LITERACY POLICY IN MULTICULTURAL AUSTRALIA

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Abstract: Australia is considered to be a multicultural society. 21% of people counted in the 2006 Census spoke a language other than English at home; the most common languages being Italian, Greek, Cantonese, and Arabic (Japanese was spoken by 0.2%, which is an increase of 24% from 2001). The politics of language has been an important feature of Australian politics, partly due to the fact that immigrants seeking citizenship are expected to be able to demonstrate a certain degree of fluency in English. Over the last twenty years, it has been realised that by maintaining the first languages of immigrants we can improve migrant children's literacy in English, and there have been moves to test this in the case of bilingual indigenous education. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that LOTE (Languages other than English) or second language programs in schools have not been as successful as expected, due to decades of policy neglect and inaction. At the same time, Australia has made considerable efforts to develop "Asia literacy" as a core part of the school curriculum in the 21st century in order to assist young Australians to make sense of the part of the world in which they live. In this paper, I examine the current situation of second language education at the tertiary level and explore the values and meanings underpinning that education.

多文化社会として知られるオーストラリアは，2006年の国勢調査によると21％がイタリア語，ギリシャ語，広東語，アラビア語など英語以外の言語を家庭で話している（日本語は0.2％で，2001年より24％の増加）。移民が国籍を取得するためには，ある程度の英語能力が必要なこともあり，言語行政はオーストラリアの政治において重要な位置を占めている。この二十年間で，移民の第一言語の保持が子供たちの英語での読み書き能力に効果的であることが認識されて来た。この認識に基づいて先住民の子供たちのバイリンガル教育が試みられている。一方で，学校におけるLOTE（英語以外の言語）または第二言語プログラムが，何十年にも渡る政策の欠如と怠慢により，期待されたほど成功していないことが指摘されている。それと同時に，オーストラリアは21世紀の学校カリキュラムの中心になるものとしての「アジア・リテラシー」に力を入れてきた。これはオーストラリアの子供たちが自分たちが生きている世界を理解する手助けを目的としている。今回の発表では大学レベルでの第二言語教育の現状を考察し，内在する価値及び意義を吟味する。

Key words: Multiculturalism, Asia Literacy, Languages other than English (LOTE), citizenship, indigenous affairs, immigration

This paper is divided into two parts: the first section focuses on Australia's multiculturalism as a background to literacy policies in Australia, including changes in multicultural policies and definitions of multiculturalism. The second section concerns Asian language teaching in the tertiary sector as part of "Asia literacy", including the example of recent changes in the situation in Queensland.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIA

On May 24, 2011, the The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) launched the "Your Better Life Index"[1] to allow citizens to compare the quality of life across 34 countries, based on 11 dimensions — housing, income, jobs, community, education, environment, governance, health, life satisfaction, safety, and work-life balance; and Australia achieved the highest average score across the eleven dimensions, while Japan was ranked nineteenth. A noteworthy characteristic of Australian society is the strong sense of community and high level of civic participation. 95% of Australians believe that they know someone they could rely on in a time of need, in comparison to 90% of Japanese people. Voter turnout, which is a measure of public trust in government and of citizen participation in the political process, is very high in Australia, partly because voting is compulsory for Australian citizens: the average turnout during recent elections in Australia was 95%, compared to 60.92% in Japan. (The Osaka mayoral election in November 2011 recorded a 67% turnout, which is the highest in the last 40 years.) Overall, 75% of Australians are "satisfied with life", as opposed to 40% of Japanese people. The figures for Japan are based on data from the 2008 census, before the Great East Japan Earthquake — the coming decade is likely to be more challenging than ever.

The overall sense of well-being is the backdrop to Australia's current multicultural policy. On February 16, 2011, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship launched "The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy".[2] This new policy reaffirms the importance of a culturally diverse and socially cohesive nation, based on the following facts:

- One in four of Australia's 22 million people was born overseas;
- 44% of the population was born overseas or have a parent who was born overseas;
- 21% speak a language other than English at home;
- 260 languages are spoken; and
- The population has more than 270 ancestries.

"The People of Australia" was translated into twelve languages: Arabic, Chinese (traditional and simplified), Dinka, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The two Chinese versions are to accommodate the needs of people from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. Dinka is a dialect spoken in South Sudan, and is the language of recent refugee migrants from Sudan to Australia.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has created a section called "What's in a Name?"[3] on its homepage to illustrate its historical development. It lists the names the department has had since its establishment in 1945, highlighting how the department's functions and responsibilities have changed over the years:

- DI - Department of Immigration (1945－1974)
- DLI - Department of Labor and Immigration (1974－1975)
- DIEA - Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1976－1987)
- DILGEA - Department of Immigration, Local Government and Ethnic Affairs (1987－1993)
- DIEA - Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1993－1996)
- DIMA - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (1996－2001)

- DIMIA - Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (2001－2006)
- DIMA - Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (2006－2007)
- DIAC - Department of Immigration and Citizenship (2007－current)

After the White Australia Policy officially came to an end in 1973, the expression "ethnic affairs" was used until it was replaced by "multicultural affairs" in the 1990s. As I discuss below, Australia's indigenous people were initially not included in the notion of Australian multiculturalism. The movement towards the inclusion of indigenous matters under the rubric of multiculturalism is demonstrated in the name change to "Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs" in the new millennium. In other words, the notion of a multiculturalism that includes Aboriginal affairs is relatively new in Australian society. The next step — the removal of "multicultural affairs" from the department's name and introduction of the current "Department of Immigration and Citizenship" — was taken by the former conservative Howard government, which advocated a citizenship test for newly arrived migrants. This led to a national debate about the definition of what it meant to be an Australian.

Australia's current multicultural policy, "The People of Australia", consists of four principles:

1. The Australian Government celebrates and values the benefits of cultural diversity for all Australians, within the broader aims of national unity, community harmony and the maintenance of our democratic values.
2. The Australian Government is committed to a just, inclusive and socially cohesive society where everyone can participate in the opportunities that Australia offers and where government services are responsive to the needs of Australians from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
3. The Australian Government welcomes the economic, trade and investment benefits that arise from our successful multicultural nation.
4. The Australian Government will act to promote understanding and acceptance while responding to expressions of intolerance and discrimination with strength, and where necessary, with the force of the law.

Compared to the recent admission by European leaders that state-sponsored multiculturalism was a failure and that assimilation policies were therefore needed,[4] "The People of Australia" celebrates cultural and linguistic diversity as a source of successful nation-building. The meaning or definition of multiculturalism, however, has changed significantly since the concept was introduced to Australia. Initially, there was indifference to indigenous affairs as a part of multiculturalism because the notion of multiculturalism was based on the assumption that the nation had been built by white people. This led to a view that multiculturalism represented the assimilation of "other" people (Aboriginal and Asian) into the majority (Anglo-Saxon). According to some members of the white majority, multiculturalism is a threat because it divides the nation, which is often seen as a "paranoid" view (See Hage, 1998 & 2003). Successive governments have negotiated such concerns, and have sought to promote the advantages of cultural and linguistic diversity for nation-building. This has been termed "hybrid multiculturalism" (Noble & Tabar, 2004).

ASIA LITERACY

Australia's geographical proximity to Asia has also played an important role in such nation-building (Lincicome, 2005). "Asia literacy" has been advocated in Australia since the 1990s, and refers to Asian language acquisition and cross curriculum studies of Asia to assist young Australians to make sense of the part of the world in which they belong. From 1994 to 2002 the federal government's "National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Program" (NALSAS) supported efforts by schools to develop and deliver an Asia-related curriculum. Since 2008, a similar scheme — the "National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program" (NALSSP) — has been implemented in order to assist schools in the teaching of four Asian languages: Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean. According to the Asia Education Foundation (2010), 18% of Australian secondary students were studying an Asian language at school in 2009; the percentage drops to less than 5% by Year 12. This means that the majority of students who study an Asian language finish secondary school with a low level of proficiency in that language. The small number of students who continue to study an Asian language to Year 12 also indicates that the academic status of language subjects is not high in the school curriculum. This can also be said of the status of language teachers in schools. The difficulties in securing qualified language teachers have been an on-going issue[5]: local teachers often fail the language proficiency tests for teaching languages, and recruiting overseas-born native speakers of the languages is not an easy alternative because teachers require formal qualifications from an Australian university and should also be able to teach other subjects.

There has been heated debate about the future direction of Asia Literacy in Australia, which is closely related to the issues surrounding Australian multiculturalism. From a "paranoid" point of view, languages other than English (LOTE) is a threat because LOTE education initially aimed at maintaining cultural identities in local communities. When Asian languages are offered to the "majority" of Australians, who are native speakers of English, it is often assumed that Asian scripts are difficult to learn and that such language study is therefore time-consuming.[6] There is also resentment about the promotion of Asia Literacy because some believe that it has been conducted at the expense of European, indigenous and other community languages (see Ozolins, 1993). While NALSAS and NALSSP have made some progress in promoting Asian languages in schools, their contribution to promoting studies about Asia has been limited: no Australian education system at present mandatorily requires schools to teach about Asia as part of the history, geography, English or arts curriculum.

TERTIARY SECTOR IN SOUTH-EAST QUEENSLAND

In 2010, an alliance, currently known as the Brisbane Universities Languages Hub (BULH), was formed by three universities in Queensland — The University of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology, and Griffith University — to allow students to study languages offered by other universities as part of the degree at their home university. The name of the alliance will change to "Brisbane Universities Languages Alliance" (BULA) in 2012. The scheme was initially funded by the federal government under the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)'s Diversity and Structural Reform Grant Program for a three-year period for the purpose of increasing opportunities to incorporate language studies into

tertiary courses. However, the initiative was rather political as it resulted, in part, from regional politics among universities in South-East Queensland. In 2009, Queensland University of Technology closed its Language Centre (located in the Business School) and ceased teaching German, Indonesian, Japanese and French Programs, as part of its strategic plan to focus on its perceived strength — namely, technology. Queensland University of Technology retained its Chinese Program even though it was the smallest language program because of its newly established Confucius Institute. Griffith University closed down it Indonesian and Korean Programs, retaining Chinese, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. Arrangements to transfer some teaching staff from the Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and French Programs to The University of Queensland were included in the scheme.

In 2011, ten languages are available through BULH: Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The University of Queensland offers all languages except Italian; Griffith University offers Chinese, Italian, Japanese and Spanish; and Queensland University of Technology offers Chinese. In the first two years of BULH, The University of Queensland offered introductory-level units in French and Japanese at one of the Queensland University of Technology's campuses, but due to the small enrolment numbers, the arrangements ceased in the third year.[7] As this indicates, one of the consequences of the formation of BULH is that significantly fewer students of Queensland University of Technology now study languages as part of their degree. It has been pointed out that issues relating to inter-campus travel, timetabling, exchange programs, enrolment processes, and assessment are the major factors that prevent students from studying languages at other universities through BULH.

LANGUAGES OFFERED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

Currently, the UQ School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies offers four Asian languages (Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean) and five European languages (French, German, Portuguese, Spanish and Russian) as single and extended majors in the Bachelor of Arts degree as well as the Diploma of Languages, which is mainly for students of International Studies. Some students study a language as part of a dual degree program, e. g. a combination of Arts and Science or Arts and Law. There are also two Masters Programs in translation and interpreting to train students at professional levels in Japanese and Chinese: the Master of Arts in Japanese Interpreting and Translation (MAJIT) and Master of Arts in Chinese Translation and Interpreting (MACTI).

ASIAN LANGUAGES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEESNLAND

The four Asian languages are offered to both local and international students. The Japanese Program has the largest enrolment, followed by the Chinese Program. Students enrolling in the undergraduate program include Japanese heritage or background students but not Japanese native speakers who have completed compulsory education in Japan, while the majority of enrolments in the MAJIT program are Japanese international students. The number of heritage students in the undergraduate program has been increasing, but is still very small compared to Chinese and Korean, reflecting the size of the Japanese community in Queensland.[8] The undergraduate program has three different entry points, depending on a student's proficiency level: A stream for beginners; B stream for post-

Year 12 students; and C stream for students who have lived in Japan for more than ten moths or the equivalent. Both skill-based and content-based courses are offered at intermediate and advanced levels. In order to maintain continuity through to the MAJIT program, introductory courses in interpreting and translation are offered at the advanced undergraduate level.

Similarly, the Chinese Program also has translation and interpreting courses in the undergraduate program. One of the major characteristics of the Chinese Program is that the majority of the students are heritage students. Reflecting the large and established nature of the Chinese community in Australia, many Australia-born Chinese background students (who often call themselves ABCs) study Chinese at school and university. This particular phenomenon has been seen as one factor that discourages non-Chinese-background Australian students from studying Chinese, because they are forced to compete with Chinese heritage students. The majority of students in the MACTI program are Chinese international students. The enrolment numbers in both MAJIT and MACTI have declined recently partly because of the changes to immigration regulations. Enrolment in translation and interpreting course is no longer given high priority in applications for permanent residency.

The Korean Program at UQ is relatively small, and the majority of students are Chinese heritage students, partly because of the familiarity with the culture and partly because of the smaller Korean community in Queensland, in comparison to the Chinese community.

Enrolments in the Indonesian Program have been declining for the past ten years despite the fact that Indonesia is Australia's closest neighbour and linguists have been in demand in fields relating to Australia's foreign policy in the region; no clear solution is likely to be available in the immediate future.

The Indonesian Program is perhaps an example of the difficulty of integrating Asian language programs and area studies in the current tertiary education system. Even though one of the strengths of language programs offered by the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies is the incorporation of both language training and cultural understanding in its programs, the separation of language components from the Asian studies program is a recent trend. This has resulted in the lack of popularity of the Asian studies major. Compared to European Studies, which has long been established as part of the history and literature curricula as one aspect of understanding Australia's cultural heritage and civilisation (see Gunew, 2004), the definition of "Asian Studies" has not been successfully articulated in the Australian context.

The successful delivery of language programs as part of degree programs in the tertiary sector has required careful curriculum design. Given that there has been a universal trend in the tertiary sector to offer programs with fewer contact hours and larger class sizes based on the concept of so-called "blended learning", it has been a challenge to combine the instrumental aspect of language training with an academic understanding of the culture and society of the target language. Universities also need to accommodate the differing needs of students with diverse backgrounds and different expectations of language learning. There are five major motivations or reasons for learning an Asian language at university:

1. To increase employment opportunities combined with other majors
2. To maintain linguistic and cultural heritage
3. As part of vocational training (translation and interpreting)
4. To pursue personal interests (e. g. popular culture)
5. As an easy subject option (international students with previous study experience)

Combined with Study Abroad programs, the overall number of students who study languages at The University of Queensland has increased, but it is not clear how much this has contributed to an increase in "Asia Literacy".

CONCLUSION

This paper has looked at Australia's literacy policies from the perspective of multiculturalism, focusing on Australia's efforts to increase Asia Literacy since the abandonment of the White Australia Policy. It is important in this context to consider individual issues specific to regions, groups and sectors as part of an examination of the literacy policies of a nation. Power relationships between languages, prejudice against and fear of other languages, and empowerment by maintaining particular languages are crucial elements in nation-building. Education systems, including both the curriculum and teacher training, are also important in the successful delivery of language programs. Political, economic and geographical factors have a significant influence on literacy policies, as do learners' backgrounds and motivations, which reflect the dynamics of the international community. The popularity of Spanish at universities has been supported by the Cervantes Institute, which was created by the Spanish government. The newly established Portuguese Program is a successful outcome of promotion by the Brazilian government. In other words, literacy policy in Australia also depends on the complicated relationships between Australia and the international community.

NOTES:

1. OCED Better Life Index <http://oecdbetterlifeindex.org> and OECD Launches Your Better Life Index, May 24, 2011 <www.oecd.org/document/63/0,3746,en_2649_201185_47912639_1_1_1_1,0 0.html>.
2. The People of Australia: Australia's Multicultural Policy <www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/ multicultural/pdf_doc/people-of-australia-multicultural-policy-booklet.pdf>.
3. "What's in a Name?" <www.immi.gov.au/about/anniversary/whats-in-a-name.htm>.
4. BBC News. February 5, 2011. <www.bbc.co.uk> "State multiculturalism has failed, says David Cameron"; BBC News October 16, 2010. <www.bbc.co.uk> " Angela Merkel says multicultural society has failed".
5. The Courier-Mail. December 20, 2011. <www.couriermail.com.au> "Many Queensland state schools not teaching foreign languages despite education policy" by Tanya Chilcott.
6. East Asia Forum. August 27, 2008. <www.eastasiaforum.org> "Asia literacy: making a good policy better" by Ken Anderson.
7. See Levy and Steel (forthcoming) for issues in terms of establishing and administering collaborative arrangements for BULH.
8. See Shiobara (2005) about a Japanese community in Sydney.

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