed to be starting to take notice but the slide in enrolments continued and it became evident that nothing would be achieved unless we could persuade the decision-makers that we needed a systematic policy on languages. Consequently, through MLTAQ and AFMLTA, we engaged in persistent lobbying with the eventual aim of having a national language policy developed and adopted in Australia. At the same time, it was evident that there was need for an organisation to provide on-going support for and advice on a national policy and so there was need for a national language policy advisory centre of some sort. The initial step in both of these endeavours was to prepare formal papers and submissions arguing, in one, for a national policy on languages and, in the other, for a national language information and research centre. These papers were presented to MLTAQ and AFMLTA in 1978 [Ingram 1978, 1978a]. The date is important because, in more recent years, several writers about language policy in Australia have chosen to ignore the preceding years and write as though the lobbying for a national policy was initiated by the group that called itself PlanLangPol which first came together to prepare a submission to the Senate Inquiry that commenced in 1982. In fact, initially there was vehement opposition in AFMLTA to the proposal to lobby for a national language policy and a national centre, the view being put that Australia was too antagonistic to language education for such a proposal ever to be contemplated. Indeed, the very title of the language centre proposal, the **National Language Information and Research Centre**, which, as an acronym, becomes the National LIRC (lurk), was a derogatory attempt on the part of one of the AFMLTA Executive who later was a PLANLangPol member to belittle the proposal. Despite all of this, the MLTAQ and AFMLTA as a whole were strongly supportive, numerous submissions were prepared, public statements were made, and strong support grew across the community, especially amongst the ethnic communities which also were lobbying for a national policy. The outcome was that, in 1982, the Senate referred the matter of a national policy on languages to its Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, a lengthy Inquiry ensued, and eventually the Standing Committee's report was tabled in the Senate in 1984 [SSCEA 1984]. The first national policy was adopted in 1987 [Lo Bianco 1987], the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in 1991 [DEET 1991, 1991a], and the National

Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools in 1994 [COAG 1994]. In addition, in the course of the 1990s, LOTE was designated one of the key learning areas in the curriculum and was effectively made compulsory for some years in every child's education.

It is significant, also, that, though it took some five years from the Senate reference to the adoption of the first national policy, both the activities of the MLTAs and AFMLTA and the procedure adopted by the Senate in calling for public meetings and submissions meant that there was much community debate on a national policy and on language education through the 1980s. As a result, not only did strong public support emerge for language education and the development of a national policy but, even before the Federal Government had adopted a policy, most States and Territories had moved to develop their own. In addition, following the adoption of the 1991 policy (the ALLP), for the first time, a structure was put in place to monitor language policy and recommend action to the Federal Education Minister. This took the form of the Australian Language and Literacy Council but, at about the same time, the Association's persistent lobbying since 1978 also paid off with the creation of the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA), principally to undertake research and provide expert advice on language policy issues. Though the NLLIA had a somewhat turbulent history, it is significant that many of the problems it encountered arose partly as a consequence of its departing from the more focussed structure and purpose proposed in AFMLTA's original submission [see Ingram 1978 and 2001, Chapters 1 and 8].

Clearly, the period from 1978 to 1996 was one of great progress and excitement for language teaching and language policy in general and Australia came to be regarded worldwide as leading the English-speaking world in systematic language policy development and implementation. It is wholly to be deplored that the years since 1996 have seen that progress stagnate and reverse. In 1996 and subsequent years, the Australian Language and Literacy Council was abolished, funding was greatly reduced soon after to the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia effectively, if not formally, abolishing it, overall support for the LOTE programme in schools was reduced, and, in 2002, funding for the National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools ceased prematurely. It is little wonder that, at the State level, the momentum that had been generated towards improved language education policy and practice declined drastically, and there is every indication that, at the school level, LOTE teaching has fallen back into a state of decline with reducing enrolments, with no significant improvement in LOTE teacher quality and supply, and with schools moving away from comprehensive language teaching because of the practical impossibility of doing otherwise with limited resources and too few qualified and proficient teachers.

However, possibly signs are emerging of renewed interest in language policy at the Federal level. The Federal Government commissioned the Review of the Commonwealth LOTE in schools Programme in late 2002, its report was released in June 2003 at the time this paper was being written [Erebus Consulting Partners: 2002], and there were welcome, if long overdue, initiatives announced in the May 2003 Federal Budget. The Budget papers refer to the value of languages "to Australia's economic growth in a competitive global environment"

and offer several useful initiatives, one of which is to make funding available for a new National Centre for Language Training, for which the accompanying justification states:

*There is a strong need for Australian exporters, professionals, teachers and tourist industry workers to quickly acquire specialist language and business culture training. ...*

*The funding for this initiative will assist the successful tenderer to develop and offer customised intensive immersion training in a range of key languages, culture and cross-cultural skills necessary for Australia to engage with other countries in business, trade and other exchanges.*

*The immersion training will significantly reduce the time required to attain language and business cultural competence, making the Centre attractive to businesses and professional firms, teachers, government departments, and graduates seeking to boost their employability. [see <http://aei.dest.gov.au/budget/default.htm>]*

The Budget also announced a substantial allocation of funding to support language education at all levels of schooling, including ethnic schools, and a new scholarship scheme, the Endeavour Programme, which, amongst other things, will offer language teachers an “immersion experience in the language, country and culture about which they are teaching”. A related scheme will provide loans to assist Australian university students to study overseas. [See [www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au) for more information on all these initiatives.] While these are laudable initiatives, it is regrettable that they are not being taken within the context of a comprehensive language or language education policy since the history of similar developments through the 1970s and early ‘80s is that they tend to be transient in their effectiveness and are ultimately ineffective. One can only hope that these announcements signal a new willingness on the part of the Federal Government to provide leadership in language policy development [see <http://aei.dest.gov.au/budget/default.htm>] and, if notice is taken of the LOTE in Schools review referred to earlier, indeed this might occur. The first two “general recommendations” in the report of the Review are:

1. *A new National Policy or Statement on Languages Education [should] be developed through MCEETYA. The policy should address the purposes, nature, value and expected outcomes of languages learning ...*
2. *The new National Policy should take account of contemporary and future efforts to reconceptualise curricula to reflect, among other things, realistic levels of language learning, and adopt new forms of pedagogy including, most importantly, the effective use of information and communication technologies. [Erebus Consulting Partners 2002: 195]*

Three other important developments of the mid-1980s warrant mention here. First, an important initiative of the AFMLTA through the 1980s was to stress the economic relevance of language skills and hence of language education. As already mentioned, one aspect of the strategy referred to earlier was to continually argue the relevance of languages and language education to

everyday life, not least to business and industry. One of the first papers on this topic was presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> National Languages Conference in Adelaide in 1986 [Ingram 1986, also 1987; for later writings, see Ingram, in preparation, 1991; ALLC 1994; Stanley *et al* 1990]. Today it rings strange that such an issue had to be argued but, in fact, the dominant arguments for languages during the 1970s and early '80s related to the multicultural reasons for a strong language teaching system and even the first national inquiry into the teaching of Asian languages and cultures in the late 1960s made scant reference to the economic values of language skills [see Commonwealth Advisory Committee 1970]. The 1986 paper generated considerable discussion and, once again, vehement opposition from those who either did not want to see the previous focus on language education as a dilettante subject to be eroded or were sceptical about the society's readiness to see economic value in language skills. In any case, the sceptics were far outnumbered by the others, the 1987 national policy made some reference to economic issues despite its overwhelming focus on multicultural issues [Lo Bianco 1987] and, by the 1991 policy, economic issues became dominant (perhaps even too dominant) [DEET 1991, 1991a]. This trend was extended in the 1994 National Asian Languages Strategy [COAG 1994] and in many trade reports of the 1990s [e.g., Ingleson 1989, Garnaut 1989; see also a summary of some in ALLC 1994]. It is a reasonable argument that, for much of the 1990s, there was an imbalance towards economic reasons for language teaching but, nevertheless, in a society dominated by economic concerns, it is both socially desirable and politically expedient for language teachers not to lose sight of the economic value of language teaching and to continually emphasise it in their statements even while trying to ensure that the other social, cultural, educational and intellectual values receive due attention. It is significant that, despite the present Federal government's negativity towards language policy since 1996, one of the first positive decisions they have taken is to establish a national language centre specifically to address the needs of business and industry. This clear indication of interest provides an opportunity that language teachers should seize to promote their cause in a wider context.

The second additional and highly significant development of the mid-1980s is less immediately relevant to the MLTAs and AFMLTA but warrants mention because of what it has done to professionalise language teaching, increase training opportunities in applied linguistics, and so raise the overall standard of Australian language teaching. It has also dramatically increased employment opportunities for language teachers and the public consciousness of the contributions of language teaching to society. In the mid-1980s, student visa regulations for overseas students were amended to facilitate the entry of full-fee paying overseas students to universities and other educational institutions. Since many overseas students require additional English before studying in Australia, the ESL teaching industry took off and continues to expand rapidly. Consequently, demand for trained language teachers able to teach ESL has escalated, there is a continual shortage of well qualified ESL teachers, universities and other training institutions have responded with additional courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and competition for secure employment in the area has led to a significant and highly desirable "qualifications creep" so that now the basic qualification for an ESL teacher wishing to gain continuing employment in a University or in a good quality private ESL centre is a Masters degree in applied linguistics. Even though this initiative relates to ESL and not to LOTEs, it has led

to more and better training opportunities for all language teachers and a context within which research and innovation in language teaching is also able to take place. These developments have also brought a higher profile for language teaching as a valued profession and one on which one of Australia's principal export industries (viz. education) is utterly dependent. ESL teaching has, in fact, become a major national industry, one on which the very existence of Australian universities now also depends since, because the Federal government has dramatically reduced its funding to universities, they are now highly dependent on overseas student fees to be able to provide education to Australians and, without the students that the ESL industry bridges into Australian universities, the present serious funding shortfall for our universities would be cataclysmic. In fact, the contribution of language teaching to Australian society in the form of ESL teaching pre-dates the overseas student programme since ESL teaching in the adult and child migrant programme has played a vital role in Australia's immigration programme since the Second World War in facilitating the creation of a harmonious and uniquely successful multicultural society.

The third additional development of the 1980s and '90s that I wish to refer to here, the creation of language centres, also grew out of the initiatives taken by MLTAQ and AFMLTA but also from the developments just mentioned. Earlier, reference was made to the lack of opportunities even through the 1970s for language teachers to undertake serious study in applied linguistics: there were simply no University departments or centres teaching applied linguistics even though such subjects as language teaching methodology existed in the training institutions. As mentioned earlier, MLTAQ and AFMLTA both promoted the concept of a national language centre and, at times, lobbied unsuccessfully for the creation of a language centre at educational institutions. In the 1970s, for instance, on behalf of MLTAQ, I wrote to Griffith University to argue at length the case for a language centre. It was ironic that the then Vice-Chancellor peremptorily rejected the idea but, a few years later after I had established a centre at Mt Gravatt, he asked to participate in one of the basic courses in language teaching methods that we were offering, and, a few years later again, I was invited by a subsequent Vice-Chancellor to found my present Centre. The language policy developments of the 1980s and the surge in ESL teaching to cater for the influx of overseas students led, in fact, to many institutions founding language centres of various sorts, especially to teach ESL, but also, in some instances such as the Centre for Applied Linguistics and Languages in Griffith University, to comprehensively promote applied linguistics through courses, research and consultancy services. It is also significant that, related to these developments, has been the fact that, following the case for a national centre produced in 1978 and promoted by AFMLTA, two major international publications on language centres have come from Australia, in fact the only significant publications on the topic. In 1990, the first worldwide survey of language centres was produced and, in 2001, the first commercial publication reviewing in detail five language centres around the world and then discussing the role, function and management of language centres was also published [see Ingram 1991a, 1990 and 2001]. The significance of this lies in the fact that language centres worldwide play a vital role in the monitoring and implementation of language policy and in related research and development.

Finally in this retrospective view of language teaching, reference should also be made to the growing importance of Australian language teaching from a global perspective. As was noted earlier, part of the strategy adopted was to emphasise the global importance of the language teaching profession at a time when Australian language teachers felt themselves continually under attack and continually forced to justify their very existence in a school. One approach to this was, through MLTAQ and AFMLTA, to have Australian language teachers continually represented on, and involved with, the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes (FIPLV, the World Federation of Modern Language Teachers) and to feed back to all members of the MLTAs information from FIPLV so as to make them aware of the global status of their profession. As well as ensuring that AFMLTA was represented at the various business meetings and conferences of FIPLV, for six years I was FIPLV Vice-President and Regional Representative for South East Asia and the South West Pacific; shortly after that, Denis Cunningham, who was then AFMLTA Secretary, became FIPLV's Secretary, and subsequently, over the last several years, FIPLV President. Since Denis' involvement, not only has he ensured that Australia was seen as a major contributor to world developments in language teaching, he has brought to FIPLV all the acumen and energy that characterised his years as AFMLTA Secretary with the result that FIPLV's profile has never been higher nor more respected not only by language teacher associations around the world but also by such bodies as UNESCO. Indeed, under the guidance that has come from Australia, specifically from Denis as President, there have been numerous valuable initiatives undertaken by FIPLV, often in conjunction with UNESCO. In particular, reference should be made, amongst many others, to the work of Linguapax, the emphasis on the role of language teaching in furthering world peace, and the creation of the "Culture of Peace" website, all of which emphasise the vital contribution of language education to positive inter-cultural relations. Such initiatives are particularly important at a time when the governments of three major English-speaking countries seem hell-bent on promoting inter-cultural and inter-faith suspicion, inter-racial hatred, and international conflict. If language teaching was ever important, it is now when the governments representative of our own first language and macro-culture and of the language most widely taught globally are adopting, with hypocritical virtue, strategies that enflame antagonisms rather than create understanding and tolerance. It is especially appropriate that FIPLV take the lead it has on these issues and all the more pleasing that Australia's language teachers, through Denis, are providing this lead.

### **III    LOOKING FORWARD: ISSUES**

There are undoubtedly many areas of concern to language teachers but the opportunities for them have also never been greater as a result of the inevitable march of globalisation, efficient telecommunications, rapid transport, massive worldwide migration, and dramatic advances in educational technology. Equally, the needs to which they must respond and, hence, their responsibilities have never been greater in the face of human diversity and the crying need for mutual understanding and acceptance of that diversity. In this final section of the paper, I wish to select six critical issues and consider what needs to be done for the future. Though these issues will be dealt with very briefly, reference will also be

made to other papers by the present writer or others where they have been discussed at length.

### **III.1 Professional Associations: the MLTAs, AFMLTA and FIPLV:**

Undoubtedly, even allowing for the regression or, at best, patchy progress made since 1996, overall there has been very substantial progress made in language education in Australia over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is very significant to remember as we look to the future that much of that progress has been made as a result of the efforts of the Modern Language Teachers Associations (MLTAs) and the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations (AFMLTA). At a time when, through neglect and lack of political leadership on language policy, language education again feels itself under threat, it is important to remember the achievements of the past and to remember that those achievements were gained largely as a result of the language teaching profession's own efforts both at the level of the curriculum and by stimulating the political and educational decision-makers to recognise the importance of language education and to act to develop systematic language policy. There are important implications of this that relate to the professional associations.

First, the language teaching profession in Australia has lived, over the years, in the ambiguous context of being an important and highly respected profession worldwide but continually under attack in Australia, it is vital for the profession to adopt a high level of responsibility, self-reliance and a strong confidence in the worth of what it is doing. As the current President of AFMLTA, Tony Liddicoat, has recently pointed out [Liddicoat 2002: 29], language teaching perennially is faced with the need to justify itself, often in the face of antagonism or disinterest from other educationalists but often, also, I would add, in the face of new, supposedly progressive, curriculum fads that conflict with the distinctive requirements of language learning. The response of language teachers must be, first, to maintain their confidence in the vital role that language teaching has to play in a multiethnic society in a linguistically, culturally, and racially diverse and increasingly globalised world marred by mutual suspicion. Second, they must draw on all of the resources of applied linguistics to ensure that developments in language policy, language education planning, language curricula, and education generally take account of the distinctive contribution and requirements of language education. Third, in support of that confidence and to enable language teachers and their local organisations to draw on wider support, it is vital for those organisations, essentially the MLTAs and their local branches, to be conscious of the wider profession to which they belong and so to maintain strong relationships with the national body, the AFMLTA, and the worldwide body, the *Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Langues Vivantes* (FIPLV). Fourth, language teachers must always be prepared, not to deplore the need to justify their existence, but to be ready to do so and to do so in ways that appeal and respond to the diverse interests and decision-making processes in the society. Fifth, the hallmark of a profession is self-reliance, a strong sense of responsibility for its own progress and the quality of the services its members provide. As the brief history that was outlined illustrated, language teaching has professionalised in this way, the level of training available to language teachers has improved

enormously, language teaching is now backed by its own specialised (and diverse) discipline of applied linguistics, and the profession has in place its own quality development programmes through the seminars and workshops that the MLTAs run and their local, State and national conferences. It is traditional and appropriate that teachers demand support in all this from their employers since their employers benefit from that professional self-reliance but, if language teaching is a profession, self-reliance should never give way to mendicant self-interest. As will be noted subsequently, there is much yet to be achieved within the context of language and language education policy to ensure the quality and supply of language teachers but language teachers must also accept their own responsibility as a profession to continually raise their own standards, to seek the highest quality in their own activities, and, in a word, to professionalise [see also Cunningham 2003a]. Sixth and finally, language teachers need to be politically astute. It is idealistic but naïve to deplore the politicisation of language teaching since that view flies in the face of the democratic system in which we live. Education is heavily subsidised by government (most of us would say, not heavily enough). That makes it a political issue and, ultimately, it is the politicians that directly or indirectly determine and adopt language policy and its implementation plans. It behoves the language associations to design strategies to influence those decisions in the most informed and effective ways they can. Possibly the approach adopted by MLTAQ and AFMLTA in the 1970s and '80s and its effectiveness may suggest general approaches that it would be timely to re-consider.

### **III.2 Language Policy:**

If language education is to survive, let alone develop, it is essential that it exist within the context of systematic language policy-making responsive to the real needs of Australian society, those needs arising from the multicultural nature of the society, personal or individual needs, and the globalisation of all human activity made inevitable and irreversible by rapid transport, efficient communications, and the continual mixing of the world's people through migration, tourism and economic necessity. We tend to think of language policy-making as something that occurred in Australia through the 1980s and early '90s. However, as Michael Clyne's excellent account of languages in Australia makes clear [Clyne 1991], language issues have always been of concern in Australia and Australia has always had the advantage of linguistic diversity whether it viewed that favourably or unfavourably. I have described the changes in language and language education policy in other papers [e.g., Ingram 2003, 2002a, 2000, 1993] and here the comments will be limited to the design of language policy.

Though Australia made considerable progress in language policy development in the 1980s and early '90s, the 1987, 1991 and 1994 policies were all deficient in certain regards [Lo Bianco 1987, DEET 1991, COAG 1994]. The 1987 and 1991 policies lacked rigour in their design and in tracing the admirable policy proposals through into practice, as a result of which there were serious deficiencies in such areas, for instance, as teacher supply, teacher education, and the on-going monitoring and evaluation of the policies. Though the 1994 policy was more rigorous in its approach to designing policy, specifying goals, and identifying the

need for improved teacher quality, it also had serious deficiencies, not least in exaggerating the potential for teacher supply and in under-estimating the time needed for learners to acquire the levels of language proficiency specified for the various exit points.

The issues involved in developing and implementing language policy are too wide-ranging and too complex to be addressed successfully in any piecemeal fashion. In addition, the time required to develop useful levels of language proficiency means that language learning is a long-term activity. Language education policy needs, therefore, to be designed on a long-term and systematic basis if it is to succeed in creating and maintaining a significant pool of people with useful language skills. It was pleasing in the recent report of the Review of the Commonwealth LOTE in Schools Programme to read:

*... Australia's linguistic diversity needs to be understood as a national resource, hence the Commonwealth has a responsibility to enhance and protect LOTEs. ...*

*The Commonwealth should provide general policy direction and positive leadership ... The Commonwealth needs to ensure the study and teaching of languages of strategic and social importance to Australia in conjunction with State budgets and interests. Continuity is crucial for effective LOTE programmes, and Commonwealth support protects developing curriculum areas from disruption caused by short-term financial pressures on states. ...*

*Any new policy needs to view the learning and teaching of languages as a cycle rather than a linear series of stages, and thus take a longer-term perspective. ...*

*In the end, only a national undertaking, supported by the Commonwealth in some shape or form can offer some stability of policy and co-ordination of change. [Erebus Consulting Partners 2002: 192 – 193]*

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* and articulated 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 aspect of the policy and its implementation and evaluation [see Ingram 2003, 1994, 1993; Ingram and John 1990; AFMLTA 1982].

An effective, long-term approach to language or language education policy requires the input of expert advice from a variety of fields, not least from applied linguistics and the establishment of a permanent structure that can advise on language policy, collect relevant data, monitor the social and language situation

and changing needs, and recommend policy developments. In the early 1990s, this took two forms: a national advisory council, the Australian Language and Literacy Council, and a national language research centre, the National Language and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA). The need, then, is for a national advisory body analogous to the former Australian Language and Literacy Council with representation from a cross-section of industry, education and society in general. This body should, also, be supported by a national language institute, which is limited in scope, size, and budget demands, highly expert, and designed to gather information and provide informed advice whether to the government, to the profession, or to the general public; it should also be independent of the language education system itself. In other words, the type of national language institute that is required would be very different from and more independent than, the former NLLIA and would be more like the original concept of such a body when it was promoted by AFMLTA from 1978 through the '80s [see Ingram 1978a, 2001].

The need for a renewed national language and language education policy together with the supportive infrastructure is undoubtedly the most fundamental issue that needs to be addressed in the immediate future.

There are many issues that one might consider in looking towards the future and which are fundamental to issues of language policy but here time necessitates that I select only a few. Of the others, perhaps no issue is ultimately so fundamental as that of language rights, which have been discussed at some length elsewhere and are, if anything, growing in importance as it is increasingly realised that other rights of education, information, access to services, racial equality, and cultural identity are interdependent with language rights and are increasingly threatened by the loss of languages worldwide [see Crystal 2000; Cunningham, Ingram & Sumbuk, in press]. Rather than discuss this large and complex issue here in the limited time available, I would refer you to other papers where it has been considered at some length. On behalf of AFMLTA, the present writer has argued the fundamental importance of language rights in the context of a Queensland inquiry into individual rights and freedoms [Ingram 1992]. In 1978, the Galbally Committee asserted unequivocally the rights of all people to maintain their own culture (hence, by implication, their own language) and to acquire others [Galbally Review 1978: 4]. In addition, Australia is signatory to various international conventions which explicitly or by implication, recognise language rights as integral components of human rights and outlaw discrimination on the basis of language [e.g., the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*]. Cunningham has provided a very useful history of the efforts by FIPLV, UNESCO and other organisations to have a universal declaration of language rights adopted [see Cunningham 2003].

### **III.3 Languages and Industry:**

Earlier, reference was made to the growing prominence from the mid-1980s of the relevance of languages to industry and the focus those issues threw on the economic value of language education [ see also Ingram in preparation, 2001

(especially Chapter 3), 2001a, 1991, 1987, 1986; Ingram and Sasaki 2003; see also ALLC 1994].

At present, one has to conclude that the needs of Australian industry are not being met by the language teaching system. The allocation of funds in the 2003 Federal Budget for a National Language Centre specifically targeting business and industry suggests this. In addition, surveys of job vacancy advertisements in Australian newspapers have shown a huge increase (some 4000% over the decade to 1992) in the demand for language skills by Australian industry outside of education [Stanley *et al* 1990, ALLC 1994: Appendix 3]. Recent world events have shown how the defence industry has been hampered in its activity by the lack of language skills. Reliable American reports of discussions at the U.S. National Security Education Board in November 2002 asserted that American operations in Afghanistan were adversely affected by the lack of skills in the local languages [Bruce Sundlun, former Governor of Rhode Island and member of the National Security Education Board writing in the Providence Journal-Bulletin, 9 February, 2003, p. I-09]. The head of the Australian Defence Forces, Peter Cosgrove, has also stated:

*One key deficiency in our capabilities in East Timor was the lack of language skills across the spectrum. We needed more linguists to provide liaison with our Coalition partners. And just as importantly there were more misunderstandings based on cultural differences than any of us could have anticipated, or would have desired. [Cosgrove 2002]*

The need is no less, the misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication are no fewer, and the opportunities lost no less costly in other industries [see Ingram *in preparation*, 1991, 1987, 1986; ALLC 1994]. For language teaching to respond to the needs of Australian industry, a number of issues require attention:

1. Language teaching must become more efficient and more effective by showing that useful levels of language proficiency can be attained in reasonable times with good methods.
2. Language teaching at all levels and in most institutions must be ready to design a range of courses that identify and meet the specific needs of industry and provide marketable vocational language skills for the learners.
3. Since the actual language needs of industry are difficult to predict and depend to some extent on changing market opportunities and, in any case, since language courses are necessarily finite and learning has to go on beyond them, it is essential that learners at all levels learn how to learn, i.e., it is essential that the methodology adopted give the learners autonomy and practical knowledge of how to learn and of how to use the community and other resources to take charge of their own learning both during the course and, in particular, beyond it.
4. Language teaching needs to be able to specify accurately and in meaningful ways the actual skills that learners acquire and their relevance to the practical demands of the workplace. The use of

proficiency scales such as ISLPR can provide practical and readily interpretable measures of language proficiency. In addition, however, there is need for relevant sets of vocational language competencies similar to those that O'Neill developed for the Australian Tourism Authority that identify directly the vocational language skills needed either by industry in general or by any particular industry [see O'Neill 2000; see also Languages Lead Body 1992, 1992a].

5. There is need for a system of assessment and certification of language skills, no matter where or how they have been acquired. The need for such a system is demonstrated in the area of English as a Second Language by the rapidly expanding and worldwide use being made of the IELTS Test and its certificates for migration and vocational purposes even though IELTS was not designed for such uses. The need is just as great in other languages.
6. Despite the growth in demand by industry for language skills referred to earlier, there is strong evidence that Australian industry remains insufficiently aware of the benefits to be gained from employing language skills. There are at least two implications of this. First, industry must be made aware of the benefits to be gained from taking advantage of the cultural and language resources in the community and produced through the education system to enable them to better match their products to the markets, to explore new markets, to relate to trading partners and clients, and to market their products more effectively. Second, Australian industry needs to understand how to go about identifying and specifying their actual language needs. They need to be informed how to use the instruments that are available (proficiency scales and competency specifications, as referred to earlier) and they need to know how to conduct language audits or needs analyses to identify and specify the language and culture skills that they have available or that they need to conduct their business most effectively. For this reason, the Australian Language and Literacy Council recommended in 1994 that the government fund some model needs analyses and language audits to demonstrate to industry in practical terms how to go about this process [see ALLC 1994: Recommendations].

In brief, language teachers, applied linguists, military personnel, trade reviewers, and language policy-makers have all asserted the practical importance of language skills and cultural awareness to all forms of Australian industry. It is essential that we, as language teachers, take serious account of that and ensure that our courses at all levels acknowledge, not only the traditional cultural values of language learning, but the practical values as well and design our courses and their methodology to provide the practical skills and in-depth cultural understanding that industry requires.

#### **III.4 Cross-Cultural Attitudes:**

There can be doubt that, in these first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the issues of cross-cultural attitudes, inter-faith tolerance, and acceptance of racial equality are of pre-eminent importance. We have already seen world leaders fostering attitudes of suspicion and hate towards people of other races and cultures. Even in multicultural Australia, we have seen politicians distort the facts to generate suspicion and hatred towards individuals of other races, cultures and religions for their own political gain. Such actions can lead only to world chaos and violence but it is possible only where racism is latent in society and ready to be pricked into activity for selfish or ethnocentric gain. If the sense of decency, equality and a fair-go that Australians like to believe is a fundamental Australian trait is to survive, if multicultural harmony and enrichment are to continue to characterise Australia, and if the world is not to collapse into warring chaos, it is essential that all societies, not least Australia, take seriously the issue of inter-cultural, inter-racial relations and, therefore, of inter-cultural attitudes. I have written at length about these issues in other papers and have reported on a number of research studies [e.g., Ingram 2001/2002, 2000a, 1999, 1999a, 1995, 1980a, 1980b, 1978b; Ingram *et al* 2003, Ingram *et al* 1999, Ingram and Sasaki 2003]. Suffice it to say here that, apart from the sheer commonsense and innate decency that we hope that all people have but often seem lacking in our national and world leaders, a society has open to it two principal tools to effect attitude change: legislation and consequent litigation to suppress negative acts and education, society's most positive tool for fostering more favourable attitudes. Within education, there is strong evidence that the most effective tool is language education. In fact, most language education policies and syllabuses identify the fostering of cross-cultural understanding and positive attitudes as one of the principal goals [see Ingram 2002, 2001/2002].

However, research into the role of language teaching in effecting positive cross-cultural attitude change clearly shows that merely endorsing such goals or the mere fact of language learning does not inevitably produce more positive cross-cultural attitudes and may, in fact, worsen attitudes and harden ethnocentricity. If positive cross-cultural attitude change is to occur, both the content of the courses and the teaching methodology must be appropriately designed. These have been elaborated in the papers referred to earlier and won't be discussed here. Suffice it to say that, of all the goals that we might pursue in a language teaching programme, probably none is so important as that of fostering more positive cross-cultural attitudes and the valuing of human diversity. It so happens that the methodology that is appropriate to this goal is also most appropriate for the development of language proficiency [see Martí 2001; Ingram 2002, 1980a, 1980b, 1978b, Ingram *et al* 1999].

Gomes de Matos [2002/2003] emphasises the humanising function of language teaching when he says:

1. *Language should have a deeply humanizing function. ...*
2. *Languages should be taught/learned and used for humanizing purposes, on the basis of such values as human rights, justice, and peace.*

3. *Language users/learners should learn how to interact and to be interacted with in human-dignifying, peace-promoting ways.* [Gomes de Matos 2002/2003: 4 – 5]

In addition to ensuring that our language teaching programmes are deliberately designed to foster positive cross-cultural attitudes, teachers might also consider participating in a major UNESCO project that has come out of the International Year for Cultural Heritage and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. A “culture of peace” website has been established under UNESCO auspices [[www.unesco.org/cp](http://www.unesco.org/cp)] with FIPLV also supporting this initiative. One of the action areas marked out by the UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace [1999, Resolution A/53/243] calls for:

1. *Fostering a culture of peace through education by revising the educational curricula to promote qualitative values, attitudes and behaviours of a culture of peace, including peaceful conflict-resolution, dialogue, consensus-building and active non-violence. ...*

### **III.5 Curriculum, Methodology, Technology and Assessment:**

If language teaching is to respond to the challenges and opportunities of the future, it is essential that we ensure that the programmes we offer are of the highest quality, that we draw on all the understanding available from applied linguistics and research into such issues as the attainment of proficiency and the fostering of positive attitudes to design programmes that will contribute to the goals that have been referred to above and that are commonly found in language syllabuses. At the same time, it is essential to consider the way in which language develops and to draw on insights from applied linguistics and, in particular, developmental psycholinguistics, to ensure that we are designing language programmes that complement the natural learning processes. In Queensland, there has, over the years, been considerable innovation in language curriculum design. However, in recent years, much of the curriculum innovation has occurred within the context of general curriculum innovation. There is considerable value to be gained from considering what is happening elsewhere in education. However, there are also serious dangers if the distinctive roles and nature of language learning are not taken adequately into account. Such curriculum design clichés as “content-based” and “outcomes-based” curricula, language across the curriculum, “big” or “rich” tasks, and so on provide insights into and approaches to learning that can make useful contributions to language curriculum design. In one school with which I am familiar, “big” or “rich” tasks have been implemented very successfully in the upper Primary School and, on the basis of homework tasks my children have brought home, the French teacher seems to be integrating this approach successfully with beneficial effects on the children’s language learning. However, it must also be remembered that language develops in both a sequential and hierarchical manner, the level of proficiency strongly influences the tasks that can be carried out and how they are carried out, and so the curriculum designer and, in particular, teachers planning their own work programmes must cater in their planning for the systematic development of the language at the same time as capitalising on the “big tasks”

or content-based aspects of the curriculum to encourage active learning methods, to accelerate the learners' productive use of the language, and to maximise the effectiveness of their receptive skills. In brief, language teachers need to assert the distinctive nature of their activity, the distinctive needs of language learners, and not be dragged unthinkingly into adopting curriculum clichés that better match students' abilities and learning styles in other subjects.

Of particular importance is to remember that language is learned through use and through social interaction. In this, concepts such as content-based curricula and "big" or "rich" tasks are useful but it also emphasises the importance of encouraging learners from very early in their learning of the language to interact with others using the language. In fact, the central learning activity in most approaches to language syllabus design should be seen as social interaction with other activities, including formal teaching-learning activities, as supporting the use of the language for that purpose [see Ingram 1980a, 1980b, 1978b]. As noted earlier, such an approach promotes the complementary goals of developing language proficiency and fostering positive cross-cultural attitudes.

In fact, Australia is well placed with its multicultural population, its close interaction with many of the neighbouring countries where the principal languages taught in Australian schools are spoken, and its relatively high level of technology to develop and adopt such active and interactive learning methods [see Ingram 2002, 1980a, 1980b].

There are many issues in the area of curriculum and methodology that must be addressed if languages are to occupy the place they deserve in education. Most fundamental is the issue of the quality and supply of language teachers, which will be discussed subsequently. No matter what progress is made in applied linguistics to enhance the design of curriculum and to develop more effective approaches to methodology, they must be implemented by teachers proficient both in the language and in methodology. In addition, though LOTE has been designated a key learning area for at least a decade, it is rarely treated as a key learning area in the resources allocated to it, in its location on subject selection lines in the general school curriculum, or in the specialist facilities such as language laboratories, computers, relevant software, and library resources which are considered mandatory in, for example, English language centres across Australia catering for overseas students. Again, the distinctive learning needs of languages are rarely acknowledged in the time allocation afforded languages at any level so that, for example, the practically desirable but excessively ambitious proficiency targets set by the national Asian languages strategy could not be reached in the contact time allowed in most schools [COAG 1994]. The report itself was unduly optimistic in this regard since the total school time it recommended for Asian language learning was about half that (approximately 2,500 hours) which the best available evidence would suggest is necessary to reach minimum vocational proficiency (ISLPR 3), the target which the report sets for at least some learners of Asian languages by Year 12 [COAG 1994: xiii]. It is, indeed, appropriate in language education planning to set proficiency targets that ensure that students who give up language study at one of the main exit points do so having had a realistic opportunity to achieve a practically useful level of language proficiency but such goals are meaningless if the corollary time allocations are not implemented. In addition, new learning modes are required to

maximise learning efficiency with consideration being given to such issues as teacher quality but also to periods of more intensive learning, immersion programmes, opportunities to spend some time overseas in the country of origin of the target language (as overseas students serious about acquiring English skills now do), and the use of technology to maximise language immersion and use, to make the rote learning elements of language learning more efficient and less boring, and to increase the authenticity of the language experience.

Modern technology has a great deal to contribute to more effective language teaching [see Cunningham 2001] but it will do so only if teachers are properly trained to make best use of it, if it is seen, not as a panacea or a baby-minding toy, but as facilitating the implementation of good methodology, and if it is genuinely available to the LOTE programme. As already noted, few schools have available for the LOTE programme the array of modern technology that is regarded as mandatory in most Australian ELICOS centres which are routinely equipped with language laboratories, computer laboratories, and self-access centres and have specialist staff available to assist teachers to make best use of the equipment. Today's technology is such that it can contribute effectively to all aspects of language learning from grammar drills to sophisticated pronunciation practice to speed reading but perhaps the usage that touches most nearly to the basis of language learning is its capacity to facilitate interaction between learners, and between learners and native speaking peers in other countries. Email and chatpages can be used effectively, as Stockwell and Stockwell [2003] have shown for email, to increase interaction and benefit cultural awareness. ESL teachers at Akita University in Japan and Japanese teachers at Griffith University have cooperated in programmes to enable their learners to interact by video, an activity that will be further facilitated as webcams and broadband links become more commonplace. Virtual reality, whether in a VR laboratory or using a regular PC, holds immense potential to enable learners to virtually walk through, or live and interact in, the target country and culture.

Nevertheless, despite the remarkable opportunities that modern technology can provide, the fundamental nature of language is a tool for interaction between people and, in a diverse multicultural society such as Australia where the diversity is immensely increased by the high level of foreign tourism and the overseas student programme, teachers need to be able to use the human resources around them to enhance the learning of students. I have written at length about the use of community involvement in language teaching and it won't be discussed further here but, again, suffice it to say that a community involvement approach requires a different orientation to the purpose and methodology of language teaching, an orientation that responds closely to the nature of language and the psycholinguistic evidence about how languages are most effectively learned [see Ingram 2002b, 1980a, 1980b, 1978b].

As curriculum design and methodology evolve to better reflect the nature of language and how languages are learned, there are profound implications for testing. In one aspect, the development of language testing over the last 50 years and in the foreseeable future reflects a continuous attempt to move towards more authenticity in the language use that is required in the tests [see Ingram 2003a for a discussion of this]. As already noted, Queensland, because of its focus on school-based assessment, was able, much earlier than most other

places, to adopt a proficiency focus in curriculum design and a “direct” approach to its assessment. However, language teachers require facility in many other aspects of testing besides proficiency assessment for purposes of both formative and summative assessment. What is most important is for teachers, policy-makers and examiners to realise that there is no single answer to the challenge of devising appropriate tests: the way in which one tests should differ according to the purpose and context of the test, and how the results are to be interpreted and by whom. It is not possible to discuss language testing here but only to emphasise the need for policy-makers and teachers to develop a better understanding of language testing [see Ingram and Wylie 1979/1999 and related papers; Ingram 2003a, 1996 and other papers in the bibliographies to these].

It is appropriate, in the context of testing, to refer back (without discussion) to two issues raised earlier: the need for a system by which language skills may be certified and the complementary need for a system of accredited language assessors.

### **III.6 Teacher Quality and Supply:**

In 1994, the Australian Language and Literacy Council produced a report on the quality and supply of language teachers entitled *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy* [ALLC 1994]. There can be no doubt that any language education policy that neglects the issue of teacher quality and supply will fail. Regrettably, all previous language policies have, at least in their implementation, paid insufficient attention to this issue. The national crisis in language teaching referred to at the start of this paper revolves mainly around the supply and quality of language teachers and the corollaries that flow from that gross and growing deficiency. There is no doubt that there are excellent, language proficient, and well trained language teachers in Australian schools but the sad fact is that, as the ALLC report indisputably showed, such language teachers are in the minority and are too few in number to implement current policies. Furthermore, a very large proportion of those teachers currently teaching languages in Primary and Secondary Schools have language proficiencies considerably below that which, in the view of the ALLC, was the minimum appropriate for a language teacher (i.e., S:4, L:4, R:4, W:4 on the ISLPR). At least as many of those currently teaching a LOTE lack specialist training in applied linguistics at even a basic level let alone at the level which is increasingly regarded as the minimum acceptable for ESL teachers to obtain a contract position in a reputable ELICOS Centre, i.e., a Masters degree in applied linguistics. If the Federal Government adopts the recent review of the Commonwealth LOTE in Schools Programme, the most fundamental issue they must address together with their State and Territory counterparts is the quality and supply of language teachers. To achieve this, many difficult but critical issues need to be addressed, included amongst which are:

- Teachers need to be given regular opportunities to develop, maintain and upgrade their language skills. The Endeavour Scholarships announced in the recent Federal budget will undoubtedly contribute to this but, if the need is to be seriously addressed, hundreds, not scores, of such scholarships are needed annually.

- The supply of language teachers needs to match the enrolment objectives in the policies but it has been amply demonstrated over the last two decades that this will not occur without incentives both to attract students to train as language teachers, to ensure they enter teaching rather than industry, and to retain them in the profession. Such incentives might include salary loadings based on language proficiency levels but scholarships or university fee abatement provided that the student remains for a specified time in teaching would also act as incentives.
- There is still need for teacher education programmes specifically designed to get native speakers in the community into language teaching. Amongst other things, their language skills should be recognised and advanced standing be provided in teacher education programmes in the same way as tradespeople or artists have their skills recognised.
- University language departments need to revise their programmes to ensure that students intending to enter teaching achieve at least ISLPR 3 in all four macroskills by graduation, that they have spent some time in the country of origin of the language, and that they have interacted at frequent intervals with native speakers in the Australian community (whether residents, tourists or foreign students).
- All language teachers should be encouraged by whatever means are available (e.g., scholarships, promotional criteria, salary incentives, and study leave) to pursue higher degree study in applied linguistics. Those who lack training in language teaching methodology should be required to take appropriate courses, possibly introductory Graduate Certificates in Applied Linguistics or Second Language Teaching.

In brief, language teachers are the pivot on which the success of language education policy depends. The issues of language teacher quality and supply have not been adequately addressed in the past. If they are not addressed in the future, then any talk about new language or language education policies will be futile and language teaching will continue to lurch from crisis to worse crisis.

## **IV CONCLUSION**

Language teaching has changed dramatically since Keith Horwood's days. He contributed greatly to the creation of viable professional associations for language teachers in Australia and, not least, in building the AFMLTA, which, over the years, has assumed a significant leadership role in language education in Australia. Like Keith, today's language teachers must remain convinced of the worth of their activity, they must recognise the value of joining together as a respected profession, and they must be ready to assert to others the importance of language learning to the education of all children, to the society in general, and to the security of the world.

Like Martin Luther King, we as language teachers must retain and maintain our dream, our dream of a world in which all people are not only created equal but

are treated as equals, with equal opportunities, equal freedom, equal rights. We must retain our dream of a world in which people are able to interact freely and equally, recognising each other's rights to be different, to live differently, to speak differently, to think differently, and to worship differently. We must retain our dream of a society and a world where cultural differences and the languages that reflect and support them are not only tolerated but are valued and genuinely enrich all people's lives.

That is what language education most fundamentally is about. As important as language education is in providing skills to grease the wheels of industry and trade, to develop awareness of high culture and literary sensitivity, it is its role in fostering positive cross-cultural attitudes, acceptance of the rights of others to be different, and the opportunity for all of us to be enriched by those differences that language education most fundamentally is about. Not only that but, as we look to the future and remember both our own past and what, as a profession, we have achieved and remember the world and the chaos that the loss of that dream has caused and is still causing, we must maintain our dream and continually assert the importance of our activities in the education of all children.

Martin Luther King spoke of a dream that is readily applicable, not just to the United States at a time of great inter-racial tension, but equally to today's world, no less torn apart by inter-racial suspicion and hatred. You are all undoubtedly familiar with his most famous speech, but let me quote it again in our context:

*Let us not wallow in the valley of despair. ...*

*I have a dream that one day this nation [that our nation and all nations] will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed - we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal. ...*

*I have a dream that ... [our children] will one day live in .. [nations] where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. ...*

*With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation[s] into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. [Carson 1998: 226]*

It is worth recalling, also, the statements of Australia's chief military officer, General Peter Cosgrove, who has strongly supported the need for an effective language learning programme in Australia and has correctly placed language learning as more important than military might in effecting world peace. He said:

*This much is certain. ... we have indeed become more interdependent, more closely linked to our fellow human beings than at any time in recorded history. ...*

*Both in their scale, and their cultural significance, the proliferation of linkages among nations is without precedence. It is a phenomenon that is inexorable. ...I cannot imagine a future in which people of all cultures and*

*nations are not increasingly connected by ties of travel, commerce and migration. ...*

*Language skills and cultural sensitivity will be the new currency of this world order. ...*

*Our future prosperity and security will depend on our ability to understand .. [other] cultures and to build bridges to the citizens of these nations and all our immediate neighbours. ...*

*..in an increasingly interconnected world the impact of armed conflict is increasingly catastrophic. If globalisation has meant one thing it is this: no man or woman ... is any longer an island. ...*

*... Commercial links, alone, will never render war unthinkable. What will, however, are mutual understanding and respect and the banishing of prejudice. ...*

*If [the] future is to be one of peace and prosperity our kids will need the capacity to engage in a dialogue with others of different cultures and creeds. [Cosgrove 2002]*

In the preface to his organisation's publication on a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights [Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights Follow-up Committee 1998], Carles Torner, of the International PEN Club narrates an old legend of a king who heard that there lived in his country a truly wise man. The man was so wise, it was said, that he knew all the languages of the world and could read the thoughts of all people no matter where they came from. The king called the very wise man to his palace, talked with him at length, and ended by asking him one last question. The king said to him,

"In my hands, which are hidden behind my back, there is a bird. Wise man, answer me: is it alive or dead?"

Torner goes on to say that the wise man's answer was addressed to everybody. The wise man was frightened: he knew that whatever answer he gave, the king could kill the bird. He looked at the king for a long time and finally he said,

"The answer, sire, is in your hands."

Indeed, the answer is in all our hands. As the language teaching profession, as members of a worldwide profession of immense and universal importance, as members of a profession on which the harmony and prosperity of this nation depends but, even more than that as recent events have starkly shown, on which the future of the world depends, the answer is in our hands. It behoves the language teaching profession, not to lose its dream in the face of political indifference and management antipathy but to envision the role that it can serve in creating a more harmonious, culturally enriched, and interactive society and peaceful world; it behoves the language teaching profession to draw on the wealth of information and insight available to it through applied linguistics to

ensure its own practices are as competent and as effective as they can be and to ensure that they are designed to achieve the high goals that our profession must pursue. Beyond that, it is the responsibility of the language teaching profession to convince the political and educational decision-makers that language teaching does have the sort of importance I have asserted here and that we have the knowledge, skills and commitment that will enable us to achieve those goals.

The answer, the future of language education, is in our hands.

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