

LINGUISTIC MINORITIES AND BILINGUAL COMMUNITIES: AUSTRALIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years many statements have been made indicating that a variety of groups and organizations recognize and support multilingualism and multiculturalism in Australia. It is less clear at a policy level, however, how these "ism" can or should be maintained. Smolicz (1983) has argued in a variety of forums that language is a "core" value for many cultural groups. If language is lost or destroyed, these cultures become de-activated and form sub-cultural variants on the majority culture. Research on European minority groups which have existed over much longer periods of time than those in Australia indicates that a linguistic factor, comprising officialness of language, school language, mass media, and linguistic ability, is the strongest predictor of minority group survival (de Vries 1984).

It should also be recognized that, for a variety of reasons, assimilation is either undesirable or impossible for many minority culture members. For these individuals bilingualism is not just a noble sentiment but a necessity if their worth and self-esteem is to be preserved. Such people provide and maintain a useful national linguistic resource for Australia (Gilhotra 1985). If this is a desirable end, whose duty is language maintenance? What roles do the state, the group, and the individual play? Quinn's (1983) concern in this regard is that the government does not have the resources effectively to create true bilingualism. He suggests we must look carefully at the questions of what language training is for, who should undertake it, and whose responsibility language learning is.

One policy widely used to help to maintain language resources at a governmental level has been bilingual education. Nicholas (1983b) points out that this is a complex concept which involves not only the development of two languages by those coming from a bilingual background, but language induction for monolingual speakers. Creating effective bilingual programs in Australia is made all the more difficult because of the number of diverse language groups. However, if Australian society is ultimately to demonstrate a real commitment to a multicultural world, then the monolingual nature of schools must change.

Given the limitations of space available for this review and the large number of interesting articles on language maintenance, development, and

contact related to bilingual communities in Australia published in the last several years, articles cited in Walsh (1982) or in the companion article by Pauwels elsewhere in this volume have been omitted. While this complementary approach makes some community descriptions less comprehensive than they otherwise might have been, it has allowed for a broader coverage of the literature. Readers interested in a complete set of references to a particular community will therefore need to consult those reviews as well as the references which follow.

2. MINORITY LINGUISTIC COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA

The Federal Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts has reviewed the language needs of the various linguistic communities in Australia. Ozolins (1984) provides an overview of this process and delineates some of the major issues. The report by the PLANLangPol Committee (1983), which was one of the many documents submitted to the Senate Committee, is worth examining because its recommendations for language maintenance and development are based on a consensus of the six major language organizations in Australia. Some application documents related to language development are also beginning to appear. For example, the Education Department of South Australia has prepared a "Language Policy Preparation Document" as a practical guide for those involved in making school curricula decisions (Marovich, Kelly, and Santich 1985).

Two general issues related to community language maintenance also need to be mentioned here because they raise continuing issues for each of the communities to be discussed. The first relates to attitudes toward the teaching of ethnic languages in schools. Smolicz and Lean (1980) indicate that while the various ethnic groups support this concept to differing degrees, there is general support for bilingual education. Second, Smolicz and Secombe (1984) have examined multicultural television and discuss how this service in Sydney and Melbourne serves the various ethnic communities. Both of these studies not only relate to important overarching issues but also contain data related to specific communities as well.

Studies of language maintenance, contact, and development are reviewed for the following bilingual communities:

<u>Communities</u>	<u>Number of Speakers</u>
2.1. Aboriginal Australians	27,572
2.2. Asian-Australians (Chinese)	29,903
2.3. Dutch-Australians	64,768
2.4. German-Australians	170,664
2.5. Greek-Australians	262,177
2.6. Islander Australians	22,500
2.7. Italian-Australians	444,672
2.8. Polish-Australians	62,945
2.9. Russian-Australians	17,710

I have included estimates of numbers of regular users of each language as given in Ozolins (1984) except for Islanders where the estimates are for the population (Shnukal 1984). These estimates come mainly from the 1976 census when the total Australian population was about 13,500,000. The

figures have changed radically of course, especially for the category of Asian-Australians.

2.1. Aboriginal Australians

In the introduction to her paper on multilingualism among Aboriginal Australians, Elwell (1982) points out that before colonization there were over 200 Aboriginal languages with many more dialects spoken across the continent, but that any particular language group rarely had more than 500 speakers. In order to communicate in such a linguistically fragmented world, most early Australians were bi- or multilingual. Deliberate policies and practices since first settlement by Europeans have resulted in the death of many of these Aboriginal languages (Fesl 1982; 1985). There is a need to save the remaining Aboriginal languages, a need for increased research and planning, and a need to encourage Aboriginal people to maintain their languages through internal group use, through the media, and through use in external situations.

Language maintenance can also be encouraged through a better understanding of the linguistic situation. Elwell (1982) examines some of the factors affecting multilingualism in a traditional Aboriginal community. She concludes that first language competence, linguistic repertoire, code-switching to reciprocate, and variables such as age, sex, and kinship relationships, plus the topic and purpose of the conversation, determine patterns of language use.

The extent of a language's use is also an important variable for maintenance and development. Several studies have looked at language planning and development aspects of Kriol, a language in use in the Roper River area in the Northern Territory (Sandefur 1985b). Kriol was also located in the Kimberleys in Western Australia (Sandefur and Sandefur 1980), but was not found to the east in Queensland (Sandefur, *et al.* 1982). Its use in bilingual programs in Australian schools has been a matter of some debate (Harris and Sandefur 1984). Other Aboriginal languages such as Pintupi and Luritja have also been evaluated for use in bilingual programs (Heffernan and Sommer 1982).

In bilingual situations, communication between individuals from different groups becomes an important issue. Von Sturmer (1981) presents some positive advice for talking with Aborigines, focusing particularly on the cultural context of the communication. In a comment on von Sturmer's work, Davidson, Hansford, and Moriarty (1983) argue that such information may be useful in the development of intercultural training programs. These initiated a continuing set of discussions of these issues in the journals.

Media is another form of communication. It can either be a positive or negative force for language and cultural maintenance. *Kriol Kantri*, a 40-part video series based on *Playhouse/Sesame Street*, was produced primarily for Kriol-speaking Aboriginal children (Sandefur 1985a). It provides a positive example of media use based on locally produced materials in an Aboriginal language. On the other hand, Thompson (1983) argues that western films, which serve as a major source of information about the outside world for traditional Aborigines, can transmit a limited and often inappropriate set of behaviors to Aboriginal children.

2.2. Asian-Australians

The term Asian-Australians encompasses a broad spectrum of individual cultures and lengths of residence in Australia. Chinese settlers arrived in Australia for the gold rush during the last century and there has been a trickle of Chinese of British citizenship into the country ever since. Japanese businessmen reside temporarily in Australia. Australia has also accepted the largest number of Indo-Chinese refugees per capita of any country during the last ten years. Each of these groups has its own language problems.

For the first of these three sub-groups the issue of bilingualism is mainly one of language maintenance. Kwong (1981) examined language use of Chinese mothers and children in Sydney and found that despite the concern of most mothers for their child's Chinese language ability, English was becoming the children's predominant language. Attendance at weekend language schools made no difference in the children's language choice. The development of Chinese language skills is made more difficult by both the lack, until recently, of Australian-based Chinese language materials and the general lack of Chinese language instruction in schools at all levels. The problem is complicated by the fact that many Chinese in Australia are of Cantonese origin and do not speak *Putonghua*¹ (Kiriloff 1983).

Marriott (1980) describes a problem of language maintenance of a different order, that faced by wives of Japanese businessmen residing in Australia. Her findings indicate that the written Japanese networks of such individuals are maintained or strengthened by their stay, but that English language networks generally fail to develop. Thus language may be maintained and bilingualism may fail to develop if there are few or no domains where the second language is used.

Most Indo-Chinese refugees are trying to cope with the other face of bilingualism; they lack the requisite English language skills to become part of the wider Australian community. Jones (1983) outlines the diversity of linguistic and cultural differences facing the teacher in the school and makes some suggestions about how teachers can cope with the special problems that these students bring to the classroom. Pedler (1984) points out that, for older Vietnamese who engage in established cultural and linguistic roles, the new pattern of relationships expressed by English and their cultural location in Australia may be difficult to cope with. Her analysis stresses the inter-relationships between language and culture and the difficulty that bilinguals may have of choosing from, or maintaining, conflicting values.

Cox (1983) examines another problem facing the Vietnamese refugee. Many refugees are selected to come to Australia because they have professional skills. However, their lack of English language proficiency keeps them from continuing in their former line of work. Many remain dissatisfied, frustrated, and under-employed former professionals for years after they arrive in Australia. These experiences stress the importance of appropriate ESL programs and of counseling with the aim of developing fully functioning bilinguals.

2.3. Dutch-Australians

Pauwels (1981) has examined the reading habits of Dutch migrants and their children as well as their attitudes toward the ethnic press. Reading is a major channel through which the cultural and literary heritage of a culture can be maintained. Dutch informants no longer expressed an explicit need or desire to read Dutch, despite the fact that there seemed to be adequate reading materials in the language available from a number of sources. Pauwels hypothesizes that language may not be a central cultural value for Dutch-Australian multicultural survival.

2.4. German-Australians

Kipp (1980) has described language maintenance and shift in rural German settlements in Victoria over the last hundred years based on interviews with older bilingual residents. Her results indicate that bilingual education and a community focus emerge as the two most important factors affecting language maintenance. Nicholas (1983a) looks at the language development of a four-year-old bilingual child in order to better understand how L₂ competence and structures are learned by bilinguals. Voorwinde (1981), on the other hand, studied a group of Dutch-English-German trilinguals and compared them to an English-German control group on a variety of lexical and grammatical variables.

2.5. Greek-Australians

Smolicz (1985) examines the core values of Greek-Australians and suggests that they consist of the family structure, the Greek language, and the Orthodox religion. The paper puts particular emphasis on the differences between Greek- and Anglo-Australian family life. Language, however, is still seen as the central value for Greek-Australian cultural maintenance. Although the Greek community in Australia has accomplished a great deal by way of an extensive network of part-time schools, more public support of Greek language programs is needed if the Greek language, the central core value of Greek-Australian culture, is to be maintained. Tenezakis (1980) compared Anglo- and Greek-Australian children from monolingual and bilingual backgrounds on a number of linguistic tasks and found that grade in school was the most important variable in language differences. The differences disappeared as children went further in school, and an interference hypothesis for the differences found between the two language groups was found to have inadequate explanatory power.

2.6. Islander Australians

Although about 80 percent of Torres Strait Islander people now live on the Australian mainland, mainly in Queensland, they are culturally and linguistically distinct from the Aboriginal people with whom they are often grouped. Shnukal (1983) provides an historical account of the development of Torres Strait creole and changing attitudes towards it. She indicates it is more widely spoken than is often supposed and has become an "in" language in informal situations providing young Islanders a sense of cultural identity (Shnukal 1984).

2.7. Italian-Australians

Galvin (1980) and Campbell (1980) have examined two different Italian communities in Australia. Galvin's work focuses primarily on proximity and inter-relationships among Italian community members. Language forms a formidable barrier for many in the community, and personal contacts thus become very important means of communication. Campbell (1980) looks at a small rural community and the transference patterns of second generation Italian-Australians. She sees little hope that the Italian language will be maintained there. Australian assimilationist policies have discouraged national identity, and the use by the residents of dialects, which are orally based and of low status compared to standard Italian, have contributed to this situation.

Looking at language teaching issues, Rando (1982) describes Italian language education in Australia between 1970 and 1980. Bettoni (1981) discusses the dialect problem and argues forcefully that standard Italian should be taught in schools so that Australian-Italian speakers are not despised. Teh (1982) reports on the planning of a function-based language course to upgrade the Italian language skills of bilingual staff in the Department of Social Security. This is an example of the sort of training which is necessary if Australian society is to meet its commitment to community language needs through bilingually provided services.

Finally, Fochi (1983) looks at the Italian-Australian writer Giovanni Andreoni and the influence that migrating to Australia has had on his work. This brief case study is about both the cultural and linguistic influences which have affected his work, and his interest in Italian as it has developed in Australia.

2.8. Polish-Australians

Smolicz and Secombe (1982) have published a study using data from a memoir competition for Polish immigrants based on children's and parents' recollections of their experiences in Australian schools. In the language section, experiences are related regarding the often painful process of learning English in the school and about the use of Polish in the home. The authors speculate that the lack of a tradition of linguistic pluralism in Australia has tended to de-activate the Polish language system which many of the memoir writers clearly value but don't frequently use. Sussex (1981) looked at the issue of phonetic interference of Australian English on Australian Polish.

2.9. Russian-Australians

Bodi (1980) and Taft and Bodi (1980) have examined some aspects of bilingualism of Russian-Australian children in Melbourne with the aim of describing bilingual competence and the possible determinants of competence in the two languages. The results indicate the strong role of the school in displacing the L₁ (Russian) with the L₂ (English) over time. In particular, Russian lexical development stagnated or regressed. Language competency levels seem to be related primarily to individual factors rather than to general social-psychological factors.

3. ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES

It may seem strange to some readers to talk about English as a second language or English as a second dialect speakers as comprising a linguistic community; however, individuals trying to learn or improve their English form identifiable groups with many of the same problems and characteristics as those trying to develop competence in another language. Bilingualism, by definition, means competence in two languages and places the individual in two linguistic communities. In the previous sections, aspects of non-English-based communities have been examined. In this section, some of the problems and the range of services that have been set up to cater for the needs of the two major ESL communities in Australia will be discussed. First, there are the migrant education programs sponsored by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and supported by a range of other organizations. Second, there are programs for Aboriginal- and Islander-Australians sponsored by Commonwealth Education and the various state Departments of Education.

3.1. The migrant ESL language community

Based on Recommendation 10 of the Galbally (1978) Report, a number of studies have been undertaken into migrant language learning needs. These studies, sponsored by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, have as their objective to understand the nature of the issues and the specific problems facing the migrant ESL community in language acquisition. A number of studies were funded in the early 1980s to examine common sets of variables in a variety of settings, representing both urban and rural migrant situations, in all the states of Australia. These reports were initially made available in draft form in 1982 through the Australian Government Printer. Since 1984, they have been published under the editorship of J. J. Smolicz as a series entitled *Studies in Adult Migrant Education*. Three types of studies were commissioned. The first were demographic studies of major population centers using a common format to interpret the 1976 census data. These reports looked at two characteristics of migrants: (1) a simple demographic description, and (2) the relationship of that data to the Adult Migrant Education Program [AMEP]. An example, the study for Brisbane (Cook and Vilkinas 1982) describes the distribution of migrants from ten non-English-speaking countries in the various city suburbs. These ten countries provided nearly 50 per cent of all ESL clients for AMEPs. The Brisbane migrant population is then broken down by the critical variables: age, sex, occupation, personal income, and "no-English" usage.

The second group of studies examines general methodological issues related to the AMEP. Mills (1984) evaluates the effectiveness of on-arrival programs as a first step towards general learning. The characteristics of the adult on-arrival learner are discussed, program design and teaching strategies are examined, and recommendations for using feedback from evaluation and testing are made.

The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating [ASLPR] scale has been developed for the AMEP to measure language proficiency in the four macro-skill areas. Developed from the United States' Foreign Service Institute [FSI] proficiency scales, the ASLPR focuses on measuring accurately the beginning and intermediate levels of language proficiency. Ingram (1984)

provides a summary of the data for the formal trialing of the instrument. ASLPR data was also required to be collected on migrant English language proficiency for each of the third group of studies. A wealth of data and descriptions of the methods used to collect it is thus available for those interested in language proficiency evaluation. Smith and Baldauf (1982) also did a study which looked at migrants self-evaluation of language proficiency.

The third group of studies focused on particular language needs of a variety of ESL communities nationwide. These studies looked not only at language needs in particular geographical areas (e.g., Sydney's Liverpool and Parramatta suburbs, Melbourne's western suburbs or the Karratha region of Western Australia), but at problems of handicapped migrants and of women's needs for child care to increase participation in ESL programs. All the studies looked at a common set of variables (age; sex; location, duration and education related measures) with the intention that a meta-analysis of the data would then eventually be performed to provide a national summary. It should be noted that, while the major purpose of the studies is to develop a picture of the sociolinguistic and linguistic aspects of ESL needs of migrants, many of the studies provide results by ethnic group. If properly collated and interpreted, this data has the potential for increasing the knowledge available about native language capabilities of Australia's major migrant groups.

An example of the setting for this type of study is West End, an inner-city Brisbane suburb, which contains a high concentration of established Greek migrants and a growing number of Vietnamese as well as a number of individuals from 16 other non-English speaking communities. The diglossic situation which exists in these two larger communities is described, and recommendations are made for meeting their language needs. In general, there is seen to be a need for more special-purpose courses, rather than for general syllabus oriented programs, and a need to provide ESL training for teachers so that trained staff is available to meet the cultural and linguistic requirements of migrants trying to learn English as a second language (Chipley, *et al.* 1985).

A second type of study examined an established, rural, predominately Italian community in North Queensland. Although attendance at language classes had been very poor for a number of years, a strong need and desire for ESL instruction was found, provided it didn't follow the traditional syllabus-bound pattern. A number of specific suggestions were made to create more relevant classes and to advertise the programs available (Smith, Baldauf, and Taylor 1985). A follow-up program was initiated based on the recommendations, using what might be described as an on-going ESP model focusing on student needs. Class attendance and retention rates rose dramatically under these conditions (Smith forthcoming).

Several projects were completed which looked at factors which effect ESL competence. Johnston (1985) presents a detailed developmental analysis and recommendations for syllabus development for ESL language sequencing based on data collected from twelve Vietnamese and twelve Polish adults. McGregor (1983) describes research which analyses language samples from young ESL children, primarily using a language development perspective. Campbell and McMeniman (1984) examine both empirical data and literature

studies in an attempt to provide an overview of factors related to ESL student needs. Botsman's (1984) report tackled the issue of teacher training needs and made recommendations for levels of professional training. As the AMEP studies suggest, this is an area where few standards currently exist and where greater effort is needed.

In summary this has been an active period for those involved in ESL migrant community language programs. Needs of bilingual ESL learners and teaching resources necessary are being studied and considered more broadly than ever before. New programs based on needs and on flexible syllabuses are being trialed.

3.2. The Aboriginal ESL community

Some work has also been done on educational language planning, policy, and control of language development in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Russo and Baldauf (forthcoming) describe the changing socio-linguistic situation for tribal Aborigines in the Northern Territory in its historical perspective. The *ad hoc* and reactive nature of language policy development there is described. The need for a deliberately planned policy based on predicted patterns of Aboriginal language use and collaboratively designed by those affected is discussed. Russo (1983) discusses the inadequacy of present educational policy in the Northern Territory and suggests avenues for developing more collaboratively based and appropriate policies. At a more specific level, Harris (1982) provides a detailed analysis of some of the strengths and vulnerabilities of Northern Territory bilingual education programs, suggests some areas of theoretical difficulty, and makes some suggestions for the future.

4. DISCUSSION

At the beginning of this review a number of questions were posed, relating to "whose responsibility is bilingualism." If Australians are now agreed that a multilingual-multicultural society is desirable and that such a society creates additional national human resources, how are these resources to be nurtured? The studies reviewed indicate that the responsibility for language maintenance or language learning is shared. Individuals ultimately are responsible, but they are unlikely to take on this challenge if the burden is too great. Linguistic communities can provide partial support through the creation of living language domains, both aural and written. There is also a need to create a wider range of media, similar to that available in L₁, to aid in this process. At the state and national levels, support is needed for both community and individual efforts. In the schools in particular, languages other than English need to be seen as a valid part of the curriculum for all students. Perhaps the hardest thing to achieve is the change in attitude necessary to view bilingualism as natural and as a national asset for all Australians. If that were to occur, it is probable that many of the other problems would be greatly reduced, and bilingualism for most Australian communities could be assured.

NOTE

¹*Putonghua* means literally "General Speech" and is the most recent of a series of names given to Mandarin in its role as "national language" in a variety of Chinese-speaking communities; e.g., *Guanhua* ("official speech"), *Guoyu* ("national speech"), *Huayu* ("Chinese speech").

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