

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume Two Number Seven: 22 May 2008

Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/news1080522.pdf>

- [Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships](#)
- [International Year of Languages](#) (3 items)
- [Opinion: Repairing languages education](#)
- [Research: Teaching and learning Languages Other Than English \(LOTE\) in Victorian schools](#)
- [Opinion: No ifs or buts, just more Rudds please](#)
- [Tales from Here & There](#) (5 items)
- [Conferences & Events](#) (3 items)
- [Reminders](#)

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR: ENDEAVOUR LANGUAGE TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS

Once Again - Indonesian Teachers are sidelined by a passive discrimination process

Once again, the Endeavour Language Teaching Fellowship is offering the wonderful opportunity for teachers to gain invaluable in-country experience for language teachers in countries as far-flung as Jordan, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Spain.

And once again teachers of Indonesian are the second class citizens of language teaching, with a program offered only within Australia.

How do we, as teachers, convince our students of the value of learning Indonesian language and culture when our government expressly forbids us to officially visit the country?

How do we "engage with Asia" when we are not permitted to do so on the soil of the country we are trying to engage with?

Why is it considered safe for all sorts of politicians, from the Prime Minister down, to officially visit Indonesia, while the very people with the biggest stake in improving relations between the people of our two nations are denied the opportunity?

There is no logical reason for this ban. Many Australian universities and other organisations run study programs in Indonesia, thousands of Australians privately visit Indonesia every year - in fact everyone in Australia is allowed to go to Indonesia except teachers and students on government programs!

I call on all language teachers and their representative bodies to make their voice heard in opposing this discrimination.

I call on the Rudd Government to overturn immediately this illogical policy of exclusion from language resources of such immediate importance to our future.

And, through ACSSO and APC, I ask the parents and families of Australia to support teachers of Indonesian in lobbying for their access by right to the same sort of in-country programs which are available to teachers of so many other languages.

Yours sincerely

*Keith Fletcher
Indonesian teacher & LOTE coordinator
Alexandra Secondary College, VIC*

What do you think? Like all ACSSO email newsletters, this one goes to all schools around the country, all State and Federal members of parliament and quite a few other movers and shakers. We can't guarantee everyone reads it - but the ones that do are smart. Contributions can be made without public attribution.

Email <mailto:info@languageseducation.com>.

Applications for the 2009 Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships

Closing in June

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.

Read more at http://www.endeavour.dest.gov.au/language_teachers_fellowships/

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES 2008

Launch of Australian Poster for International Year of Languages 2008

Today, 22 May 2008 ACSSO and APC formally launched the Australian Poster for the International Year of Languages 2008, in conjunction with the UNESCO team in Paris who are coordinating activities around the world.

The Poster was launched at the national forum "Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century" in Brisbane.

The Poster features the international design developed by UNESCO, together with ACSSO and APC Logos, and the address of the Australian site for the International Year: <http://www.languages2008.org.au>

The Full-Colour Poster is in A2 format, silk finish, suitable for framing, laminating or otherwise displaying in your school and at any appropriate events.

Posters now available for purchase by schools etc. Eight posters in a mailing tube will be sent to anywhere in Australia for an all inclusive price of \$22.00

View the Poster Design and download Order Form
<http://www.languages2008.org.au/resources.htm#080522>

"It is important to keep your first language"

Supplies of this free leaflet are now available in each of the following languages:

- English
- Arabic
- Greek
- Italian
- Mandarin
- Vietnamese

You can order on the Order Form available at
http://www.languages2008.org.au/pdf/order_iyl08_poster.pdf

Have International Year Website: Let's Fill It Up and Roll!

Running special events for the International Year? Of course you are! Opportunities like this come round too rarely to miss.

We plan to set up information about the up-coming events in each community - and then to publish stories and pictures about what happened - building up a rich national mosaic or tapestry that will depict all aspect of the International Year across Australia.

So: send us information about your school event or your community activity that's built around the International Year of Languages and our multicultural society - so we can publish and record and report on how Languages Matter! in your community.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

Email <mailto:info@languageseducation.com>.

OPINION

Repairing languages education

Phillip Mahnken 16 May 2008

You ask: What's the point of language teaching? Is it just economic, or are the biggest benefits intrinsic? What languages should be taught, how should we determine priorities?

We need to do so much to repair languages education in this country, it is puzzling to know where to begin, what to prioritise.

If we start from lower primary school (again) and do not let it fizzle along the way (again), we could create a thorough, sequenced and effective system, priming students in school and refining them at universities as the 1994 Rudd Report recommended. That would have no effect on the tertiary system until 2020, no effect on the society and economy until 2024 or so.

We cannot wait that long nor can we wash our hands of all those already past infant school. Besides, we know that students can start languages at any age and make great gains if their motivation and the quality of the curriculum and teaching match their needs.

Plenty of Australians in recent decades have begun a language from scratch at university and gone on to attain advanced, even professional proficiency. But that is more demanding and stressful than it need be than if students brought with them a sound school grounding in their languages.

Ideally, Australia will aim high like many EU countries.

"Swedish is the official language but most Swedes speak quite good English," states a little book a friend brought back recently. "The younger generation sometimes speak a third language such as German or French." Sweden has 9 million people of whom half a million are foreign citizens and "1.1 million have foreign roots," it informs me.

So, like Australia it is a multicultural country, dependent on trade, industry and an educated workforce, proud of its freedom of worship, ingrained democratic traditions and the achievements of women at all levels. Like Australia, Sweden is both spacious (50,000 square meters per citizen, it boasts) and urbanised.

Ideally, here in Australia we will immediately instigate the following:

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7357&page=0>

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RESEARCH

Teaching and learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in Victorian schools

Sandra Mahar Research Manager, Education Policy and Research Division, Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 1 May 2008

UNESCO has declared 2008 as the International Year of Languages and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has produced a timely research report on teaching and learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in Victorian schools: "Teaching and Learning Languages Other than English (LOTE) in Victorian Schools" by Sue Fernandez, Research Unit for Multilingualism and Cross cultural Communication at the University of Melbourne.

The report engages with the current debate in the media regarding the merits of language learning in schools and points out that Victoria has the greatest number of students learning LOTE, with 20.2% of students who complete Year 12 studying a language compared to 12.8% in New South Wales and 5.9% in Queensland. The report also highlights the complex range of issues associated with teaching LOTE, including teacher availability, continuity in learning and the choice of languages to be taught.

The importance of LOTE is discussed from a global perspective, drawing attention to the long term economic and employment benefits likely to accrue to those who learn a language other than English. It explores the benefits of language learning in the context of various local and national issues. Perspectives are given on how LOTE learning enriches learners intellectually, educationally and culturally, enables communication across cultures and enhances employment and career prospects for individuals.

In the 1980s, Victorian education policies expressed a strong commitment to LOTE programs for all students from Prep to Year 12 in Government schools. Although teaching of LOTE at the lower level of primary schools has gradually declined in recent years, upper primary teaching has remained stable.

The report draws on a broad body of research that suggests learning another language enhances understanding of, and insights into, one's own language. It presents various studies that demonstrate how a child's meta-linguistic awareness is enhanced through language learning. The research includes a local study undertaken in two Victorian primary schools which found that students involved in LOTE programs demonstrated higher levels of 'word awareness', a skill linked to reading readiness, than those who did not participate in LOTE programs.

The findings of further studies exploring bilingual issues indicate that bilingual children appear to develop a more analytical orientation to language and appear to have an advantage over other children when performing particular tasks. Further key research demonstrates the ability of bilingual children to separate the sound of a word from its meaning at a significantly earlier age than their monolingual counterparts.

The report queries the reduction of LOTE programs in early primary school in light of such findings. It contends that learning a second language will enhance and enrich the language experience of all children.

The report emphasises the importance of LOTE programs in promoting and valuing all languages and cultures, which is demonstrated not only by the research but also by the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). The rationale for LOTE programs presented through VELS includes the development of communication skills, and knowledge that will assist students in a broad sense to understand language, culture and humanity, thus contributing to the development of interculturally aware citizens. It further explores this notion from an intercultural language teaching and learning perspective.

The issues now facing English-speaking nations set a global context for the report. Research and key international reports suggest that English is not the only 'big' language in the world, and that the position of English as a global language is in the care of multilingual speakers. The report notes the complacency in English-speaking countries in relation to learning languages, together with significant company losses due to lack of basic proficiency in languages other than English. Of particular note was an estimated loss of two billion dollars a year for American companies due to what is described as inadequate cross-cultural guidance for their employees in multicultural situations.

The final section of the report reviews literature on LOTE teaching and learning over a 30-year period. This section aims to provide a context for understanding current issues and perspectives on what constitutes best practice. It provides background information on traditional, grammar-translation methods of language learning together with current, preferred approaches to second language teaching.

Communicative language teaching (CLT) is described as a broad approach which comprises a set of beliefs and principles that guide language teaching decisions. As the preferred approach in most parts of the world, CLT is said to engage the learner in meaning-focused, interactive communicative activities. In this context, language is seen as a powerful tool for purposeful communication. The role of grammar in a CLT approach is presented within a contemporary pedagogical approach, in which it is seen as serving the needs of communication rather than as a set of rules to be memorised.

As the media continues to report on various government and academic views of LOTE learning, this report provides some historical perspectives and echoes the need to consider the potential long term social, economic and employment benefits which are likely to accrue to those who learn a language other than English.

"The contrast is indeed very stark between the European perspective on multiple languages as 'basic skills', and the view in many English-speaking countries of LOTE as an optional, dispensable item in a 'crowded curriculum'."

"We in the English-speaking world seem to have lost sight of languages as educationally important. We have replaced this idea with the view that languages are educationally useful and we have seen this view increasingly undermined by the argument that 'everyone speaks English'."

"Graddol foreshadows the rise of other languages including Mandarin, Russian and Spanish, and predicts that, with the end of the economic dominance of the US and the European superpowers, there will be enormous changes in perceptions of the relative importance of world languages. He notes the rush in Indian universities to learn Spanish."

Download the report at <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/publ/research/publ/language-learning-report.pdf>

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OPINION

No ifs or buts, just more Rudds please

Kevin Yeoh, The Age, May 9, 2008

WE NEED more Kevin Rudds. Love him or loathe him, by 2020, Australia will need more Kevin Rudds.

By 2020, a child in primary school this year will be finishing or have just finished year 12. They will face a markedly different world order.

That order is best illustrated by an investment discussion hosted recently by Bloomberg LP, the financial markets firm founded by Michael Bloomberg, the mayor of New York.

The discussion involved a range of captains of industry from Asia, as well as Bloomberg's chairman, Peter Grauer.

A British executive, a 20-year veteran of Asian financial markets, summed up the consensus: "I've seen the end of the British empire." He turned to face the chairman from the US: "We are seeing the decline of the US empire." He then turned to the audience.

"This is the Asian century."

According to the Federal Government, by 2020 Asia's economy will be larger than those of the US and Europe combined. The rise of China and India will be an uncomfortable adjustment for some. Their economic integration is already causing some friction. The Chinese exchange rate has been a common whipping boy for US politicians. India's strength as an outsourcing hub has cost Western jobs. The geopolitical and cultural integration will likely be harder, as the Western world deals with adapting to the increasingly assertive and relatively novel Chinese and Indian perspectives of the world.

Read more at <http://www.businessday.com.au/no-ifs-or-buts-just-more-rudds-please-20080508-2cd2.html>

Kevin Yeoh is an Asian equities portfolio manager. He was a delegate to the "Australia's Future in the World" stream at the 2020 Summit. These are his personal views.

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TALES FROM HERE AND THERE

USA: School district offering pupils Mandarin classes via video from Taiwan

Ashley Kelly Times Herald Record 8 May 2008

Minisink Valley Intermediate School students participate in a unique first-of-its-kind class in which students learn Mandarin Chinese in real time from a teacher in Taiwan.

Colin Cusack and Jacqueline Conti read the Mandarin Chinese words off the computer screen. "I study fifth grade," is the English translation that 11-year-old Colin reads. Jacqueline, 9, continues reading other characters off a board that the teacher holds in front of the screen. Though thousands of miles away, the instructor has their attention as if she were in the room.

Jacqueline and Colin are among about 40 fourth- and fifth-grade students at Minisink Valley Intermediate School learning Mandarin Chinese from Taiwanese teachers.

The Chinese Language Initiative K-12 program is funded through a grant from Orange-Ulster BOCES. The Minisink Valley School District is the first in the country to participate in such a program, district officials say.

In groups of two and three, the students communicate via laptop with 13 Taiwanese instructors. The goal of the project is twofold — at the same time students learn Chinese, their instructors — from a teachers college in Taiwan — are able to hone their own skills.

Fifth-grade teacher Teresia Parker says the experience will help the children better understand the Chinese culture.

"So many students in other countries are bilingual," Parker said. "Our kids need to be just as smart. This also makes them more marketable when they grow up."

Read entire article at:

<http://www.recordonline.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080508/COMM/805080316/-1/NEWS>

Europe: European Commission hosts Public Hearing on Multilingualism

Media Release, European Commission, Brussels, 15 April 2008

Today the European Commission is hosting a public hearing on the place and role of languages within the EU.

The event, held in the Borschette Conference Centre, rounds up a wide-ranging public consultation on multilingualism which was launched at the end of last year.

It has proved to be one of the most popular public surveys ever carried out on EU policies.

The Commission is seeking to adapt its policies and actions in the area of languages in order to reflect the reality of an EU with over 450 million citizens and around 60 different mother tongues.

The consultation was carried out online between September and November 2007 gathering the opinions of individuals, businesses, expert organisations and policy makers with respect to the Commission's policies and activities related to multilingualism.

Read more at

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/572&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

USA: An education worth the wait : Parents put in long hours to sign up their children for bilingual program

Scott Waldeman Timesunion.com 29 April 2008

Gato waited overnight at the city school district's Sunshine School building in the park to register her 5-year-old son for Albany's dual language program at the Delaware Community School. She was second in line when she arrived at 10:30 p.m. Sunday to secure one of 22 open seats in the program. The district began registering students soon after 8 a.m. Monday.

"I think it's worth the next 12 years of his life," Gato said. "It's worth one 14-hour night of my life."

The dual language program, which enrolls 110 children in kindergarten through fifth grade, has 11 slots for new students whose first language is English and the same number for those whose native tongue is Spanish, district spokesman Ron Lesko said. A pre-kindergarten class will be added next year if voters approve the 2008-09 budget.

Parents line up early because they know those spots go fast. In the wee hours of this spring morning, a handful of mothers and fathers snacked on almonds and strawberries. They wore long johns and took rotating naps in cars with the heat blasting. When an April shower arrived just before dawn, they donned raincoats and huddled under an awning.

The program at the Delaware Community School is unique in the Capital Region and one of few statewide. In addition to language instruction, students are taught math, science and social studies in both languages.

Read entire article at:

<http://timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=684572&category=FRONTPG&BCCode=HOME&newsdate=4/29/2008>

USA: Crossing the cultural divide

Tammy Obermeier Wausau Daily Herald

Ten years ago, Denise Rhodes noticed students of similar ethnic backgrounds tended to sit near one another.

The long-time English language learner assistant and Spanish teacher at D.C. Everest Junior High School knows students can learn more by interacting with people of different backgrounds. So, she and Carol Tuszka, a retired family and consumer education teacher, formed the school's Culture Club.

"It's a developmental thing," said Rhodes. "It's our job to teach the differences and promote acceptance."

More than 200 of the school's 900 students are taking part in club activities this year. Students research other cultures and present song, dance, food and other activities for their peers.

Rhodes said the club evolves each year, as its dynamics, goals and number of participants change.

"It's their group; they take ownership of it and define it," she said.

Read entire article at: <http://www.wausaudailyherald.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2008805130310>

USA: "I, Chihuahua" - Another engaging children's book with a bi-lingual theme...

Jerry Griswold, New York Times

Ten miles from California's border with Mexico, a new craze is spreading among the students at the Chula Vista Learning Community Charter School. Enthusiasm for Pokémon is fading, and Hello Kitty is also on the wane. Judy Schachner's "Skippyjon Jones" books — about a Siamese kitten who thinks he's a Chihuahua — are all the rage.

For these dual-language students (they spend half the day learning in Spanish and half the day in English), it was clear that the Skippyjon Jones books — there are four so far, not counting board books and other spin-offs — were appealing mainly because of their intralinguistic wit, playfulness and musicality. While in English the diminutive is a preamble (little dog, little house), in Spanish the diminutive is a caboose attached to the end of nouns (perrito, casita), and Schachner takes full advantage of this with high-energy rhymes, Spanish or invented.

She also often adds a clap-along rhythm; I had never before noticed similarities between the Mexican Hat Dance and the limerick.

In the growing category of bilingual children's books, the Skippyjon Jones series is refreshing because of its irreverence. Here is linguistic fun and dual-language punning, or something like James Joyce's "Ulysses" for the elementary-school set.

Read entire review at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/11/books/review/Griswold-t.html?_r=2&em&ex=1210651200&en=24016f2030dcc3d3&ei=5087%0A&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

SLanguages 2008

Starts: 6pm GMT 23 May 2008, Ends: 6pm GMT 24 May 2008, Second Life

The SLanguages 2008 Conference brings together practitioners and researchers in the field of language education in Second Life for a 24-hour event to celebrate languages and cultures within the 3D virtual world.

SLanguages 2008 is free to attend and free to present. You only need a Second Life avatar, which is also free.

Language Education in virtual worlds is a rapidly growing field of education. Discover the breadth of practice and research in this area of online language learning.

Read more at <http://www.slanguages.net/home.php>

Australian Council of TESOL Associations International Conference

Pedagogies of Connection - Developing Individual and Community Identities

10-12 July 2008, Alice Springs Convention Centre

We ran an item on this conference back in February. Since then, the lineup of speakers and topics has been refined to the point where it is definitely worth revisiting. Seriously.

The focus of this conference is on the potential for TESOL pedagogies to make connections among individuals and communities.

The conference will explore a range of TESOL pedagogies and their influences on the development of identities and relationships in diverse TESOL settings.

This will include discussion of the role of language and culture within pedagogy.

The keynote speakers are international leaders in the field, and conference participants will comprise TESOL educators and researchers from around the globe.

Read more at <http://www.tesol.org.au/conference/index.html>

WorldCALL 2008

CALL Bridges the World

5-8 August, Fukuoka, Japan

WorldCALL is a worldwide professional association for teachers and educators interested in computer assisted language learning (CALL). WorldCALL members are established professional CALL associations from throughout the world. The current members of WorldCALL are: EUROCALL, CALICO, IALLT, CERCLES, CCAQLL/ CELAO, ATELL & LET.

To date, WorldCALL has held two major international conferences: the first in 1998 in Melbourne, Australia, and the second in 2003 in Banff, Canada. WorldCALL 2008 will be held in Fukuoka, Japan, and is being organized by LET (the Japan Association for Language Education and Technology).

LET will continue the WorldCALL scholarship program to enable postgraduate students and junior academics to attend and will sponsor four keynote speakers from Europe, North America, South America and Japan.

This year's Conference Chair is Mike Levy from Griffith University.

Read more at <http://www.j-let.org/~wcf/modules/tinyd0/>

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REMINDERS

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>

6-9 July - National Conference for Teachers of German - Gold Coast - <http://www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/lhr/aus/en2708450v.htm>

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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