Contextualising Multilingualism in Australia Today

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Abstract: This paper will begin by looking at globalisation, education and transnationalism in the context of Australia’s post-war immigration history leading to a brief examination of the international literature surrounding second and third generation immigration. A brief review of international educational trends in English language teaching in recent times in relation to these globalised educational contexts and an insight into the Australian context and provision for the learning of English in Australian schools will be introduced. This background will then be used to consider the current policy and curriculum context in Australia in relation to multilingual education. By definition, this will consider the Australian Curriculum with a particular focus on the efficacy of the newly framed EAL/D framework for the teaching of English in Australian schools.

Globalisation
There is no doubt that Australia in 2015 is markedly different from the Australia of 100 years ago, not long after its birth as a nation in 1901. However, one thing that remains constant in these historical, geographical, social and cultural reflections is that Australia has always existed in relation to its place in the world. There is an extensive literature that describes this from each of the perspectives above and from even wider perspectives (see for example, Held, 1999).

A useful starting point in considering globalisation and its effects is to consider your own life and how you are connected globally. When we sign up for a social networking account we immediately begin communicating globally and social spaces like Reddit, Facebook and Pinterest, for example, show our identities as being borderless as we scrutinise ideas across the world. Held (1999) gives us a broad definition when he says: ‘globalisation reflects a widespread perception that the world is rapidly moulded into shared social space by economic and technological forces.’ (p. 1)

Held (1999) suggests three ways to think about globalisation and presents three different theories or views of globalisation. He talks about the hyperglobalist thesis, arguing that networks of production, trade and banking have replaced the idea of nations or nation states. He further argues that globalisation is just about the economy, and that the complexity of the labour market predicates that multinational corporations like Microsoft or Nike will seek out the cheapest labour markets internationally. This global hybridisation of cultures is interpreted as evidence of a ‘radically new world order’ (Held 1999, p. 3). This is often called shifting jobs to the ‘south’ and de-industrialising the ‘north’. (This ‘north’–‘south’ divide comes from a northern hemisphere perspective which indeed problematises the place of Australia and New Zealand.)

Held’s second thesis is the sceptical thesis which, in contrast to the hyperglobalists, believes that globalisation is given much more importance than it deserves and that the idea that Multinational companies are more important than governments is wrong as nations have more enduring power to regulate economic activity. What the sceptics do see is that the economic divide disadvantages those in ‘the south’ and that there is an ingrained hierarchy
that pervades the globe and favours the wealthier nations.

Held’s final theory is the transformational thesis which suggests that there is a softening of the boundaries between globalisation and national governments as a result of globalisation. Thus the decisions being made in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are more crucial than those made by individual governments in terms of their effect. Perhaps the transformationalists believe that globalisation is making the nation state redundant.

In recent times, thoughts about this global perspective have permeated political discourse in relation to language use and language teaching. One of Barack Obama’s pre-election speeches in July 2008 referred to the value of bilingualism and multilingualism and urged parents to focus more on having their children speak more languages than having everyone speak perfect English. In this speech he recognised that children of immigrants to the United States learn English rapidly and that multilingualism provides economic advantages and that it is also the norm outside the US (McKay & Wong, 1988). Of course there is much critique in relation to this speech and educational policy making in the US where some writers (for example, Hornberger & Link, 2013) have questioned the actions and funding made available following the sentiments expressed by Obama.

In Australia we rarely hear such a strong endorsement of multilingualism as Obama’s but the notions of global economies and the way that these affect our context are never far away from our political dialogues. The current discussion in Australia about those from language backgrounds other than English tends to polarise around country of birth, time and method of arriving in Australia – and all of these have been supplanted by faith/religion since 9/11 and the Bali bombings. At times these discussions tend to focus on more recent arrivals or those immigrants who have come here in ways that perhaps do not fit the government’s immigration policy.

In Australia we are very aware of how the global context makes an impact on our daily life – how often are we reminded of:

• the strength or weakness of the Australian dollar and its impact on trade;
• the need for us to consider markets for goods other than raw materials and to think about a new industrialism born from a high skill base;
• how economic trip-ups in China can make a difference to our annual GDP;
• how the resources boom might just be coming to an end.
• the need for NAPLAN/PISA results to improve in order for our citizens to be able to compete in the global market place?

Our place in a global world economy is a source of constant media attention and, at times when budget balancing and public sector spending are in the spotlight, global economic contexts provide a convenient talking point.

Recent arguments by Lo Bianco (2005, 2014) further the importance of globalisation in relation to language use, language learning and language planning. Lo Bianco gives us a strongly stated case that ‘This vast population mobility has converted most countries of the world into plural societies, so that the community-level multiculturalism and multilingualism is now itself universalised’ (2014 p. 98).

Considerations of Australia’s participation in this population mobility is clearly important when thinking about multilingualism. Australia has always been a nation of immigration and recipient of groups of people from other parts of the world. Much of Australia’s 200 year white history is characterised by successive waves of migration and these waves are said to reflect world historical events (Jupp, 2002).

The lucky country
Australia was once known as The Lucky Country (Horne, 1964), a phrase first used by Donald Horne in an ironically negative way when describing Australia’s economic success which was derived from its natural resources. Over time it became commonplace to consider Australia as the lucky country, and has become a narrative to assist in making sense of some of the reasons why people take at times precarious journeys to arrive on our shores and perhaps the reason why many of us have migrated here over the past 200 years.

Initially Australia was inhabited by a vibrant and rich cultural group who continue to live in Australia today – that is Indigenous Australians, and everyone else since then has arrived as an immigrant. While it is outside the scope of this paper to present an historical view of immigration, it is possibly useful to consider some of the waves of immigration that have taken place as this will help us consider the educational

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contexts of our schools and the multilingual richness of those learners in today's classrooms.

Simply put, Australia began as a colony of Britain. Some of these early settlements began as convict settlements and others were founded by free settlers and those British who chose to begin a new life in these fledgling communities. Slowly, as the 19th century progressed, others who saw opportunity immigrated to this new land. At times other groups came to these shores, notably the Chinese who arrived here in the gold rush in the 1840s.

By the end of the 19th century, Australia's population was mostly made up of people from Britain, with some 20% of the population born overseas including some Chinese and indentured labourers from the South Sea Islands and Afghans. As the colonies worked together to develop a nation and moved towards Federation, it was very clear that the country needed to be populated and a number of immigration schemes emerged. Jupp (2002, p. 6) points out that 'Australian immigration policy over the past 150 years has rested on three pillars: the maintenance of British hegemony and 'white domination'; the strengthening of Australia economically and militarily by selective mass immigration; and, the state control of these processes'.

Most of this immigration was sourced from northern Europe and the population became almost monocultural as they looked to 'the mother country' for aspects of cultural inspiration, social institutions and education. There was working at this time a policy called the 'White Australia' Policy, which some suggest was a way of keeping Australia peopled by white Europeans. At this time, assisted passage immigration was also started which further encouraged those of northern European background to come here.

With the end of World War II, it was very clear that many displaced people needed to find new places to live and so commenced the post war immigration to Australia which indeed increased the population. There are some interesting and famous stories in relation to this post war immigration but the main result was that the racial mix of immigrants changed from northern Europeans only and included those from Mediterranean countries going on to lay the basis for the rich tapestry of linguistic, cultural and social community that is Australia in the late 20th and 21st century. This brought around 70,000 and up to 150,000 immigrants a year to Australia.

The table below taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics website gives a good summary of Australia's population born overseas. It can be seen that the highest point for overseas born population was around 30% at Federation and dropped as low as 10% before the post war immigration surge. As recently as last year we have seen our overseas born population peak to almost the same levels as those at Federation.

This broad overview of immigration begins to give us a backdrop to the classrooms of the early 21st century but I would like to consider how the legacy of the last 100 years of immigration, together with recent dynamic aspects of new arrivals into schools, might make our multilingual classrooms appear very different from what they were not only 50 years ago but as recently as 10 years ago.

First, second and third generation immigration

The theorising and research into the life experiences of migrants into countries across the world has attracted much attention with a focus on the integration processes of migrant groups in Europe and the United States. Most of these studies have been policy oriented, and have paid little systematic attention to the actual integration processes by the migrant group into the country of immigration. So what does this mean when considering the current Australian context?

A study published as The Second Generation in Europe (Portes, 1996) focused on the children of the 'old immigration' and how well those who had been born in the country of immigration of their parents integrated and assimilated educationally and economically into the new country. In the United States, scholars identified two essential positions in the debate: one, that the differences outweigh the similarities (see Portes & Rumbault, 1996, 2001; Portes et al. 2009); and, the opposite, that the similarities outweigh the differences (Waldinger & Perlman, 1998). These theories are collectively known as segmented assimilation theories and scholars often argue that the integration
and success trajectory of particular ethnic groups is strongly influenced by the immigration and settlement policies of the host government, together with other factors such as the skills of the immigrant community and the values and prejudices of the receiving society.

Portes and Rumbaut (2001) in their analysis of studies into the integration of second and third generation immigrants distinguished three variants. These variants are derived from sociological research and some critiques have suggested that this is a purely structural way of interpreting these complexities which does not consider individual aspirations and ambitions. However, in order to consider this model I have presented Portes and Rumbaut’s variants in a table for the purposes of discussing about the Australian context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variant</th>
<th>Immigrants</th>
<th>Second generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classical</td>
<td>Greater than average human capital (positively received)</td>
<td>Readily move into middle class strata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second tier</td>
<td>Little human capital (hostile reception)</td>
<td>Downward assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear ethnicity</td>
<td>Little human capital but entrepreneurial skills (solidarity with and joining co-ethnic communities)</td>
<td>Community provides social capital that compensates for lack of human capital. Ethnicity is a source of strength.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: Portes and Rumbaut (2001)

This table suggests that the integration of the children of immigrants, or the second generation, is complex and may result in very different life pathways for these groups. This model of immigrant and second generation integration with its three variants has been subjected to critique and argument as it proposed some controversial outcomes which have attempted to homogenise the groups. Furthermore, definitions of social capital and human capital vary depending on one’s perspective of the field. However, as a broad background to the discussion it is useful – always remembering of course that this is based on research from outside of Australia.

A further perspective from this work suggests that children born in the country of immigration, especially those who enter the social hierarchy at the bottom, will fail to climb up the social ladder just as they failed to do in previous immigrant groups. Another theory suggests that children of immigrants are less likely to assimilate and rather than adopting the majority identity may develop bicultural or hybrid identities. It is interesting to now consider the Australian context and to consider the two points: the variant, which suggests failure to climb the social ladder; or, those who due to current social contexts may develop hybrid identities.

In Australia we have a Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) report (2002) titled the Second Generation Australians and, as suggested by the research conducted in the United States, it suggests that this second-generation diversity can lead to different patterns of adaption (Gans, 1992; Portes & Zhou, 1993). The study looked at four groups representative of key waves of immigration, extending from Europe to Asia and the Pacific. The following table produced from the data in this report presents a view of these waves of immigration. The DIMIA report worked from the Australian census data from 1996 and does not cover more recent immigration patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Waves of immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European migration</td>
<td>1950s and 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian migration</td>
<td>1960s and 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia, Middle East and Oceania</td>
<td>1980 to current</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from the DIMIA (2002) report

Australia has high immigrant numbers so the simple depiction of the sources and years of immigration is likely to be much more complex in reality. This is discussed in the previous section.

However, it is from this base that the authors of the DIMIA report refer to the variants of integration identified by Portes and Rumbaut (1993) and identify second and third generation educational and socio-economic outcomes for Australian groups. According to Portes (1994), it is among the second generation, not the first, that issues such as the maintenance of language, cultural traditions and ethnic identity are decided. The report looks at the cohorts described above (and their children) to determine their socio-economic outcomes and educational pathways. There is considerable detail in this report but what is of interest is how this can assist us in thinking about the language and cultural diversity in Australian classrooms today.

Portes and Macleod (1996) talk of the long-term prospects of ethnic communities hinging on this adaption. First generation immigrants are motivated to immigrate and work hard to assist their children (the second generation) to achieve educationally and socially. The DIMIA report tells us that in the Australian context this is so. The report says, ‘With this strong motivational background, it is perhaps no surprise to find that most second generation groups
perform better in educational terms’ (2002, p. 145.) The report goes on to talk about the third generation, which is the grandchildren of the immigrants, and offers a different perspective again about this group. With the educational success of the second generation and then their marrying and starting families of their own, these children become known as the third generation of migrants. Internationally there seems to be a different set of outcomes for this group and it is reported that in relation to the achievements of the second generation the third generation often perform less well. This differs across ethnicity and across countries but seems to be a trend within the research.

The Australian report suggests similar patterns: ‘The study has also shown that in circumstances where the parental generation is economically disadvantaged, the second generation seems more able to overcome this disadvantage – through greater participation in education and achievement of tertiary qualifications – than their peers who are at least third generation’ (2002, p. 8).

The following table provides a sketch of how this first, second and third generation analysed by country of origin might look in schools today.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>First generation</th>
<th>Second generation</th>
<th>Third generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European migration</td>
<td>1950s and 1960s</td>
<td>1970s to 1980s</td>
<td>In high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian migration</td>
<td>1960s and 1970s</td>
<td>1980s to 1990s</td>
<td>Early years of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia, Middle East and Oceania</td>
<td>1980 to current</td>
<td>2000 and current</td>
<td>Still to be born</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this table simply sketches a broad view of the landscape, this together with the earlier discussion regarding globalisation, identity and immigration it may suggest that we are looking at a different cohort of English language learners in schools today. These learners’ parents were born here and their family experiences and educational successes and decisions about language maintenance and cultural practices present a broad diversity. The data from the 2011 census tells us that:

First generation Australians are people living in Australia who were born overseas. This is a diverse group of people including Australian citizens, permanent residents and long-term temporary residents. In 2011, there were 5.3 million first generation Australians (27% of the population).

Second generation Australians are Australian-born people living in Australia, with at least one overseas-born parent. In 2011, there were 4.1 million second generation Australians (20% of the population). http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main-features902012-2013

This clearly shows that almost 50% of Australia’s population is either first or second generation immigrants.

Do such data suggest we need to reconsider the educational needs of those in school based education today? I would like to argue that we do need to consider the implications for the delivery of English language provision for first, second and even third generation learners in schools today. The next section will explore the provision of English language support to English language learners in the post War period in Australia.

**English as a second language provision**

The post-World War II period in Australia was characterised by steady growth of immigration and many of these immigrants required support in acquiring English language in order to be successful in society and education. When post-war immigration began to deliver sizeable numbers of immigrants the government provided two levels of English language support; non-English speaking arrivals with free intensive study of English on arrival which was funded federally over a 50 year period – often referred to as being unique from workplace English classes, distance education classes, community based programs to home tutor programs.

These adult English programs followed the major theoretically strong methods of the period and by the 1990s provided learner centred communicative methods mainly based in community based teaching spaces. However, the context for these programs changed markedly during the 1990s and with budget restraints these programs have become settlement only English language programs. This provides non-English speaking arrivals with around 500 hours of English language tuition which is focused on settlement and employment.

In relation to this, the Child Migrant English program followed a somewhat different pathway and by the 1970s English as a second language provision was conducted within schools, funded federally and driven by national policy. This program had two elements: intensive language centres where students
attended a separate school which focused primarily on teaching English across the broad areas of curriculum; the other element was general support for schools with the funding of teachers for withdrawal English classes, or team taught provisions within the school context. Curriculum was developed at a state based level and by the 1990s the development of the Australian Language Levels (ALL) project had produced the ESL Band scales (McKay & Scarino, 1991). These scales provided a clear outline for assessment and planning and became so successful that they are still in use in many states today.

During the late 1990s, English as a second language provision was subsumed under the broader aspect of literacy achievement in schools and provision for literacy in English included a focus on new arrivals and those who needed further development of their English language skills in order to access the curriculum. This focus on literacy achievement led to the beginning of the National Assessment Program (NAP) and eventually to the testing of English literacy at Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 across all learners in schools.

By 2008 the federally funded school provision had been devolved to state based Education departments across Australia and due to this the way that different states support the teaching of English to those who do not have English as their first language varies across the country. Generally states have continued the practice of having both much smaller intensive English language classes and also dedicated ESL teachers allocated to schools, however further changes at state level are putting some of this staff and funding allocation in jeopardy. Some have even gone so far as to suggest that these new ‘funding mechanisms are destroying the systemic structures on which specific-purpose ESL provision for immigrant and refugee students is built’ (NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party, n.d., p. 8)

**English as an additional language and/or dialect (EAL/D)**

In more recent times, State Ministers of Education agreed that they would work together to provide national collaboration in curriculum, assessment and reporting and teaching quality (MCEETYA, 2008). This has come into common understanding as The Australian Curriculum and is underpinned by the belief that the young people of Australia are at the centre of this process. The pursuit of a common educational entitlement for all Australian young people drives this development at both national and state jurisdictional levels. Of particular interest to this discussion about multilingualism is how the vast developmental process inherent in the launching of ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) has considered both educational provisions for those who speak English and those who speak a language other than English in our schools systems.

There is much to applaud in these new frameworks as ACARA has responded to both the traditional and recent theorising about learners of English by widening the view of language learning provision. It has done this by introducing a new term ‘English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D)’. EAL/D is the educational acronym that refers to those students whose home language is a language or dialect other than Standard Australian English (SAE) and who require additional support to develop proficiency in SAE, which is the variety of spoken and written English used formally in Australian schools. This term suggests that learners are already competent users of at least one language and that they are either learning or competent in English. The other important aspect of the adoption of this acronym in the Australian Curriculum is that it foregrounds the English language learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who speak an Aboriginal or Torres Strait creole, or a variety of Aboriginal English, as their home language.

ACARA makes this forthright statement at the opening of the document *English as an Additional Language or Dialect Teacher Resource: EAL/D Overview and Advice* (ACARA, 2014):

> In Australian schools, learning is accessed through English, and achievement is demonstrated through English. Each area of the curriculum has language structures and vocabulary particular to its learning domain, and these are best taught in the context in which they are used. All teachers are responsible for teaching the language and literacy demands of their learning areas. (p. 6)

The rest of this issue provides much closer examination of the educational provision for students learning English as an additional language or a dialect. What is important to note from the current context is the policy context that EAL/D is seen in a positive light with a sense of recognition that learners of English have linguistic capabilities beyond being seen as having ‘deficit’ ability in Standard Australian English. What remains somewhat concerning is that provision for these learners remains firmly within the English literacy outcomes portfolio.
Those secondary English teachers who thus must take on this responsibility traditionally have limited training in the specific field of EAL/D. In many cases, no one in a school is given the responsibility of working with these learners, and thus it becomes a task of the whole English department to assist these learners in English and across the curriculum. These very same teachers who will be very dedicated and determined to improve the outcomes of these learners are often without the specific expertise. This is a concern for all of us involved in teaching English in schools and serves to underscore the at times negative ways that linguistic diversity is viewed and responded to in Australian schools.

Conclusion
The arguments outlined in this article serve as a theoretical and historical launch pad for the following papers and aim to give the reader an understanding of both the global and local responses to migration, education and multilingualism. In concluding, I would like to present some statistics from the 2011 census which further underscore the importance of this recent contextual information about how language education and language use in schools might be displayed at this time in Australia's long history of migration and multilingualism. The table below provides compiled information from the 2011 census showing first language spoken at home both by numbers of and percentages of the whole population together with those speakers' self-declared ability levels in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language spoken at home</th>
<th>Persons spoken at home</th>
<th>Proportion of total population</th>
<th>Proportion who spoke English very well</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English only</td>
<td>15 394.7</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>319.5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>219.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>254.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>46.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>264.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>111.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>243.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>104.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>80.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this table gives only the top 10 languages spoken it is clear that the most recent Australian census data confirms that there is around 20% of the population who speak English as an additional language. Where this becomes a little more complex is when we consider this information together with the self-declaration of ability in speaking English with some groups having almost 40% of their speakers able to speak English well. Whereas, some language groups have almost all their speakers speaking English well.

Secondary English teachers are at the very centre of the issues outlined in this paper. Your work is difficult, overwhelming but vastly rewarding and as this paper has pointed out the support for teachers in multilingual schools has been dwindling for many years while the diversity continues to increase. I was surprised to see that immigration levels are currently as high as they were in the post WW2 period. In spite of all this there are real imperatives for action by secondary English teachers in increasing their awareness and capacity to deal with this new secondary English classroom student of the 21st century.

The obvious richness of Australia's linguistic diversity is something to be valued and cherished and for the educational landscape to consider in new ways; how do schools and educational systems build upon this unique linguistic resource already existing in classrooms and already poised to support our economic growth in these new globalised transnational times? Might policy support and funding be redirected from foreign language teaching to enhancing already existing language communities in schools and thus enhance the intellectual, cultural and economic benefits for Australia?

References


**Correction**

In the previous edition of *English Australia*, Volume 49, Number 3, Brenton Doecke’s name was inadvertently omitted as the author of the review article ‘Time Travel (Knowing our History as English Teachers)’ (pages 96–105).

We apologise for this oversight. It has been corrected in online versions of the issue.

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