



Michael Clyne

LINGUIST

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It was not surprising to see the Anglican Church of St Stephen and St Mary brimming to overflowing on Monday 8th November 2010. Michael Clyne had touched so many of us and in so many different ways. Family and friends were there, students past and present and also colleagues, many of whom had also been former students. Some were present because they were among the many who had been inspired by and perhaps directly affected by Michael's ideas and his energy. There were those from among the various community groups that Michael was so committed to – perhaps they were involved in Michael's research or had personally benefited in some way. So many lives have been shaped by Michael Clyne and in a very positive way.

Where does one begin to outline a professional life such as that of Michael Clyne? During his career at Monash and Melbourne universities, Michael's research spanned numerous areas of linguistics and his output was prolific — he was always in demand to write something. His list of publications is impressively long (28 authored, co-authored and edited books and over 300 articles and book chapters) in areas such as bi- and multilingualism, intercultural communication and language policy. Some of the books he is best known for include *Language and Society in the German-speaking Countries* (CUP, 1984), and its sequel *The German Language in a Changing Europe* (CUP, 1995), *Community Languages: The Australian experience* (CUP, 1991), *Pluricentric Languages* (ed, Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), *Inter-Cultural Communication at Work* (CUP, 1994), *Undoing and Redoing Corpus Planning* (ed, Mouton de Gruyter, 1997), *Dynamics of Language Contact* (CUP 2003) and *Australia's Language Potential* (UNSW Press, 2005).

Michaels outstanding record of scholarly achievement is highlighted by the fact that he was a fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences of Australia and the Australian Academy of the Humanities, as well as the Royal Netherlands Academy of Sciences. He served on the editorial board of some 13 international journals. Not surprisingly, Michael also received a number of awards, including the Order of Australia, the Austrian Cross of Honour of Science and the Arts, the German Cross of Merit, the Humboldt Research Prize, the 1999 international Wilhelm und Jakob Grimm Prize (as the most outstanding Germanist of the year), the Centenary of Federation medal, an honorary doctorate of the University of Munich, the inaugural Vice Chancellors Award for Postgraduate Supervision (Monash).

Michaels achievements are too numerous to list and any inventory cannot capture the astonishing breadth of his scholarship, his passion and his unflagging energy for language and linguistics. Michaels work extended over the entire scope of sociolinguistics and he was an internationally recognized expert in most of its sub-fields — multilingualism and language contact, language planning, language in the workplace, the maintenance of community languages and the sociology of language in Australia. He pioneered and led many of these fields. Michael was a tireless mentor, infecting students and colleagues alike with extraordinary enthusiasm. His ideas, often groundbreaking, will continue to inspire scholars the world over. But it was also his life-long fight against narrow-mindedness and bigotry that was especially impressive. Many of his publications addressed the influences of language on our thinking and behaviour, linguistic discrimination and, in particular, official obfuscation and the maintenance of power — using language to expose language was part of Michaels crusade for a more enlightened society. Michael expressed it best on his webpage: I am passionate about languages and giving everyone the opportunity to become multilingual and to fully understand the way in which language is used for good and evil purposes.

Michael had a wonderful way of being able to enthuse others and engage them in his research activities. He was responsible for bringing many scholars to Australia to study, to lecture, to teach and to interact. Michaels commitment to academic collegiality and his network of contacts were breathtaking. Also bear in mind he was doing this in geographically distant Australia, moreover at a time when telecommunications were not nearly as sophisticated as they are nowadays — it was not easy then to bring scholars together and to maintain contacts.

Michael was way ahead of his time in so many things. He was among the first to pull together big budget research teams and his projects assembled people from many different walks of academic life. He also worked closely with communities, emphasizing the flow of ideas between academics and the broader community — and all long before there were opportunities such as Linkage Grants and buzzwords such as community engagement and knowledge transfer. The public seminars on raising children bilingually have been held all round Australia now for more than 20 years. These are intended for families in the community and also those professionals working with those families.

Even when his health was failing him badly, this never stopped the flow of ideas. One his most recent projects was The Monash Intergenerational Languages and Schools Project — and what an inspired idea it was to bring together secondary language learners and older speakers of these languages. Michaels commitment to the relevance

of linguistics to practical action has left a vigorous legacy that will continue. Already schools are responding to this project and on their own initiative are putting students and the elderly together to chat. Despite his failing health, Michael also found the time to write a secondary school textbook *Living Lingo for the VCE subject English Language*. This was a subject that he was instrumental in setting up for years 11 and 12 in Victorian high schools. It is wonderful to think that these students are now reading Michaels ideas about language – and what is more, getting it straight from the horses mouth!

Many incidents came to mind while writing this piece. These are wonderful memories of Michael, many very endearing. Michaels handyman skills were legendary — applied linguist Howard Nicholas remembers Michael as the man who regularly stuck paper clips into the earth sockets of powerpoints to make the plug work. Many will never forget the extraordinarily dense and detailed biro doodles that Michael crafted during meetings (and if these meetings were particularly dull, the contents of several pens might well be emptied). Michaels overheads in his presentations, like his doodles, had to be seen to be believed. But what many will recall most fondly are Michaels questions after seminars — always spot on and always so generous. Even if he had identified a serious problem with the analysis, the speaker was never made to feel it was a problem somehow — only a mere oversight.

For all his attributes and achievements Michael was universally admired and publicly honoured. But it was also his generosity and his sense of humanity and fair play that distinguished him. It was these qualities that set him apart within the academy. As American linguist Joshua Fishman wrote in a book of tributes to Michael on his retirement:

I could write almost endlessly about Michael Clyne. He is one of the saints that God has placed here among ordinary mortals in order to enable us to follow his lead in doing good things for all and sundry.

Professor Kate Burridge

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