We Are One, We Are Many: Portraits of Australian Bilingual Schools

By Donald F. Hones

We are one, but we are many,
And from all the lands on Earth we come

— *from* Woodley & Newton,
I am / We are Australian

Lalor North Primary School lies tucked away in a quiet suburb north of Melbourne, Australia. Cars jam the side streets as parents drop their children off at the start of the day. Across the street, beautiful roses grow in front of small, well-kept homes. A football oval—"Australian Rules" football in this part of the country, mate—lies a short distance away, the grass gleaming in the mid-morning sun.

To all appearances, this is a typical school in a typical neighborhood. But inside there are some surprises: Student literary and art work adorns the wall, but the Cyrillic alphabet is used, and the language is Greek. In a classroom in another wing of the building, students congregate around a computer, editing and producing a newspaper, but the language is Macedonian.

Though separated by thousands of miles from the homelands of their parents and grandparents, students at this school in Australia master language and academic content in the language of their ethnic communities, and English. Bilingual education may not be widespread in Australia, but in certain schools and communities, it thrives.

In the last months of 2003 I had the opportunity to visit, and learn from, the bilingual education programs at several schools in the state of Victoria, Australia. In the study that follows I address the cultural, historical and political contexts of immigrant bilingual education in Australia and particularly, Victoria.

I collected data through participant observation, audiotaped interviews, and library research to build ethnographic portraits of three schools containing four bilingual programs, with target languages of Chinese, Greek, Macedonian and Indonesian. Through a process of interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1994), I examine these portraits, and include comparisons and contrasts to bilingual education programs in my country, the United States. Finally, implications for educators, policymakers and others are suggested, including ways that supporters of bilingual education in other nations can learn from these portraits of three school programs.

Australian Immigrant Languages and Public Education

Australia in the Twenty-first Century is a nation with immigrants from many cultures. It is estimated that one in four Australians is foreign born, and one in twenty is from Asia. Linguistically, Australia is also diverse, with about 25% of the population coming from a language background other than English. Italian, Greek, Cantonese and Mandarin are the most common languages other than English spoken in the home (Miller, 2003). In addition, it is estimated that 200-250 Aboriginal languages are still spoken in Australia (Lo Bianco & Rhydwen, 2001).

In the 1970s, multiculturalism policies finally began to address the needs of linguistically diverse students in the schools. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs were offered to students, and some schools began programs in bilingual education. However, mirroring developments in the USA, Australia began to roll back support for bilingual education by the 1980s, and funding for ESL programs was cut. A discourse of *mainstreaming* began to guide federal policies (Miller, 2003). Though mainstreaming was championed as a way to limit the marginalization experienced by language learners, it also resulted in the loss of needed language support (Ozolins, 1993).

The birth of the Australian nation in 1901 was accompanied by two acts of Parliament, both of which seemed intended to ensure that Australia remained predominantly British. The Immigration Restriction Act 1901 was designed to preserve racial purity by introducing a dictation test in any European language. The Commonwealth Naturalisation Act 1903 denied Asians and other non-Europeans the right to apply for naturalization, receive pensions, or vote. Immigration to Australia swelled after World War II and in the aftermath of Vietnam. By 1970s, the last

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vestiges of "White Australia" policies were abandoned for an immigration policy of non-discrimination based on race, color or nationality (Hage, 2002).

According to the 2001 census, 16% of the Australian population spoke a language other than English in the home. Over two hundred languages were listed for Australia. Numerically, the top 10 community languages in Australia are (with number of speakers):

Table One:
Top 10 Languages Other Than English Spoken in Australia, 1996 and 2001

Language	1996	2001	% change
Italian	375,834	353,606	-5.9
Greek	269,831	263,718	-2.3
Cantonese	202,194	225,307	+11.4
Arabic	177,641	209,371	+17.9
Vietnamese	146,192	174,236	+19.2
Mandarin	92,065	139,288	+51.3
Spanish	91,270	93,595	+2.5
Tagalog	70,343	78,879	+12.1
German	99,050	76,444	-22.8
Macedonian	71,414	71,994	+0.8

From Monash University Language and Society Centre (2003). Multilingualism in Australia. at http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/language_and_society/past_projects/multilingual.html

The five years between 1996 and 2001 saw a tremendous growth in numbers of speakers of Asian and Middle Eastern languages, while the languages of earlier European immigrant groups showed a decline. Chinese, including Mandarin and Cantonese, is now the most widely spoken language next to English (Australian census, 2001). Language use patterns vary across states and regions, and from city to city (Monash University, 2003). Cities with the highest percentage of speakers of languages other than English are Sydney and Melbourne, at 26.4% and 25.4% respectively (Clyne, 2003).

Victorian Government Support for Bilingual Education

Michael Clyne, whose work over many years has shaped the field of bilingual education in Australia, writes:

> Throughout the history of Australia… there has been an open-ended tension between English monolingualism as a symbol of a British tradition, English monolingualism as a marker of Australia's independent national identity, and multilingualism as a reflection of a social and demographic reality. (2003:9)

From the 1970s until part way through the 1990s, the pendulum swung in favor of bilingual programs for "community languages"—those spoken by large numbers of immigrants in a community, as well as for the study of languages of strong regional or economic interest. The support for bilingual programs was strongest in areas where multilingualism flourished, especially in Victoria and New South Wales. In promoting bilingual approaches, policymakers and educators in Australia drew on evidence of academic success for students educated over several years and through all major academic areas in two languages (Genesee, 1987; Lindholm & Aclan, 1991).

In 1997 the government of Victoria began the Bilingual Schools Project, with the goal of supporting content-based language instruction for schools in community languages (such as Chinese, Greek, and Arabic) as well as important regional languages (such as Indonesian and Japanese). Schools in the project were required to provide at least two Key Learning Areas (including science, mathematics, studies of society and the environment, etc.) in the target language across several grades, and teaching in the target language at a minimum 7.5 hours per week (Bilingual Schools Project, 2003). Twelve primary schools and 3 secondary colleges were originally chosen for support under the bilingual project.

Theresa, a bilingual teacher at Kinsella Primary School, recalls the high level of support that accompanied this initiative:

> The government set out to retrain an enormous number of teachers, and was extremely generous. They paid for the training of the teachers, they paid for in-country experiences, they were very supportive.

This state support for bilingual teachers and schools has helped existing bilingual programs to continue and expand, and many newer programs to get off to a good start. The decrease in funding in the last few years, however, has forced schools with bilingual programs to rely more and more on themselves, and the quality of their programs may have been compromised as a result.

Ethnographic Portraits, Interpretive Interactionism

This study develops ethnographic portraits of bilingual programs. I rely on participant observation, field notes, audiotaped interviews, and a relatively small number of cases to build an interpretation that relies on rich description (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994). From data sources I develop portraits of five bilingual programs situated within four schools in the state of Victoria, Australia. I integrate historical, sociological, psychological and cultural perspectives to find the "circles of meaning" present in the lives of participants at these schools (Rabinow and Sullivan, 1987).

A narrative approach to will be used to reconstruct stories of the classroom and people's lives. Narrative research is chosen as a method in that it focuses on human agency, and the ability of individuals to creatively construct their lives within social and historical contexts (Casey, 1995). Conle (2000) suggests the value of narrative inquiry not only for research, but for professional teacher development.

The interpretative style for these ethnographic portraits draws on a combination of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and interpretive interactionism (Denzin, 1994). Interpretive interactionism "begins and ends with the biography and the self of the researcher," and encourages personal stories that are thickly contextualized, and "connected to larger institutional, group and cultural contexts" (Denzin, 1994:510-511). This study reflects an outsider perspective, that of a visiting American. My interpretation of these programs is colored by comparisons made, consciously and unconsciously, to contexts of bilingual education in the United States.

At the outset of the study I decided to focus on primary schools, as these would offer the most variety of languages taught. They would also help me draw comparisons and contrasts to bilingual schools in the United States, which are largely a phenomenon at the elementary school level. Next, I decided to contact several of the twelve schools which had received support from the Victorian government. I chose to contact schools which taught languages spoken widely in the community, as well as those which taught languages important for Australia's region of the world—Asia and the Pacific.

For this reason I chose not to visit some schools whose bilingual programs are highly regarded, such as Camberwell's French program (De Courcy, 1993). Rather, I wished to visit programs which challenged, in some ways, the pre-eminence of European languages, unless they were used widely in the community. I visited five schools in total, and at three I was able to observe classroom practice. These schools—Abbotsford, Lalor North, and Kinsella—became the central focus of the study.

Sources of data include participant observation and field notes in classrooms, around the schools and communities over

the course of three weeks; digital photographs of classroom activities; audiotaped interviews with selected teachers and administrators; data collection from district and government records; and library research.

The Schools

Abbotsford Primary School

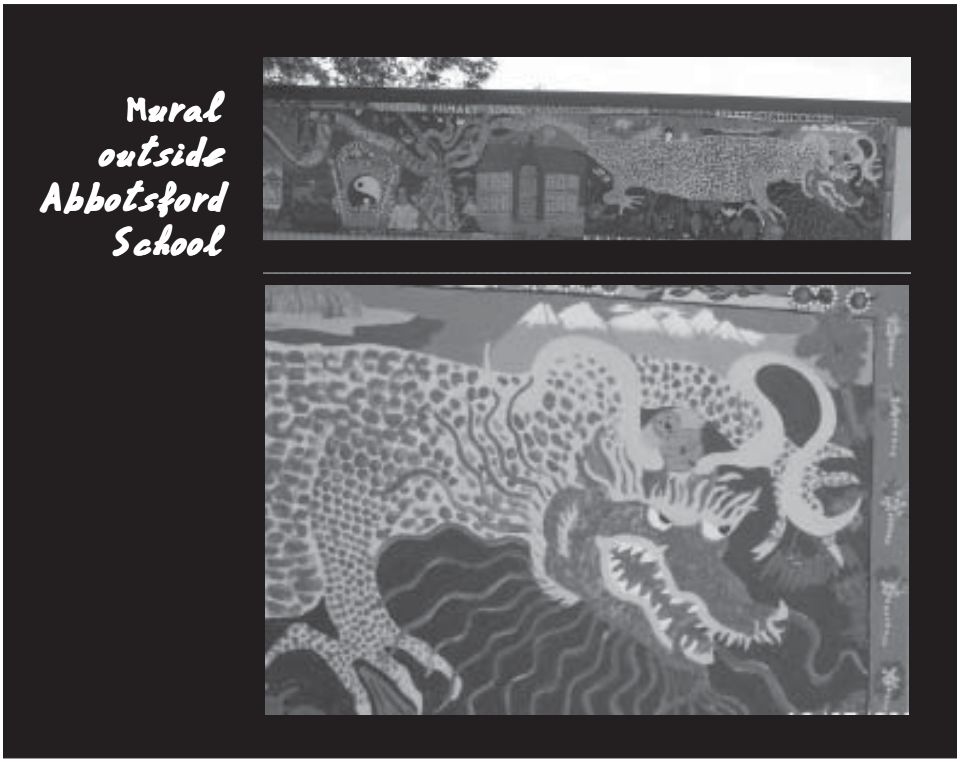
Abbotsford is an inner suburb of Melbourne, a 10-minute tram ride down Victoria Street from the city center. This is a neighborhood that has seen waves of immigrants come and go since the Second World War. Italians have lived here, then Greeks, Turks, and Chinese. Now it is home to a thriving Vietnamese community, with some Africans recently moving in. Vietnamese and Chinese restaurants, bakeries, markets and other businesses line both sides of Victoria, and by midday the sidewalks are crowded with people.

To the south looms a series of low-income apartments, known as "the flats"—these are where many of children reside who go to Richmond West and Abbotsford Primary schools. Richmond West is across the street from the flats; Abbotsford is on the other side of busy Victoria, down a quiet side street. The building is an old two-story structure, with high windows and dark brick. Yet, a touch of color and creativity gives some indication of the spirit of the place. On the side of a garage, above the school parking lot is a beautiful mural: In it, the artists morph a rainbow serpent, symbolic to the traditional owners of Australia, into a red and gold Chinese dragon. Buddhist temples, riverside huts, flying horses, kangaroos, and other cultural items fill the background.

Australia restricted immigration of people of non-European descent until the 1970s. Large numbers of refugees have come from Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia, but the largest group of Asian immigrants have been speakers of various varieties of Chinese. Some have come as refugees from political crackdowns inside China. Some, fearing the takeover of their city by China, have come from Hong Kong. Others have fled Chinese ethnic communities in Southeast Asia, or have come for business reasons (Clyne, 2003).

Principal Ken Coughlan greets me at his office. He is about 5'10", slim, with sharp blue eyes, dressed in a green sweater, dark green pants and polished black shoes. He is very proud of the school and its Chinese/English bilingual program. He also shares some demographics: The school is small, with about 80 students. Approximately 75% are Vietnamese, and 25% Chinese. There is an ESL program, as well as a Vietnamese LOTE (Language Other Than English) program which provides 3.0 hours of Vietnamese instruction per week.

There is also the Chinese bilingual program, open to all students, which provides up to 13 hours per week (about 60% of academic time) in Chinese. Ken tells me that many of the parents want their children in the Chinese bilingual program which, at 19 years, is one of the most established bilingual programs in the area. Though small in size, the school continues to attract parents and children from the crowded flats across Victoria Street. The neighborhood has its social problems, says Ken, "yet this school is seen as a safe place."



Mural outside Abbotsford School

We go upstairs for an assembly and enter a room with dark wood panels and high ceilings. I learn that the children in the bilingual program are preparing for a concert that will be videotaped by the Victoria state department of education. They will be singing "Waltzing Matilda" in Chinese and English, and a song that has come to represent Australia's effort to come to grips with its identity as a diverse nation, *We are Australian*:

I came from the dreamtime from the dusty red soil plains
I am the ancient heart, the keeper of the flame
I stood upon the rocky shore
I watched the tall ships come
For forty thousand years I'd been the first Australian.

In the front of the room are two flags, the stars of the Southern Cross and modified Union Jack on a field of blue; and the yellow sun on a field of red and black of Aboriginal Australia.

Downstairs at the bilingual rooms I meet My Hoa Lam, who is just back from a trip to China. She is about 5'3", slim, with dark hair and eyes, dressed today in a white skirt and blouse. She has built this bilingual program and has been with it since its beginning in 1985. My Hoa gives me a sketch of the bilingual program: Years Pre-4 receive developmental bilingual instruction in language, math, and integrated studies (science and social studies). Overall, they receive 13 hours per week in Chinese. Years 5-6 continue language development in Chinese, but only 7.5 hours per week, in part due to a lack of resources.

My Hoa is the only Chinese language bilingual teacher at present, although she currently is supported by a bilingual assistant and a student teacher. The program is structured so that My Hoa can work with the Pre-2 children in Chinese, while Dina Kambardis, her cooperating teacher, works with the 3-4 children in English. At a certain point in the day they switch groups.

My Hoa greets each of the children as they enter the classroom. She then introduces me, and the children all greet me, in Chinese. They seem to be a happy group, and look smart in their green and white checkered school uniforms. Together with

My Hoa they read a book about Santa Claus. She models the strategies of an effective language arts teacher, asking prereading questions, and checking comprehension along the way. She is a great communicator, utilizing lots of body language, facial expressions and different tones of voice. She smiles a lot.

After the reading, My Hoa, with much participation on the part of the children, begins to web main ideas from the story onto the white board. As a non-Chinese speaker/reader, it is interesting to see how these beautifully written characters serve to connect ideas in the minds of these bilingual children. Following this, the children draw their own pictures on a holiday theme, each with a one-sentence description in Chinese.

Dina takes the 3-4 children and they read a book, followed by a cloze exercise. Some of the Pre-2 children practice writing Chinese characters with My Hoa, while others choose Chinese language computer programs to practice. The programs are definitely gauged to the interests of the children, containing animated characters going through a variety of adventures. The computers will also be used for English literacy practice later, as the children draft letters to pen pals in China. A dark-eyed girl with a bright smile responds to her friend, Zheng Rurxi:

> I like my school and my classmates as well and how many people is in your school? I like to make friends with you. I am nine years old. My teacher name is called Dine and My Hou. I like ice cream as well. You spelt "cold" wrong…

Her classmate, who is also reading the letter, interrupts her, pointing to Zheng Rurxi's letter, saying, "It's "cool"—"cool and delicious." The correspondent deletes her ultimate sentence, then writes instead,

> I went to China before but came back to Australia…

My Hoa tells me that some of the Chinese pen pals will be able to visit Abbotsford, but it is unlikely that the students in this class will be able to afford a trip to China. Some students, however, have made the trip with their families.

Dina, the English teacher within the bilingual classroom, has long dark hair, kind eyes and a bright smile. She grew up in this neighborhood in a Greek-speaking household, and her mother still lives nearby. She has a warm manner with the students, and takes seriously their need to develop academic vocabulary in English, as her discussion with the 3-4 students about careers illustrates:

D: What do you think an astronomer does?
S1: Digs?
D: No.
S2: Does research in space?
D: Very good!

Dina also has engaged the entire class in an experiment of sorts, and after lunch she produces the results, contained in a box with several smaller parcels inside. The children had baked gingerbread teddy bears, and had individually packaged their bears, each using the same limited packaging materials, to try to prevent it from breaking when sent through the mail. The children are excited as they open their envelopes, to see if their bears are still whole, or partially broken. Dina regrets that she did not have enough funds to post each envelope separately, rather than all packed into one larger box: "Every teddy bear should have the same conditions," she tells the students. "That way you can truly test the packaging."

Before classes end for the day, students reconvene to practice once more their songs for the upcoming concert. They sing "Little Drummer Boy" in English, and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town" in Chinese. They then practice "Waltzing Matilda" in both languages. It sounded great in Chinese, actually. The children sing beautifully, and it is especially moving to hear these recent immigrants singing the refrain of "We are Australian":

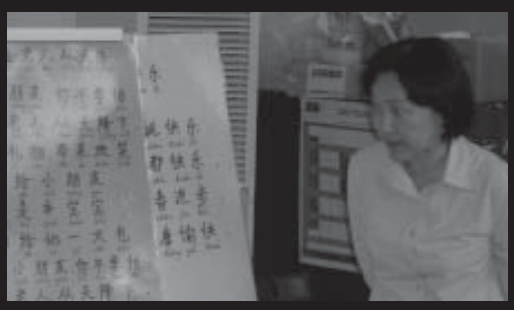
We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come
We share a dream, and sing with
one voice:
I am
You are
We are Australian.

Lalor North Primary School

Lalor is a newer suburb about 30 minutes north of Melbourne by train, a haven for second generation Greek families and others who have departed inner suburbs such as West Richmond. Wandering up the busy street from the station, I get directions to the school at an auto repair shop. Backtracking, I wind my way through quiet residential streets, lined with smaller homes with beautiful gardens, many featuring roses in white, yellow, and red.

Lalor North Primary school lies in the midst of a residential neighborhood on a large plot of land. The different wings of the school are separated by a broad courtyard, and there are playgrounds and playing fields nearby. The school looks new, and, according to principal Barry O'Brien, has recently undergone some renovation.

Large-scale Greek migration to Australia began in the 1960s, with many fleeing a repressive regime in Greece and civil war in Cyprus. Today the Melbourne area boasts one of the largest Greek communities in the world (Clyne, 2003). Lalor North



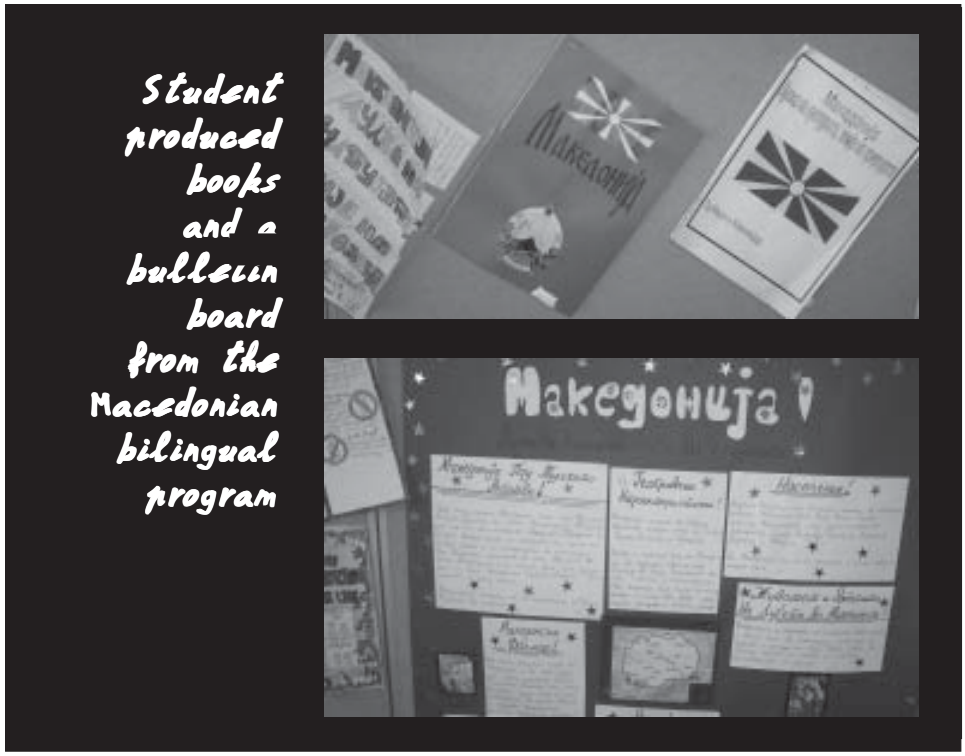
Chinese bilingual instructor My Hoa Lam goes over a song with students

Primary School has been at the forefront in providing Greek language instruction to the children of Greek immigrants over the past quarter century. What makes Lalor North exceptional, however, is that it has two developmental bilingual programs. The Greek/English program began in 1978, and in 1984 the school initiated a Macedonian/English program. Together, these programs involve about half of the school's 316 students. In addition, students not involved in either bilingual program are offered Italian language, and students who need it receive ESL. The stated aims of the bilingual program are:

- ◆ To ensure a smoother transition from home to school for children of non-English speaking backgrounds
- ◆ To support children who are learning English as a second language
- ◆ To develop English, Greek and Macedonian languages as children progress through their education
- ◆ To develop Macedonian and Greek for children who want to be competent in a second language
- ◆ To prepare students to speak, read, write and think in two languages. (Primary School Information Book, 2003, p. 30)

Each bilingual program involves children from Years Pre-6, and all areas of the curriculum are taught in the target languages. This includes technology classes taught in Greek as well as physical education, art and music classes taught in Greek and Macedonian. Years Pre-4 receive approximately 13 hours of either Greek or Macedonian per week (about 60% of academic time). Years 5-6 receive 8 hours in the languages each week. The coordinator of the Macedonian program relates that state test results for their students have been "quite good, if not better than the mainstream." Two students have won state achievement awards in math. There are currently 83 students in the Macedonian program, and it is growing.

In the Macedonian bilingual classrooms, I see Year 4-5 students editing a student-produced Macedonian newspaper on the computer; students modeling self-produced shirts with proposed school logos which they have designed; and a Year 5-6 classroom festooned with student-produced booklets, and students producing essays of several pages while I watch. The Macedonian teachers are young and engaging, and they are supported by bilingual assistants who are helping to gather, translate and prepare an extensive Macedonian resource collection.



Student produced books and a bulletin board from the Macedonian bilingual program

Across the courtyard I meet Jim Polites, who has been developing, teaching and coordinating the Greek program for over 25 years. He is a genial man with a friendly smile, slightly graying hair and glasses. He tells me that the Greek program has three Greek teachers, one funded by the Greek consulate, and 2 bilingual assistants. Similar to their Macedonian counterparts, they have put together a wonderful collection of Greek language materials and resources.

The Greek program has grown smaller in recent years, and now numbers about 50 students. Most of the children are third generation Australians, and most of their parents speak only English at home. Yet, with strong support from parents, children are eager to learn Greek. About one-quarter of the Pre-2 students raise their hands when Jim asks them if they have been to Greece or Cyprus, so cultural links remain important. As with their Macedonian peers, participants in the Greek bilingual program test well and do well academically upon leaving Lalor North.

In the gymnasium, the 5-6 Macedonian class are practicing a traditional dance for an upcoming cultural program. It is quite lively, with many complex moves across the room, and the young people seem very engaged. In the staff room, a special morning tea has been spread in honor of parents and volunteers who have given their time to help the bilingual programs and other school programs to succeed.

It is a diverse group culturally, reflecting the cultures of the school: Besides Greek and Macedonian Australians, there are newer representatives from Vietnam, the Middle East, and Africa. Looking around at this large group of multiethnic parents, teachers, and volunteers sharing food, drink and ideas together, it is hard not to conclude that this school will continue to support diverse cultures and language education into the future.

Kinsella Primary School

Kinsella lies in northeast Victoria, about two hours by train from Melbourne. It is Ned Kelly country: The famous bushranger grew up just down the road in Greta, roamed the nearby Strathbogies and the mountains of the Great Dividing range, and was captured in a shootout with police in Glenrowan. The poor immigrant Irish selectors who populated this part of Victoria in his time are gone, but Kinsella still seems in touch with its roots.

Kinsella Primary school serves children from Kinsella as well as the outlying rural areas. There are three or four one-story buildings with classrooms separated by small courtyards, with athletic fields in back. In the front hall as one enters is an Indonesian rickshaw. An ornamental garden in the Indonesian style is just off a side hallway. The several classrooms devoted to the Indonesian language program

sport more examples of art and life in that vast country: A fiercesome, flying dragon hovering from the ceiling; twin statues of smiling goddesses in the Balinese tradition; photographs of fisherman with tackle, peasants with water buffalo.

The Indonesian program has been in place since 1996. Four Indonesian language teachers form the core of the program. One is a native speaker, currently working on her teaching credentials for Australia. About one-thirds of the school's 478 children are in the Indonesian bilingual program. From Years 2-6, they receive 7.5 hours of Indonesian language, cultural study and math each week. In several of the classrooms Indonesian language teachers team with regular classroom teachers to deliver instruction.

Theresa, tall, bright-eyed, and well-organized, is the coordinator and lead teacher in the bilingual program. She describes the rationale for adopting Indonesian as a language of instruction in rural Victoria:

> There were a lot of people in the area with positive feelings towards Indonesia. This was an area during the Second World War where a lot of divisions were sent over to Asia. For example, my uncle served in Java and was a prisoner of war, and they had really good relationships with Indonesians. But the main reason was that the characters are so alike with English, and the sounds are so alike, so it makes it easier to do. That meant that more of us could qualify in Indonesian than if we had taken on a different language.

One of the challenges for Kinsella is to find, and retain, native speakers of Indonesian. At any given time the program has had one native Indonesian teacher on which they could count, and the presence of such teachers has been a great benefit for the children in the program, as Theresa underscores:

> We have had lots of challenges in getting staff. To me the key to any bilingual program is native speakers. We have been blessed. They have settled into the community, kids have loved them, and they have really kept the program together. It is an issue for us in terms of getting staff from overseas. When they come over they have to pass an English language proficiency test and they have to get a very high score. Getting the visas, getting letters of equivalency, is very difficult. Our last teacher actually got deported at one stage. He had to go home for three months and then come back.

In the Year 2 classroom I find Pak, the native Indonesian speaker. She greets the children, asking them about the day of the week, the date, and the weather, and they respond in Indonesian. Next, she works with the children on their numbers. With her pleasant smile she encourages students as they count up to 100 by 2s and 3s, and then backwards, all in Indonesian. Pak's sister has also spent time with the students in the past, teaching them traditional dances while she was in Kinsella on an extended stay. Unfortunately for the school, Pak will need to relocate while she finishes working on her teaching credentials for Australia.

In the Year Six classroom, Theresa is facilitating the children's complex math games. Next, they divide into groups and prepare to categorize, and visually represent superlatives as manifested in the natural world: highest mountains, deepest ocean trenches, and longest rivers. Although they will speak in English during the group work time, all student presentations, and all teacher talk, is in Indonesian. Before they break for morning tea, the children gather to practice a song and dance they will be performing in Melbourne. Led by one of their peers, a sea of young people in green and gold uniforms perform a swaying, handclapping sidestep, singing with clear voices:

Ayo mama jangan mama marah beta
Dia cuma cuma cuma cium beta
Ayo mama jangan mama marah beta
La orang muda punya biasa

Later, Theresa tells me,

> We run a specifically cultural program, including singing and dancing. That is a huge promotion, and makes other kids want to belong to that group. Next year I would like the grade 5 bilingual kids to begin drumming after school as an option.

An evaluation of the program at Kinsella conducted in 2000 states that the

> Indonesian bilingual program . . . is overwhelmingly successful. The team teaching model works…. All the teachers consider (the teaching of) math through Indonesian successful…. Students' receptive skills in Indonesian are excellent and at least on par with state benchmarks. (Ward, 2000: 101)

Principal Diana Hutchinson, an energetic supporter of the bilingual program, says, "Ideally I would like to see every class as a bilingual class." Unfortunately, the lack of teachers with native or near-native fluency limits the program to about one-third of the students in the school. The five bilingual classrooms tend to be larger in size, averaging about 25 students each.

The presence of the bilingual program has sometimes caused resentment by other teachers, especially at the loss of talented students from their grade level classrooms, as Theresa reports:

> The trouble is that the kids who are good at languages are normally excellent at their first language. By taking those kids into the bilingual program in our first year, there was a great deal of resentment. Since then, we have really modified our approach. You've seen them in our classrooms, you've seen the kids who come up and talk to you. They are the ones who are not coping. While it helps to balance the teacher loads in the school, I don't know that it is in the children's best interest to be placed in there when they find it difficult. However, those kids still get more assistance than I think they would in the mainstream class, because there are two of us involved in the classroom, myself and the mainstream teacher.

All of the children in the bilingual program are entered in the Indonesian Language competitions at the regional and national levels. Last year, Kinsella finished first in the regionals and students took over 60% of distinctions in writing and listening at the nationals, often competing against older students. As Theresa states, "the children have done exceptionally well."

The principal and teachers in the bilingual program recognize the challenge of developing a strong Indonesian program in a predominantly monolingual community setting. Diana suggests a proactive way to solve this dilemma: "Ideally I would like to see an Indonesian community grow up here that could support the program, and we could support them." Theresa concurs, but highlights barriers to attracting Indonesian families from the Melbourne area:

> There are all sorts of issues—they can't get the food they need here, the women won't be examined by the doctors here, their constant need for visas and the consulate. Pak probably spent hours this year trying to get her sister out here, and she was a wonderful asset to the program. But the cost to Pak was enormous, financially and in time. So the dream of a community is very hard to hold. We will have it for a moment, and then the family demands come, and then they have to go back to their communities in Melbourne.

Realizing how often newly arriving immigrants are barely tolerated, and often openly despised, in many schools and communities in Australia, the United States, and elsewhere, it is refreshing to hear of this dream by educators in Kinsella to build a bilingual community in their own back yard.

The study of Indonesian language and culture will invoke mixed feelings

from many Australians in the aftermath of the Bali bombings in late 2002. There was a government ban on travel by school groups to Indonesia which remains in place. One student was pulled out of the Indonesian program at Kinsella by a distraught parent. However, most students, teachers and others responded differently, as Theresa explains:

> I think the kids sympathize with the Balinese, they understand what is happening to them; and I think they really feel sorry for themselves, as they really want to go to Bali. That was our carrot—in grade 6 you got to go to Bali. And suddenly that carrot is gone. But we are finding that families want to go over. But they want the government ban (on school trips) lifted, to know that it is safe.

Parents have continued to show interest in the program, and have eagerly attended Indonesian language classes themselves when those are available. The Evaluation Report of 2000 cites

> The enthusiastic way in which many parents attended conversation classes so they could understand what their children were saying; the proud way in which parents watched their children perform an Indonesian dance or play the *gamelam.* (Ward, 2000:101)

Learning from the Portraits

Abbotsford, Lalor North, and Kinsella offer many contrasts in their bilingual programs. The former two are grounded in the native languages spoken by many students in their schools and by members of the surrounding community; the latter immerses predominantly English-speaking Australians in a language that were chosen, in part, for economic reasons. Similarly, Abbotsford and Lalor North provide first language instruction over several years at about 50-60% of academic time; in short, language maintenance programs (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000); Kinsella remains closer to the lower limit for government support, using partial immersion of students in the target language about 30% of academic time.

Abbotsford and Lalor Noreth are part of a greater Melbourne urban area reflecting linguistic and cultural diversity; Kinsella provides an example from rural district where other languages than English are seldom encountered. Of the three schools, only Lalor North seems to be sufficiently supplied with bilingual teachers. At both Abbotsford and Kinsella the programs could grow if qualified teachers were available.

In many ways the contexts of immigrant bilingual education in Australia model those in the United States. Each nation has experienced tremendous growth through immigration over the last 200 years. Yet, despite the variety of languages spoken by immigrants at arrival, most languages have declined within a few generations faced with the overwhelming dominance of English in formal education and the media (Skuttnabb-Kangas, 2000). Each nation has seen support for bilingual education grow in the 1970s, only to be replaced by disdain, or open animosity, at different levels of local, state and national governments during the ensuing decades.

In the United States, Spanish-English programs are predominant in the field of bilingual education, due to the presence of large numbers of native Spanish speakers, many with home country connections nearby, in Mexico or Central America. In Australia, no single language tends to dominate bilingual programs. Some, like the Chinese program at Abbotsford, reflect more recent immigration from Asia and the Middle East; others, such as the programs at Lalor North reflect wishes of more established European immigrant groups to pass on a language to second, third and even fourth generations. As with the United States, there are also programs in Australia that reflect the economic interest in certain languages, such as the Indonesian program at Kinsella, or the Japanese bilingual program at Huntingdale, near Melbourne.

In instructional terms, the programs at Lalor North and Abbotsford come closest to modeling maintenance bilingual education as practiced in strong programs in the United States, and elsewhere. Students in their first 4-5 years of schooling receive approximately half of their instruction in the target language, and about half in English. This first language support over several years has resulted in higher academic achievement (Thomas & Collier, 1997).

The Indonesian program at Kinsella, though strong, appears limited in scope, when compared to immersion models in Canada, for example, where native English speakers are immersed in French for 90% of school time in kindergarten and first grade (Genesee, 1987). The leaders of the bilingual program at Kinsella seem to have the will to immerse their students for more than the approximately 30% of the school day; at present, they lack resources, especially qualified teachers, to do this.

However, in important ways these programs are similar to each other and to successful bilingual programs in many countries. Each has strong support from community, parents, administrators, and key teachers. Each offers strong cultural programs as well as language and content area studies. Each of these programs represents hope for bilingual education, in Australia and elsewhere: A few committed people can make a difference; and with knowledge, communities will support bilingual schools for their children.

Need for Support

There is great need for support, however, if these schools and others are going to survive well into the 21st century. Much of this support has been given in the past by state and national governments, and they need to be players again if bilingual schools are to succeed:

- Funding formerly provided by the state of Victoria needs to be renewed. This could support curriculum development, training of teachers, and serious, ongoing evaluation of programs. Theresa at Kinsella laments the withdrawing of former support, stating:

  > Bit by bit all the support has been withdrawn. For example, curriculum money—now all that falls back on the school. We also have had the evaluation money stopped, and it makes me very concerned that they would spend a million dollars and nobody cares.

- More professional development is needed for bilingual teachers and all staff at bilingual schools. This should include in-country scholarships where possible.

- Teachers with native speaking ability in target languages should have their visas expedited, and every attempt should be made to help them qualify in a timely manner as teachers for Australian schools.

Implications

Desmond Cahill has written that "it is time to exorcise the ghost of White Australia…time to proclaim that cultural and language differences can exist in an Australia formed around shared core values" (2001: 58). Australia is a nation coming to terms with its diverse identity. I say coming to terms because every day in Australia there are reminders that many teachers, schools, communities, and the press take multiculturalism seriously.

As a visiting American, I could not help but make comparisons to our struggle to come to terms with the fact of diversity in the United States. As a supporter of bilingual education, I was struck most by how a few concerned teachers and administrators

could make a difference, and could bring to life bilingual programs which came to embody the hopes and dreams of entire communities.

The implications seem most clear for educators and policymakers. Bilingual educators and their supporters should not give up, even in times when political opposition seems daunting. A few people working together can become many, and can make a difference. Minority language communities will support bilingual approaches, although they need to be educated to the benefits of such an approach, especially if their community language is in decline.

Similarly, majority language communities, even in relatively isolated areas, can become very strong supporters of bilingual programs. Such programs need not be confined to large, urban areas.

Finally, policymakers need to recognize that, in the aftermath of September 11, the Bali bombings, and other tragic events, the need for young people skilled in the languages and cultures of other lands is greater than ever. We owe it to our children, to our nations, and to our world: To promote bilingual, multicultural education is to promote understanding, and to promote peace, in a world with desperate needs.

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