

<IALR.Rev>

Kipp, Sandra, Michael Clyne, Anne Pauwels, 1995. *Immigration and Australia's Language Resources*. [= Report for the Bureau of Immigration, Multiculturalism, and Population Research] Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service. xvi+168 pp.

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Australia is the only country of British background which has developed a language policy that recognizes the value of Languages Other Than English (LOTEs) and indigenous languages and makes English the official language. These positions follow from the endorsement of multiculturalism as the key element of national identity and the adoption of independent political tenets, such as that language maintenance (i) is an aspect of social justice, (ii) provides cultural enrichment, and (iii) benefits the nation as much as it does the users of non-English languages.

Languages are an asset, not a burden. The national language policy prioritized fifteen languages from which each State and Territory made a list of eight as State priority languages, see table 1.

Table 1: States priority languages <IALR.LOT.TAB>

But depending on which tenet is given primacy, the emphasis may shift between favouring the promotion of the national language and a small range of LOTEs rather than that of a broad range of LOTEs and indigenous languages. Such shifts have indeed occurred (Ozolins 1993; Clyne 1991). Over the years the social rights argument of the 80s, which was used to redress past wrongs and to promote cultural enrichment, gave way to economic interests, language needs at the workplace and in vocational training. LOTEs with a perceived higher economic importance, such as Vietnamese and Chinese, were ranked higher in the recession of the 90s. That situation continues to prevail under the impact of the evidence that shows that Australians of non-English-speaking background (NESB-Australians) are considerably disadvantaged. Both recent immigration from non-English-using countries, mainly in Asia, and a backlog of migrants with insufficient English language competence represent a considerable burden on social welfare, etc. Little scope is left for cultural enrichment arguments. Such a conflict was already foreshadowed in the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* (1989):

"Language and cultural barriers prevent many NESB immigrants gaining equal access to education, training, employment and social welfare services available to others; newly arrived settlers continue to suffer extremely high levels of unemployment..." (1989:7)

Immigration and Australia's Language Resources (IALR) was to establish the hard facts and to provide a rationale for policy formulation for LOTEs (excluding indigenous languages) in the business domain. It should identify measures to be implemented within a complex network of responsibilities shared between government at local, state, and federal level, the business world, and the education sector. IALR draws on (i) the 1991 and 1986 Census data, (ii) qualitative research into the public service and tourism, and (iii) (ii) other studies. While adhering to the socio-economic agenda, IALR develops the nexus with a cultural interpretation of social rights and with the activities of LOTE communities as a corrective.

The following questions are central to IALR: (i) what are the demographic facts about NESB immigrants in the Commonwealth, States, capital cities, and the country (ch. 2); (ii) how do LOTEs profile across such criteria as countries of origin of users; population density across Australia; gender and age; employment skills; educational and (actual) employment level(s); income brackets, etc. (ch. 3); (iii) what is the nexus between employment and employability with language (ch. 5); (iv) what are the potential benefits of more efficient LOTE uses (ch. 5); (v) who carries the main burden for language maintenance, the government or LOTE groups (ch. 7). Ch. 6 locates the survey inside the international, mainly Canadian, research and ch. 8 concludes with recommendations for policy formulation and future research.

show significant differences in the levels of (developed) infra-structure to support maintenance, the status of language in the community, etc. But overall, the greatest burden for maintenance rests with the communities, government support is insufficient.

While triggered by very serious political-economic needs, IALR provides an interesting profile of an important aspect of multicultural Australia. It succeeds in straddling the boundary between economic, social, and cultural arguments for LOTE maintenance and promotion, arguing that total reliance on current economic predictors may damage the nations interests, as could be seen in the collapse of the Eastern political block, which brought the needs of Polish, Hungarian, Latvian, etc. to the fore. One might add the rise of Latin America's economic power. The report is well-structured and the balance of argumentation excellent.

A few illustrations must suffice to illustrate the findings of this carefully produced report. The 1991 and 1986 Census findings show that the total percentage of people using a LOTE at home has increased from 13.6% to 14.8%, which is well over 2 million. IALR cautions that actual use is underestimated since use outside one's home, e.g. in parents' or grandparents' homes, business, is discounted (78). Particularly 'older' LOTEs are used more now by the younger generation with their parents and relatives in their homes, as well as in community functions (26), a fact demonstrates how successfully public attitudes on LOTE use have changed.

LOTEs are unevenly distributed across States, cities, towns and rural areas. Due to the high percentage of Aborigines the Northern Territory (NT) has the greatest concentration of LOTEs (about 23%), followed by Victoria, and New South Wales. Other States and Territories are well behind. As for cities, Sydney has a greater proportion of Asian and Arabic migrants than Melbourne, which mirrors the more traditional Europe-centered migration intake (38). The two cities are definitely drifting apart. As for the urban/rural settlement dimension, it is interesting to note that only Qld and Tas have non-cosmopolitan LOTE concentrations.

Ch. 3 provides language profiles of 29 languages and language groups, such as the Chinese, Filipino languages. The following set of criteria are used throughout: total number of speakers, greatest concentration by State, urban-rural areas, age profile of population, level of qualifications, of employment, and income, self-rated competency in English. That approach yields highly interesting language profiles, some of which are tabulated in table 2.

Table 2: profiles of selected languages

While exact predictions of future trends are not intended, age profile, along with fertility rate, etc., allow the inference that Asian languages will become more important than the 'older' European ones (ch. 4). Vietnamese has meanwhile pushed German to fourth rank. Aging communities are clearly the German language groups, Dutch, Hungarians, Poles, Russians, while young ones are Arabs and Thais. Employment and income levels, qualifications in conjunction with English competency turn out to confirm the nexus between command of English and employment. NESB-Australians with little or no English fare far worse than others although, it should be added, level of income is uniformly low.

Ch. 5 deepens the statistical findings with qualitative research into the public services and tourism domains. Translating and interpreting are clear examples of where the LOTE potential should prove useful but its full exploitation is marred by various factors. For one, it is not always appropriate to use personnel of the same ethnic/LOTE background as the client. There can be a tendency to misread the role relationship as one inviting more empathy than permitted. Overseas-born and second generation speakers are favoured. Budgetary and other annual insecurities also work against even medium-term planning and LOTE-user employment

The tourism industry is another clear case where LOTE users employment may look promising. The industry's language needs are potentially attractive both in terms of numbers and qualification. One only needs to refer to such positions as tour planner, marketing, in-bound facilities provision, entertainment, guiding, etc. But knowledge of LOTEs is not given fair recognition, applicants have to start at the bottom so careers do not provide much of an incentive. In my view the impact of the industry on LOTEs as an economic resource is clearly overrated.

Ch. 7 looks at the question of whether government or communities do more for LOTE maintenance. The three communities looked at, viz. the German-speaking, Thai, and Polish,

Table 1

LANGUAGES	STATES							
	NSW	SA	Vic	Tas	Qld	NT	WA	ACT
Abor. lges	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Arabic	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
French	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
German	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Indonesia	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
Italian	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Japanese	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mandarin Chin	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mod. Greek	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Spanish	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Vietnamese	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0

Table 1: State priority languages (1= selected, 0= not selected)

Table 2

CRITERIA	ARABIC	CHINESE	FILIPINO	GERMAN	GREEK	HINDI	ITALIAN	VIETNAM
NUMBER OF USERS	162,857	261,848	59,110	113,336	285,700	22,725	418,804	110,187
CONCENTRATION	Syd., Melb.	Syd., Melb.	Syd., Melb.	Melb. > Syd.	Melb., Syd.	Melb., Syd.	Melb., Syd.	Syd. = Melb.
AGE PROFILE	young	young	young	ageing	mid(?)	young	mid, ageing	young
FORMAL QUALIF. LEVEL	low, 19.2%	mid, 31.2%	high, 48.5%	high, 54.7%	low, 23.2%	high, 41.5%	low, 26.1%	low
EMPLOYMENT LEVEL	rel. low, 40%	mid, 53%	high, 59%	high, 60.2%	high, 58%	high, 60%	high, 61%	low, 38%
INCOME	low	low	rel. high	low	low	low	low	low
SELF-ASSESSED PROF	rel. high	reas. confid	confid	very confid	very confid	very confid	confid	low

Table 2: Selected language profiles