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Multilingualism among university staff: a case study of language management at an Australian university

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Employing the language management framework, this paper reports on multilingual use among the staff of a major metropolitan university in Melbourne and covers both simple and organised management. It describes a top–down attempt to survey staffs' (academic and general) background in Languages other than English (LOTE), LOTE usage and evaluative behaviour towards LOTE usage and communication in intercultural contexts within the university. Although the study of LOTE by Australian university students has been covered in various reports in the past, this paper focuses upon academic and administrative staff. Despite being a seemingly monolingual university, the recent survey revealed that a large number of languages are known by staff members of the community, either as first, second or other languages, and that these languages serve a wide variety of functions.

Keywords: language management; simple and organised management

Introduction

One of the outcomes of languages in contact in numerous countries is the occurrence of language planning and language policy-making at various levels, including the national, state or regional as well as the local level. This paper introduces a descriptive case study of language planning at a large metropolitan university in Melbourne, Australia which took place in 2007–2008. Specifically, I will apply a language management approach to an investigation of language use at the local institutional level, but from the perspective of staff personnel rather than a focus upon students.

In the past, Australia has sometimes been admired for its history of various types of language planning activities, especially during the latter half of the twentieth century which included the formulation of a comprehensive national language policy in 1987. Authored by Lo Bianco (1987), this national policy outlined a rationale and implementation strategies for maintaining and/or developing bilingualism in all Australians, based on a balance of social equity, cultural enrichment and economic strategies. Although English remains the unofficial language of Australia, according to the 1986 census, over 13% of the population spoke a language other than English (or LOTE as it was commonly known)[1] in the home (Clyne, 1991, p. 41). In 2006, 16.8% of the Australian population, including 27.9% in Melbourne, used an LOTE at home (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008). According to the results of the 2011 national census,[2] cultural diversity has further increased in Australia and especially in

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Melbourne in recent years. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) reveals that whereas English only was spoken at home in 76.8% of Australian households, in the Greater Melbourne (Metropolitan) area this dropped to 66.3%. Conversely, in 20.4% of Australian households, two or more languages are spoken, whereas in Greater Melbourne, this figure rises to 32.4%.

Despite this large increase in the number of speakers of other languages, for numerous reasons – largely of a political and economic nature – language planning and policy at the national level have not progressed well in Australia in recent times, despite the many gains which were made in earlier decades. Language policy after the comprehensive 1987 policy has been described as refragmented and has consisted of separate policies on literacy, on Asian languages and interpreting and translation (Clyne, 2005, p. 157).

Language planning has typically been undertaken at the national level in many countries, but increasingly, micro language planning is gaining attention and involves analysing and solving small-scale language problems (Baldauf, 2004). In the educational domain, schools in various countries have more commonly been the focus of attention for language planning (Spolsky, 2007, 2009), whereas universities are less frequently treated. Nevertheless, in view of the diversity of students, Kaplan and Baldauf (1997, pp. 258–259) have argued that Australian universities are in need of tertiary language, literacy and communication policies to serve the needs of various kinds of students, including secondary graduates, indigenous, mature age, deaf and blind, or overseas students or those from culturally and linguistically different backgrounds.

Expanding upon Cooper's (1989) earlier delineation of acquisition or language-in-education planning, Hornberger (2006, p. 32) enumerates the goals of acquisition planning as reacquisition, maintenance, foreign language/second-language acquisition and shift, the last goal being an addition of her own. Indeed, the teaching and learning of languages has long been a basic activity of Australian universities, even if the number of languages on offer has changed over time and the number of language learners have also fluctuated. University language programmes have typically taught a variety of additional languages, often covering beginner to advanced levels and sometimes have also served the purposes of maintenance or reacquisition for certain students. In contrast to earlier years when European languages were the languages mainly taught, these days both at the school and at the tertiary levels, a number of Asian and European languages are reasonably well represented. However, along side of growing pressures within the university sector as a whole, in recent years, there is increasing evidence of problems in the higher education LOTE sector, including reduction of the numbers of languages offered, decreasing enrolments and decreasing contact hours among others (cf. White & Baldauf, 2006).

A major characteristic of contemporary Australian universities, particularly those in metropolitan areas, is the dramatic rise which has taken place during the last three or so decades in the number of overseas students, particularly at the major metropolitan universities. Undoubtedly, this is one of the outcomes of globalisation and its effect on language in society, as described by Blommaert (2010). Government data reveal that 182,770 students enrolled as fee paying 'international' students in Australian Higher Education institutions in 2008 (Australian Government, 2009). As some other students from overseas are categorised as 'domestic' students if they possess permanent residency, the number of overseas born is actually higher than the statistic on international students suggests. Paralleling to a somewhat lesser extent, the growth in overseas-born students is an increase of university staff, academic as well as general (administrative, now called

professional), who are also born overseas. While some of these staff members may fit the traditional category of 'migrant', others are mobile, moving across countries for the purpose of employment or research. Thus, with regard to this flow of people, many Australian universities nowadays are aptly characterised by the feature of superdiversity (Blommaert & Rampton, 2011), not only among the student population but among its staff as well. As such, the demographic profile of the university community is quite different from what it was two or three decades earlier.

The consequent diversification of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of members of the university, particularly students but also staff, has taken place alongside of a growth in a variety of arrangements by the university in overseas contexts, such as the expansion of overseas campuses and strategic partnerships, twinning arrangements and licencing of course content. These developments have contributed to the need for Australian universities to widen the object of language planning and policy, whether it is undertaken overtly or covertly and to shift the main focus from students to also encompass staff, both academic and general, including senior administrative personnel. Universities have also needed to take into account, not only language contact in the local setting but also in overseas settings.

On the surface, Australian universities appear to remain strongly monolingual institutions with English (at least) as the written and spoken language of communication. However, as a result of certain characteristics of universities described above, such as the teaching and learning of additional languages, but more particularly, the participation of a large body of overseas background students and staff, as well as increasing contact with overseas institutions and their personnel, ethnic and, to a degree linguistic, pluralism have become more marked characteristics of metropolitan universities, particularly those in the largest capital cities. Despite this, little has been known about staff or student members' language backgrounds or their actual language use in interaction.

Within the broad spectrum of previous language planning studies, one of the valuable approaches which seek to explicate behaviour towards languages is the Language Management Theory (LMT), also referred to as a model or framework. This approach can be traced back to Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) and subsequently further developed and applied by Neustupný (1994, 2004), Neustupný and Nekvapil (2003), Nekvapil (2006) and others. In this paper, use of the concept of language management refers to this specific tradition rather than to the loose usage which has been employed by Spolsky (2004, 2009) where he proposes that 'language practices', 'language beliefs' and 'language management' constitute language policy. Spolsky's actual usage of the term language management varies, though he himself defines it as the 'conscious and explicit efforts by language managers to control the choices' (2009, p. 1; see review by Sloboda, 2010).

The LMT as briefly introduced above offers a broad framework to analyse language management activities at various levels. One of the basic distinctions within LMT is between simple and organised management, where, basically, simple management, also known as discourse-based management, refers to happenings in individual communicative acts which focus on an element of the act itself (Sloboda, 2010), and organised management, also known as directed management (Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012, p. 34), which refers to the systematic attention to (potential) language problems, principally at the level of institutions. The framework also contains a model which outlines the main language management stages, consisting of the noting of deviations from the expected course of communication (including the broad sense of different norms), evaluations, planning of adjustment(s) and implementation of adjustment(s) (Jernudd & Nekvapil,

2012, p. 33). Although these stages have often been applied to simple management, they are also relevant to organised management. While the correction of a linguistic feature in one's first or additional languages, which may involve either self or other correction, exemplifies simple management, so too is the evaluative behaviour of individuals in intercultural communicative situations also encompassed by this type of language management. On the other hand, planning for the teaching of additional languages in schools or universities provides an illustration of organised management, just as the planning for, and the provision of language and learning services to support the development of students' language and academic skills also represents a case of organised language management (see Marriott, 2004, 2006, in press).

While in previous studies, language planning has dealt with macro-level phenomena (in the main), micro-level analyses are also to be found, as mentioned above (see also Nekvapil, 2011). However, the distinction between simple and organised management is not synonymous with this broad categorisation of micro- and macro-level planning. While the case study to be reported here is clearly representative of organised management, it also contains examples of simple management, though mostly in the form of management summaries, and shows the usefulness of the framework to deal with various levels of phenomena at the same time as well as the connections between them (cf. Nekvapil & Nekula, 2008, pp. 271– 272; Jernudd & Nekvapil, 2012, p. 34).

Background to the study

The university at the centre of this case study enrolled its first students in 1961 and became the second university in the city of Melbourne, Australia. The first (and what remains the unofficial 'main') campus is situated in Clayton, a suburb of Melbourne, 20 km from the city's centre, and all except one of the six Australian campuses are found in the metropolitan area. Monash University is currently the largest university in the country, and at the time of this study in 2008 had a student population at its Australian campuses of 34,289 undergraduates and 15,516 postgraduate (coursework and higher degree research) students. In addition, there were 14,658 (continuing, contract and sessional) staff.[3] In 2008, 25.9% of the students were enrolled as international students.

Not unlike some other Australian (and overseas) universities, Monash University has also expanded abroad, establishing a campus in Malaysia in 1998 and in 2001 in South Africa. A centre was also established in Italy, being officially opened in 2001, and quite recently again in India. Other overseas alliances include a growing number of key partner universities, a large number of universities with which student exchange agreements are in place, apart from many licenced agents around the world who recruit overseas students for the institution. In other words, the network of the university is increasingly internationally focused.

Within this metropolitan university, a number of languages as well as the discipline of Linguistics have been offered by the Faculty of Arts (Humanities) from the 1960s and it was staff from the Linguistics programme who, in 1993, initiated a research project that was designed to lead to a language policy for the university. Led by Michael Clyne, Mark Newbrook and Anne Pauwels, the project aimed to document current practices relating to language and communication within the university and to identify language and communication needs; to identify the needs of various units within the university; to compile a report summarising the main issues and concerns and, to develop recommendations for the implementation of the policy (Clyne, 2001, pp. 213–214). A comprehensive 43-page document was duly written entitled 'Towards a language policy

for an international university' (Clyne, Pauwels, Newbrook, & Neil 1995). In 2001, when describing the whole process in hindsight, Clyne summarised this attempt to instigate a university language policy as faltering 'in a context of financial cuts, corporatization, economic rationalism, and a realignment of power structures' (Clyne, 2001, p. 211). He concluded that changing personnel at the highest central administration level, competition between the central administration level and individual faculties, in addition to broader social and political trends posed insurmountable difficulties.

The result of the above-described grass roots level attempt to develop and implement a university language policy resulted in a one-page statement of broad generalisations that was headed 'university language policy' being adopted by the Academic Board of the university soon after. However, in subsequent years even this minimalist policy disappeared, with senior administrative personnel of the university claiming that the various principles proposed earlier in relation to communication were now incorporated into other specific policies within the institution. As is clear from Clyne's analysis, the linguists who worked on the project conceived of a language policy as a discrete, independent policy in the traditional sense but a different view was apparent among the senior managers of the university who sought to produce integrated policies covering numerous educational matters.

The current organisational structure of the university is very complex with three (or even four) principle levels of administration: the upper senior management headed by the vice chancellor and president who, in turn, is supported by many other senior personnel, including three deputy vice chancellors, the second tier consisting of the 10 faculties which are headed by deans and which in many respects are run as independent units, and finally, schools (and within these, departments/programmes) at the lower level which belong to the respective faculties. As inferred above, this multilayered characteristic has numerous implications for the university's policy-making as well as its functioning.

A new initiative was commenced in 2007 under the direction of the deputy vice chancellor (international) whereby a task force on learning and usage of LOTE was established with the aim of assessing and making recommendations on the university's current policies and strategies specifically in relation to, firstly, the opportunities for training in LOTE for staff and students, and secondly, the use of LOTE in Monash's daily and strategic communication.

As background to this initiative, it is necessary to acknowledge that the university, like many other contemporary universities, has in place an international plan. In the case of this university and at that particular point in time, the international plan aimed, among many other objectives, to enhance the 'international literacy' of all students and staff through various means, including an increase in language learning. Specifically, the international plan 2007–2010 recognised the need to develop and support opportunities for students and staff to improve their LOTE capacity and to ensure an improved level of English language competence of both students and staff from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In addition, it is noteworthy that the senior manager (deputy vice chancellor international) who initiated the task force had a strong background in teaching and research in LOTE at other universities prior to moving into senior management in the area of international affairs.

The planning of a university-wide sociolinguistic language survey was thus a rare but important instance of language management, which aimed at identifying language problems within the university and proposing solutions to them. Notably, it was a top–down initiative, emanating from the senior managerial level and involved the formation of a committee (task force) to plan and implement the survey. This task force consisted of

a drafting committee which was headed by the dean (i.e. head) of the faculty (or intermediate governing body), with one half of the members belonging to language programmes or Linguistics at the lower level. In addition, a large university-wide reference group also met on one occasion to have input into setting up the process. As I will argue later, the way in which this language management activity was initiated and planned also affected some of the outcomes directly arising from it.

LOTE usage within the university

The main activity of the university's task force on language learning and usage[4] was to undertake a university-wide survey and, accordingly, to advise the university on appropriate practical and policy measures with regard to opportunities available to students and staff for learning and using LOTE, as described above. Three surveys covering staff, undergraduate and graduate/postgraduate students were planned by members of the task force and administered online by the university in mid-2008. These surveys were followed by three separate focus groups. The surveys covered the six local Australian campuses, excluding the campuses of Malaysia and South Africa as well as off-campus students.

In common, the three relatively short and simple surveys covered staff or student knowledge of LOTE and its acquisition, use of LOTE, individuals' willingness to learn LOTE and obstacles to the professional use of LOTE at the university. Open-ended questions towards the end of the survey invited students to outline the best aspects of learning and usage of LOTE at the university and the aspects that needed improvement, as well as providing space for additional comments. Staff, on the other hand, were invited just to make additional comments in the final question. The number of respondents and response rates are shown in Table 1 below. Preliminary analysis of the closed questions was undertaken by the university's centre for higher education quality and then certain members of the task force analysed these reports as well as the open-ended responses. A draft report was prepared and was followed by drawn-out negotiations within and outside the higher level university committees regarding the final configuration of the report, and particularly the recommendations which carried funding implications.

As mentioned above, previous research has predominantly focused upon language learning and/or use by students at Australian universities, thus, the centre of attention in this paper is upon the staff sector. As shown in Table 1, 1247[5] staff which included full time, fractional full time and casual appointments completed the survey, representing 8.5% of the total population. The majority or 53% of staff respondents were academic staff, with general (administrative) staff in the minority (44%) and a small number being unidentifiable. Of the staff respondents, 18% came from the Faculty with the largest number of staff, Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, 13% came from Business and

Table 1. Survey data for the six Australian campuses.

Categories	Number of respondents	Response rate (%)
Undergraduate students	5700	16.6
Postgraduate/graduate students	1869	12
Staff (total)	1247	8.5
(Academic)	(666)	(53.4)
(General)	(553)	(44.3)
(Not identified)	(28)	(2.3)

Economics and 12% of respondents were from the Faculty of Arts. The large majority of respondents belonged to the 'main' metropolitan Clayton campus, 70.1%, followed by 17.4% from the nearby Caulfield campus, the second biggest metropolitan campus.

Staff language backgrounds and language use

Exemplifying the polylingual nature of personnel employed at this Australian urban university, 969 individuals or 77% indicated knowledge of LOTE and between them listed 110 languages. Of the total of 982 languages claimed to be the staff's main LOTE, the top 7 languages (or language groups) represent a mix of European (French, German, Italian and Spanish) and Asian (Chinese languages, Japanese and Indonesian) languages that are spoken by 66% of the LOTE speakers. Here, the term 'Chinese languages' is used to cover Mandarin (Puttonghua) and Cantonese as well as unidentified varieties listed by the respondents as 'Chinese'. Some other regional varieties of Chinese such as Hokkein and Hakka were also specifically mentioned in the survey but appeared in small numbers. These were not listed as respondents' main languages (varieties) and are not included here. The main LOTE of the respondents are shown in Table 2.[6]

A second LOTE was also known by a significant proportion of individuals, with 566 languages nominated. Of these, the top-ranking second LOTE was also French (126 respondents), followed by German (88), Chinese languages (55), Italian (47) and Spanish (43). It is likely that knowledge of at least French and German is attributable to the staff's earlier school education. Not surprisingly, there is a considerable drop off in staff knowing a third or fourth LOTE, with 296 and 126 languages listed, respectively. In summary, these statistics provide evidence of the multilingual or polylingual nature of the university's staff.

Means of acquisition and proficiency levels

Staff were able to provide multiple responses to indicate the manner of their acquisition of LOTE. A total of 60% indicated that they were native or semi-native speakers of the main LOTE nominated, 38% claimed to have acquired their knowledge through the education curriculum and a further 30% believed that international travel or life experience were the reasons for their knowledge. For the second and third LOTE, acquisition through the education curriculum became the most important source of

Table 2. The main LOTE of the respondents.

Main language	Number of respondents	Percentage of respondents
French	190	15.2
Chinese languages	141	11.3
German	98	7.9
Italian	76	6.1
Japanese	46	3.7
Spanish	45	3.7
Indonesian	40	3.2
Russian	24	1.9
Greek	23	1.8
Sinhala	22	1.7
Bahasa Malaysia	21	1.6
Hindi	21	1.6

knowledge (56% and 52%, respectively), with native speaker competence dropping to 21% and 11%, respectively.

Respondents were invited to rank, on a scale of one (for basic/beginner) to five (excellent) their level of skill or proficiency in their named LOTE, covering all those nominated. As expected, the mean levels of skill or proficiency was highest for the respondents' first LOTE and lowest for the fourth LOTE selected. Also, the receptive skills of listening comprehension and reading were generally perceived as being higher than the productive skills of speaking and writing. For the main LOTE, however, the mean levels for listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing were 3.9, 3.8, 3.8 and 3.5, respectively, and thus exhibited minimal difference.

Usage of LOTE

The survey found that almost one third or 28% of staff used LOTE in their professional work. This is an important finding in relation to language usage within the university. Furthermore, a whole range of functions for their LOTE usage was identified, as shown in Table 3.[7]

LOTE served multiple functions for many individuals, covering spoken and written language, and served social communication as well as professional academic purposes. Furthermore, LOTE were used both internally and externally to the workplace. In the case of the second LOTE, reading articles/papers assumed the top position (120 respondents), followed by informal conversation with colleagues (96 respondents) and work-related overseas visits (82 respondents). This same ranking was paralleled in the cases of the third and fourth LOTE, though by smaller numbers of individuals. All in all, then, in the academic context, the use of LOTE was a valuable resource that a high number of staff utilised both for social and for academic purposes.

Difficulties with LOTE usage

Staff were also invited to indicate difficulties with LOTE usage, using preset multiple responses. As shown in Table 4, quite a few issues were identified.[8]

It is noteworthy that despite the academic context, being unable to take LOTE courses was identified as the main difficulty by staff. Technology-related issues also emerged but, in addition, insufficient support for translation was also not infrequently stated, again indicating the importance of resources in various languages in the university context.

Table 3. Functions of LOTE.

Functions	Number of staff respondents	%
Informal conversation with colleagues	299	24.0
Reading articles/papers	268	21.4
Sending/receiving emails	262	21.0
Overseas visits (work-related)	234	18.8
Talking to students	217	17.4
Research collaboration with overseas colleagues	184	14.8
Attending seminars/conferences	167	13.4
Communicating with external stakeholders	162	13.0
Presenting at seminars or conferences	120	9.6
Teaching	105	8.4

Table 4. Factors affecting use of LOTE in professional work.

	Factors	Number of respondents (main LOTE)	%
1	Insufficient opportunity to undertake LOTE courses	95	7.6
2	Insufficient software available in LOTE	86	6.9
3	Insufficient language support for word processing	78	6.2
4	Insufficient language support for email and other Internet communication tools	75	6.0
5	Insufficient materials for effective use of LOTE	71	5.7
6	Insufficient support mechanisms for official university translation from English to LOTE	67	5.4
7	Insufficient support mechanisms for official university translation from LOTE to English	64	5.1
8	Insufficient language support for internet browsing	49	3.9

Usefulness of other languages

In the university workplace, staff listed up to three LOTE, apart from those they have knowledge of, which would be useful to them in their professional work. A total of 48 languages were identified by 360 respondents, with the top ones shown in Table 5.[9] The Chinese language group was followed by Japanese as the most popular choices, then four European languages.

In response to a related follow-up question, 675 (54%) respondents indicated a willingness to undertake training in LOTE, given the opportunity. The top eight languages ranked in the same order as in Table 5, except for Japanese which fell from second to sixth place. The reason for this is hard to gauge; perhaps, some had studied Japanese at school and thus wished to study a different language; perhaps, others perceived it as a difficult language, though one would assume that this same argument could apply to Chinese (except for those with some background in the language). Nevertheless, quite a large number of staff indicated a willingness to undertake training in LOTE, as shown in Table 6.[10]

When asked to indicate the level to which they would be prepared to acquire training or improve their proficiency in the languages they listed above, 40% of staff indicated an interest in acquiring training to an advanced level in the first language nominated, and a further 39% to intermediate level. Nevertheless, acquisition to intermediate level was the

Table 5. Other LOTE useful in professional work.

Language	Number of respondents	%
Chinese languages	214	17.1
Japanese	62	4.9
French	55	4.4
German	46	3.7
Spanish	40	3.2
Italian	40	3.2
Indonesian	40	3.2
Arabic	20	1.6
Hindi	20	1.6
Korean	17	1.4
Malaysian	17	1.4

Table 6. Willingness to undertake training in LOTE.

Language	Number of respondents	%
Chinese languages	299	24.0
French	212	17.0
German	134	10.7
Italian	130	10.4
Spanish	121	9.7
Japanese	120	4.3
Indonesian	53	4.2
Arabic	36	2.9
Malaysian	33	2.6
Hindi	24	1.9

aim for the second and third languages listed. Overall, the results suggested that staff possess serious goals in relation to language acquisition. In summary, the survey revealed that a high level of LOTE competence already characterises the staff sample in this survey (which, it needs to be said, may be overrepresented by those with a background of LOTE) of the university that LOTE fulfilled vital functions for staff and that there was considerable interest for further learning. The findings also confirmed staff competence and interest in a range of Asian and European languages. While the languages generally involve those already taught at the university, languages of more recent interest such as Arabic and Hindi also received some attention.

Evaluative behaviour

As mentioned above, staff were provided with an opportunity in the last part of the survey to give additional comments or feedback, with a total of 219 responses being received. Here, it should be stated that though these responses may describe individual instances of simple language management (when they present an interesting example, perhaps even a short story or anecdote), most of them summarise many or 'endless' instances of simple management and are thus actually various kinds of 'management summaries' (see Nekvapil, 2004, for an introduction to management summaries as found in language management studies).

Some important themes and issues arise from these. Firstly, a number of comments related to personal, institutional or national needs in relation to LOTE usage. Numerous staff testified to the importance they personally placed on LOTE learning and usage, irrespective of whether it was connected with their work or not. For instance, 'I just like the idea of learning another language. I have no need for it though …'(3). Others made statements concerning their vision for the university, such as '(a)t an international university I think most staff should be encouraged to learn another language …' (142) and 'I believe it is extremely important that Monash supports its academics to continue to study in at least one LOTE in order to live up to our promise of embracing the world …' (80). The lack of language study within international studies courses was also criticised (34). The benefits of language learning were also outlined for the nation. For instance, 'I feel that it is extremely important for Australia and Australians to acquire a language other than English. There are so many benefits to be gained both professionally and personally and for the growth, prosperity and cohesiveness of Australia as a nation' (25).

A second and important theme found in the comments of staff involved reference to numerous problems of interaction in situations of contact within the university setting, most commonly with international students. Clearly, language problems were noted and adjustment plans often offered which frequently involved the learning of the students' language. For instance, 'I never use LOTE in my work but an ability to communicate at a basic level with overseas students may be an advantage' (73) and '(s)ince so many of the full-fee paying students we teach speak English very poorly, it is inevitable that we will have to learn Chinese to communicate with them' (22). Likewise, '(g)iven that we have a number of international students, being able to speak their language – especially while they are still adjusting to the English speaking environment would help them in settling in' (93). While these kinds of adjustment plans for solving language problems are unlikely to be effective and may not coincide with the problem diagnosis or solutions of the overseas students themselves, they do reveal both the existence and the seriousness of the problem.

Staff from some sectors of the university have extensive contact with non-English speakers in their professional work, such as in the field of medicine. One staff member explained 'I mostly use Yiddish and my very basic command of Russian with elderly patients who don't speak English. Fortunately the hospital offers a very good interpreter service …' (113). However, another staff member working in clinical practice referred to the diversity of languages that one would need proficiency in when dealing with medical clientele, if he/she were to use the clients' languages (27).

Occasionally, quite perceptive comments in relation to intercultural communication within the university context were found, as in '(i)ntercultural communication and understanding is crucial for teaching purposes because we have more international students coming to Australia to study' (82). On the whole, however, there seems to be the belief that some learning and subsequent use of the other participants' language was the solution. This is contrary to Neustupný's (1989, pp. 6–7) earlier proposal that Asia or Japan (or other) literacy should not be principally basic language learning, as is commonly perceived, but rather for the majority of Australians, the acquisition of broader social and cultural (or economic or political, as appropriate) as well as sociolinguistic knowledge is necessary in order to communicate, in English, in various domains.

The value of language learning and use by university staff for professional purposes was apparent as a third theme that characterised some of the comments. For instance, 'I am a senior research associate doing some historical and biographical research in Hungarian. It would be helpful to be able to read German' (208). Professional goals led other staff to undertake specific actions to acquire LOTE. For instance, one staff member noted that 'I am now taking German lessons at the Goethe Institute in order to facilitate an international collaborative research network project financed by the Go8/DAAD' (19). Similarly, another individual outlined a current enrolment in a basic Italian course at his or her own expense because of international collaboration with Italian researchers and revealed a plan to start Spanish the following year because of collaborations with Spanish researchers as well (30).

A fourth major theme in the staff remarks dealt with the role of English and/or LOTE in contemporary society. While on one hand, English was seen as having a predominant role, for example, '(t)he opportunity to use my LOTE is rare as most papers are published in English' (144) and '(t)he international language of my academic area is English' (172), on the other hand, the hegemony of English did not go unchallenged. Some future reorganisation of languages needed in his or her field led to the following observation by one individual: '(i)n the late 20th century, it was assumed that all technicians and

scientists worldwide should use English or American. That I expect shall change in future, to include at least one of the Chinese languages in hardware and production instructions and one of the Indian languages in software. I wish to be prepared' (163).

In contrast to the other two surveys where numerous overseas-born students loudly voiced their appeal for more English support, this theme was far less conspicuous in the staff survey. However, a small number of serious appeals were made, such as 'I am not a native English speaker and I would need to receive more support from Monash University in improving my Academic English Skills (writing and pronunciation) could you please pay more attention in non-native speakers wishing to gain knowledge in English language' (84). This is a clear example of a university employee wishing to be supported by an adjustment programme to improve self-diagnosed inadequacies.

Another commonly occurring theme related to the time and effort required for language learning while working, and also the attrition that occurs without the use of that language. Numerous staff indicated a willingness to learn a language if it could be supported within the work place. Better utilisation of existing linguistic resources of staff was also argued for. Although negative comments were not non-existent, these were clearly outnumbered by the positive claims and attitudes of most of the respondents, revealing that at least for this sample, language use and contact with speakers of other languages have become common occurrences within the university context.

Concluding discussion

As highly complex, hierarchically structured institutions with multilayers of decision-making, universities are characterised by a multitude of policies, which are added to, revised, or dropped, as time proceeds. Needless to say, personnel changes also occur at all levels of the organisation. Not an insignificant number of policies in the case study of the Australian university reported here are unaffected by language. Nevertheless, a coherent language policy does not exist as an independent policy, despite one earlier attempt by linguists to undertake a thorough investigation and recommend appropriate strategies or solutions for various sectors of the university. Furthermore, no university language policy emerged following the survey, partly reported here, of student and staff LOTE backgrounds and usage. This can probably be attributed to the top–down nature of this recent language management activity, where among the various overt and possibly also covert purposes given for it, the formulation of a discrete university language policy was clearly not one of them.

Nevertheless, irrespective of the absence of an explicit, coherent language policy at present, certain issues which impinge on language usage, especially English usage, continue to be included in various university policies. As described above, power is strongly vested in the upper level of administrative personnel, and there the need for a separate policy is not favoured. Interestingly, it was also at this level that the decision was made to exclude English as one of the languages to be investigated in the survey reported here.

In terms of outcomes of this major instance of language management within the university context, we now have for the first time valuable sociolinguistic data about at least a portion of university staff (albeit, many of whom may be favourably disposed to languages and language learning and use) as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students (not reported here) within this language community. The findings indicate the broad range of LOTE which are possessed by individuals, their self-assessed proficiency levels, the communicative and academic functions which these LOTE serve, in addition

to individuals' recognition of the value of LOTE in the context of what appears to be a largely monolingual English-based university in metropolitan Melbourne.

Following the rather slow finalisation of the report of the task force by the university, it appears that to date (early June 2012), the main outcome of the university initiative to ascertain language (LOTE) needs has been encapsulated in the current institutional international plan covering 2011–2015. Passed by the highest governing body within the university, the Council, in April 2011, the plan contains as one of its objectives 'to continue to support intercultural literacy for students and staff via opportunities to learn a language other than English'. Two of the three pertinent strategies described for meeting this goal are as follows:

> (R)eview course design principles to expand and optimize opportunities for students to incorporate study of a second language within their Monash degree; and
>
> encourage staff to consider learning or further developing – a language other than English as part of their performance development process, as appropriate to their role and balanced against other development needs. The feasibility of offering a capped subsidy to support the cost of this will be investigated. (*Monash University International Plan*, 2011–2015, p. 16)

Interesting, the above strategies were apparently championed by the deputy vice-chancellor (international). Notably, around 2010, the portfolio managed by this individual was changed by the university to one of the global engagement alongside a change in its strategic directions. So far, no actual progress seemed to have been achieved in relation to these strategies and given the hedging which characterises the second recommendation, the process in which it is been embedded (performance development), and the fact of an impending further senior personnel change, it is difficult to predict whether any change will occur.

The selection of which languages to teach has always been a principal objective of language planning. One important finding of this study relates to staff interest in a spread of both Asian and European languages. This result is contrary to current Australian government policy which, through such schemes as National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools which commenced in 1994 and after its discontinuation by a new government, the National Asian Languages and Studies Schools Program introduced in 2008, has actively and financially supported an extension and strengthening of Asian languages in the school sector over the past two decades (de Kretser & Spence-Brown, 2010). Although historically LOTE study in Australia was focused upon European languages and cultures, this bias has been rectified over the past three decades, at least partly because of government planning, on the basis of this university survey, it could be argued that unilateral support for one group of languages at the national level – Asian – could be queried.

As reported above in the previous section, valuable data on staff evaluative behaviour in relation to language learning and use as well as in relation to their participation in intercultural communicative situations which emerged from this survey is very enlightening. Given the limited breadth of the survey reported here, only a few of the prominent tensions of languages and cultures in contact which actually exist in this context emerged. Among them include the difficulties experienced by L2 speakers of English, either as staff or students, in the academic context. Another involved the university staff themselves in their interaction with students from L2 backgrounds with whom communication difficulties occur. While simple solutions such as learning the L1 of the students is unlikely to be an effective strategy, it does reveal a positive intent on the part of the staff to undertake actions

themselves to improve the effectiveness of the interaction. In our contemporary world where contact between speakers of different languages and cultures has increased enormously, the role of the university in furthering and deepening this interaction is considerable. Furthermore, the fact that many staff within the Australian university described here use and value languages for academic and social purposes is a significant finding and adds to our accumulated knowledge of language contact situations in Australia, including the diversity of peoples' linguistic resources.

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Notes

1. Over the past couple of years, the term LOTE is being replaced by the term 'language' or 'languages' in educational circles, though it will also be used in this paper since it was in vogue at the time when the case study reported here was undertaken.
2. The first-phase results of the national census undertaken in August 2011 became available in June 2012.
3. The numbers given here for students and staff refer to head count, not to the more normal university statistical unit of effective full-time student/staff numbers.
4. The author was a member of the Task Force on Language Learning and Usage and involved in the process throughout.
5. All staff with an email account were sent a survey. Postgraduate students who were employed as sessional staff received the staff survey first, followed by the postgraduate survey. Hence, there was some unavoidable duplication with the despatch.
6. Percentages indicate the number of staff who nominated a given language as their main LOTE as a proportion of the number of respondents as a whole.
7. The raw figures show the number of times the item in question was nominated by the respondents, and the percentages indicate the proportion of all respondents who nominated that item.
8. Raw figures show the number of times the item in question was nominated by the respondents, and the percentages indicate the proportion of all respondents who nominated that item.
9. The percentages indicate the number of staff who identified other useful LOTE as a proportion of the number of respondents as a whole.
10. Raw figures show the number of times a LOTE was listed, while the figure in brackets indicates that number as a percentage of all respondents.

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