

# LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume One Number Eighteen: 20 December 2007

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## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES 2008

### Languages Matter

This is the designated slogan for UNESCO's global co-ordination and facilitation role for the International Year of Languages 2008 proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in May 2007.

Advice received 21 December from UNESCO indicates that the first edition of their Newsletter "The Courier" will appear on 1 February 2008, the whole edition themed around the central focus that "Languages Matter"

We will seek to keep you informed on all further developments through subsequent issues of our Newsletter.

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## YOUR STORY

### One Song, Four Languages, in Yipirinya School, Alice Springs

*ABC Alice Springs December 10, 2007*



Students at Yipirinya School in Alice Springs perform *Silent Night* in four languages, English, Western Arrernte, Luritja and German. | Nicole Lee

Children in Alice Springs are learning language through song. Yipirinya School in Alice Springs is one of the most multilingual schools in Australia. Classroom languages include Central Arrernte, Luritja, Western Arrernte, and Warlpiri as well as English.

The students' home languages are even more diverse, and most of Central Australia's Aboriginal languages have representation at Yipirinya. Many of the children also speak Aboriginal English, which diverges from standard Australian English in its grammatical structure.

ESL teacher Margaret James uses song as a bridge across languages and to introduce English grammar. James' students recently performed *Silent Night* in English, Western Arrernte, Luritja and German, to a packed auditorium to celebrate the opening of a new school building.

Read the article (and listen to the performance) at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/alicesprings/stories/s2114098.htm?backyard>

Read more about the school at: <http://www.abc.net.au/alicesprings/stories/s2114217.htm>

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## VIEW FROM THE UK

### Education Plan Calls for More Foreign Language Teaching in Early Years

*Reuters UK December 11, 2007*

The British Children's Secretary, Ed Balls, released the government's new "Children's Plan" Tuesday. The billion-pound plan sets the stage for an overhaul of priorities in the British education system for the next ten years.

The plan includes a so-called "root and branch" reappraisal of the primary school curriculum (for children aged 5-11), and specifically calls for an increase in foreign language teaching to primary school students.

A significant aim of the review is to create more space for teaching English, maths **and** a foreign language.

Other key points of the plan include improving outdoor play areas for children, and increasing the capacity for free nursery care for 2-, 3-, and 4-year olds.

Read the article at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUKL1148905020071211?sp=true>

Read the official media release at [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2007\\_0235](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0235)

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## Cash Boost for Languages Learning in UK Schools

*19 December 2007*

Schools will be urged to work together more closely to better support pupils to continue learning languages as they move from primary to secondary, Schools Minister Jim Knight said today. His call comes alongside the announcement of £53million investment in language teaching over next year.

Today's record level of funding will drive forward the latest phase in the programme of action to revolutionise language learning which came out of Lord Dearing's review published in March 2007.

It includes £35 million for primary schools ahead of languages becoming a compulsory part of the curriculum for 7-11 year olds in 2010, as well as increased training and support for secondary teachers.

Visiting Surrey Square Junior School in Southwark, Jim Knight today said: "In the Children's Plan last week the Government set out its vision to ensure we give all children the potential to succeed and go as far as their talents take them. We know 'one size fits all' compulsory French or German GCSE study simply does not motivate pupils – a view taken strongly by Lord Dearing, teachers, employers and trade unions.

"By continuing to invest in more long term solutions, such as better trained teachers and more innovative resources, we will generate enthusiasm and confidence for studying languages in secondary school and beyond - far more effective than simple compulsion.

"Languages have many practical applications, and we know from employers that our young people must be equipped in language skills to compete in the global economy. Developing a love for languages is a lifetime asset that broadens your horizons – benefits I want all primary school children to have."

Lord Dearing said: "I invite all head teachers to see this announcement as an opportunity: in primary schools to press ahead with languages with the confidence that increased funding is secure for a further 3 years; in secondary schools, to make a reality of a policy of 'languages for all', backed by new curriculum options and a more lively curriculum for the GCSE.

"I am delighted the Open Schools for Languages is going ahead: we proposed this as a support for teaching and one that plays to the interests of today's pupils."

Read more at [http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn\\_id=2007\\_0242](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/pns/DisplayPN.cgi?pn_id=2007_0242)

**Note:** The Dearing Review was published on 12 March 2007 and can be found at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/subjects/languages/languagesreview>

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## RESOURCES

## UNESCO Paper: "Education in a Multi-Lingual World"

Language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge, but also fundamental to cultural identity and empowerment.

It is in this context that UNESCO has come to restate its position on languages and education first contained in the Organization's report *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* (1953).

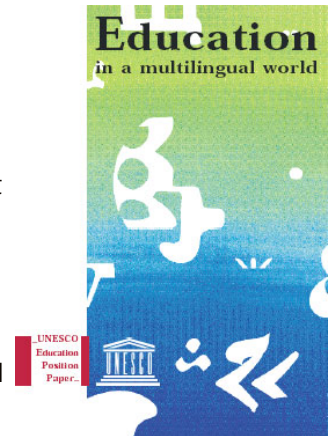
In the Education Position Paper: *Education in a Multilingual World* (2003), UNESCO considers some of the central issues concerning education and the role of languages and culture, and provides some essential guidelines and principles.

The number of spoken languages in the world today has been variously estimated at between 6,000 and 7,000. UNESCO's *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing* has suggested that at least half of them may be lost in the coming years.

Respect for the languages of those belonging to different linguistic communities through initial instruction in the mother tongue, the encouragement of pluralism and of inter-cultural, bilingual or multilingual education, access to other value systems, and the sharing of knowledge across such borders are essential elements for peaceful cohabitation in the 21st century.

Download the Position Paper at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001297/129728e.pdf>

Download the UNESCO Atlas at [http://www.unesco.org/education/imld\\_2002/atlas.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/imld_2002/atlas.shtml)



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## RESEARCH

### Second-Language Issues and Multiculturalism

*Christine A. Mallozzi and Jacquelynn A. Malloy, Reading Research Quarterly Oct-Dec 07*

*Ms Mallozzi and Ms Malloy compiled a series of reports on second-language and multicultural issues in countries around the world for Reading Research Quarterly, the journal of the International Reading Association. The reports were presented as summaries of questionnaire responses received from informed professionals in their regions, such as teacher educators, researchers, policymakers, and publishers. These responses were then summarised by invited international research correspondents. We reproduce here and extract from the report compiled for Australia.*

### Australia

Jan Turbill of the University of Wollongong compiled responses from Australia, a markedly multicultural country. At the time of the 2001 census, there were 57 main languages spoken in Australia other than English.

When the various dialects and languages of smaller groups of people were identified, there were 240 languages spoken in Australian homes, including 59 indigenous languages, many South Pacific Islander languages, and several Asian languages.

The five most frequently spoken home languages other than English are (in descending order) Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, and Vietnamese. However, English is the language of instruction, business, and government.

Most Australians are monolingual, although 15% speak a mother tongue other than English. In some communities, particularly in major cities, non-English languages may be more dominant in both private and public domains as reflected by the mixture of cultural groups that exist within the community.

For instance, in one Sydney-area public elementary school of more than 1,000 children, 98% of the children are raised in non-English-speaking homes. These children come from homes where Mandarin Chinese (58%) or any of 45 other different languages and dialects is spoken.

Therefore the school offers three language programs (Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, and Italian) so that all children have an opportunity to learn another language spoken in the community.

In some Australian states, these programs are offered to support the child's home language as well. In the areas where English is the dominant language, the elementary school children are provided an opportunity to learn a language other than English through programs often funded by particular language groups. In areas where an indigenous language is dominant, the native language is used for instruction and may be taught in a bilingual context in the early years.

At the secondary school level, all students are required to learn a language other than English, such as French, German, Italian, Indonesian, Japanese, or Spanish. English is taught as a second language to children who come to school with little or no English facility.

English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers are supplied on an as-needed basis to develop mainstream or pull-out programs depending of the needs of the students. Instructional methods, the integration of out-of-school interests, the use of electronic media, and the influence of assessment are reportedly dependent upon the socioeconomics of this multicultural society.

Multiculturalism in this region is defined as valuing the diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds rather than seeking that all groups must assimilate. The federal government provides an umbrella policy to all Australian educational programs regarding multicultural education.

The National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia stated that multiculturalism is achieved through maintaining and renewing cultural identity; providing access, equity and educational services with equitable outcomes; and maximizing the potential of people on a national and international level.

Some question how successful this policy has been and suggest that it has served only to increase racism rather than promote the valuing of cultural and linguistic differences.

Read the entire paper at <http://www.reading.org/Library/Retrieve.cfm?D=10.1598/RRO.42.4.7&F=RRO-42-4-international.pdf>

Read the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia at <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/multicultural/agenda/agenda89/toc.htm>

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## **INTERNATIONAL ROUNDUP**

### **Seniors & Students Pair Up For Reading**

#### **The Moose Jaw Times Herald (Canada) December 20, 2007**

The residents at Chez Nous retirement village celebrated Christmas with their reading buddies from Central Collegiate on Wednesday. "It's a connection to the community," said Rosalie Boots, activity worker at Chez Nous.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) class at Central has been paired up with seniors at the Chez Nous seniors' residence for two years. The students come in every Wednesday to read with their buddies and improve their reading skills.

Boots said the residents look forward to their time with the students and enjoy the opportunity to help someone. "It's a very nice change of pace for them," she said.

Michelle Smith, ESL teacher at Central Collegiate, said it means a lot to students as well. "It's a win-win situation. They are working on their reading and learning social skills," said Smith.

Smith has noticed that some of the residents are former teachers and have been able to help the students with their books. "Sometimes they don't do much reading, they just sit and tell stories," she said.

The two groups also exchanged Christmas gifts with each other as well. The students made Christmas ornaments for the seniors and the residents knitted mittens and hats for the students.

*Editor's Note: As Michael Clyne has shown in his recent paper, this buddy system with retired people from other linguistic backgrounds has proven very successful in languages learning in Australia – and provides an invaluable community resource for language learning programs and intercultural communication across our communities.*

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## **Contest Reflects Focus on China**

*The Miami Herald, December 13, 2007*

Miami-Dade County Public Schools gathered on Saturday to announce the winners of the first annual China essay competition within district. Last year in 2006, the Chinese language program was first introduced to the district's bilingual programs, supported by the Foreign Language Assistance Program of the U.S. Department of Education. The goals of the new program, which are to increase cultural knowledge and foster proficiency in the Chinese language, have received great praise while interest continues to grow.

"China is getting stronger economically, and there are many job opportunities," said Harry Gao, project coordinator of the district's Division of Bilingual Education and World Languages and one of the organizers of the essay contest.

"The future will require a more bilingual workforce. Chinese is definitely one of the major languages for students to take," Gao said.

Gao said future essays may have to be written in Chinese.

Sarah Lubin, 16, one of the essay winners, spoke her short acceptance speech in Mandarin Chinese, which she translated afterward.

The Chinese program at her school, Sarah said, is teaching her to talk and write in the language. "I like to travel, so if I go to China, now I can know how to speak with them," she said.

Read more at <http://www.miamiherald.com/494/story/339716.html>

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## **Families Work to Keep Home Language Alive in Second and Third Generation**

*Star-Telegram, Texas, December 20, 2007*

In Arlington, Texas, the Vietnamese community is working together to ensure that the children and grandchildren of immigrants hold on to their ancestral language. Volunteers from the community run a language school in a local church to help American-born children maintain Vietnamese language skills.

The school has a superintendent, a dean, a principal and 40 language teachers. Everyone who works there is a volunteer, and the budget is from donations and dues.

But experts say immigrants' efforts to keep their language alive is an uphill battle. Rubén Rumbaut, a sociology professor at the University of California at Irvine, said America has proven for centuries to be a "language graveyard" where immigrant families' native language is almost always lost by the third generation.

Other Vietnamese churches and Vietnamese Buddhist temples in the area also said they teach Vietnamese as a way to preserve their culture. That is unmistakably the first priority, but some also said learning Vietnamese would bring a few other benefits.

Annie Cao, one of the teachers, said learning Vietnamese can prepare the youth for serving their community later in life. "When you become a doctor a lot of elders don't speak English," she said. "It's great to speak two languages."

"We want them to know their roots," said parent Anna Nguyen. "I don't want them to forget Vietnamese because they are Vietnamese."

"In this country the more languages you know, the more chance you'll get a job," adds Vien Bui, dean of the language school.

Read more at [http://www.star-telegram.com/arlington\\_news/story/370462.html](http://www.star-telegram.com/arlington_news/story/370462.html)

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## **Using Comic Books as Read-Alouds: Insights on Reading Instruction From an English as a Second Language Classroom**

*By Jason Ranker The Reading Teacher December 2007*

A first-grade teacher used comic books as read-alouds during her implementation of a reading/writing workshop. The students, primarily English-language learners, were able to make use of this medium in order to learn new reading practices.

The teacher used the comics to teach multiple aspects of various reading processes such as reading with an eye for gendered representations in media texts, reading for recognition of dialogue, and recognizing a problem/solution structure in narrative.

The teacher's use of the comics as read-alouds demonstrates their use as instructional texts, because comics provide interesting and motivating material as well as visual support for literacy learning.

*Editor's Note: So, does the recorded success of this approach for English learners indicate a potential strategy for learners of other languages.....?*

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