

Remembering Language Studies in Australian Universities: An Italian Case Study



John Hajek and Jennifer Baldwin

Abstract Language studies in Australian universities have a long and complex history—that differs according to such things as language, institution, national imperative, etc... One essential but often overlooked part of the discipline of languages and cultures in our universities is recording and understanding precisely that history. Recording how and why specific language programs were established, for instance, is important for establishing a permanent record of historical continuity and for understanding the past and the present of language programs in the Australian tertiary sector, as well as their possible interconnections and differences.

In this chapter we describe a pilot study exploring the beginnings of Italian language teaching and programs in tertiary institutions in Melbourne—and especially their somewhat inorganic expansion across the city from the late 1950s, into the 1980s and beyond. We are specifically interested in trying to understand how and why Italian language (and Italian Studies more generally) came to be taught in different universities in that city. While we present some of our early findings, including: (a) the effect of institutional type; and (b) the useful assistance of colleagues in other languages, at the same time we also have an interest in mapping out and reflecting on the methodology adopted and the challenges faced. It is hoped that our pilot study might in this way assist and encourage colleagues at other institutions to record the history of language studies in their individual institutions or cities, but who might wonder how to approach the issue in terms of possible data collection and analysis.

Keywords Language studies · Australian universities · Melbourne · Italian studies · 1950s–2000s

J. Hajek (✉) · J. Baldwin
University of Melbourne, Melbourne, VIC, Australia
e-mail: j.hajek@unimelb.edu.au; baldwin.j@unimelb.edu.au

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2020
J. Fornasiero et al. (eds.), *Intersections in Language Planning and Policy*,
Language Policy 23, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-50925-5_5

1 Introduction

The importance of Language studies in Australian universities has been captured in many documents, including in reports and studies written by those actively involved in all aspects of the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU), e.g., Nettelbeck et al. (2007). Even before the formal creation of LCNAU in 2011, there had been, for instance, a significant conference on tertiary language studies entitled “Marking Our Difference” that was held in Melbourne in 2003 (Wigglesworth 2004), a report by the Go8 universities in 2007 (*Languages in Crisis: A Rescue Plan for Australia*), and the national languages colloquium also held in Melbourne in 2009. The colloquium was the final precursor to the establishment of LCNAU, which occurred with the significant support also of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC).¹

LCNAU, as the only peak national body of its kind in Australia’s tertiary sector, leads the way in endorsing the importance of language and culture teaching and learning in our universities. It has a number of critical aims, of which the two of perhaps the greatest relevance here are:

- The sharing of present and future good practice;
- And encouraging and enabling university research. (LCNAU background 2018)

To these two objectives we would link an important imperative, that of documenting our history, i.e., the history of the teaching and learning of languages in the Australian tertiary sector, so that we can understand better how we arrived at the place we are at now. There are certainly many references to the beginnings of language teaching in some published official histories of universities, of particular departments and faculties (e.g., Harvey et al. 2012) and other more general documents, such as national reports, e.g., the 1991 Leal Report. However, many histories of Language studies in Australian universities remain to be written. We also believe it is important to dig deeper to uncover how and why the teaching of specific languages began in a particular place and what were the driving forces behind such events. Our research project, only pilot in nature, is of course preceded by much more detailed and developed histories of Language studies, such as that written by Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby (2012) (published in Harvey et al. 2012) and by Ivan Barko and Angus Martin (1997).

We have a number of aims in pursuing a project on the history of language programs at university level. We wished in the first instance to record the establishment and early history specifically of Italian language teaching and Italian Studies at tertiary level in Melbourne—home of Australia’s largest Italian-born and

¹The ALTC was renamed the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) in 2011, and remained the funding body under that guise for LCNAU in its initial phase in 2011 and 2012.

Italian-speaking population; and establish the historical continuity as well as connections within and across language programs and institutions in that city.

We also wanted to understand what happened in the past so we can better understand the present—to what extent have events in the past determined the current provision of Italian language teaching and Italian Studies programs in Melbourne? A better understanding could also assist in identifying the feasibility and mechanisms for the establishment or re-establishment of future language programs, not just those involving Italian.

An additional aim was to map the methodology we used to navigate the challenges for remembering the history of language programs, e.g., variable access to data sources. Given the nature of the process there is also scope for some reflection on our part which might be helpful too in assisting and encouraging others to do the same for their languages, institutions and/or cities and states.

2 Why Italian in Melbourne?

We began our project by choosing to focus on the beginnings of Italian language studies in the tertiary sector in Melbourne. The reasons for such a choice are straightforward. Italian is firstly a language with which we are very familiar and for which we have significant pre-existing knowledge and contacts. It also presents itself as a good test case as Italian has been offered in a diverse range of institutions in the Melbourne metropolitan area since it was first taught at the University of Melbourne. In most cases the beginnings of Italian language teaching and programs are also still within living memory, although increasingly in the last few years we have also lost important people who held critical memories going back decades.

As we shall see, we have learned in the course of this pilot study that the development of Italian language teaching in Victorian universities is more complicated and diverse than we had ourselves previously understood while also showing quite discernible patterns of development with long-term consequences.

3 Methodological Approach and the Process of Data Collection

Our methodological approach was multi-faceted, and care was taken to understand the challenges presented by the collection, validation and interpretation of data.

We used a variety of primary and secondary sources to gather our data and focused on qualitative methods of doing so. Given that we were attempting to construct a history it was important to use multiple sources (O’Toole and Beckett 2013,

p. 55). This enabled us to cross-reference information from oral sources and written sources, primary and secondary. Such cross-referencing can alert the researcher to possible inaccuracies in both primary and secondary sources (Mcdowell 2013, p. 56). It is also important to note that any history constructed will never be absolute or unchallengeable. Some documents may seem to be an accurate record of the past but could also be what “the writer believed had taken place” (O’Toole and Beckett 2013, p. 55; Mcdowell 2013, p. 56). Similarly, oral history collected through interviews is of course never likely to be a complete account of what happened as interviewees’ recollections may be partial or selective or simply inaccurate. Another cautionary note which applies to both oral and written sources is that what was deemed important or unimportant in the past is not necessarily the perspective current-day researchers would have (Mcdowell 2013, pp. 61, 62, 75). All of this is not to dissuade us from our task but cautions us to be as careful as possible in our work, and flexible enough to change any claims we make, if more accurate information becomes available.

The process of data collection we adopted was fairly straightforward—at least in principle. The first step was to establish which tertiary institutions we wanted to investigate, i.e., all locally established universities in Melbourne. With this in mind we examined a series of reports for any details they might provide on when Italian Studies courses and programs had started and in what context they had been established. We then tracked whether they had continued. The documents consulted included the Wykes Report (1966), the Wykes and King report (1968), the so-called Kramer report (Australian Universities Commission 1975), the Hawley Report (1982) and the Leal Report (1991). The Italian profile in the Key Languages in Australia series (Di Biase et al. 1994) published by the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia was also a valuable resource. These reports provided useful background information, as well as varying amounts of historical detail about the tertiary teaching of Italian and Italian Studies in Melbourne.

We then consulted a range of other resources to find additional material, wherever possible. University archives sometimes contained correspondence files, faculty meeting files and professorial board files of minuted decisions. When searching various university archives for historical material and contacting archivists for advice on elusive material, often the archivists themselves went out of their way to suggest additional materials which might be of use.

Faculty handbooks and university calendars (often digitized) were a rich resource with respect to the names of lecturers, and instructors, the course structures and the departmental grouping in which various languages were located. However, it was often necessary to refer to an “institutional family tree” to find out the previous names and component structures of a now amalgamated institution where a particular course had originally been introduced. Metropolitan newspapers (often digitized now) were a source of letters written to the press in the 1950s as various sections of

the community agitated for Italian to be taught at the University of Melbourne. The journal *Babel* contained valuable articles and language surveys. The Dante Alighieri Society located in Carlton, close to the University of Melbourne, holds important records which we also consulted. Useful information was also found in the *Australian Dictionary of Bibliography* and in public obituaries.

A very helpful resource was that of word-of-mouth collected from key stakeholders, such as past and present teaching and administrative staff. This allowed us to establish who is in touch with whom—ex-teachers and ex-lecturers—and who knows whom. It was sometimes just a chance comment that led to the identification of people who were previously unknown to the authors, but who were known to others we had previously contacted but who had not mentioned them. In one case we found a useful contact simply by picking a name out of the phonebook that seemed to be located in the right part of Melbourne where this person was thought potentially to be living.

Finally, a series of interviews were conducted and recorded—once the necessary ethics approval was received. These were mostly in person but in some instances because of the constraints of distance and ill health of the interviewee, information was obtained by email. Interviews proved to be particularly helpful for our study. They allowed the researchers to ask questions of interviewees to confirm previously reported facts but also to uncover information that may not have been considered useful in the past. Such interviews sometimes elicited insights from interviewees that researchers had not previously considered and helped to gather valuable information as to how historical developments impacted on the individuals concerned and the courses they taught—in addition to providing helpful historical detail about institutional provision of Italian language teaching.

One worthy interviewee with extensive knowledge of the University of Melbourne, other institutions, and the wider Italian community, was interviewed, with his full approval, in his nursing-home bed. He had much to say! Sadly, he has since died. We are also aware of other important figures more generally in the tertiary languages sector in Melbourne who have passed away in recent years, such as Professor Michael Clyne. Unfortunately, their encyclopædic knowledge and oral anecdotes about languages at universities in Melbourne were never recorded for posterity, although they were often related verbally to others including the first author. What this underlines of course, is the need to document such oral history before it is too late.

For each institution we examined we have tabulated the resources available to us. As is clear from Table 1 below, access to data sources differed greatly across institutions. Only in the case of the faculty handbooks and calendars were we able to use the same data sources for all institutions.

Table 1 Access to data sources across institutions

	UniMelb ^a	La Trobe	Monash	Deakin ^b	ACU ^c	Swinburne ^d	RMIT ^e	VU ^f
Published languages surveys & reports	Yes	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
Archived correspondence & Faculty files	Yes		Yes			Yes		
Archivists			Yes			Yes	Yes	
Faculty handbooks/ calendars	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Institutional family trees				Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Newspapers, e.g., letters to the editor	Yes							
Early issues of <i>Babel</i>	Yes							
Dante Alighieri society records	Yes							
<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i>	Yes							
Obituaries	Yes	Yes	Yes					
Word of mouth	Yes	Yes	Yes					Yes
Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

^aUniversity of Melbourne includes the Melbourne College of Advanced Education

^bDeakin University (previously State College of Victoria at Toorak, Victoria College and Prahran College of Advanced Education)

^cThe Australian Catholic University (previously the Institute of Catholic Education)

^dSwinburne University of Technology (previously Swinburne Institute of Technology, and Swinburne Technical College)

^eRMIT (also incorporating the previous State College of Victoria at Coburg, and Phillip Institute—Coburg Campus)

^fVictoria University (formerly Footscray Institute of Technology)

4 The National and Local Context: Language Studies and Italian Past and Present

As part of our first step back in time we also explored the general tertiary landscape from the 1950s when the expansion of Australia's university sector was well under way. The Australian Universities Commission began to control funding to a large extent and its decisions progressively expanded some discipline areas and restricted others. It often blocked funding to institutions wishing to introduce a language, stating that this was an unnecessary duplication of an offering of that language at another metropolitan university.

Across the decades from the 1950s to the 1980s technical colleges and institutes of technology also grew in number and size during the expansion of the tertiary sector. These new institutions were more vocational and community-oriented than

traditional universities, enabling a wider variety of languages to be introduced, which were often linked to courses with a vocational or community focus.

The tertiary sector reforms begun in 1988 by the then federal Minister for Education, John Dawkins, transformed the tertiary sector through the merging of vocational entities with both existing and new universities, a process which led to the creation of a unified cohort of some 34 universities by 1992. This process resulted in many language programs, including Italian, being brought into the university sector (Baldwin 2019).

Not surprisingly, given the history of higher education in Australia outlined briefly above, there have been two distinct strands in the development of Italian language studies in Victoria: one through the three traditional universities established in Melbourne and the other through the merger and/or transformation of vocational institutions, such as colleges of advanced education and institutes of technology. In the first instance, the three traditional universities typically introduced Italian within the generalist Arts degree. In the college/institute sector, however, the push was often for Italian specifically in its role as a significant community language. Offerings were often couched in vocational terms and their courses (in interpreting/translating, ethnic/multicultural studies and teacher education) aimed to meet the particular needs and interests of the Italo-Australian community.

Victoria cannot claim to be the first Australian state to have taught Italian language formally in a degree course in the tertiary sector. That honour belongs to the University of Western Australia when Francis Vanzetti was appointed as a part-time lecturer in 1929 (Alexander 1963, p. 715; UWA 1929, pp. 138, 155). The University of Sydney followed in 1930, when two benefactions enabled Italian teaching to begin (Turney et al. 1991, p. 510; University of Sydney 1931, pp. 788–789).

Today the current picture is that, in the Melbourne metropolitan area, Italian language teaching continues at the University of Melbourne, and at Monash, La Trobe, RMIT and Swinburne Universities, and has recently been revived in limited fashion at the Australian Catholic University (ACU). It is not currently taught at Victoria University and Deakin University, although it has been available in both institutions in the past. Elsewhere in Australia, the teaching of Italian continues to be widely available in the university sector (Dunne and Pavlyshyn 2015).

5 Universities at Foundation

In this section we discuss the history of Italian at the three tertiary institutions that were originally founded as universities in Melbourne: they are the University of Melbourne, La Trobe University and Monash University.

In the case of the **University of Melbourne** the earliest history of discussion about the teaching of Italian language was discovered in the University Archives through documents detailing discussions of a 1913 Joint Committee of Enquiry into a range of University issues (University of Melbourne, Joint Committee of Enquiry 1913, p. 10). This document revealed that there was an interest in expanding the

range of languages, including Italian, but also significant concern that funds were scarce. So whilst acknowledging the importance of an increase in the number of language offerings, the committee looked for ways to introduce more languages at little cost. The proposal was for the appointment of Readers (later called instructors) but no action was taken that year.

After World War I, the issue of the introduction of more languages arose again. The instructorship scheme was introduced in the Faculty of Arts where the instructor was not paid by the University, but directly by the students. The University took a 10% cut of instructors' fees for "administration" but it actually cost them nothing. The instructor was not a staff member of the University of Melbourne. As such, the University could claim to be teaching Italian, but it did not bear the cost of the teaching staff, and the subject, as far as students were concerned, was not for degree purposes.

We know from the University Calendar that the first instructor in Italian language in the Faculty of Arts was Dr Omero Schiassi who began teaching in March 1928. More information about him is available from his *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry (Griffin 1988) but also from a pen portrait of Schiassi by Alan Chisholm (1958), a lecturer in French in the 1920s who was later to become the Professor of French at Melbourne. Archival correspondence reveals that Professor Chisholm had an instrumental role in enabling Schiassi's appointment in 1928 and continued to support him throughout his teaching career at the University. Schiassi himself sent a barrage of letters to the Registrar throughout the 1930s and 1940s pleading for Italian to be part of a degree course. This did not happen, as the Registrar claimed again and again that finances would not permit it. However, after the war, Schiassi was made a tutor in Italian within the Department of French and served in this role until his death in January 1956.

During the 1950s a campaign for the inclusion of Italian as a degree subject gained momentum, spearheaded by Professor Chisholm, and Dr Soccorso Santoro, a prominent member of the Italian community. Whilst many letters of support were written to *The Age* newspaper by University staff members, there was also a groundswell of commentary from the Italian community as Santoro mobilized its support (Letters to the Editor 1956). When Commonwealth funding for languages was eventually recommended in the Murray Report of 1957 (Commonwealth of Australia 1957), these monies finally enabled the University to fund Italian Studies properly and on an ongoing credit-bearing basis. In 1958, Italian was approved as a degree subject by the University, to be located within the French department where formal credit-bearing teaching within the Bachelor of Arts began in 1959—with the appointment of Colin McCormick, who had first arrived from the United Kingdom in 1950, to teach Italian at the University of Sydney (Obituary 1987, p. 6). It is this moment then, 1959, that we consider pivotal in the history of Italian Studies in Melbourne, as the starting point of fully credited tertiary provision of the language in that city and the state of Victoria.

Several written resources document the lead up to and the beginning of this fledgling program at the University of Melbourne. These include: Chisholm's (1957) article in the journal *Babel*; Mayne's account of the Dante Alighieri Society

(Mayne 1997, pp. 106, 108); and correspondence in the University of Melbourne Archives (UMA 1958–1959).

Italian Studies remained within the French department until 1963 when it was established as its own department. This was not the only case of Italian teaching beginning within a department of French in Melbourne. As we shall quickly see, the influence and mentoring of French departments have been important for the establishment of Italian language programs and departments elsewhere in Melbourne.

Elsewhere in the university, the teaching of Italian was available for some time in the late 1980s and into the 1990s specifically in the undergraduate program of the Institute of Education which arose through the merger of the university's Faculty of Education and the Melbourne College of Advanced Education (MCAE) in 1989. The MCAE (itself the product of an earlier merger in 1983) was a major teacher training college that directly adjoined the university's campus. It is clear from handbook records that Italian was introduced in the mid-1980s at the MCAE to be taught specifically as a community language—at a time when the teaching of community languages was rapidly expanding in primary and secondary schools across Australia. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in our knowledge of the history of Italian teaching at MCAE, and much more research is needed.

La Trobe University was the next university to offer Italian language—commencing in 1974—in response to a growing need from the large migrant Italian population in La Trobe's northern suburbs heartland. The La Trobe University Handbooks of the time document the teaching arrangements whereby the University of Melbourne agreed to teach Italian at La Trobe University for the first three years from 1974.

The driving force for this arrangement was Elliott Forsyth, the foundation Professor of French at La Trobe, who was able to provide helpful information before he passed away in late 2012. Thus, just like at Melbourne, Italian began as a subject within a French department. In the first instance a formal arrangement was struck between the University of Melbourne and La Trobe University, whereby Melbourne University lecturers travelled (sometimes by taxi) to La Trobe to teach. By the end of 1975 it was clear that La Trobe had sufficient regular demand for Italian and McCormick who was still the head of Italian Studies at Melbourne indicated that his program could not manage it any longer due to the heavy demands on his staff at both universities (Forsyth, personal communication, February 9, 2012). La Trobe then advertised for a lectureship at the end of 1975 (Pagliaro, personal communication, October 20, 2016), and took over primary responsibility for teaching Italian in 1977 (La Trobe University 1977, p. 204). Its first appointment in Italian Studies was Tony Pagliaro, a graduate of the University of Melbourne. Italian Studies continued to be located within the French Studies department until an endowed chair for the former was created in 1982 (Scott 1989, p. 178). The first professorial appointment in Italian was Giovanni Carsaniga, who arrived from the UK to take up the Vaccari Foundation chair. He later took up the chair in Italian Studies at the University of Sydney.

Monash University's entry into the direct provision of Italian language teaching was somewhat later. Information was difficult to find at first. Several visits to the

Monash University Archives, and discussion with very helpful and interested archival officers, uncovered extensive correspondence and faculty committee files which detailed early attempts in the 1970s to introduce Italian. Interviews with former and current staff members provided helpful additional detail with respect to the 1980s.

Monash's first attempt to introduce Italian was in 1973, and the program was to be completely internally funded. The aim was to design a course at both beginners and intermediate level, which would specifically meet Monash's needs rather than duplicate what was already offered at the University of Melbourne. This did not happen.

In 1975, a submission to the Working Party on Languages and Linguistics sought a sizeable establishment grant but the Working Party only supported Italian as a Continuing Education course (Australian Universities Commission [aka Kramer Report] 1975, clause 4.18). A further request for funds from the Universities Commission was sought in 1977. Again it failed as the now Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) cited the courses in Italian already being taught at La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne. An approach for funds to the Director-General of Education in Victoria also failed. As a result, Monash could obtain neither Commonwealth nor State Government funding and could not finance provision of Italian from its own funds. Information from archival correspondence and committee minutes indicates which academics at Monash University were the driving forces for the push for Italian language teaching, which had come not only from French academics at Monash but also from Michael Clyne, in the German Department, who was a well-known proponent of community language education. Monash was keen to offer Italian to its students who would otherwise have had to travel quite a distance to undertake complementary studies at another university.

It was not until 1985, however, that Monash came up with another proposal: that French and Spanish departments would be amalgamated into a Department of Romance Languages and that Italian should then be introduced as a third Romance language. By reducing the commitment to Spanish teaching (where enrolments were falling), Italian could be incorporated. This proposal was approved by the TEC. It was willing to allow Monash to introduce Italian as long as Melbourne was amenable to this, but it also hoped that Monash did not think TEC was moving away from its desire to avoid unnecessary duplication of language teaching. With the support and input particularly of senior members of the French Studies program, Monash University eventually began teaching Italian in 1987—a welcome addition for students who previously travelled mostly to the University of Melbourne to study Italian. Monash's first appointment in Italian Studies was Joseph (Joe) Gioscio, a graduate of the Universities of Melbourne and Strasbourg. Sadly, he soon fell ill and passed away in 1988 (Musolino 1988–1989; Musolino, personal communication, September 12, 2017), at which point a new appointment in Italian Studies had to be made.

6 Universities That Were Previously Colleges of Advanced Education/Institutes of Technology/Institutes of Education

Swinburne Technical College, which eventually became **Swinburne University of Technology** in 1992 was the first in the vocational college/institute sector to decide to teach Italian. In 1967 there were internal discussions about the expansion of courses in the humanities and the growing need for people proficient in languages in industry and commerce. The former Swinburne Archives officer (now retired) supplied a copy of an annual report document from 1967 detailing those discussions. Three past teachers of Italian at Swinburne were also identified and interviewed. The College took its cue from the Martin Report (Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education 1964) stressing the need to increase Australia's potential for trade with foreign countries. There was also behind-the-scenes activity. According to one interviewee, there was a push from the Italian community to have its language taught formally. Swinburne College of Technology handbooks of the era confirm that pilot courses in Italian (as a significant community language) and Japanese (for trade reasons) began in 1969 with the approval of the Victoria Institute of Colleges. Italian was first listed in the 1970 Swinburne College of Technology handbook as a subject in a General Studies diploma, subsequently becoming a subject in a BA degree. Through an unexpected contact in the secondary school language teaching community, we were able to identify and fortunate to track down the very first teacher of Italian at Swinburne, Brian Warren, himself an ex-high school teacher, who was already teaching French at Swinburne. Brian was later joined by Charles D'Aprano in the teaching of Italian. Over time, as a result of a series of restructures Italian was subsequently moved from the Arts Faculty to the Business Faculty becoming part of a double degree (Bachelor of Business/Bachelor of Arts (Italian)) and then more recently back to the Arts Faculty as part of a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Business combined degree.

RMIT's Associate Diploma (Interpreting/Translating) introduced in 1978 is indicative of Italian being included in a vocational course rather than in a more traditional academic course. Concern had already been expressed about resettlement issues for the many migrants coming to Australia. This course was funded by RMIT to enable interpreters and translators to be trained to meet community needs, including those of the Italian community. When funding ran out after 2 years, the interpreting/translating course was discontinued at RMIT and picked up and funded by the then **Prahran College of Advanced Education**. In 1981 this course was upgraded to a Bachelor of Arts (Interpreting and Translating). This course continued when Prahran CAE became part of **Victoria College** and subsequently part of **Deakin University**. Much of the history of this course in Interpreting/Translating was gleaned from an interview with a former staff member, Adolfo Gentile, who had worked in the course through all its various institutional iterations at RMIT, Prahran CAE, Victoria College and Deakin University. And of course, the various handbooks of these institutions provided the formal detail.

In 1981 what was then the **State College of Victoria at Coburg** (which eventually became **Phillip Institute-Coburg Campus**), also in the college sector, introduced Italian, Greek and Turkish through an Associate Diploma in Ethnic Studies—at a time of significant interest in ethnic studies amongst Melbourne’s burgeoning migrant communities. This formal teaching of these three languages was in advance of TEC funding which was allocated from 1982. The program was very popular and attracted sufficient student numbers to keep it going (Carroll 1995, p. 39). Phillip Institute became part of RMIT in 1992. Teaching of Italian initially continued at the Coburg campus after amalgamation but was formally discontinued due to lack of demand a few years later. By 2011, RMIT was teaching some Italian again—at its main city campus as an individual Arts elective—through the employment of casual tutors. This limited provision has continued to this day, subject each semester to student demand.

Victoria University (previously **Victoria University of Technology**) was established in 1992 with the **Footscray Institute of Technology (FIT)** as its core. Italian was introduced at FIT in 1986, taught by John Lando as an exchange lecturer from the Institute of Catholic Education. The impetus for this teaching seems to have come from a recommendation of the 1980 review by the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) of Multicultural and Migrant Education. Subsequent funding was allocated by the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) for the next triennium. In 1987 a lecturer, Nina Bivona, was formally appointed and Italian was taught in a Community languages stream in the Bachelor of Arts (Multicultural) and in a Bachelor of Arts (Australian Cultural Studies). When Footscray Institute of Technology was eventually merged into the new Victoria University of Technology (and later Victoria University (VU), the Italian language stream in the Bachelor of Arts (Australian Cultural Studies) continued. However, by 1998, Italian language was no longer taught at VU due to declining demand. Students were now referred to the possibility of cross-institutional studies in Italian at ACU, La Trobe, Melbourne, Monash, RMIT and Swinburne. All that remained at VU were two Cultural Studies subjects, taught in English, “Images of Italy”, and “Italian Presence in Australia after World War II”. These subjects have long since gone.

Deakin University entered the field of Italian language teaching by virtue of its amalgamation with the Melbourne campuses of Victoria College in 1991. It had not previously taught any languages since its establishment as Victoria’s first regional university in 1974 through the merger in Geelong of the Gordon Institute of Technology and Geelong Teachers College. Through the eventual incorporation of Victoria College, Deakin inherited a series of language-oriented programs, one of which was in Interpreting/Translating, with Italian as one of the available language streams. This was an important course, approved by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) for providing accredited interpreters and translators. Unfortunately, that specialized program was closed in 1998, due to declining demand. Again, the Deakin University handbooks and the handbooks of its previous iterations were important in tracing the development of the Interpreting/Translating courses. The Deakin University Archivist was particularly helpful in suggesting archival resources held at Deakin. Extensive detail on this

course was also gathered from an interview with the last Head of the Department of Language and Culture Studies, Adolfo Gentile, who, as already noted, had taught in the program in its various iterations across institutions since well before Victoria College was merged into Deakin. In a more recent initiative cross-institutional teaching arrangements were made with the University of South Australia (UniSA) in return for the teaching by Deakin of Arabic. Tutors for each were placed in receiving institutions, while primary teaching was offered in distance fashion. The arrangements did not last long and Italian was discontinued after a matter of a few short years (2009–2011).

The Australian Catholic University (ACU), on its formation in 1991, took on the already existing Italian language program of the former Institute of Catholic Education (ICE) located in Melbourne. Italian language studies from the BA degree were offered within Education courses, with a particular emphasis on the communicative ability/real life contexts necessary to teachers of primary and secondary students of Italian. Italian-born John Lando who had pioneered the teaching of the Italian language in 1983 at ICE continued this work at ACU. Despite our best efforts, we have not been able to find information about why precisely Italian was introduced nor how it was funded at ICE. Given the timing, however, which coincides with the demand for community language teachers in schools at the time, Italian was an obvious choice for a Catholic institution which attracted large numbers of Italo-Australian students wishing to become teachers.² It appears that ICE may have funded such teaching themselves, with additional funds for a language laboratory coming from the Italian social welfare organization CO.AS.IT (Comitato Assistenza Italiani). The ACU archives were searched but there was still nothing available which gave information about Italian and its beginnings at ICE.

Curriculum changes in Education courses at ACU from 2007 made it difficult for students to pick up Italian as an elective major, leading to a decline in enrolments. Eventually, from the beginning of 2012, the teaching of Italian language units was discontinued and continuing students needed to pick up the Italian language course online from the University of South Australia in order to finish their course.

Fortuitously, however, due to a push from ACU International, ACU accredited and introduced from January 2017 a Diploma in Languages with Italian and Spanish languages which was offered collaboratively between Education and Arts. This course was firstly offered at ACU Melbourne and North Sydney, and in 2018 it was also introduced at Brisbane and Strathfield campuses. It should be noted that the provision of Italian Studies at ACU is supported only by staffing on a limited sessional basis.

²The first author recalls many of his cohort in Italian at the University of Melbourne on completion of their undergraduate studies in 1982 and 1983 going to ICE (later to become part of ACU) to train as teachers—most of these then became Italian teachers in Victorian schools.

7 On the Origins of Italian Language Teaching and Italian Studies Programs in Melbourne: Observations and Implications

In the course of recording the early history of Italian language teaching and Italian Studies in Melbourne, we discovered that the provision of Italian language teaching has typically very different origins from that of other languages, albeit with some common threads, and that the 1970s and 1980s really were the golden days in terms of introducing Italian language (and Italian Studies more generally) into individual tertiary institutions in the city.

There is a clear historical split between traditional universities (i.e., institutions founded as universities) and the rest (i.e., universities created solely through the merger of previously vocational institutions and institutes of technology).

The three traditional universities share some interesting similarities with respect to the provision of Italian, which was always envisioned primarily as a component of a traditional arts degree without any specific vocational outcome.³ While the teaching of Italian at the University of Melbourne was already formally established in 1959, this university and La Trobe University have a clear interconnected history of teaching provision in the 1970s, with staff from the former travelling to the latter under a short-lived agreement—before La Trobe established its own program. Monash University eventually followed suit by setting up its Italian Studies program some years later—after years of funding resistance over duplication at Melbourne and La Trobe. Initial permanent staffing at both La Trobe and Monash Universities was provided by graduates from the University of Melbourne—linking all three departments at a personal level.

What is also striking about each of these traditional universities is the critical support and input from colleagues in other language programs, especially French, at each (as well as German at Monash)—a fact not known to many today but which we have been able to highlight here. This is a valuable reminder of the value of language programs and colleagues working together at a local institutional level—for the benefit of students and universities—much like LCNAU does now at a national level. Colleagues in French and German could see the evident benefits of providing (and even hosting) Italian—particularly in light of the noticeable presence of the Italian community in Melbourne—which had expanded rapidly from the 1950s on and whose children were now entering their universities in large numbers. There was also of course the additional prestige of Italian language and culture themselves that helped to make the case.

³A minor exception involved the merger of the teacher training college, Melbourne College of Advanced Education (MCAE), into the University of Melbourne. As noted previously, MCAE maintained its community language education (mainly Italian) in its teacher training programs from the 1980s well into the 1990s. The history of Italian Studies at MCAE follows a pattern entirely consistent with other historically vocational institutes regardless of which university they ended up in.

Elsewhere, in the college/institute sector, Italian language teaching typically developed independently of the traditional university sector, without any apparent coordination between institutions. However, we are also aware of several staff who taught in both sectors, before Dawkins's tertiary unification occurred. Swinburne Technical College, which eventually became Swinburne University of Technology, is a good example of this separate development, and is the only example of a former college/institute to have maintained Italian language teaching and associated Italian Studies program in uninterrupted fashion to this day.⁴ In many colleges and institutes Italian teaching was often developed as part of a non-traditional vocational or academic structure or discipline area, e.g., interpreting and translating, and ethnic/multicultural/community studies. Here the community language role of Italian was pivotal, although it does not appear to be sufficient to support programs in the longer term.

We have learned too of the positive and negative effects of amalgamations of institutions and restructurings within institutions. Languages are often the casualties in restructures and cutbacks—often as a result of declining or fluctuating interest in specific discipline areas, such as ethnic and multicultural studies. This pattern happened at Deakin University, RMIT, VU and ACU. What we have also found are courageous attempts to revitalize languages with a mix of teaching arrangements, such as at Deakin University and ACU.

Overall, it is clear that the type of institution (traditional v. non-traditional), and associated discipline type (part of traditional non-vocational Arts degree v. non-traditional/vocational discipline area, even within an Arts degree) at the time of the introduction of Italian language teaching has had a significant impact on the long-term viability of Italian programs over time. Whereas full Italian Studies programs continue to exist in the three traditional universities today, viability is much more chequered in the non-traditional sector, as associated demand in non-traditional disciplines declined. Very limited teaching has been reinstated at RMIT and ACU, but only Swinburne retains a program with any full-time staff. In this last case, a critical fact here may be that Italian was introduced as part of a General Diploma (a qualification awarded before entering a traditional BA)—rather than as part of some specialist or community focused qualification or discipline area more typical of the non-traditional sector.

8 Reflecting on the Process: Data Sources, Complex Strands and Final Thoughts

While the use of written records was very helpful, documentation was often lacking (cf. Table 1). On reflection, we understand how critical it was for our project to interview past and current staff at different universities. They were identified

⁴This is not to say the Italian Studies program here has not been periodically threatened with closure.

through personal knowledge, contacts or university calendars. All of this can be a very time-consuming process. There were instances where we simply could not find a person who had moved interstate, and there were some instances where key people who were part of the beginnings of Italian language programs did not wish to be involved in an interview for the project. Others were unable to assist because of illness or the frailty of old age. The phone book is a surprising source of assistance if one is prepared to follow up information that may or may not be correct.

We were astonished, too, by what people knew about courses and personnel involved in the early days, often involving information of which we had no prior knowledge. In this way, after following up information from a secondary school teacher of Italian in regional Victoria, we discovered that a foundation member of the Italian language staff at Swinburne Institute, unknown to us, was living in retirement in the country. It then turned out, on checking, that he was also known to many of the staff we interviewed at different institutions.

Most people are keen to remember and to share, and are actually pleased that someone is interested in documenting their part in the history of Italian language teaching. But not all people we contacted were so willing to participate—and the histories and memories that they might have remain elusive to us.

We have also learned through this project that people do not remember events in the same way or that they even remember the same things. It is important therefore to tap into multiple voices and sources to obtain the most comprehensive information.

We are conscious, though, that time is passing and that those people who were around and active in the 1960s and early 1970s are already becoming hard to track down if they are still alive.

All in all, there are different histories and different outcomes for Italian at different institutions—albeit with clear predictive patterns about the present emerging. Some Italian programs continue to flourish, others have been closed down, with a small number revived in very limited fashion after several years. We are of course intrigued to see if historical patterns we observed for Italian in Melbourne, e.g., (a) the distinction between traditional and non-traditional universities and respective pathways to provision; and (b) the assistance of colleagues in other languages, especially French, may have been replicated elsewhere in Australia, as well as the extent to which they may also be linked to language provision over the long term in other cities and states.

We strongly believe that a nationwide effort of remembering and recording of language teaching, especially the beginnings, would be an important achievement. Those of us who are located in the languages areas of our universities are well placed to write our own histories once the initial research and collation of data have been achieved. Indeed, as previously noted, the work of Fornasiero and West-Sooby (2012) and Barko and Martin (1997) in particular provides excellent models of what detailed historical work can bring to the public record for the benefit of everyone in the sector. Such research could also be a very fruitful student project within languages/linguistics/history disciplines towards an honours or graduate thesis.

While we did not have time or resources to explore this avenue for this study, the new alumni culture fostered by many universities is undoubtedly a valuable resource to be tapped—memory is important for former students as well.

All this is very interesting but the point to be made is this, such history is important and needs to be documented. Of course, the historical research we have in mind has wide scope: Italian is but one language taught in the Australian tertiary sector, with many more language histories still to be written. What is crucial, we believe, is to start now as time really is of the essence.

References

- Alexander, F. (1963). *Campus at Crawley*. Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire for the University of Western Australia Press.
- Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA). (1980). *Review of multicultural and migrant education*. Melbourne: AIMA.
- Australian Universities Commission. (1975). *Languages and linguistics in Australian universities: Report of the working party on languages and linguistics to the Universities Commission* (also known as the Kramer Report). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Baldwin, J. (2019). *Languages other than English in Australian higher education*. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
- Barko, I., & Martin, A. (1997). A short history of the teaching of French in Australian universities. In P. Lane & J. West-Sooby (Eds.), *Traditions and mutations in French studies: The Australian scene* (pp. 19–92). Mount Nebo: Boombana Publications.
- Carroll, B. (1995). *A decade of achievement: Phillip Institute of Technology*. Abbotsford: RMIT Press.
- Chisholm, A. (1957). We are still waiting for Italian. *Babel*, 6, 8–10.
- Chisholm, A. (1958). *Men were my milestones*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia. (1964). *Tertiary education in Australia* (also known as the Martin report). Canberra: Government Printer.
- Commonwealth of Australia. (1957). *Report of the committee on Australian universities* (known as the Murray report). Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer.
- Di Biase, B., Andreoni, G., Andreoni, H., & Dyson, B. (1994). *Unlocking Australia's language potential. Profiles of 9 key languages in Australia* (Vol. 6, Italian). Deakin: The National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia.
- Dunne, K., & Pavlyshyn, M. (2015). Less commonly taught languages in Australian higher education in 2013: *Plus ça change....* In C. Travis, J. Hajek, C. Nettelbeck, B. Beckmann, & A. Lloyd-Smith (Eds.), *Practices and policies. Current research in languages and cultures education. Selected proceedings of the second national LCNAU colloquium, Canberra 3–5 July 2013* (pp. 9–15). Melbourne: Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities.
- Fornasiero, J., & West-Sooby, J. (2012). A tale of resilience: The history of modern European languages at the University of Adelaide. In N. Harvey, J. Fornasiero, G. McCarthy, C. Macintyre, & C. Crossin (Eds.), *A history of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide 1876–2012* (pp. 133–180). Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press.
- Griffin, J. (1988). *Schiassi, Omero (1877–1956)*. *Australian dictionary of biography*. National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. <http://adb.edu.au/biography/schiassi-omero-8357/text14667>
- Group of Eight (Go8). (2007). *Languages in crisis: A rescue plan for Australia*. www.go8.edu.au/_documents/university-staff/agreements/go8-languages-in-crisis-discussion-paper.pdf
- Harvey, N., Fornasiero, J., McCarthy, G., Macintyre, C., & Crossin, C. (Eds.). (2012). *A history of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide 1876–2012*. Adelaide: University of Adelaide Press.
- Hawley, D. S. (1982). *Foreign language study in Australian tertiary institutions 1974–1981*. Wollongong: University of Wollongong.

- La Trobe University. (1977). *La Trobe University calendar 1977* (Vol. 1). Bundoora: La Trobe University.
- LCNAU Background. (2018). <https://www.lcnau.org/background/>
- Leal, B. (1991). *Widening our horizons: Report of the review of the teaching of modern languages in higher education* (known as the Leal Report) (Vol. 1). Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Letters to the Editor. (1956). *The Melbourne Age*, September 13, p. 2; September 15, p. 2; September 19, p. 2; September 20, p. 2; September 22, p. 2; September 24, p. 2; September 25, p. 2.
- Mayne, A. (1997). *Reluctant Italians? One hundred years of the Dante Alighieri Society in Melbourne 1896–1996*. Melbourne: Dante Alighieri Society.
- McDowell, B. (2013). *Historical research: A guide to writers of dissertations, theses, articles, and books*. Routledge: ProQuest Ebook Central. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unimelb.edu.au/detail.action?docID=1569819>
- Musolino, W. (1988–1989). In memoriam Joseph Gioscio. *Spunti e ricerche*, 1(4), 4–5.
- Nettelbeck, C., Byron, J., Clyne, M., Hajek, J., Lo Bianco, J., & McLaren, A. (2007). *Beginners LOTE (Languages other than English) in Australian universities: An audit survey and analysis*. Canberra: The Australian Academy of the Humanities.
- O’Toole, J., & Beckett, D. (2013). *Educational research: Creative thinking and doing* (2nd ed.). South Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Obituary. (1987, September). *University of Melbourne News*, 1(8), 6.
- Scott, J. (1989). The open door. In W. Breen (Ed.), *Building La Trobe University* (pp. 177–184). Bundoora: La Trobe University Press.
- Turney, C., Bygott, U., & Chippendale, P. (1991). *Australia’s first. A history of the university of Sydney* (Vol. 1, pp. 1850–1939). Sydney: Hale & Iremonger.
- University of Melbourne Archives (UMA). (1958–1959). UM312, 1958, item 393; UM312, 1959, item 819.
- University of Melbourne, Joint Committee of Enquiry. (1913). Report of the Joint Committee of Enquiry submitted to Council at its meeting n^o. 14, Monday 17 November 1913. Council minutes, 1 November 1913, item 3, 461–475.
- University of Sydney. (1931). *University of Sydney calendar 1931*. <http://calendararchive.usyd.edu.au/Calendar/1931/1931.pdf>
- University of Western Australia. (1929). *Calendar for the University of Western Australia for the year 1929*. Perth: Fred W.M. Simpson, Government Printer.
- Wigglesworth, G. (Ed.). (2004). *Proceedings of the “Marking our Difference” conference 2003*. Parkville: School of Languages, University of Melbourne.
- Wykes, O. (1966). *Survey of foreign language teaching in the Australian universities*. Canberra: Australian Humanities Research Council.
- Wykes, O., & King, M. (1968). *Teaching of foreign languages in Australia*. Hawthorn: Australian Council for Educational Research.

John Hajek is Professor of Italian in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne. He is a linguist with wide research interests, including language education at all levels. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.

Jennifer Baldwin is a research assistant at the University of Melbourne and the author of a major study on Languages in Australian Universities. She is currently researching and writing on the life and legacy of a Melbourne University alumna and benefactor.