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Australia between monolingualism and multilingualism

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Apart from the 150 Aboriginal languages, more than one hundred languages other than English are in use in Australia today. In the 1986 Census, 13.63 per cent of the Australian population (15,604,150 at the time) were reported as using a language other than English at home, and many more employ one away from their home (see below, pp. 39–40). However, it is not only in the post-World-War-II period that Australia could be described as a multilingual society. Ethnolinguistic diversity existed, and, in fact, thrived in some parts of Australia from the early days of European settlement. There were periods during the past 200 years when multilingualism was recognized, or even promoted. There were others when it was ignored, or outlawed.

It has been stated (Bostock 1973) that Australian governments

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have directed their policies towards achieving monolingualism. And yet Australia has an ethnolinguistic mix probably unparalleled in any other nation. It now has a more comprehensive and positive National Policy on Languages than any comparable country. This paradox is characteristic of a tension that has existed, throughout the history of white settlement in Australia, between three symbolic relationships of language and society: English monolingualism as a symbol of a British tradition; English monolingualism as a marker of Australia's independent national identity; and multilingualism as both social reality and part of the ideology of a multicultural and outreaching Australian society. This tension predates the federation of six British colonies into an Australian nation in 1901, and has not yet been resolved.

The historical relationship of Australians to the Australian national variety of English lies outside the scope of this monograph (see Collins and Blair 1989.) In this book, I shall be considering the effects of the tension on the maintenance of 'immigrant' languages other than English, on language change, and on the development of language policies. Whatever attitudes and policies may have developed towards immigrant languages, Aboriginal languages have been treated in a consistently negative and destructive way (Fesl 1988). Oppression, genocide and assimilation pressures have led to the death of one hundred Aboriginal languages since 1788 and the present 'dying state' of another hundred (Dixon 1980). (As the treatment of Aboriginal languages also falls outside the topic of this book, I refer the reader to Fesl 1988.) It is not until very recently that Australian Sign Language, used by deaf people in Australia, has been afforded the slightest legitimacy.

In this chapter I shall examine the three 'symbolic relationships' over different phases in Australian history and in the different states (colonies), each of which had its own development and settlement history, and observe how internal and external factors have led to enforced monolingualism or the acceptance of multilingualism at particular times. The role of the emerging intelligentsia and the second generation 'ethnic Australians' will be considered, and the uniqueness of Australia will be discussed through a brief comparison with the USA and other comparable nations. All this will be placed in the context of Australia's immigration history and the academic and political debate on multiculturalism.

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The term 'Community Languages'

This term has been used in Australia since about 1975 to denote languages other than English and Aboriginal languages employed within the Australian community. It legitimizes their continuing existence as part of Australian society. Terms that have been found discriminatory and inadequate for the same languages are: *foreign languages*, unsuitable for languages that are very much part of Australian life; *migrant languages*[1], which does not account for their use by Australian-born generations; and *ethnic languages*, which ignores the use of 'community languages' by members of other ethnic groups. As will be explained later (Chapter 5), national and state language policies having become increasingly oriented towards education, the division of languages other than English into categories has proved neither feasible nor advisable. 'Community languages' are thus now frequently subsumed under LOTEs, 'Languages other than English'. In some senses, this is symptomatic of a shift away from internal multilingualism as the basis for a pluralistic language policy (see pp. 230–2).

In other publications, I have employed the acronym 'CLOTEs' (Community languages other than English) to stress that English too is a community language. As 'community languages' has now attained fairly universal currency in Australia and has also been adopted in some other English-speaking countries, this will be the term used in this book.

Functions of language

Four major functions of language are relevant to any discussion of community languages, and these will be referred back to throughout this volume. Language is:

(i) The most important medium of human communication;
(ii) A means by which people can identify themselves and others;

1. In Australia, 'migrant' and 'immigrant' are used interchangeably.

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(iii) A medium of cognitive and conceptual development; and
(iv) An instrument of action. (For example, language is sufficient for acts such as complaints, promises and threats to be performed.)

Immigration to Australia, vintages and the notion of distance

Basic to any discussion of immigration to Australia and its cultural and linguistic consequences is the notion of geographical and cultural distance.

Just as the first British convicts were transported to Australia, which was considered appropriately distant from the Mother Country, many waves of migrants came to Australia in order to be as far as possible from the political régimes from which they wanted to escape, or from unjust orders of society which had discriminated against them. Such migrants included: the Old Lutherans from Eastern Germany fleeing from religious suppression to South Australia as from 1838; the refugees from the 1848 German and Italian revolutions; the Bolsheviks and anti-Bolsheviks from Russia around the time of the revolution; the Polish Jews fleeing from anti-Semitism between the wars; the refugees from racism and political oppression in Nazi Germany and the territories it had annexed (1938–9); the displaced persons from European camps — Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, Croats, Slovenians, Ukrainians, and others (1947–50); the ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe (1950s); the refugees from the Greece of the colonels (1967) and from Soviet military intervention in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968); the Anti-Allende (1970) and the Pro-Allende Chileans (1973); the Palestinians as well as the Lebanese; the Timorese (1975); and the Vietnamese and Khmer as well as ethnic Chinese from Vietnam and Cambodia (from 1975). Often refugee waves were later followed by the migration of family and friends.

Not only political refugees but also most economic migrants up to the mid-1960s knew that emigration to Australia was generally a final step. The normal and only affordable means of transport to

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and from Australia was by ship; this was slow and expensive. While it may have been possible to bring out other members of one's family, a return home was almost impossible, and a visit difficult to accomplish. With cheap air fares, both regular trips home and the visits of relatives could be financed and immigration as a short-term measure became more feasible.

Migration to Australia was frequently associated with a spirit of adventure. This was epitomized by the people, largely single males, who came to make their fortunes during the gold rushes of the mid-19th century. It was on the Victorian gold-fields that Irish, Italians, Welsh, and Germans were among the miners who led a challenge to the authority of the British bureaucracy. In the Eureka Stockade of 1854, Raffaelo Carboni referred to the rebel diggers' flag as 'the refuge of all the oppressed from all countries on earth', inviting all people to salute it, 'irrespective of nationality, religion or colour', a very early enunciation of Australian multiculturalism (Lahey 1988:1). The last reference was to the large number of Chinese miners in Australia at the time. In the ensuing years, some of the Australian colonies, notably Victoria and South Australia, became democracies and 'workers' paradises' which were among the pioneers in the institution of universal suffrage, payment of parliamentarians, secret ballot, and the eight-hour working day. (South Australia and Victoria are also the colonies in which speakers of languages other than English played the most prominent role; see below, pp. 6–8 and 25–7. There were, however, a number of influential Germans in 19th century Queensland public life; see Voigt 1983; Nadel 1983.) Both cities and rural areas received economic migrants from non-English-speaking parts of Europe, notably Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, France, Russia and the Lebanon. Towards the end of the 19th century, Queensland attracted much indented labour from Europe as well as the Pacific Islands. Migration intake from non-English-speaking countries was low in the first decades of the 20th century, and by this time, restrictions on 'non-white' migration were in force.

The political migrants of the immediate postwar years were soon joined by economic migrants. Apart from the British, including Maltese and Greek Cypriots, there were first northern Europeans (Dutch, followed by Germans) and Italians in the 1950s, then Greeks (1950s and especially 1960s), Yugoslavs (late 1960s and early 1970s) and Lebanese and Turks (early 1970s), to name only

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the larger groups. It can be noted that the source countries moved further and further away from the original British 'mother country', requiring a constant adjustment of the prejudices of the existing population.

The postwar mass immigration scheme was started in order to provide a work-force for Australia's greatly expanding secondary industry, and to boost the population as protection against a possible 'Asian invasion' following the Japanese war efforts (Appleyard 1988:97; Castles *et al.* 1988:9). Prevailing economic conditions have necessitated increases and decreases in the intake numbers of migrants, and modifications in the balance between refugees, economic migrants, those wishing to join members of their family in Australia, and others. They have also entailed differences in the occupations of migrants selected for entry. All this has contributed to the augmentation of some speech communities (for instance German 1938, 1947–9, 1951–60, 1980s; Hungarian 1938, 1947–51, 1956, early 1970s (from Yugoslavia); Czech 1938, 1947–9, 1968) and the formation of new ones (for example, Khmer and Vietnamese in the 1970s) as the White Australia policy came to an end. However, as I shall argue later, use of the same language does not necessarily result in contact between migrant vintages.

Historical perspective

The 19th century

Although the term 'community language' is relatively new, languages other than English have been an important part of the Australian context since the 19th century, more so in some states (colonies) than in others. Despite the occasional references to non-English speakers among the convicts on the First Fleet and among the first free settlers (e.g. Cigler and Cigler 1985; Norst and Mc Bride 1988) and to the German origins of the first governor, Arthur Phillip, the first British settlement in New South Wales was basically a monolingual one. It shared a continent with communities of very long standing using a total of over 250 Aboriginal languages. Virtually all the population of Australia prior to white settlement is likely to have been multilingual (Dixon 1980).

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In the second half of the 19th century, aspirations were expressed for an Australian nation and the form it should take. By the 1860s, a number of immigrant languages other than English had been transplanted to Australia — on the goldfields, in the cities and in rural settlements. The main 'community languages' at the time were Irish, Chinese, German, Gaelic, Welsh, French, the Scandinavian languages, and Italian. The 1861 Census records 27,599 German-born, 38,742 Chinese-born and 11,589 other foreign-born, which includes those German speakers from Austria-Hungary. To these must be added the Australian-born second generation, especially for German, which was at the time the best-maintained community language. In the course of the 19th century, the number of Celtic and Chinese speakers declined. Many migrants from the British Isles actually used as their main language Gaelic, Irish or Welsh and were subjected to language assimilation. As Castles *et al.* (1988:8) point out, the term 'Anglo-Celtic', current in Australia today, conceals the battles fought between English and Irish in Australia. Jupp (1988:61) estimates, on the basis of birthplace accounts, that there were about 6,000 speakers of (Scottish) Gaelic in Victoria in 1861 and 2,000 in New South Wales. He suggests that there were 3,000 Welsh speakers throughout Australia in 1871 and that 'Irish may have been the second most widely-understood language in Australia in the mid-nineteenth century [although it] had been overtaken by German in the 1880s'. From the 1830s, there had been rural enclaves in which a 'community language' (usually German, but sometimes Gaelic) was the language of the church, work and community domains* as well as one of the mediums of (bilingual) schooling. (For German, see Clyne 1981: 15 ff.) It was in the colonies of Victoria and South Australia whose main settlements were not founded until the 1830s and had never received convicts that the bi- and multilingual tradition became strongest. The (French-English) bilingual household of Victoria's first governor, Charles La Trobe, and his wife, and the acceptance of some intellectuals from the 1848 revolutions of Europe into the local Establishment, put multilingualism on a firm footing. Four years after the foundation of South Australia there began the transplanting to that colony of Old Lutheran village parishes from Silesia and other parts of Prussia. Migrants who had come directly from Germany or who had remigrated from the rural settlements had an important impact on 19th-century Adelaide.

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As from 1848, there was a thriving 'community language' press, initially in German, with as many as eight weekly, bi-monthly or monthly newspapers issued at one time, mainly in South Australia and Victoria, and later also in New South Wales and Queensland. The influence of these newspapers can be gauged by the fact that English-speaking candidates for the Victorian and South Australian parliaments wooed electors by issuing special statements in the German-language press (*Victoria Deutsche Presse, Germania, Deutsche Zeitung, Südaustralische Zeitung*). Subsequently, Chinese, French, Gaelic, Scandinavian and Welsh newspapers appeared, some of them short-lived (Gilson and Zubrzycki 1967; Clyne 1986a; Corkhill 1983).

From the German-language newspapers it can be deduced that virtually all business transactions could be conducted in German in the central business districts of Melbourne and Adelaide in the 1860s and 1870s. There were regular church services in five languages in Melbourne, and in various cities there were ethnic clubs.

Education

It is in the school domain that community languages played the most influential role. Bilingual education was practised in Australia from the 1850s onwards, in both religious and secular schools.[2] It was aimed initially at children of particular ethnic backgrounds for language and/or religious maintenance (German, Gaelic, Hebrew), but some bilingual schools attracted other pupils or were intended to provide a language immersion experience. Bilingual education was projected in advertisements for schools in both Melbourne and Adelaide as a valuable asset for both 'majority' and 'minority' groups, for example 'Instruction is given in German and English so that German and English people can learn one another's language' (*Südaustralische Zeitung*, 24 March 1865, my translation; similar wording *Australischer Christenbote*, 11 November 1862).

2. There had been German schools in South Australia since 1838 which were bilingual by the mid-1850s.

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Some German-English and especially French-English bilingual schools, noted for their high standard of education, attracted a substantial number of pupils from English-speaking families. This is a testimony to the importance attached to a second language in parts of Australia in the second half of the 19th century. Outstanding examples were German-English boys' schools in Melbourne and Hahndorf (South Australia) modelled on the German *Gymnasium*, and particularly French-English girls' schools in Melbourne which were among the pioneers of girls' secondary education in Victoria. (On bilingual education in 19th century Australia, see Clyne 1988a.) The French traveller Otto Commetant (1890: 210) comments on the 'marvellous facility' of children in Australia 'to learn languages'. In addition to private bilingual schools in Adelaide, Melbourne and South Australian rural centres, there were networks of bilingual country parish schools run by the several Lutheran synods. They served the local German-speaking communities, providing a basic primary education similar to that available in Germany, adapted to Australian conditions, with a stress on religious and moral education. *Der lutherische Schulbote für Australien*, a teachers' magazine (July 1895:33, my translation) attested to the role of bilingualism: 'Because [German] is our mother tongue, it takes first place in our practical lives. But it is of great harm to a citizen of this country not to have learned the English language of the land sufficiently . . .'. As the Lutheran schools were often the only schools in the district, the English-speaking minority would send their children there, and they too became bilingual. (See also Kipp 1981.)

There were nearly one hundred bilingual schools at the turn of the century, most of them Lutheran and principally in South Australia and Victoria. Apart from the schools in five rural German settlements of New South Wales, there is little indication of bilingual education in that colony. There were, in Sydney, in addition to a 'German school' (1888–90) and a 'Hebrew school' (1867–1905), numerous private schools conducted by people with non-British names of which nothing appears to be known (Clyne 1988a:100).

Considering that Queensland had, by the turn of the century, the greatest ethnolinguistic diversity of any Australian colony — with sizeable groups of Germans, Scandinavians, Italians and Russians

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and the largest German-born population (Price *et al.* 1984) — bilingual schools were relatively few and short-lived here (Hebart 1938:808; Clyne 1988:101). There is no evidence of bilingual education in either Western Australia or Tasmania in the 19th century. Bilingual teachers in Lutheran schools were, to an increasing extent, Australian-born and trained in Lutheran tertiary colleges attached to secondary schools in South Australia and Victoria.

In the 1870s, attempts were made, in Queensland, to appoint teachers to match the language background of the pupils in state primary schools. That these appointments were sometimes rapidly terminated may have been due to transitional assimilationist motives. For instance, one inspector, reporting on an unsatisfactory teacher, commented that 'the children knew no English when the school opened' and ten months later did 'not know sufficient of it to be taught or addressed in that language' (Clyne 1988a:102).

Although bilingual education in 19th-century Australia is not well documented, there appear to have been three main models:

(i) *Division according to subject and time of day.* In the Lutheran primary schools, literacy skills were imparted in both languages. Mathematics subjects were taught in English, religion in German, and history and geography were divided between the languages according to course content.

(ii) *Division according to subject and teacher.* Many of the private bilingual schools had a German- and an English-medium teacher who taught different subjects.

(iii) *Language and culture.* In other private schools, most subjects were taught in English but there was an extended component of German language, literature and civilization given in German.

For much of the 19th century, languages other than English were taught widely in primary schools. Secondary schools generally offered French (as well as Latin), and many also had German and some had Italian on the curriculum. The fact that the French-English girls' colleges lasted longer and were more successful than the German-English boys' schools in selling bilingual education to the English-speaking public may be indicative of a gender-based perception of academic accomplishments in Australia. As language shift persisted, the stress in mother tongue education passed from

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