

APPENDIX

Overseas contexts

Australia and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP)

The provision of English to adult speakers of other languages in Australia is described by one of its leading researchers, Anne Burns (2006: 98), as ‘privileged on a world scale’. This comment refers to the fact that the provision of English language education in Australia has been guaranteed in law as a right of settlement for new arrivals. The Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP) provides 510 hours of free tuition to immigrants and refugees in a variety of modes, from formal courses to distance learning, from home tutoring to self-paced learning through Independent Learning Centres. Some providers have also developed online learning programs. Through the Special Preparatory Program, refugees and humanitarian entrants are offered a further 100 hours of provision if they have suffered torture or trauma which could affect their learning. For those between the ages of 16 and 24 years, with fewer than seven years’ formal schooling, an additional 400 hours of tuition is available.

ESL in Australia has a national curriculum framework, the Certificates in Spoken and Written English (CSWE) developed by the New South Wales Adult Migrant English Service (NSW AMES), one of the main AMEP providers, and a national research centre which conducts research across the Program, often in close collaboration with teachers. Unlike some other curricula the Australian curriculum is ‘text-based’; its theoretical grounding is in systemic functional linguistics and the work of Michael Halliday, which has been highly influential across the Australian education system. Anne Burns writes: ‘the overarching orientation is towards the discourse competencies required to undertake a range of spoken and written genres taught through a curriculum cycle based on the notion of explicit or “visible pedagogy”’ (2006: 102).

The AMEP has undergone several major changes over the years. In the 1950s and 1960s it was a textbook-based programme with materials issued centrally from the Commonwealth Government. In the 1970s and 1980s it moved to a classroom-centred negotiated programme with teachers acting as curriculum