

Martin, Shirley, 2002. *New life, new language. The history of the Adult Migration English Program*. Sydney, National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University. ISBN 1 86408 48X.

Reviewed by Gerhard Leitner, Berlin

Written to commemorate the 50th anniversary in 1998 of AMEP, *New life, new language* (NLNL) is the story of the most important language teaching program to assist migrants to assimilate or integrate into a life in Australia. NLNL tells a fascinating story of the motifs that led to its foundation in 1947 and on to 2001, when it still existed as an effective program amongst many other service providers. AMEP, one well say, triggered the rise of an English language teaching industry that is well able to compete on the Asian export market, is innovative in research and development. It is one of Australia's educational and migration success stories.

Australia desperately needed people after World War II. "Our first requirement is additional people", said the first immigration minister, Arthur Calwell, in 1945, and migration programs were set up with Britian and, importantly in this context, continental Europe. English language teaching was – surprisingly in light of other immigrant countries – seen as a proper part of an immigration policy. The other responsibilities were employment and accommodation. The Director of the Commonwealth Office of Education suggested in 1946 that the program should target teaching at four stages of migration, i.e. in the country of origin, on the voyage to Australia, on arrival and after placement (p 5). Given that migrants were based on reception centres at first, on-arrival program were feasible. (Now several migration programs provide for services to be chosen after arrival only.) The teaching goal was to meet immediate, direct, natural and oral needs of communication (p 6), a goal that has not vanished and holds for much language teaching in Australia, but was to assist assimilation. In 1951 it shifted from the Commonwealth to a State/Commonwealth-administered program with clear divisions of labour. AMEP expanded, included radio, later TV, provided employment-oriented classes and teacher training. Migrants did not for ever take easily to be taught. Work fatigue was a major factor in declining attendance rates, it was also the lack of appreciation of the opportunities offered especially in continuation classes.

I will pass over much of the next phase (1965-87), which includes the significant shifts. The source countries of migrants widened to Asia, political events like the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 triggered new waves of Central European migrants. But, importantly, the second generation of (European) migrants was a factor in the shift to multiculturalism and to ethnic pluralism. The program details shifted along with new demands, challenges and opportunities. As English language needs became more acute and diverse, ELT became a topic in the debates about a language policy. The Campbell Report (1986) into immigration programs summed up the changes in AMEP in these words:

... from goals of assimilation to integration to multiculturalism; from centralised curriculum planning to decentralised planning; from a content-based structural curriculum to a needs-based one; from s single language learning methodology to methodologies; from texts to 'authentic' material; from teacher-centred to learner-centred activities (p 25)

Changes in society piled up to a coherent user- and skill-oriented package of educational methods. The national language policy (1987) mainstreamed ELT and developments in the

1990s led to other adaptations. Outcome-orientated planning, testing, cost-efficiency, tendering and the diversification providers are some of the key words used in the process and reflect the over-arching philosophy of economic rationalism. NLNL continues the story with the theme of client services, methodology, the AMEP curriculum, support services, etc., that show how the new economic constraints led to a competitive university-business link. The final chapter asks whether AMEP has made a difference. Yes, it has, of course – indeed on many levels. The author concludes her story in these words:

The AMEP is acknowledged as a world leader and Australia's most important migration settlement program. It has made a major contribution to our nation-building process, to the successful settlement of non-English-speaking migrants and refugees, and the maximisation of Australia's cultural diversity (p 206)

It may be interesting to refer to another success story here, i.e. the teaching of languages other than English (LOTEs). The pre-cursors of LOTEs began somewhat before World War II, continued throughout the war and gradually led to the biggest school for LOTEs, the Victorian School of Languages. Despite well-known difficulties, Australia is outstanding in several areas of language education.

This book, written by a former director of AMES in Sydney, is a splendid contribution to the story of migration, assimilation, integration and pluralism, structural adaptations to learner needs, teaching methodologies and curricula. It is well written, amply illustrated and of relevance to those interested in migration, education and language.