

Introduction

Ng Bee Chin

Volume 36, Number 2-3, juin 1991

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/002233ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/002233ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (print)

1492-1421 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this document

Chin, N. (1991). Introduction. *Meta*, 36(2-3), 327–328.

<https://doi.org/10.7202/002233ar>

INTRODUCTION

NG BEE CHIN

The University of Queensland, Queensland, Australia

Les huit prochains articles sont un choix de communications présentées au Premier séminaire national sur l'interprétation et la traduction qui s'est tenu à Brisbane en Australie.

This is a collection of articles chosen from the papers presented at the *First National Workshop on Interpretation and Translation* (I/T) held in Brisbane, Australia. The workshop was convened by the Key Centre for Asian Languages and Studies at The University of Queensland.

The demographic description of Australia can be compared to that of Canada as it has a significant percentage of non-Anglo-Saxons in its population. There are approximately 16 million people in Australia. Of this number, 13.6% of Australians over 5 years old use a language other than English at home (Clyne 1988). Furthermore, Lo Bianco (1987) listed 1.6 million Australians as non-English speakers by mother tongue.

Apart from the multitude of Aboriginal languages, some of the major LOTE languages spoken in Australia are Italian, Greek, Serbian and Croatian, Chinese and Arabic. The number of speakers of these and other languages are shown in the table below. (Table 1 is adapted from Clyne 1988).

Table 1: Home use of languages other than English in Australia

	NSW	Vic.	Qld.	WA	SA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
Italian	113203	178097	26115	43590	48179	1590	1040	3951	415765
Greek	96652	128562	10491	5864	28622	1508	2747	3026	277472
Serbo-Croatian Croatian Serbian Yugoslav	57957	49496	7160	11662	12529	697	248	4506	140575
Chinese	66974	40443	9696	11389	5833	820	1965	1980	139100
Arabic	88475	24515	1590	1446	2415	204	69	473	119187
German	35324	32665	14526	8206	14190	1999	992	2654	111276
Spanish	42783	18556	4770	3231	2114	228	391	1888	73961
Polish	21362	22920	4889	7295	9044	1499	185	1444	68638
Vietnamese	25506	21680	5560	5046	6158	193	427	1286	65856
Dutch	15852	18278	9820	8272	6473	2013	447	1026	62181
Maltese	24086	30535	2076	632	1839	26	29	283	59506
French	20256	14803	6807	5375	2994	804	547	1204	52790
Macedonian	15131	24090	373	4801	861	7	3	344	45610
Aboriginal Languages	806	374	5017	8420	2970	15	23138	50	40790

Australia's multicultural make-up is evident from Table 1. In fact, Melbourne is reputed to have the largest Greek population outside of Athens.

Given such linguistic diversity, it is not surprising that issues of inter-language transfer and contact have featured prominently in the Australian sociolinguistic context. However, it is only in recent years that I/T has emerged as a research discipline. This is due more to individual researchers working in isolation rather than a lack of interest, as I/T issues are clearly significant to a multi-cultural country like Australia.

Apart from promoting I/T as a national social interest, recent acceleration in economic ties with Asia have also called attention to the need to train and provide individuals with competent I/T skills in Asian languages of importance to Australia's trade and economic relations.

The University of Queensland has been running a Master's course in Japanese conference interpreting and translation since 1980, and this is a major reason why, since its inception in 1988, the Key Centre for Asian Languages and Studies has made the encouragement of I/T research one of its top priorities. The objective of the I/T in workshop in February 1990 was to bring together researchers working on related topics of I/T. The workshop identified several areas in I/T research which require more "urgent" attention. These are:

- research on user attitudes to I/T and to interpreters and translators
- research on assessment standards and procedures
- research on cognitive issues in I/T
- research on curriculum development in I/T
- research on the socio-economics of I/T in the Australian community
- development of datasets for use in the research
- comparative language studies as impacting on I/T

Currently, there is a team of researchers at The University of Queensland working on different aspects of I/T issues in Japanese and Mandarin Chinese. We hope to extend these studies to other languages such as Korean, Indonesian and Vietnamese. In the light of the present research climate, I/T research will stand to benefit from more cross-linguistic input from typologically different languages. We hope that the present collection will generate more response to I/T research and will encourage greater contact between I/T researchers in Australia and elsewhere.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CLYNE, Michael (1988): "Community Languages in the Home: A First Progress Report", *VOX*, 1.
LO BIANCO, Joe (1987): *National Policy on Languages*, Canberra, AGPS.