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## ABSTRACT

The following similarities exist between the language situations of the United States and Australia: (1) both countries have developed and prospered through overseas immigration; (2) until recently, neither country has had a "de jure" official language, only a "de facto" one built around English; (3) in both countries indigenous languages have been badly neglected; and (4) the changing linguistic makeup of both countries has recently created pressures for reappraisal of language policy development. However, the two countries have taken different approaches to multilingualism and language policy development, due to the following dissimilarities: ethnic revival affected Australia and the U.S. at different stages of their development; the United States War of Independence symbolizes its national unity and identity, while the idea of Australia as a nation is recent; Australia has great language diversity, with none predominant in any community; and decision-making is more centralized in education and related domains in Australia. The 1980s have seen new beginnings for language policy in both countries. The United States has been examining either/or exclusive policies (English-speaking vs. foreign-speaking) while Australia has embarked on an inclusive multicultural policy. Political influences will shape the final policies. In Australia, a united effort of ethnic communities and language professionals has had an important impact on policy development. (MSE)

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NEW BEGINNINGS FOR LANGUAGE POLICY:  
AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES<sup>1</sup>

Presented at the 1990 Rocky Mountain  
Regional TESOL Conference  
Richard B. Baldauf, Jr.

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INTRODUCTION

A number of similarities exist between the language situations that are to be found in Australia and the United States. First, both are countries which have developed and prospered through overseas immigration. Second, since the end of World War II, much of this immigration has been non-English speaking. Third, until recently neither country has had a *de jure* official language, only a *de facto* one built around English. Fourth, in both countries indigenous languages have been badly neglected. Finally, in recent years the changing linguistic make-up of both countries has created pressures for a reappraisal of issues related to language policy development. However, Australia and the United States have taken different approaches to multilingualism as a 'language problem' and to subsequent language policy development. Clyne (1988b:1-2) argues that there are four over-riding dissimilarities which may account for these differences in policy direction. Briefly, these can be summarized as follows:

1) Ethnic revival affected Australia and the United States at different stages of their development. The United States was founded on and has a long standing history of non-English speaking immigrant settlement. By comparison, Australia was before 1945 a more predominantly English speaking country than the United States has ever been, while it now has a larger first generation (overseas-born) component than the United States has had at any time this century.

2) The United States fought a war of independence which has served as a symbol of its national unity and identity. The idea of Australia as a nation is only a recent phenomena and multi-culturalism has been adopted as one of its unifying concepts.

3) Australia has a great diversity of languages, none of which is predominate in any community. Non-English speaking in Australia is not identified with a powerful minority nor is it seen as a 'threat' as it seems to be in some parts of the United States.

4) Despite some recent moves to devolve power, decision making is more centralized, at both the State and Federal levels in Australia in domains such as education than in the United States.

Keeping these similarities and differences in mind, the two national situations are now contrasted with a particular emphasis on the unique developments, in terms of language policy, which are occurring in Australia.

#### LANGUAGE SITUATION IN AUSTRALIA

Manning Clark (1989:1) described Australia before the second World War in the following terms:

Before the war no one challenged the view that Australia was 98 per cent British. That was a fact of life. We were all Australian Britons. The Russians used to say in the 19th century that they were Russians but their religion was Greek.

We used to say that we were Australian but our culture was British. We lived in Australia, we belonged to the "wide brown land", but our wisdom came from abroad. Our minds fed on "foreign harvests".

The second world war changed all of that; it explo' the myth that Britain could protect Australia. Industrialization initiated during and after the war meant that population growth was essential, and Europeans trapped in camps in Germany were invited to come to Australia to meet those labor needs. Between 1947 and 1971 nearly three million immigrants came to settle in

Australia, about 60 percent of these came from non English speaking nations (SSCEA 1984). These changes undermined the isolation and material backwardness characteristic of pre war Australia, and meant that Australia became much more self-centered.

Manning Clark (1989:22) also argues that other issues were brought into question by the experience of World War II.

The myths we had inherited from the past were exploded one by one. All forms of domination were questioned. The domination of man over woman was among the first to be questioned. Australia, it had been said, was no place for a women. In Australia a women was often degraded to the role of a poodle in the comfortable classes and to a packhorse or a madonna of the kitchen sink in the working classes.

The domination of one race over another was soon to come on the agenda. For generations the white man had assumed his superiority over the Aborigine. The canker of doubt now made that assumption irrelevant.

It can be argued that the post war need to find a new national identity, to build new international relationships, and to accommodate large numbers of immigrant workers laid the foundations for a multiculturalism in Australia. Just as other forms of domination were being brought into question, the role of English as the sole language of the national polity was also being examined.

In descriptive terms, Australia is clearly a multilingual society with some 150 Aboriginal languages, several Aboriginal and Islander creoles and between 75 and 100 immigrant languages. Since 1973, when the "White Australia" policy was officially abandoned, Australian immigration policies have been politically bipartisan, broadly based and have not discriminated by race. By 1981 over three million people, or 21 percent of the population of Australia were born overseas, of whom 53.8 percent were from non-English speaking backgrounds (SSCEA, 1984). Table 1 lists the numbers of speakers of major languages other than English in Australia from the 1976 and 1986 census data and from the 1981 Australian Bureau of Statistics Language Survey data. While the figures for some language groups differ markedly for the three sets of data, depending,

on the data collection techniques used, the figures are indicative of the extent of multilingualism in Australia (also see Pauwels, 1985; Baldauf, 1985). However, while Australia may be a multilingual nation, without a language policy to signal a commitment to multilingualism and multiculturalism, these figures could mark a passing phase in Australia's national development.

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Insert Table 1 about here  
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### LANGUAGE SITUATION IN THE UNITED STATES<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Australia, the United States has had a long history of multilingualism including the use of colonial languages other than English. As Conklin and Lourie (1983) point out English was not without serious rivals during the colonial period. Spanish, French, German, Dutch and Swedish all served as official languages in various colonies before English became predominant.

During the Revolutionary period, however, many non-English speakers living in the thirteen British colonies adopted the cause of national independence and assimilated culturally and linguistically to the dominant English speaking population. (1983:5)

Speakers of these colonial languages continued to immigrate to the United States, especially from Ireland and Germany. Scandinavians also came in considerable numbers. However, the period between 1880 and 1920 saw the greatest numbers of new Americans arrive, and most were from southern and eastern Europe. Chinese, and later Japanese and Filipino contract laborers were also imported. By 1910, 15 percent of the total US population was foreign born.

Alarmed by the population boom and fearing the pollution of their language and values, native-born Americans radically restricted all immigration in the 1920's. Quotas based on national origin wholly excluded Asians and favored northwestern Europeans,... Since immigration from the Western hemisphere remained unrestricted, new sources of labor were found in Mexico and the Caribbean. (Conklin and Lourie 1983: 34)

These quotas remained in force until 1965 when immigration was restricted in

total numbers, but without respect to national origin. In the 1980's the United States once again experienced massive immigration with the overwhelming majority being non-English speakers.

In Table 2 language data are provided for numbers of non-English speakers in the United States for 1940, 1970, 1975 and 1980. Unfortunately, the U.S Bureau of Census data for each of the four years are not directly comparable as different questions and age levels were used. In addition prior to 1970 no data was tabulated for non-European languages. The data illustrate that there have been a large number of languages other than English in use in the United States. In addition the data show how Spanish speakers have increased relative to other groups of non-English speakers so that for 1975 and 1980 nearly

[h]alf of all Americans reporting non-English language use are Spanish speakers. Although almost three-quarters of Spanish speakers were born in the United States, half retain Spanish as their primary language. (Conklin and Lourie 1983: 53)

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Insert Table 2 about here  
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When comparing the data in Table 1 with that in Table 2, it can be seen that a wide range of languages are spoken in both Australia and the United States. However, no language predominates in Australia the way Spanish does in the United States.

Having briefly compared the language situations in both countries, let us now look at recent policy development.

#### LANGUAGE POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA

The changes which have occurred to the economic, cultural and linguistic basis of Australian society over the last four decades have lead to governmental reconsideration of issues related to language for policy and Australian identity.

The first indication of a federal government response to these pressures was the gradual acceptance since the mid 70s of the multicultural character of Australia. An indication of this acceptance can be found in the Galbally Report (1978) which placed a national focus on the inadequacy of services for migrants and created "the philosophical underpinning for the more general acceptance of the principles of multiculturalism at an official level" (Smolicz, 1983: 16). In the McNamara Report (1979), which served as a guide for the implementation of multicultural programs in schools, the value of multiculturalism was discussed in terms of "the belief that the various cultural traditions represented in Australia have something of value to share with the other traditions and something of value to learn from others" (Cahill, 1986: 57).

The emerging recognition of multiculturalism in Australia, along with an increased academic interest in second language acquisition, generated by the provision of ESL programs through the Child Migrant Education Service, provided the basis for an emerging advocacy of mother tongue education. Relabeled as "community languages" to connote their greater immediacy, these languages were given an implied priority over those traditionally taught in Australian Schools (Lo Bianco, 1987b).

A second pressure which coincided with the growth of interest in community languages was the general decline in foreign language education. By the early 1970's Universities had dropped their requirement that entering students have studied a foreign language. This change caused a dramatic fall in the numbers of students studying languages in high schools (Baldauf and Lawrence, 1990) which was only partly offset by increases in the growth of community language programs at the primary school level. This decline caused great concern among those who advocated modern/foreign language teaching and increased their support for an explicit national policy on languages (Lo Bianco, 1987b).

During this period, there was also a growing awareness and concern, among other community groups, with language issues. Aboriginal languages were in need of drastic revitalization and funding if they were not to disappear altogether and Aboriginal people and their supporters were becoming more vocal on this issue (e.g. Fesl, 1987). The increasing number of non-English speaking migrants meant that there was an increasing demand for ESL services and, as the Galbally report had indicated, these services were inadequate. Professional ESL groups began to lobby for increased support and objected strongly when funding cuts were proposed. English mother tongue educators were concerned with literacy standards and with strengthening English teaching in schools (Christie, 1982). Finally, the gradual reorientation of the economy towards Asia and specific market niches meant that these changes could only be accomplished if Australians were knowledgeable about Asian societies, their languages and cultures (e.g. Ingram, 1986).

Although these groups espoused different and sometimes conflicting language goals<sup>3</sup>, there was enough common interest to allow for joint lobbying of the federal government (Lo Bianco, 1990). Thus, a broad based constituency emerged with an interest in an explicit Australian language policy based on language use and language needs in the Australian community.

The specific details of how Australia's National Language policy has developed have been discussed in a number of places (e.g., Baldauf, 1990; Clyne, 1988b; Lo Bianco, 1990, 1987b; Ozolins, 1988, 1984), and the government has published two major volumes on it, the first detailing the nature of the language situation (SSCEA, 1984) and the second outlining a language policy for implementation (Lo Bianco, 1987a). The first report was based on two and a half years of initial data collection by The Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts (SSCEA, 1984). The Committee held hearings all around Australia and took both written and oral submissions from individuals and



organizations including professional organizations, linguistic experts, and government departments. The Committee's report, A National Language Policy, therefore represented what was known about language use and needs in Australia at the time. The second report, National Policy on Languages, completed in 1987, defined an implementation strategy for language use, maintenance and development in Australia.

As Appendix A indicates the national language policy document is a broadly based statement covering both English and other languages as well as language needs, rights and resources. Specifically it deals with four major areas: "English for all" (mother tongue, ESL, EFL), "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages", "A language other than English for all" and "Language services" (translating and interpreting, media, public libraries, and language testing).

#### IMPLEMENTING MULTILINGUALISM: A NEW BEGINNING FOR AUSTRALIA?

A language policy, no matter how carefully developed and broadly based, is only a statement of intent until it has been implemented. Even when implementation begins, it does not always go smoothly and funding may limit what can be accomplished. In the Australian context, some potential problems have already arisen. For example, language professionals and language groups became concerned in 1986 that the government might take no further steps to implement a language policy since no immediate action had been taken on the Senate Standing Committee's descriptive report of 1984. This concern was overcome with the appointment of Joseph Lo Bianco who was charged with developing recommendations for policy implementation (Lo Bianco, 1990, 1987). Now that implementation has begun, language professionals continue to be concerned that funding may not be allocated in the amounts recommended and the independent watchdog advisory council (AACLAME) may be abolished. Many of the areas recommended for funding in the National Policy on Languages have

yet to receive any funds (See Appendix B). These problems illustrate that the creation of a policy through socio-political action is only a first step. There must be a continual review of the language plan and the concerted application of political pressure by groups interested in language to see that programs are funded and implemented.

A second concern with implementation relates to the perceived underlying emphasis within the policy. As Jernudd (1988) points out in his analysis of the PLANLangPol (1983) document, which is parallel in many ways to the final policy, one reading of the document is that the National Policy on Languages makes English the Australian national language with a few exceptions. As Jernudd comments:

Such is the propagation of ethnocentric power, once the battle for hegemony of English has been won. Adjustments remain. The notion of an Australian historical community is closely interdependent with the notion of continuity of use of English into what has become the present social structure. (1988: 57)

Lo Bianco (1987b) makes much the same point when comparing policies of the mid 1960s to those of the multicultural period of the late 1970's and early 1980's.

English monolingualism seems an accurate brief description of Australian practices in education in relation to immigrant and Aboriginal students until relatively recently. If these practices have changed it is only slightly. The prevailing slogan could now be said to be English proficiency with residual family or immediate community directed skills in the mother tongue. (1987b: 25)

Smolicz sees this issue in a somewhat different light arguing that in Australia a balance of values is being struck which accepts English as an over-arching core value (i.e., there is a need for a common language). However, "what has not yet been fully grasped by the dominant group is that this must be understood *in relation to the co-existence of such a common language with the native tongues of ethnic minorities*" (1986:53-4). Thus, the underlying issue in policy implementation is not the substitution of an ethnic language for English, but the addition of second language skills to the English language base. What does the

limited evidence from the funding indicate about policy implementation to date?

Funding figures for 1989 for those areas recommended for implementation in the National Policy on Languages are available (see Vox, 2, 1989: 5 and AACLAME Update, 1, July 1989), and the first thing to note is that many of the specific recommendations in the report have yet to be funded. If we look at the four areas listed in the National Policy on Languages (see Appendix A), there is funding for the first area, "English for All", included money for adult literacy (A\$1.96m), and funding for English as a second language programs for children and adults, but no funding has been provided for English mother tongue projects. The second area, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages", received A\$1m, half the recommended funding level. In the fourth area, "Language Services", only the language testing sector has received any support, and this was to develop tertiary education tests for screening full fee paying students wanting to study in Australia. The third area, "A Language Other Than English for All", has received much of the funding with A\$7.64m being allocated to the Australian Second Language Learning Program and A\$1.95m to Asian studies. In addition A\$1.1m has been set aside for the Languages Institute of Australia. These figures indicate that the funding priorities of the government have been put on improving second language learning, especially through LOTEs. The Prime Minister has summarized the government's funding objectives when he said:

...we will continue to fund and promote a balanced program of second language learning - languages that we need for our economic future, for the efficient delivery of social welfare, and for the celebration of our cultural diversity. (cited in Vox, 2, 4, 1989)

Much of that money will go as grants to the states to support language-in-education programs and planning. Since funding is only in its first year, it is too early to tell how programs will develop, but I think some potential problems are already apparent.

First, although a national second language development program has been under development for several years (e.g. A.L.L. Project, Scarino and McKay,

1988; 1990), the surge of funding has caught the State Department and Schools unprepared. Programs to increase the teaching of LOTEs are being implemented overnight with inadequate staff and teaching resources to back them up (Wilson 1990). While additional teacher education is being provided, the gap between what is needed and what is available is growing. Programs are being developed with "start up" funds with the hope that eventually States will redirect continuing funding to support this new emphasis.

In summary, the government seems to be providing the start up funding for the development of a continuing basis for a multilingual Australia. However, this funding has been limited. Without teachers and resources, and without proper management it could collapse under its own weight. The notion of a new beginning for language policy in Australia must therefore still be marked with a question mark. It could be just another bit of political rhetoric that never reached actualization.

#### ENGLISH-ONLY: AN AMERICAN POLICY?

There has been much public debate and a lot has been written on "U.S. English", "English only", "English Plus" and the "English Language Amendment (ELA)" (e.g. Imhoff, 1987; Bikales, 1986 - for; Fishman, 1988; Judd, 1987; Marshall, 1986; Donahue, 1985 - against), i.e., whether to make English the official language of the United States<sup>1</sup>, and there is not space to recite that history or rehearse those arguments here. Instead, I propose present a brief analysis of the situation in the United States as it appears to an outsider who has not been actively engaged in the debate.

To an outsider the debate seems often to be emotional and essentially negative on both sides. Furthermore, the debate seems to be politicizing language, and dividing communities within the nation, that is, having the opposite effect that either party believes is desirable. Finally, both sides of

the debate admit that a Constitutional amendment, if it were to pass, might not make any difference in practice.

What is an outsider to make of all of this? To me the debate indicates first, that there is a 'language problem'. By this I mean that in the United States the full range of the language needs is not being met. It is also apparent that different groups give different language needs different priorities. Second, both sides seem to be interested only in simple solutions (i.e., pass a simplistic regulation; what's wrong with what we have) to what are clearly complex social, political, economic, not to mention linguistic issues. Why have there been no proposals for a comprehensive language policy? Third, the real issue of how are language skills to be improved has been lost in the political debate and is not therefore being addressed.

'English only' or 'English plus' are not policies; they are dogmatic statements of belief. Without detailed language policies to go with them, the debate about the hypothetical results of either statement of belief can never be resolved. My feeling is that more attention is needed to detailed policies aimed at developing the necessary language skills in the community. As language needs in a community are developed and met, the need for dogmatic statements of faith is lessened.

## CONCLUSIONS

The 1980's have seen new beginnings for language policy in both the United States and Australia. In common with many English speaking countries, there has been no de jure language policy in either country. Both countries are in the process of formalizing language policy, with the United States examining either-or exclusive type policies (English speaking vs. foreign speaking) while Australia has embarked on an inclusive multicultural policy (English plus another language). The policies finally adopted and the form they will finally

take will undoubtedly be shaped in part by the political lobbying done by language groups in each country. Australia has shown that a united effort by ethnic communities and language professionals can have an important impact on the development of language policy.

For Australia, these are early days and it will be interesting to see whether it is possible to develop a national identity on the basis of multiculturalism, and whether it is possible to implement the multicultural identity both in ideology and in reality, through the learning of languages.

The situation in the United States suggests there is a need for a broadly based language policy. Simple solutions are unlikely to solve complex problems, and the battle to implement them can only lead to divisiveness.

## Notes

1. This is a revised version of a paper was presented at the Rocky Mountain Regional TESOL Conference, 26th January 1990 while the author was Visiting Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics in the English Department, Northern Arizona University. The author acknowledges the help of Linda Dela-Rosa in compiling the Further Reading section.
2. This section is primarily based on Conklin and Lourie (1983). Other useful materials on these language issues include Fishman (1985), Ferguson and Heath (1981) and McKay and Wong (1988).
3. For example, in the current Australian language planning context, Asianists might push for more Japanese and Korean to be taught, while ethnic communities might want Turkish and Maltese or language teachers might stress French and German as important languages to know for access to the European Community. In a balanced situation where every student has the opportunity to learn a second language and where funding is not a problem, there is ample opportunity for all languages to expand their clientele. However, if these pressure groups begin arguing over which languages and rationales are more important (economically, socially or culturally), particularly if funding is limited, then the coalition could fragment (cf. Lo Bianco 1990).
4. This debate is also going on at the State level. One source for updated material on this debate (from the English plus perspective) is EPIC Events, Newsletter of the English Plus Information Clearinghouse.

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Table 1: Major Languages Other Than English Used in Australia

Language	1976 <sup>1</sup>	1981 <sup>2</sup>	1986 <sup>3</sup>
	Total	Total	Total
Italian	444,672	555,300	415,765
Greek	262,177	307,800	277,472
Yugoslav <sup>4</sup>	142,407*	207,000 <sup>5</sup>	140,575
Chinese	29,903	106,500	139,100
Arabic	51,284*	107,800	119,187
German	170,644*	187,800	111,276
Spanish	48,343	75,900	73,961
Polish	62,945	97,400	68,638
Vietnamese	NA	38,200	65,856
Dutch	64,768	130,200	62,181
Maltese	45,959*	81,900	59,506
French	64,851*	64,100	52,790

<sup>1</sup> From Clyne (1982: 12). Based on 1976 Census data where respondents were asked for "all languages regularly used".

<sup>2</sup> From SSCEA 1984: 12. ABS 1983 Language survey; DEYA National Survey of Language Learning in Schools 1983. Total = 14,072,900.

<sup>3</sup> From Clyne (1985a: 24). Based on 1986 Census data where respondents were asked to indicate which language(s) they speak at home.

<sup>4</sup> Includes Serbo-Croatian, Croatian, Serbian, Yugoslav.

<sup>5</sup> Macedonian included with languages of Yugoslavia.

Other languages include Aboriginal languages, Afrikaans, Afghan, Albanian, Amharic, Armenian, Assyrian, Basque, Bengali, Bulgarian, Burmese, Danish, Estonian, Farsi, Fijian, Finnish, Gaelic, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Indonesian, Iranian, Japanese, Kazakh, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Lithuanian, Latvian, Lao, Macedonian, Malay, Malayan, Maori, Norwegian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Singalese, Sindhi, Sri Lankan, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Tartar, Tetum, Thai, Timorese, Tongan, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Welsh, Yiddish (SSCEA 1984: 11).

\*Estimate.

Table 2: Major Languages Other than English Used in the United States

Language	1940 <sup>1</sup> Total	1970 <sup>1</sup> Total	1975 <sup>2</sup> Total	1980 <sup>3</sup> Total
Spanish	1,861,000	7,889,000	8,234,000	11,116,000
Italian	3,767,000	4,052,000	1,379,000	1,618,000
French	1,412,000	2,650,000	1,452,000	1,551,000
German	4,950,000	6,188,000	1,389,000	1,587,000
Polish	2,416,000	2,347,000	NA	821,000
Chinese languages	NA	397,000	475,000	631,000
Greek	274,000	493,000	384,000	401,000
Filipino languages	NA	209,000	317,000	474,000
Portuguese	216,000	334,000	279,000	352,000
Japanese	NA	405,000	372,000	336,000
American Indian or Alaska Native Langs	NA	NA	NA	330,000
Yiddish	1,751,000	1,526,000	NA	316,000
Korean	NA	70,000	182,000	266,000
Arabic	NA	201,000	NA	218,000
Vietnamese	NA	NA	NA	195,000
Total	21,778,000	31,866,000	18,719,000	23,060,000

<sup>1</sup> From Waggoner 1981: 498,500. Estimated numbers of selected non-English mother tongue claimants.

<sup>2</sup> From Waggoner 1981: 510. Estimated numbers of persons aged 4 or older who speak languages other than English in households where such languages are spoken.

<sup>2</sup> From Waggoner 1988: 97. Estimated numbers of people, aged 5 and older, who speak languages other than English at home.

<sup>1</sup> White population only. No data were tabulated on non-European languages until 1970.

APPENDIX A: A NATIONAL POLICY ON LANGUAGES (Selected Contents)

- I. RATIONALE
- II. POLICY
  - Introduction
    - A. The Status of Languages in Australia
      - 1. English:
      - 2. Australian Languages:
      - 3. Other Languages Used in Australia:
    - B. The Teaching and Learning of Languages
      - 1. English for All
        - a. English as a first language
        - b. English as a second language
          - i. ESL for adults
          - ii. ESL for children
        - c. English as a foreign language
        - d. Teacher education
        - e. Policy/action strategy
      - 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
      - 3. A Language Other than English for All
        - a. General introduction
        - b. Languages used in the Australian community
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        - d. Making it happen
        - e. Factors which influence and constrain planning for LOTE teaching
        - f. Suggested directions for educators on language issues
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    - C. Language Services
      - 1. Translating and Interpreting
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    - D. Advisory Council on the Australian Languages Policy (AACLAME)
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APPENDIX B: NATIONAL POLICY ON LANGUAGES (DEC, 1989 ALAA Newsletter 24,10)

## A STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE JOINT CONFERENCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN LINGUISTICS SOCIETY AND THE APPLIED LINGUISTICS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA HELD AT MONASH UNIVERSITY, 25-29 SEPTEMBER 1989

The implementation of a National Policy on Languages in Australia marked an initiative of world standard that excited support and interest in both Australia and abroad. However, failure on the part of the government to enunciate a clear future for the National Policy on Languages seems to indicate a visible diminution of commitment. The joint conference of the Australian Linguistics Society (ALS) and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia (ALAA) is specifically concerned that:

- there is no guaranteed continuation of funding after 1990 for the important programs of the National Policy: the Australian Second Language Learning Program (ASLLP), the National Aboriginal Languages Program (NALP) and the Multicultural and Cross-Cultural Supplementation Program (MACSP). Arrangements for Adult Literacy are also unclear
- there has been no indication that the important coordination and independent policy advisory role of AACLAME will continue after 1990. This function is crucial to the ongoing success of a National Policy on Languages
- the Government and particularly DEET have been highly selective in their statements on language policy, at time stressing short-term economic and narrow sectional interests, instead of the broader perspectives of social, professional and cultural needs of all Australians and the rich potential that exists in Australia for language development.

The Australian Linguistics Society and the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia strongly urge the Government to reaffirm its commitment to the National Policy on Languages which acknowledges the diversity of language needs in Australia, and to live up to Prime Minister Hawke's commitment in 1988 not to make artificial distinctions between the languages promoted by the Government.

The Australian Linguistics Society, the Applied Linguistics Association of Australia, the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations, the Aboriginal Languages Association and many other professional bodies were instrumental, together with the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) and other concerned groups, in placing language policy on the Government agendas. This community-based and internationally acclaimed initiative must be maintained beyond 1990 by committed Government funding to ensure an equitable and socially just National Policy on Languages for all Australians.

This statement is fully supported by the Australian Council of TESOL Associations.

Dr Barbara Horvath, President of ALS; A/Prof Ross Steele, President of ALAA