Translation Services and the Australian 'Multicultural Policy'

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Abstract

Australia is one of the world's most diverse multicultural nations. Almost half of the population are immigrants or the children of an immigrant. The objective of this paper is to find out about the needs for translation and interpreting services in Australia as a multi-cultural country from the perspective of the macro environmental forces that shape up the market. One of the most important policies on translation and interpreting in Australia is the *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, which* is significant in that it fosters sustainability in Australia. In order to meet the challenges of an ageing population, skilled migration is seen as a solution. *By respecting diversity and improving responsiveness*, this policy acknowledges that immigrants live in a multicultural society and there is an obligation on Australian Government departments and agencies to provide equitable access to services regardless of the cultural or linguistic background. Data were collected though a content-analysis method from the sources of Australia's governmental bodies with a focus on the demographic, political and cultural forces. The demographic environment is of major interest because it involves people who make up markets. The political environment consists of laws, government agencies, and pressure groups that influence or limit various organizations and individuals in a given society. The cultural environment consists of institutions and other forces that affect a society's basic values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviors. The findings were used to draw conclusions about translation and interpreting services as a profession in Australia and the sustainability of the public services.

Keywords: Translation and Interpreting, Services, Australia, Macro-environment, Multicultural Policy

1. Introduction

Across the world, there are many countries where multicultural and multilingual communities exist. A closer look at the countries like Australia, the USA, Canada and the Republic of South Africa will make it possible to see what part migration plays. It is quite striking that the democratic Constitution of the republic of South Africa as a multi-ethnic society, which came into effect on 4 February 1997, recognizes 11 official languages, to which the state guarantees equal status (Mwakikagile,2010:117).

Translation and interpreting are services in nature and are necessary in making services sustainable. There are a number of forces which I think we must consider in this paper as they are underlying the macro environment of the translation and interpreting market as we know it. This way, it will help the stakeholders involved understand how the land lies and act accordingly. They may vary from individual translators to translation companies and from consumers to society. Aside from profitability, it also matters if it serves the future interests of consumers in particular or society in general. The goal is to create value for customers and build sustainable relationships. Sustainable societies are those that create value through socially, environmentally, and ethically responsible actions (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011:582).

Australia sets a good example as one of the world's most diverse multicultural nations (National Sustainability Council, 2013:2). Translation and interpreting services play a key part in sustaining the public services in Australia. The concept of macro environment consists of demographic, economic, natural, technological, political and social, and cultural environments. Translation services take place in such a macro environment of forces that shape opportunities and pose threats. This paper looks closely at Australia and the fundamental circumstances to regard translation and interpreting services as a profession.

2. Methodology

2.1 Objectives and Restrictions of the Research

The main objective of the research aims to examine the macro environment of Australia in terms of translation and interpreting services.

2.2 Variables of the Research

Research will be conducted through a content-analysis method. The variables are the larger societal forces that make up the macro environment (Kotler and Armstrong, 2011:70-88). The focus that I will focus on are as follows:

- Demographic,
- Political, and
- Cultural

Demographic is the study of human populations in terms of size, density, location, age, gender, race, occupation, and other statistics. The demographic environment is of major interest because it involves people, and people make up markets. Changes in the world demographic environment have major implications for business. Markets require buying power as well as people. The political environment consists of laws, government agencies, and pressure groups that influence or limit various organizations and individuals in a given society. Governments develop *public policy* to guide commerce - sets of laws and regulations that limit business for the good of society as a whole. Almost every marketing activity is subject to a wide range of laws and regulations. Business legislation is enacted for a number of reasons. The first is to *protect companies* from each other. The second purpose of government regulation is to *protect consumers* from unfair business practices. The third purpose of government regulation is to *protect the interests of society* against unrestrained business behavior. The cultural environment consists of institutions and other forces that affect a society's basic values, perceptions, preferences, and behaviors. People grow up in a particular society that shapes their basic beliefs and values. They absorb a worldview that defines their relationships with others. Core beliefs and values have a high degree of persistence.

3. Findings

3.1 The Demographic Environment

First and foremost, we should understand Australia's population and its diversity from other countries as migrants. Australia sees the ageing of its population as inevitable and acts accordingly as it raises a number of challenges and opportunities in relation to sustainability. As the population ages, a higher proportion of Australians will retire or reduce the extent of their participation in the workforce as being employed affects income, living standards, welfare dependency, social inclusion and social connectedness. In order to meet the challenges of an ageing population, skilled migration is seen as an answer to an ageing population (National Sustainability Council, 2013:53).

The estimated resident population (ERP) of Australia at 31 March 2014 was 23,425,700 people. Australia's population grew by 1.7% during the year ended 31 March 2014.Australia fosters growth through migration from other countries. Therefore, the estimate of net overseas migration (NOM) recorded for the year ended 31 March 2014 was 231,500 people. When we look at the net overseas migration by states and territories, there seems to have been an increase of about 250.000 migrants every year since the year 2008. Natural increase and NOM contributed 40% and 60% respectively to total population growth for the year ended 31 March 2014 (ABS, 2014:1).

For the purposes of estimating net overseas migration (NOM), and thereby Australia's official ERP counts, a person is regarded as a usual resident if they have been (or expected to be) residing in Australia for a period of 12 months or more over a 16 month period. Australia's ERP and estimates of NOM include all people, regardless of nationality or citizenship, who usually live in Australia. The current NOM estimation methods employ a '12/16 month rule' where the traveler can be added or subtracted from NOM if they have stayed in or been absent from Australia for a period of 12 months or more over a 16 month period. This period of 12 months does not have to be continuous.

The cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia's resident population has been reshaped over many years by migration. Historically, more people immigrate to, than emigrate from, Australia. At 30 June 2013, 27.7% of the estimated resident population (ERP) was born overseas (6.4 million people). This was an increase from 30 June 2012, when 27.3% of the ERP was born overseas (6.2 million people). In 2003, ten years earlier, 23.6% of the ERP were born overseas (4.7 million people). In terms of Australia's population growth, for the top 50 countries of birth (excluding Australia) at 30 June 2013, persons born in Nepal had the highest rate of increase between 2003 and 2013 with an average annual growth rate of 26.3%. However, this growth began from a small base of 3,000 persons at 30 June 2003. The second fastest increase over this period was in the number of persons born in India (12.0% per year on average), followed by those born in Pakistan (11.4%), Bangladesh (10.9%) and Sudan (9.2%). Of the top 50 countries of birth, the number of persons born in Serbia decreased the most, with an average annual decrease of 3.1%, followed by Hungary with an annual decrease of 1.3%.

Australia's estimated resident population (ERP) by country of birth is only available for Census years, with the latest being 2011. The table below shows the composition by country of birth for each state and territory, for the top fifteen countries ranked at the national level. Net overseas migration represents about 25% of Australia's population in both years and from the statistical facts, it appears that net overseas migration will continue to increase.

ESTIMATED RESIDENT POPULATION,

Top 15 countries of birth - 30 June 2006 and 2011

2006		2011	
Australia	15 419.3	Australia	16 321.8
Overseas-born		Overseas-born	
-UK, CI & IOM(e)	1 133.5	-UK, CI & IOM(e)	1 196.0
-New Zealand	437.9	-New Zealand	544.0
-China(f)	252.0	-China(f)	387.4
-Italy	218.0	-India	337.1

-Vietnam	178.0	-Vietnam	207.6
-India	169.7	-Italy	201.7
-Philippines	141.9	-Philippines	193.0
-Greece	129.0	-South Africa	161.6
-Germany	124.7	-Malaysia	134.1
-South Africa	119.5	-Germany	125.7
-Malaysia	105.7	-Greece	121.2
-Netherlands	91.8	-Sri Lanka	99.7
-Lebanon	85.9	-USA	90.1
-Hong Kong	81.4	-Lebanon	90.0
-USA	74.7	-Netherlands	87.7
Total overseas-born	5 031.6	Total overseas-born	6 018.2
Total	**20 451.0**	**Total**	**22 340.0**

Source: ABS - *Top 15 countries of birth*, 2006-2011

In recent years, net overseas migration has become the major driver of Australia's population growth, contributing 60% of total population growth in 2013. Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that Australia's population is to be 32 million in 2033. Around 19% of the population would be over 65 (with 3% being 85 and over), and 17% of people would be under 15. Two thirds of the population would be working age (64%), and there would be 55 'dependents' for every 100 'workers'. The effects of an ageing population may be reduced in the short term with higher levels of working-age people migrating to the country. The 'dependency ratio'- the proportion of people of working age to those aged 65years and older - is projected to decline significantly (National Sustainability Council, 2013:1).

The translation and interpreting services are vital as the migrants mingle with the community and are in need of the community services such as health, education, law etc. Not all migrants are fluent in English. Approximately 3% of Australians did not speak English well or at all in 2011. This is a small increase from 531,838 (2.8%) of Australians in 2001. Of recent migrants who arrived since 2006, 33.5 per cent speak only English at home and another 54.1 per cent speak another language and English either very well or well. Eleven and a half per cent do not speak English well or at all. Of the 5.3 million people living in Australia in 2011 who were born overseas, 47% speak only English at home and a further 42% speak English well or very well. Less than one in ten Australians born overseas report that they do not speak English well or they do not speak English at all (National Sustainability Council, 2013:251).

There were 21,507,730 people in Australia according to the 2011 Census released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). It shows that more than 300 different languages are spoken in Australian households. 2011 Census data revealed that 76.8 per cent of Australia's population speak only English at home. The most commonly spoken languages other than English include Mandarin (1.6 per cent), Italian (1.4 per cent), Arabic (1.3 per cent), Cantonese (1.2 per cent) and Greek (1.2 per cent).

The Department of Social Services (DSS), through the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National), provides free interpreting services to non-English speaking Australian citizens and permanent residents communicating with certain approved groups and individuals. The Department of Social Services also provides a free document translating service for Australian citizens and new migrants settling permanently in Australia. Within the first two years of arriving in Australia, eligible individuals can have key personal documents such as birth or marriage certificates, drivers' licences, educational and employment documents translated into English, free of charge, to assist with settlement into the community. TIS National has a panel of over 2600 interpreters speaking more than 160 languages and dialects across Australia. TIS National delivers access and equity to the community by:

-   providing an immediate phone interpreting service 24 hours a day, every day of the year
-   providing free interpreting services to non-English speakers
-   providing free interpreting services to eligible agency clients
-   providing a range of interpreting service options to meet client needs
-   providing a range of informative publications and promotional materials about our services.

In 2013-14, TIS National delivered more than 1.4 million interpreting services through telephone and onsite interpreting. The 10 languages most in demand for on-site services were Arabic, Persian, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Dari, Tamil, Turkish, Nepali, Hazaragi, and Cantonese (in descending order) (DIBP, 2014:224).

3.2 The Political and Social Environment

In Australia, the profession of translation and interpreting is strongly affected by the political environment. One of the most important policies on Translation and interpreting in Australia is Australia's *Multicultural Access and Equity Policy, adopted in March 2013. By respecting diversity and improving responsiveness*, this policy acknowledges that they live in a multicultural society and there is an obligation on Australian Government departments and agencies to

provide equitable access to services regardless of the cultural or linguistic background of clients. This is considered as one of the most significant reforms since its inception in the 1970s. Australia's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy is the primary vehicle for ensuring that Australian Government programs and services are responsive to the needs of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse population. The Policy aims to ensure that government programs and services are accessible by all eligible Australians, responsive to their needs, and deliver equitable outcomes to them, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. The Policy has been strengthened in line with the Australian Government's commitment under The People of Australia - Australia's Multicultural Policy. The strengthened Policy provides greater clarity for Australian government departments and agencies and a more structured approach to implementation.

There are six dimensions to the policy – Leadership, Engagement, Performance, Capability, Responsiveness, and Openness – with minimum obligations attached to each. To address these obligations, all Australian Government departments and agencies accountable under the Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997 (FMA Act) are required to prepare two-yearly Agency Multicultural Plans (AMPs). These plans will identify priority actions, responsibilities, timelines, and measurable targets for improving responsiveness to the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse population. They will also form the basis for both performance reporting and accountability measures. The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) has lead responsibility for coordination of the Policy and its implementation. Australia's Multicultural Policy, The People of Australia, announced by the Australian Government in 2011, recommended an Inquiry into the responsiveness of Australian Government services to clients disadvantaged by cultural and linguistic barriers.

The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy (the Policy) is part of the Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. It demonstrates the Australian Government's ongoing commitment to the core principle that government programs and services should be accessible by all eligible Australians, responsive to their needs, and deliver equitable outcomes for them, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

-   **Access** means that Australian Government services and programs should be available for all culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
-   **Equity** means that these services and programs should deliver outcomes for culturally and linguistically diverse Australians on par with those that other Australians can expect to receive.

At its core, the policy is about public service. It is about government departments and agencies respecting and properly serving the multicultural diversity of Australia's citizens and placing the public at the centre of their considerations and actions.

3.3 The Cultural Environment

Australia's values and perceptions are shaped by its cultural and diverse community. Cultural and linguistic diversity within Australia is ever increasing. These multicultural communities do not form a small minority of the Australian population; rather, they are the mainstream. Multiculturalism implies the existence of different cultural communities in one state, and refers to policies and laws designed to recognise this in a positive way. The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia defines multiculturalism as a policy for "managing the consequences of cultural diversity in the interests of the individual and society as a whole". Multiculturalism is built on the belief that people of diverse languages, religions and culture should be able to participate on equal terms in a single political entity, and that national unity is compatible with diversity (Evatt, 1995:1). It includes

-   **cultural identify**: the right of all Australians, within carefully defined limits, to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion

-   **social justice**: the right of all Australians to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth, and

-   **economic efficiency**: the need to maintain, develop and utilise effectively the skills and talents of all Australians, regardless of background.

The Australian legal system is a product of the society in which it has evolved over the past two centuries. As a result of the post-war immigration of large numbers of people from continental Europe and later from the Middle East, Asia and South America, the ethnic composition of Australian society has dramatically and irrevocably changed. While cultural diversity is now an accepted part of Australian society

The Australian Census of Population and Housing is a rich source of data about Australians and their cultural characteristics. In 2011, the Census revealed that over a quarter (26%) of Australia's population was born overseas and a further one fifth (20%) had at least one overseas-born parent. Throughout the 100 years since the first National Census in 1911, migrants have made up a large component of the Australian population. Historically, the majority of migration has come from Europe, however, there are increasingly more Australians who were born in Asia and other parts of the world. This pattern of migration is evident in the make up of the richly diverse society which was recorded in the 2011 Census.

From colonial times, patterns of migration to Australia have been shaped by historical events and policies both in Australia and other parts of the world. In particular, the successive waves of migration since World War II have contributed to the make up of the overseas-born population in Australia in 2011. Initially most of these migrants were

born in countries in Europe. However, the proportion of the overseas-born population originating from Europe has been in decline in recent years, from 52% in 2001 to 40% in 2011.

In the 1970s, many migrants arrived in Australia from South-East Asia and in recent migration streams a number ofAsian countries have made a large contribution. Reflecting this trend, the proportion of migrants born in Asia increased from 24% of the overseas-born population in 2001 to 33% in 2011. The proportion of the overseas-born population arriving from countries outside Europe and Asia has also increased. In 2011, the United Kingdom was the leading country of birth for the overseas-born population (21%). It was followed by New Zealand (9.1%), China (6.0%), India (5.6%) and Italy (3.5%). The most common countries of birth differed according to when migrants arrived in Australia. For longer-standing migrants (those who arrived before 2007) almost a quarter were born in the United Kingdom. The top 10 birthplaces for longer-standing migrants included four Asian and four European countries. However, the pattern differed for recent arrivals (those who arrived between 2007 and Census Night in 2011) with India being the leading birthplace for this group (13%). It was closely followed by the United Kingdom (12%), the only European country in the top 10 birthplaces for recent arrivals. Seven of the remaining countries for recent arrivals were Asian.

4. Religious Affiliation

Since the first Census, the majority of Australians have reported an affiliation with a Christian religion. However, there has been a long-term decrease in affiliation to Christianity from 96% in 1911 to 61% in 2011. Conversely, although Christian religions are still predominant in Australia, there have been increases in those reporting an affiliation to non-Christian religions, and those reporting 'No Religion'. Between 2001 and 2011, the number of people reporting a non-Christian faith increased considerably, from around 0.9 million to 1.5 million, accounting for 7.2% of the total population in 2011 (up from 4.9% in 2001). The most common non-Christian religions in 2011 were Buddhism (accounting for 2.5% of the population), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%). Of these, Hinduism had experienced the fastest growth since 2001, increasing by 189% to 275,500, followed by Islam (increased by 69% to 476,300) and Buddhism (increased by 48% to 529,000 people). The number of people reporting 'No Religion' also increased strongly, from 15% of the population in 2001 to 22% in 2011. This is most evident amongst younger people, with 28% of people aged 15-34 reporting they had no religious affiliation. Over half of the overseas-born population (56%) reported a Christian denomination; the two most commonly reported were Catholicism (24%) and Anglicanism (12%). Non-Christian religions were reported by 19% of the overseas-born population, with Buddhism (6.8%), Islam (5.4%) and Hinduism (4.3%) being the most prevalent. The proportion of the overseas-born population who reported 'No religion' was 20%, slightly lower than the level for the Australian population as a whole (22%).

5. Languages

In 2011, 81% of Australians aged 5 years and over, spoke only English at home while 2% didn't speak English at all. The most common languages spoken at home (other than English) were Mandarin (1.7%), Italian (1.5%), Arabic (1.4%), Cantonese (1.3%) and Greek (1.3%).

TOP 10 LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME(a)(b)

Language spoken at home	Persons	Proportion of total population	Proportion who spoke English very well	Proportion born in Australia
	'000	%	%	%
English only	15 394.7	80.7	..	83.8
Mandarin	319.5	1.7	37.5	9.0
Italian	295.0	1.5	62.1	43.2
Arabic	264.4	1.4	61.9	38.5
Cantonese	254.7	1.3	46.4	19.9
Greek	243.3	1.3	65.0	54.1
Vietnamese	219.8	1.2	39.5	27.9
Spanish	111.4	0.6	62.1	21.9
Hindi	104.9	0.5	80.2	9.8
Tagalog	79.0	0.4	66.9	5.9

Almost half (49%) of longer-standing migrants and 67% of recent arrivals spoke a language other than English at home. This probably reflects the main countries of birth for these two groups and also the amount of time spent in Australia. However, this doesn't provide any indication of their ability to speak English. Over half (51%) of longer-standing migrants reported speaking English very well, while 2.6% reported not speaking English at all. For recent arrivals, 43% reported speaking English very well and the proportion who reported not speaking English at all was 3.1%.

First generation Australians had the highest proportion of people who spoke a language other than English at home (53%). It was much lower for second generation Australians (20%) and the third-plus generation (1.6%). The most commonly spoken languages for longer-standing migrants, who spoke a language other than English at home, were

Mandarin (4.3%), Cantonese (4.2%), Italian (3.7%) and Vietnamese (3.2%). For recent arrivals, the languages spoken at home varied from those for longer-standing migrants and the overseas-born population as a whole. Just under a third (32.6%) of newly arrived migrants aged 5 years and over spoke only English at home. This was followed by Mandarin (10.8 %), Punjabi (3.7%), Hindi (3.3%) and Arabic (3.0%).

6. Discussion & Conclusion

Australia embraces a policy to include all people, regardless of nationality or citizenship. The cultural and linguistic diversity of Australia's resident population has been reshaped over many years by migration. Australia's government departmet and agencies have been designed in such a way that they are responsive to the needs of a multicultural community. In a country where more than 300 different languages are spoken, Australia's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy is one of the most important policies that include translation and interpreting services in Australia. The Multicultural Access and Equity Policy is part of the Australian Government's vision of a socially inclusive society in which all Australians feel valued and have the opportunity to participate fully in the life of our society. The Policy aims to ensure that government programs and services are accessible by all eligible Australians, responsive to their needs, and deliver equitable outcomes to them, regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. At its core, the policy is about public services. It is about government departments and agencies respecting and properly serving the multicultural diversity of Australia's citizens and placing the public at the centre of their considerations and actions in order to make public services sustainable by respecting diversity.

To deliver translation and interpreting services of quality, Australia sets a good example in making these services a profession. This is important in that services are intangible by nature. In a world where services are growing fast and making up 64 percent of the gross world product, quality is what really matters. Measuring the quality of services like translation and interpreting is of great concern, too. Australia's government offer these services for courts, hospitals, police departments, and schools etc. The competencies that a translator or an interpreter needs to perform functionally varies greatly. It is qualitatively different from bilingual competence which is one of the competencies that constitute translation competence (PACTE, 2003:48). As it is expert knowledge, one should never expect that any bilingual who speaks the language that the person in need of translation or interpreting does will perform well or any official in a government department should not rely on any bilingual as this may result in improper communication, rather than effective mediation. Translation and interpreting services are high in experience and credence qualities. Professional translation/interpreting is one of the few professions conducted wholly within another professional activity. Interpreters are bound to respect the objectives and intentions of the speakers, and primarily, to respect the rules and ethics of the institutions in which they are working (Mulayim and Lai et.al., 2015:XXVI). When we look at top service companies in the world, we come to understand that they set service quality standards. A written set of service standards will not only provide stakeholders with a set of goals, it will set benchmarks that can be used to measure and improve service standards. Written standards can be a valuable training resource. An increased emphasis could be placed on ethics and socially responsible actions as written regulations can not be expected to cover all potential abuses, and existing laws are often difficult to enforce. In Australia, the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters Ltd (trading as NAATI) is the national standards and accreditation body for translators and interpreters. It is the only agency that issues accreditations for practitioners who wish to work in this profession. NAATI has been specified by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship in accordance with the Migration Regulations 1994 as the assessing authority for the occupations of Translator and Interpreter. NAATI's primary purpose is to strengthen inclusion and participation in Australian society by assisting in meeting its diverse and changing communication needs and expectations through (NAATI, 2013). NAATI credentialing provides quality assurance to the clients of translators and interpreters and gives credibility to agencies that employ practitioners who are credentialed appropriately. Australia's government departments employ translators and interpreters accredited by NAATI only. NAATI as the body responsible for sustaining Australia's Multicultural Access and Equity Policy through translation and interpreting services is, I think, one of the most important factors that make translation and interpreting services a profession in Australia.

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