Survey reveals migrant language problems

A SURVEY conducted by the Monash Centre for Migrant Studies has revealed widespread problems in speaking, understanding, reading and writing English among overseas-born adults living in Melbourne's western suburbs.

The study, conducted by Mr John McKay, Ms Susan Manton and Associate Professor Michael Clyne for the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, has been published in the Adult Migrant Education Program series "Studies in Adult Migrant Education".

A sample of 337 migrants, with a diverse linguistic background, took part in the study which was carried out in the Yarraville, St Albans and Maribyrnong-Avondale Heights areas.

The migrants' native tongues included Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, Croatian, German, Greek, Italian, Macedonian, Maltese, Polish, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Housebound women, young unemployed adults, factory workers (especially those in jobs vulnerable to the pressure of structural and technological change) and the aged were chosen as special target groups.

The migrants were interviewed and given the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR) test to test their proficiency in English.

The tests showed that in English speaking skills, 44 per cent of people in the Yarraville sample had not reached the minimum "survival" proficiency — the level of language needed to satisfy minimum levels of courtesy, to purchase goods in shops, to get around the city and function at work. In Maribyrnong-Avondale Heights the figure was 24 per cent and in St Albans 18 per cent.

When it came to writing skills, 63 per cent of the Yarraville sample were below the minimum "survival" level. The figure in St Albans was 44 per cent and in Maribyrnong-Avondale Heights, 36 per cent.

While there was no significant sex difference, there was a significant relationship between age and English skills, and a strong relationship between the level of education and ASLPR scores and between the length of residence in Australia and the ability to speak and understand English.

Forty-eight per cent of those under 30 had a lower than minimum "survival" level of proficiency in speaking. In writing, the figure was 70 per cent. Older people appeared to have more problems with reading and writing English than with understanding it.

Different language groups differed also in their ability to use the English language. Vietnamese, Serbian, Macedonian, Croatian and Turkish speakers, in particular, had "rather low average scores" for spoken English. When it came to written English a greater number of language groups had problems.

These ethnic differences, the authors believe, are probably related to the time spent in Australia by the various communities.

Many people interviewed by bilingual interviewers expressed a desire to improve their English to enable them to communicate more effectively with their children and to help them in their school activities.

Sixty-two per cent of parents admitted they had found communication with school...
authorities difficult or moderately difficult. More than half the sample expressed the need also for improved English to make contact with neighbors easier and to broaden their social life.

The study shows that working women do not necessarily have any wider exposure to English than their housebound counterparts. Most worked in factories as machinists or process workers. The job required no English and the break was generally spent with speakers of the same native language. With marriage and the arrival of children there was a tendency for the family circle to narrow and exclude English speakers.

For many migrant families children are the main source of exposure to English.

"Apart from very recent arrivals in Australia," the authors of the study say, "migrant children at school speak English to their peer group. They speak English at home also to brothers, sisters and cousins and often to their parents."

In many cases the parents speak in their native language, but the child replies in English. Often a form of inter-language is used.

"The presence of grandparents in the home increases the use of the first language and most parents make conscious efforts to prevent their children losing the use of their language."

"Where the children have left home the use of English between the parents generally declines, especially when one or both the partners has left the workforce."

This latter situation was particularly marked with the elderly Croatian and Serbian couples in the sample. One elderly couple who had returned to Australia from a visit to Yugoslavia had completely lost touch with English.

The study found that some people were able to satisfy their everyday needs entirely in a language other than English, although this generally meant some degree of dependence on the spouse or children for help and could lead to feelings of inadequacy. Slightly more than a third of parents said that a better knowledge of other things through language.

Languages, also, are best learnt in use. In learning other things through language.

"English language training in the workplace needs to be promoted more effectively."

English-speaking workmates and local institutions with specialist resources."

As with the locally based community classes, there needs to be specific planning to cater for the special needs of each group.

Cultural factors may make it difficult for some young people (especially girls) to take advantage of the programs organised on a general basis. The study points out. Some may not be allowed to go out alone, to go out at night, or to take work outside the local area. The special knowledge of the community groups is needed in these cases, the authors conclude, to design acceptable programs.

The study draws attention to the English language deficiencies of the younger people in the sample which it describes as "particularly distressing."

It points out that many of the young people who arrive in Australia with disrupted school and incompleted training are not catered for by existing schools, educational institutions or training schools. Transitional programs, and programs developed for the young unemployed need to take this into account, it says.

One migrant group which is difficult to plan for, the study says, is housebound women. They are often difficult even to contact. Since it has been demonstrated that learning takes place most effectively outside the household, it says, there is a need to encourage these women to develop a wider contact network. However, for many husbands or parents the idea of a centre where such contacts can be made may appear threatening.

"Sensitive community advice needs to be sought for each particular area and ethnic group," it says.

The authors of the study make the following recommendations:

● Greater efforts should be made to publicise language classes.
● Language classes and other programs should promote activities that encourage contact with native speakers of English.
● There is a need to provide combined language and skills-oriented programs.
● Programs need to vary to cater for various preferences, and classes should be offered at a wide variety of times.
● A greater role could be played by ethnic and local community groups in the planning, organisation and advertising of classes.

● Transitional education programs and programs for the young unemployed should make provision for non-native speakers of English.

● For women there is a need for a range of activities linked with language learning.

● There is a case for multi-purpose community centres, used by a variety of groups into which "English acquisition can be in integrated."

Despite communication problems, the vast majority of migrants interviewed in the study appeared reasonably happy with their lives here.

Nearly 90 per cent expressed approval of the original decision to come to Australia. Only six per cent said they had come against their wishes.

More than 21 per cent said they would like to remain here for most of their lives and 65 per cent saw their stay as permanent. Only 12 per cent were unsure about their future intentions. Nearly 52 per cent were already Australian citizens and only 19 per cent were firm in their intention not to change citizenship status.

Most feel accepted. Nearly 60 per cent said they were fully accepted by Australians and a further 21 per cent felt accepted at least some of the time. Only 15 per cent gave a firm no to this question.

A large and wide-ranging program is needed, the authors of the study conclude, "to persuade all Australians that communication problems are not simply the fault of the non-English speakers."

Communication is a two-way process, they point out. Australians need to be made aware of this and shown how they can help in communicating with people who are still learning English.

Most migrants interviewed in the study found slow and careful speech on the part of the native English speaker helpful. Also helpful was the use of a simple vocabulary, grammatically correct English and avoidance of jargon.

Fast and sloppy speech and deviation from grammatically acceptable English ("Foreigner talk.") was not helpful, even though the latter might be done with the best of intentions to improve understanding.

"Foreigner talk" by native English speakers is undesirable, the authors point out, because it involves talking down to people, it is based on misconceptions of how foreigners talk, and it can give the migrant the wrong idea of what is correct English.
The first IVF baby to be born as a result of a donor ovum — a boy — sleeps through the excitement. The baby’s name has not been released.

Wood says great care was taken to ensure that the donor and the woman who received the embryo were similar in genetic characteristics such as hair and eye color, body build and stature, and in social class and level of education.

Neither the biological mother nor the donor are aware of each other’s identity, he says. The donor has not been told of the outcome of the donor pregnancy, but, in accordance with the Waller Committee’s recommendations, she will be given this information by her physician if she asks for it. So far she has not done so.

The mother, he says, intends to tell the child how it was conceived “some time in the future”.

Wood estimates that there are several thousand women in Australia without functioning ovaries who would benefit from the donor procedure.

Some of these women have been born without ovaries, he says. Others, like the mother who gave birth to the donor embryo child, have had an early menopause. Others have had to have their ovaries removed by surgery because of infection, cysts or cancer. The donor procedure, he says, could be useful also, as an alternative to adoption, for women who may carry deleterious genes in their eggs.

“In normal pregnancy these genes could be passed on to the child, causing disease or disability,” he says.

“The problem could be overcome by using a donor egg. It would not be necessary to create an artificial menstrual cycle as the woman would already have functioning ovaries.

“All that would be needed would be to synchronise the donor and the recipient’s cycles”, he says.

Announcement of the donor embryo birth was delayed partly at the request of the mother and partly to enable tests to be carried out to ensure that the child was the product of the donor embryo.

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Working with Wood were Dr Alan Trounson, the IVF unit’s senior scientist, who was mainly responsible for the development of the research, endocrinologist Dr Jock Findlay, from the Medical Research Centre at Prince Henry’s Hospital, Associate Professor John Leeton, biochemist Peter Lutjen, who coordinated the clinical care and research, and obstetrician, Dr Peter Renou.

A paper on the birth appeared in a recent issue of Nature.
Premier opens Japanese Studies Centre

THE Premier of Victoria, Mr Cain, last month officially opened the new premises at Monash of the Japanese Studies Centre, Melbourne.

The Japanese Studies Centre Inc. was founded in 1981 and is unique in bringing together specialists in the study of Japan from LaTrobe, Melbourne and Monash Universities, and Swinburne Institute of Technology.

Its main aims are to promote understanding of Japan and to initiate and conduct research into Japanese culture, society, and problems of communication between Australia and Japan.

The specially designed building, which incorporates five offices, a library, meeting room, guest room and facilities, was built on the Monash campus from funds provided by the Commemorative Association of the World Trade Fair in Osaka, Toyota, CRA and Monash University.

The Japanese architectural influence is particularly evident in the supporting wooden pillars and sloping tiled roof of the building. A Japanese-style exterior wall is planned as a development in the near future.

The offices will provide space for the Centre's research and administration needs as well as for some of its teaching programs.

Since its founding in 1981 the Centre has been active in organising lectures, seminars and other public activities, undertaking research projects, and producing a series of publications on Japan. To date it has functioned mainly on grants received from the Australia-Japan and Buckland Foundations.

The Centre's President, Professor J. V. Neustupný, chairman of Japanese at Monash, is approaching Melbourne business and industry for continued support.

Neustupný says the Centre's work aims primarily at dispelling some of the mistaken attitudes and stereotypes which contemporary scholars recognise have haunted Australia-Japan relations to date.

He says ANOP surveys taken in 1976, 1977 and 1979 show that about 40 per cent of Australians know nothing about Japan (30 per cent said it was a dictatorship).

Some currently-held stereotypes, he says, are potentially more dangerous than the outdated stereotype images of geisha and cherry blossoms.

Examples of these myths are that the Japanese always form groups, that groups are organised on a hierarchical principle, that little conflict occurs in Japanese society, that the national character of the Japanese cannot be understood by foreigners and that Japanese business is always successful.

"While much can be said in favour of the increasing opportunity for contact between the two nations," he says, "many impressions gained by Australian tourists, businessmen and students are disturbing because they frequently perpetuate unsubstantiated myths."

There is a need, he says, for more in-depth data-based study of contemporary Japan, particularly by Australians with a high competence in the language. This need applies particularly to those areas which impinge on Australia-Japan relations.

The Japanese Studies Centre has produced a series of research monographs covering a broad range of topics on Japan, including Japanese society, industrial relations, the auto industry, business, politics, technology and its implications, film and language.

One of its first publications, entitled "Japanese Society: Stereotypes and Realities" by Sugimoto and Mouer, examined the commonly prevailing notions about Japan and the inability of the West to see the diversity of its culture and some strong conflicts within it.

Other papers of particular interest to Australian businessmen are those on "Joint Ventures and Investments in Japan" and "Industrial Relations in Japan". The latter publication covers the proceedings of a seminar held in 1981.

In September last year, the Centre organised a colloquium on "Changing Aspects of Post-War Japanese Democracy" to mark the visit of eminent Japanese political sociologist, Professor Rokuro Hidaka, who earlier had been prevented from entering Australia. Hidaka delivered the leading address on "Democracy in Post-War Japan". His visit was the culmination of a 2½-year struggle to gain an entry visa to Australia.

Others who have visited the Centre include Professor Donald Keene, an

Continued on Page 5
A critical look at patent law and trade practices

MONASH Dean of the Faculty of Law, Professor Robert Baxt has recommended important changes in patent law as it relates to trade practices.

In a report to the Federal Government’s Intellectual Property Advisory Committee, he recommends that the owners of patents should be subject to the same controls under the Trade Practices Act as anyone else who is in a position to exercise monopoly power.

In his view, there is no justification for the exemptions at present granted to the owners of patents, trade marks and copyrights under Section 51(3) of the Trade Practices Act.

These exemptions largely protect the owners from the restrictive practices and anti-monopoly provisions of the Trade Practices Act.

For example, as the Act is now, a patent owner or licensee can engage in certain anti-competitive practices (for example, exclusive dealing arrangements) which are generally prohibited under the Act if they are shown to substantially restrict competition.

There should be no special treatment for patent holders in respect to trade practice legislation, Baxt argues. They should be encouraged, like others who do not have their protection, to compete effectively in the market place.

If their exemptions are removed from the Act, and they wish to engage in practices that could adversely affect competition, there is an avenue open to them, he says. They can approach first the Trade Practices Commission, and on appeal, the Trade Practices Tribunal for permission to engage in the practice (that is, authorisation).

The Commission and the Tribunal have the authority to hold an inquiry and grant permission if they consider that the “public good that flows from the arrangement” outweighs any anti-competitive effects it may have.

Authorisation should be available to owners of patents.

If his main recommendations are rejected and it is decided to preserve the present exemption provisions, Baxt recommends that, to be consistent, exemption rights under the Trade Practices Act should be extended to include, for example, people who possess what is known as “know how”; in similar situations to those in Section 51(3) of the Trade Practices Act.

"Know how" is built up over the years and is important in business, he says, but, as such, does not enjoy the same statutory protection in Australia as is available to patents.

The situation is different in the UK, where people with “know how”, like the owners of patents, are exempted from the operations of the UK Trade Practices Act under equivalent provisions to Section 51(3).

Baxt’s report is one of three prepared by the Monash Law School on various aspects of patent law for the Intellectual Property Advisory Committee, a body set up by the Federal Government in 1978 to advise it on matters relating to patents, copyrights, trade marks and designs.

The other Monash reports were prepared by Ms Ann Duffy, who recommended a two-tier patent system (see Monash Review 5-83), and Professor Enid Campbell, who examined jurisdiction in patent matters.

In preparing his report, Baxt examined Trade Practices legislation in the UK, the US, and the European Common Market, and consulted with lawyers and patent attorneys who practise in the field.

The majority view of the lawyers and patent attorneys, he said, is that the present exemptions should be preserved. Some, like the Law Council of Australia’s Trade Practices Committee, argue that they should be extended to include people who have "know how".

The available economic evidence and the input from economists (for example, the Lamberton report to the Intellectual Property Advisory Committee) does not support this view. He believes it would be better for the community and the economy to adopt the more logical American approach and not permit exemptions.

Difficulties have been created because the Australia Trade Practices legislation is based in part on the English legislation, and was introduced without any proper economic survey beforehand.

There are inconsistencies in Australian patent law as it relates to trade practices, he points out. One example is the question of jurisdiction.

The Trade Practices Act, which contains exemptions and certain prohibitions against monopolistic and anti-competitive behaviour, is within the jurisdiction of the Federal Court of Australia.

Patent law, which also contains provisions aimed at preventing the owner of a patent or a licensee from engaging in restrictive practices, is dealt with by the State Supreme Courts.

Baxt recommends that all patent matters should be dealt with by the Federal Court, which has intimate knowledge of the Trade Practices Act.

Because of this knowledge it would be able, for example, to evaluate an application for a renewal of patent in the light of the Trade Practices Act and any anti-competitive activities the patent owner may have engaged in.

"There is nothing in the patent legislation, nor do I believe, in practice," Baxt says, "that directs the State Supreme Court to take these matters into account in considering such an application.”

Baxt suggests in his report that his recommendations should be the subject of at least two workshops — one in Melbourne and one in Sydney.

The workshops would enable lawyers, patent attorneys, and economists, together with officials of both the Trade Practices Commission and the Patent Office, to discuss the various alternatives and the recommendations.

Continued from Page 4

Japanese Centre

American authority on Japanese literature: Professor Ronald Dore, of the Technical Change Centre in the UK, a specialist on Japanese education; and Dr A. Shibatani, a senior principal research scientist with the Japanese language and culture course, an American authority on Japanese literature; is in a position to exercise monopoly power.

MONASH REVIEW
Neutron research may have energy spin-off

Fundamental research in the Monash physics department could lead to an improved method of measuring small amounts of hydrogen in metals.

The research, which was mentioned in a recent ARGS review of the strength of Australian research, involves neutron scattering experiments conducted at the Australian Atomic Energy Commission's research establishment at Lucas Heights, near Sydney.

It has important implications for the "hydrogen economy"—a term coined to describe the use of hydrogen as a multi-purpose fuel for heating and cooking, power generation, and transportation.

Crucial to the widespread use of hydrogen as an alternative energy source is a reliable system of storing it—for example, as a hydride (a compound formed of hydrogen and a metal, or hydrogen and some other material).

Development of a suitable storage system requires a reliable method of measuring small amounts of hydrogen in a material. Such a method could emerge from the Monash research.

Using the Australian Atomic Energy Commission's HIFAR research reactor and the Monash-designed LONGPOL neutron scattering apparatus, the Monash team has already used the scattering technique to determine the amount of hydrogen in a particular sample of quartz.

The method yielded a fractional concentration of 0.001 protons (hydrogen nuclei) per SiO$_2$ unit in quartz. The figures compare well with determinations from infrared spectroscopy, an alternative measuring method, which, unlike neutron scattering, cannot be used for metals because the metal absorbs the infrared radiation.

Senior lecturer in physics, Dr Trevor Hicks, who is leading the Monash research, says his team's work with hydrogen is only a minor part of the Monash program, which is aimed mainly at determining the distribution of magnetism (at the atomic level) in a variety of materials, including metals and alloys.

"We are attempting to shed more light on why atoms acquire magnetic moments, and in what circumstances they do or do not have them," he says.

The Monash research has been supported since 1970 by the Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering, which helped build the Monash-designed LONGPOL apparatus at Lucas Heights.

Hicks says the neutron (an uncharged sub-atomic particle found in the nuclei of all atoms except ordinary hydrogen) is, by one of those fortunate coincidences of nature, an ideal probe for a study of the microscopic structure of matter.

It has an energy about that of heat-induced motions in solids and liquids, he says, and has a wavelength similar to the distance between atoms. Thus, not only can it be used to investigate the structure of a material, but it can also be used to obtain information about the wavelength and energy of atomic vibrations in the material under study.

Slow neutrons scattered by the atoms in solids or liquids undergo mutual interference similar to the behavior of X-rays and light to form diffraction patterns from which details of crystal structure and magnetic properties of the material can be deduced.

The simplest neutron diffraction instrument just measures "the amount of intensity scattered at a particular angle from a solid or liquid specimen out of a beam selected for a single wavelength". More sophisticated instruments can vary the orientation of the specimen and analyse the scattered neutrons for its wavelength and energy components.

The Monash LONGPOL instrument ("LONGPOL is an acronym for "long wavelength polarisation") takes the analysis a step further. It polarises the neutron beam and analyses the scattered neutrons for polarisation.

Neutrons spin and behave like tiny magnets which can only be oriented with the north pole parallel or antiparallel to an applied field, Hicks explains. On scattering, a neutron can either preserve its magnetic direction or have it "flipped" to the opposite direction.

To partially polarise their neutron beam, the Monash team passes it through an iron filter which is magnetised to saturation. The filter preferentially scatters neutrons with a particular magnetic direction, thus producing a beam "enriched in one polarisation state".

The research has important implications for the hydrogen economy—a term coined to describe the use of hydrogen as a multi-purpose fuel.
The partially polarised neutron beam is then used in the scattering experiments. The diffraction pattern produced by the beam's interaction with the target material is analysed for "flips" in polarisation.

Hicks says the first scattering experiments using polarised neutrons were done at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, in 1969.

In the Oak Ridge experiments, he says, the neutron beam was fully polarised but its intensity was a good deal less than that of the partially polarised beam used in the Monash experiments.

"We have the problem of a partially polarised beam," he adds. "But we are still better off than the Oak Ridge experimenters in terms of the accuracy of our results because of the increased intensity of our neutron beam."

"This extra intensity more than makes up for the loss in polarisation, and enabled us to do a number of experiments in the 1970s which at first were beyond the Oak Ridge instrument or the instrument at the Institut Laue-Langevin with their more conventional polarisation and analysis." Hicks says an enormous effort to improve neutron beam polarisation and analysis is underway in Western Europe, America and Japan.

The Monash instrument LONGPOL is being rebuilt, he says. It will have eight detectors in place of one, and there will be innovations in methods of polarisation, analysis and polarisation reversal.

The new LONGPOL will do everything that the old instrument can do, and because of its eight counters, will do it at least eight times faster.

Hicks is being assisted in the research by research fellow, Dr Peter Gibbs, four research students, and a research assistant Mr Tony Hudson.

More than 30 journal articles have been published on the research, which is supported by ARGS and Monash Special Research grants, as well as by the Australian Institute of Nuclear Science and Engineering.
Monash molecule detected in space

A CARBON compound, previously unknown on Earth, which was created in the laboratory for the first time last year by Monash chemists, has now been "picked up" in outer space.

The Monash chemists were arranging with an American colleague, Dr Bill Irvine, of the University of Massachusetts, to make a joint search for the compound, tricarbon monoxide (C_3O) in gas clouds in the Milky Way when Irvine discovered its signal in data he had just collected for another purpose.

The data had been collected by the Greenbank radio telescope in West Virginia from a gas cloud in the constellation Taurus.

Tricarbon monoxide's existence in space was predicted last year by Professor Ron Brown who led the Monash team which created the molecule in the laboratory and established its characteristic emission and absorption frequencies.

Brown predicted its existence in space from a computer model of the gaseous parts of the Universe which he and his team Dr Frank Eastwood, Dr Patricia Elmes, Dr Peter Godfrey and graduate student Mr Ed Rice, had been developing for some time.

The manufacture of tricarbon monoxide came as a corollary to this work.

To synthesise the molecule, the team used the chemical technique of building a large molecule, which, when heated, would break down, leaving the hoped-for tricarbon monoxide.

Eastwood devised a molecule of 12 carbon atoms, 12 hydrogen atoms and eight oxygen atoms — C_3H_12O.

The technique had the desired result. The molecule broke down, leaving acetone, carbon dioxide and the new oxide.

The new oxide "lived" for only a fraction of a second, but the team was able to show that in space it should emit radio waves on a frequency of 19,234.531 megahertz as it changed its energy of rotation.

Brown says this frequency was detected by Irvine in the Greenbank data.

"Tricarbon monoxide is the only known molecule to emit that frequency," he says. "The frequency of the line measured in the radio telescope," he says, "agrees with the frequency of tricarbon monoxide measured in the laboratory to one part in a million.

"The chance of that happening by accident is not absolutely zero, but it is remote.

"We are currently using the Kitt Peak radio telescope in Arizona to search for a second frequency which the molecule is known to emit and to search other clouds.

"If we find it, the molecule's existence in space will have been confirmed beyond reasonable doubt."

Additional support for the correctness of Irvine's interpretation of the radio frequency comes from measurements of the amount of C_3O in the cloud.

According to the Monash computer model, the Taurus gas cloud (TMC-1) should contain one part in 10 billion tricarbon monoxide. This prediction is confirmed by calculations based on the intensity of the radio signal detected by the Greenbank radio telescope.

Although tricarbon monoxide has only a fleeting existence in the laboratory, Brown says, it should be stable in space because the gas clouds are made up mainly of hydrogen. Tricarbon monoxide does not react with hydrogen.

A knowledge of the physical properties and chemical nature of the interstellar gas clouds is important, he points out, because they are the birthplace of stars and planets and may be a reservoir of the basic constituents of life.

A paper on tricarbon monoxide was presented at the recent conference on molecular structure held at the University of Texas.

The Greenbank radio telescope in West Virginia. The signal of a molecule created in the laboratory for the first time last year by Monash chemists has been identified in data collected by the telescope from a gas cloud in the constellation Taurus. Inset: Professor Ron Brown, who led the Monash team which synthesised the molecule, tricarbon monoxide.

The signal of tricarbon monoxide, identified by the arrow, in data collected by radio telescope.

Printed by Standard Newspapers for Monash University

MONASH REVIEW

8

MARCH 1984