AMIDST THE TURMOIL OF SETTLING into a new country, learning the language is vitally important. Over the past 50 years, the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs’ Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) has helped over one million newcomers to Australia learn English and settle into their new home.

The only program of its kind in the world, it is acknowledged today as a world leader and is Australia’s most important migrant settlement program.

This book charts the AMEP’s development from its beginnings as a provider of English language classes to post-World War II refugees to its present day provision of nine million hours of English language tuition annually to over 39,000 clients from 89 language backgrounds.

Shirley Martin retired as Director of Adult Multicultural Education Services, Victoria in 1997 after 25 years as a teacher and manager. In 1998, she received the Public Service Medal for outstanding public service to adult migrant education services in Victoria.
Cover photo: Migrants arriving in Sydney
Photo by David Moore, 1966

Back cover photos (from top right, clockwise):
Learning on the high seas, 1955: From 1948, the AMEP provided English language classes on board ships en route to Australia. These students have an English lesson on board the Italian liner Fairsea.

Distance learning, 1995: This student studies English through the AMEP’s distance learning course. It’s over to you. Distance learning enables students who cannot attend classes to learn at home, thereby overcoming barriers imposed by geographic location, work or family commitments or cultural factors.

AMEP classroom, 1991: These students participate in an ‘on arrival’ class in Canberra using ‘accelerative learning’ techniques. Lessons featured the presentation of material in innovative, non traditional ways - through energetic game playing, activities and relaxation exercises - making information easier to absorb, understand and remember.

English in the workplace, 1975: An outdoors class within the Australian Iron and Steel complex at Port Kembla. Course participants included migrants from the former Yugoslavia, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Italy.