

NALDIC Conference ¹⁴

Advocacy: Entitlement, Inclusion and Expectations
November 11th 2006, School of Oriental and African Studies
(SOAS), University of London

Keynote Speaker:

Joseph Lo Bianco

“Dilemmas and promises of difference, equality and language education”

Abstract:

Drawing from the Australian experience principally, but ranging more widely across other English speaking settings, this talk will consider how during the 1990s restrictive, literacy-centred English-only language policy orientations have come to be favoured over the more pluralistic orientations of earlier decades. The paper will show how language policy is an index of wider social and cultural policies and how economic and social anxieties have produced contractions of language rights, undermining more open and pluralist visions of languages, Englishes and literacies. Hostility to recognition of diversity in communicative forms has moved language education policymaking towards more centralised and controlling regimes and to more narrow normalisation of standards. If we examine episodes of past progress and liberalisation it becomes clear that diverse and sometimes antagonistic language education interests can either collaborate or collide and that what they specifically do depends on the overarching rhetoric they deploy in their relations. A "science-centred" approach to devising policy responses to linguistic diversity in schooling produces a different quality of relations among advocates than a more rights-centred framework. The relations among the diverse language policy interests are ultimately located within distinctive national policy making styles, such as adversarial legalism in the United States, where litigation forms a part of education decision making, compared to a British and Australian approach where rhetoric forms the main basis for policy making. Neither is inherently more conducive to advocacy for minorities; though they do tend to generate different kinds of policy rhetoric. The paper will consider how both opened up space for more

responsive education language policies that acknowledged entitlements, and expectations, of minorities and both later contributed to closing this same space. The paper will attempt to pursue a line of questioning of the trends of the recent past to see whether we can realistically aspire to a period of change in the immediate future.

Biographical notes:

Joseph Lo Bianco holds the Chair of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Melbourne and was formerly Director of the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia. He is also Honorary Professor in Language Education at the University of Hong Kong. He has worked on language policy, literacy planning, bilingualism and multicultural education in many countries including Australia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Western Samoa and Scotland. His recent books include: *Australian Literacies: Informing National Policy on Literacy Education*, with P. Freebody, 2001; *Australian Policy Activism in Language and Literacy*, with R. Wickert, 2001; *Voices from Phnom Penh, Development and Language*, 2002; *Teaching Invisible Culture: Classroom Practice and Theory*, with C. Crozet 2003; and *Language Policy in Australia*, Council of Europe, 2004. He has more than 120 refereed publications.

For his research and policy work in language and literacy Professor Lo Bianco has been elected Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and Fellow of the Australian Council of Educators, and has been awarded the Order of Australia, the Centenary Medal and the title of *Commendatore nell'ordine di merito della repubblica Italiana*.

His email contact is: j.lobianco@unimelb.edu.au