



**Sprach- und
literaturwissenschaftliche
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Institut für Anglistik und
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Fachdidaktik Englisch

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**University public engagement in Sydney: Education,
social services and public policy**

von

Dr. Alice Chik und Prof. Phil Benson
(Macquarie University, Sydney, Australien)

am

Mittwoch, den 6.2.2019 um 8:15 Uhr, DOR 24, R. 1.501.

Das Abstract übersende ich Ihnen anbei.

Mit herzlichen Grüßen,

i.A. R. Schlösser

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Public lecture

University public engagement in Sydney: Education, social services and public policy

Alice Chik and Phil Benson

The 2016 census report shows that Australia is a highly diverse migrant country, especially in metropolitan cities like Sydney and Melbourne. Collectively, more than 200 languages are spoken in Australia. There is no official language, and English is only the de facto common or national language. Other than English, the most commonly spoken languages at home are Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Arabic, Vietnamese, Italian and Greek. Facing such diversity, we believe university researchers help create space for a healthy social discussion on language diversity. This paper discusses how the Macquarie Multilingualism Research Group (MMRG) leverages its resources to create, participate in and empower public discussion in three domains: education, social services, and public policy.

The Australian government regularly promotes the economic benefits of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce. However, the Australian curriculum does not prescribe mandatory language education, and state governments have the autonomy to decide on requirement and provision. In New South Wales, this autonomy translates into only a minimal requirement of 100 hours of language education in lower secondary. With limited curricular space, community language education relies on voluntary teaching outside regular school schedule. MMRG collaborates with the sector leader to professionalize community language teachers and advocate social awareness of collective benefits of community language education.

An ageing population is an Australian reality, and with it, visibility of elderly and access to essential services. We have integrated a 'Positive ageing for all' program into an undergraduate Professional and Community Engagement course to involve university students in volunteering and researching on social issues related to elderly. This involves a city council funding application, festival organization, census and policy research, submission to public policy, and local media engagement.

The last domain on public engagement is opening a public discussion on a potentially discriminatory city council proposal on commercial signage that could have national ramifications. A local city council proposed to tightly regulate non-English language use on shop signage. We will discuss how we brought a local council proposal into a city- and nation-wide discussion through using the media, advocacy groups, and public consultation. This consultation is still in development, but we will be able to report and discuss our engagement strategies.

Bios

Alice Chik is Senior Lecturer in Educational Studies and co-ordinator of the Macquarie University Multilingualism Research Group (<https://www.multilingualsydney.org/>). Her research examines languages learning in digital environments. She is especially interested in exploring how language learners construct and direct their autonomous learning in informal contexts. (alice.chik@mq.edu.au)

Phil Benson is Professor of Applied Linguistics at Macquarie University. His main research interests in multilingualism are in language learning environments, language experiences of migrants and international students, and linguistic landscapes. (philip.benson@mq.edu.au)