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The Rise and Fall of Indonesian in the Australian Education System: Implications for Language Policy and Planning

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Introduction

The history of Asian language study in Australia has been about a struggle for recognition. For much of the twentieth century, xenophobia and racism ensured that few Asians were even allowed into Australia, while in the education system, the Euro-centric focus of the British-based education system only allowed for minimal study of Asia within the curriculum. In recent decades, Australia's realisation of the political, economic and strategic importance of Asia has dramatically changed its relationship with the region. Within this evolving context, Asian languages and studies have slowly taken a greater role in the Australian education system. The National Asian Languages and Studies Strategy for Australia Schools (NALSAS) program in particular provided enormous support for four prioritised 'Asian languages'¹ – Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean. Unfortunately, the study of Indonesian has been in decline in the Australian education system in recent years.

This article will draw upon language planning and policy (LPP) theory and practice, more specifically language-in-education policy theory and practice, to examine Indonesian in the Australian education system. It is a complex endeavour to explore why the study of languages, or of particular languages, increases or decreases in popularity within an education system as the LPP process involves the consideration, *inter alia*, of linguistic, economic, political, historical and religious issues and contexts. The focus on Indonesian however, is justified in this instance, as over 80 per cent of the decline in language enrolments in Victorian government schools between 2000 and 2005 can be attributed to decreases in Indonesian language programs.

It is therefore pertinent to examine why Indonesian study has declined so steeply, while enrolments in other languages have remained relatively stable. First, this article provides a brief overview of the field of LPP, of LPP in Australia and of the study of Indonesian in Australia. Second, this article looks closely at trends in Indonesian study at the primary and secondary levels in Victoria, drawing on annual Victorian Department of Education and Training (DE&T) reports on the study of Languages Other Than English (LOTE). Third, this article analyses data collected from nineteen schools teaching Indonesian through to the senior secondary level in NSW and Victoria as part of my PhD dissertation, *Asian Languages in the Australian Education System: Implications for language policy and planning*². The data consists of interview and questionnaire materials collected from thirty one educators, LOTE teachers and coordinators, and 137 senior secondary students of Indonesian. This research enables us to investigate in more detail, a number of significant factors that have impacted on the success of Indonesian programs. By examining some of the

structural issues (teacher supply, content of programs, etc) and non-structural issues (the impact of political events on attitudes within school communities, economic factors, etc) this article's analysis of Indonesian provides important insights for the future of Indonesian in the education system and for the development of LPP practice and theory for second language study. The importance of recognising LPP as a social and cultural construct (Christ, 1997; Schiffman, 1996) will be highlighted.

Language policy and planning

LPP involves deliberate attempts to change the use of languages, the language code itself, the study of languages and/or the status or prestige of languages. Language policy can be overt or formal, such as those represented in laws, regulations, rules and practices, or they can be covert or informal and represented, for example, in the discourses of governments and societies (Baldauf, 2005b). LPP is a powerful mechanism that can be used to control people and communities by taking or granting power and privilege within societies. The use of LPP has been noted as far back as early recorded history; processes resulting from the actions of individuals, religious institutions, governments, and through the course of exploration and invention. However, it was within the post-Second World War context, with the gradual demise of large-scale colonialism, that the practice of LPP began to significantly evolve into a cohesive field (See Ricento, 2000 for historical discussion of field). Over the last fifty years, LPP has emerged both as a powerful tool for governments and societies, and as a field of academic study and practice, transforming from a naïve model of national and economic advancement to a conflicting, complex and influential means of control, justice and development.

LPP practices initially focused on the developing world and the goals of the process at this time included national unification, modernisation, efficiency and democratisation. LPP was promoted as a neutral practice, conducted in an ahistorical and decontextualised framework (Ricento, 2000). From the mid-1960s, the theoretical development of the field evolved through the formulation of definitions and frameworks for the LPP process (See for example, Cooper, 1989; Fishman, 1974a, 1984, 1992; Haugen, 1966; Hornberger, 1994; Jernudd, 1993). However, during the 1970s and 1980s, the field came under heavy criticism for the underlying assumptions of 1) neutrality and 2) rationality in the LPP process. Luke, McHoul & Mey (1990:27), for example, argue that the false belief in neutrality has led to 'a failure to tackle the hidden agendas – political, social, educational and otherwise – of particular forms of government, economic relations, politics and social organization.' The problem with a rational problem/solution framework, according to Ricento & Hornberger (1996:406) is that this model views complex sociocultural phenomena as 'manageable problems amenable to study and solution within the parameters of normative science,' an approach which they argue fails to account for policy development processes and why policy is or is not successful.

An increasing and critical awareness of the possibilities, as well as the limitations of LPP and its theory developed (See for example, Cobarrubias & Fishman, 1983; Das Gupta & Ferguson, 1977; Fishman, 1974b; Jernudd & Das Gupta, 1971; Kloss, 1971; Pennycook, 2000) and by the late 1980s, language planning was viewed as inextricably linked with political processes, with the language itself only one

component of the process. There are four major types of LPP – corpus; status; language-in-education, and prestige planning. LPP concerning any of these often interconnected branches needs to involve a consideration of the religious, social, political, economic, national, psychological and demographic contexts surrounding language study and use (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). The branch of LPP theory most relevant to this paper is ‘language-in-education planning and theory’ which deals with the study of second and/or foreign languages in the education system. However, as this article demonstrates, the study of Indonesian in the Australian education system is impacted by and impacts on the broader issues of status and prestige planning.

The Australian Context

Australia has had a long history of multilingualism and the use of overt and covert practices and policies to deal with language related matters (See Clyne, 1991:6-24). In relation to second language study in schools and universities, courses traditionally focused on Latin and Ancient Greek, with the gradual introduction of modern languages such as French and German. At various times a number of other languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Italian, Russian, were available in some schools and universities. However, it was the significant increase in migration following World War II, which set the context for radical changes in second language learning in Australia. With the influx of European languages into the Australian community due to migration, heated arguments developed around what the purpose of language study in the education system was and whose needs were to be addressed. By the end of the 1970s, after persistent lobbying, several European languages gained a more permanent position in the education system when they were put in place as matriculation subjects in certain states (Ozolins, 1993). However, due to the lingering impact of the White Australia policy, Asian languages did not enjoy the same success in the education system at this time.

In 1987, after extensive and lengthy lobbying by a coalition of a broad cross section of Australian society including government departments, community groups, pressure groups and universities, a comprehensive National Policy on Languages (NPL) was enacted (Lo Bianco, 1987). The languages policy encompassed the issue nationally and was based on four guiding principles:

1. Competence in English
2. Maintenance and development in languages other than English
3. Provision of services in languages other than English
4. Opportunities for learning second languages (Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, 1984)

The development of the NPL was not without contention, with the Asian Studies Association of Australia’s (ASAA) submission to the Senate inquiry into a national languages policy recommending that a national council be set up to specifically develop Asian language study. While the NPL itself stayed away from categorising ‘languages taught in schools into invidious categories - ‘Asian’, ‘migrant’, ‘traditional foreign languages’, etc.’ (Ozolins, 1985:296), after continued lobbying by ASAA, the Asian Studies Council (ASC), a national council for the promotion of Asian studies and languages in the education system, was established in 1986. With the increasing emphasis on economic rationalism in political debates at the time, the ASC stressed the importance of economic and pragmatic reasoning in regard to Australia’s future;

‘The proper study of Asia and its languages is about national survival in an intensely competitive world’ (Asian Studies Council, 1988:2). In 1994, a report *Asian Languages and Australia’s Economic Future* (Rudd, 1994) was prepared for the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia which deals with issues of national significance. This report led to the implementation of the National Asian Languages / Studies Strategy for Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy. The underlying rationale for the strategy was based on the projection that eight of Australia’s top ten export markets would be in East Asia by 2012 and that Australia’s economic success depended on a greater economic interaction with the region. It was predicted that Japan, China, Korea, Singapore and Indonesia would be Australia’s five largest export markets and as a result, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean became ‘priority Asian languages’ in the Australian education system. Funding for the NALSAS program ended in 2002.

Indonesian study in Australian schools

Indonesian was first introduced into Australian secondary schools in 1966 and rapidly established itself as an important Asian language in the school system. By 1969, when very few schools offered an Asian language, seventy seven schools in Australia included Indonesian programs, while only twenty nine schools included Japanese and eight Chinese (Auchmuty, 1970; Kamada, 1994). In 1994, when the NALSAS program prioritised Indonesian, as well as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, in the Australian education system, Indonesian was already offered in hundreds of schools in all states and territories in Australia. While around 90,000 primary and secondary students were studying Indonesian in 1994 when NALSAS funding began, by 2001, 316,877 primary and secondary students across Australia were studying the language, second only to Japanese (EREBUS Consulting Partners, 2002).

The study of Indonesian, however, has been in decline in recent years. At the tertiary level, ASAA has succeeded in gaining sustained attention in the media of the plight of Indonesian, highlighting a decline in tertiary student enrolments of 15 per cent between 2001 and 2005 (See for example, Barton, 2004; Cervini, 2004; de Silva, 2005; Jeffrey, 2005; Morris, 2002; Russell, 2003; Williams, 2004). In Victoria, at the primary and secondary levels, student enrolments in Indonesian in government schools decreased by 19.1 per cent between 2000 and 2005, significantly higher than the average decline across all language programs of 6.5 per cent. Remarkably, the decrease in enrolments in Indonesian accounts for 82.0 per cent of the decline in language study in Victorian government schools between 2000 and 2005. At the Year 12 level enrolments in Indonesian in government schools increased by 2.9 per cent between 2000 and 2005, although they decreased by 7.1 per cent across all sectors (government, Catholic and independent schools) (VCAA, 2004a, 2006b; Victoria. DE&T, 2000, 2006b). In NSW government schools, Year 12 enrolments in Indonesian decreased by 42.9 per cent between 2000 and 2005, although they only decreased by 9.7 per cent across all systems (NSW. BOS, 2001, 2006; NSW. DE&T, 2000, 2006). While these figures are limited to two states in Australia, they are states where Indonesian is well established and provide a strong indication of the struggle to maintain enrolments in Indonesian study.

Research method

Ideally, any study of Indonesian in the education system would consider all states and territories in Australia. In reality, few national statistics exist for LOTE study and centralised records are not maintained by all sectors of the education system in each state. As a result, the first research section of this article will focus on Indonesian in Victorian government primary and secondary schools. Victoria has one of the most extensive LOTE programs in Australia, with the Victorian DE&T recommending students study a language from Prep to Year 10 for a minimum of 150 minutes per week (Victoria. DE&T, 2006a). DE&T also produces an annual report on the implementation of LOTE programs in primary and secondary government schools, which forms the data source for the next part of this paper (Victoria. DE&T, 2000, 2002b, 2002c, 2005a, 2005b, 2006b). Where possible, statistics from all education sectors, available through the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), are utilised.

While the case study of Victoria will provide detail of trends in Indonesian study as well as outline the nature of Indonesian programs, there are numerous, complex factors that impact on the successful implementation and management of any language program. The second research-based section of this article analyses data collected from nineteen Victorian and NSW secondary schools that teach Indonesian through to the senior secondary level. Data collection for this section involves a broader representation of LOTE programs in that both Victoria and NSW are represented and data was collected from across all education systems. Victoria was chosen as a site for data collection because of its extensive LOTE recommendations, while NSW was chosen as a second data collection site because it has, in comparison to Victoria, a minimal requirement for LOTE study – a mandate of 100 hours of languages education at the Year 7 or 8 levels. The nineteen schools that participated in the study include nine government schools, five independent schools and five Catholic schools. The schools were chosen to ensure that they were as representative as possible of the three education systems (state, Catholic/CEO and independent/IND), of gender (boys, girls or co-educational), of location (metropolitan or regional), and of state (Victoria or NSW). Schools will be referred to by education system and state, for example, *State 1 NSW* or *CEO 1 VIC* (See Appendix 1 for full details). Thirty one interviews were conducted with teachers of Indonesian (referred to as T1, T2, etc), LOTE coordinators (referred to as LC1, LC2, etc) and senior administrators not involved in language teaching such as principals and senior curriculum advisors (referred to as SA1, SA2, etc). Questionnaires were completed by 137 students of Indonesian at the Year 11 and 12 levels. The interviews and questionnaires were collected and recorded in 2003 and 2004.

Indonesian study at the primary level, Victoria

School programs and student enrolments

There have been significant changes in primary Indonesian enrolments in Victoria between 2000 and 2005. In 2000, 404 primary schools offered Indonesian, representing 31.5 per cent of primary LOTE programs but by 2005, the number of primary schools offering the language had decreased to 320 schools. The number of students studying Indonesian decreased accordingly from 85,394 students or 30.9 per

cent of student studying a LOTE, to 67,711 students, or 25.9 per cent (Victoria. DE&T, 2000, 2006b). Although Indonesian had the highest primary level student enrolments for many years, from 2003, Italian became the most studied language at the primary level (75,490 students in 2005). This has not been due to a large movement of students towards Italian. Rather the position of Italian is due to the rapid and steep decline of Indonesian programs and student enrolments.

While the number of primary schools offering Indonesian decreased from 404 to 320 between 2000 and 2005, in actuality, the number of schools who discontinued their Indonesian programs was 134. A further fifty new schools introduced Indonesian into their curricula. Overall, 50 per cent of the schools that discontinued their Indonesian programs did not introduce another language, with 50 per cent introducing a different language. As this study did not include the collection of qualitative primary school data, further research is required to understand the motivations for primary schools to introduce certain languages, why program implementation does not work and the inability or unwillingness of schools to introduce other languages.

The study of Indonesian is particularly strong in non-metropolitan areas. The Victorian education system is divided into nine education regions – four metropolitan and five non-metropolitan. In 2005, Indonesian was the most studied language in five of the nine educational regions in Victoria – four of these were in non-metropolitan regions. Indonesian was studied most intensively in the Loddon Mallee region (non-metropolitan) where 77.7 per cent of all students studying a LOTE were studying Indonesian (Victoria. DE&T, 2006b). The president of the Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers Association (2004) believes that Indonesian is particularly popular in regional areas because it uses the Roman alphabet and because, ‘from a literacy point of view...you see a letter and it has a specific sound, it doesn’t change...it’s very easy to remember.’ More importantly, she argues, it is easy to demonstrate this to parents and convince them of the benefits of their children studying the language. With the issue of English literacy development at the forefront of many parents and educators minds, this is a persuasive argument and not just limited to non-metropolitan areas.

The nature of Indonesian programs at the primary level

While 25.9 per cent of all students studying a LOTE are studying Indonesian at primary schools in Victoria in 2005, it is important to examine the nature of the programs. What is the content of the program? Who is teaching the classes? How much time is provided for language study? For all primary language programs in 2005, only 46.4 per cent of students were in programs that focused on the language, while 53.1 per cent of students were in classes focused on culture and language awareness (The remaining 0.5 per cent of students were in bilingual programs). For students of Indonesian, this was even less so, with only 40.9 per cent of students in language focused classes, with a majority of programs largely focused on cultural studies (Victoria. DE&T, 2006b). The challenge remains for language programs generally and more so for Indonesian, to increase the focus of programs on language content. The average time provided for Indonesian programs was 56.2 minutes per week for Indonesian programs - just below the overall average of 63.4 minutes for LOTE programs per week and well below the recommended 150 minutes per week of LOTE study.

In 2005, there were 139 fully qualified teachers³ of Indonesian teaching at 36.9 per cent of the schools offering Indonesian. A further 124 teachers with some level of qualification⁴ were teaching Indonesian at another 23.8 per cent of the schools. At the remaining 39.4 per cent of schools teaching Indonesian, non-LOTE qualified classroom teachers taught the language (Victoria. DE&T, 2006b). Approximately half of students of Indonesian are located in non-metropolitan areas and while the supply and training of qualified LOTE teachers has been identified as an ongoing issue in the teaching of languages, particularly in regional areas (Nicholas, AACLME, & NLLIA., 1993; Victoria. DE&T, 2002a), 63.7 per cent of qualified teachers of Indonesian were employed in non-metropolitan areas. While this does not shed any light on whether teacher supply is an ongoing issue for primary programs, it demonstrates that Indonesian programs in non-metropolitan regions are staffed by qualified teachers and/or that teachers can access training opportunities to develop their skills as Indonesian teachers.

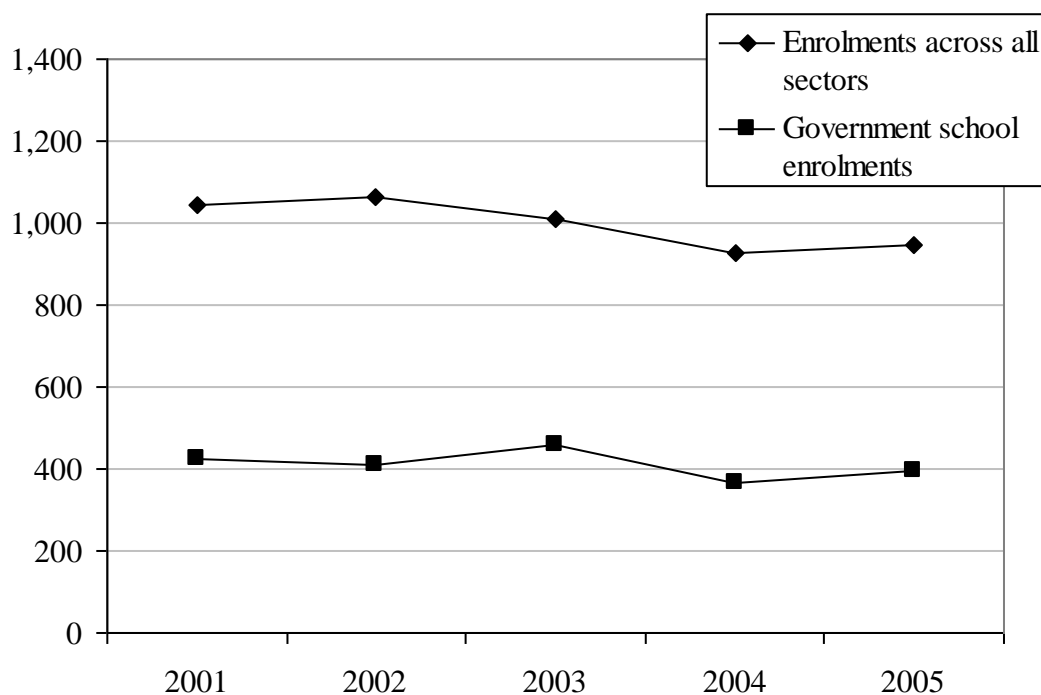
Indonesian study at the secondary level, Victoria

School programs and student enrolments

The number of government secondary schools offering Indonesian in Victoria has decreased slightly from 134 in 2000 to 127 in 2005. Student enrolments have decreased by 4,061 students between 2000 and 2005, a decline of 14.4 per cent - higher than the overall decrease of 8.4 per cent across all language over the same time period at government secondary schools (Victoria. DE&T, 2000, 2006b).

The number of Year 12 students studying Indonesian between 2000 and 2005 has fluctuated, but encouragingly risen by 2.9 per cent overall. In 2005, it was the fourth most studied language at the Year 12 level after Japanese, French and German. Most languages have fluctuated at the Year 12 level over the same period of time and it is encouraging that there has not been a steep or continuous decline in Indonesian over this time period. The largest decline has been at the Year 10 level, a 48.2 per cent decrease over the same time period, which may have more serious consequences for Year 12 enrolments in the next few years (In comparison, enrolments across all languages at the Year 10 level declined 35.7 per cent over the same time period suggesting a problem with retention rates at the mid-school levels, as well as for Indonesian in particular).

Figure 1 Trend in Year 12 Indonesian enrolments, 2000 – 2005, Victoria
(VCAA, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, 2006a, 2006b; Victoria. DE&T,
2000, 2002b, 2002c, 2005a, 2005b, 2006b)



As at the primary level, the study of Indonesian dominates in non-metropolitan educational regions. At the secondary level in 2005, Indonesian was the most studied language in four of the nine educational regions in Victoria, all in non-metropolitan areas. It was studied most intensively in the Loddon Mallee region (non-metropolitan) where 51.3 per cent of all secondary students studying a LOTE were studying Indonesian.

The nature of Indonesian programs at the secondary level

At the secondary level, programs are more tightly focused on the provision of language centred courses. In 2000, 82.0 per cent of Indonesian programs were language focused, increasing to 91.3 per cent in 2005. This figure is slightly below the overall LOTE program average of 95.3 per cent. Contact time at the Year 7 and 8 levels was 142 minutes per week, and by the Year 12 level, provision in Indonesian had increased to an average of 240 minutes per week.

In 2005, there were 189 fully qualified² teachers of Indonesian teaching at 81.9 per cent schools offering Indonesian. A further sixty four teachers with some level of qualification³ were teaching Indonesian at another 13.4 per cent of the schools. At the remaining 4.8 per cent of schools, non-LOTE qualified classroom teachers taught Indonesian.

In summation, Indonesian programs in Victoria government primary and secondary schools have different strengths and weaknesses. While primary enrolments in the language have decreased quite sharply in recent years, Indonesian is still one of the most widely studied languages in the state. The nature of Indonesian programs, however, is variable, with only 40.9 per cent of students in programs that focus on the teaching of the language. Further research is needed to understand why enrolments and programs have decreased so rapidly and how LPP can best support and improve

the teaching of the language at the primary level. The decline in language study at the secondary level is also largely attributable to the decrease in the number of students of Indonesian, particularly at the Year 10 level. On a positive note, a vast majority of Indonesian programs were language focused and taught by fully qualified teachers. The second part of this paper examines a number of issues within and outside of schools that have contributed to the decline of Indonesian study at the secondary level in recent years.

Why offer Indonesian at secondary schools?

Participants at the nineteen secondary schools in Victoria and NSW were asked to identify the history of Indonesian in their schools and why the language was originally introduced, with some schools identifying multiple reasons. The main rationale, identified in 76.9 per cent of schools, was to increase access to Asian Studies in the school curriculum. Given the importance of Indonesia as a regional neighbour, Indonesian was seen as the appropriate choice for these schools. This argumentation strongly reflects the line of reasoning of ASAA and the Asian Studies Council, who lobbied the government extensively during the 1970s and 1980s. The Australian government, through the formation of the Asian Studies Council in 1986, took up this line of argument, with both groups pushing for greater inclusion of Indonesian studies due to their location at Australia's door, as well as for security purposes (See for example, ASAA. Committee on Asian Studies., FitzGerald, & Drysdale, 1980; Asian Studies Council, 1988).

In contrast, 23.1 per cent of schools had actually wanted to introduce Japanese but could not secure teachers and therefore introduced Indonesian, for which there was a more ready teacher supply. For example, at *State 4 VIC*, the school could not find a Japanese teacher and only approved the introduction of Indonesian when the teacher agreed to sign a ten-year contract. 30.8 per cent of schools introduced Indonesian as it was considered easier to learn than Japanese, which has a writing system based on characters and *kana* scripts. Indonesian uses a Roman alphabetic script and students, participants believe, can achieve far more in a shorter period of time when compared to learning a script-based language. In a desire to make Asian languages both accessible and challenging for students, Indonesian coexists or had coexisted with Japanese in 44.4 per cent of the schools offering Indonesian, with Indonesian presented, linguistically, as an easier language for students to learn and Japanese as a language to challenge students. Two schools offer Indonesian because they are senior secondary colleges and provide the languages that are offered at feeder schools.

Indonesian was established in around 40 per cent of schools included in this sample during the 1970s and 1980s. The remaining schools introduced Indonesian in the early 1990s in conjunction with the NALSAS push for Asian languages.

Struggling to maintain a foothold

Within this study, 36.8 per cent of schools have discontinued or were in the process of phasing out their Indonesian language programs. Differences can be seen between programs in NSW and Victoria. Most of the programs that were discontinued or about to be discontinued are in NSW, while the programs in Victoria reporting substantial

decreases in enrolments, although schools were still committed to offering on-campus courses.

Two schools, *State 7 NSW* and *State 8 NSW*, dropped the language almost immediately upon introducing it in the early 1990s due to only one level of examination being available for both first and second language speakers at the time. This issue was resolved by the introduction of a two-tier examination for Indonesian in 1994, although the schools did not reintroduce the language. Two independent schools, *IND 2 NSW* and *IND 4 NSW*, have discontinued or are about to discontinue Indonesian due to the wishes of the school clientele, who no longer see Indonesian as an economically useful language. This will be discussed further in the next section. At *State 9 NSW*, the Indonesian teacher moved on and the school was not able to find a replacement, while *CEO 3 NSW*, a senior secondary college, was about to discontinue Indonesian because its two feeder schools no longer offered the language. In Victoria, *CEO 3 VIC* discontinued Indonesian after student numbers became too low to continue with Year 9 classes. Despite great effort from the school, argues SA1, the closure was the consequence of native speaking Indonesian teachers being unable to control their classes, resulting in students losing respect for the language.

While seven schools have or are closing their Indonesian programs, of the twelve schools that still have continuing Indonesian programs in this study, 73.3 per cent reported a significant decrease in Indonesian enrolments. For example, LOTE coordinators at *State 1 VIC*, *State 3 VIC*, *State 6 VIC* and *IND 5 NSW* all reported drops in enrolments at the Year 7 and 8 levels as well as the Year 11 and 12 levels. LC37 points out that a decline at both the junior and senior levels of schooling makes rebuilding a language program difficult as the ‘success’ of a program is often dependent upon strong senior student numbers or at the very least, potential Year 11 and 12 students through strong junior program enrolments. If both are lacking, the future of a language program may be under threat within a school. LC19 at *State 5 VIC*, a senior secondary college, predicts that the school will not offer Indonesian in a couple of years as the numbers of students studying Indonesian in the feeder schools was continuing to drop dramatically.

While this brief outline of why some schools discontinued their Indonesian programs identifies a number of issues that impacted on programs, participants were asked to elaborate on any particular issues that they felt had a strong negative impact on Indonesian programs, with issues beyond the school level implementation of Indonesian study, particularly socio-political and economic arguments, dominating. We now turn to these factors.

Sociopolitical events impacting on Indonesian study

1. Teacher perspective

Indonesian has received a lot of support in the education system through lobbying by ASAA, governmental rhetoric through the 1980s and early 1990s, and NALSAS funding. Participants in this study argue that the place of Indonesian within schools in recent years has been dramatically affected by a sequence of sociopolitical events as well as changes in the approach of the Australian government to the Asia-Pacific area. 83.3 per cent of teachers of Indonesian interviewed identified numerous events that they believe have contributed to negative cultural perceptions of Indonesia within the

teaching community, the student community and most influentially, the parental community. These include the Asian monetary crisis in 1997⁵, the violence experienced in East Timor following their decision to secede from Indonesia in 1999; the events of September 11, 2001 and the association of terrorism with Muslims; the Bali bombing in which scores of Australians were killed in 2002, and the Marriott Hotel bombing in Jakarta in 2003. The perception that Indonesia may have been supporting ‘boat people’ or the arrival of ‘illegal immigrants’ was also an issue discussed within school communities. Examples of teacher comments on the decline of Indonesian include,

- Right across the board if you talk to other schools, right across the board you would see and they will tell you that the reason was the Bali Bombing. People get turned off and they think the way to go about it is to ignore the problem (LC18).
- Because of the Muslim factor and because of the Bali bombing (T6).
- We’re Catholic and we were raising money to send to the East Timorese people that were being massacred by the Indonesians! East Timor is a really Catholic community and the school is a Catholic school raising money for them...And even look, I felt it too personally a bit...but just like ‘Indonesia! What are you doing!?’ (T6).
- I think it is really to do with the perception of Indonesian in the wider community and the valuing or devaluing of Indonesian (LC21).
- When was the bombing? 2002, that year in particular it did. Very, very severely. That’s why in Year 9 now our elective numbers are right down (LC37).

Indonesian teachers and LOTE coordinators reported mixed reactions to these events from the student population. For example, LC1 commented, ‘Sometimes we worry that that [adverse events] might have an effect, but I think the boys see past that,’ while LC18 argued that,

we need to be literate and knowledgeable so we have acceptance of other people’s cultures and if we are accepting, the chances are there will be more harmony and the chances are there’ll be less trouble. So...students are making that connection and students are actually great. They’re quite excited.

On the other hand, LC37 who works at *IND 5 NSW*, reports that the events have impacted on student numbers because “It makes them frightened.” While student numbers dropped after the violence in East Timor following independence from Indonesia, they had begun to rise again, only to drop after the Bali bombing. This was followed by the Jakarta bombing, with LC37 arguing that the sequence of events had led to poor enrolments for a number of years, resulting in weak class sizes at all year levels. The school must build the Indonesian program up from Year 7 again. At *CEO 1 VIC*, which is located within a predominantly Anglo-ethnic population, T6 argues that recent events in Indonesia, “makes it really hard because I think kids struggle enough with languages and this ‘Anglo Saxon’ background that they come from and then for them to be thrown all these other obstacles as well...”

2. Student perspective

While student numbers have decreased significantly over recent years, those who have continued with Indonesian to the senior secondary level are well aware of some

of the negative features of Indonesian society, although this has not deterred them from continuing with their studies. When asked about negative images students have of the language and culture they are studying, 49.6 per cent of students discussed violence in Indonesia. This encompassed violence associated with terrorism as well as with religion. Students expressed a fear of violence and the danger of travelling to Indonesia, as well as a fear of terrorism, although many students recognised that a minority of extremists in the country perpetrate these acts. For example,

- With all the violence that is happening it puts you off going there because are we safe? S405
- Indonesia is an unstable country and so traveling there poses a risk. S46
- Also the recent Bali bombings have left a negative impact on my view of Indonesia. S537
- Terrorist groups that operate within the culture. S137
- Bali bombings - but obviously it's a minority. S49
- No. Besides a few extremists like members of Al-Qaeda. S224

The Muslim religion itself was not raised as a negative issue by a majority of students, with one student objecting to the conception that all Muslims are terrorists.

- People seem to stereotype all Indonesians as Muslims and therefore terrorists. S529

However, violence associated with religious conflict was an issue for students. For example,

- The country as a whole is very religious in both a good and a bad way. Just like other traditionalist religions there can be a lot of violence. S475
- Yes the bombing, the army and religious conflicts. S324
- Religious conflict... S325
- ...Aech province insurgencies... S428
- Also the political and religious strife in provinces such as Aech and the East Timor conflict. S328

Only two students wrote overtly racist comments about the issue of terrorism and Islam.

3. Parent perspective (reported)

While data collected for this study did not involve interviews with parents, 72.7 per cent of teachers of Indonesian expressed concern at the negative influence emanating from segments of the parental community. While 37.5 per cent of teachers who discussed this issue believed there was a general devaluing of Indonesian study within the parental community, 62.5 per cent of teachers relayed specific comments parents had directed to them. For example,

I've been teaching Indonesian since 1997. So since the East Timor massacre, the Bali Bombing...I had really, really bad responses, mainly from parents actually, and the kids sort of go along with their parents because the kids themselves have no idea. They don't see the connection at all. But I still had parents who insisted on their children being taken out of the class (LC21).

I have a lot of kids who want to do Indonesian but I have parents who come to me and say there is no way that my child will be doing Indonesian. Because, not so much that it's even a language, but that it's Indonesian...for the first time, parents saying, 'I don't want my child to do it. I don't want my child learning the language of terrorists' (LC30).

I think there's still a lot of negativity out there amongst the community, the parents and the staff, about languages and about Asian languages in particular. And particularly Indonesian because of the Muslim factor and because of the Bali bombing... I've had parents say to me, 'Oh, I don't want them learning anything about a Muslim culture.' Or really racist stuff like that (T6).

Even when students choose to continue with the study of Indonesian, they can still experience intense pressure from home. When counselling a Year 12 student who was studying Indonesian, LC19 reports that while the student enjoyed studying Indonesian, she revealed "to me one day, about her father - HATES Indonesians and HATES the fact that I'm studying Indonesian;" an attitude LC19 believes weighs heavily on the student and impacts negatively on her language learning experience.

LC19 also witnessed the fear apparent amongst parts of the parental community when organising for a group of students from Indonesia to make a homestay trip to the school. After organising for the visiting students to stay with local students, LC19 found that "now with the group of Indonesians coming, some strong Christian families were saying, 'Yes, I'll host but only if they're Christian'. They're all Muslims! They're from a really Muslim area." A number of families chose to withdraw their offer to host a student. Alternative families within the school community offered to host the students, but LC19 was surprised at the lack of tolerance of some parents despite having organised numerous information evenings to alleviate concerns of families and to inform them of Islam and Muslim culture.

The manager of the Languages Unit at the Victorian DE&T also reported that parents had been in direct contact with her demanding that their children's schools withdraw Indonesian from the curriculum, a decision, the manager points out, that can only be made at a school level.

The role of government in influencing cultural perceptions

While most teachers discussed the impact of political events on Indonesian study, 36.7 per cent of teachers of Indonesian argued that it is also the impact of federal government policies which is contributing to the demise of the language, that is, how the government interacts with Asia, Indonesia and the issue of terror. They argue that broader governmental policies are perpetuating the negative perceptions of Indonesian amongst school communities. For example, T33 contends that the study of Indonesian has been devalued by changing governmental interaction with the area.

The messages that have been sent out by our participation in Timor, our handling of sensitive issues around East Timor and our current handling of the Timor Gap treaty is symptomatic of a growing arrogance on the part of Australia to the area...Now I think the Howard government's emphasis on foreign relations centres on the North Atlantic more...and [gives] the perception that the cultural divide between Australia and Indonesian is widening if anything because of

perceptions that Indonesia's religious differences with Australia are going to deepen rather than anything else.

Why aren't we as a nation encouraging cultural understanding? But I think what has happened politically, what our government is doing, the alliance with the US, this [local] community can't value Asia given its white roots and history and given that no one ever really says we should value and understand other cultures, particularly Asian cultures. They are very different to us. I think there is a chance that I won't be able to teach Indonesian in a few years here...(LC19)

I just think – look at the way we behaved in Timor. We were robbing them blind...that's just the way the government is at the moment, so terribly narrow-minded. I think that it's Howard's fault...I used to travel all over Asia and be proud to be an Australian. Now I'm not. I just think the way our government is behaving is shocking. So hopefully things will change. (T25)

While these comments by teachers include personal political opinions, they also show a clear understanding of the importance and significance of federal support for the valuing or devaluing of language and cultural studies in the curriculum. While the *de facto* policy may have been in support of Asian languages in the curriculum through NALSAS program, the perceived devaluing of Australia's relationship with Indonesia and the Asian region has also impacted on programs. The variability of the cultural impact of government policies, as well as the capricious impact of world events on cultural perceptions, leave language programs and language planning and policy vulnerable to these influences.

Inaccessibility

Participants in 86.7 per cent of the schools offering Indonesian identified the negative impact of the travel restrictions as a significant factor contributing to the decline of Indonesian. While funding is no longer available to assist students in homestay trips across all languages, government travel restrictions prevent students from making any trips to Indonesia at all. This, in turn, has had a negative impact on programs in a number of schools. For example, LC14 states that “not being able to go has taken away from one of our motivating factors. We found that kids would go to Indonesia, meet their sister school, have a wonderful time and that would filter back to the school. And now that has been taken away from us.” Although there are travel restrictions in place, Indonesian teachers at 33.3 per cent of Victorian schools reported significant pressure from the parental communities to allow the trips to Indonesia to go ahead because students were so disappointed. No school in this study, however, will run school trips while government travel restrictions are in place.

Compounding this lack of physical access is the severance of sister school relations by schools in Indonesia. Only 26.7 per cent of schools in this study had managed to develop a sister school relationship with an Indonesian school, with all Australian schools losing contact with the schools over recent years. The fear, racial stereotyping and intolerance that are evident in small parts of school communities in Australia are also apparent from the Indonesian perspective. For example, the Indonesian sister school of *State 4 VIC* cut ties because it believed that the school trips from Australia were designed to spread Christianity amongst its Muslim school population. At *State 3 VIC*, LC18 reports that their Islamic sister school in Indonesia argued it was bound to cut relations with them by the Indonesian government. At *IND 4 NSW*, SA37 spoke

of the declining number of international Indonesian students attending the school “now that we’re not friendly with them and our change in foreign policy,” reflecting a perceived mutual discordance between the two countries. While two schools have managed to re-establish relationships with new schools (one Catholic, one Muslim), the travel restrictions have limited the development of these relationships.

Within the student population, this lack of social and physical access Indonesia has arguably had a harmful effect on their motivation to continue with language study. Overall, 442 students of Asian languages participated in this study, although this paper has only focused on the 137 students of Indonesian. A comparison with other groups of students of Asian languages, however, provides a greater understanding of student motivation and demotivation in relation to language study. Students were asked if they had ever seriously considered giving up language study, why and what motivated them to continue. In comparison to other groups of students, students of Indonesian are most likely to have seriously considered discontinuing with their studies (See Table 1).

Table 1 Percentage of students, by language studied, wanting to discontinue language study

Language	Percentage
Indonesian	67.0
Korean	50.0
Japanese	35.4
Chinese	33.3
Vietnamese	23.1

This can perhaps be understood to some extent by highlighting that a feature of students studying Indonesian and Korean is that they are predominantly from monolingual speaking English backgrounds. Students studying other languages were far less likely to want to discontinue with their language study and were motivated by factors that were not as easily accessible for students of Indonesian. First, a majority to 100 per cent of the student studying the other Asian languages listed above come from a LOTE speaking background, usually speaking an Asian language⁶. Second, the factors that motivate students the most to continue with their studies include the enjoyment of being bilingual/trilingual; of sharing LOTEs with friends, and of sharing pan-Asian cultural interest (for example, *manga*, *anime*, TV dramas, and music). This discourse was almost entirely absent in student replies for Indonesian, a result, in part, of the class demographics and of a lack of access physically and socially (through school trips, video link-ups, emails, etc) to Indonesian speaking peers. The teacher is the most important motivating factor for students of Indonesian. Further research is needed to develop a better understanding of motivation in learners of different languages and how teachers and policy makers can better address the differing needs of language learners.

The tensions of economic arguments

As highlighted at the beginning of the paper, the NALSAS strategy was motivated by the belief that Australia's economic success is dependent on greater economic interaction with the Asian region. According to the report, Australia lacked the appropriate export culture, cooperative attitudes, and Asia knowledge necessary to ensure Australia's economic future (Rudd, 1994). It was therefore determined that a schools based program was most appropriate to instigate the changes necessary for Australia's future economic success in Asia. The influence of the NALSAS strategy is apparent in the student questionnaires where the most important motivating influence for senior secondary students of Indonesian (72.2 per cent) in Victoria was the belief that study of the language would increase their career prospects. Bind

While the main rationale identified by schools in this study for introducing Indonesian into the curriculum was to increase access to Asian Studies, staff at two schools in NSW, *IND 2 NSW* and *IND 4 NSW*, explicitly identified the economic argument as the most important influence. LOTE coordinators and teachers at these schools talked of LOTE programs being responsive to the needs of the 'clientele.' At *IND 2 NSW*, the school community embraced Indonesian because a number of families in the school had business interests in South East Asia and many of the boys went to Bali on school surfing holidays. It is now these same factors that are contributing to the withdrawal of the program. T33 believes that a number of families with business interests in South East Asia have faced some difficulties since the Asian monetary crisis in 1997. Some parents have now been calling for Chinese (Mandarin) to be introduced instead of Indonesian as China has greater economic potential. Both the lack of economic imperative within the school to study Indonesian and the travel restrictions placed on trips by students to Indonesia militate against the continuation of Indonesian within the school. T33 argues that with no further rationale identified for the introduction and continuation of the language, the lack of support for Indonesian beyond an economic engagement, both at the school level and the governmental level, becomes apparent and is the reason the language is being phased out at the school.

At *IND 2 NSW*, LC31 argues that it is the perception within the wealthy school community that Indonesia is a 'third world country' that has led to Indonesian being replaced by Italian in the junior school. SA34, principal at the school, explained that originally there was a lot of opposition to the introduction of Indonesian, but that she had used the economic argument to get the language introduced. However, it is now this argument, and the belief that Indonesia is an economically weak country, which has contributed to the decline of the language. SA34 believes that the rationale for learning languages must be broadened beyond the economic argument in order for languages to be sustainable.

Over time people saw it [Indonesian] as pretty useless [economically]. So I think that's where it plays into parents' minds...it's very nice of them to think about that [the economic factor] but we need to show them that there are a variety of reasons, other than that one, why the study of languages in the secondary school is important and promote the understanding with them...

It is important to consider the influence of the economic argument alongside the impact of sociopolitical events. The detrimental impact of political events on cultural

perceptions is not unique to Indonesia and Indonesian. For example, French citizens and French products in Australia were the subject of a serious backlash during the testing of nuclear weapons in the Pacific in the mid-1990s (See for example, Daley, Graham, & Tippet, 1995; Lynch, 1996). The French language, however, did not suffer a sustained decline as a result of the events. In fact between 1995 and 1997, enrolments in French at the primary and secondary level in Victoria government schools increased by 10.1 per cent (Victoria. DE&T, 1995, 1998). Two LOTE coordinators who participated in this study were also French teachers and confirmed that nuclear testing in the Pacific created “a huge issue” in the school and put them under great pressure to respond to the situation, it did not impact significantly on student numbers. LC16 believes that a deeper valuing of France, the French culture and the French lifestyle limited the impact. “I mean with French, yes people had a few words about the French blowing up the South Pacific but it’s so beautiful (France) and there is France and Impressionists and cooking and it has the whole cultural thing that people know.”

However, this deeper knowledge and valuing of a language and culture has not been apparent for Indonesian in many of the schools in this study and the continuing decline in enrolments represents an extreme example of political events impacting on language study. Once the economic argument is no longer convincing, the lack of valuing of Indonesia and Indonesian culture beyond an economic argument has contributed to some school communities rapidly shunning the language. The impact of these factors is also derailing a number of the main aims of language learning within schools, including:

- Enriching our learners intellectually, educationally and culturally
- Enabling our learners to communicate across cultures
- Contributing to our strategic, economic and international development and enhancing employment and career prospects for the individual (Australia. MCEETYA, 2005:2).

The very intolerance that the study of other languages and cultures is trying to eradicate is preventing many students from benefiting from the valuable skills language and cultural study can provide.

It must also be pointed out that the economic argument concerns not only Australia’s economic relationship with Asia, but also the availability of funds within the education system. LC21 at *State 6 VIC* argues that the decline of Indonesian in her school is a result, in part, of the loss of NALSAS funding. She argues that the NALSAS funding,

gave added value to languages and languages were seen as a financially viable thing to do and I suspect that that’s part of the reasoning behind our curriculum changes. It’s that it’s no longer a cash cow and I think that’s happening in a lot of schools; I think Asian languages in particular. It means that Asian languages have to stand or fall on how valuable they are seen to be in other ways. Chinese is doing OK because it’s seen as really valuable economically, whereas Indonesian is no longer seen as an economically viable language.

LC21's views are supported by the manager of the languages unit at the Victorian DE&T who argues that the availability of extra funding created greater prestige for languages within government schools.

...the things like LOTE grants and the opportunity to do the training program, to go overseas in the last year of your language course, all of those things helped to raise the profile of LOTE in the schools significantly and the fact that schools could apply for \$500 worth of resources and almost always got it...was a real feather in the cap in language departments in schools and gave them some standing and prestige in the school community. I feel those...are quite significant losses.

Any sense of prestige resulting from a connection between NALSAS financial support and Asian languages has now dissipated, resulting in some schools viewing certain Asian languages as less valuable or economically viable. The data presented in the paper indicates that Indonesian has been particularly hard hit due to the combination of the loss of economic prestige, both in terms of the loss of NALSAS funding and a weakened Indonesian economy, and the impact of negative political events.

LPP as a social and cultural construct

The National Policy on Languages (1987) was a comprehensive national policy which engaged with social and educational issues within the Australian context. The language-in-education component of the policy aimed to address the social and educational rights of students with a monolingual English speaking background as well as those with a LOTE speaking background and encouraged the study and promotion of many languages including European, Asian and other languages such as Arabic.

The NALSAS strategy, on the other hand, represented a new form of language policy; one that was pursued through a policy forum (COAG) which focuses largely on national economic issues (Mackenzie, 2004) and based purely on an economic rationale. It did not follow the traditional route of language-in-education policy development, nor address any of the issues involved in implementation of educational policy. The strategy provides a clear example of high-level prestige planning, where significant status and funding were granted to four Asian languages. The strategy aimed to develop specific linguistic and cultural skills within the Australian population to support greater economic integration between Australia and East Asia. By examining the study of Indonesian in Australian schools, we have seen the dramatic increase in enrolments as a result of, or leading on from, the introduction of the NALSAS strategy in 1994. There has subsequently been a significant decrease in enrolments in recent years. Arguably, while the aims of the NALSAS strategy were initially achieved, they have not been maintained in relation to Indonesian. This study has explored a number of reasons as to why this is the case.

While this examination of the study of Indonesian in schools has highlighted a number of structural or in-school issues which impact on programs, the main focus has been on the impact of issues outside of the school system, particularly in relation to attitudes towards and perceptions of Indonesia. It is essential that language-in-

education policy practice and theory take account of these influences. As Christ (1997:10) argues, “language attitudes possess their very own political dimension – a fact of which educational policy needs to take productive cognizance”. However, it is not simply a matter of considering ‘attitudes’ when forming, fine tuning or evaluating policy. Consideration needs to be given to the whole ‘linguistic culture’ as conceptualised by Schiffman (1996:277):

...language policy is primarily a social construct. It may consist of various elements of an explicit nature – juridical, judicial, administrative, constitutional and/or legal language may be extant in some jurisdictions, but whether or not a polity has such explicit text, policy as a cultural construct rests primarily on other conceptual elements – belief systems, attitudes, myths – the whole complex that we are referring to as linguistic culture, which is the sum totality of ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, religious structures, and all the other cultural ‘baggage’ that speakers bring to their dealings with language from their background.

Christ (1997:10) argues that consideration also needs to be given to the two-way relationship between policy and school communities. That is, to what extent does policy “serve to strengthen or even create attitudes towards language,” but on the other hand, to what extent do the attitudes and beliefs of schools and their communities impact on the success of language programs.

In relation to language learning in Australia, this study has shown that careful consideration needs to be given to the prominent use of a singular rationale such as the economic motivation for studying Asian languages. This is not to say that other argumentation has not been successfully disseminated regarding the study of Indonesian, rather that the original rationale of the NALSAS strategy, which focused on economic interaction with Asia, provided a narrow lens through which Asian languages and a deeper understanding of Asian cultures and languages could develop. Reaction to Indonesia’s perceived lack of economic prestige; the relative inaccessibility of the country and aspects of the culture, and the negative influence of political events in Indonesia and between Australia and Indonesian over the last several years supports, to some extent, what Baldauf (2005a:135) considers a truism of language education – “If I don’t like you, I won’t learn your language”. (Further consideration however, needs to be given to the motivations of those students that do continue with Indonesian studies through to the senior secondary level.) A broader rationale and valuing of language and culture is essential to aid in the long-term development of languages in the education system and to create a level of resistance to changes of government, government policy and the unpredictable impact of world events.

Too often, it is the conception of policy that is regarded as the achievement. Broader social issues, the evolving linguistic cultures of schools and their communities, and the effective implementation and evaluation of policy are left out of the equation. The challenge for language-in-education policy and theory is to develop mechanisms and frameworks which address the reality of policy as a social and cultural construct and ultimately, to effectively shape the formation and development of language policy.

Notes

1. A critical approach must be taken towards the use of generalising terms such as 'Asian languages'. The NALSAS strategy utilises the term to refer to four particular languages spoken in Asia. Within a broader context, governmental policy in Australia uses the term to refer to the dozens of Asian languages currently spoken in Australia. In other contexts, the term could be used to refer to any of the hundreds of languages spoken on the Asian continent. Within this paper, the term is used mainly to refer to the four languages prioritised through the NALSAS program, although, where necessary, a broader use of the term will be utilised and defined.
2. Data was collected for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean language studies, with this article focusing only on Indonesian language studies.
3. According to the DE&T, a fully qualified teacher has a three year post-VCE major sequence or a four year beginners sequence at tertiary level in the language they were teaching (or a statement of equivalence from a Victorian university), as well as an approved LOTE teaching method, including theory and practicum; or a LOTE Accreditation granted by DE&T (Victoria. DE&T, 2006b).
4. Other qualifications range from in-country experience, to taking a CAE course or completing a year of language study at the tertiary level.
5. While the Asian monetary crisis impacted on numerous South East Asian countries, the Indonesian rupiah suffered the most severe and sustained depreciation against the US dollar (International Monetary Fund, 1999).
6. Asian languages spoken at home by students in this study include Cantonese, Hakka, Hindi, Hokkien, Indonesian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lang du, Laotian, Malay, Mandarin, Shanghainese, Telegu, Teochiu, Tetum, Thai, Vietnamese, Visayan and Wenzhounese.

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