

SOME ASPECTS OF RETENTION RATES AND RATES OF  
PROGRESS OF THE CHINESE-TIMORESE AND  
VIETNAMESE AT THE ADULT MIGRANT EDUCATION  
CENTRE IN DARWIN

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMEC	Adult Migrant Education Centre
AMEP	Adult Migrant Education Program
ASLPR	Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings
DIEA	Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
ESP	English for Special Purposes
NT	Northern Territory
TAFE	Technical and Further Education

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study arose from informal discussions among teachers at the Adult Migrant Education Centre (AMEC) in Darwin. Stated simply, a number of teachers feel that after their initial enrolment, fewer Vietnamese students re-enrol to continue learning English at AMEC in comparison with Chinese students from Timor, particularly in the higher levels of the program. Teachers have also questioned whether the rates of progress of Vietnamese students are equal to those of the Chinese-Timorese.

The need for research into these questions is particularly pertinent to AMEC in Darwin as the majority of enrolments at the Centre over the last three years have been from people of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese origin. This trend seems likely to continue in the immediate future.

Information gained by means of the study will be made available to AMEC. Any differences which may occur in retention rates or rates of progress may suggest a need to revise or restructure the English language learning opportunities which are currently available, or to introduce different options. The information may assist individual teachers in their course design and planning. It will be available for use in a proposed evaluation of AMEC, and may also indicate further directions for research.

## Background

To provide the back ground to the study, it is necessary to give a brief description of the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEC), and the way in which English language learning opportunities are provided through AMEC in Darwin.

The objectives of AMEP are:

To provide a range of English language learning opportunities for adult migrants from non-English-speaking backgrounds, with the aim of enabling them:

- (i) to gain sufficient English to function at a basic level in the community
- (ii) to acquire the skills necessary to continue learning English in the course of their day-to-day lives
- (iii) by developing sufficient English through English language learning opportunities in the AMEP, supplemented by learning at other educational institutions ... and through community interaction, to gain equal access to mainstream services and programs. <sup>1</sup>

Funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (DIEA), AMEP services are provided in Darwin by AMEC, with the Northern Territory Department of Education acting as the service agency, responsible for provision of staff, delivery of approved programs and associated administrative matters. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adult Migrant Education Handbook 1983. Education Branch, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Canberra. June, 1983. p. 1

<sup>2</sup> W.J. McGrath. 1982. "The Development of Adult Migrant Education in the Northern Territory 1-68-71", p. 1

AMEC is located on the first floor of the TAA building, Bennett Street, Darwin. There is also an annex in the grounds of the Tamarind Centre, a hostel for Vietnamese refugees in Ross Smith Avenue, Parap. More students attend the larger centre at TAA, where most of the administrative work is also carried out. In the Northern Territory, as in other Australian states, the program is divided into two phases: On-Arrival and On-Going.

### The On-Arrival Phase

All migrants who do not have English as a first language are eligible for one On-Arrival course if they enrol for English lessons within six months of their date of arrival in Australia. On-Arrival courses are geared to the level of English of the students, and cover areas likely to be of immediate need to newly-arrived migrants. Where possible, Bilingual Information Officers provide an information component for each topic, and teachers concentrate on the requisite survival skills in English. Courses may vary in length, but are usually of three to four hours a day, and of 10 weeks' duration. The number of courses on offer at any one time depends on the number of enrolments received. If only one course is available, students of disparate levels are included, although occasionally a student whose level of English is very much higher than the remainder of the class is referred to the On-Going Phase. When more than one course is offered, students are usually streamed according to their levels of English.

The On-Arrival Phase is based at the Tamarind Annex of AMEC, and almost all of the Vietnamese residents at the Tamarind Centre take advantage of the nearness of the Annex to attend a course there. Students of all other nationalities also attend On-Arrival courses at the Tamarind Annex, but as their places of residence are dispersed throughout the Darwin city and suburban areas, few find it as convenient as the Tamarind residents do.

### The On-Going Phase

All prospective students who have been in Australia for more than six months are enrolled into the On-Going Phase. There is no ceiling on the length of time a person has been in Australia for eligibility, but applicants whose English is at a higher level than the program caters for are referred to the English for Migrants courses conducted by the Darwin Community College.

In the On-Going Phase, courses are conducted at several levels, termed Beginners, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Post-Intermediate.<sup>3</sup> Two or three courses are often available within these categories, usually at the lower levels. Most courses are part-time, generally of three to four hours daily for ten weeks, but at least one full-time course, with a minimum of five and a half hours daily for ten weeks, is available. Part-time courses in Literacy and Conversation are offered according to demand. In contrast to the On-Arrival Phase, students in the On-Going Phase may re-enrol for several courses.

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<sup>3</sup> Post-Intermediate Courses are offered according to demand, so if insufficient numbers apply, the course is deferred until numbers are sufficient.

If a student is unable to attend, or does not wish to attend, any of the courses offered at AMEC (including the Tamarind Annex), there are a number of other options available:

- (i) Evening Classes, also divided into On-Arrival and On-Going Phases, of two hours twice weekly over a 20 week period
- (ii) the Self-Access Centre, located in the library at TAA, where students work individually with the assistance of a teacher if required
- (iii) the Home Tutor Scheme, in which community volunteers are matched with students, and work with them for one or more hours weekly, usually on a one-to-one basis
- (iv) the Correspondence Course, consisting of a series of lesson books and exercise booklets with an accompanying set of cassettes or records posted to students <sup>4</sup>
- (v) Community Day Classes, held in venues such as Casuarina Library or the Greek Hall, usually twice a week for two hours, and of no set length
- (vi) Special Purpose Courses, such as English for Office Skills, generally run over a holiday period, depending on student demand and the availability of resources.

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<sup>4</sup> The audio material of this course is currently being broadcast by 8 TOP-FM.

English language learning opportunities designated as courses are those in which students learn as a group with one or more teachers, and where there is a finite starting and finishing point. Included are the On-Arrival courses, the day courses at various levels and the evening courses. None of the options described in (ii) to (v) above are courses, as there are no finite starting and finishing points, and students may enrol and withdraw at any time.

All the Vietnamese and Chinese-Timorese included in this study enrolled for an On-Arrival course, and many re-enrolled in the On-Going Phase. Each of the options described was used by one or more students.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter consists of some background information about the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese in Darwin, with particular reference to studies carried out locally, and an outline of the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings, well documented by Dr David Ingram.

#### The Two Groups

The Chinese-Timorese began to arrive in significant numbers in Darwin in 1975 and the Vietnamese in 1979, although a few individuals had arrived prior to those dates. Both groups are refugees from their own countries. The Chinese-Timorese are among those who left what is now called East Timor because of an outbreak of hostilities and the subsequent takeover of the country by Indonesia. The Vietnamese began leaving Vietnam in large numbers because of a change in government, introducing a new political system which was intolerable to many thousands of inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

A spokesman for the Migrant Resource and Settlement Centre estimates that approximately 2,500 Chinese-Timorese and 350 Vietnamese are presently settled in Darwin. Neither group has a first language

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<sup>5</sup> Indo-Chinese Refugee Resettlement - Australia's Involvement, Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. 1982. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, p. 1.

which is like English. These factors, community size, length of residence and first language, have a considerable effect on the necessity for and difficulties involved in learning English, posing "... particularly serious problems for people whose own language has no common basis with English ... and where the ethnic communities are particularly small, widely distributed or not well established ..." <sup>6</sup>

Taking into account the very small size and short establishment period of the Vietnamese community, the members are likely to be at an even greater disadvantage than the Chinese-Timorese.

The Chinese-Timorese In 1975, 2,538 Timorese (including Chinese-Timorese) were evacuated to Australia, 731 continuing on to Portugal and the remainder being granted resident status. <sup>7</sup>

Few remained in Darwin at this time, as the city was still suffering from the effects of Cyclone Tracy in December of the previous year, and accommodation was unobtainable except for those who had relatives who could house them. However McGrath notes that with the arrival of the Timorese refugees, the Rapid Creek Primary School was the centre for all migrant education from September, 1975, to the end of the year. <sup>8</sup> Arrivals since 1975 include many of those who went to Portugal, and most, if not all, of 625 in Timor who were selected in 1978 to be reunited with their families. <sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> W.D. Scott and Company in association with Australian Sales Research. 1980. Survey into the Information Needs of Migrants in Australia, Final Report. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, p. 317.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. 1980. Review of Activities to 30 June 1980. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, p. 49.

<sup>8</sup> McGrath, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> D.I.F.A. Review of Activities to 30 June 1980, op. cit., p. 49.

It is also known that a number now living in Darwin spent time in Jakarta on their way from Timor.<sup>10</sup> None of the 103 Chinese-Timorese included in Ramachandra's survey had lived in Australia for more than 10 years.<sup>11</sup>

Evidence of interest in English courses on the part of the Chinese-Timorese in Ramachandra's survey is shown in his findings that 38% were attending English classes at the time of the survey, 23% had previously attended and 32% wished to attend classes.<sup>12</sup> The latter two categories may overlap, as those who had previously attended as well as those who had never attended classes were asked if they wanted to attend. This question was not asked of those who were currently attending. The total of 70% made up of those who were attending and those who wished to attend indicates a very high level of interest in learning English. The survey refers to the difficulties experienced by respondents in using English, stating that "lack of or inadequate English language ability is a barrier to social life and integration."<sup>13</sup> Ratings carried out by the interviewers show that at least half of the Chinese-Timorese respondents are rated at 0 and 0+, the two lowest levels of the scale used, in

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<sup>10</sup> Ramjith Ramachandra. 1980. "A Survey of the English Language Needs of the Timorese, Greek and Italian Communities in Darwin," a Galbally Report Recommendation 10 Study. Adult Migrant Education Centre, T.A.F.E. Branch, N.T. Department of Education, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> ibid., p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> ibid., pp. 38-42. The first two percentages given were calculated by the author from Ramachandra's data.

<sup>13</sup> ibid., p. 44. Ramachandra's emphasis.

speaking, listening, reading and writing,<sup>14</sup> levels at which they would experience great difficulties in using English or be unable to use English at all.

The Vietnamese The Tran Nelson Report, dealing with the settlement of Vietnamese in Darwin, states that before 1980, Vietnamese refugees (including the "boat people" whose first land-fall in Australia was Darwin) were settled in southern states because the Northern Territory lacked the necessary infrastructure for their resettlement.<sup>15</sup> However, talks between the Commonwealth and the Northern Territory Governments led to the opening of the Tamarind Centre, a hostel for Vietnamese refugees, in late 1980. 170 Vietnamese passed through the Tamarind Centre in the next two years.<sup>16</sup> As well as those who were first accommodated at the Tamarind Centre, the survey also includes Vietnamese who were sponsored by families and by community organisations under the Community Refugee Settlement Scheme.<sup>17</sup>

Tran and Nelson found that communication in English is a major problem for the Vietnamese on their arrival and during the first

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<sup>14</sup> ibid., pp. 54-57. The scale referred to is described in the next section of this chapter.

<sup>15</sup> My-Van Tran and Richard Nelson. 1980. "A Report on the Settlement of Indo-Chinese Refugees in the Northern Territory." Darwin: Northern Territory Department of Community Development, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>17</sup> loc. cit.

six months, over 80% giving this as a most significant problem at these stages.<sup>18</sup> After six months the figure dropped to 41%, although the researchers suggest that this is not necessarily due to an increase in ability to communicate, but rather, acceptance of low comprehension levels and using friends or relatives to interpret.<sup>19</sup> There is no data to support this explanation, but Chapter VI, "The Special Problems of Learning English",<sup>20</sup> leaves no doubt that learning English is seen as a priority by the Vietnamese. The researchers sum up their attitude in the following words: "Without better English, the refugees logically perceived themselves as being in a poor competitive position for jobs and remaining isolated from the rest of the community."<sup>21</sup> The need for English language learning opportunities among the Vietnamese is a continuing one, although the low rate of unemployment, given as 7%,<sup>22</sup> suggests that day courses are not likely to be suitable for many.

Mutual Concerns The Chinese-Timorese and the Vietnamese have first languages that are unlike English, and are among the newest ethnic groups in Darwin. The serious problems experienced by migrants in this situation are clearly perceived by both groups, especially the very

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<sup>18</sup> ibid., p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup> ibid., pp. 21-23.

<sup>21</sup> ibid., p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> ibid., p. 20.

small community of Vietnamese. The need for greater competency in English, to gain access to better jobs (or in some cases, any jobs), general community services and further education or for social interaction is recognized, suggesting that consultation with the communities could increase attendance of and satisfaction with English classes, courses and other learning options.

### The Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings

Although other factors are involved, the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR)<sup>23</sup> is the main tool used for assessment and placement of students in classes at AMEC in Darwin. Developed by David Ingram and Elaine Wylie for the Adult Migrant Education Program (AMEP),<sup>24</sup> the ASLPR is based on the " ... 'Absolute Language Proficiency Ratings' of the United States Foreign Service Institute School of Language Studies ... , generally known as the FSI Scale though recently renamed the ILR Scale ... ".<sup>25</sup> Following distribution of the ASLPR in 1979, it is now in use in AMEP centres Australia-wide. The AMEP Handbook states that it " ... provides a scale against which learning arrangements should be pegged, planned and provided."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Originally titled Australian Language Proficiency Ratings (ALPR), and published under that name in the Teachers Manual, Adult Migrant Education Program. April, 1979. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

<sup>24</sup> D.E. Ingram. "Assessing Proficiency: An Overview on some Aspects of Testing", first draft of a paper for a volume provisionally titled Instructional and Social Implications of L2 Acquisition Research, edited by Kenneth Hyttenstam and Manfred Pienemann, p. 97.

<sup>25</sup> D.E. Ingram. "New Approaches to Language Testing", a paper to the Fourth National Languages Conference of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Association, The Language Curriculum in the 1980s - Affective, Effective or Defective. Perth, 3rd-6th November, 1982, p. 7.

<sup>26</sup> AMEP Handbook, op. cit., p. 1a.

Description of the ASLPR The ASLPR describes observable language behaviour at nine defined proficiency levels ranging from zero to native-like in the four macroskills of speaking, listening, reading and writing.<sup>27</sup> The levels are represented numerically and with symbols as 0, 0+, 1-, 1, 1+, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and each level has a short descriptive title. Individual detailed descriptions for each macroskill mean that " ... the ASLPR actually consists of four separate but conceptually related scales ... ".<sup>28</sup> A learner's proficiency in each macroskill is rated, and an example of such a rating is S:1, L:1+, R:1, W:1-; which decodes as Minimum Survival Proficiency in speaking, Survival Proficiency in listening, Minimum Survival Proficiency in reading and Elementary Proficiency in writing. Ingram refers to this method of assessment as " ... a developmental approach, which tries to capture the way in which a second language develops from zero to native-like proficiency and the learner is assessed by being located in that developmental schedule."<sup>29</sup> The main difference between assessment on the ASLPR and most other types of language tests such as cloze exercises or multiple choice grammar tests is that the ASLPR attempts to measure the learner's ability to use language in a situation as close to real life as possible.

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A for the key headings of the ASLPR.

<sup>28</sup> Ingram. "Assessing Proficiency: An Overview on some Aspects to Testing", op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>29</sup> D.E. Ingram. "Needs, Tests and Language Programmes", an invited paper to the Eighth National Conference of the Australian Association of Special Education, "Exceptional People: A Lifetime Commitment", Brisbane, 25th-28th June, 1983, p. 8.

Using the ASLPR The ASLPR is applied through the medium of a structured interview. The interviewer firstly tries to make the learner feel as comfortable as possible, asking simple questions to identify points of interest and to allow the interviewer to locate the learner's approximate proficiency. The interviewer then extends the learner to the limit of his ability, concentrating on the kinds of specific tasks given as examples in the scale. Finally, the interviewer eases the pressure, returning to the more relaxed atmosphere of the initial stage.<sup>30</sup> It is the responsibility of the interviewer to elicit the kind of language on which a rating can be fairly based. The interview usually takes about half to three quarters of an hour, and includes reading and writing tasks.

Rating on the scale may be carried out by the interviewer during and immediately after the interview, or an observer may do the rating. Mills recommends that two trained interviewers should be present, one to interview and one to rate,<sup>31</sup> but this is often not possible to arrange. The experience of the writer is that it is preferable to work with another person, especially in one's introduction to using the ASLPR. This gives the opportunity after the interview for the interviewer and observer to discuss the learner's abilities and the features of his language in terms of the ASLPR thoroughly before assigning a rating.

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<sup>30</sup> John M. Mills. 1979. "A Handbook on Evaluation for the 'On-Arrival' Stage of the Adult Migrant Education Program". Hawthorn, Victoria: The Australian Council for Educational Research Limited, pp. 19-20.

<sup>31</sup> ibid., p. 18.

The ASLPR is a task-oriented approach, in line with the view that the best description of language proficiency is " ... in terms of the tasks a learner can carry out and how they are carried out." <sup>32</sup> The interview, including the reading and writing activities, provides a way in which appropriate language tasks are presented to the learner.

All learners included in this study were given an entry rating on the ASLPR before they began attending their first course, which was an On-Arrival course. ASLPR scale ratings were also recorded for all students at the conclusion of any day courses they attended and for some evening courses, but no exit ratings were recorded for those who studied English through the Self-Access Centre, Home Tutor Scheme, Correspondence Course or Special Purpose Courses.

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<sup>32</sup> Ingram, "New Approaches to Language Testing", op. cit., p. 9.

CHAPTER III  
DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Specific Problems

The focus of this study is on two problems, which are

- (i) whether there is a significant difference in the retention rates of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students at AMEC, and
- (ii) whether the data recorded at AMEC show a significant difference in the rates of progress made in learning English by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students.

Hypotheses

H<sub>0</sub>1 There is no significant difference in the retention rates of the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students as measured by the chi square test of independence at a .05 level of significance.

H<sub>0</sub>2 There is no significant difference in the rates of progress made in Speaking by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students as measured by a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test at a .05 level of significance.

H<sub>0</sub>3 There is no significant difference in the rates of progress made in Listening by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students as measured by a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test at a .05 level of significance.

H<sub>0</sub>4 There is no significant difference in the rates of progress made in Reading by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students as measured by a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test at a .05 level of significance.

H<sub>0</sub>5 There is no significant difference in the rates of progress made in Writing by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students as measured by a two-tailed Mann-Whitney U-test at a .05 level of significance.

### Delimitations

The study is confined to Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese of AMEC in Darwin who started an On-Arrival course between 17 November 1980 and 8 September 1981. The cut-off dates vary, extending from the end of Second Semester, 1982, to the end of First Semester, 1983. This allows each student access to a maximum of seven consecutive day courses, including the initial On-Arrival course. The On-Arrival courses varied in length, from approximately 10 weeks to approximately 14 weeks, and the introduction of the semester system in 1982 meant that four sets of day courses became available each year instead of three.

### Limitations

Limitations imposed on the study include the difficulties encountered in retrieval of data recorded at AMEC. Information in some instances is not clearly set out, and other problems arose because the student records are organised in a manner that gives a profile of individual students rather than in a system which would easily lend itself to location of data

common to all students.<sup>33</sup>

In addition, it must be noted that doubt has been cast on the practice of allowing teachers to rate their own students on the ASLPR,<sup>34</sup> a practice which was in use throughout the period of this study. Although the instrument can be taken to be reliable, ratings given by teachers may not be valid in all cases, but as they are the only form of measurement recorded for all students, they have been used as the indicator of progress in the four macroskills involved in learning English.

Finally, although a conscientious effort has been made to carry out this piece of research correctly, the writer admits to her shortcomings and lack of experience in this field.

### Procedures

The population of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese was identified by taking the enrolment lists of all students in the 13 On-Arrival courses offered from 17 November 1980 to 8 September 1981,<sup>35</sup> and checking the nationalities given with those on the application forms for each student. The

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<sup>33</sup> This comment is not intended as a criticism of the format of AMEC records, as it is recognized that they are maintained for the benefit of AMEC, not for research purposes.

<sup>34</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the issues involved, see Heather Worth's unpublished dissertation, "The Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale: A Study".

<sup>35</sup> These dates are the starting dates for the first and last On-Arrival courses included in this study.

Chinese-Timorese have Portuguese nationality, in common with other ethnic groups born in Timor and Portuguese born in Portugal, so the Chinese-Timorese were specifically identified by name, place of birth and first language given on their application forms, and these identifications were cross-checked by a Chinese-Timorese staff-member of AMEC.

The following information for each student was obtained from the student records:

- (i) student number
- (ii) country of origin
- (iii) sex
- (iv) age group: 20 and under/21-30/31-40/41-50/51+
- (v) total number of courses and other language learning opportunities enrolled in
- (vi) number of day courses enrolled in
- (vii) number of day courses completed
- (viii) entry rating on the ASLPR
- (ix) most recent rating on the ASLPR within the bounds of the study.

Some of the information listed above was unobtainable for 10 students, so these 10 were withdrawn from the study. One student was found to have been transferred into the On-Going phase of the program immediately after starting his On-Arrival course, so this student was also withdrawn from the study, leaving a total population of 156.

The raw data are organised by means of descriptive statistics to assist in summarizing and interpretation. A chi square test of independence is used to test  $H_01$  because the problem fits the criteria of having two independent groups with data in terms of frequencies in discrete categories, and the chi square test of independence is therefore the appropriate statistical test.<sup>36</sup> The Mann-Whitney  $U$ -test is used to test  $H_02$ ,  $H_03$ ,  $H_04$  and  $H_05$  because it cannot be proved that the measurements involved, of movement of score on the ASLPR, have interval scaling. The Mann-Whitney  $U$ -test has been described as " ... one of the most powerful non-parametric tests, since ... it utilizes most of the quantitative information that is inherent in the data."<sup>37</sup> All statistics have been computed by the writer with the aid of reference books and a pocket calculator.

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<sup>36</sup> Richard P. Runyon and Audrey Haber. 1971. Fundamentals of Behavioural Statistics, second edition. U.S.A.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, p. 249.

<sup>37</sup> ibid., p. 257.

CHAPTER IV  
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

In the first part of this chapter data relating to general characteristics of the population are discussed, followed by the presentation and analysis of the data gathered to test the hypotheses regarding retention rates and rates of progress formulated in the previous chapter.

General Characteristics of the Population

During the period of the study, 13 On-Arrival courses were offered by AMEC. Among the enrolments were 167 Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students, of which 90 were Chinese-Timorese and 77 were Vietnamese. One Chinese-Timorese was transferred to the On-Going phase immediately after starting the course, and there was insufficient data in AMEC records for four Chinese-Timorese and six Vietnamese. These 11 students were withdrawn from the study, leaving a population of 85 Chinese-Timorese and 71 Vietnamese, making a total of 156. Table 1 on the following page shows the distribution of the population with regard to nationality, sex and age group.

There is a remarkable uniformity in the numbers of Chinese-Timorese males and females, with 1 more female than male, and this uniformity extends to the Vietnamese males, where the number is the same as that for Chinese-Timorese males. There are 13 fewer Vietnamese females than males. The females make up 41 per cent of the Vietnamese

TABLE 1

Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students in On-Arrival Courses from 17.10.1980 to 8.12.1981 by Nationality, Sex and Age Group.

Age Group	Chinese-Timorese		Vietnamese		Total(%) <sup>a</sup>
	Male(%)	Female(%)	Male(%)	Female(%)	
Under 21	4 (2.6)	10 (6.4)	7 (4.5)	8 (5.1)	29 (18.6)
21-30	20(12.8)	24(15.4)	28(17.9)	17(10.9)	89 (57.1)
31-40	4 (2.6)	9 (5.8)	6 (3.8)	3 (1.9)	22 (14.1)
41-50	9 (5.8)		1 (0.6)	1 (0.6)	11 ( 7.1)
50+	5 (3.2)				5 ( 3.2)
Total	42(25.4)	43(27.6)	42(25.4)	29(18.6)	156(100.0)

<sup>a</sup> Percentages have been rounded off to one decimal place and do not necessarily add up to the totals given.

total, which is exactly the same percentage in the survey by Tran and Nelson.<sup>38</sup> This is probably due to the presence of the same factors noted by Tran and Nelson, who state that " ... there was a large proportion of single people ... . The unmarried were predominantly male ... ".<sup>39</sup> Data on single and married students was not collected for this study.

Another noteworthy characteristic of the population is the clustering of males and females of both nationalities in the 21-30 age group. Over half of the population is in this category. By contrast, only 16 (10 per cent) are aged 41 or over, and all but two of these are male Chinese-Timorese.

<sup>38</sup> Tran and Nelson, op. cit., Percentage calculated by the writer from Table 1, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> ibid., p. 6.

### Retention Rates

Following enrolment in an On-Arrival course there are four possible outcomes, or results, for each student and these are used to calculate retention rates. The four results are

- (i) completion of the On-Arrival course followed by enrolment in the On-Going phase
- (ii) completion of the On-Arrival course with no further enrolment
- (iii) discontinuation of the On-Arrival course followed by enrolment in the On-Going phase
- (iv) discontinuation of the On-Arrival course with no further enrolment.

Table 2 on the following page shows the number and percentage in each of these four categories during the period of the study. It can be seen from Table 2 that although the 71 Vietnamese comprise less than half of the population of 156, they make up a larger percentage of those who completed an On-Arrival course and enrolled into the On-Going phase (36.5 per cent compared with 29.6 per cent for the Chinese-Timorese). Nine Vietnamese students (5.7 per cent) and 22 Timorese-Chinese (14.1 per cent) did not enrol in the On-Going program after the On-Arrival course was either completed or discontinued.

The two groups (Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese) are independent and the data available is in terms of discrete categories, so the chi square test of independence is applied to a contingency table where the expected cell frequencies are derived from the data given in Table 2, calculated by multiplying the line total and column total of each cell and dividing this result by the total number of 156.

TABLE 2

Completion and Discontinuation of On-Arrival Courses by Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese with Enrolment into the On-Going Program.

Result	Timorese-Chinese(%)	Vietnamese(%)	Total(%)
O/A Comp. O/G Enrol.	46 (29.5)	57 (36.5)	103 (66.0)
O/A Comp. No O/G Enrol.	7 (4.5)	5 (3.2)	12 (7.7)
O/A Disc. O/G Enrol.	17 (10.9)	5 (3.2)	22 (14.1)
O/A Disc. No O/G Enrol.	15 (9.6)	4 (2.6)	19 (12.2)
Total	85 (54.5)	71 (45.5)	156(100.0)

Table 3 on the following page has 3 degrees of freedom, and at the .05 level of significance stated in  $H_0$   $\chi^2$  must be less than 7.815 to support the hypothesis. <sup>40</sup>  $\chi^2$  is calculated in Table 4, on the following page.

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<sup>40</sup> Critical region taken from Runyon and Haber, op. cit., Table B, p. 292.

TABLE 3

Contingency Table of Relationship between Nationality and On-Arrival Course Result with Calculation of Expected Values ( )

Result	Timorese-Chinese	Vietnamese	Total
O/A Comp. ) O/A Enrol. )	46 (56.1)	57 (46.9)	103
O/A Comp. ) No O/A Enrol. )	7 (6.5)	5 (5.5)	12
O/A Disc. ) O/G Enrol. )	17 (12.0)	5 (10.0)	22
O/A Disc. ) No O/A Enrol. )	15 (10.4)	4 (8.6)	19
Total	85	71	156

TABLE 4

Calculation of  $\chi^2$  for Data of Table 3.

O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$
46	56.1	-10.1	102.01	1.818
57	46.9	10.1	102.01	2.175
7	6.5	.5	.25	.038
5	5.5	-.5	.25	.045
17	12.0	5.0	25.00	2.083
5	10.0	-5.0	25.00	2.500
15	10.4	4.6	21.16	2.035
4	8.6	-4.6	21.16	2.460
156	156.0			$\chi^2 = 13.154$

As Table 4 shows,  $\chi^2 = 13.154$  which exceeds  $\chi^2 = 7.185$ , which is the minimum value of  $\chi^2$  required for significance at the .05 level. Therefore on the basis of the results of enrolment in an On-Arrival course as a measure of retention rates,  $H_0$  must be rejected, as a relationship between nationality and result of enrolment has been shown to exist. The figures given in Table 2 show that there is a higher retention rate of Vietnamese students from the On-Arrival phase into the On-Going Program, and the chi square test of independence shows that the difference in retention rates is significant.

#### Rates of Progress

The rates of progress are calculated by measuring the movement of score on the ASLPR in each macroskill for the Timorese-Chinese and the Vietnamese. The intervals between each level of the scale are referred to as steps. Almost all students who registered a movement on the scale advanced to a higher level, but a very few students went back one step to a lower level in one or more macroskills. No student regressed more than one step. Table 5 shows the movements for each group in the four macroskills.

As the ASLPR is not proved to have interval scaling, the statistics which can be applied are limited. The mode can easily be ascertained by observation of the most frequently occurring value, which is 1 step on the ASLPR for the Vietnamese in all macroskills and for the Chinese-Timorese in Speaking and Writing. The mode for the Chinese-Timorese in Listening and Reading is 2 steps.

TABLE 5

Movement in Steps on the ASLPR for the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

Nationality	Macroskill	Number of Steps on the ASLPR							Total
		-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	
C/T	Speaking		19	23	20	14	9		85
C/T	Listening	1	16	18	24	15	8	3	85
C/T	Reading	2	12	24	25	14	5	3	85
C/T	Writing	2	13	26	25	11	5	3	85
V	Speaking	1	15	23	19	5	7	1	71
V	Listening		16	22	14	12	4	3	71
V	Reading		15	27	13	10	6		71
V	Writing		11	27	15	14	4		71
Total		6	117	190	155	95	48	13	624

The Mann-Whitney  $U$ -test was selected to test the hypotheses about Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing because although the intervals between the levels of the ASLPR cannot be shown to be equal, the data obtained can be ranked. The question is whether the magnitude of the observed differences is sufficient to reject the null hypotheses.  $U$  is the sum of the number of times a score of one group precedes a score of the other group, and the method used to calculate  $U$  is given in Table 6. Using a two-tailed test at a .05 level of significance,  $U$  is then checked against the appropriate tabled values, which differ according to the number of scores in the columns for each group. <sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Table used from Runyon and Haber, *op. cit.*, Table 13, p. 306.

TABLE 6

Method of Calculation of the Mann-Whitney  $U$  for the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese in Speaking by Number of Score Movements on the ASLPR.

C-T		V		Formulae
Score Moves	Rank	Score Moves	Rank	
9	5	1	1.5	$U = n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_1(n_1+1)}{2} - R_1$
14	6	1	1.5	
19	8.5	5	3	$U' = n_1 n_2 + \frac{n_2(n_2+1)}{2} - R_2$
20	10	7	4	
23	11.5	15	7	$U = n_1 n_2 - U'$
		19	8.5	
		23	11.5	
	<hr/> 41		<hr/> 37	

$$n_1 = 5 \quad R_1 = 41 \quad n_2 = 7 \quad R_2 = 37$$

For Speaking,  $U = 9$  and  $U' = 26$ . Using a .05 level of significance in a two-tailed test where  $n_1 = 5$  and  $n_2 = 7$ , the critical region is between  $U \leq 5$  and  $U' \geq 30$ , and as the values of  $U$  and  $U'$  are within the critical region, they are not significant.

The same method of calculation was used with the data for Listening, Reading and Writing. For Listening,  $U = 20$  and  $U' = 22$ . The significant region for a two-tailed test at .05 level of significance is  $U \leq 6$  and  $U' \geq 36$ , so the relationship is not significant. In Reading, the obtained values are  $U = 22$  and  $U' = 13$  which are within the critical region of 5 and 30. In Writing, the obtained values are  $U = 22.5$  and  $U' = 12.5$ , also within the same critical region of 5 and 30.

The calculations for the data in each macroskill show that the relationship between nationality and movement of score on the ASLPR is not significant, and therefore the hypotheses  $H_{02}$ ,  $H_{03}$ ,  $H_{04}$  and  $H_{05}$ , that there is no significant difference in rates of progress in each macroskill, are accepted.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In the previous chapter, the hypotheses were tested, and it was found that  $H_0 1$ , that there is no significant difference in retention rates of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students at AMEC is not sustained. Hypotheses 2, 3, 4 and 5 can be summarized to state that there is no significant difference in rates of progress of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students in Speaking ( $H_0 1$ ), Listening ( $H_0 2$ ), Reading ( $H_0 3$ ) and Writing ( $H_0 5$ ), and these hypotheses are supported by the findings.

#### Retention Rates

The data tested in relation to retention rates are concerned with whether students enrol into the On-Going program after enrolling in the On-Arrival phase. Success or failure in completing the initial On-Arrival course is not taken into account as it does not affect the eligibility of students to enrol in any level of the On-Going program. The number and type of courses enrolled in by students will be considered in the next chapter, Other Issues.

The findings that there is a difference in retention rates and that the Vietnamese are more likely to enrol in the On-Going program is important, particularly as it seems that AMEC will continue to have relatively large intakes of Vietnamese. This statement is based on the establishment of the Tamarind Hostel specifically for the Vietnamese, the support of the Northern Territory government for resettling Vietnamese refugees and the desire of the Vietnamese here to bring other

members of their families to join them.

The numbers of Chinese-Timorese arriving in Darwin may not continue to be as high as in previous years, as those still in Timor are experiencing difficulties in leaving the country and many who went to Portugal have already arrived in Australia. However the size of the community in Darwin and its relatively recent establishment indicate that there will be a continuing demand for English language learning opportunities for some time in the future.

Some of the reasons for a difference in retention rates can be suggested. As stated in Chapter 1, the effect of a small, recently established community is to exacerbate the usual problems experienced because of insufficient English, and this is particularly likely to affect the Vietnamese. Many of them do not have the support of family members or close friends who can interpret and assist with problems that arise through lack of English in an unfamiliar society. The majority of Vietnamese are now initially settled in a hostel situation where many of the traditional family and household activities may be difficult, if not impossible, to carry out. In this situation, attending English classes may have the additional benefits of alleviating boredom and providing an outside social activity which the Chinese-Timorese, living in houses and flats (often with other family members) do not need to the same extent. There are almost certainly other explanations for the perceived difference in retention rates, and this would be a useful area for further research.

### Rates of Progress

The findings that there are no significant differences in the rates of progress of the two groups should be treated with some caution. As already stated, at the period of time of the study, teachers rated their own classes on the ASLPR at the end of courses, and in addition some teachers had received little training in the use of the scale.

More recently at AMEC the organisation of initial interviewing before enrolment has become the responsibility of one staff member, and two person teams of teachers have carried out end of course ratings for students in other teachers' courses. Different materials for use with the scale have also been developed, and although none of these factors would necessarily mean that the ratings given during the time span of this study are incorrect, there may be variations which could not be controlled for. Replication of this part of the study when procedures have been standardized would provide a more secure basis for accepting or rejecting the four hypotheses concerned with rates of progress.

## CHAPTER VI

### FURTHER ISSUES

A brief examination is carried out in this chapter of the types of courses and language learning options enrolled in by the Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese students. These courses and options are described in the section on AMEC in Chapter 1. The numbers of students who completed courses are also considered.

After completing or discontinuing an On-Arrival course, students could enrol in one or more of the following: day courses, evening courses, the Self-Access Centre (day or evening), continuation classes (day or evening), the correspondence course, Home Tutor Scheme, at least one English for Special Purposes (ESP) course, a literacy and a conversation class (both day classes). Table 7 shows all enrolments recorded for the total population of 156. Each student was enrolled in one On-Arrival course only, so the enrolments shown for On-Arrival in Row 1 give the correct distribution totals for nationality and sex of the population.<sup>42</sup>

It can be seen that the majority of enrolments (71%) are made up of 156 for On-Arrival and 166 for day courses. Some students enrolled in several day courses and some enrolled in none. The most popular of the remaining options are the evening courses with 64 enrolments (12%), continuation classes, 20 (4%) and the correspondence course with 24 (12%).

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<sup>42</sup>Also shown in Table 1, with percentages.

During the period of the study all but 2 of the students in the correspondence course discontinued and no-one completed the course. Two students were still enrolled at the cut-off date of the study. Only 5 students had enrolled in the Home Tutor Scheme, English for Special Purposes course, literacy and conversation combined.

TABLE 7

Enrolments in AMEC Courses and Other Options of Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese Males and Females.

Course or Option	Total	Chinese-Timorese			Vietnamese		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
On-Arrival	156	42	43	85	42	29	71
Day	166	41	42	83	36	47	83
Evening	64	14	24	38	23	3	26
Self-Access	17	8	6	14	3		3
Continuation	20	3	1	4	9	7	16
Correspondence	24	3	1	4	12	8	20
Home Tutor	2				1	1	2
ESP <sup>a</sup>	1	1		1			
Literacy	1		1	1			
Conversation	1	1		1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>221</b>

<sup>a</sup> English for Special Purposes

The arithmetic mean for courses enrolled in for the total population is 2.9. For the Chinese-Timorese the mean is 2.7 (for both males and females), and for the Vietnamese it is 3.1 (3.0 for the males and 3.3 for the females).

It is also of interest to consider the numbers of students who completed courses. The correspondence course is not included as no student had completed it within the time span. The literacy, conversation and ESP courses are also excluded, with only one enrolment in each. The issue of completion does not arise for the Self-Access Centre, Home Tutor Scheme or continuation classes. Table 8 shows the numbers who completed On-Arrival, day and evening courses. The distribution of the total population for sex and nationality is the same as given in Row 1, Table 7.

TABLE 8

Completed On-Arrival, Day and Evening Courses for Chinese-Timorese and Vietnamese Males and Females.

Course	Total	Chinese-Timorese			Vietnamese		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
On-Arrival	115	27	26	53	35	27	62
Day	121	31	33	64	26	31	57
Evening	32	5	15	20	10	2	12
Total	268	63	74	137	71	60	131

The arithmetic mean for the completion rate for all 156 students is 1.7, with the mean for Chinese-Timorese 1.6 (1.5 for females and 1.7 for males) and for Vietnamese 1.8 (1.7 for males and 2.1 for females).

As could be expected on the results of testing retention rates, there is a higher rate of enrolment for the Vietnamese shown by the arithmetic mean. The Vietnamese also show a higher completion rate,

especially the females. However, no further statistical analysis has been undertaken for either of these issues, as they are subsidiary to the major parts of the study, and therefore it is not possible to state whether the differences are significant.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that there is a relationship between nationality and retention rates, and there appears to be no relationship between nationality and progress in learning English for the two groups studied.

Regarding the finding that the Vietnamese have a higher retention rate than the Chinese-Timorese, it should be remembered that it refers to the likelihood of students enrolled in the On-Arrival phase re-enrolling into the On-Going phase, and not to the program as a whole. The data presented in the previous chapter indicate that retention rates in all areas of the program may favour the Vietnamese, but further study of this issue is required before findings regarding retention rates in the whole of the program can be stated.

One potential weakness of the research hinges on the way in which assessment using the ASLPR was carried out in the period under study. Materials and procedures are currently under review, and it is likely that they will both be standardized to a greater extent in the future. Following development and implementation of more standardized materials and procedures, re-testing of the four hypotheses concerned with progress in Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing would allow the findings to be stated with more confidence.

### Recommendations for Further Study

In the course of the study, the following areas were identified as needing further study:

- 1 Retention rates in the program as a whole.
- 2 The reasons why a difference in retention rates between the two groups exists.
- 3 Rates of progress measured on the ASLPR using ratings given by trained interviewers and/or raters.

Finally, the study has proved of value to the writer, who has learned to appreciate the time and effort required to carry out research in an approved manner, and it is hoped that the findings will be interesting and worthwhile for those who are involved in Adult Migrant Education.

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APPENDIX : KEY HEADINGS FROM  
AUSTRALIAN SECOND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY RATINGS (ASLPR)

Zero Proficiency Unable to function in the language.	L:0 Zero Proficiency Unable to comprehend the spoken language.	W:0 Zero Proficiency Unable to function in the written language.	R:0 Zero Proficiency Unable to comprehend the written language.
+ Initial Proficiency Able to operate only in very limited capacity in very predictable areas of need.	L:0+ Initial Proficiency Able to comprehend only a very restricted range of simple utterances within the most predictable areas of need and only in face-to-face situations with people used to dealing with non-native speakers.	W:0+ Initial Proficiency Able to write clearly a limited number of words or short formulae pertinent to the most predictable areas of everyday need.	R:0+ Initial Proficiency Able to read only a limited range of essential sight words and short simple sentences whose forms have been memorized in response to immediate needs.
- Elementary Proficiency Able to satisfy immediate needs using learned utterances.	L:1- Elementary Proficiency Able to comprehend readily only utterances which are thoroughly familiar or are predictable within the areas of immediate survival needs.	W:1- Elementary Proficiency Able to write with reasonable accuracy short words and brief familiar utterances.	R:1- Elementary Proficiency Able to read short simple sentences and short instructions.
Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum literacy requirements.	L:1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to comprehend enough to meet basic survival needs.	W:1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy basic survival needs.	R:1 Minimum Survival Proficiency Able to read personal and place names, street signs, office or shop designations, numbers, isolated words and phrases, and short sentences.
+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social needs.	L:1+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social needs.	W:1+ Survival Proficiency Able to satisfy all survival needs and limited social needs.	R:1+ Survival Proficiency Able to read short texts on subjects related to immediate needs.
Minimum Social Proficiency Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements.	L:2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to understand in routine social situations and limited work situations.	W:2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements.	R:2 Minimum Social Proficiency Able to read simple prose, in a form equivalent to typescript or printing, on subjects within a familiar context.
Minimum Vocational Proficiency Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in both formal and informal conversations on practical, social and vocational topics.	L:3 Minimum Vocational Proficiency Able to comprehend sufficiently readily to be able to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations with native speakers on social topics and on those vocational topics relevant to own interests and experience.	W:3 Minimum Vocational Proficiency Able to write with sufficient accuracy in structures and spelling to meet all social needs and basic work needs.	R:3 Minimum Vocational Proficiency Able to read standard newspaper items addressed to the general reader, routine correspondence, reports and technical material in his special field, and other everyday materials (e.g. best-selling novels and similar recreational literature).
Vocational Proficiency Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to personal, social, academic or vocational needs.	L:4 Vocational Proficiency Can comprehend easily and accurately in all personal and social contexts and in all academic or vocational contexts relevant to own experience.	W:4 Vocational Proficiency Able to write fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to personal, social, academic or vocational needs.	R:4 Vocational Proficiency Able to read all styles and forms of the language pertinent to personal, social, academic or vocational needs.
Native-like Proficiency Speaking proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same socio-cultural variety.	L:5 Native-like Proficiency Listening proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same socio-cultural variety.	W:5 Native-like Proficiency Written proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same socio-cultural variety.	R:5 Native-like Proficiency Reading proficiency equivalent to that of a native speaker of the same socio-cultural variety.

NOTE: This table provides only the key headings used in the ASLPR. The full scale is used for rating by AMEC, and it may be viewed there.