

Promoting Diversity through Language-in-Education Policies: Focus on Australia and the European Union

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Promoting diversity has become a prominent goal in language-in-education policy discourse in two broad contexts. On the one hand, language policies take on the challenge of maintaining and developing *de facto* linguistic and cultural diversity through language acquisition planning; on the other hand, they portray themselves as active agents of social change and aim to develop positive cross-cultural attitudes through language education. This paper discusses these two main aspects of language-in-education policies. The discussion is focused on the Australian and the European policy discourses. These two contexts offer an interesting point of comparison as they represent Western democracies with a highly multicultural and multi-ethnic population.

Keywords: language-in-education policy, Australian and European language policy, linguistic and cultural diversity, cross-cultural attitudes, minority languages

Introduction

There is an increased emphasis in policy discourse on the crucial role education has in developing and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, and developing positive cross-cultural attitudes. This advocacy for diversity is partly a reactive reflection on current political acts, such as the acts of institutional racism which are presented as examples in this paper, and partly a proactive measure committed to contributing to social change in order to prevent future cases of racism and xenophobia. For language-in-education policy makers, as for other public policy makers, public opinion and attitudes are inspirations for setting new goals (Escandell, 2004). At the same time, language-in-education policies can influence the wider social environments, such as attitudes towards immigration. Thus, policies can 'trigger social change' (Escandell, 2004: 6).

International education-policy documents published by UNESCO and the United Nations have emphasised the role education plays in the development of positive cross-cultural attitudes and in promoting diversity. For example, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (UN, 1948: Article 26)

Since this volume is dedicated to Professor David Ingram, it is appropriate to cite his vision of the role language education plays in a multicultural society. As early as 1979, Ingram stated that:

in a multicultural society, language teaching assumes a central role in education for social transformation or cultural action for freedom. It makes education, language teaching in particular, an essentially humanizing process, i.e. one in which human potential is more fully realised. (Ingram, 1979: 14)

In the 1970s and 1980s fostering cross-cultural attitudes became a central mission for Ingram's work and this is reflected in his numerous writings (Ingram, 1979, 2001; Ingram & John, 1990; Ingram & O'Neill, 2002). Ingram (2003, 2004), Ingram & John (1990), Liddicoat (2004), Liddicoat & Crozet (1997), Lo Bianco (1987, 1999, 2000), Scarino and Papademetre (2001) and others have emphasised the importance of culture-learning and culture-teaching in various language policy documents.

This paper discusses language-in-education policy discourse in Australia and in the European Union, with specific focus on diversity. The paper is divided into three main sections: the first section describes the context of diversity and its underlying demographic forces in Australia and in the European Union; the second section highlights references to diversity in language-in-education policy discourse in Australia and in the European Union; and the third section presents some facts of linguistic and cultural diversity in education and cross-cultural attitudes in the wider society. While the paper contrasts policies with practices, it is not an intention of this paper to evaluate language-in-education policies. The policy-practice parallel is necessary to highlight the important role language-in-education policies play in responding to social change. However, the author recognises that a systematic and exhaustive analysis of language policy development in the two contexts cannot be attempted within the limits of this paper.

The Context of Diversity

On the outset, it is important to establish that the term 'diversity' in this paper refers to two main interrelated phenomena. Firstly, it has a descriptive meaning and refers to *de facto* ethno-cultural and ethno-linguistic pluralism in modern states; and secondly, it has a normative meaning, referring to the norm of respecting diversity and developing cross-cultural attitudes. This definition is in line with the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity that 'respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding, are among the best guarantees of international peace and security' (UNESCO, 2001). Although this paper does not distinguish between 'multinational' diversity, related to the context of autochthonous, native cultures or national minorities, and 'polyethnic diversity', referring to immigrant cultures (Kymlicka, 1995), the focus is on the second context. The paper also treats the terms *intercultural* and *cross-cultural* interchangeably, both terms referring to the desirable skills and attitudes individuals need to develop to deal with representatives of other cultures.

While this paper is mainly focused on language policy discourse as repre-

sented in official policy documents published by various ministries of education, it is important to recognise that, as Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) have suggested, the Ministry of Education may be the least productive site for language-in-education planning, especially in the absence of a national language policy in which language-in-education policy may be anchored. Kaplan (2005) poses the question: 'Is language-in-education policy possible?' and concludes that:

language-in-education policy development may not be possible, at least not in the ways in which it has been developed during the 20th century. The difficulty in language-in-education policy stems from the fact that such planning has little to do with research in education, linguistics or applied linguistics (i.e. it is not evidence based) but rather constitutes a substantially political process based on political assumptions. (Kaplan, 2005: 78–9)

Promoting cultural and linguistic diversity has never been as important as it is today, as we live in a 'global century' (Cleveland, 1999), where traditional speech communities are replaced by such dynamic communities as, for example, the speech communities of the Internet, or the workforce of multinational corporations. Although the model of the nation-state seems to prevail, nation-states have come under enormous pressure both from below, as articulated by the nationalist movements of smaller ethnolinguistic minority groups in all parts of the world, and from above, where the ideas of internationalisation, globalisation and integration set the new agendas for governments (May, 2000). In our contemporary world, the terms such as 'global citizenship', 'multicultural citizenship' (Kymlicka, 1995) and 'transnational identities' seem to be useful concepts for capturing new concepts of identity. These changes in the concept of identity are strong contributing factors in the development of current language-in-education policies, as this paper shows in the context of Australia and Europe.

The need for promoting diversity is increased by the development of diverse, multicultural and multi-ethnic contemporary societies, mainly as a result of immigration. Although both Australia and Europe are historically highly multicultural and multilingual regions, their current societies are experiencing dramatic changes in the structure of migration flows which are producing ever-greater differentiation within the population (Fernández de la Hoz, 2002: 2). The EU Member States are pluralist, and the future is likely to bring increasing diversity, with increasing socio-economic gaps (Fernández de la Hoz, 2002: 9).

Cultural and linguistic diversity is often seen as an undesirable characteristic of societies, regarded as a potential source of conflict. No society has ever '*consciously* wanted to be multicultural' (Ozolins & Clyne, 2001: 373) and pluralist societies often oppose immigration, as they fear minorities are a threat to social peace and welfare. Also, social identity theory (Giles & Johnson, 1987) tells us that people tend to favour in-group members and discriminate against out-group members even putting aside the possibility of conflict or competition. Yet immigration is an essential dimension for economic growth. For example, according to some forecasts, the EU will have to receive 1.3 million immigrants each year, the equivalent of 32.5 million immigrants in the next 25 years, if it wants to maintain its economic growth and its welfare system (Vala *et al.*, 2004: 139). Australia, although originally a highly multilingual and multicultural continent, throughout its modern history has also been highly reliant on immigration.

In addition to hosting large numbers of economic immigrants, both Australia and Europe play a role in assisting the resettlement of refugees on a global scale. According to the UNHCR country report, Australia offered 12,000 new places each year in the past seven years under the Humanitarian Program (UNHCR, 2004b: 3) and in 2004/5 the yearly rate is expected to reach 13,000 places. The enlarged European Union currently receives 75% of all asylum claims submitted in 36 countries around the world (UNHCR, 2004a: 2). These trends contribute to the rapid development of *de facto* multi-ethnicity, multiculturalism and multilingualism, which in itself requires attention from policy makers.

Contrary to the forces of globalisation and multi-ethnification, attitudes towards diversity have not changed much for the better in the past 30 years. Escandell (2004) lists the following events as vignettes of institutional racism and expressions of xenophobia in Europe:

- In February 2000, rioting broke out in El Ejido, Almeria, a small town in the southern region of Spain. The violent protests were levied against foreign-owned commercial establishments and mosques as local residents vented their rage after the assassination of a young local girl, allegedly by a Moroccan immigrant. Little or no police intervention ensued. While these events took place the offices of the NGO [Non-Government Organisation] 'Mujeres Progresistas', advocates for immigrants' social and labour rights, were burned and its members expelled from El Ejido.
- In March 1991, thousands of Albanian migrants were confined to football camps as the Italian government tried to find a humanitarian solution to the migrants seeking asylum in the country.
- In 1999, Greece launched 'operation broom'; in which foreigners (with or without residence documents) were rounded up by the police, brought to the police station and fingerprinted for possible identification with pending criminal cases. (Escandell, 2004: 3)

Similarly, in Australia, a number of incidents have occurred which highlight the same tensions:

- In 1994 a new wave of asylum-seekers . . . arrived; these were mainly Chinese nationals who created a media frenzy with headlines such as 'boat people flood feared', 'refugee crisis' and the usual headline of 'invasion'. (McMaster, 2002)
- In August 2001 the Tampa episode took place in which the right of asylum was denied to asylum-seekers attempting to land in Australia.
- In September 2001, the Australian government introduced a new government policy, known as the Pacific Solution which 'prevents unauthorised arrivals . . . from having their applications for asylum assessed in Australia according to domestic guidelines. These asylum seekers were instead removed from Australia in subsequent months to Nauru and Papua New Guinea, where they are held in detention facilities pending consideration of their asylum claims'. (AHREOC, 2001b)
- A Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Inquiry 'found that

children in Australian immigration detention centres have suffered numerous and repeated breaches of their human rights'. (AHREOC, 2001a)

In 1997 – the European Year Against Racism – the Eurobarometer survey showed a 'worrying level' of negative attitudes towards immigration in the 15 EU member states (Beate Winkler, Director of the EUMC in Thalhammer *et al.*, 2001). The results showed that 'a majority of Europeans have voiced concern over minorities, because they fear minorities are threatening social peace and welfare' (Thalhammer *et al.*, 2001: 11). Also, 'one European out of five supports the cultural assimilation of minorities; they argue that in order to become fully accepted members of society, people belonging to minority groups should abandon their own culture' (Thalhammer *et al.*, 2001: 11).

In Australia, the 1970s saw the official end of the White Australia policy, which excluded the entry of non-white immigrants, and the emergence of multi-cultural policies. Still, racism, xenophobia and intolerance continue to operate in modern Australia (Healey, 2003: 12). According to the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (March 2000), institutional factors still operate to the systematic disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia (Healey, 2003: 11).

These facts call for an urgent response from policy makers, educationalists and language policy makers to promote diversity, address the issues of racism, and develop, through policy initiatives, positive cross-cultural attitudes in the wider society. Language-in-education policy-makers in Australia and in Europe have not been silent on these matters, and responded with a shift in policy discourse. These policy responses are discussed in the next section.

Language Policy Discourse in Australia

Since multicultural policies were introduced in the early 1970s, there have been three main phases of policy development in relation to diversity in Australia (Lo Bianco, 2000). In the early 1970s diversity was first seen as a problem; then, as a result of minority rights movements, diversity was seen as a right. This was followed by the third period, the period of treating diversity as resource (Lo Bianco, 2000: 6). These periods were largely reflective of the political orientations represented by successive governments.

The Galbally Report (Galbally, 1978) was one of the first language policy reports highlighting the importance of developing positive intercultural skills and attitudes in the Australian society. The report stressed the role of two institutions in particular, schools and the ethnic media, which were seen as having particular responsibility for 'encouraging a multicultural attitude in Australian society by fostering the retention of the culture heritage of different groups and promoting intercultural understanding and fostering multiculturalism' (Galbally, 1978: 11–12). Schools in particular were seen as the key element in achieving such a goal, and developing multicultural education programmes. The Report was a significant step forward in recognising multiculturalism in Australia and reflecting on the needs of a multi-ethnic society. However, at this stage diversity was seen more as a source of 'inevitable friction, tension and divisiveness' which, nevertheless, can be 'overcome' (Galbally, 1978: 104).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, diversity came to be seen as representing

intellectual, cultural, economic and social benefits. The first national language policy document in Australia, the *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987) recognised and supported community languages as the main vehicles of intercultural communication within the multicultural society of Australia:

The linguistic diversity of Australia has social, cultural and economic potential to offer this country. Most non-English-speaking communities in Australia wish to maintain and develop their languages in the Australian context whilst acquiring and using English too, and there are important emotional, cultural, intercultural, social and educational reasons why this is desirable for Australia. (Lo Bianco, 1987: 15)

As a social benefit, the Lo Bianco report emphasised the role of second language education in:

improving intergroup and intercultural education, enhancing, thereby, the quality of relations between the component groups of Australian society. At an individual level the acquisition of languages spoken in Australia by speakers of other languages can contribute to expanding the cultural horizons and ways of thinking of all Australians, (Lo Bianco, 1987: 47)

After the introduction of the Australian Language and Literacy Policy in 1991 (DEET, 1991), the discourse shifted to an emphasis on economic benefits. This became the subject of criticism. In 1990/1 the Australian Language and Literacy Policy (DEET, 1991) argued for the benefits of linguistic diversity by advocating four broad strategies: (1) the conservation of Australia's linguistic resources; (2) the development and expansion of these resources; (3) the integration of Australian language teaching and language use with national economic, social and cultural policies; and (4) the provision of information and services in languages understood by clients.

Language development of the individual (referring generically to the speaker's first language) is interrelated with intellectual, emotional and social development. In addition to its primary communicative functions, language also serves a wide range of cultural, artistic, intellectual, personal, group identification, religious, economic and social-political functions. (DEET, 1991: 8)

In 1994 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) accepted the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy (NALSAS) (see Rudd, 1994), which made learning Asian languages and cultures a high priority, and which expressed the desire to develop 'Asia literacy' to better the economic relationship with Asia. The policy also put emphasis on intercultural skills and commissioned a report on 'infusing sociocultural dimensions into language programs' (DEST, 2003). The report stated that this integration of intercultural skills into language education policies was in line with the National Goals for Schooling, which states that:

all students [should] understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understand-

ing to contribute to and benefit from such diversity in the Australian community and internationally. (DEST, 2003: 2)

The ideology that diversity represents an important resource is reflected in current multicultural policies which emphasise that Australia needs to harness the diversity brought by immigrants and develop 'productive diversity' (DIMA, 1989; DIMIA, 1999). Thus, over the last 25 years, goals of language-in-education policy in Australia have emphasised the role language-learning plays in promoting diversity. These policies have been largely driven by societal needs and political and economic considerations.

Language Policy Discourse of the European Union

In Europe the fundamental underlying principle of promoting diversity is based on the clauses of the Treaty of Maastricht which aim to protect the national identity of the member states and to 'strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its Member States through the introduction of a citizenship of the Union' (Title 1, Article B). The Treaty requires the Community to respect the 'cultural and linguistic diversity' of the member states' education systems (Article 149), requires that the Community respect the 'national and regional diversity' of the member states and states that 'The Community shall take cultural aspects into account in its action under other provisions of this Treaty, in particular in order to respect and to promote the diversity of its cultures' (Article 151) (Grin & Moring, 2002: 24).

The notion of diversity in Europe is coterminous with national identity, and regional diversity is merely a 'borrowed constitutional value' (Toggenburg, 2003: 279). The term 'community languages' in the European context also refers to this national focus, as it refers to the official or working languages of the European Union, which today number 20 languages.

As many authors have argued (see e.g. Extra, 2005; Toggenburg, 2003), the paradox of the European context is that while European policies have been successful at promoting and protecting the national identity of their member states, in line with the Treaty of Maastricht, EU policies have had a limited impact on the various states' internal national policies in relation to diversity within their own territories. As Toggenburg argues, regional diversity is under the 'constitutional caveats of the member states who themselves define their internal degree of diversity' (Toggenburg, 2003: 279). (See, for example, Kaplan & Baldauf (2005) for some examples of such internal language policies for Hungary, Finland and Sweden.)

The Council of Europe has adopted two treaties that are particularly relevant to regional and minority languages: the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, and the Framework Convention on the Protection of the Rights of National Minorities. Still, even the very definition of 'minority language' reflects a limited potential for the protection of minority languages: minority languages are defined so that they exclude the languages of immigrants (Grin & Moring, 2002: 26).

Nevertheless, in current policy discourse linguistic diversity is seen as a 'valuable common resource', and education is called upon to convert diversity from a 'barrier to communication' into 'a source of mutual enrichment and understand-

ing' (Trim, 2000: 54). The Council of Europe is committed to 'building up mutual understanding and acceptance and linguistic diversity' (Trim, 2000: 56). Several European policy documents have emphasised the role of language learning in promoting intercultural understanding. The White Paper issued by the European Language Council states:

Languages are [also] the key to knowing other people. Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe. (EC, 1995: 47)

In 1997 the European Commission welcomed the year against racism and stressed that member states' efforts must be intensified. In 2000 the Education and Youth Council took note of the need to tackle racism and xenophobia among young people and, as a result, in 2001 a declaration on combating racism and xenophobia on the Internet by intensifying work with young people was adopted (EC, 2001c: 71). Also, the Council of Europe language policy states:

The Council of Europe accords special importance to fostering the linguistic and cultural diversity of its member states. Its activities in the field of languages aim to promote plurilingualism and pluriculturalism among citizens in order to combat intolerance and xenophobia by improving communication and mutual understanding between individuals. (Council of Europe, 2004)

In 2003 the European Commission issued a policy paper which forms an explicit Action Plan for 2004–6 for promoting linguistic diversity (EC, 2003). This policy paper acknowledges the emergence of a strong European identity by making the initial statement that 'at long last, Europe is on its way to becoming one big family, without bloodshed, a real transformation . . . a continent of humane values . . . of liberty, solidarity and above all diversity, meaning respect for others' languages, cultures and traditions' (EC, 2003: 3). The document emphasises intercultural and language skills, as essential for European citizenship, and necessary for employment in a 'global market-place' (EC, 2003: 3). Promoting linguistic diversity is defined as 'actively encouraging the teaching and learning of the widest range of languages in schools, universities, adult education centres and enterprises'. The policy states that 'the range [of languages] should include the smaller European languages as well as all the larger ones, regional, minority and migrant languages as well as those of 'national' status and the languages of our major trading partners throughout the world' (EC, 2003: 9). The policy emphasises the wealth of languages that the enlargement of the Union in 2004 has brought. These aims underlie a wider goal of establishing a 'language-friendly environment' (EC, 2003: 18). An important tenet of the policy is that it works towards this environment not only through schools and formal language learning: e.g., the policy calls for disseminating the benefits of language learning to a wider audience, including parents. The policy also promotes Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) through various programs including the Socrates program and the European Eurydice Unit. Bilingual and multilingual education is promoted in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

These policy goals are encouraging, but the overall situation of foreign language learning in Europe has been rather 'mixed' (Beacco & Byram, 2003: 23). One of the weaknesses of the policies has been that they have put languages in competition with each other, usually to the disadvantage of regional minority languages. As Beacco and Byram state, 'the economy of languages is used to justify efforts to thwart linguistic diversification' and 'language policies tend to tolerate citizens' linguistic diversity as necessary for communication or social harmony, but such diversity is still not recognised and encouraged for its own sake' (Beacco & Byram, 2003: 19). Also, the impact of supranational EU policies on the protection of diversity within the individual member states in Europe has been the centre for criticism for EU language-in-education policies. As Extra states:

[In Europe] National languages are often referred to as core values of cultural identity. Paradoxically, in the same public discourse, IM [immigrant minority] languages and cultures are commonly conceived of as sources of problems and deficits and as obstacles to integration, while national languages and cultures in an expanding EU are regarded as sources of enrichment and as prerequisites for integration. (Extra, 2005: 89)

The European Commission's Action Plan to promote a more inclusive approach to diversity is a positive step ahead. It is a promising positive impact on immigrant minority languages. As Extra argues, this policy direction 'may ultimately lead to an inclusive approach in which IM languages are no longer denied access to Europe's celebration of language diversity' (Extra, 2005: 105). This policy direction represents a shift from the concept of diversity as defined on the level of sovereign nation-states, to a new level where linguistic diversity offered by the plural societies of individual European nation-states is also considered.

The protection and promotion of these minority languages is supported by the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages which came into force in 1998. The Charter states that:

the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages in the different countries and regions of Europe represent an important contribution to the building of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and cultural diversity within the framework of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Council of Europe, 1992: Preamble)

The Charter emphasises the benefits of interculturalism and multilingualism, but stresses that 'the protection and encouragement of regional or minority languages should not be to the detriment of the official languages and the need to learn them' (Council of Europe, 1992: Preamble).

In summary, the policy discourse in the European Union is focused on promoting diversity, and developing intercultural skills for mobility. It is promising that policy discourse is reflecting a new European self-concept, a 'plurilingual habitus' (Gogolin, 2002: 17), but the promotion of diversity is largely limited to the level of the official national languages. The diversity provided by the traditional indigenous or regional minority languages and the immigrant or 'non-territorial' languages is left to the individual countries' policy decisions.

Facts of Diversity and Language Learning in Australia and Europe

Following the policy discourse emphasising diversity both in the Australian and the European context, one would think that these leading Western democracies should be frontrunners in cross-cultural understanding and language learning. The next section provides an insight into the reality of linguistic diversity as represented through education policies. First, the focus is on the facts of diversity in relation to the range of languages taught and offered in Australian and European schools. Second, the focus is on the facts of developing cross-cultural attitudes: Do language education programmes result in more positive cross-cultural attitudes?

Diversity in language education in Australia

Diversity poses enormous challenges for Australia's education system. In 2001 there were over 200 languages spoken in Australian homes, including 64 Indigenous languages (Clyne *et al.*, 2004: 241). The top 10 most common community languages¹ spoken in Australian homes included: (1) Italian; (2) Greek; (3) Cantonese; (4) Arabic; (5) Vietnamese; (6) Mandarin; (7) Spanish; (8) Filipino; (9) German; and (10) Macedonian. This demographic picture of linguistic diversity in the wider society is not always mirrored in the language offerings in the education system, and often a lack of opportunity to study the community language at school contributes to the loss of the diversity brought by immigrant communities.

Community languages are being lost in Australia and language loss is most dramatic and visible in the context of Indigenous languages. At the time of the British arrival, it is estimated that about 250 languages were spoken in Australia, with many languages having a number of different dialects. Of these only about 50 languages remain (Ozolins, this volume). Today, 90% of Aboriginal people do not speak their Indigenous language (Mühlhäusler & Damania, 2004: 20) and even the relatively stronger languages are subject to language shift (Dixon, 2002). Also, there is a rapid language shift in numerous migrant communities. Clyne and Kipp (2000) diagnosed the greatest rate of shift among the Dutch (61.9%). Other nationalities with high rates of shift included Germans, Austrians, French, Maltese and Hungarians.

While the vitality of an immigrant language is influenced by a wide range of factors, including demographic characteristics of the immigrant language, institutional support and status factors (see e.g. Bourhis, 2001), language-in-education policies have a key role in the maintenance of minority languages. For example, the availability of language programmes in the immigrant language can be a crucial factor in developing literacy skills in it.

In Australia, language education is available to minorities in four main forms: (1) Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programmes which are integrated into the mainstream primary and secondary curricula; (2) Ethnic School Programmes or Community Languages programmes, which are also state funded; (3) Saturday or Sunday schools organised by the ethnolinguistic communities; and (4) self-funded private schools.

Community languages programmes have been operating in Australia since 1981, when the Commonwealth-run Ethnic Schools Programme (ESP) was intro-

duced, and this, in 1992, became the Community Languages Element (CLE) administered on the state level (Baldauf, 2005). The large number of community languages in Australia poses an enormous challenge to schools, and as a result the availability of these programmes is largely dependent on the demographics of the immigrant language community, and also varies across states. Some of the more widely spoken and economically preferred languages such as German, French, Chinese, Indonesian, and Japanese are in a more favourable situation, while smaller community languages are often at risk of being marginalised (Clyne *et al.*, 2004). As the government programmes do not satisfy the needs of ethnic communities, these usually organise their own Saturday or Sunday schools, but these schools are not integrated into the general educational system.

Under the NALSAS policy the so-called 'economically beneficial' languages have enjoyed a relatively high level of availability and valorisation through the education system. Since 2003 the support of Asian languages has seen a sharp decline when Commonwealth funds for the teaching of these languages were cut back. In 2000, more than 750,000 students, or just over 23% of all Australian students, were studying an Asian language at some level (DEET, 2002). In the Australian primary education system the main languages in 2002 were (1) Japanese 25.0%; (2) Italian 24.1%; (3) Indonesian 22.2%; (4) French 9.2%; (5) German 6.7%; (6) Chinese (plus derivatives) 3.4%; (7) Spanish 2.5%; (8) Aboriginal languages 1.3%; (9) Greek 0.7%; (10) Auslan (Australian Sign Language) 0.5%; and (11) Arabic 0.4%. The top five languages accounted for over 87% of the total number of language enrolments (Australian Primary Principals Association, 2002: 28).

As a result of recent heightened focus on national security, the need for proficiency in 'small languages' has received public attention; however, not much has been done in relation to developing proficiency in them, although intelligence agencies are deficient in language skills 'to the point of being pathetic' (Quinn, 2004). As Quinn argues, the neo-classical economic philosophy underlying the tertiary education system in Australia fails to provide the necessary support for developing and sustaining multilingualism: e.g., as a result of economic rationalism (neo-liberalism) small enrolment courses in languages such as Hindi, Vietnamese, Cantonese and Arabic have been disappearing from the linguistic repertoire of university programmes (Quinn, 2004). This reflects the fact that contrary to policy discourse, 'the number of languages has become a problem even when it is a resource' (Clyne *et al.*, 2004: 258).

In summary, the Australian education system cannot fully meet the demands of the numerous ethnolinguistic communities. The policy goal of promoting diversity is only partially fulfilled. Although the availability of language programmes in Australia's primary, secondary and tertiary education is not only influenced by economic forces, economic rationalism is one of the key factors that limit language learning opportunities.

There is also much work to be done in the area of developing positive cross-cultural skills and competence (Byram, 2003; Liddicoat, 2004; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2000). In contrast with policy discourse, current literature shows that learners do not necessarily develop positive attitudes and cross-cultural skills as a result of their mere exposure to another language or culture. A study by Ingram and O'Neill (2002) in the Australian multicultural context surveyed the attitudes

of Australian secondary school children towards different ethnic groups and the speakers of the foreign language they were studying at school. The results of the survey suggest that there is no evidence that foreign language learning has any considerable positive effect on the attitudes of language learners to the speakers of the language. Consequently, there is no proof that language learning *per se* promotes cross-cultural understanding and tolerance. In a study conducted in the European context, Coleman (1998) reported similar findings. The study investigated the intercultural perceptions of university students who participated in an exchange programme in a foreign country. Coleman concluded that language students have clear stereotypes, and extended residence in the target language community will not influence those stereotypes, except to reinforce them.

Diversity in language education in Europe

The rapidly growing linguistic diversity in Europe, as in Australia, has also posed challenges to educators. In the European context linguistic diversity is the outcome of national languages of European nation-states, their autochthonous regional minority languages, and their allochthonous immigrant minority languages. It has been estimated that in the year 2000 about one-third of the population under the age 35 in urbanised western Europe had an immigrant background (Extra & Gorter, 2001).

In Europe, language education has enjoyed a relatively favourable status, although it is important to note that the European sociolinguistic environment is much different from Australia. According to a recent survey conducted by the European Commission (EC, 2001a) in the 15 member states in 2001, 69% of youngsters aged 15 to 24 reported that they could speak a foreign language. The most common languages spoken were English (41%), followed by French (19%), German (10%), Spanish (7%) and Italian (3%): 81% per cent of Swedes, 80% of Dutch and 78% of Danes claimed to know English, compared with only 39% of Italians and 36% of Spaniards and Portuguese (EC, 2001a: 9).

The enlargement of the EU in 2004 has posed additional challenges. While the 10 newly admitted countries brought less powerful languages to the Union, paradoxically the members of the original 15 states have expressed concerns about the impact of these languages on the more powerful and more established languages of the EU. According to the European Commission's survey, 61% of Europeans agreed that the enlargement of the European Union to include new member countries means that they must protect their own languages more. This opinion was expressed by 90% of Finns and Greeks, 78% of Luxembourgers and 74% of Spaniards. The countries where most respondents disagreed included Sweden (34%), Denmark (33%) and Austria (32%). The countries where the 'don't know' response was common included Germany (22%), Ireland (19%), Austria (17%) and Portugal (16%) (EC, 2001a: 57).

As in the Australian context, the maintenance of linguistic diversity through language education programmes remains a challenge in Europe, as language programmes cannot meet the demands represented by the numerous ethnolinguistic communities. The range of languages offered in schools is narrower than it is proposed in policy documents (EC, 2001b: 96). The European Commission (EC, 2001b) lists several reasons for the gap between policy and

practice: for example, the minimum number of interested students and the lack of specialist teachers are the main reason. Further, 'in order to adequately respond to the imperatives of the economic world, schools in most countries tend to offer English as the first foreign language' and 'indeed 10 or so countries even impose it' (EC, 2001b: 96).

Even with the limited range of offerings and the imposed 'choice' of English put aside, Europeans tend to favour the more powerful and economically more beneficial languages, as opposed to the smaller languages. In a survey Europeans were asked which two languages they thought were most useful to know apart from their mother tongue. In all countries, English was mentioned as the most useful language to know (75%), followed by French (40%), German (23%) and Spanish (18%) (EC, 2001a: 12). When asked about the main motivation for learning other languages, 24% of Europeans said 'to be able to understand people from other cultures', while the motive 'to know a language which is widely spoken in the world' was cited by every fifth European (EC, 2001a: 35).

In summary, in the European Union the demographic picture of diversity is not matched in the education system. As Extra argues (2005: 101), due to the 'monolingual *habitus* of primary education across Europe, there is an increasing mismatch between language practices at home and at school'.

In the area of cross-cultural attitudes it also seems that much work needs to be done. Although Europeans are relatively multilingual, they do not necessarily have positive attitudes towards linguistic and cultural diversity. A recent research project conducted by the European Commission found that young European adults have shown negative attitudes towards immigrants (Thalhammer *et al.*, 2001). Another survey, conducted in 2003 in 10 acceding and three candidate EU countries, examined Europeans' values and diagnosed a low level of understanding of the Arab world and its values (EC, 2004). Racism and xenophobia have been shown to be linked to the increasing numbers of foreigners in Europe, especially in regions that had once perceived themselves as mono-ethnic or having a low degree of ethnic diversity (Escandell, 2004: 7). While it seems that higher education clearly correlates with more positive attitudes towards minorities (Thalhammer *et al.*, 2001: 14), there is no evidence as such that language education leads to more positive cross-cultural attitudes.

Conclusion

Language-in-education policy discourse in Australia and in the European Union is driven by the underlying goal of promoting diversity and developing cross-cultural attitudes. From the Australian and the European context it is clear that there is a gap between language-in-education policy discourse and the actual practical implementation of promoting diversity in two main aspects. First, the delivery of a wide range of languages is limited by economic rationalism, and minority languages are often marginalised in the education system as they are experiencing a 'climate of competition' (Clyne *et al.*, 2004: 242). Second, the theorised positive impact of language learning on the development of positive cross-cultural remains, as Ingram argued, 'enigmatic' (Ingram, 2001). In other words, there is no empirical evidence to support the proposition that language learning (in itself) leads to positive cross-cultural attitudes. For these

two reasons, the goals highlighted in language-in-education policies remain primarily symbolic. However, this symbolism is still a powerful action tool in language policy, and this 'symbolic action is socially and politically necessary' (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000: 30) in order for language-in-education policies to contribute to social change. Promoting diversity and developing positive attitudes towards ethnolinguistic diversity is only possible if it is supported by a wider social environment where 'cultural monism' (Smolicz, 1999: 64) is not the norm and multiculturalism and 'internalised cultural pluralism' (Smolicz, 1999: 55) are promoted (Smolicz, 1999: 64). Language-in-education policies need to continue to advocate these goals and respond to the challenges of these environments.

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Note

1. In Australia, community languages are those spoken by ethnic communities within the broader Australian community; cf. community languages in the European Union, which are the official or working languages within the Union.

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