Competing priorities:

Retention patterns in the

Adult Migrant English Program

Sue Noy

National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
Acknowledgments

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Executive summary

This research project represents a wide-ranging examination of factors affecting retention within the AMEP. The project includes:

- a review of literature on adult learning, and in particular retention or persistence;
- a statistical analysis of Australian and Victorian AMEP data to identify risk factors for lower retention;
- surveys of interstate and Victorian Centre managers;
- comprehensive consultations with all Victorian AMEP staff;
- client surveys of groups with low retention, looking for positive and negative factors affecting retention/withdrawal;
- trials of strategies for promoting retention.

Monitoring performance and data collection

The literature review established that, whilst there is no direct equivalent to the Australian national program, retention rates within the Australian AMEP compare very favourably with similar US programs. It also highlighted that the way ‘retention’ is defined poses difficulties for comparison, and is essentially a bureaucratic rather than learner-based perspective.

Current NMIU data collection about reasons for withdrawal is limited as a monitoring tool for program managers because of the lack of categories relating to course dissatisfaction or achievement of personal goals. Customer service surveys are a useful measure of performance but limited in relation to retention because they do not include clients who have withdrawn.

Risk factors for lower retention

Less than one third of clients withdraw from the program without fully utilising their 510 hours. Within this group, the Family Migration category has the highest withdrawal rate, at 43%. As this is the largest group, it also makes up the largest number of non-continuing clients (56%). Clients in the Family Migration category are not eligible for social security benefits until two years after arrival in Australia, and for many of these clients finding work is a priority which competes strongly with accessing AMEP provision. Retention rates, then, are related to migration category. On a national level, the Longitudinal Study of Immigration in Australia shows that women in the Family Category are less likely to feel they speak English well three years after arrival than are Humanitarian women clients, who show the greatest use of the AMEP and the greatest improvement in English language.

Former years of schooling and older age are also linked to lower usage of the program.

The largest numbers of non-continuing clients come from the groups with the largest number of people in the program. The groups with the largest numbers are Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Chinese Cantonese, Vietnamese, Serbian and Bosnian.

Further information emerges from a closer analysis of language groups and specific communities, where we find low retention rates for young women in specific Vietnamese and
Arabic communities, and for older adults in the Chinese groups. Young adults from former Yugoslavia and young adult men in the Arabic group also have lower retention rates.

These four groups were the focus of the interviews and trial strategies.

Summary of research findings

The research focussed on those language groups with lower than average retention rates. These were Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and former Yugoslavian. Within those groups, attempts were made to identify subgroups with particularly low rates and to investigate the reasons for this. Exploratory research confirmed the following as important factors in supporting or discouraging adult learners:

- **Life context factors**, such as employment, family demands, financial situation and responsibilities. These are outside the control of programs, but careful program planning can reduce their negative impact on learners. Access, timetabling to fit in with other family needs such as looking after school-aged children, and availability of accessible and culturally appropriate childcare seem to be particularly important to encouraging ongoing participation.

- **Class structure and pace suited to the learner**: Older adults, slower learners and those with low levels of formal education in their first language, and women with work and/or family responsibilities seem to be attracted to low intensity programs with an emphasis on oral English for everyday use rather than a formal assessment-oriented course. Equally, younger learners do not want to be held back by slower, older learners.

- **Content appropriate to learners’ interests**: Men and younger adults in this study were looking for programs which included a focus on preparation for work or male interests (Iraqi and former Yugoslavian). Clients who had withdrawn criticised assessment focus, lack of oral practice, emphasis on grammar, or pace being too fast or too slow. Within one class, criticisms could be totally different, highlighting the need to negotiate individual needs, and not only groups’ needs.

- **Discouragement with personal progress in English**: Although identified as a factor by researchers, it did not come out strongly from the studies cited in this report. However, amongst the unprompted comments clients made in the AMES Victoria 1999 client satisfaction survey, dissatisfaction with their own ability to learn quickly was an issue.

- **The three-year time limit**: This arose as an issue for clients in a low intensity program and women unable to utilise their 510 hours due to family/work responsibilities. The data does not allow us to discover how many ‘non-continuing’ clients would re-enter the program if their entitlement were not tied to time. Full information about the uptake of the entitlement may not be clear to all clients. (Whilst the legislation states that all clients must complete their entitlement within three years of arrival, the policy is that, providing they have valid reasons, any client may seek a deferral allowing them five years to complete. Reasons may include illness, family responsibilities, overseas travel, pregnancy, work commitments or moving.)

- **Cultural attitudes toward language learning**: Attitudes towards language learning seem to favour men, and to disadvantage women. The Iraqi women were particularly conscious of family responsibilities. The availability of single-sex classes was important for them.

- **Lack of information about options and entitlement**: This did not emerge strongly as an issue in the studies of clients; however, the study was not designed to explore this in depth. The positive response to the recruitment drive for older Chinese (bilingual class) suggests
clients appreciated receiving information in their first language. Other researchers have found that lack of knowledge about entitlements means that potential clients do not realise they are eligible. The case studies and comments from interviewees provide a strong case for the value of bilingual assistance in class to foster retention, especially for older adults.

A program plan for supporting adult learning/retention

The literature and the studies described in this report identify key areas for action to promote retention. Tracey-Mumford’s (1994) plan provides a good basis for a Centre designing a retention strategy. The key elements are:

- at initial interview, provision of appropriate information about entitlements and options to assist course selection;
- establishment of realistic expectations of language learning;
- the setting of individual learning goals;
- provision of good quality teaching and administration staff;
- during counselling sessions, the identification of students at risk of dropping out early;
- a system for student contact and follow-up of withdrawals to assist students wanting to return to the program and/or to inform them of remaining entitlement and time limit;
- course content and resources suited to the client group;
- ongoing monitoring of progress and recognition of achievement;
- involvement in a learning environment suited to the client's abilities and needs.

Many of elements are in place, and have operated within AMEP providers for some years.

Managers and staff at AMES venues are aware of strategies for responding to clients at risk of withdrawing/not continuing (see Table 3.1: Strategies to promote retention, suggested by AMES staff in Chapter 3). Many of these strategies are already being implemented. A retention plan may help centres to identify the strategies most relevant to their client group, and to implement them in a consistent way to promote retention.

The project highlighted the range of program options and retention strategies operating in Victoria, and the client surveys and interviews reinforced the variety of individual needs, learning capacity and constraints amongst the client groups. Good programs will need to provide a range of options for each learner. A commitment to retention and achievement of learner goals will benefit both the program and the learner.
Definitions

Acronyms

AMEP      Adult Migrant English Program
AMES      Adult Migrant English Service
ANTA      The Australian National Training Authority
ARMS      AMEP Reporting and Management System
ASLPR     Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating
CSWE      Certificates in Spoken and Written English
DIMA      Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
LSIA      Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia
NCELTR    National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research
           (Macquarie University)
NMIU      DIMA's National Management Information Unit
TAFE      Technical and Further Education

Definitions

Retention is measured by the number of enrolled clients who re-enrol quarter by quarter and, ultimately, the number of hours that the client spends in the program. (AMEP Contract Outcome Indicators).

Non-continuing clients are defined as those clients who do not continue after one term adjusted for those clients with fewer than 50 hours remaining or who have reached functional English.

Withdrawal differs from non-continuing. A client who withdraws from a course will be listed under latest outcomes as a ‘withdrawal’, but may rejoin the program at a later date provided his/her entitlements and eligibility are still valid.

Adjusted offered hours refers to the number of hours a client has been offered, adjusted for hours credited when a valid reason has been given for non-attendance.
Chapter 1

Introduction

For many years English language tuition for adult migrants to Australia has been provided by the federal government. The rationale behind this Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is the government’s belief that a basic level of written and spoken English is needed so that newly arrived migrants and refugees settle successfully in Australia. Clients may remain in the Program until they have used their maximum entitlement of 510 hours or until they reach functional English, whichever comes first. Clients must register for their entitlement within three months of arrival and start tuition within one year. In general, the entitlement must be completed within the first three years of arrival, or the first five years after arrival for refugees. However whilst the legislation states that all clients must complete their entitlement within three years of arrival, the policy is that providing they have valid reasons, any client may seek a deferral allowing them five years to complete. Reasons may include illness, family responsibilities, overseas travel, pregnancy, work commitments or moving. Accordingly, the AMEP is closely linked to the settlement process in terms of eligibility criteria, timing of uptake, choice of content, and the immense range of issues impacting on individuals during this settlement period.

Given that legislation underpins this 510 hour entitlement (ie it must be provided), that the provision of tuition is so closely tied to the settlement process, and that the rationale is to achieve 'successful' settlement, it is desirable that both uptake and program completion levels are high.

The goals of learning English are two-fold. For the policy maker and program administrator, the goal is based on measurement and performance. A high retention rate is desirable, with the ultimate goal of all clients achieving language proficiency within the period of their entitlement. For the individual focused on settlement, learning English is one of many settlement goals; the type of language learning they will be looking for will be related to their settlement experiences, and their goals may not include passing tests of their proficiency.

Retention of clients in the AMEP is therefore a complex issue, with many variables. As in all adult education, students come in and out of the program as circumstances and need allow. The model of the adult as a long-term learner is actively encouraged in the adult learning field generally under the banner 'lifelong learning'. Adult migrants have settlement goals other than English language acquisition, and may achieve individual goals, such as employment, and leave the program as a result. In terms of a 'Settlement program', finding employment would be regarded as a worthy goal. In terms of the individual concerned, it may be a pressing and immediate need, highly sought after and regarded. Yet because taking up employment may mean leaving the AMEP before the 510 entitlement is used or before functional English is achieved, it may be regarded as a 'retention problem.'
In the period from first quarter 1996 to 1999, 57% of those eligible for the AMEP enrolled. The authors of the first report in this volume found that whilst the vast majority of migrants and refugees are keen to learn English, the difficulty of reconciling competing priorities prevents many from registering. Similar competing priorities continue to exist for many of those who do enrol in the AMEP and commence a course.

Over a similar period (1996–1998), more than two thirds of those who arrived and enrolled remained in the program, reached functional English or exited because they had had completed their 510 hour entitlement or reached the five-year limit. Twenty-eight per cent (28%) left the program for one term or more without completing their entitlement or achieving functional English.

This research project arose from a concern that a number of eligible clients were not fully utilising their entitlement, and that it might be possible to identify strategies for reducing the number of non-continuing clients. Whilst there is no national benchmark for retention, experience in the field suggested that it would be useful to study reasons for withdrawal, and aspects of program content and institutional factors affecting retention. The study was therefore established to review experience here and overseas, to analyse national statistical data, to carry out original qualitative research with teachers and clients, and to apply that information to developing strategies for improving retention rates. The research aims of the project were to:

- identify client groups with relatively low retention rates within the AMEP;
- focus research on a number of these groups;
- examine reasons for the low retention rates in these groups;
- research and trial strategies to improve retention.

The statistical data relates to Australia as a whole, the literature review is international, and the qualitative research and trialling of strategies was carried out within Victoria.

Adult Multicultural Education Services (AMES) Victoria managed the project. It was carried out between April 1999 and February 2000.

**Literature review**

This review draws on American and Australian material relevant to adult learning, and in particular adult migrant learners of English. It draws heavily on the study by Comings, Parrella and Soricone (2000) which contains an excellent literature review of the study of persistence (retention) as well as an extensive study of adult learners and strategies for improving persistence. Other material reviewed here includes studies of migrant communities in Australia, studies of module completion in other adult learning environments and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA).
Retention

The definition of retention used in this study, and for all of the AMEP programs, relates to the entitlement to 510 hours, and retention is linked to utilisation of the 510 hours within three or five years, or to achieving functional English—an achievement which is assessed through formal testing. This goal differs from more common definitions such as completion of modules (ANTA/TAFE), completion of a year’s study (National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs) or more sociological models which use achievement of learner goals as the measure of success (Merrifield 1998, Edwards 1996, Comings et al 2000).

Kerka (1995) points out that the phenomenon of staying out one or more cycles is typical of adult learners, and they should not be counted as dropouts. Comings et al 2000:13, expand this idea, and use the term 'persistence', a learner-oriented definition described as:

*adults staying in programs as long as they can, engaging in self-directed study when they must drop out of their programs, and returning to programs as soon as the demands of their lives allow.*

Comings et al argue that using class attendance as the only measure of persistence devalues self-directed learning and the adult learner accountability system. Nonetheless, it is important to support students in the early stages of their study, as researchers have found that students 'who persisted for a few months were more likely to persist for a longer period of time'. This highlights the significance of the first class, or first learning experience in a program in terms of its effect on later retention. Students are affected by entering a learning environment which values persistence and has supports built in to maximise student participation (Kerka 1995).

A number of American commentators quote Tracey-Mumford's (1994) definition of retention—’to keep learners in programs until they achieve their goals’—and the principles she set out:

- retention requires vision to guide efforts
- programs control the conditions that foster retention
- retention needs a student support system, high quality instruction, and flexible structures and processes to help motivate and sustain student commitment
- all program personnel affect persistence.

Comparison of retention rates

The AMEP has extremely accurate documentation of student attendance over time, but it is difficult to find other comparable programs with such sophisticated record keeping (Merrifield, 1998). In this report therefore, comparisons of retention rates in the AMEP program have been made with adult education programs generally rather than to specific ESL program retention. A recent study of Module Completions in the TAFE sector in
Victoria found that institutes did not know how they were performing, nor were most interested in setting targets and monitoring performance (Cleary and Nicholls, 1998). Cleary and Nicholls argued for greater attention to be paid to completion rates, and suggested that target setting at the micro-level was probably most appropriate.

The Australian National Training Authority collects data on module completion; (Cleary and Nicholls 1998) however, comparison of TAFE completion rates with AMEP is confounded by the fact that half the modules are less than 100 hours long, with 65% less than 200 hours. Within their courses, completion rates for NESB participants are lower than for all students.

The most directly comparable material is found in Comings et al (2000) which looks at adult learner motivation in the USA in adult basic education programs and also English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs. They quote National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs data on non-completion/withdrawal, which found that the median hours of instruction for ESOL students is 113 (16 weeks), and approximately 25% of students attend classes continuously for a year. The rates in ESOL classes are higher than for the basic education classes.

Transfer to another mode of learning outside the current system can also affect retention rates, but does not appear to be a significant factor for AMEP clients (see studies below). Within the AMEP, students who move to the Home Tutor Scheme, or to another provider (TAFE or CAE) are counted as non-continuing, clearly not the perception the learner would have.

**Adult migrant English language learners and settlement**

Burnett (1998) found that post-migration factors affecting successful settlement in Australia, where English is the dominant language in all spheres of life, include the acquisition of English as part of establishing a social and political identity. The adult learners in the AMEP not only contend with all the factors affecting adult learners, but do so in the context of settlement in a new country. Burnett (1998) cites the example of a small study of migrants and compared their intention to learn English on arrival (83%) with the actual outcome (67%). Clearly, other priorities compete with the desire to learn English.

A number of factors emerge as priorities on arrival, and remain as barriers to English learning, or reasons for withdrawal from programs. In particular, the need to find work or/and look after family take priority over English language learning (Edwards 1996, Plimer and Candlin 1996, Burnett, 1998). Most commentators have discussed the need for money and financial security; however, work also assists in social identity, as (Griffiths 1977:ii) points out:

> Various studies in this field suggest four functions of work: economic, social, conferring of status, and psychological... The social function of work is that it provides an environment in which people can meet together around an activity, communicate and form relationships. The status-conferring function is related to the type of work performed by an individual [usually the father]...
The psychological function of work is much more complex, its chief outcomes being the formation of self-esteem, self-identity and a sense of order.

Adding pressure to looking for work is the fact that newly arrived migrants have a higher rate of unemployment than do those of longer residence. Those in the humanitarian categories are more likely to be in unskilled work with arduous conditions and little opportunity for retraining (Griffiths 1977, Burnett 1997, 1998, VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999). The pressure to find work is often greater on those in the Family category who have a two year wait before being eligible to apply for unemployment benefits.

However, English competency is also directly related to successful labour force participation. Migrants with poor English are less likely to be employed, and those who are employed are less likely to be using their professional skills (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999). Vietnamese women in Edwards’ study felt that the lack of social security entitlements on arrival forced them into low paying, low status jobs (Edwards 1996).

Burnett and others have argued that settlement is an ongoing process, and that it is unrealistic to expect adults to study English intensively during the early years. Burnett (1997, 1998), Plimer and Candlin (1996) and Edwards (1996) argue that the 510 hours and three/five-year limit does not allow women, in particular, to use a slower informal learning style which fits with their competing priorities.

The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA) found that women in the Family category are slightly less likely than men to speak English well on arrival (43% as compared with 46%), and after three and a half years show less improvement in their English than either men (55% as compared with 67%) or than women in the Humanitarian category. This does not mean that women did not try as hard to improve their English. VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1999) report that men were somewhat more likely to report that they succeeded in their efforts to improve their English than women.

Whilst the LSIA statistics for participation and improvement paint an optimistic picture for Humanitarian category migrants, in fact only 14% of women said they spoke English well on arrival, and whilst this increased to 43% after three and a half years, it is still lower than for other categories.

Factors affecting adult learning

A number of theoretical frameworks exist for categorising barriers to completion. Cross’s (1981) framework lists barriers as either situational (having to do with the life of the adult), institutional (having to do with the program) or dispositional (having to do with the learner). However, Comings et al (2000) suggest a four category framework of personal, life context, instructional and program. Personal forces include attitudes to learning, beliefs, likes and dislikes. Life context forces are the pressures of every day life for the adult learner, and include childcare, transport, and support of family and friends. Instructional forces take place within the class and
include the teacher, resources, and interaction with other students. Program forces are outside the classroom but within the program and include counselling, location, program culture and scheduling. This framework will be used to discuss the experience of AMEP clients.

Commentators have identified a number of factors affecting retention. As mentioned above, settlement priorities such as gaining work and building financial security, and settling self and family into a new community take precedence over language learning. Elderly migrants as well as women often have child-minding responsibilities (Edwards 1996). Proximity of classes to home, and availability and proximity to the class of childcare have also been raised (Edwards 1996, Plimer and Candlin 1996). Most of these are the life context forces described by Comings et al (2000), over which program planners and teachers have minimal control. Attempts have been made by AMEP providers to situate classes in accessible community venues and to offer flexible modes of delivery to accommodate some of these needs.

Edwards’s (1996) study identified six major barriers to participation for Vietnamese women. These were:

- economic necessity
- lack of information or inaccurate information
- family responsibilities (often related to traditional gender roles)
- childcare difficulties
- transport difficulties
- cultural factors/gender roles.

Plimer and Candlin (1996) found that lack of awareness of courses, family responsibilities, an intention to start soon and childcare difficulties were the main reasons given by women for not learning English. For men, ‘too busy with work’ replaced childcare issues and family responsibilities.

Australian commentators have argued that the time limit on the 510 hours disadvantages those who need to take longer to use their entitlement (Edwards 1996, Plimer and Candlin 1996, Burnett 1998). In particular, these first two studies showed that women’s work and family responsibilities severely limited their ability to give many hours/week to English language learning in the first years of settlement and highlighted the difficulty many women have in accessing programs during their first three years of settlement.

The National Management Information Unit (NMIU) data on reasons for withdrawal supports the above analysis, with health and access being the other two main reasons given. However, the NMIU does not seek withdrawal reasons related to course satisfaction or learner goals, and data is scarce. Specific codes for these would be useful. Plimer and Candlin report one study of employment-oriented ESL where ill health, employment or transfer to another course were the main reasons for not finishing, with course dissatisfaction accounting for 16%. Edwards’s (1996) study of
Vietnamese women found that the style of the class pace, emphasis on homework, formality and emphasis on reading and writing did not suit them (Edwards, 1996).

Castleman (1999), in a customer satisfaction survey for AMEP (Victoria) (AMES 1999a), found a high level of satisfaction with the program (89%). Improvements from the previous year (1998) were noted for counselling and referral and childcare provision. In a second student survey (AMES 1999b, of which 50% were AMEP students, the authors found that satisfaction with class content was moderate. Clients’ concerns were related to the class content helping them to improve their English or job skills and in teaching them what they need to know. The authors of this report suggest that improvements should focus on ensuring class content is interesting and helps improve English or job skills as these aspects have been identified as the primary drivers of satisfaction with class content overall. Satisfaction with teachers was high, but there were slightly lower levels of satisfaction related to teachers giving insufficient progress reports and not being able to help students to use English with more confidence.

Many commentators talk about adult learners being focused about their learning. A number also emphasise the importance for adult students of making obvious progress toward their goals (Kerka 1995, Comings et al 1999). The former of these two identify as vital to retention the setting of a clear achievable goal, evidence of self-efficacy (building up student’s confidence about ability to achieve relevant tasks), assistance with the management of positive and negative forces that help and hinder progress, and identifiable progress toward the goal.

The difficulty of learning English, and therefore the perceived slow progress toward personal fluency goals, is a further factor. Plimer and Candlin’s (1996) focus group research drew this out, with respondents commenting on their disappointment at their achievement after hundreds of hours of effort. The AMEP Satisfaction Survey (commissioned by AMES Victoria, 1999) reports some clients’ dissatisfaction with their own ability to learn quickly (Castleman 1999). A number of clients also commented that 510 hours is not enough.

Ross’s (2000) investigation of individual differences and learning outcomes showed that language distance (ie the distance a language is from English) is less important to learning outcomes than age or formal education in the home country. His study suggests that at CSWE 1 level, older learners progress at a slower rate than younger ones, and that pre-migration literacy in the first language is an important factor in second language acquisition. At CSWE 2 level, former education is even more significant to success.

Statistical data supports the view that within many language groups, men give greater priority to learning English than do women (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999). However, Edwards’s (1996) study shows that cultural expectations of women may lead to their receiving little support for making English learning a priority. Family responsibilities affect women’s attendance, and access to childcare and transport are listed as reasons for withdrawal (NMIU 1999).
Approaches to improving program retention rates

Tracey-Mumford (1994), in her review focusing on retention, argues that programs must develop a commitment to and a plan for increasing retention. This should include a set of criteria for measuring persistence and defined strategies to reduce dropout, increase attendance, improve achievement, increase personal goal attainment and improve completion rates (Comings et al 1999).

A large number of studies emphasise negotiating learner goals, and accommodating changes over time (Burnett 1997, 1998, Merrifield 1998, Comings et al 2000). Comings et al 1999 also suggest encouraging students to identify barriers to and supports for their learning.

Provision of a range of language learning options will mean more clients are able to fit in English learning with their other commitments. Informal learning environments are more attractive to some adult learners. Plimer and Candlin (1996) report that 50% of a sample of women in the Victorian Home Tutor Scheme had never enrolled in formal AMEP classes. People in the Humanitarian category are more likely to use AMEP than those in other categories (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999). None of the major studies have established the reasons for this, although the availability of social service benefits is thought to be a factor enabling these clients to persist. Women in Plimer and Candlin’s (1996) study felt strongly that more flexibility, and a longer time frame for learning were essential to working women’s participation. VandenHeuvel and Wooden’s (1999) data shows that over time, migrants choose more informal learning options, but the data does not provide any explanation for this trend.

Ross (2000) suggests that clients would be more appropriately classified at entry to the program if information about home country, formal education and age were used as factors for choice of course. Er (1986) supports the use of the learner’s first language for elderly learners, the setting of realistic goals, and the use of teaching methodologies which are sensitive to appropriate pacing.

Project framework

Before setting goals and developing strategies for improving retention rates, it is important to accurately identify the problem in relation to pre-established targets or goals, and then to collect good quality data to inform any strategic planning. In this study, the data provides:

- an accurate picture of the client group(s) and its (their) behaviour;
- information about reasons clients fail to re-enrol;
- an understanding of those factors which can be modified and those outside the control of the institutions providing the AMEP.

This information forms the basis for the intervention strategy; in this case the trialling of a range of language teaching approaches and institutional changes to improve retention rates. The results of these interventions form part of this report.
Methodology

The methodology incorporated three main elements.

Profile of client group and its behaviour

Data on non-continuing clients was extracted by the National Management Information Unit (NMIU) in order to identify groups with low retention rates. Data was collated in terms of gender, age and years of education as well as migration category, home language and Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating (ASLPR). This was done for both Victoria and nationally. Data was collected from 1996 to 1998.

Published data from the three waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia Study of Immigrants in Australia was reviewed to expand the initial analysis (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999).

Data was analysed to ascertain groups and subgroups with relatively low retention rates. These were further analysed in terms of language groups with numerically high enrolments and therefore numerically high withdrawals, and those with relatively small numbers of enrolments but proportionally a high number of withdrawals.

Information about reasons clients fail to re-enrol

Reasons for withdrawal were noted from AMEP Reporting and Management System (ARMS) codes.

A letter and survey were sent to AMEP providers nationally, asking them for their experiences with those groups with lower retention rates, and about the success of any strategies they have tried (Appendix 1).

Clients from three of the identified groups were surveyed through bilingual interview to further establish withdrawal reasons and to establish possible strategies to address withdrawal rates (Appendices 2 and 3). Teachers of these groups were also surveyed to further establish withdrawal reasons and to establish possible strategies to address withdrawal rates.

Collection of information for trials

Focused discussion sessions were used to gather information from teachers and Centre Managers about strategies for increasing retention.

Surveys were sent to all Centre Managers in AMES Victoria to ascertain strategies that they had implemented and their assessment of the success of these measures (Appendix 4).

Three case studies were undertaken and documented.
Chapter 2

Profiles of client groups

Statistical analysis

The national data supplied by NMIU includes all AMEP clients for the period beginning the first quarter 1996 to the end of 1998, a total of 46 994 clients. Over that time, 14 156 (30%) new settlers who enrolled remained in the program as continuing clients, 7754 (16%) reached functional English and 10 431 (22%) exited because their entitlement had ended (either 510 hours or the three- or five-year limit). Less than a third—14 653 (31%)—were non-continuing (statistics do not add up to 100% due to rounding).

Migration category

Of the 14 653 non-continuing clients with which this report is concerned, 8229 (43%) are from the Family Migration category and 4501 (33%) are in the Humanitarian/Refugee category. Within the Humanitarian/Refugee category (15 499), more than two thirds of clients, were continuing (69%) and 31% (4501 persons) were non-continuing. The small group of migrants, 5449 (12% of the AMEP group) in the Skilled Migration category accounts for 12% (1737) of non-continuing clients.

Non-continuing clients, on average, use 253 adjusted enrolled offered hours, about half of their 510 entitlement; Skilled category migrants use 237, Family use 247 and Humanitarian use 271 hours. Longitudinal Survey of Immigration to Australia (LSIA) data shows that Humanitarian clients are the most likely to use the AMEP, and they show the greatest improvement over time.

Gender

Retention rates by gender reflect enrolment rates. Women make up 60% of the client population and represent 55% of non-continuing clients. Men account for 40% of clients and 45% of non-continuing clients. Re-enrolment shows minimal variation between gender. Young men also use fewer than average hours and, overall, women utilise more of the 510 entitlement than men do.

LSIA data shows that women in the Family Migration category are less likely to improve over time, and to say they speak English well three years after arrival. Women in the Humanitarian category, by contrast, showed the greatest improvement over the three years, so that their English fluency was comparable to men in the same category.
Age

Age appears to be more significant. Over the whole sample, for both men and women, the highest percentage withdrawal is in the 26–35 year age group. This is slightly higher than their profile in the program. Amongst older female non-continuing clients (55+) the number of hours used is lower than the average.

Educational background

As would be expected, the greatest proportion of withdrawals comes from the group with 10, 11, or 12 years schooling (ie the largest group). However, clients with fewer than 10 years of schooling use fewer than the average adjusted hours for non-continuing clients. This cluster accounts for 65.7% of non-continuing clients. However, the group is weighted toward the higher ASLPR levels compared to groups with less schooling.

Home language

AMEP clients’ latest outcomes listed under the home language category reveal that the largest numbers of people in the program come from the following language groups: Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Serbian, Chinese Cantonese, Vietnamese and Bosnian groups. Not surprisingly, the same groups appear as the largest for non-continuing, although the order changes slightly: Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Chinese Cantonese, Vietnamese, Serbian and Bosnian. This is slightly higher than their profiles in the program.

Groups who come from a country where English is spoken in some form, or taught as a second language in schools (for example, India, Pakistan) have a slightly lower utilisation of the program.

Reasons for withdrawal

The ARMS codes include information about reasons for withdrawal. These show that the main reasons given (national data) were family/personal (22.4%), health (23.4%), work/employment (25.9%), and accessibility 9.3%. Childcare made up a further 2.1%, although the data is not specific enough to throw light on the problems encountered. Unknown accounted for 10.2%. The majority of reasons listed under access (9.3%) relate to clients moving or travelling. Within that 9.3%, timetable and transport problems account for 1.1%. Under work/employment, work constraints made up 6.5%, and obtaining employment 13.6% of the 25.9%. There are no categories relating to course satisfaction, or completion of personal learning goals.

Summary of statistical data

In the AMEP less than one third of clients withdraw from the program without fully utilising the 510 hours. Within this group, the Family Migration category has the highest withdrawal rate at 43%. As this is the largest group, it also makes up the largest number of non-continuing clients (56%). Retention rates, then, are related to migration category, and it is probably highly relevant that Family Migration category clients, in
contrast to Refugee/Humanitarian category clients, are not eligible for
social security for two years after arrival, and therefore their priority is to
find work.

Former years of schooling and older age are also linked to lower usage of
the program. Further information emerges from a closer analysis of
language groups, where we find low retention rates for young women and
older adults in key language groups (see ‘Client interviews’ below).

Survey of AMEP providers nationally

The survey sent to AMEP providers seeking information about retention
and any attempts to improve retention rates yielded two responses. One
provider focused on retention issues in relation to Thai migrants, and the
other focused on former Yugoslavian. Retention was not a major issue for
the latter group, but was for the Thai group. The strategies used to avoid
withdrawal are in Appendix 1. Key strategies common to both were:

• personal contact and follow up;
• linkage with community and support services;
• use of bilingual administration and teaching staff;
• use of more than one learning tool (ie combinations of home tutor, class
  and distance or independent learning);
• timetabling to suit client needs;
• consultation with client to establish learning goals.

Client interviews

The aim of this retention study was to identify client groups with relatively
low retention rates. Victorian data was more closely analysed to learn more
about the groups identified in the analysis of national data.

Thirteen percent of Vietnamese clients who enrolled subsequently
withdrew from the program. Of this percentage, the number of females
(66%) withdrawing from class was almost double the number of males
exiting. Most of these clients were between 26 and 35 years. A large
majority of non-continuing clients (74%) migrated to Australia under the
Family Migration visa category.

Fifty percent of the Arabic language groups enter Australia under the
Refugee and Special Humanitarian visa code. Sixty-seven percent of the
non-continuing clients were male and the largest age group was between
26 and 35 years.

Within the Chinese Mandarin group, women represent 66% of the total
number of non-continuing clients. Sixty-nine percent of clients were
between 26 and 35 years. Sixty-five percent of this group entered Australia
under the Family Migration visa category.
For the Chinese Cantonese group similar trends were revealed. The number of females that exited the program was significantly higher than for men. The age group 26–45 years represented 62% of the non-continuing clients and the majority of these clients entered under the Family Migration category.

Of the group from former Yugoslavia, the majority of clients that exited from the program were between 25 and 46 years, representing 63% of the total number, with the males being the dominant group. Eighty-eight percent of clients who discontinued the program entered Australia under the Refugee and Humanitarian Visa category.

Clients from each of these groups were approached and interviewed. The Arabic and Yugoslavian groups were interviewed to look at barriers to learning and reasons for withdrawal as well as to seek information about positive approaches that could assist or are assisting their learning.

Within a number of language groups, older adults represent a relatively small percentage, but have lower retention rates. For this reason, a number of the strategies trialled were designed to improve retention rates for older adults. The Chinese groups were not directly interviewed. Chapter 3 reports on case studies of recruitment strategies and establishment of a bilingual class as a retention strategy for older adults. A further case study of a mixed language group low intensity class for older adults is also reported.

**Vietnamese community**

Fourteen clients were interviewed in their first language. They were randomly selected from a potential group of 188 clients registered at Footscray AMES between June 1995 and June 1999 who had exited the program with more than 50 hours remaining. Of the 188, 125 were women and 63 were men.

The survey was designed to elicit positive and negative responses about the program they had attended (see Appendix 3). It asked why they had stopped attending class, and whether they were studying with another provider. Respondents were also asked about the importance of English at the time of the survey, and were given information about different learning options.

Since the majority of withdrawals were women, a further ten women currently enrolled in a class were invited to participate in an informal discussion with the Project Officer and the Vietnamese ethnic aide.

**Survey results**

Nine women and five men were interviewed. Reasons for withdrawal were: transferred to another institute for skills training (2), gained employment (2), became pregnant (3), childcare issues (2), access: transport (2), program boring (1), unknown (2).

Most currently regarded learning English as important, although three people did not regard learning English as extremely relevant for them.
To the question ‘Did the content of the class meet your needs?’ nine (64%) clients responded negatively. Six respondents wanted more emphasis on oral skills for casual conversation and employment related communication. Ten students had a criticism of the course which reflected their assessment of their needs and the program’s failure to meet them; in particular, the emphasis on grammar and the lack of conversation practice. The criticisms were not unanimous; one person wanted more grammar, and whilst one person commented that his/her all Vietnamese class meant no one spoke English in class, another person felt isolated because there was no one else from her ethnic group in the class.

Qualitative research findings

The purpose of the discussion with ten women currently enrolled in an AMEP class was to ascertain whether these women shared the sentiments of the survey group of withdrawals, and to explore strategies for improving retention.

The ages of the 10 women ranged between 20 and 35 years. They agreed with the comments on oral communication in the classroom. They believed grammar and reading could be done at home and that the class time should be used for development of oral skills focused around future employment and community involvement, with an emphasis on pronunciation. Childcare was a major issue for clients, and on-site childcare was seen as most attractive. Cost of transport to centres was raised, and the availability of a student card (only available to full time students) with transport concession was suggested. (Because many of the women’s husbands worked they were not eligible for concession through a Health Care Card).

Strategic directions

The following were found to be important strategies for retention of the students in this group:

- Design classes to reflect learners’ goals and preferences for class structure.
- Increase focus on oral communication skills.
- Ensure readily available, culturally appropriate childcare is available for women’s classes.

The Arabic language group

The area selected for the study was the Goulburn area, where the local AMEP provider, Goulburn Ovens TAFE, has a growing client group of Iraqis. The local data showed that 45% of non-continuing clients were Arabic speaking, and that women made up 61.7% of withdrawals compared with 38.3% for men. The reasons for withdrawal (ARMS data) were family/personal and ill health.

Interviews were carried out with two class groups of Iraqi women in the Goulburn area: one group of 5 (Group 1) and one of 10 which meets at a neighbourhood house (Group 2). The teacher of an all male group was also interviewed. The group interviews were run in an informal way, with open-ended questions. The teacher of the male group was interviewed about
course curriculum, methodology and strategies she has implemented to encourage participation and retention.

Group 1 took place in the home of one of the women, and their children were with them (all under 2 years). The women were aged between 20–26 years, and all had 10+ years of education. Four of the women had moved from Melbourne, and two had previously accessed AMES classes but withdrawn because of childcare and cultural reasons.

Group 2 occurred at the community house in Cobram, where childcare is available on site. Fifty percent of this group of ten were professionally employed in Iraq. They all lived locally so could walk to class. They had chosen a country town for quality of life reasons, including the friendliness of the town as well as the support and friendships within their own community.

Results

The issues raised by both groups focused on cultural appropriateness, childcare and transport:

- Single sex classes are essential for religious reasons.
- Childcare needs to be physically close to class as it is not appropriate for children to be cared for by someone else, and husbands regard it as the wife’s duty; the on-site crèche at Cobram enabled mothers ready access to their children if needed.
- Women relied on their husbands to drive them to classes. Public transport was not seen as a popular option. Access by walking was seen as the most likely to encourage regular attendance.

The course design was based on community access and the women’s immediate needs. The emphasis was on oral communication and English that dealt with school and family issues. The teacher was an adviser and friend, and in some cases encouraged action. The women relied on her assistance with settlement problems.

Both classes were of low intensity, which the women preferred; however, the five-year eligibility limit was seen as an issue when classes were only a few hours a week. Similarly, the teacher expressed concern for women unable to access classes due to childcare problems. She had been informed by some families that the mother could attend only when the children started school.

The men’s class was held in the evening twice a week. There were 24 enrolled students and the retention rate was consistently high. The curriculum was needs-specific and was negotiated between the teacher and the clients. Topics included: buying a car or a house, the medical system in Australia, and English for First Aid. The session was structured to include a set of regular activities. The teacher reported that the men liked to use a course book or class sets, or work sheets given out at the start of the week. Men preferred single sex classes. Strategies for retention included setting a high standard for attendance and accepting few excuses for non-attendance, and telephoning clients who did not attend.
Strategic directions
The following were found to be important strategies for retention of the students in this group.

For Iraqi women:
- meeting in an informal learning environment such as a home or a community house as it fits most closely with cultural requirements;
- a low intensity program based on the women’s needs;
- physical proximity to home
- childcare onsite.

For Iraqi men:
- client/teacher negotiated curriculum and class format;
- single sex classes;
- expectation of high attendance rate and quick follow up of non-attenders.

Younger adults from former Yugoslavia
The group from former Yugoslavia, referred to elsewhere as Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian, has the second lowest retention rates. The majority of clients who exit the program are between 25 and 46 years, and employment is the major reason given for leaving. However, since 88% of clients from former Yugoslavia enter on humanitarian grounds, and are entitled to social security benefits, simple economic survival may not be the motivation. The study examined:
- reasons for withdrawal;
- the delivery mode of program most attractive to them;
- the course curriculum and teaching method to deliver this;
- strategies to promote retention.

Sample and methodology
Clients for this study were from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, registered at Springvale, Noble Park or Dandenong AMES, aged between 26 and 45 years, and had more than 50 hours remaining of their entitlement. Of a target group of 117 clients, there were 71 males and 46 females. Exit codes gave withdrawal reasons as employment (30%), family/personal (35%), health (22%) and access and childcare (13%).

A random group of ten clients was invited to an informal session to discuss the program and their satisfaction with it, and to ask for suggestions for improvements and to enhance retention. Three men and three women participated. All had ten years education or more.

In addition, a telephone interview in the first language was designed to obtain feedback about the course and their reasons for leaving. It explored their view of the importance of learning English and asked if they were
studying elsewhere. Clients were also given information about different learning options available to them. Seventeen interviews were carried out.

**Group discussion results**

Economic motivation was the main reason for withdrawal, with four of the six saying money and financial independence was more important than learning English. An aversion to ‘charity’ and the need to send money to family at home were related reasons. Saving money for their children’s future was also a motivator.

Teaching methodology and content were criticised. Participants felt that the selection basis should take factors of age and learning goals into account, for example a slower learning pace and oral/social goals for older people compared with younger people wanting a faster pace and needing to understand the Australian workplace and culture. In particular, the group felt that an Employment Focus Module with industry site visits should be included in the elementary language program, rather than waiting until the module in Certificate 3. The group felt that bilingual assistance was needed not only in the lower level classes but occasionally at higher levels to assist with explanations of the fine points of English grammar. The male who left for health reasons felt there was too much testing, and that classes of high intensity (ie 20 hours) were stressful and beyond his powers of concentration.

**Telephone survey results**

Eight men and nine women were interviewed by telephone in their first language. Fifteen were not currently learning English, one had just returned to an AMES class and the other was learning English at the factory where she worked. Thirteen clients withdrew because of employment, three for health reasons, and one moved away.

All clients thought that learning English was important for them at this time, but most felt that getting employment and thus earning money was more important. Three thought they needed English to settle happily in Australia.

Seven clients were happy with the content and intensity of the class they had attended. Six were critical because the content and pace did not meet their needs. Four did not comment. Four said they would like classes formed on the basis of age, and another said she was unhappy because of the range of ages and levels of education amongst class members.

**Strategic directions**

For this group, employment and wanting/seeking employment is a major focus of settlement. It is difficult to argue that any retention strategies will succeed against this perceived need. However, some strategies may assist, and encourage clients to persist. These are:

- class groupings with an emphasis on age groups and years of education;
- intensity of classes based on the specific learner or learning group: elementary and intermediate classes at a higher intensity than lower levels, individual modules of varying intensity;
• content reflecting learners' needs; in particular offering an employment module for those planning to work or already engaged in work;
• use of bilingual support at all certificate levels on a regular basis;
• delivery strategies that include lessening the pressure of assessment and using activities appropriate to the sophistication of the group.

**Summary of studies**

The data from two studies—the Vietnamese and Iraqi—suggests that programs for women with children must be responsive to their life context. Classes must be close to where they live and to childcare, reflect their need to speak and understand English in their everyday transactions in the community and in relation to their children’s schooling, and acknowledge that a low-intensity, community-based class may be the most appropriate for them. For the women interviewed, a focus on oral communication was the priority. The interviews also highlight the constraints on women’s English learning in a cultural context as well as because of competing commitments, and the difficulty of the time limits for the 510 entitlement.

The Iraqi men’s class has a high retention rate, using a quite different approach to that of the women’s classes. Key factors in retention appeared to be the curriculum negotiated to suit client needs, clearly identified structure and content for each class, the teacher’s expectation of persistence, and prompt follow up by the teacher of non-attenders.

The group from former Yugoslavia who were interviewed were all clients who had withdrawn, the main reason being related to the economic and psychological value of employment. Course content and teaching methodology were criticised. Participants wanted selection criteria to take age and learning goals into account when placing clients in classes. This group wanted content that helped them negotiate Australian workplaces and culture. They favoured bilingual assistance at all levels, although not at all times for higher levels. Again, individual variation highlights the importance of negotiating individual learner goals and assessing learning needs.
Chapter 3

Identifying and trialling strategies

An area highlighted by the literature review and the interviews conducted with clients is the need for programs to be tailored to suit the many different needs of new settlers. As Burnett's study showed, within one language group there will be a range of needs and interests: a group of older adults may prefer a slower pace, a young women's group may want language skills with a focus on family management (Burnett 1998). As research reported in the first paper in this volume points out, new settlers (clients) are not fully aware of their entitlements, and strategies are needed to encourage them to make full use of their available hours to achieve a level of English which supports successful settlement. Centres report that clients present for class re-enrolment not realising their entitlement has finished (personal communication, Julie Anne Töl). Since the definition of retention used in this report and by DIMA covers a client’s involvement in the program from the time of enrolling to the completion of the 510 allotment, marketing and promotional strategies for re-recruiting clients to classes also need to be considered.

Survey of Centre managers

Managers of eight of the nine AMES Centres in Victoria were surveyed about their retention strategies. (Appendix 4). In the survey, managers were asked to nominate two or three strategies they had implemented and comment on their effectiveness. The same categories have been used to classify their responses. Strategies that have proven to be successful in retaining clients and/or maximising their entitlement were as follows:

- recruitment and enrolment;
- bilingual assistance at initial interviews, and for general inquiries and assistance;
- providing quality initial interviews for placement and to provide clients with accurate and comprehensive information on the range of options;
- bilingual briefing on enrolment with a preparation for learning covering learner’s expectations;
- program options;
- flexible delivery options, including combinations of distance learning, Independent Learning Centre, classroom-based and on-line learning;
- bilingual classes;
- low intensity classes for the elderly and/or slow-paced learners;
• extension classes/modules (eg Introduction to the Internet, Job Search and Field Placement);
• flexibility in timetabling to cater for individual client needs such as four-day and two-day options;
• Saturday classes offering distance learning options;
• class content and resources;
• structured sessions with course books;
• explicit information on learning outcomes for each lesson;
• linkages with other support services;
• provision of Support Services on site eg Migrant Resource Centre staff, Torture and Trauma Counsellors and a Migrant Liaison Officer from Centrelink to be available on a regular basis;
• the involvement of key ethnic community groups for information and assistance to allow better communication between learners and program planners;
• identification of at-risk clients;
• contact of all ‘no shows’ within two weeks of course commencement using bilingual aides if possible.

**Centre consultations**

In seeking improved retention, it is worth considering the reasons people stay in a program. These may be as important as the reasons they don’t. The following strategies aim to build up supports as well as address barriers to retention. The information comes from a series of consultations run on a centre by centre basis during 1999. It represents the experience of all the Victorian Managers (interviewed individually) and approximately 80% of AMES staff (at staff meetings). Teachers and administration staff were invited to contribute ideas.

**Table 3.1: Strategies to promote retention, suggested by AMES staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment and enrolment</td>
<td>Information at initial interview for all CSWE levels to be given in client’s first language</td>
<td>Initial information to be kept to a minimum and to be essential only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>If possible a bilingual ethnic officer to be available at interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Pre-course information session given by bilingual aides</td>
<td>Clear information on the course and what is expected of the client and realistic setting of learner goals. Introduction of services that are within the Centre and those outside the institute that can help the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target group</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Run an Enrolment Day</td>
<td>Enable clients to negotiate their class and extension modules prior to starting Information on services to be available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program options and learning styles</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Extension classes to run as options for students to increase the hours and to allow the student to select their focus in learning</td>
<td>Suggested extension classes: - Accessing your community - Pronunciation workshops - Conversation groups - Grammar workshops - Further study elective - Vocational elective - Reading the newspaper - Childcare elective - On-line computing - Preparation for work placement/experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients wanting to join the work force</td>
<td>’Ready for Work ’ or ’Job Search’ module</td>
<td>Include: General English, OH&amp;S, résumé writing, casual conversation, negotiation skills, speakers, workplace visits, computing skills Also clients participate in work placement and gain experience in cold canvassing, telephone and interview skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly clients and/or slow paced learners, and/or clients with family/work commitments</td>
<td>Low intensity classes of 6 to 9 hours per week</td>
<td>Low intensity classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly client group and groups that prefer this style (eg Chinese)</td>
<td>Bilingual classes at CSWE I level</td>
<td>Involve a bilingual assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic speaking/Muslim</td>
<td>Single gender classes and ethno-specific classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education/highly motivated learners (fast track learners with 11+ years of schooling)</td>
<td>Increased activity hours to maximise their learning options Client grouping to focus more strongly on educational background and client goals Stream studies to match client goals and study purposes</td>
<td>Offer additional learning options to fast track clients and those requesting a greater number of hours (distance learning or extension classes) Give course vocational, further study or settlement titles Accredited TAFE modules offered as part of extension classes Identify competencies which can be mapped against CSWE II/III Clients receive CSWE competency plus an accredited TAFE module</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 3  Identifying and trialling strategies  29
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-level classes</td>
<td>Volunteer tutors</td>
<td>Use to work with individuals on a one-to-one basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees &amp; special humanitarian</td>
<td>Provide stability: Retain client group and teacher for one semester if possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timetabling options</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients needing flexible class arrangements</td>
<td>Timetable classes over four days to accommodate settlement and lifestyle needs of clients</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients with weekday commitments or lack of childcare</td>
<td>Evening and Saturday classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class content and resources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Structured sessions with explicit information on the learning outcomes for each lesson</td>
<td>Teachers need to make it clear to clients the outcomes expected from various activities and in some cases the reasons behind a specific mode of delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Bilingual ethnic aides</td>
<td>Bilingual aide to work in the classroom on a regular basis at all certificate levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students at risk of not continuing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Random/all client</td>
<td>Seek feedback from clients to provide support and to deal with issues before they lead to withdrawal</td>
<td>A staff member designated to follow up new clients to ensure they are satisfied with their class etc and to resolve any issues if they arise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients leaving to travel</td>
<td>Provide practical strategies to continue client’s English language learning</td>
<td>Clients to be encouraged to buy distance learning material or some listening tapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients not attending</td>
<td>Use personal contact to encourage client to return</td>
<td>Teachers to ring ‘no shows’ after one week absent from class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Trials of strategies

This section reports trials of the following strategies:

- a recruitment/enrolment strategy with a focus on communication in the first language, and including the strategies outlined in Table 3.1 under ‘Recruitment and enrolment’: that is, written material, interview and an enrolment day (Chinese adults over 35 years).
- a low intensity class, a program option for older adults.
- bilingual classes for older adults (Chinese-Mandarin/Cantonese).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients likely to withdraw/not re-enrol</td>
<td>Ensure client knows the hours remaining and their AMEP eligibility expiry date In the last week of class, ensure that all clients know the learning options that are available to them</td>
<td>Exit/withdrawal interviews Teacher identifies client who is likely to leave, such as a poor attender or a client who has health problems etc With client’s permission teacher makes an appointment with the Vocational Counsellor to give future study options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients threatened by competency-based approach</td>
<td>Lessen the pressure of assessment</td>
<td>Provide information about low intensity classes or other learning options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>Seek feedback from bilingual aides about student satisfaction</td>
<td>Aides to act as a mentor for their specific language group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients preferring to use first language to discuss issues</td>
<td>Provide clients with access to a pool of bilingual staff on-call to Centres</td>
<td>Bilingual staff to rotate between centres within a region and timetabled to be available by telephone between certain times Advertise and promote to clients when certain bilingual staff can be available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Awareness of entitlement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target group</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All potential and current AMEP clients</td>
<td>Promotion of 510 hours entitlement</td>
<td>AMEP 510 Promotional kit including posters, writing pads and paper A resource ‘Story Lines’ with worksheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All potential and current AMEP clients</td>
<td>AMEP advertisement on the various ethnic radio stations</td>
<td>Purpose of advertising is to promote the availability of classes through the 510 entitlement and encourage clients to use their full 510 entitlement Advertise telephone numbers for bilingual assistance for all language groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment and enrolment strategies: Chinese/English bilingual class

The area of Dandenong has been identified as having 8% of the total Victorian Chinese-born population (2,240 people). Most (73%) entered Victoria under the family reunion provisions. Local and national statistics paint a picture of a group with limited fluency in English, with older residents less likely to speak English well. In Dandenong, 67% of those of 60+ years do not speak English at all, and literacy amongst older adults is extremely low (City of Greater Dandenong, 1999; Multicultural Affairs Unit, 1999).

This project concerned provision of a Chinese/English bilingual class for elderly Chinese clients. The study aimed:

• to ascertain whether bilingual classes as a mode of delivery promote retention; that is, encourage clients enrolled in AMEP but currently not utilising their 510 to take up a class;
• to ascertain the most effective mode of invitation.

There was no bilingual class in existence prior to the study.

The target group for invitation totalled 56, and included clients of Chinese nationality who:

• had registered at Dandenong AMES;
• lived in the area;
• were over 35 years;
• had more than 50 hours of entitlement left;
• had an ASLP Rating of 0 to 1-;
• were not currently enrolled in an English course with an AMEP provider.

Fourteen of the fifty-six spoke no English and these were predominantly in the over 45-year-old group. Each client was sent a bilingual English/Chinese letter informing them that a bilingual class was to start at a central location in Dandenong and accessible by public transport. It reminded them of the time limit of their entitlement and invited them to an information session two weeks prior to the intended start of the class. It also advertised the availability of a Chinese speaking customer officer at the Centre at specific times to answer queries. Twelve clients (21%) attended the information session, and were enthusiastic to join a course that emphasised oral communication for everyday living. Details of the class were given to those present and a follow up in a bilingual letter was promised.

A random sample of 30 of those who did not attend was selected for telephone follow-up in their first language. The telephone call checked that the client had received the letter, and checked on their interest in a class. Of the thirty:

• eight clients asked for further details about the class;
• five referrals were made for clients wanting further information about the bilingual classes;
• seven wanted classes at different times (evening or Saturday);
• two were pregnant but interested in attending after the birth of the child;
• three clients had other family and work commitments that made it impossible to attend;
• ten had moved or were unable to be contacted.

The follow-up sample had a hit rate of 73% compared to the letter and session with a rate of 21% (of a larger sample). Of the total of 22 interested who received a follow-up letter with times and commencement date of the class, 12 enrolled, a conversion rate of 21.4% of the original sample. It appears that personal contact in the first language is an effective mode of recruitment, and is particularly appropriate for groups with a high percentage of members with little or no English. Advertising the availability of bilingual staff is also encouraging to prospective participants.

The total class enrolments grew to 23 with clients who were new clients or preferred this mode of delivery and transferred from a mainstream class. The data suggests that a bilingual class is attractive to older Chinese adults, but that intensive initial recruitment is only moderately successful. However, once a class is established, its availability attracts both students who transfer from other classes (possibly at-risk clients) and those who were otherwise non-participating. Word of mouth appears to be the main method of recruitment at this stage.

Program Options: Older adults in a low-intensity class

Oakleigh AMES operates within a community with a marked proportion of aged residents (Multicultural Affairs Unit). To cater for the needs of older adult clients, organisers ran a low intensity class of six hours a week for CSWE 1. The features of the class were as follows:
• The curriculum was community-based and the pace was slow.
• The teacher was sensitive to and responsive to client needs.
• New language was constantly revised and recycled in the lessons.
• A strong support culture developed in this class and the friendships extended beyond the classroom.
• The class membership and attendance records were analysed to ascertain if the low intensity class worked as a retention strategy for this specific client group.
• The class consisted of adults from a range of nationalities including Asian, African and European. The teacher started Term 1 with 18 students and finished Term 4 with 22 students. During the year, half to two thirds of students continued from the previous term.

Whilst the class was designed to suit the learning needs of older adults, they made up around 50% of the class in Terms 2, 3 and 4, and 33% in Term 1. (This percentage is affected by the number who transferred to a mainstream class). A number of the older students had more than 12 years of education, but younger students who stayed in the class tended to have less than eight. Around two thirds of the group were female.

Over the course of the year, a small number of students transferred to a mainstream class (four in Term 1, one in Term 2), and others who withdrew did so due to move house (3), travel overseas (4) and for health reasons (1). One client had to withdraw because their eligibility expired.
The client participation statistics of this class for the year show that seven clients started in Term 1 and continued through to Term 4, seven clients enrolled in Term 2 1999 and continued to Term 4 and two clients started the class in Term 3 and completed Term 4. An examination of the reasons for withdrawal plus the retention rate suggest that these specific clients were happy in the class and that the course met their needs both in intensity and curriculum. Although the study does not include feedback from clients, it appears that a low intensity class with or without first language support is an effective retention strategy for the older female and male client and for younger adults with a low level of formal schooling.

Program options: Bilingual classes for older adults (Chinese-Mandarin/Cantonese)

The Chinese language group has the lowest retention rate of any home language group. A large majority of these non-continuing clients enter Australia under the Family Migration category, where the core eligibility is based on a close family relationship with an Australian citizen or a permanent resident sponsor. One of the subgroups of this large complex group is elderly Chinese who are usually sponsored by their children. Although this group only represents 28% of the non-continuing clients in the Chinese Mandarin and Cantonese group, the issues related to this group are equally relevant to other elderly ethnic groups.

The elderly are an important and growing category in the AMEP. However, many older clients withdraw from the program. Commentators have argued that age is not necessarily a barrier to learning (Byrne, 1985) but that some strategies will be more successful. These are supporting the use of the learner’s first language, the setting of realistic goals, and the use of teaching methodologies which are sensitive to appropriate pacing (Er, 1986).

The case study tested these propositions by analysing the retention rates of the elderly Chinese in a low-intensity bilingual class over a period of four terms at Oakleigh AMES (Group 1), and comparing these with the retention rates of Chinese clients in a CSWE Certificate 1 mainstream class over four terms in 1998 (Control group, Group 2).

Group 1: The English/Chinese bilingual class at Oakleigh AMES

The English/Chinese bilingual class was introduced in first term 1999, following a survey of several older Chinese clients at the end of 1998, where they stated that they would only continue if there was help in their own language. An experienced Chinese teacher aide in the Individual Learning Centre had been employed to act as a mentor to Chinese clients, and assisted with letters in their first language to clients who had withdrawn from class and still had hours remaining from their 510 entitlement. The target group was elderly clients and those whose ASLPR was 0 to 0+. The letter offered a low intensity class of two hours, two days per week.

In Term 1 the class ran for two hours two days/week and in Term 2 was extended to six hours/week, as a bilingual Certificate 1 class. The Term 3
and 4 class was bilingual, Certificate 1 and 2, but the class was split for tuition to create a Certificate 1 Low group.

Fourteen clients commenced class in February 1999, 64% of whom were 60 or over. The majority (71%) had 11+ years of schooling. In Term 2, 14 new class members joined, with the vast majority of the class now over 55 years (92%), with 16 between 56 and 65. The group remained fairly evenly split between men and women and the number of years of education was high (76% with tertiary education).

Eleven of the original group of clients continued in the bilingual class for Terms 2 and 3. Twenty-three of the Term 2 class continued into Term 4, and 28 of the Term 3 class continued into Term 4. Numbers of withdrawals over the year were small, and in a number of cases were transfers to other classes or clients who returned to the class after overseas travel.

Of clients who joined in Term 3, 23% of these clients had registered and commenced class in 1997/1998 and had withdrawn. They had re-enrolled on hearing through friends that a Chinese/English bilingual class was being held at Oakleigh AMES. The remaining 77% were new registrations; however, 50% of these clients came to Oakleigh specifically for the bilingual class.

**Group 2: Control group**

The control group was a CSWE certificate 1 class, with an intensity of 12 hours over four days/week. Data was obtained from ARMS. There were nine Chinese clients out of a class of 24 (38%), four women and five men. The group was younger than the intervention group, and ranged from 26 to over 65 years, although five were between 29 and 36 years. Of the nine clients, seven completed the term, two withdrew totally, and two withdrew to travel and then re-enrolled in Term 2.

During Term 2, eight of the nine clients withdrew for the following reasons: employment (3), family/personal (2), access—moved away (1). However, further data analysis shows that three of these clients accessed English at a later date: one returned to Certificate 1 in Term 4, and two clients joined the Distance Learning Volunteer program in 1999.

By Term 4, two of the original Chinese group remained, and one client who joined in Term 3, when the class became a Certificate 2 class. Two clients who withdrew went on to a bilingual class (NB one listed family/personal as the reason for withdrawal, the other gave no reason). Over the year, the retention rate of the Chinese clients in the control group averaged 1.7 terms.

This case study strongly supports the proposition that an English/Chinese bilingual class proved to be an effective retention strategy for older learners, and also an effective reach strategy for new or previous learners. The high level of previous education of the majority of Group 1 may be a critical factor in the success of this group, as research suggests that education in the home country is the most important factor in achievement of competencies (Ross 2000).

The lower age of the control group and the fact that it was not exclusively Chinese makes further comparison difficult.
Chapter 4
Discussion of findings

There is limited research material available that explores reasons for withdrawal from adult learning programs or explores, with clients, options for improving retention. These studies make a great contribution to this field, and add to the statistical and theoretical models described earlier. They show the importance of learners being involved in expressing their own learning needs, setting their own language goals, in having access to a range of learning options to suit their life style, and support from programs to encourage their learning.

The studies here support Edwards’s set of six life context factors affecting both initial participation and retention: economics and cultural values of work, family responsibilities, issues of culture, childcare, transport and lack of information (Edwards 1996). They also add to our understanding of class and program-related reasons clients withdraw.

Employment and financial security is a priority for most adults of working age. For those with families, juggling work and family responsibilities during the initial years of settlement is a huge commitment of time and energy. The English language programs which are sensitive to these realities are assisting rather than competing with other settlement goals.

The importance of programs targeted to learners’ interests and language priorities has been mentioned many times, and is clearly critical to engaging adult learners over time.

Identifying clients at risk

Strategies for follow-up of students at risk of withdrawal, mainly through telephone contact, appeared to be successful (Iraqi men’s group and interstate former Yugoslavian group).

The studies also suggest that in some cases the official recorded reasons for withdrawal were not the actual reasons. Dissatisfaction with classes will tend to appear as family/health reasons due to the absence of other categories. Studies also suggest that a proportion of withdrawals return, especially when the withdrawal relates to overseas travel. Withdrawal codes relating to course dissatisfaction and failure to achieve personal codes would be useful additions to NMIU data collection.

Strategies for promoting retention

The Dandenong bilingual class continued to grow as people heard about it, and drew on clients from within mainstream classes as well as from non-participants. The number of students leaving the low-intensity class at
Term 1 masks the fact that a number of these transferred into mainstream classes, which better suited their needs. The ability of clients to transfer to a class which better suits them encourages retention.

Learner goals become more focused or even change over the period of settlement. After having some experience of the program, the Former Yugoslav and current Vietnamese groups were able to clearly identify their preferences and criticisms.

Centres are already implementing strategies to promote retention. The successful strategies managers described and the extensive list of strategies developed from the group interviews are supported by the findings of the studies (Table 3.1). The trial of bilingual and low-intensity classes was successful, and the survey of the existing Iraqi women’s group suggested that classes designed to suit particular learners’ needs do promote retention.

The success of the intensive recruitment strategy is less easy to assess. The strategy was labour intensive and therefore costly. However, it generated a core class group which expanded over time. It may be that word of mouth publicity is a feature of this type of class.

Clients responded frankly to questions asked through the first language surveys and interviews in this study, and did so in discussion with bilingual aides during classes (personal communication, Julie Anne Tolj, Sue Castleman). Strategies for identifying clients at risk and promoting retention should build on these findings.

**Conclusions**

The literature review established that retention rates within the Australian AMEP compare extremely favourably with US programs. It also highlighted that the definition of the term retention poses difficulties for comparison, and is essentially a bureaucratic rather than learner-based perspective.

Current NMIU data collection about reasons for withdrawal is limited as a monitoring tool for program managers because of the lack of categories relating to course dissatisfaction or achievement of personal goals. Withdrawal codes for these reasons would be useful additions. Customer service surveys are useful measures of performance but limited in relation to retention because they do not include withdrawals. Centres need to have standard methods for collecting feedback from clients.

Clients who continue to learn with some community-based and home tutor programs are currently counted as non-continuing. This also limits the AMEP providers’ ability to track client needs and link different learning approaches for individual clients; for example, designing a program of classes supported by a home tutor. Community programs and the home tutor program may be more appropriate for some clients than assessment focused AMES classes. Attempts should be made to measure language learning achievements via these methods, and to include them in any discussion of women’s persistence in language learning.
If the current definition of retention is to be kept, then data collection about clients who withdraw should provide information which will assist program planners to provide other options for such learners to suit their needs, and encourage them back into the program. This would help reduce the risk of a withdrawal becoming a non-continuing client.

**Risk factors for lower retention**

Less than one-third of clients withdraw from the program without fully utilising their 510 hours. Within this group, the Family Migration category has the highest withdrawal rate at 43%. As this is the largest group, it also makes up the largest number of non-continuing clients (56%). Retention rates, then, are related to migration category. On a national level, women in the Family Migration category are less likely to feel they speak English well three years after arrival than are Humanitarian women clients, who show the greatest use of the AMEP and the greatest improvement in English language (VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999).

Former years of schooling and older age are also linked to lower usage of the program. Further information emerges from a closer analysis of language groups and specific communities, where we find low retention rates for young women in the Vietnamese and Arabic communities, and for older adults in the Chinese groups. Young adults in the former Yugoslavian groups and young adult men in the Arabic groups also have lower retention rates.

Looking for or gaining employment is the main reason for withdrawal. The need to work to achieve financial security is greater for Family Migration category clients, than for Refugee/Humanitarian category clients, as they are not eligible for social security for two years after arrival. It is doubtful that the AMEP can influence this factor.

**Summary of research findings**

The research focussed on those language groups with lower than average retention rates. These were Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and former Yugoslavian. Within those groups, attempts were made to identify sub-groups with particularly low rates and to investigate the reasons for this. Exploratory research confirmed the following as important factors in supporting or discouraging adult learners:

*Life context factors*. such as employment and family demands, and responsibilities. These are outside the control of programs but their negative impact on learners can be reduced by careful program planning. Access, timetabling to fit in with other family needs such as looking after school children, and availability of accessible and culturally appropriate childcare seem to be particularly important to encouraging ongoing participation.

*Class structure and pace suited to the learner*. Older adults, slower learners and those with low levels of formal education in their first language, and women with work and/or family responsibilities seem to be
attracted to low intensity programs with an emphasis on oral English for everyday use rather than a formal assessment-oriented course. Equally, younger learners do not want to be held back by slower, older learners.

**Content appropriate to learners’ interests.** Men and younger adults in this study were looking for programs which included a focus on preparation for work or male interests (Iraqi and former Yugoslavian). Clients who had withdrawn criticised assessment focus, lack of oral practice, emphasis on grammar, pace being too fast or too slow. Within one class, criticisms could be totally different, highlighting the need to negotiate individual needs as well as group needs.

Discouragement with personal progress in English was identified as a factor by researchers, but did not come out strongly from the studies here. However, amongst the unprompted comments clients made in the AMEP client satisfaction survey, dissatisfaction with their own ability to learn quickly was an issue.

The three–five year time limit arose as an issue for clients in a low intensity program and women unable to utilise their 510 hours due to family/work responsibilities. The data does not allow us to discover how many ‘non-continuing’ clients would re-enter the program if their entitlement were not tied to time.

Cultural attitudes toward language learning seem to favour men, and to disadvantage women. The Iraqi women were particularly conscious of family responsibilities. The availability of single sex classes was important for them.

**Lack of information about options and entitlements.** This issue did not emerge strongly in the studies of clients; however, the study was not designed to explore this in depth. The positive response to the recruitment drive for older Chinese (bilingual class) suggests clients appreciated receiving information in their first language. Other researchers have found that lack of knowledge about entitlements means that potential clients do not realise they are eligible. Similarly there may be a case for informing clients more clearly about the policy and conditions for deferral available to all participants, enabling not only refugee category but all clients the potential to use the 510 hour entitlement over five years.

The case studies and comments from interviewees provide a strong case for the value of bilingual assistance in class to foster retention, especially for older adults.

**A program plan for supporting adult learning/retention**

The literature and the studies reported here identify key areas for action to promote retention. Tracey-Mumford’s (1994) plan provides a good basis for a Centre designing a retention strategy. The key elements are:

- at initial interview, provision of appropriate information about entitlements and options to assist course selection;
• establishment of realistic expectations of language learning;
• the setting of individual learning goals;
• provision of good quality teaching and administration staff;
• counselling should identify students at risk of dropping out early;
• a system for student contact and follow up with withdrawals should help students return to the program or be informed of remaining entitlement and time limit;
• course content and resources suited to the client group;
• ongoing monitoring of progress and recognition of achievement;
• involvement in a learning environment suited to the client’s abilities and needs.

Many of these are in place, and have operated within AMEP providers for some years.

Identifying clients at risk

Managers and staff at AMES venues are aware of strategies for responding to clients at risk of withdrawing/not continuing (Table 3.1: Strategies to promote retention, suggested by AMES staff). Many of these strategies are already being implemented. A retention plan may help Centres to identify the strategies most relevant to their client group, and to implement them in a consistent way to promote retention.

A good program will provide a range of options for each learner. A commitment to retention and achievement of learner goals will benefit both the program and the learner.
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Appendixes

Appendix 1: Interstate AMEP providers survey

Appendix 2: Survey questionnaire for students from the former Yugoslavia who withdrew from AMEP course

Appendix 3: Survey questionnaire for Vietnamese students who withdrew from AMEP course

Appendix 4: Survey questionnaire for Victorian AMES Centre Managers
Appendix 1

Interstate AMEP providers survey

The survey sent to all AMEP providers seeking information about retention and any attempts to improve retention rates, yielded two responses. One provider focused on retention issues in relation to Thai migrants, and the other focused on clients from the former Yugoslavia. Retention was not a major issue for the latter group, but was for the Thai group.

The strategies for the former Yugoslavian group were:

- extensive use of home tutors to support language learning and aid settlement;
- close liaison with Migrant Resource Centres;
- follow-up phone calls and visits, especially when client withdraws for health reasons;
- teacher does client evaluations, discussions etc. to attempt to meet client needs;
- timetable classes to fit in with clients’ family/child commitments.

The following information was provided on the Thai group:

- low retention mostly among females with low literacy;
- reasons for withdrawal: domestic problems, finding employment;
- retention strategies employed: special literacy classes to suit clients’ hours; use of bilingual interpreter to ascertain needs; class at Buddhist temple and weekly class for Thais;
- post-withdrawal: questionnaire about preferred class times; educational counselling; flexible learning options—distance learning, home tutor, night/Saturday classes;
- strategies to attract clients back: letters encouraging re-enrolment and informing them of new class times and locations; personal telephone contact from admin officer/teacher/interpreter;
- strategies with little impact: flexible access.
Appendix 2

Survey questionnaire for students from the former Yugoslavia who withdrew from AMEP course

Family Name ..................................Student ID no........................................
Given Names ................................---------------------------------------------------------------------
1 Are you learning English or studying English anywhere at the moment?

.............................................................................................................................................................
2 Why did you decide to stop coming to class?

.............................................................................................................................................................
3 Do you think learning English is important for you at this time?
   Why?.....................................................................................................................................................
   Why not?..............................................................................................................................................
4 Do you know about the different learning options we can offer you?
   • Saturday class
   • Evening classes
   • Community classes or groups
   • Study at home with distance learning
   • Volunteer tutors
5 (If client does not want any of the above)
   How would you have liked to learn English? Would you have like an intensive program when you first started English Classes?
   .............................................................................................................................................................
   If yes. How many hours of English classes per day? .................................................................
   If no. How many hours would you like to learn English? ......................................................
6 Did the content of the class meet your needs?..........................................................
   If not what would have been better?..............................................................................................
7 Comments
   What did you like/dislike about your course?
   .............................................................................................................................................................
8 If you are not able to study English at present, when do you think you will be able to study again?
   .............................................................................................................................................................
Appendix 3

Survey questionnaire for Vietnamese students who withdrew from AMEP course

Family Name .................................. Student ID no. ..................................

Given Names ..............................................................

1 Are you learning English or studying English anywhere at the moment?

............................................................................................................

2 Why did you decide to stop coming to class?

............................................................................................................

3 Do you think learning English is important for you at this time?

Why? ....................................................................................................

Why not? ..............................................................................................

4 Do you know about the different learning options we can offer you?

• Evening classes
• Community classes or groups
• Study at home with distance learning
• Volunteer tutors

5 In the last class at AMES did the hours and time of the class suit your needs?

............................................................................................................

If yes (ask client) day class/evening class .............................................

How many hours of English classes per day? .......................................

If no (ask client) Why not? .................................................................

............................................................................................................

How many hours would you like to learn English? ...............................

6 Did the content of the class meet your needs?

If not what would have been better? ....................................................

............................................................................................................

7 Comments

What did you like/dislike about your course?

............................................................................................................

8 If you are not able to study English at present, when do you think you will be able to study again?

............................................................................................................
**Appendix 4**

**Survey questionnaire for Victorian AMES Centre Managers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Choose two or three strategies that you have implemented in your centre. Describe these strategies and the particular group/groups you were targeting.</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Do you think that the above strategies improved the retention of the clients or had little impact?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| On what data/evidence do you base this judgement? |