Ethnicity, class and gender in Australia
1945-1996

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EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND LANGUAGE

STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN A MULTIETHNIC ECONOMY

by

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CHAPTER SIX: AMES LEARNING PHILOSOPHY AND UNEMPLOYED MIGRANTS

1. INTRODUCTION
Several documents exist examining the current needs-based approach, adopted by AMES since 1980. Major reports, submitted for the National Review of AMEP in 1985, included sections discussing the effect of a needs-based philosophy on teaching practice, learner's progress, curriculum development and AMES teaching structure.

The conference held in Melbourne in 1984 was aptly named 'Self-Directed Learning' - From Practice to Theory (our emphasis), because the needs-based philosophy has not evolved as a slowly established practice which finally dominated the system, but was introduced over a short period, as described by (Bartlett, Butler, and Kohler, 1984:4). Only recently have formal outlets been devised for structured theoretical debate of the interpretation, application and suitability of needs-based learning in AMES, as has been noted by Hughes, Bartel and Slade (1985), who state that, despite needs-based programing being one of the most significant developments in the AMEP in the last four-years, there has been very little debate within Australia about the educational validity of the needs-based approach itself, nor 'has there been discussion about whether the adoption of this approach will lead to a more efficient delivery of English language services'.

The basic reason, for undertaking this project at all, is the conviction that unemployed people have different or additional language-learning needs from other people of non English-speaking background, whose needs can be easier identified and catered for. It is germane to this project, to examine the extent to which current learning philosophies within AMES can accommodate these distinctive needs. This section will, therefore, deal with AMES learning philosophy, and the effects of that philosophy on meeting unemployed migrants' English-language needs.

2. NEEDS-BASED PHILOSOPHY
It is widely accepted that a marked change of direction has occurred within the AMEP in recent years. Bartlett, Butler and Kohler (1985) date this change from
1979-80, and describe it, in essence, as a reversal of the separation of curriculum preparation and teaching functions, which had been a characteristic of the program. A relatively centralised system, utilising standardised curriculum materials, was replaced by a decentralised model, whose goals Bartlett et al. describe as follows:

'It is AMEP policy: "to accept that all adults who do not communicate in English adequately for their needs must have the opportunity to learn English" (emphasis added). One of its objectives was to enable the adult migrants "to acquire the skills necessary to continue to learn English autonomously" (emphasis added).'

Finally, two of the strategies adopted by the AMEP are:

'to instruct clients on how to make use of language-learning materials in the community at large to develop a wide range of effective language-learning materials to suit the needs of learners (emphasis added)' (1985:1)

They then go on to propose the following as key structures of the new model:

'- goals of assimilation and integration replaced by multiculturalism ....
- centralised curriculum planning to decentralised planning ....
- content-based curriculum to a needs-based curriculum ....
- language learning methodology to methodologies ....
- texts to authentic materials ....
- teacher-centred to learner-centred classroom ....
- classroom-learner to autonomous, self-directed learner.' (loc. cit., pp.2-4)

It will be evident from this, that what we term (for the sake of brevity) the needs-based model is, in fact, a teaching/learning philosophy which has fundamental repercussions through the whole system, since it touches on the organisation of teaching and ancillary services, such as curriculum development, recommended teaching style and practice, and the goals of the teaching/learning process itself.
Our fundamental point of enquiry is, then, the extent to which the organisational forms, teaching style and goals, which make up what we have loosely termed the needs-based model, are appropriate to the group which forms the subject of this study. Before proceeding with this enquiry, however, it may be as well to reiterate, on the basis of our fieldwork, what these needs seem to be.

3. NEEDS OF UNEMPLOYED WORKING-CLASS MIGRANTS

At the most basic level, we may stress two main findings from our survey.

- For unemployed migrants English-language learning is a process of which the main objective is helping to gain employment.
- The majority of those interviewed (and, in particular, those with first-hand experience of the labour market) perceived that their present unemployment was not the result of lack of proficiency in English alone, and would not be remedied simply by increasing such proficiency.

It follows from this, that one of the main criteria for assessing the efficacy of the needs-based model, in the context of this project is the extent to which it will be amenable to the integration of English-language and general skills training, in a way which will permit more than a token response to the situation of unemployed working-class migrants. This situation may be described as social marginalisation, resulting from the interaction of lack of main-language proficiency and structural, labour-market vulnerability during, a period of rapid and far-reaching industrial change.

Apart from the above criterion, we propose that the fundamental goal of the AMEP should be to enlist the fullest possible participation of all the social, political and cultural dimensions of our society. In this sense, teaching/learning philosophies which espouse a minimalist definition of 'needs'. Restriction to 'survival' needs alone would be unacceptable. We appreciate that a massive value-judgement is enshrined in this statement, but feel justified by the widespread and bipartisan acceptance of this assertion in the multitude of reports, administrative guidelines and policy statements which have been produced since the mid-1970s at both state and federal levels.
Apart from these 'life-chance' needs, linked with language learning, employment and participation, our subject group also has a number of special needs, in relation to the learning process itself. Some of these were expressed by the sample group directly, some can be deduced and almost all are related to the group's socio-economic composition. We will not repeat these in detail, but they may be summarised as follows.

- Structural exclusion from social contexts, in which English is predominantly spoken, with a consequently enhanced stress on classroom activities in the language-learning process.

- For the majority, average to low levels of previous educational experience and a lack of the sort of educational experience necessary to provide the skills requisite for self-directed learning or, arguably, for articulation of learning-needs adequate to form the foundation of a teaching strategy.

- A strongly-expressed preference for learning activities, which have a discernable structure of progression, are obviously related to English-language learning, and involve active and extensive intervention by the teacher.

We have, then, a skeleton framework of learning-needs and desired outcomes of the learning process for the subjects of this project. The question now is the compatibility of these with the various elements, outlined above, what Bartlett et al. call the 'intended curriculum' of the needs-based approach.

### 4. PLANNING GOALS AND OUTCOMES

A further line of enquiry, of relevance to our subject, is the extent to which enunciated policy-goals are actually achieved. Thus, it may be that some or all of the current policy-goals are, in fact, appropriate to the needs of unemployed workers. However, if the structures, through which these goals are to be realised, prove inadequate for the purpose, then little of practical value will have been achieved. In this context, we would single out for special attention such activities as curriculum development and in-service training of teachers, since these are among the primary means by which policy-goals are realised in the classroom practices of the teachers themselves.

We will now deal in turn with the various aspects of needs-based learning philosophy, as outlined above, and in the context of the learning-needs of
unemployed workers.

5. ASSIMILATION, INTEGRATION AND MULTICULTURALISM

Bartlett et al. noted:

'a keen awareness of the theoretical poverty within the AMEP with respect to the needs concept and with respect to the concept of multiculturalism'

among teachers in the AMEP, and further noted, that these teachers despite regarding themselves as 'agents of multiculturalism', felt they were, in fact, forced to take on the role of 'assimilators under the present system of language teaching'. (Ibid)

This dilemma is not confined to the question of language teaching, since the 'theoretical poverty' referred to above, affects the whole field of multicultural policies.

Essentially, multiculturalism is a prescription for social pluralism based on ethnicity. Its two fundamental tenets are a stress on the continuing validity of migrants' various cultures in the Australian context, and the consequent requirement for sensitivity to the existence of an ethnically diverse population.

In practice, particularly with regard to teaching, multiculturalism has produced a degree of confusion for two main reasons. These are, in the first place, that what is essentially a prescription for Australian society is often treated as a description of it, and, in the second place, that neither the limits of pluralism, nor the processes proposed for delineating them have ever been adequately described.

The first point can be expanded by saying that, although quite definitely a multi-ethnic society, Australia is only in a rather superficial sense multicultural. This is because of what is alluded to in the second point: that key cultural practices remain firmly monocultural, among them being the areas of most concern to our sample group, namely criteria for hiring and firing, the rhythms and rewards of different types of work and the status attached to
different types of occupation and achievements. One can, of course, add to this list, an argument put forward in the analysis of our sample: that, outside the family, 'the ethnic group' does not constitute the major context within which the working and social life of the majority of people of non English-speaking background operate.

The obvious conclusions to be drawn from this are to do with the goals of the language-teaching process. Most notably, it is a reality whose perception should not be clouded with doubt, arising from the current rejection of 'assimilationism', that the key area through which welfare is distributed - the labour market - is primarily both monolingual and monocultural. Any teaching strategy, which does not recognise that lack of full competence in main-language skills, is likely to be heavily penalised in the current labour market, if it ignores the most pressing objective 'needs' of the students, whatever may be the philosophy on which it is based.

In this context, it must be accepted that any strategy, which accepts less than full main-language proficiency as a final goal, is also accepting a continuing degree of social marginalisation for the people concerned. Intermediate goals may well lay emphasis on what Nicholas (1984:37) calls the 'perceived nature of the relationship between the inter-language user and the target language speaking community'. However, as Hughes et al. (1984, passim) point out, any extension of this position to the idea that there are different 'appropriate' proficiency levels and forms of usage, contingent upon different 'needs', can be damaging in the extreme.

To propose that there are levels of (more or less minimal) English, 'appropriate' for particular groups of migrants, resonates with assimilationism, both in the sense that it implies the expectation that ethnically-based labour-market segmentation will be a permanent feature, and also in that the resource implication is that migrants' English-language ability needs only to be brought to the minimum level appropriate to their condition and status.

When the sample of unemployed migrants, surveyed during this project, were asked to indicate the purpose for which they had taken English classes, 67 per cent gave job-related reasons. The major employment problem for migrants, as
one key informant emphasised, is mobility between jobs. Lack of English contributes, to a large degree, towards this immobility and consequent unemployment, by making migrants dependents on unskilled manual work, which is vulnerable to the vagaries of the national economy. Also, without a good general proficiency in English, retraining becomes a difficult and limited prospect, as was demonstrated in the LATA scheme.

A general point must be made about this. Of our sample Re-entry group, most of whom had previously done unskilled work, only a small proportion felt that lack of English-language competence had caused their present state of unemployment. A very high proportion, however, saw proficiency in English as essential in getting a 'better' job than they had previously held. In other words, even at the basic level of perceived-needs the sample saw quite clearly the effects on occupational mobility of remaining at the 'appropriate' level of English for their previous job.

6. CULTURE AND THE LEARNING PROCESS

The overall conclusion which may be drawn from the foregoing, is that multiculturalism is simply irrelevant to English-language teaching. We would argue, however, that this is true only in relation to what should be the goals of the process. In relation to the question of teaching methods, questions of culture are relevant at a number of levels.

At the most obvious level people, whose first language differs radically from English in terms of orthography, structures of pronunciation etc., will need a different teaching emphasis from those whose language more closely approximates to English in these respects. Thus, for example, many of the teachers interviewed stressed the key importance of early stress on pronunciation for students of Indo-Chinese origin. In a limited way such considerations would lend a limited support to the move in AMEP, described by Bartlett et al. as 'language learning methodology to methodologies', provided, as we have insisted above, that this is not interpreted as meaning that particular groups of students have different 'needs' in relation to outcome.

There is, however, a more generalised way in which questions of culture may be posed. We would summarise this by saying that, however diverse the 'migrant
experience' may have been, we can still propose that, for the majority, the fact of being main-language learners, rather than simply second-language learners, is of crucial importance, since the former category is subject to patterns of intercultural negotiation which are not expected of the latter.

This arises from the fact, that the majority of migrants occupy a particular structural location in Australia, an argument which applies a _fortiori_ to the more closely-defined group which forms the subject of this study. It follows from this, that teaching/learning philosophies, derived in the arena of general second-language learning, may be of only limited relevance to main-language learning, in particular, in the case of working-class people. A perusal of issues of the journal, _Modern Language Teacher_, covering the last decade or so, reveals the development in this area of teaching philosophies, which parallel closely the developments in the AMEP we have outlined above. Without arguing causation, it is true that this parallelism has been frequently commented upon. (Brindley (1984), for example, notes that Ingram's 'Methodology' papers correspond closely to the Council of Europe's 'whole person' approach to education). This is most pronounced in relation to such aspects as 'student-centred' needs analysis and teaching methods.

We would argue that some further aspects of this needs-based model are unsuited to working-class main-language learners for the following broad reasons.

- Whereas the second-language learner, generally, has relatively limited goals (academic qualifications, tourism, general interest) the object for the main-language learner is survival. The language goals which need to be achieved in the latter case are more extensive and complex and their achievement more crucial.

- The particular dynamics of Australian immigration have meant that a very high proportion of migrants have limited educational backgrounds, and operate in situations which generally afford limited opportunities for systematic improvement in English-language proficiency. By contrast, second-language learning, beyond the most minimal level, is almost exclusively performed by people of middle-class background and good education.

7. THE EXPRESSION OF NEEDS

There is a heavy emphasis in Ingram's (1979) work on the paramount importance of responding to learners' 'felt needs'. This is based on the belief that learners themselves best know what they want. It highlights the importance of
psychological and social factors in the learning process and the relationship between high self-esteem, self-confidence and autonomous learning. The notion is put forward by Ingram that psychological and social factors have a parity with factors more narrowly related to language teaching, and it is necessary to take the former into account for effective learning to take place.

There are a number of faults with this argument. Giving unemployed migrants with language problems more confidence and self-esteem is not a means of assisting them to function better in the community at large in the same way as, say, a middle-class person can be assisted to function better in the community by being made to feel better about themselves. The equation simply does not exist for very basic material reasons. Most middle-class people have the wherewithal (money, security, job, family, connections) with which to actuate their sense of well-being. Unemployed, non-anglophone migrants do not generally have this wherewithal and any increased sense of self-esteem is short-lived, in the context of continued unemployment, low socio-economic status and possible alienation. In short, the low self-esteem of people at the bottom of the status pyramid is not self-generated but continually generated and reinforced by their material circumstance.

Reducing the important task of AMES to that of making migrants 'feel good' temporarily is a caricature of this situation, but one that must be borne in mind. The way in which unemployed migrants can be made to 'feel' better in a more concrete way is if they can acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for social participation and self-determination. AMES cannot generate jobs for migrants and it is not its task nor its responsibility to deal with the emotional side-effects of unemployment. These side effects cannot be ignored, particularly when they affect the learner's rate of progress, and it has traditionally been the task of the teacher to motivate the student by keeping the objectives clearly in view and relating them to the student's circumstances. This, however, is far from saying that amelioration of the student's emotional state is the main objective of the teacher.

The activity of expressing needs implies the existence of the skills and social experience to ascertain the need and then express it. Brindley (1984:27) suggests that it is the role of the teacher to 'develop learners' awareness of these needs to the point where they can be stated in a form which
can be acted upon by the teacher. Thus the basic questions may be summarised as follows:

'Does the student have the ability to ascertain her or his needs?'

'Should the student's expressed needs preside over objective needs (determined by the teacher or another counselling service),'

'Does the teacher in effect always ascertain the needs in the process of developing "learner's awareness of these needs"?'

A number of reports of AMES needs-based courses concluded that there was a disparity between the co-ordinator's interpretation of students' perceived needs at the beginning of the course and the co-ordinator's perception of real, objective needs at the end of the course. It usually transpired, and some stated as much, that had an objective needs-analysis been carried out, vital mistakes would not have been made. However, regardless of whether the initiator of a course carried out a needs analysis of students' felt needs, or of objective needs of a group, the constant is always that the teacher is the filter through which the needs are expressed structurally and then acted upon.

In part this may be a reflection on the need for a great deal more teacher-training at the in-service level, on which we comment below. Whatever the case in this respect, however, the fact that these shifts of opinion on the part of the teacher took place over relatively short courses demonstrate that students' needs frequently are not clearly articulated by the students nor clearly perceived by the teacher.

Henri Holec (1984: See below Section Eight), a noted advocate of self-directed learning in the language-teaching process, describes the process involved in training learners to analyse their needs and direct their own learning as a long and gradual one. This being so, it should not be presumed that learners in AMES are automatically able to perceive and express their needs, or can be trained to do so during the course of a ten-week program.
8. THE AUTONOMOUS LEARNER

The desired outcome of needs-based learning philosophy is the idea of the autonomous learner. This has clearly been stated as a major aim of AMES by the Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, in an opening address to the 1984 AMEP National Conference in Melbourne at which he stated, that 'adult second-language learners should be encouraged to develop responsibility for their own learning'. At this same conference, however, two papers were presented which gave apparently opposing views of the autonomous learner. The keynote speaker, Professor Henri Holec, spoke with the objective of explaining the ramifications of what might be called the autonomous approach, because... "anyone intending to "use" autonomy needs first of all to have a clear idea of just what it involves'.

As a counter to this, Dr Geneveive Louie, then of AMES, described the problems with the autonomous approach in the AMES context. On closer examination, rather than being contrary to each other, the papers were complementary, with Dr. Louie's paper extending some of the principles posited by Professor Holec.

Crucially, Professor Holec's paper describes the context in which autonomous learning can most effectively take place and the types of 'social and personal braking mechanisms which each of us brings into the learning situation'. Although stating that not enough empirical research has been done into 'psycho-social aspects of the acquisition of autonomy' (p.10), Holec suggests that the learning difficulties are experienced

'both intellectually, because it necessitates self-criticism and the tools to carry it out - and affectively, since it involves putting up with the fear of the unknown, hanging onto one's self-confidence, admitting one's weaknesses, being strong-willed and persevering etc.'

(p.12)

Holec then identifies twenty-two basic skills required to direct one's own learning program, which he indicates are the end product of a long learning process itself. The situation which Louie describes is specifically that of the migrant as a potential autonomous learner who, consistent with Holec's broadly-based theory, suffers under such a system. Louie succinctly pinpoints the crucial differences between the native main-language speaking, language
learner and the average AMEP student. There is an indication of the irony, of migrants being deprived of the choice of having their needs met in a more conventional classroom method, in an environment which is promoting learning methods catering for individual differences:

'Individualised learning which does not involve students in a degree of real choice does not seem to us to increase learner autonomy in the sense that self-directed learning suggests'.

(p.21)

Louie's arguments are well supported in the case of unemployed non-anglophones. If, as Holec suggests, the difficulties of the autonomous approach lie in 'psycho-social' factors for even native-speaker learners of language, how much more are these difficulties of 'the fear of the unknown, self-confidence, being strong-willed' etc., exacerbated in the case of unemployed migrants, who (AMES teachers can document) suffer from a predictable loss of confidence, and self-esteem and whose strength of will and sense of perseverance are seriously undermined by the unemployment experience. To this one might add, of course, the fact that virtually all those of our respondents, who had experience of it, saw the workplace as by far the most English-speaking context in which they operated. Enforced withdrawal or exclusion from this context may well result in deterioration of English-language ability.

The sample surveyed in this report was also asked how often they became depressed because of their unemployment status, and 44.2 per cent indicated that they were either always or frequently depressed, 37 per cent stated they were depressed 'sometimes', whereas 19 per cent were rarely or never depressed. (When asked what they thought their chances of getting a job were, 21 per cent said their chances were 'hopeless' whereas only 9 per cent thought their chances were 'good').

This indicates the core problem in the application of needs-based programs in general (and of attempting movements towards autonomous learning in particular) to working-class unemployed people. Most arguments for it concentrate on the individual and her or his personality (Nicholas, 1984:36, Willing, 1984:104, Brindley and Bagshaw, 1984:162). In the case of a native
main-language speaker learning a foreign language, the psycho-social aspects of the individual are important in considering rate of progress. This is because such a person is likely to have well-developed learning skills, a sound education and a secure socio-economic background, but this can not be presumed in the working-class unemployed migrant. As in the context of needs-articulation, a considerable range of skills is necessary for successful autonomous learning. Although these may be available to many migrants, on the basis of educational and other experience in the country of origin, this will not be the case for all, or even for the large majority. In the case of the subject of this report it will be the case for only a small minority.

In brief, we would argue that there can be no real opposition to the idea that autonomous learning is a desirable goal. As in other contexts already discussed, however, what is desirable should not be confused with what actually exists. Quite obviously, the majority of our sample, given their circumstances, would require considerable structural support over an extended period of time before this goal was achieved. Equally obviously, our analysis indicates that they have not, in fact, received this support. It is open to serious question whether current structures are capable of providing it.

9. CURRICULUM PLANNING AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING
The two aspects of the needs-based model as we have described it in previous sections which affect curriculum are that there should be a decentralisation of curriculum planning and that 'needs-based' curriculum should replace 'content-based'.

We have argued throughout this report that the objective needs of unemployed working-class migrants should be seen in terms of two main sets of factors, namely:

i) The need to provide the opportunity for progress towards full main-language proficiency through programs mainly based on the classroom;

ii) The need to integrate language and general skills training, particularly in the context of labour-market programs.

On the face of it, these objectives seem to conflict quite severely with the
move towards decentralisation. It is difficult to see how either objective could be achieved without a degree of standardisation in course materials. If the system were to work on the basis of an extreme form of needs-based philosophy, where all teaching was an ad hoc response to the 'needs' of each individual class as assessed by the class teacher, then obviously there would be no basis either for integration with other (e.g. labour-market) programs, or for the type of structured progress towards maximum feasible proficiency, which we have insisted is both an expressed and objective need of working-class migrants. At this extreme, in fact, the content and conduct of each individual class is essentially an ad hoc response to what the individual teacher believes to be the 'needs' of a particular class. Quite obviously, neither structured progress from course to course, nor planned integration of English-language teaching into other programs is possible on this basis.

On the other hand, we found in the course of our key interviews virtually no support for a return to the rigidly structured system which had, in theory at least, been in practice until the late 1970s. Teachers clearly valued a degree of latitude for individual initiative at the classroom level, and stressed that different groups of students did have different needs. In essence, they affirmed the necessity for the move from 'language-learning methodology to methodologies'.

The problem, then, appears to be one of providing sufficient structure, so that the goals we have stressed become organisationally feasible, without returning to a system in which both the creativity of teachers and consciousness of the specific learning needs of particular types of students are steamrollered by overcentralisation.

We would suggest two approaches, namely, an up-grading of in-service training for teachers and a systematic development of core curricula for various levels of learning and, where appropriate, for various types of learning needs.

The first of these seems to be a necessity at a number of levels. Firstly, it is the most practical way of ensuring that the intended curriculum is translated into classroom reality; secondly, programs of regular in-service training would in large measure eliminate the confusion amongst teachers about the objectives of the AMEP to which we have referred above; and, thirdly, such
a program would enforce the development of a consistent teaching practice throughout the system.

The development of core curricula is an obvious corollary of regular in-service training, but would also have other beneficial effects. In terms of the main concerns of this report, for example, it appears to be an absolute prerequisite for the integration of language training into other programs, and also for structuring a series of courses, so that students may move through towards the goal of maximum feasible main-language proficiency. Development of core curricula would also mean that the experience gained, in the course of initiating innovative courses, would be generalised through the teaching system, thus assisting in the process of replacing 'teaching methodology by methodologies'.

SUMMARY
The move to needs-based teaching has had repercussions which were by no means all favourable for the subjects of this report. We stress throughout that, for working-class migrants, clearly-defined structure and integration into general skills programs are of the essence. Although needs-based programming may have beneficial consequences in increasing the sensitivity of the system to the specific needs of particular groups, these benefits are likely to be swamped, to the extent that evaluation of needs and responses to them become the ad hoc responsibility of individual teachers. This will be doubly the case, if there is any tendency to confuse prescription and description, (particularly over the question of autonomous learning) or if, in practice, the "needs" of students are assessed from a minimalist perspective which does not accept full main-language proficiency as the ultimate goal.

For these reasons we have argued that, in order to retain the benefits of needs-based programing, structural supports are needed in order to eliminate what we would see as its main faults - lack of clearly defined goals and procession and lack of assimilability into other programs. We suggest that the two vital elements in this respect are systematic in-service training and the development of core curricula which would facilitate the development of clear learning progressions within the system without placing teachers into a pedagogic strait-jacket.
We would also suggest that some of the goals of needs-based programing are irrelevant to the needs of working-class migrants. In particular the idea that teachers in the AMEP should be in any sense agents of multiculturalism is productive of nothing but confusion, since the world the students wish to enter - the world of paid employment - is monocultural and monolingual and shows every sign of so remaining.

Finally, we would stress that if the expressed needs of students were to be the major determinant of teaching methodology, those expressed by our sample would give little support to moves toward 'authentic materials' as opposed to 'texts' or to 'learner-centred' as opposed to 'teacher-centred' classrooms, since the clearest result in this context was a preference for the more traditional teaching practices. This result, however, should be qualified by a point we have stressed heavily: namely, that the type of people who make up our sample are generally not in a good position to know (and still less to articulate) their language-learning needs. Ultimately the development of 'methodologies' must be an ordered process based on systematic programs within the AMEP rather than the simple product of ad hoc teacher responses.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

1. GENERAL BACKGROUND
Throughout this report a major theme has been developed. We have argued, on the basis both of our fieldwork and our review of the available literature, that the majority of unemployed people of non English-speaking background are disadvantaged in two ways, and that neither of these can be dealt with in isolation. These are:

   i) low levels of main-language proficiency; and

   ii) vulnerability to structural change in the economy, as a consequence of concentration in contracting occupations and industries.

Given the magnitude of the problem that this report addresses, the number of recommendations to be made is limited, and most relate to tasks which need to be completed, prior to a direct attack on the central problem itself.

2. RESOURCES
The context, in which any recommendation must be set, is that of resources. As with others, this report establishes quite clearly that lack of main-language proficiency is by no means confined to newly-arrived immigrants, that a considerable backlog exists among longer-established people, and that this situation is likely to be exacerbated by prolonged periods of unemployment which remove people from the most English-speaking context in which they customarily operate. In this situation, formal main-language learning is of even greater importance than in times of full employment.

Our sample showed that a high proportion had never attended an English-language class; that the majority who had attended could have received only very basic instruction, given the duration of their courses; and that, as a result, a very high proportion could not negotiate some of the most basic survival tasks of an industrial society without assistance.

Much of this report has concerned itself with the efficacy of different approaches to language teaching, but, it cannot be stressed too heavily, that
the most efficacious teaching imaginable will be of little avail if people do not get enough of it. It must also be stressed equally heavily, that nothing short of full proficiency in all four main-language macro-skills, is consistent with the goal of full participation and equity.

It is, of course, easy to call for greatly increased resources to be devoted to adult migrant education, but this call still has to be made, and it still has to be pointed out that, in a situation where people get only 240-hours or less instruction, talking about alternative teaching organisation methods, at the present level of resources, is simply stirring a very small pot. Language learning must be seen as a long term process, and it has to be accepted that for a large proportion of non-anglophone people, informal learning has not been sufficient to bring them to an acceptable level of main-language proficiency; nor, for reasons we have already outlined, will this take place in the future.

If this long-term view of formal English-language learning is accepted, then we must envisage sequential courses lasting in total much longer than is now available, and passing students through graded stages with a much higher level of organisation than is now available. All of this means increased resources being made available to the AMEP.

3. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMMES

Our main set of recommendations are in line with Recommendation 7 of the Committee on Labour Market Programs report that:

'The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs should, in consultation with the Department of Employment and Industrial relations seek to develop appropriate vocational English courses and courses which combine English language training with vocational skills training to assist unemployed migrants'  
(Kirby Committee 1985:97)

This recommendation obviously reflects the view that;

1) unemployed migrants are not unemployed because of lack of proficiency in English alone; and
ii) that the twin problems of lack of English-language proficiency and lack of marketable skills must be attacked in tandem.

It also, in our view, implies a call for systematic curriculum development when it refers to 'develop...(ing) appropriate vocational English courses', and, it is further to be noted, that the committee is not recommending the development of ESP courses but that of courses where English-language learning and vocational skills training are seen as distinct activities being pursued in tandem.

It is our major recommendation that Kirby Recommendation 7 should be acted upon. We would recommend that the DIEA should immediately take steps to set a liaison body, to consider the appropriate organisational structures for meeting the retraining needs of unemployed migrants. This body would necessarily include representatives from the appropriate Commonwealth Departments and from the AMEP, and also such co-opted specialists as might be deemed useful.

4. AGENDA OF CONSULTATIVE BODY

In the light of the findings of this report we suggest the following agenda for such a body:

a) Integration of language training with labour-market programs

We have already shown that virtually no such integration has taken place. Moreover, this will be a much more serious matter in the future, if the Kirby committee's recommendations are pursued seriously, since:

- labour-market programs will be more extensive; and
- they will be, to a much greater extent than previously, located in functioning workplaces.

The second point has ramifications of vital importance in the area of course organisation and design, which we deal with below. Under this general heading, however, a liaison body would have to address a number of extremely difficult organisational problems. To integrate language teaching into labour-market programs systematically and, as a matter of course, would involve pooling the efforts of a number of Commonwealth and State departments and
but it seems obvious, on the basis of past experience, that if migrants are not to be excluded from future programs, there must be a systematic and central effort.

b) Establishment of a centralised Industrial Language Service

The location of labour-market programs in the workplace will require that bodies responsible for language teaching will have to respond in a flexible and organised way to rapidly changing circumstances, particularly if there is to be an integration of language and vocational skills training. We would recommend for this purpose the establishment of a national body, for which experience could be drawn from a British model, the Industrial Language Training Service.

Essentially, the Industrial Language Training Service is a national network of around thirty specialist units co-ordinated by the National Centre for Industrial Language Training (NCILT). Broadly, its work falls into three areas. The first of these is an assessment service which, upon negotiation with individual employers, assesses language and communication problems in the particular workplace, and then prepares a package incorporating two other services. These are, firstly, workplace-based and work-related language training for people whose first language is not English. The courses are structured around the specific circumstances of learning and workplace needs, including non-linguistic skills. At the same time, courses take place for native English-speakers, whose work involves contact with migrants, dealing mainly with communication skills, cultural awareness, examination of prejudicial attitudes and so on.

The function of the training centres themselves is to liaise with a wide group of migrant, employer, trade union and training organisations whereas the National Council is charged with staff development within the service and also with a program of continuing curriculum development. In 1981, over 200 workplaces were involved in the scheme, including a large number of the private sector, and, in the period 1975-81, over 20,000 people had gone through ILT courses.

Such a body could perform a number of functions in two areas, vis:
- co-ordination and development of existing industry programs;
- co-ordination of language classes associated with vocational training programs located in the workplace.

The advantages of such a body would be, that experience in course and curriculum development would be accumulated rather than dissipated; that it would have a clear focus on employment-related aspects of language learning; and that it could develop a variety of core curricula appropriate for particular courses, which could then be mounted with a short lead time.

c) Relations between AMES and TAFE
It was not in our brief to consider this topic but it is obviously relevant (in N.S.W. and Vic., particularly) to the question of English language in labour market programmes since TAFE will clearly play a major role in vocational skills training, and already plays a role, varying from state to state in both ESP and ESL teaching.

5. NEEDS-BASED PROGRAMMING
Apart from the question of labour-market programs, this report has questioned seriously the current approaches in the AMEP towards needs-based organisation of teaching. The survey demonstrated clearly that, if the expressed preferences of students are to be taken into account, the desire is for what would generally be described as traditional language-learning activities. Whether the expressed preferences of students would actually form the basis of a recipe for effective teaching in terms of activities is a moot point. What does underlie these preferences, however, is a desire for structure, for clearly articulated intermediate goals, and for a sense of progression.

It is also the case that, in terms of employment, the sample group placed a very heavy emphasis on what they perceived to be the effects of improved proficiency in general English.

Finally, in this context, the needs-based approach was criticised on the grounds that no system existed for organised development, trialling and evaluation of courses. In fact, it is hard to see how needs-based programing, even in theory, could be submitted to this process.
6. CORE CURRICULA

All of the above, in our view, leads to the conclusion that systematic development and testing of core curricula and materials should be a priority. Although there is room for an ESP approach in certain areas (and particularly in the area of job-seeking skills), this should be seen as supplementing the goal of assisting people to proficiency in general English, not as replacing it. In this respect, too, we have argued that, whatever its merits in relation to other groups, the goal of autonomous learning is not appropriate to working-class people, until later, in a much more extended formal learning process than is at present available.

For all of these reasons we would recommend a review of procedures for instituting, trialling and evaluating courses, with particular reference to the viability of central core curriculum development for particular courses.

Supplementing the development of core curricula, and in concert with it, we recommend an increase in the role of teacher in-service training, so as to unify intended and actual curriculum, and to eliminate uncertainty about the educational goals of the AMEP.

7. POSTSCRIPT

The recommendations in this report are, by their very nature, broad and indicative of paths to follow in the future rather than predictive of what lies at their end. This is because the class dimension of the migrant experience (with which this report is implicitly concerned) has in the past been largely ignored. It is hoped that this report provides some insights into this neglected area which may be useful.