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MULTILINGUAL SOCIETY WITH A MONOCULTURAL MINDSET

Michael Clyne FASSA FAHA
Honorary Professorial Fellow
School of Languages and Linguistics
University of Melbourne

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This paper briefly outlines the language demography, discusses why these resources are important, and contrasts them with a predominant monolingual mindset which is demonstrated by some widely held fallacies preventing the harnessing of our multilingual resources. Some suggestions are made for the development of our language potential.

1. Recognising Our Multilingualism

The 2001 Census, the latest to be processed, indicates Australia's rich language resources. There are about 240 languages other than English used in the homes of Australians – 64 indigenous languages, sign languages, and about 170 languages from all corners of the world which have come through immigration – languages of different typologies and with different sociolinguistic histories, all in contact with English in the same environment and therefore excellent potential for research on language change and survival. They are also very important resources for the nation if only it would appreciate them. Sixteen percent of the Australian population speaks a language other than English at home; in Sydney and Melbourne the percentage is 29% and 27% respectively.[1] Across Australia, the top languages are Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, and Vietnamese. Cross-census comparisons show substantial losses of speakers by European languages such as German, Maltese, Italian and French and large gains by languages from Asia such as Mandarin, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese (Table 1).

Language	2001	% change from 1991
Italian	353606	-15.6
Greek	263718	-7.7
Cantonese	225307	+38.9
Arabic	209371	+28.6
Vietnamese	174236	+58.1
Mandarin	139288	+155.9
Spanish	93595	+3.4
Tagalog (Filipino)	78879	+33.4
German	76444	-32.6
Macedonian	71994	+11.7
Croatian	69850	+10.7
Polish	59056	-11.8
Turkish	50692	+20.8
Serbian	49202	+102.2
Hindi	47817	+110.4
Maltese	41392	-21.9
Dutch	40187	-14.7
French	39643	-12.9
Korean	39528	+100.1
Indonesian	38724	+42.4

Table 1: Top 20 community languages in Australia, based on home use, 2001, with percentage increase from 1991 (from Clyne and Kipp 2002 also in Clyne 2005, p. 6).[2]

However, there is much regional variation in language demography. Sydney's most widely used community languages are Arabic and Cantonese; Melbourne's and Adelaide's are still Italian and Greek. In Brisbane the top three languages (Cantonese,

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[1] The focus of this article is on the community languages.

[2] The increase shown for Indonesian is for 1996–2001 only, due to the fact that the 1991 Census coded the closely related languages Indonesian/Malay as one entry. If we add the Malay figures to the Indonesian ones for 2001 for purposes of comparison, then the percentage increase from 1991–2001 is 61.6%

Vietnamese and Mandarin) are of Asian origin and the same languages plus Indonesian follow Italian in Perth. Of the ten top languages, three (including Spanish, based largely on Latin American migration) are of European origin in Sydney but five in Melbourne (Table 2). Perth is the only capital in which Greek is not represented in the top ten languages.

Melbourne	**Sydney**	**Adelaide**	**Brisbane**	**Perth**
Italian 134,675	Arabic 142,467	Italian 37,803	Cantonese 13,796	Italian 32,893
Greek 118,755	Cantonese 116,384	Greek 25,119	Vietnamese 13,374	Cantonese 14,889
Vietnamese 63,033	Greek 83,926	Vietnamese 12,355	Mandarin 13,244	Vietnamese 11,587
Cantonese 59,303	Italian 79,683	Polish 7,454	Italian 11,368	Mandarin 10,882
Arabic 45,736	Vietnamese 65,923	German 7,103	Greek 8,239	Indonesian 6,322
Mandarin 37,994	Mandarin 63,716	Cantonese 6,609	Spanish 6,874	Croatian 6,313
Macedonian 30,859	Spanish 44,672	Arabic 4,252	Samoan 6,768	Polish 6,161
Turkish 26,598	Tagalog 40,139	Serbian 3,862	German 5,736	Macedonian 5,782
Spanish 21,852	Korean 29,538	Mandarin 3,825	Tagalog 5,288	German 5,724
Croatian 21,690	Hindi 27,283	Croatian 3,457	Hindi 4,669	Arabic 5,293

Table 2: Top ten community languages in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth, based on home use, 2001 (Clyne 2005, p. 8).

The statistics for the 0–14 age group in 2001 give some indication of the future language break-up – two languages stand out in this age group. Vietnamese is the top community language in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth, second in Adelaide and third in Sydney. Arabic is very strongly concentrated on Sydney (and to a much lesser extent in Melbourne). One of the surprises is Samoan, the second most widely used community language of the younger generation in Brisbane. In the New South

Sydney	**Melbourne**	**Adelaide**	**Brisbane**	**Perth**
Arabic 37,217	Vietnamese 15,395	Greek 3,272	Vietnamese 3,236	Vietnamese 2,753
Cantonese 21,199	Greek 14,446	Vietnamese 2,952	Samoan 2,323	Italian 2,294
Vietnamese 15,242	Arabic 12,404	Italian 2,493	Cantonese 2,219	Cantonese 2,059
Mandarin 11,320	Cantonese 10,241	Cantonese 1,094	Mandarin 2,099	Mandarin 1,816
Greek 10,464	Italian 9,434	Arabic 956	Spanish 1,117	Arabic 1,462
Spanish 6,128	Turkish 6,381	Polish 728	Greek 1,060	Indonesian 1,066
Korean 5,906	Mandarin 6,540	Khmer 673	Hindi 878	Macedonian 858
Tagalog (Filipino) 5,759	Macedonian 4,178	Serbian 619	Arabic 836	Spanish 794
Italian 5,699	Spanish 3,349	Mandarin 553	Italian 664	Serbian 712
Hindi 5,515	Sinhala 2,486	Spanish 486	German 556	Malay 567

Table 3: Community language home users aged 0–14 in five major capitals.

Wales capital, 2 ½ times as many school-age bilinguals use Arabic at home as Greek and Italian combined, and the number of young Spanish speakers exceeds that of young Italian speakers. In the 0–14 age group (2001), Italian is in fifth position in Melbourne and ninth in Sydney. The current demography of community languages should be taken into account in deciding which languages should be taught where.

2. Valuing Our Multilingualism

Having recognised our multilingualism, we need to value it. The international literature attributes to bilingual children earlier metalinguistic awareness, including:

> a better understanding of the arbitrary nature of language (and by extension of the difference between form and content) because bilingual children know that referent may have different names in each language (e.g. Ianco-Worrall 1972, Ben-Zeev 1977);
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> more divergent thinking (trying various ways of problem solving) because they switch between languages (see e.g. Baker 2001, p. 144–148, Ricciardelli 1992, Cummins 1976, 2000); and
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> more efficient neural activity because they are accustomed to using the resources of both languages (Mondt 2006).

Apart from cognitive benefits, there are social, cultural and economic ones. The development of bilingualism in children of migrant background may restore self esteem and estimation of their parents by giving them an appreciation of their parents' capacity in their first language. The children's development of a high level of proficiency in the community language opens doors. Language is a key to culture and bilingualism to an understanding of cultural relativity. Ten of our top twenty community languages are among the world's twenty most widely spoken languages. Among our prominent community languages are ones useful for business negotiation, such as Mandarin, Korean, Arabic and Spanish. Yet a study published in 2000 (Rosen, Digh, Singer and Phillips) showed Australian CEOs averaging proficiency in fewer languages than those of the 27 other countries surveyed, including the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

3. Language Shift

In view of its benefits to individuals and society, it is useful for bilingualism to be fostered and transmitted to the next generation. Census data shows a high shift to English as the only home language in some communities. The shift varies from 2.4% shift among Vietnamese-born to 62.6% among Netherlands-born. Post war northern and central European groups who came to Australia during the assimilation era (e.g. Dutch, Germans, Austrians, Lithuanians, Latvians) record the greatest shift, while recent communities from Asia, Africa and the Middle East and also more established communities from the eastern Mediterranean (speakers of Macedonian, Turkish, Arabic, Greek) are maintaining their languages most (Table 4). In between are the other groups, which include Italian, Spanish, Polish, Japanese and Filipino speakers. Space does not permit a discussion of the factors relating to pre- and post-migration experiences promoting higher or lower language shift. Perhaps the most important factors in language maintenance are cultural distance from the mainstream group and the role of language among the core values of the culture (e.g. Smolicz 1981, discussion of factors: Clyne 2005, pp. 73-85).

Birthplace	% using only English at home, 2001
Vietnam	2.4
Eritrea	3.0
Somalia	3.4
Iraq	3.6
Taiwan	3.8
Cambodia	4.0
China (People's Republic)	4.3
(Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia	4.7
El Salvador	4.8
Lebanon	6.2
Greece	7.1
Turkey	7.1
Hong Kong (SAR of China)	10.3
South Korea	11.1
Chile	12.2
Ukraine	13.5
Ethiopia	14.9
Italy	15.9
Indonesia	16.4
Japan	16.9
Argentina	17.0
Portugal	17.4
Poland	22.3
Brazil	24.1
Spain	25.1
Mauritius	27.3
Philippines	27.4
Hungary	35.0
France	36.8
Latvia	38.2
Malta	38.2
Lithuania	41.7
India	47.6
Singapore	48.9
Germany	54.0
Austria	54.4
Netherlands	62.6

Table 4: Language shift in the first generation, 2001 (from Kipp and Clyne, 2003, reproduced in Clyne 2005: 68)

To estimate the shift to English in the second generation (Australian-born), we have to go back to the 1996 Census, since it was the last to elicit responses on the parents' country of birth, which is the nearest we have to language first acquired. The shift to English is much greater in the second generation than in the first. It follows the same rank ordering as in the first but for an exceptionally substantial inter-generational shift in the Hong Kong Chinese and mainland Chinese communities – increased from 9% to 35.7% and from 4.6% to 37.4% respectively (Table 5). The shift is also generally

Birthplace	**% shift (first generation)**	**% shift (second generation)**			
		Endogamous	*Motherx*	*Fatherx*	*Exogamous (aggregated)*
Austria	48.3	80.0	89.4	92.2	91.1
Chile	9.8	12.7	55.8	68.9	62.3
France	37.2	46.5	77.0	83.3	80.4
Germany	48.2	77.6	90.0	93.6	92.0
Greece	6.4	16.1	44.6	55.1	51.9
Hong Kong	9.0	8.7	43.9	53.9	48.7
Hungary	31.8	64.2	85.9	90.7	89.4
Italy	14.7	42.6	73.1	80.9	79.1
Japan	15.4	5.4	65.0	79.2	68.9
Korea, Republic of	11.6	5.4	59.0	65.7	61.5
Lebanon	5.5	11.4	34.2	49.0	43.6
Macedonia, Republic of	3.0	7.4	33.2	41.3	38.6
Malta	36.5	70.0	92.0	94.0	92.9
Netherlands	61.9	91.1	95.5	97.2	96.5
Other South America	17.2	15.7	61.3	74.2	67.1
Poland	19.6	58.4	81.0	89.8	86.9
PRC	4.6	17.1	46.1	58.1	52.8
Spain	22.4	38.3	69.6	78.3	75
Taiwan	3.4	5.0	28.7	30.7	29.2
Turkey	5.8	5.0	34.7	52.3	46.6

Table 5: First- and second-generation home language shift contrasting exogamous and endogamous families and shift from father's and mother's language (from Clyne 2005, p. 71).

highest in families with exogamous parents. This can be illustrated best among families with a Japanese background (second generation from endogamous family, 5.4%, from exogamous family, 68.9%) or a Korean one (from endogamous family, 4.4%, from exogamous family, 61.5%). That is not to say that languages other than English can not be transmitted by one of the parents. Workshops for parents raising, or wishing to raise children in more than one language are very well attended and overwhelmingly by 'ethnolinguistically mixed' couples opting for the one-parent-one-language strategy.

4. Obstacles to Valuing, Fostering, Strengthening and Supporting Our Multilingualism

Valuing, supporting, strengthening and sharing our multilingualism are limited by some popular fallacies based on an underlying monolingual mindset which assumes monolingualism to be the norm and sees the complexities of language in a monolithic way. This mindset, which prevails in government, business, education and many other public spheres in this country, contrasts with the reality that there are far more bi- and multilinguals in the world than monolinguals. The first of the fallacies is the *Crowded Curriculum Fallacy*, which has no space on the school curriculum for a second language or to permit an adequate time allocation for a second language. Languages are a key learning area but are treated as inferior to other key learning areas. Inadequate time allocation is provided for languages. Many schools do not require students to take a language other than English beyond Year 8, even in Victoria, where this is officially a government expectation. Australia has only 13.4%

continuing a second language to Year 12 (with a range from 5.8% in Queensland to 20.2% in Victoria). Yet many other countries do not consider their curriculum too crowded to include two languages other than the first without the students being disadvantaged in other learning areas. In Finland, whose school students perform better than Australians in the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) study comparing achievements across the curriculum, all children take three languages throughout schooling, 44% a fourth language and 31% a fifth. In the Netherlands, 99% of Year 12 students are learning a second language, 41% a third and 21% a fourth. European Community countries are increasingly making two languages other than the first an essential part of the normal educational experience of all school students. The same is occurring in many Asian countries. There is Australian evidence that bilinguals approach the task of learning another language differently to monolinguals because they have a better understanding of how language works (Clyne, Isaakidis and Rossi Hunt 2001).

Closely related to this is the *Monoliteracy Fallacy* – that literacy must be acquired through English only. This underlies the argument that learning a second language takes away time from literacy acquisition. It denies the overwhelming evidence of literacy transfer between languages (e.g. Baker 2001, pp. 321–3, Jiminéz, Garcia and Pearson 1995, Calero-Breckheimer and Goetz 1993) – even between languages with different writing systems, as Australian studies on Persian–English (Arefi 1997) and Khmer–English (Barratt-Pugh and Rohl 2001) have shown. It also disregards how literacy is enhanced by preoccupation with any language. The children focus attention on the structure of the word, the structure of the sentence, and which sounds are used alongside other ones. It gives practice in scanning and skimming – all skills that contribute to literacy in any language (e.g. Koda 2002). Yelland, Pollard and Mercuri (1993) found a link between even limited exposure to a second language in early primary school in Melbourne and increased reading readiness in English. This is borne out by children in primary bilingual programmes at Bayswater South (German–English) and Huntingdale (Japanese) for instance, with fewer hours of English outperforming in English reading skills children in comparable schools teaching all subjects in English in Victorian statewide testing (2005 School Level reports). Bialystok (2001) and Bialystok, Shenfield and Codd (2000) report on studies that demonstrate that biliteracy in languages with very different writing systems (such as Chinese–English), while burdensome, actually brings with it cognitive benefits such as a better understanding of the relation between print and meaning.

The *Global English is Enough Fallacy* originated with English monolinguals. However, there are now three times as many second-language users of English, employing the language mainly for communication with second-language users from other cultural backgrounds as there are first-language users. For most people in the world today, English is a second or additional language. They have the advantage of a first-hand understanding of cross-cultural communication. Monolingualism is not a useful basis for intercultural understanding in communication. Yet Australia has a unique range of languages that could be built on for international communication. Bilingual competence acquired at home can be supported through senior secondary programmes in over forty languages in some states but it is being undermined by the *Unfair Advantage Fallacy*. This is the fallacy that children with a home background in certain (mainly Asian) languages are a threat to 'real' learners of these languages for whom the subject really exists. It disregards the complexity of home backgrounds, ranging from the 'native speaker competence' of those who have migrated fairly recently and have received most of their schooling in the language via those who have grown up in Australia but have developed good active skills in the language and those who hear it a little from parents (or one parent) communicating with grandparents. It also neglects the difference between some home languages or varieties and the one taught at school (such as Cantonese or Hakka as opposed to Mandarin/Modern Standard Chinese, or Lebanese as opposed to Modern Standard Arabic). It disregards the demotivation of the effort that goes into language maintenance and development by 'witch-hunting' that requires declarations about a student's early language history to assess whether a student should sit for a special background speakers examination. (There are up to four differentiated examinations in community languages, but only in certain ones.)

5. Continuing Icons of Multilingualism in Australia

Despite declining commitment to multiculturalism policy on the part of Federal politicians, Australia still retains the icons of multilingualism and multiculturalism:

- Government multicultural television (with films predominantly in community languages with English sub-titles and half-hour news broadcasts in sixteen community languages) despite disruption of programming through cricket and an increase in English-language films;

- multilingual government and community radio stations, broadcasting in over eighty languages;

- forty-eight languages accredited as Year 12 examination subjects, even though five have been suspended because of low candidature, a practice which is an unhealthy innovation as it departs from the principle that all languages are worthy;

- schools of languages as part of the education departments of Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory (but would be worthwhile additions in the other states), teaching a wide range of languages on Saturdays and after school to students who do not have them available at their day school (in addition to ethnic community schools);

- the Telephone Interpreting Service, functioning in some 190 languages;

- public notices in a wide range of languages, and

- local library facilities in community languages of local need or interest.

6. Spreading Our Multilingualism

One of the challenges is spreading multilingualism – utilising our existing multilingualism to enable the monolingual English-speaking section of the population to participate in multilingualism. In an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project the Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross Cultural Communication at the University of Melbourne worked with a number of state and Catholic secondary schools to facilitate this (Clyne, Rossi Hunt, Isaakidis and Liem 2004). Students were prepared for using Greek or Chinese for shopping transactions on excursions to local shops which they were encouraged to repeat in their own time. Students taking Spanish were brought together regularly with elderly Spanish speakers through a Spanish-language senior citizens' club. In other initiatives, a Melbourne primary school with a German–English bilingual programme timetabled an hour a week in the upper classes at a local German-speaking old people's home to enhance the children's language input, output opportunities and cultural knowledge and a primary school Greek class produced children's segments for the Greek programme in a multilingual community radio station. The German club in the Victorian country town of Morwell regularly welcomes to its functions students at the local high school taking the language. A group of Mandarin-speaking volunteers, the Association of Learning Mandarin in Australia, have established a scheme modelled on the Home Tutors' Scheme for English as a Second Language to help adult non-Chinese Australians to acquire Mandarin (Scott 2004). Students of Japanese at Griffith University and its predecessor, Mt Gravatt College of Advanced Education, were given the opportunity to interact in Japanese with members of the local community as part of their course (Ingram et al. 2004). For many years, the German programme at Monash University has suspended regular classes for one week per year during which members of the German-speaking community, including musicians and composers, business people, journalists, consular officials and German-speaking members of other areas of the university, have given talks as a basis for discussion. This has raised the students' confidence in their German (Clyne 2002). For some years, German students at Monash were assigned an elderly German-speaking buddy for linguistic and cultural interaction. A Japan Week for intensive language activity has been established at the University of Melbourne, while students of Spanish at that university have been interacting closely with members of the Spanish-speaking community.

7. Towards a collaborative strategy

In brief, developing our multilingual potential entails recognising, valuing, fostering and transmitting, strengthening and spreading our multilingualism. This in turn necessitates a strategy of supporting multilingualism on the part of many institutions, including governments, schools, universities, families and ethnic communities.

Universities, for instance, need to offer a larger range of languages, taking into account language demography. Some language programmes such as Dutch, Khmer, Maltese, Polish and Slovenian have been closed down in the wake of 'rationalisation' and are now not available anywhere in Australia. Some, such as Hungarian, Tamil and African languages, have never been taught at universities in Australia. Some languages are no longer available in particular states, such as Turkish in New South Wales and Victoria, Thai and Serbian/Croatian in Victoria, and Vietnamese in South Australia. For this universities would need targeted government funding, as was previously available. Distance education and overseas exchanges can complement in-house offerings. Tertiary institutions are an important link because they can provide more advanced courses to take students beyond their Year 12 level and also train teachers who are needed in a wide range of language now offered and assessed at Year 12. The large number of young speakers of Vietnamese and (in some cities) Arabic should be taken into account in course offerings as should the combined community resources and external need for Spanish (of which there are more school-aged speakers than there are of Italian in Sydney). There has been a decrease in courses in bilingualism/language contact and specialist staff in the field. This will severely compromise the relation between research and policy. It is also imperative that all Australian teacher trainees and language specialists be equipped with knowledge on the nature of bilingualism.

Schools must do their bit by making their language programmes central and not dispensable, with sufficient time allocation and adequate staffing. School language programmes should cater for the diversity of backgrounds and needs of the students and encourage students to utilise community resources in the language. They should take into account the demography of the local community in the language offerings. Primary school languages other than English (LOTE) programmes should be taught in such a way as to maximise the benefits for literacy. Students should be encouraged to make use of the opportunities offered at schools of languages to enable them to take a language other than English in addition to the one being learned at day school.

Over the last decade, Federal and many state governments have reduced their commitment to multiculturalism and multilingualism. They need to foster an awareness of the importance of languages to Australia and of sharing languages. It would be desirable for the Federal Government to give incentives to businesses which utilise productively the linguistic and cultural resources of the workforce. Governments should alleviate the language-teacher shortage by providing scholarships and tagged funding to universities to ensure that a wide range of languages is available. It is important for work on a coordinated national languages policy to recommence, based on wide consultation (Cf. Lo Bianco 2001, Clyne 2005, pp. 143-171).

Ethnic communities themselves should develop schemes to involve young people acquiring or maintaining and developing the community language in activities involving the elderly, tourists and recently arrived migrants or refugees. Especially, they should offer second language learners of their language, both children and adults, links to community activities which can provide input and output opportunities and cultural learning experience. Communities can also organise links between the younger generation and their peer group in the country of origin and other migration countries through new technologies to ensure the development of a peer group register that is missing when the community language is used almost exclusively with the parental and grandparental generations.

Finally, within families of non-English-speaking background, the family has a crucial role to play, firstly in developing a family language policy on who speaks which language to whom and when, and secondly in implementing it consistently and confidently. They can ensure that a communication rich environment is available, with resources to support and strengthen everyday interaction.

As the monolingual mindset is largely an attitudinal issue, language again needs to become an important item on the public agenda in Australia. The change from assimilationist to pluralistic thinking on language and culture was the result of a concerted effort on the part of a wide coalition of interests, including ethnic, Aboriginal and deaf groups, academics and teachers, trade unions, and business people (Clyne 2005, pp. 143-171). Defending and building on this pluralist thinking will again necessitate a widespread grass-roots movement. This is a matter of urgency, for as has been implied in this paper, it is the cost of monolingualism not of multilingualism that Australia cannot afford.

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