

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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Welcome to the **Languages Education in Australia Newsletter**. Produced by the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) jointly with the Australian Parents Council (APC), this Newsletter started as a monthly publication and is rapidly evolving to be a much more frequent event through 2007 - to inform school communities and other subscribers about events, activities and initiatives around the country related to languages education.

We want this Newsletter, and our website (<http://www.languageseducation.com>) to become increasingly interactive, building two-way communication and providing a venue for school communities to put forward ideas, discussion topics, suggestions – and *a gallery of good news stories and photos about how your school is engaging its community around languages education*. Contact us on: info@languageseducation.com

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AUSTRALIA, ASIA AND MULTICULTURALISM

Capturing the Soul of a Nation

Dewi Cooke and Barney Zwartz, The Age, 28 June 2007

There are now two more countries to officially add to Australia's diverse collection of prospective nation-builders: China and India. Results from the 2006 census show significant increases in the number of people born in China and India living in Australia, and commensurate rises in the number of those who speak the languages of each country.

Cantonese, in fact, is mounting a challenge to the traditional language groups established by Australia's postwar Italian and Greek migrants. With Arabic, it ties third for the most common language other than English spoken at home and, when combined with the increasing numbers of Mandarin speakers now living in Australia, Chinese dialects outstrip them all.

Chinese languages are spoken by more than 500,000 people. This represents an increase of nearly 100,000 since the 2001 census, compared with Italian (317,893) and Greek (252,222), which have both been in decline since 1996.

Mandarin and Hindi experienced the greatest proportional growth of all languages - more than doubling since 1996 - and there are now more than 147,000 Indian-born people living in Australia, compared with more than 77,000 in 1996.

But while the dominant cultural paradigm remains with those of European descent - British, Italian and German are still the key non-Australian ancestries claimed - the Australian National University's James Jupp said the postwar face of Australian migration was likely to continue through its metamorphosis.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/cooke070719.pdf>

Enhancing the Australia-Indonesia Relationship

Robert McClelland, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Speech to Australia Indonesia Business Council, 15 March 2007

One of the best opportunities for Australia-Indonesia relations lies in the field of education. Enhancing the linkages of our education sector promises deep social and economic rewards for both nations.

Indonesia's proximity, its rich culture and climate have long attracted many tourists from Australia - in 2005 nearly 400,000. Indonesian visitors to Australia numbered some 81,000 last year.

While there has been a steady downward trend since 1998 (Indonesian visitors numbered 154,000 in 1996) the Indonesian figure is projected to reach about 200,000 within the next decade. This travel ensures both countries already have a decent sized class of cross-culturally aware citizens.

The opportunity presented here is to develop tourism and business interactions into exchanges and investment more genuinely focused on education and deeper understanding.

Last year roughly 15,000 Indonesian students were enrolled in Australian institutions – both secondary and tertiary. This ranks in the top 10 of international student enrolments by nationality. But this figure of 15,000 actually represents a 6.7 percent drop from 2005 figures, which was itself an 11 percent drop on the previous year.

The reduction in numbers is partially due to Australian universities offering an increasing number of off-shore programs in Indonesia – some 11 institutions now do so.

But if you take into account the 2006 Lowy Survey, the decline may also be attributed to unresolved suspicions and negative public perceptions of one other.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/mcclelland070719.pdf>

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INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN LANGUAGES

Modern Ways for Ancient Words

Puliima National Indigenous Languages and Information Communication Technology Forum

Making the best use of Information Communication Technology to assist in keeping the 250 plus endangered languages alive in Australia was the focus of this national forum held in Newcastle 24-26 April.

The Puliima National Indigenous Languages Information Communication Technology Forum was funded by the Department of Communication Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), and coordinated by the Arwarbukarl Cultural Resource Association (ACRA) based in Hunter St Newcastle West.

The forum was the first of its kind to present information on a range of technologies from the more complex programs, to the very simple equipment many people own but don't ever quite master in the field of Aboriginal Language reclamation and revitalisation.

All states and territories were represented by Aboriginal community people. The focus was on working together in a community friendly atmosphere, and all presentations and displays had relevance for Australia's native Indigenous language programs.

The Manager of Arwarbukarl CRA, Daryn McKenny has a passionate interest in both language revival and in helping to support Aboriginal people to develop computer skills. "This is the first opportunity that we have where the world's oldest Culture and languages can come together with the world's newest culture, technology, just like the theme of our forum says 'Modern Ways for Ancient Words.'"

Read more at <http://www.arwarbukarl.com.au/default.aspx?id=136>

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OPINION

Language, the Missing Word in Our Schools

Matthew Absalom, Lecturer, Melbourne University, 6 July 2007

Walking around Preston Market this weekend, I was overjoyed to hear not a word of English spoken around me. Despite the fact that Melbourne is a linguistic hotbed, Australia has an appalling record with languages.

Commentators such as the Australian Council of State School Organisations label this "an international embarrassment and national disgrace". Influential groups such as the Group of Eight Australian research-intensive universities call for "a new attitude towards languages and the learning of languages in Australia".

Talk about languages in our schools is a hot topic. But nobody is talking about the elephant in the room — how language programs in government schools undermine languages education.

To understand this better, we need to survey some of the programs offered. In primary schools, we find immersion/bilingual programs, language awareness programs and Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programs.

An immersion/bilingual program is one where everything is taught in the language being studied. So, as well as doing maths in English, you would do it in, say, Chinese. This would happen in all areas of the curriculum and it requires teachers with expert language skills.

Language awareness programs focus on culture and include varied exposure to the target language. LOTE programs concentrate more strongly on the target language as the object of study.

In Australia, Italian has long been the language spoken most after English. It is also one of the most taught languages in Victorian government schools — it accounts for 25 per cent of all language enrolments and its continuing strength in Victoria can be linked to patterns of community settlement in Melbourne.

Startlingly, despite this, in 2005 there was not a single bilingual/immersion program for Italian at primary level in any Victorian government school. Even more perplexing is the imbalance between full-blown LOTE programs (where Italian is taught as a language) and language awareness programs (where students do things such as study Venice's Carnevale, make masks and perhaps learn a little vocabulary).

In Italian primary programs in 2005, more students statewide (53 per cent) were in a language awareness classroom than those studying the language (47 per cent). Even at secondary schools, 4 per cent of students were only offered language awareness in Italian.

This is a grave state of affairs, given the place of Italian in Victoria's psyche.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/absalom070719.pdf>

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VIEW FROM ABROAD

Beijing Pays UK Schools to Teach Chinese Culture

Richard Garner, The Independent (UK) 5 July, 2007

Confucius, the 6th century BC Chinese philosopher, always told his disciples to study the outside world in detail.

So he would have been delighted by the announcement yesterday that five state schools in the UK are to become "Confucius classrooms" - dedicated to promoting the study of Chinese culture and language.

For the schools, it will mean extra money to spread the study of the subject throughout their regions and the chance for their pupils to go on exchange trips and summer camps to China itself.

The first 175 pupils and their teachers will leave the UK next week to attend a summer camp in Beijing.

The project is being financed by Hanban - China's equivalent of the British Council - which aims to promote Chinese culture throughout the world. Hanban is giving each school £3,000 to help get the project off the ground.

All five - which include a selective grammar school in Wirral, a comprehensive serving one of east London's most deprived areas and a privately sponsored academy in Nottingham - have already started teaching Mandarin.

The five were chosen by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, which now represents 2,600 of the country's 2,950 state secondary schools and was itself awarded Confucius Institute status to spread the teaching of Chinese culture.

Read more at <http://education.independent.co.uk/news/article2737134.ece>

Russia Seeks to Promote the Russian Language

International Herald Tribune, 2 July 2007

Russia has opened a campaign to promote the national language after almost two decades of retreat, hoping to match the country's increasing economic and political confidence.

The Kremlin believes it can start rebuilding the credibility of Russian as a means of communication outside its borders, with business, and not Communist, ideology driving the revival.

In Moscow last week, ministers announced a series of plans, like expansion of an international cultural foundation comparable with Germany's Goethe Institute or the Alliance Française.

"Russian was the first language spoken in space," Education Minister Andrei Fursenko said, referring to the first cosmonauts and their Cold War-era space race against English-speaking American astronauts.

Once the common language across most of the Communist world, Russian has been sidelined, especially in Eastern Europe, where English has replaced it as the favored second language.

Russian also suffers from an image problem there, with Czechs, Poles and residents of other former Warsaw Pact member states resentful at having been forced to study a language linked with an occupying foreign power.

Read more at <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/07/02/news/russia.php>

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EVENTS

Indigenous Languages Conference

ILC 2007 is being held at the University of Adelaide from the 25th to the 27th of September, in association with the Annual Conference of the Australian Linguistic Society and the 2007 conference of Australex, the Australasian Association for Lexicography. The series of these three linguistics meetings is called LINGAD 2007.

Plenary speakers for ILC 2007 include:

- **Phillip Cash Cash** - born and raised on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in northeastern Oregon (USA) and is an indigenous Weyíletpuu (Cayuse) and Nuumiipuu (Nez Perce) person. In his homeland, Phillip is widely known by his traditional Weyíletpuu (Cayuse) name: píitamyanon maqsmáqs 'yellow hawk' (lit.: yellow striking). Phillip is also a speaker of Nuumiipuutímt (Nez Perce) and a traditional religious practitioner and singer. Provisionary Title for Keynote Address: "*Language and Culture in Two Endangered Language Communities in the Southern Columbia Plateau of western North America.*"
- **Te Haumihiata Mason** - of Tūhoe, Te Arawa and Ngāiterangi descent, Te Haumihiata was raised in Tūhoe and is a native speaker of Māori. While raising her children in her early thirties, she decided she should get an education. She graduated with a Bachelor of Education from Waikato University and a Diploma of Teaching from Hamilton Teachers' College before joining the Māori Department at Waikato University. During her six years there she lectured in Māori language at an advanced level, before taking up the position of Language Standards Manager at Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (The Māori Language Commission). Provisionary Title for Keynote Address: "*Some of the challenges of writing the first monolingual Māori dictionary.*"

Read more at <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ilc2007/>

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REMI NDERS

ACSSO National Conference symposium on Languages Education in Australia - **Darwin, 22-23 October** - <http://www.acsso.org.au/natconf/index.htm>

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