Language and Culture in Australian Public Policy: Some Critical Reflections

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This article examines the rationale and philosophical underpinnings of Australian public policy relating to language and culture, especially as they have emerged in relation to nonindigenous ethnic minorities, *i.e.*, migrants and ethnic groups. An underlying theme is that the concepts of language and culture as they have evolved in relation to the ideologies of multiculturalism are not neutral but contested concepts which need understanding and critical analysis. The article has three main objectives. The first is to show how, historically, language— in particular English—has been an important public issue in matters of migrant settlement. Second, it examines the hidden and often unstated assumptions of social theory implicit in policies relating to language and culture by analyzing the way in which the key concepts of culture and ethnicity have been used in policies. Third, it presents the case for a paradigm shift in public policy and argues that the issue of language and culture should be re-examined and restructured to serve new and emerging social needs.

Australian public policy relating to ethnic affairs has been dominated for some time by issues relating to language and culture. This article provides a theoretical and conceptual backdrop to the policies identified under the rubric of multicultural social policies, as these have been greatly influenced by questions of language and culture.

Language and culture have been important in two major areas of Australian public policy, *viz.*, in relation to Australian Aboriginal groups and migrant settlers. As regards the latter, this has been seen as critical to their settlement and adaptation to Australian society. While both areas seemingly have much in common, they have been considered separately. This reflects the vastly different sociopolitical and historical circumstances surrounding the position of these groups in Australian society as indigenous and non-indigenous ethnic minorities respectively (*See,* Manuel and Poslins, 1974; Grabourn, 1981; Dyck, 1985 for the use of the term "Fourth World" to characterize nonindigenous minority groups). Thus, from the earliest days, interethnic group relations in Australian society pertaining to Aboriginal

people and migrant groups have been dealt with separately in ethnic minority policies at all levels of government and belong to different policy sectors (*See,* Lithman, 1988 for a notable exception to this trend in ethnic minority research).

The social realities indigenous minority groups confront differ markedly with the historical and political circumstances prevailing in each nation state. Thus, as Dyck (1985) observes, in the liberal democratic countries of the Western world, these groups "are not simply aggregates of separate individuals belonging to a category but rather distinct groups that are usually associated with particular territorial bases" (p. 7). Dyck also maintains that "it is the attachment of indigenous peoples to particular localities [which] is one of their most notable and politically significant features" (p. 7). For this reason alone, there is a sharp difference in the relationship between the State and indigenous groups when compared with nonindigenous ethnic minority groups, mostly immigrant settlers. The central point is that the marginality of Aboriginal people relates to the appropriation of their territory by the State and nonindigenous groups in society. It is this relationship to the economic structure that makes their position in the wider social system distinct from that of immigrant groups and ethnic minorities.

From a public policy perspective, the Australian Aboriginal people in their relationship to the State have always been characterized by the recognition that they are not "just another ethnic minority," but a group who has a need to promote and protect their special status and rights. What, makes these Aboriginal groups stand out in the liberal democratic nation states of the advanced Western industrial societies is their insistence on the right to be recognized and treated as dispossessed people who have special claims on the State in the allocation of public goods. This relates in particular to the demands of these groups for the recognition of their "nationhood."

Guided by these considerations, the issues of language and culture affecting Aboriginal groups need to be regarded separately from those concerning immigrant ethnic minority groups. For these reasons, this article confines its attention to the analysis of public policies dealing with language and culture as they relate to nonindigenous ethnic groups.

An underlying theme is to demonstrate the centrality of issues relating to language and culture in the development of ethnic affairs policies in Australia. The account of these policies presented here goes beyond a mere technical analysis of policy and presents a "critical" analysis leading to a philosophical understanding of the bases of public policies.

The study has three main objectives: to show how historically language, in particular English, has been an important public issue in matters of migrant settlement; to examine the hidden and often unstated assumptions of social theory which lie behind policies relating to language and culture,

primarily by analyzing the way in which the key concepts of culture and ethnicity have been used in policies; and to suggest that in the future the issues of language and culture will need to be re-examined and restructured to serve new and emerging social needs. The article concludes by arguing briefly that language and culture should be anchored within a new policy framework described as "democratic pluralism" rather than be exclusively located within what has so far been little more than a form of "cultural pluralism."

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS OF EXISTING POLICIES

Language has been a central aspect of Australian immigration policies with regard to both recruitment and settlement in the post-World War II period. Even prior to the large scale immigration of the late 1940s and 1950s, it was widely acknowledged that the selection of migrants was strongly influenced by the language factor. Thus, it was assumed that English language proficiency was the best guarantee that one would be integrated and succeed as a migrant. The language factor was also used negatively in implementing the blatantly racist "White Australia" policy to exclude potential settlers via the notorious dictation or language test.

In the first phase of migrant settlement, associated with the mass migration of the post-World War II period, hard-line assimilationist policies were the order of the day and new settlers were expected to integrate and conform to the mores, practices and cultural values of the host society. The key to this monocultural policy of anglo-conformism was the mastery of the English language. For this purpose, prerecruitment procedures for migrants as well as settlement policies were heavily laden with English language classes, and every effort was made to strengthen these educational programs throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

As a recent federal government Report on Multicultural Education (Report of the National Advisory and Co-ordinating Committee on Multicultural Education, hereafter abbreviated as NACCME, 1987) points out, "the entry of the Commonwealth government into an interventionist role for the provision of special education programs was marked by the adoption of the Immigrant (Education) Act of 1971" (p. 8), along with its subsequent amendments. The Act itself was based on the immigration powers contained in the Australian constitution and residing in the federal government. Programs and services based on this Act became the backbone of the multicultural education policies and programs that were initiated in the 1970s, and these included child as well as adult education programs. What is more, this Act, primarily concerned with issues of language and, to a lesser extent, culture constituted until recently the sole legislative and constitutional basis for catering to the needs of migrants and ethnic minor-

ities. Importantly, the 1971 Act ushered in the influential Child Migrant Education Programme (CMEP) aimed primarily at the teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) to migrant children. In this sense, the CMEP was a pioneering and pathfinding social program on which subsequent multicultural educational policies and programs were to be developed. Importantly, it was the provisions of the 1971 Act that were extended later to include educational programs and services for adult migrants through the Adult Migrant Education Programme (AMEP) (*See* Campbell, *et al.*, 1984 for an exhaustive review of CMEP based ESL programs, also *see* the Report on the Review of the AMEP 1985).

The recent controversy when the federal government reduced resource allocations to the various state governments for ESL teaching and the resulting public outcry is indicative of the continuing importance attached to English language learning as a critical element of migrant settlement policies.[1] Support for these policies has come not just from the dominant groups of the host society who viewed them as the basis for guaranteeing the effectiveness of assimilationist policies, but equally strongly from migrants and ethnic groups. The latter no doubt have come to recognize that economic betterment and occupational mobility for themselves and their offspring had to be built on solid educational foundations which could not be acquired without a sound knowledge of spoken and written English.

In brief, the importance accorded to English language learning in migrant adaptation as an aspect of language policy is noncontroversial and remains securely entrenched in public policy. The pre-eminent place given to English in matters of public policy and community affairs remains unchallenged, politically uncontested and eminently sensible. Disagreements only occur about strategies of policy implementation such as the principles and criteria of resource allocations for ESL, about educational issues relating to the place of ESL in the curriculum and the choice of teaching methodologies, and about the amount and source of government funding (*See* Campbell, *et al.*, 1984 for a good discussion of the pedagogical issues).

The federal government's recently instituted National Language Policy, based on the National Language Report (1987) (hereafter identified as the Lo Bianco Report) of Lo Bianco, confirms the primacy of English for all and is premised on the recognition of English as the national language of Australia. According to Lo Bianco,

> English is a cohesive and unifying element in Australian society [contributing] to national and cultural allegiances ... serves as the common

[1] In the structure of Australian federal/state relations, education in a central (federal) government responsibility and the states are dependent for financial resources from the federal government.

language of communication for Australians from different language backgrounds (p. 71).

Additionally, the Lo Bianco Report observes that English performs a variety of functions—economic, social, cultural and political—in the public and private life of the total Australian community (*See* p. 71 of Lo Bianco Report). What is more, this report refers to the "uniquely Australian varieties of English," and accords "positive recognition" to the "national character of Australian English" (p. 10). Curiously, however, the Lo Bianco Report, while giving strong support to English as the national language, argues against giving it legal status.

The reluctance of the report to endorse English as the official language appears to be based on the assumption that to do so may vitiate the de facto recognition of the multilingual nature of Australian society. If this is the case, then Lo Bianco's spirited defense of "community" languages, *i.e.*, Languages Other Than English (LOTE), is tilted towards a pedagogical rationale in preference to one couched in favor of defending linguistic pluralism per se. However, this uncertainty on the question of granting "official language" status to English (which the Lo Bianco Report inherits from its predecessor, the Senate National Language Report of 1984) should not detract from the worth of this report, attested to by the positive reception it has enjoyed in all quarters.

LINGUISTIC PLURALISM IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY

Clearly, any language policy at state or national level in Australia has to contend with the question of the nature and extent of linguistic pluralism which exists as a direct outcome of the demographic transformation of Australian society that has taken place over the last four decades.[2] The Lo Bianco Report, along with many other similar public documents, maintains that linguistically Australia should no longer be regarded as a homogeneous and monolingual society, but be classified instead as a truly multilingual society. It is primarily in this context that issues of language and culture, especially the culture of migrant groups, have gained salience in Australian public policy in recent decades. Therefore, prior to considering policy response to this issue, the evidence for the proposition that Australia is a multilingual society should be considered.

As a result of the nature of the migrant intake over nearly four decades, Australia has become culturally diverse and multiethnic. It is a society

[2] The increased intake of immigrants, following large scale migration in the post-World War II period, consisted mainly of those of non-British origin and were drawn from varied social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Over 40% of these non-British migrants came from European countries, mainly Greece, Italy and Yugoslavia. This cultural and social variability has increased with the more recent refugee intakes from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, mainly from Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

characterized not only by linguistic diversity, but also by racial and cultural variety, especially religious and national differences, all of which are overlaid by important socioeconomic differences. The minority status of these new groups of migrants is reflected vividly in the social and occupational distribution of migrants which shows that it is biased, mainly due to labor market segmentation, towards the lower end of the scale (*See* Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, 1988, for a detailed exposition). Yet, in describing this complex social mix of immigrants, the term which has gained considerable currency in identifying these groups is the term "Non-English Speaking Background" (NESB). The usage of this term, though in itself misleading (because there are many migrants from Asia and the Middle East who are primarily English speakers), highlights the importance attached to the facts of linguistic diversity rather than socioeconomic position in characterizing Australian migrant and ethnic minority communities.

Language more than any other element is perceived as the most valid boundary marker for identifying and classifying ethnic minority groups. As a result, the term "multicultural" has become synonymous with "multilingual" at a descriptive level. The terms "language" and "culture" are often confounded, particularly when carried over into the prescriptive usage of the term "multicultural" as in social policies dealing with education. This makes it all the more imperative to determine to what extent Australian society is justifiably described as a multilingual society.

Despite the imprecise nature of the statistics about language use (*See,* Clyne, 1986 for limitations inherent in using birthplace data to assess extent of language use) in contemporary Australian society, the Senate National Language Report (1984) maintains that "about 17 percent of the Australian population aged five or over first spoke a language other than English."[3] Likewise, the Lo Bianco Report suggests that 15–20 percent of the Australian population daily use a "Language Other than English" (LOTE), also sometimes referred to as L1 or First/Home Language. This does not include dialects and varieties of nonstandard English used in the Australian community. Most of these community languages, referred to as CLOTE (Community Languages Other Than English), are European languages, mainly Italian, Greek, Yugoslav (*i.e.,* Croat, Serbian, Macedonian, etc.) and to a lesser extent German, Dutch, Polish and French. Of the non-European languages, Arabic, various Chinese dialects (chiefly Cantonese, Hakka and Hokkien besides standard Mandarin) and Vietnamese, have become increasingly important. These non-European languages are also now

[3] Even the recent Lo Bianco Report (1987) leans heavily on data from the Language Survey of 1983 carried out by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The only other major source of data comes from the federal Department of Education Language Learning Survey of 1983. Incidentally, it should be noted that these surveys equate language with birthplace data.

recognized as community languages, but have so far received much less acceptance than European languages.

The existence of all these language/speech communities appears *prima facie* to justify the claim that Australia is becoming more of a multilingual than a monolingual society. This claim for multilingual status should, however, be viewed with some qualification. For one thing, special note has to be taken of the continuing dominance of English which is still, according to the Lo Bianco Report, the first language for over 83 percent of the Australian population.

According to McRae (1986), several criteria are used to establish language power in comparing the linguistic diversity of states. Demographic strength is one key factor, others being dispersion patterns, mobility, cultural outputs and so on. One influential view, following Banks and Textor (quoted by McRae), draws "a dividing line between linguistically homogeneous and heterogeneous policies at the point where 85 percent belong to the main language group" (p. 9). On this criterion, Australia, given the poor language statistics available but taking into account Aboriginal language groups, warrants classification as a "weakly heterogeneous" society in terms of its linguistic diversity.[4]

Even here, an important qualifying factor to be considered is the growing evidence of language shift (LS) among second and third generation Australians of ethnic origin (*See*, Clyne, 1982). The readiness with which immigrant communities, the children of immigrants and their offspring are prepared to discontinue the use of their home languages (dialects or language varieties of their parents and grandparents) would suggest that Australian multilingualism may be less pervasive and stable than is often claimed by those who demand that Australia should be formally recognized as a multilingual society. Studies on Australian language ecology have shown low language maintenance rates (LM) among some immigrant groups. In this connection, Clyne (1982) notes that:

> In spite of the advantages of language maintenance (LM) and the strong interest of many ethnic groups and families in developing and maintaining bilingualism, the rate of language shift (LS) is very high in the second generation, especially in families that are products of mixed marriages (p. 140).

Besides intermarriage, the degree of similarity of the ethnic groups to the host society in values, attitudes and cultural mores appears to be an important factor in determining the extent of language drift across generations. Interestingly, there is also, according to Clyne (1982), a consistent

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[4] According to the Senate National Language Report of 1984, there were 150 Aboriginal languages in use, but the Lo Bianco Report (1987) considered only 50 were viable. It is also the case that only about six of these languages or dialect groups have more than 2,000 speakers.

rank ordering of LM in ethnic groups regardless of specific factors determining LS. In this ordering, the least amount of LS is with Greeks, followed by Italians, Yugoslav groups, Polish, German, Maltese with the most extreme LS being noticeable with the Dutch.

It is important to recognize that rates of LM depend on the operation of a complex set of social and economic factors, and not just on ethnic group membership and a sense of ethnic identity. Factors influencing rates of LM as well as the extent of LS include historical factors, public attitudes and political influences. The latter, especially the relative political power and influence of a particular language group, which may or may not be governed by its position in the hierarchy of ethnic minority groups, can have a profound impact in determining the importance of LM for this group. The relative value and importance attached to a particular community language by the mainstream society may change over time so that language may become a key factor in ethnic mobilization and lead to decreased LS.

Smolicz (1979), a leading proponent of prescriptive multilingualism in Australia, suggests that language may be more important for some cultural groups than others because of the centrality of language as a core value. Thus, whereas Greek and Polish cultures are language-centered, Smolicz contends that Italian culture is more family-centred. With other groups the salient factor may be religion, as is the case with Jewish identity. But, as Smolicz rightly observes, religion and language may be intertwined, as is the case with Greek culture. In short, then, cultural maintenance need not necessarily be linked with language maintenance. Clyne (1986) has pointed out that often the language/ethnicity nexus "is very tenuous." Therefore, in unraveling the dynamics of the language/culture relationship and the associated language/ethnicity nexus, the meaning of two key concepts, culture and ethnicity, which are of central importance in fashioning public policy must be briefly considered.

THE USE OF THE CONCEPTS OF CULTURE AND ETHNICITY: DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The concept of culture is a complex notion and is used in a variety of ways. The problematic nature of the culture concept is evident in the general unwillingness to define it in formulating public policy dealing with migrants and ethnic minorities. Thus, there is an ambivalence implicit when one talks of culture/s of origin or culture/s of the host society. This exceptionally difficult and highly abstract notion is often used loosely and in a simplistic way, as in Tylor's 19th century classic, often quoted anthropological definition of culture as:

> That complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (quoted in Cashmore, 1984).

This definition merely enumerates several constituent parts of culture such as the normative, affective, cognitive, aesthetic and behavioral elements. Other similar anthropological definitions refer to a configuration of characteristics such as one's heritage or the totality of society's life.

However, the shortcoming of these descriptive approaches is that they fail to depict the essentially dynamic and evolving nature of culture. Thus, as Williams (1983) observes, culture must be understood in terms of the history of the usage of the term and this reveals two distinct traditions. One influential usage refers to a range of meanings associated more closely with the commonsense view of culture as a process or state of mind; *e.g.,* cultivation of states of mind, intellectual activities and interest in the arts. The other, as with Tylor's definition, is more in line with the social science where the concept is used to "designate a whole and distinctive way of life."

Within the latter there are significant differences or nuances of meaning associated with the usage of the term in the scholarly literature. One dominant mode of thinking, stemming from the European humanities' perspective known as the "cultural sciences," is evident in the influential writings of Herder, Dilthey and others who interpret culture in idealist terms; *i.e.,* as a system of ideas, meanings and understandings, including values (*See* Smith, 1981, for a discussion on this point.) These theorists regard culture in the sense of the "informing spirit" (*verstehen*), of a whole diverse range of human and social activities manifest in such elements as language, artifacts and intellectual products. Language becomes intimately linked with culture when it is used in this sense. (*See* Smith, 1981, for a critical exposition of the writings of Herder and others of the German romantic movement on the language and culture relationship.)

By contrast, others in their approach to culture place the emphasis on whole social order, wherein culture itself is seen as a product of social activities which provide a material basis for cultural activities. Reviewing these approaches, as they have evolved in the sociology of culture, Williams (1983) presents a composite viewpoint by stating that culture should be viewed as the:

> "Signifying system" through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored (p. 13).

The signifying system includes the anthropological "distinctive whole way of life" notion as well as the commonsense view of culture, referring to all forms of intellectual products and artistic forms and practices. Culture in this extended sense of a "signifying system" is enmeshed in the total social order of social classes, groups and competing ideologies which are modified by and also modifies other elements in the social system.

In short, this point of view, which is also followed in the NACCME Report of 1987 on Multicultural Education, subsumes a structural view of culture and differs significantly from the rigid, static and unchanging view of culture as consensual values, often presented in anthropological writings or in social policy.

The purpose of this discussion is to point out the inherent limitations of the conventional view of culture implicit in discussions of the relationship between language and culture. Since, for needs of this article, a key cognate notion associated with the culture concept is that of ethnicity—referring to ethnic groups, viewed as cultural groups—how the notion of ethnicity has been understood in Australian theorizing must be discussed.

The study of group relations ethnicity, as an aspect of social identification, focuses on the processes of inclusion and exclusion enabling a recognition of who constitutes "us" and "them." As Ballard (1987) puts it, ethnicity basically refers "to the classification and labeling of groups within society and primarily to the labeling of minorities by dominant groups who claim to speak for the interests of society as a whole" (p. 129).

The concept of ethnicity is defined in various ways, depending on the relative importance attached to objective or subjective factors as bases for labeling or differentiating between groups. Objective definitions of ethnicity refer mainly to the shared possession of designated cultural characteristics such as a common religion, language, ancestry and national or geographical origin. The "boundary markers," *i.e.*, the physical or cultural attributes used in defining an ethnic group, vary from group to group and, since these defining attributes may change, the nature of an ethnic group undergoes important changes over time.

As Bromley (1987) points out, in subjective definitions the accent is placed primarily on factors such as group identification, solidarity, sense of peoplehood. According to these definitions, people must perceive themselves as belonging to a distinct ethnic group, be clearly recognized as a descent group and be differentiated by others in terms of their distinct characteristics. In other words, individuals need to identify themselves and be identified as different by others (Isajiw, 1974). It is essentially a subjective process of status identification whose salience and worth varies from individual to individual (Jayasuriya, 1987b).

There is sharp disagreement among theorists in their approach to the study of ethnicity, especially as regards the degree of importance to be attached to a particular attribute such as common descent or origin as opposed to a consciousness of kind. Those highlighting "common descent" represent the primordialist approach. These theorists, contend that these primordial ties, allegiances and emotional identifications based on some particular attribute, *e.g.*, kinship, religion or language, are rigid, pervasive

and binding primordial roots and tend to give a pre-eminent place to the role of language in determining primordial ties. However, the research of Clyne (1986) questions the inevitability of the language/ethnicity link because of instances, like the many German speakers in Australia, who are drawn from several ethnic or national groups.

It is argued by others such as Cohen (1974) and Gans (1979) that what really matters is how people define themselves as being distinct or separate based on cultural or physical attributes. This characterization is flexible, adaptable and takes on different manifestations depending on the circumstances of the group at a given point of time. These theorists contend that the so-called primordial roots are often mythical and at times mistakenly represent symbolic elements of ethnicity as genuine and authentic. Second and third generations of migrant origin, influenced by their particular social, political and economic circumstances, manifest their ethnicity in a manner quite different from their parents or grandparents.

According to Gans (1979), second generation immigrants (often ethnic marginals) manifest symbolic ethnicity, *i.e.*, a nostalgic allegiance to the Old World cultural mores and practices, without any real sense of ethnic identity or ethnic group membership. For this reason, it is suggested that ethnic identity changes with the nature and form of the ethnic group and the sense of identity it prefers to express. Emphasizing the institutional nature of ethnicity, Ballard (1987) views ethnicity as being "mobilized" on the basis of interest rather than culture. This was also the viewpoint of Martin (1975) when she described Australian ethnic groups primarily as interest groups having claims on the State. Ethnicity, in short, becomes salient and politicized only when some interest or need such as resources for access and equity is denied.

This difference in conceptualization has a vital bearing on how the role of language and culture in ethnicity is characterized. The primordialist theorists stress the language/ethnicity nexus and view it as being unproblematic. The alternate viewpoint, more characteristic of the situationalists, is that language is a resource that could be appropriately mobilized by a minority group in the political arena.

LANGUAGE AND ETHNICITY IN THE IDEOLOGY OF MULTICULTURALISM

Historically, language and culture entered the Australian political arena of ethnic relations for the first time in the mid-1970s with the ethnic rights movement which presaged the early manifestations of cultural pluralism and the ideology of what later came to be known as "multiculturalism." During this period, ethnic mobilization was directed primarily towards the amelioration of linguistic/cultural disadvantages suffered by immigrants and their offspring. The assertion of ethnic rights by a disaffected, disadvan-

taged minority utilized the cultural forms of ethnicity, in particular language and identity, as a means of mobilizing ethnic groups. By demanding the teaching of migrant and ethnic languages (*See* 1976 Report on Teaching of Migrant Languages) as a matter of right at public expense, these groups were seeking what they regarded as rights as minority not necessarily as cultural rights as in the later demands for cultural maintenance through language rights. It was a search for empowerment through language.

In this early phase of multiculturalism, characteristic of the policies of the reformist Labor government of Gough Whitlam (1972–75), it was widely accepted that ethnic groups and organizations were legitimate buffer zones providing, among other things, psychic shelter to migrants and their families as they learned to adapt to a new environment. This tentative groping towards cultural pluralism played an important part in fashioning ethnic group relations away from conventional assimilationist social policies and monoculturalism; and ethnic languages were seen as a key element in the mobilization of ethnic groups, who were seeking liberation from the effects of the crippling monolingual dominance characteristic of assimilationist orthodoxy. The use of language in relation to ethnicity, in this context, was more situational than primordial.

However, with the advent of the more conservative Liberal/National Party government of Malcolm Fraser in the late 1970s, there was a marked and noticeable shift in policies on migrant settlement and ethnic affairs. Of the many factors influencing a change in approach to multiculturalism from that of the previous Labor Government, a key factor was the sensitivity of policymakers to the fear of creating ethnic enclaves or ghettos. By encouraging interdependent ethnic groups and cognate structures as a part of public policy, the dominant groups felt that cohesion and stability of society may be threatened and at the same time lessen their own influence and control of power structures.

The "culturalist" view of multiculturalism which evolved in the Fraser era was a response to these several concerns. It essentially represents a construction of race and ethnic relations in a manner which was less threatening to the dominant groups of society while concurrently accommodating at a superficial level the needs and concerns of these groups (*See*, Castles, 1987a for an exposition of the view that the construct of "ethnicity" may be viewed as a mode of interpreting social reality).

Besides the emphasis on social cohesion, another dominant feature of this newer approach was the assumption that in a liberal democratic plural society, a secure sense of identity and self-esteem was a precondition for achieving equality of opportunity (Smolicz, 1987) though not necessarily equality of outcomes (Jayasuriya, 1987a). To this end, multiculturalism sought to promote "ethnicity" and cultural identity as a means of safeguard-

ing the self-esteem and self-respect of the culturally different, and providing newcomers with the emotional security and self-confidence to participate fully and strive for a better life in society.

This approach to multiculturalism was exemplified in the social policies arising from a major report on migrant services known as the Galbally Report (1978). This important Report maintained that it was the right of every person to maintain his or her culture, and in a vaguely stated policy of cultural rights identified the pursuit of cultural diversity as a desirable goal of public policy. This culturalist version of multiculturalism was most vividly reflected in the multicultural education policies and programs that evolved from the Galbally Report, all of which stressed linguistic/cultural aspects to the relative exclusion of other aspects of migrant children's educational performance and achievements.

What is most interesting and equally perplexing in this policy perspective was the way in which the doctrine of rights, quite distinct from the earlier "ethnic rights" movement, has been invoked in some quarters to defend the claim of language and/or culture rights either for individuals or groups. Although some theorists such as Smolicz have made reference to the notion of language rights, it has, with the exception of the South Australian Government's Language Policy Report (1983), been eschewed by most policy documents at national and State levels. This avoidance of the term "rights" reflects the difficulty of substantiating this complex notion and the uncertainty surrounding its validity as a sociolegal concept.

In the light of this cautious attitude among jurists towards cultural rights, Clyne (1986) has argued that multiculturalism "affords legitimation and rights to all languages used in Australia . . . as a part of an international human rights movements" (p. 15), rather than in terms of the so-called "third generation" rights, the rubric under which cultural rights have been considered. But as Prott (1985) points out, quoting the work of Brownlie, the inclusion of language rights under classical human rights formulations has so far not been entirely successful.

Crittenden (1982), on the other hand, takes objection to the rights concept when applied to language rights on more practical grounds. He takes Smolicz to task on the grounds of wanting to suggest that persons of mixed ethnic origins should also have a right to learn a native language. In this context, he asks, "What sense can be made of the claim that for a person who came to Australia from, say, Italy in 1855, Italian is still his native language and as such has a right to learn it."

Those who make this claim of rights in terms of language (and also for culture) rarely clarify in what sense they are using the term, the nature and the type of "right" that is being claimed, *e.g.*, whether these refer to individual and/or group rights. A notion of group or collective rights is not

defensible unless the boundaries of these groups can be legally defined and, except for some Aboriginal groups this is impossible in a country like Australia where ethnic minority groups have no corresponding or overlapping territorial boundaries. More importantly, as Falk (1985) puts it, it is necessary to determine whether the demands made are on the grounds of one's ethnicity in terms of a right *sans* phrase (a right which is unqualified —a moral right) or as a *prima facie* right; *i.e.,* one which when denied or obstructed has to be weighed against other considerations.

In the light of the technical difficulties and complexity of the notion of rights as applied to such things as language, one can only suspend judgment on the validity and logical status of such propositions. Within the framework of a liberal democratic society espousing a conception of justifiable pluralism (*See* NACCME Report of 1987 for a brief outline of this rationale), all that the State can reasonably assert as regards language rights is the guarantee that it will not interfere in the legitimate cultural activities of these groups, including the pursuit of their language interests. Rights, in this sense, implies the absence of interference or removal of obstacles to the pursuit of cultural characteristics, all of which lie in the private domain. There is no notion of "rights" in the sense of a claim on the state by virtue of membership of a political community, as indeed, may be the case with indigenous groups such as the Aboriginal people.

Other than the question of language rights and individual cultural rights, what is critically important to note is that this approach to multiculturalism is steeped in the communitarian philosophy of Herder's romanticism, as well as the political philosophy of individualism and an ideology of self-help. This philosophical approach to multiculturalism is most evident in the multicultural education policies of the late 1970s and 80s, all of which originated from the Galbally Report (*See* NACCME Report of 1987 and the Cahill Report of 1984 for a history and critique of these policies). They served to strengthen educational policies and practices in most States, centered around the teaching of CLOTE. It was these policies which led to the view that multicultural education was synonymous with multilingual education.

The centrality of language issues in multicultural education, especially the role of community languages, is well depicted by Alcorso and Cope (1986) in their succinct survey and review of the multicultural education policies pursued by the various State governments in Australia. The authors summarize the main arguments for the teaching of community language in both day and ethnic schools in terms of three closely related rationales. These are that:

> Community languages are viewed as a means of fostering cultural pluralism, for maintaining ethnic languages and cultures and for enhancing the sense of cultural and linguistic worth of community members (p. 15).

Besides these, there are four other objectives identified by Alcorso and Cope (1986) as not being related to either cultural maintenance or the pursuit of cultural differences. These concerns are more closely linked to questions of access and equity and are quite secondary to the threefold culturalist rationale for community language teaching. These are:

> the value of Community Languages as a means of gaining employment, as an intellectual skill of general educational value, as a specific strategy in the cognitive development of students of NESB and as part of transitional bilingualism (p. 16).

This general orientation to language and culture in education stressed its day-to-day use in communication, social interaction and communal life. Hence, though the preference for the term community languages instead of migrant or ethnic languages is seemingly more functional, it is more fundamentally related to the need for cultural maintenance through language education. This in many ways, as Fishman (1977) comments, reflects "the touching belief of many . . . linguistic minorities that bilingual education will save their language" (p. 47). It is this belief in the need for bilingual education for cultural maintenance which has been questioned by Horvath (1981) and others on the grounds that the production of genuine bilinguals (i.e., those who can use both languages in all social settings) may in fact lead, in some instances, to language disappearance rather than language reinforcement. The contention is that in these types of situations, one of the languages being taught must give way because "no country needs two languages for the same set of circumstances" (Horvath, 1980). For this reason linguists argue that language survival requires what is described as "diglossic compartmentalisation." Without some kind of diglossia or social separation, it is suggested that language drift cannot be stemmed.[5]

The teaching of community languages for cultural maintenance, that is, as a means of providing a genuine authentic experience of a cultural reality, cannot by itself lead to the desired outcome unless there is strong social and political support (e.g., public approval, adequate resources, etc.) within the wider society. Indeed, the language shift noted earlier, despite the several attempts at enhancing community language teaching in Australia, is indicative of the real difficulties inherent in sustaining an effective program of community language teaching with the avowed objective of language and cultural maintenance.

In this context, Ozolins (1985) has performed a valuable task by documenting the diffused and sometimes confused nature of the language policy

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[5] Diglossia refers to a functional separation in the use of a language where there are markedly different language varieties, e.g., High and Low varieties coexisting and serving different social functions (See Yule, 1975).

rationales that have been recently developed in the various States in Australia. He shows, for example, that while in the State of Victoria the emphasis is more on mother tongue maintenance and home language development programs for students from NESB, in South Australia the central aim of language learning is more pedagogical and also linked with achieving greater linguistic fluency among learners. At the same time, the language policy instruments of other States such as Queensland are oriented more towards social interaction and enhancing cultural awareness.

In this regard, it is instructive to note that the influential Lo Bianco Report does not appear to place a high priority on the objective of language maintenance and makes only a somewhat muted and relatively weak case for language maintenance objectives. At least by implication, the Report appears to favor something more akin to transitional bilingualism, for which a strong case can be made on pedagogical grounds. It is well documented in the literature on second language teaching that the home language or mother tongue provides a most effective basis for the introduction of a second language such as English.

The reticence of the Lo Bianco Report to put forward a sustained argument in favor of language and cultural maintenance in relation to ethnic minorities becomes all the more significant when one compares it with the principles for a national language policy enunciated in the earlier Senate Report (1984). Whereas one of the four fundamental principles specifically mentioned in the Senate Report relates to cultural maintenance through language acquisition, the Lo Bianco Report makes no reference to this nor to the issue of language as a cultural right. Considering the fact that, as Andreoni (1985) points out, the impetus for the National Language policy debate came from the multicultural lobby and was "centered on establishing the nexus between multicultural policy and teaching and maintenance of LOTE" (p. 8), the policy stance taken by the Lo Bianco Report in its approach to language teaching is extremely significant.

Clearly, the Lo Bianco Report's approach to LOTE appears to be more in accord with the South Australian approach to language policy which, presents a scientific rationale for school level language teaching and highlights the cognitive and linguistic benefits of language learning. In similar vein, the Multicultural Education Policy Paper produced by NACCME (NACCME Report, 1987) also argues strongly that language is only one key element of multicultural education and defends its inclusion primarily but not exclusively on pedagogical grounds. The NACCME Report recognizes explicitly that "language contains symbolic and instrumental communicative aspects" (p. 29). In relation to the broad-ranging goals of second language, learning is to be justified primarily "on the general cognitive and

linguistic arguments . . . which derive their justification from the general purposes of schooling" (p. 29).

What both these important policy documents appear to acknowledge and emphasize is that there are considerable political, economic and utilitarian benefits as well as social benefits for language learners from ethnic minorities. Indeed, as Quinn (1981) maintains, it seems that there is a move to play down the community part of the CL program because, as he observes, "community language programs should transcend the local community" and be capable of presenting "an authentic experience of cultural reality" (p. 94). The arguments being put forward in policy documents such as the Lo Bianco Report for what are termed "languages of wider teaching" acknowledges the fact that community languages may sometimes overlap with Languages other than English, whose study is warranted by wider national reasons such as international trade. With this move away from community languages as such in formal education, these several policy documents have signaled a new direction for public policy away from the earlier distinctly culturalist orientation of multicultural social policies.

The NACCME Report of 1987, in outlining the future direction of multicultural education, has strongly advocated a broader view of multicultural education in an effort to avoid the narrow perspectives of the earlier decades which, according to Jayasuriya, (1987b) have "tended to erroneously equate multiculturalism with multilingualis . . . thereby subscribing to a limited view of multicultural education as cultural maintenance (p. 14). The NACCME Report's approach, described as equitable multiculturalism, incorporates within a rationale of justifiable pluralism the legitimate and desirable cultural elements such as the need for greater cultural awareness and understanding, equity and identity, and locates language learning within this framework. Briefly, this viewpoint attempts to conceptualize multicultural education within a philosophy of democratic pluralism rather than narrowly as a form of cultural pluralism per se (*See* Jayasuriya, 1988).

To summarize, the dominance of language in ethnic affairs policy is, in a large measure, due to the ideology and particular sociopolitical approach adopted in Australian public policy in dealing with migrant adaptation. Policies promoting Languages other than English (LOTE) and the culture of migrants and ethnic minority groups formed part of the philosophy of multiculturalism as cultural pluralism and employed the notion of ethnicity as an organizational strategy for policy development. Culturalist multiculturalism, which developed in the Liberal/National Party government of Malcolm Fraser, pursued a doctrine of cultural pluralism, wherein the expressive dimension of ethnicity, such as language and identity, was given priority in policy development. The primacy of these elements in defining ethnicity is characteristic of what is described as the primordialist approach

to ethnicity. An orientation to public policy based on these tenets concentrating on the private rather than public domain has inevitably tended to neglect the instrumental dimension of ethnicity which has more to do with competition, conflict and power relations between groups than the aspects of groups' belonging and identity.

TOWARDS A NEW PLURALISM: AN ALTERNATIVE POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The foregoing discussion has examined the conceptual and philosophical assumptions that lie behind the development of recent language and ethnic affairs policies in Australia and, in particular, indicated the extent to which these different strands of thinking have influenced the existing policy ethos. In particular, the philosophical tradition of German romanticism, with its emphasis on the nexus between ethnicity and language and the predisposition towards the expressive rather than the instrumental dimension of ethnicity, has had a significant influence on policy developments. This mode of theorizing, when linked with the liberal political philosophy of individualism and self-help, has served to construct a mix of public policies on language and culture, characteristic of the doctrine of cultural pluralism.

There is no doubt that this essentially conservative model of multiculturalism and the social policies based on it have proved to be eminently functional and attractive to first generation migrant settlers. It has enabled new settlers of non-British origin and ethnic groups to maintain their self-esteem and a sense of security by retaining the essentials of their cultural "baggage" in the dominant environment of an "anglo-fragment" society and culture.[6] English cultural values and attitudes, especially in relation towards other groups, have been ingrained in Australian society. In fashioning this process of accommodation the dominant Anglo-Celtic groups have made only peripheral concessions to ethnic minority groups through aspects of policy such as the support for ethnic media and the acceptance of ethnic schools. These are noteworthy in themselves, but of marginal importance to the long term well-being of these minority groups who, as Bullivant (1981), Jayasuriya (1985), Castles (1986) and others have pointed out, may find the continued pursuit of a life styles approach to adaptation counterproductive in the long term. Furthermore, as Jakubowicz and Castles (1987) have recently shown, these policies have done little to ameliorate the condition of some ethnic groups who have been adversely affected by the recent prevailing economic downturn. The effective participation of these

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[6] The term "anglo-fragment," adapted from Louis Hartz (1964), is used to denote Australian society (See Jayasuriya, 1987b) as a colonial settler society which throughout "waves" of immigration has been dominated by the beliefs and political attitudes of the early British colonial settlers.

groups in the wider society is likely to be impaired by having to share a disproportionate burden of the adverse economic conditions, and aggravated further by being exposed to discriminatory practices.

Thus, over the past few decades, the definers of policy, the policymakers, have tended to structure the problem of migrants, their inequalities and disadvantaged minority status, largely in terms of cultural dissonance and communication difficulties. The policies of social intervention designed to deal with the migrants' problems were, under the guise of cultural pluralism, shaped by a conservative political ideology exemplified in the Galbally Report on Migrant Services (1978). This important policy document, in fact, provided the rationale for migrant settlement policies developed during the 1970s and 80s as multicultural social policies. What this style of multiculturalism highlighted was the classic dilemma or paradox of pluralism, viz., the need "to reconcile the rightful concerns of cultural diversity and identity with the socially legitimate desires and claims to achieve equality" (Jayasuriya, 1987a: 486). This dilemma hides the tension or competing pressures existing between the expressive and instrumental dimensions of ethnicity.

However, from a current and future perspective, this ethnic identity model of multiculturalism may have outlived its functional utility as an effective means of dealing with ethnic affairs and ethnic relations (See Jayasuriya, 1987b for an exposition of this view). As the "old" multiculturalism proves to be irrelevant and ineffective in the current social and political climate, there emerges a period of confusion, uncertainty and drift. The functional utility of this earlier version of multiculturalism is questioned as being essentially a conservative first generation strategy, with little appeal for present day ethnic minorities. There exist new needs and different "clients" or "actors," such as ethnic youth, militant women workers and an unemployed or under-employed labor force. To these must be added the significant changes in the pattern of immigration as a result of the increasing intake of non-Caucasian migrants, thereby introducing "race" and "color" as new elements in the social scene. The existing climate of thinking about multicultural policies does not adequately consider the special needs of all these groups.

For these reasons, the case for a paradigm shift leading to an alternative model of multiculturalism based on the concept of minority rights has been advocated by Jayasuriya (1984) and Castles (1987b), quite independently of each other, and presents, especially in the context of a faltering economy, a more realistic and functional approach to policy formation. It is more relevant and suited to cater to the new needs of ethnic minorities in a changing society such as the aspirations for social betterment of second and third generation Australians of ethnic origin and the adaptation of the new non-Caucasian settlers, (i.e., those of Asian origin). Furthermore, it provides an ethnic affairs policy perspective more consonant with the policies of

structural adjustment and conducive to achieving a social justice strategy for social policy development (*See* Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs Discussion Paper, 1988, for an attempt to incorporate a social justice point of view within the principles of cultural pluralism).

In short, by contrast to the earlier model of multiculturalism, greater importance is now attached to the public needs of ethnic groups, defined primarily in terms rights of citizenship, especially those pertaining to access and equity. Conceptually, this alternative model (*See* Jayasuriya, 1989) emphasizes the importance of extending the domain of the public sphere to minority groups and may be said to promote a philosophy of democratic pluralism as against a narrow and restricted view of cultural pluralism.

This version of the rights model of multiculturalism views the goals of effective citizen participation more in terms of equality than equity, and for this, conceptually, it leans heavily on Marshall's (1964) concept of citizenship, embodying the notion of citizen rights as extending beyond mere civil and political rights to social rights (Jayasuriya, 1988). There is a strong emphasis on policy strategies promoting equality rather than equity; *i.e.*, as pertaining to equality of outcomes and not just equal opportunities.

Within this new perspective, language policy as an aspect of public policy needs to acknowledge and respond to what McRae (1985) refers to as "the double role of language in modern societies, as an instrument of communication and as a symbol of group identity" (p. 22). In adopting a minority rights model, it is necessary to make a sharp and clear distinction between language as a vehicle of cultural expression, including its role in cultural maintenance, and its use as a means of communication at the instrumental level, facilitating greater social participation and access to resources. But even as a communicative tool, as Kalantzis and Cope (1985) correctly point out, language is relatively neutral and open to enormous variations in register, semantic range and sociolinguistic function depending, for example, on socioeconomic context (p. 20). Consequently, where language-based policies are developed for improving access in social delivery areas, bilingual professionals and interpreters should take proper cognizance of linguistic diversity and be tolerant of these variations. However, the essential point to be made is not that language should be discarded, but that it should be seen as a "public need" to allow a person to function more effectively in the private arena. This implies that culture itself should be seen in public rather than private terms, as a set of resources over which there may be political conflict.

The thrust of this new policy perspective must be to clearly draw limits on the role of the state *vis-á-vis* the language and culture of the diverse groups that constitute the society. The acceptance of the notion of democratic pluralism means that in societies like Australia the role of the state is primarily located in the public domain. Although the manner in which the

public/private differentiation is made in policy terms depends on the particular social, political and historical circumstances of the minority groups concerned, it is premised on an acknowledgement of the existence of diversity and an affirmation of the right of all citizens to participate fully and effectively without being subject to disadvantages or discrimination by virtue of their membership of racial, ethnic or cultural groups. Thus, in this sense, the state safeguards the rights of minority groups to pursue and utilize their language and culture freely within the private domain.

Within a public policy perspective, as far as language is concerned in a multicultural society, it has to be governed by some concept of public need. The scope of public need will, as a rule, be defined by a variety of considerations relating to a particular policy initiative such as language teaching at the school level. But, as Charlesworth (1988) has rightly pointed out, in relation to language teaching, the nature of public need may be defined in a variety of ways. This need not necessarily be in utilitarian terms as some have recently argued with reference to the need for language learning for trade purposes in the Australian scene. Nor should it be assumed that by learning other languages one necessarily becomes less chauvinistic and more tolerant of other cultures. The justification for language studies in the educational system includes a variety of reasons—utilitarian, political and strictly educational, and the arguments adduced in support will have to be defended in their own right. Whatever the rationale and logic of any particular policy, the chief concern within a framework of democratic pluralism, of any public policy initiative relating to language must be to safeguard the larger public interest while at the same time safeguarding the right of ethnic minority groups to utilize their language and culture within the private domain.

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