

12TH OECD-JAPAN SEMINAR:

“GLOBALISATION AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCIES: RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY IN LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENTS”

COUNTRY NOTE:

AUSTRALIA

LINGUISTIC CHALLENGES FOR MINORITIES AND MIGRANTS

Australia is today a culturally diverse country with people from all over the world speaking hundreds of different languages. Australia has a broad policy of social inclusion, seeking to ensure that all Australians, regardless of their diverse backgrounds are fully included in and able to contribute to society.

With its long history of receiving new visitors from overseas, and particularly with the explosion of immigration following World War II, Australia has a great deal of experience in dealing with the linguistic challenges of migrants and minorities. Instead of simply seeking to assimilate new arrivals, Australia seeks to integrate those people into society so that they are able to take full advantage of opportunities, but in a way that respects their cultural traditions and indeed values their diverse experiences.

Snapshot of Australian immigration

Australia's current Immigration Program allows people from any country to apply to visit or settle in Australia. Decisions are made on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to the applicant's ethnicity, culture, religion or language, provided that they meet the criteria set out in law.

In 2005–06, there were 131 600 (ABS, 2006) people who settled permanently in Australia. The top ten countries of origin are:

	Country of birth	%
1	United Kingdom	17.7
2	New Zealand	14.5
3	India	8.6
4	China (excluded SARs and Taiwan)	8.0
5	Philippines	3.7
6	South Africa	3.0
7	Sudan	2.9
8	Malaysia	2.3
9	Singapore	2.0
10	Viet Nam	2.0
	Other	35.3
	Total	100.0

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 census data:

- Australia's immigrants come from 185 different countries
- Australians identify with some 250 ancestries and practise a range of religions.
- 43% of Australians were born overseas or have at least one parent who was born overseas
- 24% of the Australian population was born overseas – (23% in the United Kingdom, 10% in New Zealand, 4% in Italy, 4% in China and 4% in Viet Nam)
- Almost 3% of the population is made up of indigenous Australians
- In addition to Indigenous languages, about 200 other languages are spoken in Australia and 21% of the population speak a language other than English at home. After English, the most common languages spoken are Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic and Mandarin.

Australia's indigenous population

The ABS estimated that the indigenous population of Australia as at 30 June 2006 was 517,000 or 2.5% of the total Australian population with an estimated 43% living in regional areas and 25% in remote areas. According to the ABS, almost 1/5th or 93,000 of Australia's Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders live in a discrete indigenous community, of which 73% reported a usual population of less than 50 people. It is estimated that there are more than 200 Australian Indigenous languages.

Education performance of migrant and indigenous

Performance of migrant students – PISA 2006

Education performance of migrant students is not a major policy issue for Australia and our selective migration policy, including selection based on English language skills and education background, contributes to the minimal gaps between Australian born and migrant students on PISA performance and socio economic status.

Australia also offers excellent support services for settlement of our migrants and a strong immersion language (of instruction) program. There is also a lot of emphasis on early detection and scaffoldings services for students with language literacy problems more generally.

In scientific literacy there were no significant difference between the scores of Australian- born students (students and both parents born in Australia); first generation students (student born in Australia with at least one parent born overseas); and foreign born students (students and both parents born overseas).

Students with a language background other than English scored significantly lower than those who spoke English.

Slightly more foreign-born students than Australian-born students, and substantially more students with a language background other than English (20% compared to 11% of English-speaking students) were not achieving proficiency level 2.

In reading literacy, first-generation students achieved significantly higher scores than Australian-born students. There was a similar distribution in proficiency levels across all immigrant status categories.

English speaking students scored at a significantly higher level than those students with a language background other than English, and 20% of students with a language background other than English failed to achieve level 2, compared with 12% of English speaking students.

In mathematical literacy, both first generation and foreign-born students significantly outperformed Australian-born students, and there was no significant difference in the average scores of English speaking students and those with a language background other than English.

Similar proportions of students in each of the immigrant and language categories achieved at the lower proficiency levels. However a higher proportion of foreign born (23%) than first generation (18%) and Australian-born (15%) students and a higher proportion of students with a language background other than English (22%) than English speaking (16%) students were achieving at level 5 or higher.

Performance of indigenous students

PISA 2006 results evidenced that there is a wide gap in performance between indigenous and non-indigenous students in scientific, reading and mathematical literacy.

The performance of indigenous students over the period from 2000-06 for reading literacy and from 2003-06 for mathematical literacy has remained essentially the same with any changes not to be found statistically significant.

The achievements of indigenous students continue to be a concern with the average scores of indigenous students placing them about two and a half years behind the average for that of non-indigenous Australian students.

In addition from the 2006 Censuses of Population and Housing, it is clear that there still remains a marked difference in Year 12 completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, but there have been improvements in educational participation and attainment for Indigenous people across Australia since 1996.

In 2006, Indigenous young people aged 19 years had lower rates of Year 12 completion than non-Indigenous young people of the same age overall (37% compared with 74%).

In 2006, just over half (51%) of all Indigenous 15-19-year-olds were participating in education, up from 43% in 1996, and there was also an increase in participation in education for Indigenous people aged 20-24 years (from 11% in 1996 to 13% in 2006).

Between 1996 and 2006, increases in educational attainment among Indigenous people corresponded with increased levels of participation in education. In 2006, the proportion of Indigenous people aged 25-64 years with a non-school qualification (29%) had nearly doubled from that in 1996 (15%). This was mostly due to a marked increase in the proportion of Indigenous people whose highest qualification was a Certificate or Advanced Diploma, from 12% in 1996 to 23% in 2006. The proportion of the Indigenous population whose highest qualification was a Bachelor degree or above was relatively small (compared with the non-Indigenous population) but doubled from 3% to 6% between 1996 and 2006.

Australian government policy responses

Australia has a long history of immigration and continues to admit significant numbers of immigrants for permanent residency. Policies are in place that provide for the selection of immigrants on the basis of a range of characteristics that are considered necessary for integration, including English language skills and educational background. Australia has also developed over many years language support programs for new arrivals with clearly defined goals and standards.

Australia is one of the few countries that train ESL specific teachers. For example the Department of Education and Training in New South Wales states that approximately 30% of ESL specific teachers have completed a special teacher training program/specialisation during their initial studies, 28% have completed their initial studies in other subject areas and received in-service training (between 18 and 300 hours), 17% have completed a post graduate degree specialising in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) or equivalent since beginning their teaching and another 14% have a range of other qualifications such as adult TESOL teacher training or qualification gained in other countries.

Current language support programs include, but are not limited to:

Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The AMEP is a national settlement program that provides English language tuition for eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants who do not have functional English. Functional English assists migrants to settle successfully in Australia and provides the basic language skills necessary to deal with everyday social and some work situations in English.

The AMEP offers up to 510 hours of free English language tuition to eligible adult permanent migrants and humanitarian entrants who register for the AMEP within three months of arrival or visa grant if onshore, and commence classes within 12 months. 73% of eligible migrants took up their AMEP entitlement in 2006 – 07.

In 2006-07 the AMEP provided 8 million hours of English language tuition to 50 218 clients at an expenditure of \$155.8 million. The average hours of tuition were 389 hours for each student in 2006 -07. AMEP clients represented 189 countries of birth and the most commonly spoken languages were Mandarin, Arabic and Vietnamese.

Fifty-five per cent of all clients were family stream entrants, 31% were humanitarian stream entrants and 14 per cent were dependents of skilled entrants. 77.6% of all clients had eight or more years of education, 66.5% of all clients were female and the age breakdown was as follows - 14.7 % of all clients were aged between 16 and 24, 64.8% were aged between 25 and 44, and 20.4 were aged above 44 years of age

A range of learning options are available - full or part time study, distance learning and a Home Tutor scheme. Additional tuition is available through the Special Preparatory Program to humanitarian entrants. Service providers also offer ongoing educational counseling, advice on options for further study, referral to services, including Commonwealth funded employment assistance and can arrange free childcare for the under school age children of clients during class times.

Eligible migrants can contact enrolment centres themselves or are referred to the AMEP by their sponsor, settlement provider or Centrelink. Information on the AMEP is made available in English as well as in 24 community languages – (Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chinese Simplified, Chinese Traditional, Dari, Dinka, Farsi (Persian), Indonesian, Japanese, Karen, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Serbian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Urdu and Vietnamese)

Results of the 1 January 2005 – 30 June 2006 AMEP Client telephone survey (in 16 community languages to 2956 people) indicated that 79 per cent of respondents had been offered English classes suitable to their needs and English level and 84 per cent were happy with their AMEP English classes overall.

English as Second Language-New Arrivals (ESL-NA) Program

The Australian Government continues to recognise the importance of giving children from non-English speaking backgrounds, including refugee students, every opportunity to gain the English language skills they need to be successful at school and beyond.

For newly arrived students, intensive support to improve English language skills is one of the best ways to improve their educational outcomes and future employability so that they may participate more broadly in Australian society.

The Government's *English as Second Language-New Arrivals (ESL-NA) Program* will provide an estimated \$311 million over the 2005-08 funding quadrennium to state and territory government and non-government education authorities to assist with the cost of delivering intensive English language tuition to eligible students.

The *(ESL-NA) Program* provided approximately \$80 million of funding in 2007 for 14, 536 students, 92% of who were enrolled in the government school sector and 8% in the Catholic and independent school sectors. Of the total number, approximately 38% of eligible students were humanitarian entrants.

Funds may be used at the discretion of the education authority for such purposes as:

- the employment of specialist teachers, including bilingual teachers, to teach ESL in a variety of situations, including but not restricted to:
- Parallel and team teaching
- Assistance to regular teachers to enable them to attend more effectively to English language development across the curriculum for ESL learners;
- the employment of advisory staff, interpreters, translators, bilingual welfare officers, teachers aides and school-community liaison workers;
- curriculum development and the provision of ESL teaching and learning materials;
- the provision of small items of equipment such as teaching aids, but not otherwise used for capital purposes; or
- the provision of ESL-in-service courses for ESL specialists as well as mainstream teachers.

This level of support includes additional funding for refugee students in recognition of their pre-migration experiences and low levels of schooling.

To be eligible for ESL-NA funding, students must be Australian students, permanent residents, accepted as a temporary migrant under the Humanitarian Program, or hold one of a range of provisional visas that provide for a long term commitment to Australia.

Students assessed at the local level as requiring intensive English language assistance must enrol within six months of arrival in Australia or 18 months in the case of students commencing first year of primary schooling.

Students from a non-humanitarian background funded through ESL-NA are expected to receive at least six months intensive English language tuition either in intensive language centres/units or in schools. Eligible humanitarian new arrival students are expected to receive at least twelve months tuition in intensive language centres/units or in schools. When tuition is delivered through schools, it is expected that students will be provided with a minimum of 10 hours of ESL assistance per week.

In addition to ESL-NA funding, targeted assistance is also provided by the Government's **Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Program**. This program will provide an estimated \$2 billion to state and territory government and non-government education authorities over the 2005-08 funding quadrennium targeted at the most disadvantaged students, including students from a non-English speaking background.

In addition to giving migrants the opportunity to improve their English language skills, language maintenance or the continued learning of a community or Indigenous language spoken in the home environment, is also of importance.

Community Languages Australia (Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations) is an umbrella body designed to unite the ethnic schools of Australia, and the state-based bodies which serve as their administrators, consolidating them beneath a single banner, and in the process carrying out a number of roles in the creation, maintenance, and profile of Australia's 1400 community language schools.

Australia's ethnic schools are one of the many tools used to consolidate Australia's identity as a multicultural society. Ethnic schools are non-profit, after-hours institutions, open to students regardless of their linguistic backgrounds, which provide training and instruction in a diverse range of languages, with a view to preserving and celebrating the culture and traditions of Australia's multicultural society.

The Australian Government is currently providing funding of \$247,500 under the national projects element of the *School Languages Program* to the Australian Federation of Ethnic Schools Associations (AFESA) to:

- strengthen national coordination and promotion of ethnic languages and ethnic Schools
- support 'emerging' communities establish their own ethnic community language schools
- consult with the diplomatic corps in the promotion of languages and establishment of new community support networks and programs of student exchanges
- maintain a website and produce electronic newsletters
- support the national Quality Assurance Framework
- support professional learning opportunities for personnel involved in language teaching at community languages schools
- improve data collection to enable annual reporting on community languages schools in Australia

In Australia the languages area is usually framed in terms of second/foreign language learning, that is, new learning of languages not spoken by the learners, and the secondary purpose for languages education is language maintenance.

A further rationale is the teaching of languages for what can be considered as 'cultural maintenance' when the language is taught to background speakers who do not speak the language, but who have a heritage attachment to the language.

Most of the twenty most widely taught languages, except the six most widely taught languages and Spanish, are taught either for language or cultural maintenance objects, as are Indigenous languages and community languages, whether in after-hours ethnic schools or in mainstream systems.

There are a number of recent initiatives that have sought to influence the nature of languages education in Australia. The most recent and significant of these is the **National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools: National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008**, which frames the nature and purpose of languages education in a nationally agreed manner.

In order to help build a secure and economically strong nation for the 21st century, the Australian Government is committed to encouraging the study of the languages of Australia's main regional partners. The \$62.4 million *National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP)* aims to increase the number of high school students who will become familiar with the languages and cultures of Japan, China and South Korea, which are Australia's largest merchandising export markets, and Indonesia, our close neighbour.

The Government is working in close collaboration with state and territory government and non-government education authorities and other key language education stakeholders to plan the implementation of the NALSSP from 1 January 2009.

NALSSP funding of \$62.4 million over 2008-09 to 2010-11 will provide additional Asian language classes in high schools, teacher training and support and the development of specialist curriculum for students who display advanced abilities in Asian languages and studies programs.

In regards to programs for indigenous Australians, a key objective of the Government's Education Revolution is to accelerate improvements in indigenous student learning outcomes and close the gap between the educational outcomes of Indigenous students and other students.

Though the MCEETYA Indigenous Reference Group, Ministers have agreed to develop and fully implement, by 2012, educational programs for Indigenous children that respect and value Indigenous cultures, languages and contexts and explicitly teach standard Australian English.

The Australian Government's Indigenous education and training programmes are supplementary to mainstream funding, and the 2008-09 Closing the Gap budget measure provides \$56.4 million over four years to expand intensive literacy and numeracy programs in schools and provide professional development support to assist teachers to prepare and maintain Individual Learning Plans for Indigenous students in every year of schooling up to Year 10.

Additionally, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations commissioned Vision Network to undertake a study of *Best Practice in the Teaching of Indigenous Culture in Australian Schools* with key findings recognising the importance of teaching Indigenous cultures, languages and history in schools. A briefing on the report and the findings is being provided to the Minister of Education for consideration and subsequently to be made available to stakeholders within the next few weeks.

Other programs include the **Whole of School Intervention Strategy (WoSI)** which involves communities and parents working with schools and other organisations to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous school students. The WoSI Strategy is made up of two elements; the Parent School Partnerships Initiatives (PSPIs) and Homework Centres (HWCs).

The Parent School Partnerships Initiatives (PSPIs) encourages parents of Indigenous students, Indigenous communities, schools and other organisations, to work together to address local barriers to education. The PSPI supplements mainstream education services and programmes, and may provide a mechanism for capacity building in Indigenous communities to enhance learning outcomes of Indigenous students.

PSPI has seven objectives – to improve attendance; improve literacy and numeracy skills; increase retention of Indigenous Students from Years 10-12; improve Year 12 (or equivalent) completion rates; ensure Indigenous children are ready, and inspired, to learn in the school environment; strengthen the capacity of parents and the community to work with schools to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students; and improve transitions at critical times of education and school to work transitions

In 2006 an additional \$5 million was allocated towards PSPIs to target early childhood education, ensuring two years of quality early childhood education before their first year of schooling and to help Indigenous parents make a smooth transition from pre-school to school.

Homework Centres (HWC) encourage schools and local Indigenous communities to work in partnership to develop and deliver initiatives to improve education outcomes for Indigenous school students including raising literacy and numeracy skills, increasing the rate of homework and assignment completion and improving students' study habits.

HWCs provide a supervised after-school hour's environment which encourages Indigenous students to complete their homework and to study. These are usually set up in a school classroom, library or other school building and are supervised by people from the local Indigenous community and schools.

The importance of Indigenous languages is acknowledged in the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' (MCEETYA) *National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools and the National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008*. Some of the actions recommended in the National Plan include schools working in partnership with Indigenous communities to provide Indigenous language learning, and support for Indigenous languages speakers and teachers involved in school languages programs.

Through the **School Languages Program**, the Australian Government is providing approximately \$112 million during 2005–08 to support languages education at all levels of schooling, including Indigenous languages.

Five per cent of funds are allocated for national projects that support the implementation of the National Statement. One of these national projects is the *Indigenous Language Programmes in Australian Schools — A Way Forward* which aims to provide a snapshot of the current national situation in Indigenous languages education which will provide useful evidence about the challenges facing Indigenous languages.

The Australian Government is currently in discussions with State and Territory, Independent and Catholic school systems about the next quadrennial funding agreement which will outline funding arrangements including for languages education for all schools.

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts also administers the **Maintenance of Indigenous Languages and Records Program**. In 2007–08 it is supporting around 160 Indigenous languages with funding of \$8.9 million. Estimates are that this will rise to \$9.1 million in 2008–09, \$9.3 million in 2009–10 and \$9.4 million in 2010–11.

There is also a range of generic programs which are not specifically targeted at migrant children or indigenous children which have indirect positive effects:

The Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) assists working age people who are unemployed and looking for work. While targeting adult jobseekers who are migrants, refugees, non-English speakers, and Indigenous, it does include young people (working age is from 15-64). Full time students are not eligible for assistance.

- The Program also assists clients from non-English-speaking-backgrounds (NESB) who are not receiving Australian Government funded income support needing language-only training.
- The Program assists clients with language training at three different levels (Initial, Basic and Advanced).
- The Program assists clients with literacy and/or numeracy training needs at two levels (Basic and Advanced). Training is available to those clients needing specific Advanced vocationally-oriented training.
- The Program also caters for disadvantaged client groups including Indigenous people, young males, people with disabilities, isolated female clients and/or cases of aged based workforce exclusion.
- All clients must be of working age (15 to 64 years), and be registered with Centrelink as a jobseeker. Clients must also satisfy eligibility criteria relating to benefit and visa status.

The National **Assessment Program for Literacy & Numeracy (NAPLAN)** reports on student achievement to parents. All students at Years 3,5,7,9 are tested on literacy and numeracy and it provides students, parents and teachers with information used to improve learning.

The **Early Childhood Learning Resources Project** assists parents to introduce and develop early literacy and numeracy learning to young children. It develops resources for children from birth to 5 years and assists parents, carers and practitioners create stimulating environments for rapid development and learning

The **Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)** is a two year home-based curriculum for 3-5 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds and provides home tutoring, books and educational resources to help parents prepare their children for school through role-playing, teaching/learning techniques and positive affirmation.