

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/news1080508.pdf>

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A CHALLENGE TO AUSTRALIA

How can we all work together on this?

A Letter to the Editor:

I read your newsletter each month, which automatically comes to my email address.

I don't read all emails I get as a teacher, but I am always drawn to your work as it is described.

I am as convinced/frustrated/excited/dismayed as you seem to be about languages in Australia.

As a father of a 3 year old I am even more tuned to this debate.

The most promising thing I read in the current newsletter was about the Aboriginal language database MiroMaa.

An easy-to-access (like youtube, say) online database of language/culture/stories/info/multimedia from our pre-euro culture would be a fantastic resource. Obviously a massive job.

I would love to take my students through information about our immediate location. I would love to listen to people who have a direct oral connection with our local original culture.

I'm not sure why I'm saying this. I know we ALL need to act to save what is left of our aboriginal culture.

I REALLY appreciate what you are doing. You are combatting the hopelessness I feel.

I am almost equally convinced that Asian language acquisition is important and rewarding.

(name & address supplied)

A Challenge from the Editor:

I want to share these words with every reader. They are much, much more real and powerful than any abstract comment I could write. They come straight from the heart, the spirit, the community, the land and more than 40,000 years of uniquely rich language and cultural heritage - now in peril of being let slip through our fingers, fade away and lost forever.

So: What are we all going to do about it? How can we work together to tackle these issues, that affect our past, present - and future?

The debate is open - and will not be closed anytime soon.

Over to you ...

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AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Push for teaching Aboriginal native language in schools

Daily Telegraph, April 28, 2008

Primary school students may learn Aboriginal languages as part of bold plan to improve education on the country's cultural heritage.

That's one topic to be discussed today at the National Brains Trust forum, hosted by the National Trust.

Forum moderator Simon Molesworth believes children would gain a deeper appreciation about Australia's cultural mix if Aboriginal words and phrases were taught.

"There is whole body of Aboriginal words that have become part of the lexicon, many place names and outback names for landforms," he said.

"I think it would be of great value to the students to know where these names, such as Wagga Wagga and Murrumbidgee came from."

He said a plan to discuss the Australian flag at the forum could prove "divisive" and may be put on the backburner.

Mr. Molesworth said the forum was initiated as a way of bridging the gaps left by the recent 20/20 Summit.

"This forum really sprang out of the failure of the summit to address the issue of cultural heritage," he said.

"What we do about our cultural heritage was not even on the agenda. It's a great pity we don't realise the way ahead should be largely focused on where we have come from."

- Read the National Trust Media Release at <http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/media/files/2008/april/media-24-4-08.pdf>
- Read the Australian Financial Review Article of 29 April 2008 at http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/files/brainstrust_heritage.pdf
- National Trust will publish an outcomes paper at: <http://www.nsw.nationaltrust.org.au/>

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OPINION

Let's send a message to the world ... in their languages

John Hajek and Yvette Slaughter May 5, 2008

There has been much discussion recently about language issues in Australian media, revolving around two closely intertwined areas: Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's public speaking of Chinese and anxiety about Australia's language capacity.

As for the first, it's a highly commendable public act. It has generated real interest here and overseas, and reignited debate about the state of languages in Australia and in our schools in particular. It takes real courage for an Australian politician to speak anything other than English. Despite the snide comments from some quarters, it also sends a powerful message to students and voters that it is perfectly all right to be a multilingual Australian.

Of course, Rudd's not the first multilingual prime minister in an English-speaking country - they are the norm in Canada, and former British PM Tony Blair spoke French publicly - but it has taken a long time for anything like this to occur in Australia.

As for our language skills in general, the signs are worrying. The proportion of students completing language study in schools has dropped from 40% in the 1960s to about 13% today. It is the reverse of what is happening elsewhere in the world. Our international competitors are getting better at speaking other people's languages, especially English. The fall in the number of Australian students studying Asian languages was identified as a major national problem at the 2020 Summit.

Fortunately, the Federal Government is already on the ball, which is no surprise given the Prime Minister's special interest. During the election campaign, Rudd announced the ALP's new National Asian Language and Studies in Schools Program, under which it would provide \$68.6 million over four years. It is remarkably like the earlier National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Program that the Howard government terminated at the end of 2002.

It is admirable that the Government is prepared to put more into languages and Asian studies in Australia. But this revived policy, and indeed the current debate on Australia's language skills (or lack thereof), seems to address only part of the equation. The Government's silence on European languages is deafening. It is far too focused on Asia and the policy sends several wrong signals.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/hajek080505.pdf>

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RESEARCH

Report Calls for Compulsory Languages Education from Kinder to Year 10

Australian Teacher, April 2008

Foreign languages need to be made a compulsory and integral part of a national curriculum to prevent Australia from falling further behind the rest of the world, the author of a new government report says.

Angela Scarino, director of the University of South Australia's Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education, says although she is pleased with the "strong message" Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has sent regarding foreign languages education, it is "absolutely necessary" it be made compulsory from kinder to Year 10, with incentives for students to continue their studies into senior secondary school.

"It's a shame that four areas have been designated in the national curriculum," Scarino says of the National Curriculum Board's mandate to focus on English, maths, science and history, but not languages."

Scarino, co-author of a Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations report investigating the state and nature of languages education in Australian schools, says Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's election promise of injecting \$68 million into Asian languages education is too narrow.

"We are a global world. We need more students learning Asian languages, but we also need more students learning languages full stop."

Julia Gillard recently said the new National Curriculum Board would work on ways to standardise language education across Australia, after the government report found that the number of Year 12 students studying a language other than English had dropped to 13 per cent today, from 40 per cent in the 1960s.

Lia Tedesco, president of the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers Associations, said the report "stresses the urgency of the need to do something".

"When our counterparts in Europe and Asia are studying languages right through to Year 12 level, we are at risk of not being the clever country," she said.

Tedesco also said better workforce planning and pre-service education were critical.

Read more at

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/investigation_languages_in_schools.htm

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LANGUAGES BONUS FOR TERTIARY ENTRY

Studying languages at school earns bonuses for university entry

Group of 8 - 28 March 2008

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's decision to include languages education on the list of key subjects that will form the planned national curriculum for primary and secondary schools is an important step forward, according to the Chair of the Group of Eight universities, Professor Alan Robson AM, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia.

"The Go8 is concerned, however, that research released by the Government this week finds that secondary students believe that studying a language will negatively affect their university entry scores and is not relevant to their future lives and careers," Professor Robson said.

"Rather than disadvantage students, studying a language other than English to Year 12 earns bonus points for access to many universities. Studying a language can also open up career opportunities that would not be possible otherwise," he said.

"In the near future the Go8 will be releasing details about the languages taught at each member university and the incentive schemes they have in place to encourage students to study languages both at school and university.

"This information will help students and their parents make better-informed decisions about study choices and help career counsellors provide better advice.

"The Go8 is pleased that the Federal Government has taken the first steps towards a co-ordinated national approach to improving languages education in Australia. This move is in line with a key recommendation contained in a policy paper on languages the Go8 released in 2007," Professor Robson said.

"Go8 universities offer training in all languages still taught at the tertiary level in Australia and we welcome the opportunity to work with other stakeholders to support the study of languages," he said.

Contact Michael Gallagher, Go8 Executive Director, 02 6239 5488

Background Publications:

- Group of Eight, Languages in Crisis: A rescue plan for Australia, June 2007:
<http://www.go8.edu.au/policy/papers/2007/Go8%20Languages%20in%20Crisis%20Discussion%20Paper.pdf>
- Australia Council for Educational Research (ACER), The Review of Teacher Education for Languages Teachers, August 2007:
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/review_language_teacher_education.htm
- Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education, The University of South Australia, An Investigation of the State and Nature of Languages in Australian Schools, October 2007 (Published March 2008)
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/investigation_languages_in_schools.htm
- Read the detailed Group of 8 publication "LOTE Incentive Schemes" of 14 April 2008, at
<http://www.go8.edu.au/news/2008/Go8%20LOTE%20Incentive%20Schemes.pdf>

Editorial

We are advised that:

- *Currently, in Victoria and South Australia, such a bonus is mandated by the respective state governments so it applies to all universities in those states, for all degrees.*
- *In other states (with the exception of the University of Western Australia) the Go8 universities offer such a bonus only for "relevant" degrees, such as International Relations or Global Studies, where in some cases LOTE study is also required as part of that degree.*
- *The University of Western Australia is currently the only Go8 university to "go it alone" in offering a TE bonus, for admission to all degrees, for year 12 completion of LOTE subjects, without government backing to ensure an equal footing for all students and all universities in that state.*
- *The University of WA scheme will only apply from 2012, since any earlier year of commencement was considered prejudicial to current secondary school students who had not had the opportunity to plan their year 8-12 studies knowing that this option would be available.*
- *In a parallel backward step, it is understood that Edith Cowan University in WA has responded by removing a LOTE bonus they previously offered - a move which does nothing to encourage high school study of LOTE and subsequent university enrolment.*
- *It is understood that other Group of 8 universities are still working out the detail in relation to their own institutions, in terms of such aspects as: the determination of which degrees will be considered "relevant" for the purpose of the bonus, and indeed the extent of the bonus to be awarded for eligible students.*

- *Other matters to be worked through by each are in relation to questions of access and equity and consideration of the extent to which such a scheme would not unfairly favour or disadvantage any group of potential incoming students.*

Comment: In the interests of simplicity, consistency and equity it would seem the logical approach would be for each other State and Territory to endorse and adopt the arrangements successfully put in place by Victoria and South Australia. By all universities - for all degrees.

That indeed appears to be the intention of a key recommendation in the Group of 8's own national discussion paper "Languages in Crisis: A Rescue Plan for Australia" (2007) which puts it thus:

- *"The expansion to all other states and territories of the bonus for language study based on the successful VTAC practice, which provides a 10% bonus on a student's university entry score if he or she has successfully completed the study of a language other than English at Year 12 level."*

So: why not this consistent national approach - now - if we really want to encourage the study of languages in all our schools? - Ed.

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OPINION

Learning a language is not just words

Matthew Davies, The Age, April 28, 2008

It is in Australia's best interest to look beyond speaking only English.

The 2020 Summit missed half of the problem: Australia's weakness in foreign languages comes from widespread problems of attitude. Overcoming bad attitudes is crucial to mastering languages. How could Australians miss the publicity for Prime Minister Rudd's command of Mandarin? And what does it say of Australian identity and our place in the world when such pride and curiosity greet a public figure who has mastered another tongue very different from his first language of English?

The paradox is extreme. Rudd's language ability contrasts starkly with debate about Australia's foreign language education, where leading professionals have long reported a worsening crisis.

Since the 1960s, Australia has plummeted in foreign language learning. Strange then that the 2020 Summit really only restated much that has been urged at different times in past decades: more foreign language skill, covering Asia in general and Indonesia in particular.

As a domestic social issue, the state of our foreign language learning suggests many of us have tunnel vision, if not stunted minds. Globally it amounts to a major and long-term strategic weakness, comparing poorly with most other countries.

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/davies080428.pdf>

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2009 ENDEAVOUR LANGUAGE TEACHER FELLOWSHIPS

Applications now open for the 2009 Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships

The Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships (ELTF) are an Australian Government initiative which offer practising and trainee (pre-service) language teachers an opportunity to improve their language proficiency and cultural knowledge through an intensive, short-term study program.

The Asia Education Foundation manages the ELTF Program on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations.

In 2009, study programs will be offered for practising teachers of Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Bahasa Indonesia in Jordan, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Spain, and Darwin respectively.

Trainee teachers are eligible to apply for the study programs in Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Bahasa Indonesia.

Applications for practising teachers close on Friday 6 June 2008.

Applications for trainee teachers close on Friday 13 June 2008.

For further information, and to download an application pack, go to http://www.endeavour.dest.gov.au/language_teachers_fellowships/

Enquiries can be directed to endeavour@asialink.unimelb.edu.au

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TALES FROM HERE & THERE

USA: Preschoolers Learn Language Skills to Prepare for Kindergarten

Visalia Times-Delta (CA) April 23, 2008

Children as young as three at preschools in Visalia, CA, begin learning both Spanish and English in their daily curriculum. LaDonna Samuels, owner of Raggedy Ann & Andy Preschool in Visalia, said teaching preschool children more than one language encourages them to continue foreign-language studies in later years.

Children at her school learn the alphabet and colors in Spanish and sign language, and also learn to count to 10 in Japanese and Italian. "Anything we can teach our kids, the better it is for them," said Samuels.

Parents are also benefiting from the multilingual curriculum. Rosanne Huitt is learning Spanish from her 5-year-old son, Matthew, who attends Watch Me Grow Preschool.

"When we're out driving around, he points out things and tells me he can say it Spanish," she said. "He tells me the word and teaches me how to pronounce it. He's teaching me how to speak Spanish, and that's awesome."

Read more at

<http://www.visaliatimesdelta.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080423/NEWS01/804230314/1002>

USA: Language Immersion to Become Trilingual

San Diego Union Tribune (CA) April 22, 2008

Lakeside Union School District has voted to add Mandarin to its language immersion program at Riverview Elementary School.

Currently, nearly all instruction is in Spanish for the 140 kindergarteners, first- and second-graders in the program, which started two years ago.

English reading and writing instruction is added in the second grade. Students are expected to be fluent in English and Spanish by the end of fifth grade.

Beginning in the fall, students will receive instruction in the Chinese language for about 45 minutes four days a week, beginning in the third grade.

The Lakeside district wants to ease Riverview students into Mandarin and develop course work in the middle grades for them to continue learning both languages, said Tina Brady, the district's special projects director.

The kindergarten-through-eighth-grade district plans to work with El Capitan High School in Lakeside, which is part of the Grossmont Union High School District, to provide additional classes.

"My goal is to make them trilingual by the time they graduate high school," Brady said.

Read more at <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/education/20080422-9999-1m22mandarin.html>

UK: Cambridge drops need for foreign language

Sarah Cassidy, The Independent, 15 March 2008

Cambridge University applicants will no longer need a GCSE in a modern foreign language to win a place, following the biggest shake-up of its entrance requirements for nearly half a century.

The 800-year-old university argues that it is unfair to continue to demand that all applicants have at least a C grade in a language GCSE when many schools no longer require students to take the subject.

Dr Geoff Parks, director of admissions for the Cambridge colleges, said: "This change would remove something which has, unfortunately, become a significant barrier impeding access to Cambridge. We would still encourage all young people to learn a foreign language, and highlight the fact that students at Cambridge are able to study no fewer than 140 different languages through the provision at our excellent language centre."

The decision was taken after ministers dropped foreign languages from the national curriculum for 14-year-olds in 2004.

Since then, the number of state schools requiring students to take a language GCSE has plummeted. In 2000, 80 per cent of students studied a foreign language at GCSE level.

The proportion has fallen to below 50 per cent.

Source is <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/cambridge-drops-need-for-foreign-language-796256.html>

USA: When Language Can Hold the Answer

The New York Times April 22, 2008

Cornell researcher Dr. Gary Lupyan is studying the effect of language labels on learning, providing fodder for one side in a traditional debate about language and perception.

In stark form, the debate was: Does language shape what we perceive, a position associated with the late Benjamin Lee Whorf, or are our perceptions pure sensory impressions, immune to the arbitrary ways that language carves up the world?

The latest research changes the framework and perhaps the language of the debate, suggesting that language clearly affects some thinking as a special device added to an ancient mental skill set.

Read more

at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/22/science/22lang.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1&ei=5070&en=b6d0165220090bc8&ex=1209528000&emc=eta1&oref=slogin

USA: Bilingual education is the way

Michael Rukavina Observer Today, 28 April 2008

Breaking a language barrier is difficult for anyone trying to communicate a message. In many school districts across the state and locally this barrier is battled every day between educators and children trying to learn English.

In a collaborative effort involving the Dunkirk City School District, SUNY Fredonia, Project ELA and Project BRIDGE, Dr. Stephen Krashen was brought to the SUNY campus last week to speak about English Learners in American classrooms to area educators.

"My main point is, this is America, we want kids to learn English and I'm in favor of that. Minority children should learn English as fast as they can and bilingual education does that," Krashen said of his theory.

"I teach Foundations of Bilingual Education, but really anyone who teaches any class that has to do with English Language learners - kids learning English as a second language in schools - you learn Dr. Krashen's ideas," added Dr. Kate Mahoney, Assistant Professor for Language Learning and Leadership. "He's introduced a lot of prominent theories."

During his discussion Krashen focused on three main points, with one being a focus on bilingual education as well as trying to maintain the child's "heritage" language and importance of having access to books.

"If you can keep the child's first language, their heritage language, it's good for the county we need spies, interpreters and sales personnel. It's good for the brain, bilingualism keeps you young. There's no reason why not," he said.

"Children who are language minority are usually children of poverty which means they don't have access to books at home, English or first language, they live in neighborhoods with inferior public libraries and go to school with inferior school libraries. Number one is increasing children's access to books. Children who read a lot, first language or second language, do better on all their tests."

Read more at <http://www.observertoday.com/articles.asp?articleID=20950>

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Canberra Region Languages Forum

Sunday 18 May 2008

1pm to 5pm Building 2, University of Canberra

A regional forum which brings together teachers, researchers, community groups, parents, students and others interested in maintaining and developing the bilingual and multilingual skills that Australians will need in the 21st century.

The aim is to share ideas and expertise to take action at the local level to increase awareness of the importance of other languages and to encourage people to learn, or to continue to develop, their language and cultural skills.

Topics to be discussed include developments since the first forum in October 2007, bilingual programs in ACT schools, ethnic schools, and collaboration between schools and multilingual community radio.

The forum will be opened by Ms Mary Porter AM, MLA, representing the ACT Chief Minister

THE FORUM IS FREE: Everyone with an interest in language education is welcome

To register, or for more information, call Mandy Scott on (02) 6201 2073 or 0408 089 235 or email Mandy.Scott@canberra.edu.au

Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century

Two-Day Forum for the International Year of Languages 2008

22-23 May 2008 - Riverglenn, Indooroopilly: Brisbane

Thursday 22 May Celebratory Breakfast (from 7.00am to 7.45am finish, Guest Speaker: Prof. Ken Wiltshire from 8.00am- 8.40am)

Forum registration 8.45am. Program from 9.00am - 3.00pm

Friday 23 May from 8.30am - 3.00pm

Speakers: Professor Ken Wiltshire, Professor Mike Levy, Lia Tedesco, Professor Michael Clyne, Professor Roly Sussex

Presenters: Primary and secondary teachers of languages (to be finalised)

ISQ Member Schools attending the forum are funded by the Australian Government School Languages Programme.

The cost for other schools and institutions will be \$150 for 2 days or \$75 for 1 day

Read more at <http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/CalendarBook.aspx?category=1&element=23&PKID=447>

National Conference for Teachers of German - NCTG

"German on Stage"

6-9 July 2008, Gold Coast Queensland

German on Stage, linking with themes of the International Year of Languages 2008, will showcase and explore a variety of methods for teaching German in Australia.

The focus will be on elements of drama, role play, theatre and film which can enrich and foster general methods used in the German classroom.

The conference will include examples of best practice, Landeskunde and papers on research findings.

Keynote speakers include:

- Birgit Oelschläger from Berlin: how to include theatre elements in teaching German.
- Susanne Wodraschke on the new docx series and the way documentaries are useful material for intercultural aspects in language teaching.
- Andrew Ferguson, president of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria, will present the big picture - languages advocacy.

Read more at <http://www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/lhr/aus/en2708450v.htm>

PLUS

Network of Australian Teachers of German (NATG) Meeting: 5-6 July 2008, Gold Coast Queensland - in conjunction with "German On Stage" Conference

The Network of Australian Teachers of German (NATG) will also meet prior to the conference on July 5-6 at the same location. Representatives from all states and territories are invited to this annual meeting.

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

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REMINDERS

9 May - Celebrating the International Year of Languages - Melbourne -

<http://www.mltav.asn.au/content/view/168/>

15-16 May - Open Road 2008 - Melbourne - <http://www.openroad.net.au/conferences/2008/>

22-23 May - Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century - Indooroopilly -

<http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/CalendarBook.aspx?category=1&element=23&PKID=447>

31 May-1 June - Central Association of Teachers of Japanese Annual Conference Madison, USA -

<http://imp.lss.wisc.edu/catj2008>

30 June-11 July - LingFest 08 - Sydney - <http://www.lingfest.arts.usyd.edu.au/>

5-6 July - Language Education in Transition: College and University Educators Conference - Kinki

University, Japan - <http://jaltcue-sig.org/>

6-9 July - New Zealand Language Teachers Biennial Conference - Wellington, New Zealand -

<http://www.nzalt.org.nz/conference>

9-12 July - Australian Council of TESOL Associations International Conference - Alice Springs -

<http://www.tesol.org.au/conference>

12-13 July - National Chinese Language Teachers' Federation Conference - Canberra -
<http://www.cltfa.asn.au/confreg08.pdf>

7-9 August - Modern Language Teachers Assoc of Tasmania State Conference - Hobart -
<mailto:suzette.holmes@education.tas.gov.au>

3-5 October - Japan Studies Association of Canada 2008 Annual Conference - Waterloo, Canada -
<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/JSAC.pdf>

16-18 October - Immersion Education: Pathways to Bilingualism & Beyond - St Paul, USA -
<http://www.carla.umn.edu/conferences/immersion2008/call.html>

25-27 September - XIIth Foundation for Endangered Languages Conference 2008 - Leeuwarden,
Netherlands - <http://www.ogmios.org/home.htm>

8-9 November - International Symposium on Japanese Studies and Japanese Language - Hong Kong -
<http://www.lib.unimelb.edu.au/collections/asian/jsaa/hk-j.pdf>

4-7 December - Media in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning: CLS International Conference -
Singapore - <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cls/clasic2008/>

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