

Faculty of Education



**Indigenous languages in education  
Do current policies match our needs?**

Joseph Lo Bianco  
Professor, Language and Literacy Education  
The University of Melbourne  
Charles Darwin University  
9 September 2010



## Shaheed Minar

1947 partition of British India divided Hindu-majority India from Muslim-majority Pakistan (non-contiguous West Pakistan and East Pakistan).

1948 language policy to impose Urdu on all Pakistan; East Pakistan a cultural and linguistic extension of West Bengal.

>> protest from Bengali students, many killed 21 February 1952.  
Resistance spread from elites to masses culminating in ferocious 1971 civil war. Emergence of independent Bangladesh.

Tragedy now commemorated as Language Martyr's Day. Shaheed Minar, probably the world's only monument to language struggle erected in Dhaka.

1999, with Pakistan's support, UNESCO declared this day *International Mother Language Day*.

(Lo Bianco, 2010)



## The Silent Crisis

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon:  
"the silent crisis confronting many of the world's languages"

23 July message for 2008 International Day for the World's Indigenous People

Action for indigenous languages linked to the struggle against marginalization, poverty, expropriation of traditional lands and human rights.

## Questions

Rights?

Closing the gap?

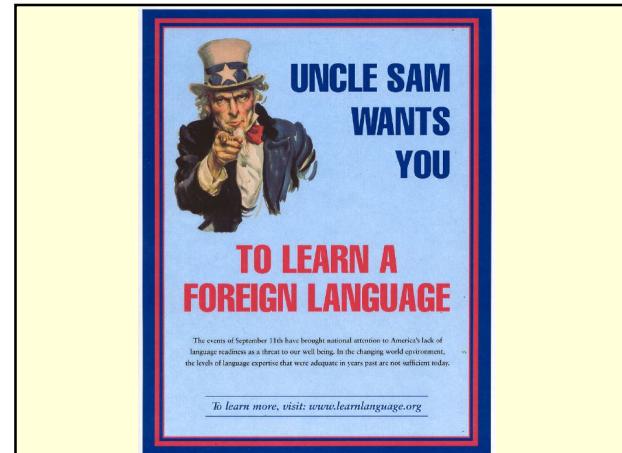
Culture?

Data?

-----  
What have been the premises of language education planning in Australia, especially for Indigenous children?

What are some patterns of lp development for Indigenous languages in education elsewhere?

What can "we" do to raise the standard of policy making for languages in general and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in particular?



## Patriotism

A 1997 US Navy Fact Sheet: on Navajo code talkers WWII, encrypted radio voice messages to confound Japanese attempts to crack Navy communications, 1942-1945...

"Were it not for Navajos, the Marines would never have taken Iwo Jima."

Radio: "the nation-serving Navajo"; "patriotism" of Navajo; "the language that saved a nation".

Language Planning within the National Defense Act and Sputnik Two

(Lo Bianco 2008a)

## NALA 1990-2006

In 1990 Congress approves its most bilingualism-promoting declaration; Native American Languages Act.

"It is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans... to use, practice and develop Native American languages"  
Reauthorized 2006 to 2012, bi-partisan bill: language nests, survival schools and restoration support.

(Congr. Rcd 1990; P.L. 101-477; October 30, part of the Tribally Controlled Community Colleges Bill, PL101-477) and December 6 2006, Esther Martinez Native Languages Preservation Act, H. R. 4766,

## Philippines

"To safeguard indigenous peoples from deception by unscrupulous elements, the ...law required ...all project proponents first secure free and prior informed consent (FPIC) from the indigenous peoples ...if... projects intrude into ... traditional territories"

Indigenous People's Rights Act Philippines IPRA (1997)

Act stresses use of indigenous languages for education campaigns, public hearings and contract signing purposes

(Castro, 2002: 69).

## Aotearoa

NZ: three official languages, Māori, English, NZ Sign Language. Māori Language Act of 1987 >> bilingual names of departments, local areas, postal addresses, even the country itself.

Māori Language Act 1987 176  
(Commenced: 1 Aug 1987)

### Recognition of Māori Language

**Māori language to be an official language of New Zealand**  
"The Māori language is hereby declared to be an official language of New Zealand."

<http://www.tereo.govt.nz/act87/3.shtml>

1994 Privy Council decided that 1840 Treaty of Waitangi applied to NZ today, and required preservation of Māori.

## Guaraní

Paraguay mainly, also Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil

Co-official language in Paraguay, bilingual constitution, widespread use (diglossia).

Co-official in an Argentine province.

2009 Bolivia started a Guarani language university named after an indigenous leader.

## Mexico

Mexican Federal Congress in 2003 passed a Law of Linguistic Rights of Indigenous Peoples, declares 63 indigenous languages as "national" languages of Mexico

.... "have the same validity [as Spanish] in their territory, location and context".

.... indigenous Mexicans are entitled to use their ancestral languages in communication with government, and to have interpretation and translation as needed. Also creates National Institute of Indigenous Languages, to preserve and promote the use of national languages.

## South Africa

LP central plank of Apartheid aim of “breaking up the black people into a large number of conflicting and competing so called ethnic groups” (Alexander 1989: 21).

As *“the immediate cause of the ... Soweto uprising”* (Juckles, 1995, pp. 147-149) compulsory bilingual instruction was the spark that resulted in the deaths of many dozens, by some estimates hundreds, of students. Since 1995 South Africa marks 16 June as Youth Day.

Today, in the post-Apartheid reality, a progressive national constitution recognises eleven official languages, including Afrikaans and English, and debates about bilingual education centre more on delivery methods, learning effectiveness, or levels of resourcing.

(Lo Bianco, 2008b)

## Australia

Some 67 national policies or policy-influencing reports since 1970.

**mindless media coverage**    **endless chopping and changing**

Today...

at least THREE federal policies all at once  
contradictory and unintegrated

Moves now to a national (Australian) curriculum, which could, should, improve some things...

(Lo Bianco and Gvozdenko 2006)

## 40 Years of Policy Upon Policy



- e.g.
  - *Auchmuty, 1970*
  - *Galbally, 1978*
  - *NPL, 1987*
  - *ALLP, 1991*
  - *NALSAS, 1994*
  - *ASAA 2002 NASIP 2007*

## Generalisations on LP since 1970...

Australia one of the world's best in policy writing but one of the world's worst in policy consistency and delivery.

While national policy has never been perfect it has always led to better results for small languages than its absence. Not having a national policy is an obstacle to innovation & collaboration.

Regular changes to policy settings has had a clear negative impact on improvement in learning, innovation in teaching, costs of programs, sharing of experience.

**WHY?** Because continual chopping and changing >> cynicism & languages require long lead-times for learning and establishment.

**Today we have a continual repetition of the importance of languages but declining financial commitment leading to major erosion in delivery**

### The Problem of Globish

i.e., ‘varieties of English’  
studied by “2 billion people – $\frac{1}{3}$  of humanity” – by  
2015.  
and by  
“...as many as 3 billion people or  $\frac{1}{2}$  world’s  
population” by 2050

(Graddol, 2006)

### Andhra Pradesh Chronicle, 18 August 2009

“Tribals demand English Medium”, Adilabad, August 17<sup>th</sup>

“Tribals in the district are against their children being taught in the MT and have demanded that English be the medium of instruction in the newly introduced ‘MT tribal schools’. They opine that their children will not get a competitive edge without English.....”

~~~  
The Adivasi (tribal) languages Gondi and Kolami were introduced in 2009. Adilabad MP Mr Ramesh Rathod strongly opposed this and described MT schools as “a conspiracy against” the Adivasi.

### From tribal schools to elite universities.

#### Formal university rankings.

2006 edition of Shanghai Jiao Tong Index shows of 20 top-ranked universities 19 American or British and 66% of the top 100 located in English language settings.

~~~~~  
Rankings “... favour universities ...from English language nations because English is the language of research (non English work is published less and cited less); and universities from the large US system as Americans tend to cite Americans”.

(Marginson, 2007:133).

### Effects of Globish in ES and NES Countries

#### ES country: complacency effect

Historic: neglect of language competence  
Recent: Heritage Recovery + Strategic Languages

~~~

#### NES country: instrumentalism effect

Historic: Resistance vs. embrace of colonial English  
Recent: Massive demand for global English:  
e.g. University rankings > 60% of top 100 ranked Universities; 19/20 top ranks English medium.

## For Australia

Globish can be liberating for languages

IF

- 1) we teach languages for humanistic, (cultural and intellectual) reasons mostly;
  - 2) we understand that bilingualism means 2 literacies and therefore MORE literacy rather than less;
  - 3) we get serious about support (better), time (much more) and methodology (content and usage based).
- BUT CURRENTLY...

## Political-Ideological Context

Gough Whitlam: *Australianism* > 1972-1975

Malcolm Fraser: *Cultural multiculturalism* > 1975-1983

Bob Hawke: *Class multiculturalism* > 1983-1990

Paul Keating: *Asia-literacy* > 1991-1995

John Howard: *Anglo-nationalism* > 1996-2007

Kevin Rudd: *Asian Regionalism* > 2007-2010

Julia Gillard: *We can only guess* > 2010-

six “meta-discourses” of LP debates.

Britishism  
Australianism  
Multiculturalism  
Asianism  
Economism

(Lo Bianco 2004)

The main voices and interests in LP debates

~~ language professionals ~~  
~~ immigrants ~~  
~~ indigenous ~~  
~~ diplomatic and trade elites ~~

(Lo Bianco 2004)

...and what they have said...

Who they are...  
Professionals

Immigrants  
Indigenous

Diplomatic and Trade  
Elites  
(Lo Bianco 2004)

What they advocate...  
Generalised L2 Learning, Research, Services

Intergenerational LM, educational equality

Language survival, land claims,  
documentation, community and cultural  
survival, educational equality,

Asian languages, Regional Integration, Trade  
and National Security, Specialised  
Provision

(Lo Bianco 2004)

Current Federal Policy Situation

1) *National Statement & Plan for Languages '05-'12*

~~~

2) *The National Indigenous Languages Policy  
Indigenous Languages - 9 August 2009*

~~~

3) *National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools  
Program (NALSSP) '08-'11*

(i) *National Statement & Plan for Languages 2005-  
2012*

~~~

*On purpose and nature of languages education states:*

*'All languages are equally valid'*

*'Learners gain similar social, cognitive, linguistic and cultural  
benefits, regardless of the language studied';*

*'Australian Indigenous Languages have a unique place in  
Australia's heritage and in its cultural and educational  
life.'*

(ii) *The National Indigenous Languages Policy- 9 August 2009*

**National Attention**

Focus attention on oldest surviving languages in the world

**Critical Endangerment**

Prevent decline and extend use as much as possible

**Close the Gap**

Linking language education to Close the Gap agenda

**Strengthening Pride in Identity and Culture**

Restoration of rarely spoken languages

**Supporting Indigenous Language Programs in Schools**

Offer indigenous languages as second languages in schools.

(iii) *National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) 2008 – 2011*

Supports: “additional Asian languages classes in high schools, teacher training, “development of specialist curriculum for students who display advanced abilities”.

Target: by 2020 at least 12% of students exit Yr 12 with “a fluency in one of the target Asian languages (Mandarin, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean) sufficient for engaging in trade and commerce in Asia and/or university study”.

National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program 2009 (v.2) p. 1

## Early Negativity on Bilingualism

Early studies show bilingual deficit:  
e.g., Saer 1923 in Wales; Margaret Mead 1950s NYC

Problems with control of language proficiency, social class and sociolinguistics

(Lo Bianco, 2007)

## Early Policy on Bilingual Education

UNESCO 1953

de-colonizing in African and Asian countries >  
supporting vernacular languages ‘axiomatic’ that the best teaching language is a child’s mother tongue (MT).

Scandinavia 1970s

(1976 Finland) immigrant children’s fluency in MT related to acquisition of dominant language  
~ ‘semi-liaisonism’ and ‘double semi-liaisonism’ ~

## Watershed Studies

two break-through studies using rigorous research designs  
>> general consensus today

Peal and Lambert (1962)  
IQ bilinguals outperform monolinguals on IQ (possibly overcompensated)

Hakuta and Diaz (1985)  
Longitudinal research isolating independent contribution of bilingualism..

(Lo Bianco, 2007)

## What we know today >> 1200 reputable & replicated studies

Ask 4 main questions:

*What is effect on L1?*

*What is effect on L2?*

*What is effect on academic content learning?*

*What is the effect on children's literacy?*

Overwhelmingly find one main answer:

When properly and fully implemented, immersion or bilingual education programs :

- 1) Assist with L1; 2) Improved L2; 3) Equal or better on academic content; 4) Better for literacy

(Lo Bianco, 2009)

## References

Castro.N. (2002), Indigenous languages for development: Philippine experience, 54-60 in Lo Bianco, ed. Voices from Phnom Penh, Melb: Language Australia

Lo Bianco, J. (2004). *Language policy in Australia*, Council of Europe.

<http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Source/LoBiancoEn.pdf>

Graddol, D. (2006), English Next. London: The British Council

Lo Bianco and Gvozdenko (2006) Collaboration and Innovation in the Provision of LOTE in Australian Universities, DASSH

[http://www.dash.edu.au/publications/CASR\\_ARCHIVE REVIEW.pdf](http://www.dash.edu.au/publications/CASR_ARCHIVE REVIEW.pdf)

Lo Bianco, J. (2007), Advantage + Identity, pp 5-22 in *Language, Capital, Culture*, Vaish et al, eds, SensePublishers

Lo Bianco, J. (2008a), Tense Times & Language Policy. Current Issues in Language Planning

Lo Bianco, J. (2008b), Bilingual Education & Sociolinguistic Issues, 35-51, v. 5, Encyclopaedia of Language & Education, Springer.

Lo Bianco, J. (2009), Second Languages and Australian Schooling: Review and Proposals, AER 54, Australian Council for Education Research.

Lo Bianco, J. (2010), Language Policy & Planning, 143-176. in Homberger and McKay, eds,

*Sociolinguistics & Language Education*, Multilingual Matters.

Marginson, S. (2007) Global university rankings. Journal of Higher Education Policy and

Management 29 (2), 131-142.