

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume One Number Thirteen: 25 October 2007

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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 aims 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 Languages Education in Australia 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

Note: Disclaimer - Any products or services mentioned in this Newsletter or on our Website are simply noted for your information; no such mention infers or provides any recommendation, guarantee or indemnity from ACSSO, APC or any of our members or employees in respect of any member of the public who may choose to follow up with that service or product.

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INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

Directory of Resources in Languages Education

ACSSO and APC Launch Second Edition

The first edition of the "Directory of Resources in Languages Education" was developed by ACSSO and APC in early 2007 in response to requests from parents and other stakeholders for a compilation of links to readily accessible information and resources in this important learning area.

Not only did this initiative receive very positive responses from around the country, but many people and organisations around the country responded enthusiastically to our invitation to forward further links, information and suggestions for inclusion in a subsequent Second Edition.

This second edition has now been compiled and published.

In preparing this edition of the Languages Education Directory, we have tried to make it widely accessible to a range of potential audiences which can include: parents and families; languages teachers and other educators; principals, and other community members. The material assembled here includes:

- General information about languages education and the reasons why this is such an important area of learning, produced by education agencies at Federal, State and Territory levels, government and non-government, in Australia and overseas.
- Information and contact details in respect of organisations providing languages education or support for languages professionals in Australia and overseas
- Information on entities producing languages learning resources and products
- Reviews and inquiries in relation to languages learning
- A range of current research and discussion papers

We hope this will contribute in some measure towards the vision of the "National Statement Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005-2008"

http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/languageeducation_file.pdf

In adopting the Statement, the Ministers of Education jointly "committed to the vision of quality languages education for all students in all schools in all parts of the country. We believe that through learning languages our students and the broader Australian community gain important benefits. Learning languages:

- Enriches our learners intellectually, educationally and culturally
- Enables our learners to communicate across cultures
- Contributes to social cohesiveness through better communication and understanding
- Further develops the existing linguistic and cultural resources in our community
- Contributes to our strategic, economic and international development
- Enhances employment and career prospects for students"

We gratefully acknowledge with thanks the time, effort, and knowledge which so many organisations and individuals contributed to identifying and forwarding a variety of valuable information that is now included in this second edition. Any further suggestions received will be included in the next edition in 2008.

Download the Directory in either PDF or Word format at
<http://www.languageseducation.com/resources.htm>

We also have a small supply of print versions of the Directory; you can request a copy by emailing info@languageseducation.com.

LEARNING RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Pacifica - A Cultural Voyage

An edutainment interactive CD-ROM

Through photographs, text, video, animation, sound and music, the **Pacifica CD-ROM** takes you on an interactive voyage around the South Pacific, exploring the culture, environment, art, music, location and history of the islands and providing an excellent introduction to anyone who would like to find out more about our region.

This outstanding educational resource has comprehensive and innovative curriculum support materials available, encouraging examination of issues such as nuclear testing and global warming in a South Pacific context.

Based on the Juniper Films series **Pacifica: Tales from the South Seas**, the CD-ROM is available for Mac and Windows platforms. Cost is AU\$54.00 plus GST and postage.

A companion book to the series, which focused on the myths and legends that have shaped the cultures and social histories of South Pacific countries, is also available.

Go to <http://www.juniperfilms.com>

LEARNING RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

LOTE@HOME Learning Packs

A New Language Learning Resource for Families

[LOTE@HOME](#) is an innovative way for parents to participate with their kids as they all learn a second language, devised by a parent who was unable to identify an approach to learning a language other than English that focused on a home, family-based setting.

In the [LOTE@HOME](#) pack, there's a set of 50+ laminated cards for rooms in the home. Families attach the cards to the thing they refer to - the stove, the door, the dishwasher, the cupboard, the bath, the tap and so on. There are cards for the bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen. Family members use the words on the cards, mixed in with their usual language, to make sentences. So for example, a parent could say to a child "... please close 'la porta' when you come in ...". Gradually, everyone will absorb the Italian word for 'door'. And so it goes with all the other cards.

In another set of cards in the pack, it's all about learning the names of body parts. With this set, you can play a game, like 'Snap' or 'Go Fish' but use the foreign words to do it. The pronunciation is explained too.

By using the cards, and reinforcing words around the house, kids will learn a new language in exactly the same way they learned English - by immersion and absorption - which experts worldwide agree is by far the fastest and most thorough way to learn a new language.

[LOTE@HOME](#) extends the reach of language learning in the home by also including a set of conversation cards with simple sentences and interactions, a calendar (for dates, days and months), and easy recipes so kids can extend their experience of living the language.

[LOTE@HOME](#) packs are only \$40 and can be bought online or through schools. At present, there is an Italian pack available, with French, German, Indonesian, Japanese and Spanish available to order now for 2008.

For more information visit <http://www.lote-at-home.com.au/>

THE WORLD IN REVIEW

Talking the Talk: Putin Expounds on Foreign Languages

Agence France-Presse October 18, 2007

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday jokingly compared his learning of German to training a circus bear, and said he studied English regularly to have "normal" conversations with other leaders.

The Russian president said he studied English "fairly regularly" in order to carry on conversations with foreign counterparts without the help of translators.

Putin said he had also made an effort to utter a few words in French during his speech before the International Olympic Committee in Guatemala last July.

"Why do I do this?... It is necessary to have a normal working regimen with colleagues, so that there is no language barrier. You can't always talk about everything in the presence of translators," he said.

Read the article at <http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5i52KvT6MmTabQMeeGBwFZGgg8JDg>

Web Domains Get Language Lesson

The Globe and Mail (Canada) October 15, 2007

The U.S. organization in charge of overseeing and regulating domain names online, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), is to launch 11 test sites in languages that don't use the Roman alphabet.

Until now, addresses on the World Wide Web used Roman alphabet-based suffixes - .com, .org, or .net - even if the rest of the domain name appeared in a language such as Japanese, Russian, or Arabic.

But experts say French-speaking and native Canadians may now be able to more effectively pressure the Canadian Internet Registry Agency (CIRA) to make changes to the Canadian domain name system.

CIRA has talked about creating a multilingual domain name system in Canada, but has been slow to push forward on the issue, University of Ottawa Internet law professor Michael Geist said.

"I think it's a positive step," he said. "It's one that is long overdue and one that highlights the fact that Canada has not made the same kind of progress that it should on the same issue domestically. Surely in a bilingual country our domain names ought to have full functionality in both languages."

Balancing Bilingual Education for Dubai Schools

Gulf News October 18, 2007

Siham Al Najami profiles the debate over bilingual education in Dubai, where educators are challenged to teach students English to survive in the job market, but at the same time to preserve the nation's native Arabic language culture.

For Samia Majan, Arabic Language Supervisor at the Dubai Education Zone, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is working to achieve that balance in public schools with the recent initiatives such as Common English Proficiency Assessment (CEPA) and the developments in Madares Al Ghad - or "schools of the future."

"Our students are fluent in Arabic and achieving a balance between the two languages is quite challenging at the moment, but we are on the way to achieving it," she said.

But others suggest that the study of Arabic is declining in private schools. "It is shameful, the effect of English, or rather its dominance has taken its toll on Arabic," said Majid Fahd, Head of the Arabic Unit at Dubai National School. "I speak with my students in Arabic, but get a reply in English or they have to add English words to the conversation."

Read the article at <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/07/10/19/10161324.html>

Learn a Language

Mango

Mango offers a variety of free Flash-based foundational language courses on its new website.

Each self-paced course has 100 lessons that contain dozens of vocabulary quizzes and drills, along with recordings of native speakers reciting the words and phrases.

The website's beta release includes courses in Brazilian Portuguese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, and Spanish.

There are also English lessons for Polish and Spanish speakers, and even a course in Pig Latin.

Visit the website at <http://www.mangolanguages.com/>

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BACK TO THE FUTURE ENCORE UNE FOIS ...

The Journey and the Arrival Matters: Proficiency is the Purpose!

Perhaps the most perceptive and persuasive of all the many successive national review of languages education was "Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy" (May 1996).

The Letter of Presentation (19 April 1996) to then Education Minister Amanda Vanstone, seems well worth re-reading ...

Dear Minister

In June 1993 Mr Beazley asked the National Board of Employment, Education & Training to provide advice in the following terms:

Drawing on existing reviews, the Board is requested to provide advice on policy and implementation in the areas of Languages Other than English teacher quality and supply. The study should consider issues in relation to the diversity of language learning needs in Australia and the fundamental importance of the quality of outcomes of the programs with a particular emphasis on proficiency.

The Council believes that achieving proficiency in other languages is one of the great learning experiences in the human condition. The key finding of the Council's investigation is that our education systems are consistently failing to deliver any worthwhile proficiency in languages.

This Advice does not hold the classroom teacher responsible for this failure. Members of Council sympathise with the teachers themselves who have received inadequate training in language pedagogy, who have to cope with school organisational constraints which seem to hinder, rather than help, language instruction, and who are required to teach a curriculum which demands so little of students in the way of proficiency.

The Advice places the blame upon successive policies of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. The worst approach is the contemporary practice of setting extravagant and unachievable targets of students studying a language while failing to put in place strategies to ensure there are sufficient qualified and proficient teachers to reach those target enrolments. The Advice blames policy makers who fail to mandate proficiency as an outcome of language education. And the advice blames those who have failed to make the hard decisions to ensure that the school environment is wholly supportive of effective language education.

The recommendations of this Advice seek to reverse the failures. The Council believes that the recommendations, if accepted by the Commonwealth, the States and by teacher training institutions, will lead to a marked improvement in the quality of languages teaching in this country and in the proficiency of the students studying languages. The Council is not asking for extra dollars to be spent. The Council is asking that governments scrap existing policies and the meaningless targets associated with those policies.

The pivotal element of this Advice is the teacher. If acquiring foreign languages is an aim desired by governments, then governments must put in place the policies and the curricula to make them possible. Certain it is, however, that none of this is worth doing unless we have the teachers.

Yours sincerely

Peter Laver (Chair)

Also well worth re-reading is the report's Preface, by Rodney Cavalier, Chair of the Australian Language and Literacy Council. And of course the Report itself and its array of logical recommendations.

You will find it all at: http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/2D0678CB-53D9-4616-B992-F45043FCCE62/3968/96_21.pdf

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