The Role of Multiculturalism and Languages Education

Efrosini Stefanou-Haag

Multiculturalism and languages education

> Many of the most creative periods in human society have been multi-cultural in character; and the fact that we in Australia acknowledge that we have diverse cultures is a ground for hope for creativity in our future. Indeed it is far more common to live in a multicultural society than in a *monocultural* society (McCaughey, 1992:1).

> Culture is all the things we think, feel, say, do or have which we acquire and share as members of a society (Smolicz, 1999:5).

The cultural benefits of developing South Australia's multicultural resources may be summarised as enrichment – enrichment of the soul, the mind and the consciousness. This results in the development of a nation that is characterised by its openness, its vitality and its dynamism. Importantly, a diversity of cultural inputs contributes to the development of a society of a distinctive character, thereby enabling Australia to project itself to the world community as a powerful cultural entity in its own right and not merely a derivative, colonial one.

The social benefits of developing South Australia's languages and multicultural resources are both tangible and intangible. They contribute to the broadening of perspectives for the whole community. They facilitate the move away from mere tolerance of differences among Australians, to the dynamic acceptance of diversity. They increase Australia's prestige in the world community as an example of a nation that uses cultural pluralism to create a cohesive and democratic society. In this, Australia acts as a model for the global community.

Multiculturalism countering racism

Racism is based on negative assumptions that sustain and perpetuate existing power relations within a society. Racism legitimates and provides a false but nevertheless powerful justification for discriminatory behaviours at the individual, group and systems levels, which ensure that some groups in society are treated more favourably than others. It is possible to trace consistent patterns of racism against specific groups over time, for example the Jews in Europe. Within Australia, it is Aboriginal people as well as people from language backgrounds other than English who are most vulnerable to the effects of racism. This is not to deny that people from the most discriminated against groups are not themselves capable of racism against others. The fact remains however, that in terms of educational outcomes, career choices and life chances it is they who are most disadvantaged by it.

At the heart of discriminatory behaviour is the notion that certain groups are less entitled to success than others in our society. It is the experience of many people that discrimination intensifies after they have proved they have the skills, talents and abilities that compare favourably with those of people from the dominant group.

Australia has the potential to provide leadership to the world community in the successful management of cultural pluralism. This is important not only because antiracism is ideologically sound but also because social cohesion and lasting economic prosperity cannot be achieved and maintained in a society that is besieged from within by racist divisions, resentments and violence.

> The most serious threats to peace and security are now within our nations rather between them (Power, 1999:3).

Multiculturalism may be seen as a major strategy in countering racism. Whilst countering racism is essentially about modifying inappropriate behaviours, and addressing structures and processes that do not discriminate against and disadvantage learners, it also has to do with curriculum

organisation and content. From a multicultural education perspective, countering racism is best addressed through the development of cultural understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity as well as the critical examination of common issues that bind all humanity such as human rights, children's rights as well as cultural and linguistic rights.

In his recent paper *Countering Racism*: *On a Voyage of Discovery Towards Human Rights*, J.J. Smolicz makes a distinction between political rights which are protected by legislation and cultural and linguistic rights, which are less easy to guarantee, simply because they are less tangible. He raises important questions about Australia's national identity and its capacity to encompass all Australian citizens as equally Australian. He asks if everyone can be equally real Australians but "in a Jewish way, in an Aboriginal way, in a Vietnamese way" (Smolicz, 1999:3). He also identifies two categories of racism namely ethnicism (discrimination based on cultural practice) and linguicism (discrimination based on language spoken or accent of speaker). In a multicultural nation neither form of racism is acceptable:

> A key lesson that must be learned and accepted is that diversity of looks, cultures and tongues, which mark out all of us, is permanent and will not disappear in time. The second is that within a frame of shared values, none of these markers should disqualify any citizen from being a real Australian.
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> The differences must be acknowledged while giving all such markers positive meaning and a positive valuation. When the individuals concerned happen to be Australian citizens, they should be recognised as being one hundred percent Australians in their own particular way. By adopting this mental frame, we can all help to overcome the demeaning aspects of racism in all its forms, including ethnicism and linguicism. We can do so through developing cultural understanding of the benefits of diversity that enrich our heritage and lead to greater creativity through interaction which arises at the juncture point of cultures (Smolicz, 1999: 6).

A critical aspect of managing cultural diversity productively is countering racism. Educational programs that aim to prepare children to live peacefully with difference draw on the fact that local action has global impact.

Such programs take children beyond the management of relationships at the neighbourhood level, to an appreciation of their membership of a world community that shares fundamental aspirations and problems. Nevertheless it is the ability of individuals to interact across cultural groups which is the critical prerequisite to global understanding.

What we should be aiming to create is a citizenry that acts powerfully at the local level, is globally aware and relates confidently to people from countries and backgrounds other than their own. As well as promulgating a socially just society such citizens enhance South Australia's standing overseas, and contribute to its sound economic future.

Smolicz has developed the concept of **valency**, through which to analyse the effectiveness of social and cultural interaction among members of different groups. Valency is defined as knowledge, understanding and positive attitudes to another culture and participation within it with a sense of belonging. Univalent individuals are only able to interact within one cultural context, whereas **bivalent** individuals "can transcend the boundaries of one culture and enter another one" (Smolicz, 1999:7). **Polyvalency** is the result of cultural interaction across more than two groups and is a growing phenomenon in a globalising world. Bivalency and polyvalency are seen as excellent ways of combating racism as well as maximising all benefits accruing from a culturally plural society. This should be a major goal of any education program.

Multiculturalism provides learning opportunities to critically review and develop cultural understanding about futures. This allows individuals to appreciate that others may make different choices from their own. Just as there are a range of different pasts, curriculum must make students aware of multiple modernities and different futures. To ensure sustainable development and peaceful co-existence, students need to learn cultural understanding and acceptance of diverse cultural values and practices.

Government has a critical role to play in developing policies that enable the State to develop a sense of identity, purpose and confidence among its citizens, particularly in its development of social policy. It also has a role in promoting the benefits of multicultural policies within the

Australian community, thereby combating bigotry, racism and other negative forces that disenfranchise sections of the community and promote fear and hatred within and across nations.

Policies that support the effective management of cultural pluralism naturally support choice of and access to language services and programs. Within such policy frameworks we have seen the development of schools that promote an ethos and culture associated with particular religious faiths. Islamic, Jewish as well as Greek Orthodox colleges have been established across most Australian states. They receive per capita grants and access to special and Targeted Program funding and are usually members of independent schools associations.

Language and culture

Language is both the medium through which culture is communicated and a critical shaper of culture. Cross-cultural communication without knowledge of the language is useful but incomplete. The very process of language learning leads to sensitisation, it alerts the learner to the diversity of ways in which meaning can be made. According to Smolicz, each language opens a new conceptual world. It provides its own unique vision of social reality:

> Young children should be given the opportunity to savour a vision of the world different from that provided by their home language as soon as possible in their school career, and to make it a joyful experience (Smolicz, 1997:6).

Language education is also important because it is responsive to the democratic rights of people from languages backgrounds other than English.

Australia gains much prestige in the world context by projecting itself as a sophisticated and democratic nation, particularly in the area of social justice. It is signatory to a United Nations Convention of Human Rights. As such it supports international laws and human rights systems which in principle apply to everyone, irrespective of cultural or linguistic background. Article 27 of the UN Convention on Civil and Political

Rights (1976) makes reference to linguistic rights as follows:

> In those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practise their own religion, or to use their own language.

Tove Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) describes the concentration on the majority language and the active denigration of the mother tongue as brutal. However, she also makes the point that it is not enough simply not to prohibit the use of minority languages. In a paper given at the Juncture Points Conference organised by the Multicultural Education Coordinating Committee in November 1994, she expands on this theme by stressing the importance of linguistic human rights. Linguicism, a form of racism, is defined as ideologies, structures and practices that are used to legitimate, effect and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources between groups which are defined on the basis of language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1997).

She discusses the concept of linguicide, as the active persecution of a language – by prohibiting the use of the language in public places or legislating its exclusion from school programs for example. Language death is the process by which a language may die by what seems to be a natural process, but is in fact the result of systematic neglect and prolonged lack of support:

> There is nothing natural in language death. Languages cannot be treated in an anthropomorphic way, as organisms with a natural life-span. Language death has structural and ideological causes, which can be identified and analysed (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1981: 46).

The structural and ideological causes are the same as those that motivate discrimination on any other grounds. The result is also the same – substantial exclusion by certain groups, in the power structures of a society. Apart from the attendant conflicts between groups and the sheer waste of human resources there is also an ethical dimension to consider. There is a moral obligation to prevent linguicide and language death.

Multicultural education and curriculum practice: National Curriculum Frameworks

The latest in a series of developments designed to provide schools with a framework for the development of educational programs is the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework. This framework is to build upon and eventually supersede the *Curriculum Statements and Profiles*. These were developed five years ago and were the initial attempt to provide a coherent learning pathway across the bands of schooling and at seven levels of achievement, in each of the eight areas of study as identified by the National Goals of Schooling.

The new SACSA Frameworks are being developed through a consultative process that is very extensive. A major part of this process is the work done by Expert Working Groups in developing the Writers' Briefs. One of these groups is the Multicultural Experts Working Group, which has provided advice to all writers. The Brief provides the most lucid and current definition of multicultural education, and as such provides a practical framework for the work of schools. It presents a renewed vision of multiculturalism in Australia that is seen to involve the personal, local, national and global contexts of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Multicultural Education involves gaining knowledge and understanding of cultures shared by all Australians. This involves content in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, in the students' home culture, in the diversity of other Australian cultures as well as in other global cultures, especially those of the Asia/Pacific region.

This results in developing positive attitudes to cultural and linguistic pluralism within Australia as well as at the regional and global level. In the process we foster social and cultural understanding for interaction across cultural backgrounds and for participation in other cultural groups within Australia and in the regional and global setting.

The role of language policy in culturally plural settings

Like all other policies, social policies on multiculturalism and languages education are important agents of change. They are public statements of governmental (and therefore societal) intention and commitment. They establish key directions for action and encourage a planned and coordinated approach to the relevant issues. They are often accompanied by resource allocation for those initiatives established within their frames of reference.

The usefulness of policies also lies in the fact that they make explicit the underlying principles for government action – that is they articulate the values which underpin government decisions. This articulation enables the public to examine these values and to respond on an informed basis. Ideally, policies act as a means by which government and its agencies can be held accountable for the projected outcomes promised by policies. In other words policy formulation and implementation can and does have an impact on society and can act as a powerful catalyst of democratic social change.

In Australia twenty years of multicultural policies has seen a profound change in Australia's view of itself as well as in Australia's image across the global community. Australia is widely regarded as a nation that has succeeded in the management of cultural pluralism where other nations have failed.

Despite enlightened policies on language education, Australia still tends to see itself as a primarily monolingual country, albeit with a cheerfully tolerant attitude to the use of other languages in certain contexts.

Policy or not, values will out!

The fact that a specific policy may not exist does not mean that certain values are not being activated in regard to the promotion or the suppression of some languages in comparison with others. Before the First World War, Australia had no overt languages policy. There were however, prevalent

attitudes within society that ensured the following:

- English was unquestionably the lingua franca
- Other languages could be taught in the home, community or church schools.

The onset of World War 1 brought about a radical change in this comparatively liberal attitude. With the worsening conflict between Britain and Germany the Anglo-Australian Establishment strengthened identification with the British Empire. This was accompanied by xenophobia and intolerance to the speaking and teaching of languages other than English (Clyne,1991: 12).

The two world wars led to the development of attitudes and practices that were at variance with the Australian nation's view of itself as fair and democratic. Instead they were blatantly monoculturalist and oppressive. According to Michael Clyne (Clyne, 1991:12), during World War 1 an *English Only* policy was implemented which banned languages other than English as a medium of instruction for educational and religious purposes. It also led to the change of many place names from German to English ones. There were 69 such changes in South Australia alone. These actions had far reaching repercussions for all communities in Australia. Lutheran schools were forcibly closed down leading to the eventual erosion of German as a major language spoken in Australia. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas could well see this as a prime example of linguicide.

The White Australia Policy

The *Federal Restrictions Act* known as the *White Australia Policy* was promulgated in 1901 and was implemented until the 1960s. It meant that English immigrants and those from northern Europe were favoured over those from Asian and Southern European backgrounds. The aim of the policy was to maintain or rather to produce a homogenous English-speaking Anglo-Saxon society. Although this policy was driven by racist and anti-democratic ideologies, it was promoted as a legitimate means to

achieve a cohesive nation. It aimed at assimilation of cultural and linguistic diversity through a process of exclusion and dilution. As negative as this policy was for people from language backgrounds other than English, the results for Aboriginal people have been devastating. They include widespread destruction of languages, the dispersal of whole communities with the attendant anomie and disenfranchisement that this brings about.

Assimilationist immigration policy was vigorously pursued until it became clear that the nation's survival called for immigration from sources other than the traditional English-speaking ones. This imperative was popularised by the axiom "populate or perish". However, the underlying values and attitudes that drove the original policy remained unchanged. There was the strong expectation, often enforced through discriminatory behaviour, that "new Australians" would eventually shed their cultural heritages and become indistinguishable from the English-speaking majority.

One of the clearest indicators of culture, indeed a core and overarching value of many cultures, is language maintenance. Advice to new settlers in official statements included admonitions against the use of languages other than English in public places. This extended to non-verbal behaviour which was considered unAustralian: "try to avoid using your hands when speaking because if you do, this will be conspicuous" (*Canberra Times 1967*, quoted in Clyne, 1991:16).

Multiculturalism and its impact on languages policy

The concepts and theories that drove Australia's policies on languages were based on ethnocentric values. These were brought into question during the 1970s. In 1978, the *Galbally Report* signalled a major shift in Government policy towards Australians from language backgrounds other than English. In contrast to the assimilationist stance that required newly arrived immigrants to abandon their cultural and linguistic heritages, the new bipartisan policies demonstrated an acceptance and affirmation of cultural diversity within the framework of overarching

values. These were identified as "the rule of law, the recognition of justice for the individual, the democratic processes, the commitment to combat bias and violence" (Grassby, 1982:38).

Within the new ideology, the gaining of English literacy was perceived as important for all children and students to ensure their full participation in learning and interaction with others. This should go hand in hand with literacy in another language.

By 1984 all States had repealed prohibitions against bilingual education in their Education Acts. The concepts associated with multiculturalism with their inherent respect for the rights of ethnic minority groups, the desire to establish structures and processes which reflect and respond to Australia's cultural diversity, and therefore its linguistic diversity, have gained ground over the last two decades. These were reinforced by the *National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia* under the Hawke Government in 1989. The *Agenda* provided a coordinated response to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian nation, and provided explicit goals, strategies and priority areas of action, in order to address issues of social justice, cohesion and economic efficiency.

In terms of languages education the following objectives were articulated in the *National Agenda*:

- All Australians should have the opportunity to acquire and develop proficiency in English

- All Australian students should have the opportunity to acquire a second language

- Students whose first language is not English, including Aboriginal students, should be able to maintain and develop their language and culture through mainstream education or the ethnic school system

- All Australians should be able to share and develop their cultural heritage and develop cross-cultural understanding and communication as an integral part of the curriculum (*National Agenda*, 1989:38–41).

The 1970s multicultural push was motivated by a number of factors both domestic and international. The liberal humanitarian ideologies of western democracies were always in conflict with assimilationist policies of forced conformity. In addition there was an emerging consciousness that Australia was part of a world community in its own right and not merely a British Empire outpost. Michael Clyne attributes these changes in part to the strong advocacy provided by "young ethnics and intellectuals" (Clyne 1991:221) as well as major bodies of academic linguists.

In 1984, the Federal Government established an inquiry into the development of a national languages policy that was completed in 1987 by Joseph Lo Bianco under the title *National Policy on Languages*. In so doing, Australia was breaking new ground among Anglophone countries. Australia is the first of the major English-speaking countries to formulate an explicit languages policy. The *National Policy on Languages* led to significant funding allocation to languages education generally and community languages in particular.

National Policy on Languages

The *National Policy on Languages* (1987) utilised the best principles which underpinned languages policy and planning at the State and Federal levels and turned them into explicit statements of desired objectives. This has led to the formulation of programs to realise those objectives. It received strong bipartisan support. Consultation was extensive and ensured widespread acceptance by stakeholder groups within the States. It explicitly articulated the value of cultural and linguistic pluralism:

> The linguistic richness constitutes a valuable resource which should be utilised and developed in order to serve Australia's domestic and external interests and the aspirations and needs of Australians in a context of national cohesion and unity (Lo Bianco, 1987:3).

The *National Policy on Languages* provided a sound rationale for multilingualism, under the four headings of social justice, enrichment for all

Australians, economic strategies and Australia's external relationships. The Policy presented a dual focus in relation to languages other than English education: support for mother tongue maintenance and development for non-English-speaking background Australians, and second language learning for English-speaking background Australians by providing them with:

> opportunity and incentive to build a linguistic bridge towards their fellow citizens in Australia and/or to Australia's neighbours in the region, or to people of interest elsewhere (Smolicz, 1991:22).

The *National Policy on Languages* gave rise to many Commonwealth funded programs under the Australian Second Language Learning Program (ASLLP) Scheme. For South Australia, this made possible the establishment of such initiatives as the Languages Inservice Program for Teachers (an action research based training and development program), the Languages other than English Mapping and Planning Project (LOTEMAPP), and the development of collaborative curriculum materials in a number of languages including Indonesian (with the Northern Territory). The gains made during the 70s and consolidated by the *National Policy on Languages* cannot be measured in the number of programs alone. They should also be viewed in terms of the attitudinal changes they helped to forge.

The *National Policy* assisted towards the ongoing process of legitimating languages other than English as part of Australian mainstream culture. It enhanced efforts to broaden Australia's view of itself as an agent in world affairs in its own right. It reaffirmed efforts to depict multilingualism as an asset and emphasised the complementarity of English and other languages in Australia.

South Australian initiatives

Smolicz developed the concept of core values that he described as comprising the heartland of a given culture. He maintained that for many cultures, language was a core value whose loss would result in the

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disintegration of those cultures leaving in their wake only residual manifestations of cultural identity.

He advocated diversity within the framework of overarching values. The Smolicz Report, *Education for a Cultural Democracy* (1984), commissioned by the Minister of Education, paved the way for developments in languages planning at the state and national levels. It stated clearly the links between languages and multiculturalism, language maintenance and cultural maintenance. It asserted the right of all students to study the language of their home and community: "Language teaching arrangements should be designed to meet these rights" (Smolicz, 1984:20).

This Report gave rise to many firsts, including the *State Languages Policy* (1985); the establishment of the South Australian School of Languages; the South Australian Institute of Languages within the University of South Australia; the superintendency in multiculturalism within the Education Department; and the Ethnic Schools Advisory Committee whose own Report to the Minister of Education led to the acceptance of ethnic schools as complementary providers of language programs within the education department.

The *State Languages Policy* (1985) made an explicit commitment to the study of languages other than English, outlining two major goals as follows:

- All students should have the opportunity at some time during their formal education to learn at least one language other than English

- Students from non-English-speaking backgrounds should have the opportunity to study their mother tongue as part of their formal education (*SLP*, 1985:3).

The policy also made statements about the importance of sustained and continued study of a language, from Reception to Year 12, with the aim of developing proficiency in the target language. Importantly the policy established a target that by 1995, all students from Reception to Year 7 would be studying a language other than English as part of their formal education. This gave impetus to the development of the LOTEMAPP,

which aimed to provide a planned and coordinated approach to the achievement of the 1995 target.

South Australia pioneered the introduction of languages in primary school (Romaine 1991:8). South Australia predated and provided advice to the *National Policy on Languages*, in advocating the link between mother tongue development and literacy development in English as well as in emphasising the benefits of bilingual education.

Australia's Language and Literacy Policy (1991)

The policy initiative commissioned in 1990 by John Dawkins, the then Federal Minister for Education, Employment and Training, represented a resurgence of the reactionary views expressed by ministers of immigration in the 1960s. It portrayed languages other than English as competing for prominence with English, a prominence that has never been contested even by the most militant proponents of cultural pluralism.

It established an ill-conceived hierarchy of priority languages, thereby setting up competition among languages in accessing funds. It failed to perceive the powerful link between literacy development in English and continual conceptual and linguistic development in the mother tongue for Australians of language backgrounds other than English. The most obvious casualties of the lack of conceptual linkage between literacy and language learning are the same speakers of minority languages who need to be given the opportunity to acquire literacy in their home or first language, before being introduced to literacy in English (DEET, 1991:13).

Mother tongue development was given marginal consideration and only after pressure was exerted by lobby groups through the consultation process. Asian languages were presented as of value only in external economic terms, ignoring the fact that they are also community languages for significant numbers of Australians. In taking a narrow and divisive view of languages education, this policy disappointed some of the major proponents of languages education in Australia and has

largely ignored the sound academic basis on which the *National Policy on Languages* was built.

The Council of Australian Governments' report *Asian Languages and Austalia's Economic Future* (1994) is a significant document for the future of languages education in Australia. Its impact has been significant, particularly as it stipulated national targets. By 2006, 60% of all Australian students will be studying one of four Asian languages – Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean. It further stipulated a minimum time of instruction for these languages at 2.5 hours week. Most significantly it made financial commitments to the implementation of these targets.

Economic rationalism now dominates the education agenda in regard to languages as in all other areas. There is no question that expansion of these four languages – Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean – will benefit the nation both economically and socially. However, the terms of reference for the preparation of the report meant that their expansion had to be considered without reference to the multilingual and multi-purpose contexts in which the States operate.

The dangers of fostering divisions within the language community as a result of this Report have been left to individual jurisdictions to manage. The encouragement of resentments among the Asian communities, some of which are favoured over others, is an issue that the Federal government has not acknowledged.

The Report does not address in any but the most perfunctory fashion the social advantages of learning these languages. Neither does it make sufficient mention of the Asian Australian communities as invaluable assets in expanding our knowledge and skills in these languages and cultures. It is interesting that in the preparation of the report *Asian Languages* as well as in the formation of the Asian Studies Council, the contribution of Asian Australians has been minimal. This is not to denigrate the efforts of the many fine people who contributed to both these initiatives. However it would be logical to expect that Asian Australians could provide perspectives to such work which may

be pertinent, interesting, diverse and important in the insights they may provide.

It seems that languages other than English are considered economically important only when Australians of the most powerful ethnic group manage them. One could be led to believe that it is safe to value languages but only in ways which do not provide greater access to power sharing with the ethnic minority groups which speak them.

The desire for continued domination by one ethnic group at the expense of others is often disguised by a rhetoric emphasising unity. Often in practice this translates into actions leading to forced conformity – even when the failure of such forced conformity in the past has been demonstrated beyond a doubt. Dawkins's Green Paper culminating in the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* may in some measure be viewed as an antidote to the multicultural focus of the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987).

Policy formulation at a national level demonstrates the vulnerability of a languages education which is framed within a multicultural ideology. It indicates the need for strong and continued advocacy within enlightened circles in the academic and wider community.

Language policy development in the United States of America – some comparisons

The United States of America and Australia have a number of common experiences, which makes it possible to draw parallels between them. Both were originally British colonies. Both are immigrant countries of long standing with a variety of migration sources, giving rise to a multilingual population. As with Australia, the United States of America has experimented with the whole gamut of responses to this diversity, ranging from rejection of other cultures and languages to tolerance and acceptance.

Both nations have used the *melting pot* as a metaphor for the development of a unified and homogeneous society. In both, this gave way to the *salad bowl* metaphor. For the United States of America however, the

melting pot ideal was pursued for a much longer time, and became as Ioannides described it the *scalding pot* for minority Americans, leaving in its wake a situation that is both volatile and dangerous (Ioannides, 1991).

The historical response to being a British colony has also been different. Whereas Australia modelled most of its major institutions on the British ones, the American War of Independence led to the development of systems and processes different from the mother country. Despite the unfortunate history of both nations in regard to their indigenous populations, the existence of treaties in North America has meant greater language survival among the original inhabitants of North America than those of Australia.

The backlash against multilingualism has however been more powerful in the United States than in Australia. In particular the efforts of a group called US English have resulted in English being declared in seventeen States as America's lingua franca to the exclusion of all others (Romaine 1991:14). The motto of its Canadian equivalent APEC is: "One language unites, two divides" (Romaine 1991:14).

Initiatives in America during the 1980s presented English as being in competition with other languages and similarly ignored the links between mother-tongue development and literacy development in the English language. The Reagan government in 1983 made cuts to bilingual education. Indeed the Reagan administration condemned the maintenance of languages other than English as un-American. Reagan himself declared that:

> It is absolutely wrong and against American concepts to have a bilingual program that is now openly, admittedly dedicated to preserving their native language (Clyne, 1991:5).

Cuts to bilingual programs in 1983 were accompanied by government cuts to multicultural education in 1986.

Some of the differences between the experiences of the two nations derive from their geographic positions. The proximity of the United States to the nations of South and Central America has meant that Spanish has

become a significant minority language, for which there is no equivalent in Australia.

The very prevalence of Spanish provides fuel for the fears and attendant linguicism of powerful lobby groups. Fishman, in comparing developments between the United States and Australia, stated that unlike Australia which developed a *National Policy on Languages* that stressed the complementarity of English and other languages, the United States of America is not even ready to begin active and constructive debate on the relevant benefits of such a policy:

> We are a long, long, way from a positive languages policy, such as the one the Australians have adopted [...]; indeed so far that it would be not only premature but dangerously self defeating to engage, at any foreseeable date, in the requisite discussion out of which such a policy might ultimately flow (Fishman, 1988, quoted in Clyne, 1991:6).

The *Goals 2000, Educate America Act*, based to a large extent on the Oregon Education Act for the twenty-first century, represents a move towards acknowledgment of the need to address the schooling needs of minority groups. In particular, Goal 3 of the National Goals of Schooling, makes a commitment that:

- The percentage of students who are competent in more than one language will substantially increase, and

- All students will be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural heritage of this nation and about the world community (*Goals 2000*, 1990: Section 102).

Although cultural knowledge and languages education are explicitly linked in Goal 3, language maintenance and development is not linked strategically to the learning needs of minority Americans.

Richard Lambert of the National Foreign Language Centre in the United States points to the urgent need for national languages planning in the United States and expresses concern that the agenda for 2000 does not include this as one of its goals. His country's apparent indifference

to the need for a nationally coordinated and comprehensive approach to languages education is contrasted to language policy developments in other parts of the world, particularly Australia and Europe.

It is the absence of a national policy discussion in the United States that is a most striking contrast (Lambert, 1992:2). As with Australia, federation is presenting problems in reaching agreement on issues of what constitutes national significance, on areas of jurisdiction and on funding arrangements. Lambert lists three areas which must be addressed by a national policy, all of which have preoccupied Australian policy makers and educators for some time: language choice; teacher education and teacher qualification benchmarks; and the assessment of student achievement. Lambert gives no consideration to the need for a language policy to respond to the nation's linguistic pluralism. In fact if one had no knowledge of America's demography, one could be forgiven for believing he is describing a monolingual nation.

In contrast, Donna Christian and Ramon Santiago, in the context of the Centre of Applied Linguistics Symposium on Goal 3, in Washington in 1992, made strong statements on the importance of responding positively to linguistic and cultural diversity as a major strategy for improving the learning outcomes of minority students, and to support the promulgation of a cohesive but multicultural society. The links between literacy development in English and mother tongue development are highlighted, as is the need for further and more qualitative research in the areas of second language learning processes, home and community factors in enhancing or inhibiting learning assessment issues and teacher education.

It is fair to say that in matters of comprehensive national language policy Australia is well ahead of America. However, it is as important for Australia that policy developments be informed by detailed and credible research as it is for America.

Conclusion

Without underestimating the significant progress that has been made in Australia in contrast to America, there is no room for complacency. The

concepts, theories, and values expounded by multicultural policies have by no means been embedded in the consciousness of the majority of Australians who were subjected to the propaganda of aggressive mono-culturalism of past decades. Many view with alarm the growth in confidence of those Australians who speak languages other than English in public places, who live in extended family units, who continue to demonstrate respect for the values of their particular cultures even in the second and third generations. These attitudes and feelings are not restricted to the masses that may be out of touch with social changes. Bill Snedden, Minister for Immigration in 1967, made statements condemning multiculturalism:

> We must have a single culture – if immigration implied multicultural activities within Australian society, then it was not the type Australia wanted. I am quite determined that we should have a monoculture, with everyone living in the same way, understanding each other, sharing the same aspirations. We don't want pluralism (Snedden 1967, quoted in Clyne, 1991:16).

Michael Clyne quotes other instances in which major political figures have made ethnocentric statements at times to the embarrassment of their political parties – John Stone and John Howard to name but two (Clyne, 1991:16).

Attitudes of this kind may not be articulated as blatantly in the 1990s as they were in the 1960s. However, the underlying values on which they are based are still very much with us. The fact that one million Australians voted for the One Australia Party in the previous Federal elections, despite the crudity and lack of coherence of that party's campaign, is another disturbing indicator of the vulnerability of multicultural social policies and practices.

While the world looks to Australia for leadership in the management of linguistic and cultural pluralism because of its achievements to date, it is clear that the re-emergence of monolingual-oriented attitudes could threaten these achievements.

The challenge for those committed to multiculturalism and languages education as defined within it, is to educate. The message is that good Australians include those people who have skills in languages other than English, that these languages should be used for the benefit of the whole nation, and that this does not have to happen at the expense of the majority group. For this to be achieved, multicultural and languages education programs need to be firmly embedded within curriculum programs.

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