

# LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume Two Number Eight: 29 May 2008

Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/news1080529.pdf>

- [Letters to the Editor: Endeavour Language Teaching Fellowships](#) (5 items)
- [Engagement with Asia](#) (3 items)
- [Independent Schools Queensland Forum](#) (2 items)
- [Opinion](#) (11 items)
- [From Here and There](#) (2 items)
- [Resources](#) (2 items)
- [Conferences & Events](#) (3 items)
- [Reminders](#)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: ENDEAVOUR LANGUAGE TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS

*Each correspondent has provided their name and address.*

### **This passive discrimination is absurd and must cease**

As a teacher of Indonesian Language in Australia for fifteen years I congratulate Keith Fletcher and reiterate his thoughts and feelings in regards to his letter published in the ACSSO Languages Education in Australia newsletter on 22 May 2008, entitled Once again - Indonesian Teachers are sidelined by a passive discrimination.

As a member of WILTA (Westralian Indonesian Language Teachers' Association) and President of the Association from 1996 - 2006, and as the Coordinator of a newly formed Indonesian Language and Culture Institute in Australia (Balai Bahasa Indonesia Perth) partly sponsored by the Indonesian Government, I too am extremely frustrated and hindered in my role as an Indonesian Language educator as this issue has still not been resolved.

In my opinion this issue alone, is one of the biggest single hindrances to the maintenance of successful Indonesian Language Programs in Australian schools.

Despite several high ranking Indonesian Government Ministers personally approaching our Foreign and Education Ministers and Prime Minister (current and recent), particularly over the last eighteen months, we still have this ridiculous highly discriminatory and illogical situation in place.

One should not have to point out why the study of Indonesian should be foremost in the Languages studied across Australia, and numbers of Indonesian learners in schools and universities should be amongst the highest in Australia - yet they are from it. Instead of increasing, sadly numbers are decreasing. This is a national tragedy in terms of the future of our relationship with our nearest northern neighbour with a population of over 230 million.

I join with Keith Fletcher, and I am sure all teachers and students of Indonesian language in Australia, in seeking the ongoing support of the parents and families of Australia to assist us in lobbying the Rudd Government to overturn immediately this illogical policy of exclusion from the language and cultural resources/experiences gained as a result of interacting at a people to people level in Indonesia.

This has such immediate and immense importance to our future and we need your Organisation's support to access our right to the same sort of in-country programs which are available to teachers and students of so many other (less strategically important) languages.

WA

---

## **In-Darwin Ain't In-Country - but the ATO can help change that**

Yes, I endorse the view that Indonesian teachers like myself are discriminated against in regard to Endeavour Scholarships in that our courses are not in-country but in Darwin.

However, I would inform that there is a tax-deductible alternative. Your own in-country visit.

For the last three years, I have been visiting Indonesia over the Christmas holidays, with a component of the visit being work-related (taking photographs for lessons, conferring with "experts" (including, in my case, interacting with the editor/artist I employ to make materials for me), taping interviews, etc). I usually work out what proportion of the visit is work-related and impute the costs appropriately. So far, ATO has accepted my analysis.

NT

---

## **In-Country Programs Choked by Bureacracy**

I have been campaigning for parity with regard to "in country" educational programs for over two years now. As a recipient of the Endeavour Language Teachers Fellowship I thought it was ludicrous that I should gain cultural learning's and experience language immersion in Melbourne! Particularly when there have been terrorist attacks in Spain and Japan, riots in France and high violent crime rates in Mexico.

I tried to find the logic underpinning this decision and to obtain a policy that identifies when Australia determine that a country is too dangerous to study in. This set me on a campaign of letter writing, seminar attending and question asking.

It seems that there is "no policy" in existence that outlines when programs should be cut due to security issues. (This would mean there would be parity with the decisions being made). It is also the case that each department is responsible for setting the in country education program embargo.

In other words it is a case of the Emperor is wearing no clothes and no Governing body or official wants to appear stupid so a fearful about stating the obvious. For example DETWA states that DFAT dictates the terms for in country programs, DFAT states that DETWA is solely responsible and both blame the insurance companies.

When I mentioned anomalies like the Climate Change conference being held in Bali hosting scores of influential world leaders the powers that be run for cover, it seems no one wants to be responsible for changing the status quo.

I thought that with a change of Government that there would be a review on the In-country educational program embargo so I wrote to The Honorable Stephen Smith MP Foreign Minister, I received a reply this week.

"The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) travel advisories are not mandatory and are designed to help Australians make well-informed travel decisions"

"The content and level of all travel advisories are carefully considered to ensure they are up-to-date, objective, and accurate and reflect the underlying level of risk to Australians."

WA

---

## **Time to sort out this anomaly!**

I too am frustrated as an Indonesian teacher. I find it absolutely astounding that I still cannot take students to Indonesia - so many years after the initial ban was placed. And it is now more than ever that we need students to develop further understanding.

The impact on the Indonesian program has been huge as well. The number of students studying Indonesian through to year 12 has more than halved since the ban - Malaysia does not hold the appeal - especially since so many of them say "well I will go with my family to Bali."

However as we all know the family holiday to Bali means lying around in the sun, eating Western foods and bargaining in English. Students on family trips rarely see any of the culture of Indonesia, and use very little of their language, and interact very minimally with the Indonesians around them.

Hopefully now Mr. Rudd is in office, this ban will be modified so that we can once again take our students to Indonesia, and also once again allow teachers of Indonesian the chance to experience Indonesia - through the Endeavour Fellow Scholarships.

VIC

---

## **All language teachers feel impoverished and disappointed**

As a teacher of Japanese in a country school, and recent recipient of an ELTF Fellowship, I would like to express my disappointment on behalf of all Indonesian teachers at the ban imposed on studying in-country.

The knowledge I gained from the experience provided by ELTF was invaluable, and I can only imagine how frustrating it must be for teachers of that language, and to be so close to the country yet not be able to live it first hand.

I would encourage the government to rethink the ban it has imposed, in terms of the impact it has on teachers and their students. They would obviously question the value of learning the language of a country from which they have been scared away from visiting.

NSW

---

## **ENGAGEMENT WITH ASIA**

### **US lifts travel warning for Indonesia**

*ABC Jakarta correspondent Geoff Thompson*

The United States has lifted its warning against travel in Indonesia for the first time since the year 2000 when churches were bombed across the country, but Australia still warns its citizens to reconsider the need to travel to the country.

The US State Department has announced the lifting of its travel warning for Indonesia "after determining that the security climate in the country no longer warrants such a warning".

A statement from the US Ambassador to Indonesia says that "Indonesia has not experienced a major terrorist attack since October 2005 and the Government of Indonesia has disrupted, arrested and prosecuted numerous terrorist elements".

The Australian Government's advice to reconsider the need to travel to Indonesia including Bali "due to the very high threat of terrorist attack" remains in place.

"We continue to receive reports indicating that terrorists are planning attacks against a range of targets including Western interests and places frequented by foreigners," it says.

Source: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/05/25/2255046.htm>

---

## **Leading 21st Century Schools Engage With Asia Forum**

***Hon Julia Gillard MP 19 May 2008***

Thank you for that welcome.

I recognise the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Kurna People people.

I want to thank the Asia Education Foundation for promoting and supporting the studies of Asia in Australian schools since 1992, and extend the personal thanks of the Prime Minister for the important submission that you made to the 2020 Summit last month. And I want to congratulate all of you, and the professional associations for your involvement in the Leading 21st Century Schools initiative.

I have to concede straight off that when it comes to making a speech about Asia, our Prime Minister has set the high jump bar incredibly high. I know it may seem a cop out, but... this one's going to be delivered in English.

So let me start by giving you, in plain English, some facts which I am sure many of you know but which zero in on one of the biggest challenges we face as we start the Education Revolution.

- According to a recent study, half of all Australian primary and secondary schools teach their students little or nothing about Asia.
- Less than 14 per cent of Australian year-12 students are studying a foreign language.
- Only 5.8 per cent are studying Asian languages in Year 12.
- And at university the proportion studying Asian languages is even lower - at 3 per cent.

Now I want you to compare that with what happens elsewhere.

- In the Netherlands 99 per cent of secondary students study at least one foreign language.
- And in Finland it is compulsory for students to study 3 foreign languages throughout schooling.

Why is this? Why do countries like the Netherlands and Finland go to such extraordinary lengths to make their citizens bilingual, trilingual and more?

I think the answer is obvious: those countries worked out long ago that, because they stood at the juncture of other powerful empires and cultures...

Read more at

<http://mediacentre.dewr.gov.au/mediacentre/gillard/releases/leading21stcenturyschoolsengagewithasiaforum.htm>

---

## **2020 Summit - Priority Theme**

***A campaign to develop regional literacy***

- A comprehensive, cross-agency, national strategic plan for a major reinvigoration of Asia literacy in Australia, to enhance our global engagement in trade, security and people to people exchanges.
- Commence a more focused effort to recruit foreign language teachers from local communities and overseas and to enhance Australia's foreign language teaching skills.
- Link thousands of young Australians to Asian communities through support for school twinning, exchange programs, mentoring, in-country and community-based learning programs.

Read more at [http://www.australia2020.gov.au/docs/2020\\_Summit\\_initial\\_report.pdf](http://www.australia2020.gov.au/docs/2020_Summit_initial_report.pdf)

=====

## **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS QUEENSLAND FORUM**

*The 2008 ISQ Forum was a major celebratory event for the International Year of Languages 2008 and already elements have been picked up by the media:*

### **Aussie kids 'need second language'**

***May 23, 2008 (AAP)***

AUSTRALIAN children should be learning a second language from early childhood to keep up with their European and Asian counterparts, a leading language expert said.

University of Queensland Professor Ken Wiltshire has called on state and federal governments to do more to encourage children to learn a second, or even third language.

"In Europe it's now going to be compulsory for children to learn two languages and ideally three," he said.

"In Australia kids get an exposure to foreign language for about four or five years from primary school but from then on they can actually escape it, which is a great pity."

He said Australia's physical isolation and the position of English as a global language meant many did not see the need to learn another language.

However, he said being fluent in only one language meant Australians would miss out on cultural experiences and it could also prove a disadvantage in international business.

Professor Wiltshire, formerly Australia's representative on the executive board of United Nations Education Sciences and Culture Organisation (UNESCO), said foreign languages needed to be included in Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's "education revolution".

He said while Mr. Rudd's fluency in Mandarin provided a good role model, the prime minister needed to do more to encourage young Australians.

Read more at [http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,23745220-29277,00.html?from=public\\_rss](http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,23745220-29277,00.html?from=public_rss)

-----

## **Engaging with Languages**

***ISO Media Release 22 May 2008***

A leading Australian professor believes both the Australian and Queensland Governments need to seriously address the decline in foreign language teaching.

Professor Ken Wiltshire will tell an Independent Schools Queensland forum today Governments need to do more to help foreign language studies.

Executive Director, Dr John Roulston, said the two day Engaging with Languages Education in the 21st Century forum at Riverglenn in Indooroopilly is bound to spark plenty of debate.

"The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages recognising genuine multilingualism promotes unity in diversity and international understanding," Dr Roulston said.

"Independent Schools Queensland decided to hold this forum for the same reasons, not only to discuss why speaking a language other than English in the 21st Century is vital but also to help develop better teaching methods."

Dr Roulston said no stone will be left unturned in the forum with a huge range of speakers attending and even some presentations by French and Chinese students.

One of the keynote speakers will be Professor Wiltshire who is not only from the University of Queensland's Business School but was previously Australia's representative on the Executive Board of United Nations Education Sciences and Culture Organisation (UNESCO).

Professor Wiltshire will look at the importance of learning foreign languages for greater intercultural and interfaith understanding.

"It really is a pity, in a time of present turbulence in the world, that our policy makers are taking so little action to arrest the decline in foreign language teaching in Australia," Professor Wiltshire said.

Read more at

[http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/files/files/Communications/media\\_releases/Language%20Forum.pdf](http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/files/files/Communications/media_releases/Language%20Forum.pdf)

=====

## **OPINION**

*In May 2008, Online Opinion invited contributions focusing on Languages Education. These are the essays they published:*

### **Multilingualism and multiculturalism**

*Karen Woodman 28 May 2008*

From the perspective of a Canadian, the current discussion on language education in Australia is very interesting - primarily because many of the questions being raised about the viability of language education have arguably been answered by other international experiences.

For example, growing up in a country where bilingualism - and multiculturalism - has been official policy for more than 30 years, it is normal for Canadians to self-identify as "hyphenates" (for example, Greek-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, French-Canadian, and so on) without undermining their "Canadian identity".

Thousands of children have graduated from language immersion programs without losing their first language(s) or suffering any other damage (in fact, quite the contrary). "Heritage language" programs promote and celebrate cultural diversity without undermining social order; and indigenous language programs have been prominent in the cultural revitalisation programs of the First Nations, which have been key to supporting development within those communities.

Government policies supporting language education have not driven the country bankrupt, nor have they negatively had an impact on national or international opinion. In fact, Canadians are generally known for their tolerance and openness to other cultures, arguably a product of the cultural "mosaic" approach (and "additive bilingualism"), rather than the "melting pot" ("subtractive bilingualism") of, for example, the US.

This is not, of course, to imply Canada is an oasis of harmony and understanding (there are still linguistic and cultural tensions in different regions), but rather to underline the fact that official recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity clearly can have a real impact on how the population perceives such issues.

As a number of writers have noted, continental Europe has a long tradition of multilingualism, supported by government via language education and other policies. The expectation in Europe is that the majority of the population will study and learn at least one other language. In other parts of the world, the expectation is that most people will speak several languages.

Why is the issue of expectations important in a discussion of language education?

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7422&page=0>

---

## **Squandered worlds**

*Nicholas Ostler 23 May 2008*

I was struck by Joe Lo Bianco's persuasive description of Australia's current language education policy as "squandering the gift of home-grown bilingual skills". It reminded me of a gut-wrenching - and for me unforgettable - moment in Cormac McCarthy's novel *No Country for Old Men*: "Chigurh shot him through the forehead and then stood watching. Watching the capillaries break up in his eyes. The light receding. Watching his own image degrade in that squandered world." There is something ultimately repellent in the idea of a bully in self-absorbed fascination, gratuitously ending another's whole experience of the world, watching a life ebb away, lost beyond recall.

I don't want to suggest that such psychopathic cruelty is one of the motives for the nihilism of current policy towards foreign language teaching in Australia - and even more in my own country the United Kingdom, where in 2002 any requirement to study a foreign language in secondary school was ended, and where since that fateful decision we have watched actual take-up of language instruction at school level ebb away.

Not psychopathy, but quite likely neurosis: Estelle Morris, the minister who took the decision, subsequently resigned from the government, pleading inadequacy in skills of strategic management. Sadly, the management decisions she had taken, stood.

It may be unfair to blame an individual for yielding to a pressure that she did not create - but then again, a minister should be aware of the wide-ranging resonance of any decision they take. We expect our ministers to be made of sterner stuff.

But it is undeniable that foreign languages are the closest thing we provide in our school systems to an approach to alternative worlds, or at least world-views. Declaring them optional - and by implication, given the dynamics of school budgets, unaffordable - is to say that an attempt to understand others in their own terms is a luxury our education system cannot afford; that those other world-views are expendable.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7393&page=0>

---

## **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 speaks 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>

---

## Languages at school

*Jane Orton 15 May 2008*

Learning a new language is a multifaceted educational experience which offers a range of potential benefits in and of itself, as well as providing longer term dividends in the form of mental and emotional flexibility, and the language proficiency and intercultural competence for broader social and work-related interaction.

In support of these claims, a recently published report by Victoria's Department of Education and Early Child Development (February 2008: 6-9) states:

Sustained international research on second language acquisition, bilingualism and bilingual education demonstrate that learning a second language actually enhances and enriches children's language experience, and offers them unique insights and opportunities for the development of cognitive skills which are unavailable to the monolingual learner.

Furthermore:

The development of language awareness...[is] central to education because it allows learners, uniquely, to adopt the perspective of the other, to look at their own culture from outside, to become aware that culture as a social construct is relative and not absolute ... (Coleman, 1997: 7)

Although young adults (typically, tertiary level students) are the most efficient classroom learners of a language in terms of speed and proficiency, because of its important educational benefits, language learning - in which cultural understanding is an integral part - belongs in the school curriculum, and from an early age. And it is in terms of these benefits that school language programs should primarily be evaluated.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7358&page=0>

---

## Reversing the trend

*Peter Jones 13 May 2008*

"If you don't know foreign languages, you don't know anything about your own language." Johann Goethe.

In a multi-lingual world, yet one where languages are dying out every month, it is essential for Australians to speak a second language, particularly as we face the tyranny of English language imperialism: or should I say, American English imperialism?

I feel ashamed that many students in Europe often speak two or three languages fluently and put our students to shame when they come on exchange visits or to do the International Baccalaureate - especially the Germans, Dutch and Scandinavians. Yet there is a dangerous drift in Australia to running down the teaching of LOTE subjects, despite the publicity generated by a Prime Minister who speaks Mandarin fluently and the advantages accruing to Australia as a result.

My K-12 (and IB) school in Hobart offers two European languages (French and German) and two Asian languages (Chinese and Japanese).

Students in Year 7 get a sample of each then make their choices through to Year 12. If they haven't done a language by Year 11, they can do an "ab initio" course for the IB. Language teaching has certainly improved since I was at school, with emphasis on a national culture as well as the language itself. There is the opportunity to go on school exchanges too as we have sister schools with each of our four language groups. I realise that this is not possible for students from a poorer socio-economic background, but there are often grants available and support organisations to help fund exchanges that involve talented students.

I realise that many students of predominantly European heritage will find Asian languages harder to grasp, but the minority who do have a skill need more encouragement to continue with their studies, and go on to link them with other subjects at tertiary level, like Arts, Commerce, Journalism, International Law, and Asian Studies or International Relations.

In the years ahead, as Australia develops closer ties with South East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region, we will need young people with these skills rather than simply expecting everyone else to speak English.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7347&page=0>

---

## Ignorant of the fact of being ignorant

*Paul Doolan 12 May 2008*

There is a joke doing the rounds that goes as follows:

What do we call people raised speaking many languages - multilingual. What do we call people raised speaking two languages - bilingual. What do we call those poor souls raised speaking only one language - native English speakers.

Some years ago Yale historian Paul Kennedy became involved in a polemic in the pages of Harpers Magazine with the late Palestinian scholar Edward Said regarding the health of Arab culture. Kennedy figured that he had hit the nail on the head when he reported that, over a period of five years, only 360 works of literature had appeared in Arabic translation. This, he claimed, proved that the Arab world was incurious, closed and in trouble.

But as a reader pointed out in a letter to the editor, the number of translations into English that had appeared in America over the same period was, well, about 360! Only nine of these had been translated from Arabic. In other words, we (I'm using the term loosely, to refer to Anglophones - those burdened with the disadvantage of being so called "native" English speakers) don't know the Arab world, we don't read their literature, we are not in the slightest bit curious regarding what their intellectuals and artists have to say, but that doesn't stop us from condemning their customs and invading their countries. And then we act surprised at the reception we receive.

Of course it's not just the Arab world that we refuse to get to know. Only once in the history of the New York Times bestseller's list has a novel that originally had been published in another language reached position number one - *The Reader* by Bernard Schink, translated from German.

British readers are at least as ignorant as their American cousins. While in Germany about 50 per cent of books that appear are translations, and even in Argentina, with its wealth of Spanish language literature to draw from, translations form half of all books published, in Britain translations make up about 2 per cent of literary publications.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7348&page=0>

-----

## **What's the point of teaching languages?**

*Brian Manning 12 May 2008*

I was invited to attend the first Conference of Fretilin since Independence in May 2000 and the issue which attracted the most debate was: what languages would East Timor use now?

Bearing in mind that a whole generation had grown up being forced to speak Bahasa, all the schools were using Bahasa and some students were part of the way through their courses in secondary and tertiary institutions.

There was strong argument to continue the use of Bahasa but there was strong sentiment to reject Indonesian Bahasa as it was the language of their oppressors for the last 24 years.

After much vigorous debate, the consensus was to use Portuguese as the "official" language with Tetum becoming the "national" language, which would be further developed as a language. Bahasa would continue to be used as a transitional language and English would also be used in higher education.

Arguments to retain Portuguese, which after all was the language of a coloniser, included existing official documents relating to land tenure and historical material that was all in Portuguese. Also, Fretilin was concerned to retain close fraternal relations with other ex-Portuguese colonies, and Portugal itself, because of the support they had received in their struggle for Independence.

The position now, eight years after independence, is that interpreters are required in parliament to translate for those members who do not speak Portuguese so they can follow the debate.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7327&page=0>

-----

## **Tapping the reservoir: languages at school**

*Jo Lo Bianco 9 May 2008*

People are often surprised to see how intense debates about language education can be. People often expect that, like geography or science, language education is an unproblematic affair. They might value the cultural insight that languages offer, but many feel that since so much communication in the world happens in English language teaching is a minor issue of interest only to teachers, students and

their parents. However, some school subjects do break out from the confines of specialist discussion and become the focus of policy debate in the national interest.

During the Howard government history teaching became entangled in sharp disputes in the mainstream media. Even mundane educational questions like the sequencing of academic content were disputed. English literacy is often taken up in media debate with polarised positions on how the young should be made literate and what adolescents should or should not read.

Although they are incorrectly called "foreign", languages today are also part of public discussion, and for very good reasons, though perhaps not the ones that make the press. While not as bitterly contested as history or literacy what we do with languages in schools, the choices we make, and how seriously we pursue them, do raise questions about the nature of our society, our place in the world and how education should prepare us to meet future challenges.

Everyday in homes and workplaces across Australia some 400 languages (including Indigenous and sign languages) are used to transact business, organise mealtimes, make career plans, arrange social events and exchange information. Millions of Australians read newspapers, download web material, search for information and discuss issues over Skype or email and link our cities and towns with Asia, Europe, Africa and the Americas in diverse languages.

Where in recent debates on language education has there been even the minimum of awareness that we are one of the most successful multilingual and multicultural countries in the world?

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7329&page=0>

---

## **A universal language**

*Henriette Vanechop 8 May 2008*

The great number of language courses taught in New South Wales' schools proves the quasi-impossibility of enabling all human beings to communicate universally, by use of national languages.

Only an auxiliary language, easy to learn, error-proof, taught in all primary schools in every country, would provide our descendants with a tool for international communication, while respecting and ensuring the continuity of all national tongues, dialects, and idioms within each ethnic group.

One of the objections cited by the Education Department to the teaching of such a language is that there is no demand from any ethnic community and no evidence of student interest.

But, for example, in 1966 "friendly persuasion" had to be used, along with firm perseverance, to adopt the metric system, yet it is a time-saver compared to the Imperial system. Likewise, no doubt, when Roman numerals were replaced by the Hindu-Arabic numerals: if we had waited for public demand we would still be making long divisions with M, D, C, L, X, V, I ... what fun!

In the musical world, if each member of an international orchestra read his part in his/her own language, could harmony be achieved?

Maybe it is time for educators to take the lead in the communication area.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7317&page=0>

---

## **A world of understanding**

*Claudia Mainard 7 May 2008*

Learning a second language gives us an improved understanding the world, as much as it helps us to be understood.

Being born in Australia, but of migrant parents, my heritage has taught me the value of speaking more than one language. In fact, I had to learn English because, like the many other children of migrants, I started school with no English at all. With a little destiny and a lot of hard work I now speak an Italian dialect, Italian, English, French and a little Spanish. This is a testament to the inspiration of my high school French teachers and the excellence of their language teaching.

In the past few years, however, language learning had been regarded as a redundant pursuit, the poor second cousin of more important subjects. It was nearly at the point of relegation through curriculum revision and development, which placed the priority on literacy and numeracy, with the arts and languages - other than English - as optional extras.

Isn't English spoken everywhere? Well yes, but the breadth of understanding conferred by the rigorous study of a foreign language opens up a whole world for exploring, with the benefit of communication and an understanding not possible through the use of a translator.

Kevin Rudd's recent trip to China highlights the real benefit of being fluent in more than one language. His demonstrated a depth of knowledge of Chinese literature and history, obviously gained only through a thorough mastery of Mandarin, which certainly allowed him to critique the issue of human rights in Tibet with sensitivity and cultural understanding, and more importantly, in the language of his audience.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7328>

---

## Language learning

*Penny Vos 6 May 2008*

Australia spends up to \$50 million a year teaching a LOTE (Language Other Than English) to our children. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of dedicated teachers, it is not working: almost no one is becoming bilingual as a result of LOTE education in Australian schools.

The Federal Department of Education, Science and Training stated, in 2002, that:

Given the questions and concerns that have been raised in relation to LOTE, it is appropriate to ask whether the current model of provision can ever produce better results in terms of language learning, regardless of the amount of funding injected into it.

Given how long we and other English-speaking countries have been failing, it does make sense to suppose that more of the same is not going to produce different results.

LOTE experience, especially in the early years, is important. It helps students develop empathy, cognition, perspective, literacy, self-confidence and capacity to learn other languages later. However, currently, as many as a third, or even a half, of all students learn no LOTE at all. Most have 45-60 minutes a week. A moderate and realistic goal would be 10-30 minutes each school day for every primary school child.

If actual language acquisition (rather than just language or cultural awareness) is the goal, it matters a great deal which LOTE we teach in this limited time allowance. Children learn languages more slowly than adolescents or adults, and motivated adults need more than 3,000 hours to gain basic competence in Japanese; basic French or German can be achieved in 700 hours; and Esperanto in 100 hours.

As our primary children have between 300-600 hours available to learn, it is clear that we can offer them very different fractions of a language, depending on which language we offer them.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7307&page=0>

=====

## FROM HERE AND THERE

### Turkish Language Olympics unite children from around the world

Students of Turkish from 110 countries around the world are competing with each other in the 6th International Turkish Language Olympics. They are also establishing friendships and taking pictures. Almost all of them are carrying cameras and the flags of their home country. When they see fellow competitors from other countries, they start up a conversation by asking if it is possible to have a picture taken together. Kids most in demand include an American Indian and a student from Mozambique who is strutting his stuff in traditional dress. The Mexicans, with their black sombreros and long red skirts, are also proving popular for snapshots. Before taking pictures, many of the students exchange hats: One typically universal combination saw a South African donning a Kazakh hat and chatting to a Swede in Turkish as the shutter clicked.

Participants at the Turkish Language Olympics are quick to establish relations with each other; their shared experience of trying to learn the same foreign tongue makes them feel it does not matter how far apart their countries may be, they have something in common.

"I heard there would be a Turkish Language Olympics, and I thought it sounded fun," says Rebacca Luthi from Switzerland. She adds that she has only been learning Turkish for three months but wants to continue until she is able to speak it fluently. She will compete in the singing contest. All together there are 13 categories, including conversation, writing, grammar, singing, poetry recital, presentation, general culture, article writing, and for Turks living abroad and attending Turkish schools: writing, singing and poetry recital.

Read more at <http://www.todayszaman.com/tz-web/detaylar.do?load=detay&link=142871>

-----

### Dual-Language Program Proposed

*The Advocate (LA) May 19, 2008*

Walker Elementary will be piloting the first and only dual-language pre-Kindergarten program within the Livingston Parish School District beginning this fall.

Organized by the district, officials from Head Start and researchers from Southeastern Louisiana University (SLU), this program will help English-speaking and Spanish-speaking preschoolers acquire both English and Spanish literacy skills.

Associate Professor Cynthia Elliott from the Department of Teaching and Learning at SLU stated, "Research shows that students who learn to read and write in their native language have an easier time with a second language."

Read more at <http://www.theadvocate.com/news/19065059.html>

=====

## RESOURCES

### Richard Aedy's national Blog on Languages Education

*26 May 2008*

"My wife, who grew up in Europe, can speak French. She has German too but her French is better, in no small part because she spent a happy year there between school and university. My own French is

a sort of gesture. I can kind of follow it in print, I know some words, but not enough to have anything more than the most rudimentary and stumbling conversation.

My version of French is a relic of "learning" it three decades ago for two years. And damn near passing, I will have you know. All this time later, French is still the fourth most taught language in Australian schools. German is fifth. Italian - probably the sexiest language in the world - is second. The top six actually looks like this:

- Japanese 302,780 students
- Italian 296,641
- Indonesian 214,760
- French 204,869
- German 128,133
- Chinese (all) 78,419

These figures are from 2005 but they're the latest available. They were included in a report for the Australian government from the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education at the University of South Australia. They cover the government and non-government sectors across all the years languages are taught in schools. What's wrong with that list?

First, the numbers are small. Less than half of students learn a language. By the time they get to Year 12 it's down to 13%. The overwhelming majority of language teaching happens at primary school, with most program times taking less than an hour a week. No other OECD country puts in as little effort as this - in Finland, all children study three languages throughout their school years.

Secondly, check that out again. How relevant does it look, really? French is beautiful, Italian is sexy, German is not sexy but my word it is precise. There are community reasons for teaching Italian and historical reasons for teaching the other two. But that's where it ends.

This is the Asian Century. By the time that five year olds beginning school now are in mid-career, China and India will be (once again) two of the world's most dominant economies. Australian Schooling, as it stands, does almost nothing to prepare kids for this.

Read more at <http://richardaedy.blogspot.com/2008/05/parlez-vous.html>

---

## **A Second Language**

Not many Australian students study foreign languages, either at school or university.

So will our first Mandarin-speaking Prime Minister make a difference?

Language teachers hope that more students will see the value in being bi-lingual, both for work and cultural understanding.

Presented by Richard Aedy.

Guest: Associate Professor Angela Scarino, Director of the Research Centre for Languages and Culture at the University of South Australia

Listen to or download podcast at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/lifematters/stories/2008/2258610.htm>

---

## **CONFERENCES & EVENTS**

**Nanjing University Languages Festival:**

**10-11 May 2008**

***And: Esperanto Alive and Well in China (and Elsewhere...)***

From our roving reporter:

On 10th and 11th May there was a big festival of languages in Nanjing, China with over 13,000 people attending.

I found a really interesting report written in Esperanto at <http://www.liberafolio.org/2008/chinalingvafestivalo/>

But not yet much in English, except the blog of an Australian who taught English at the festival and was amazed that Esperanto was the second most popular language, see <http://geoffinwuhu.blogspot.com/2008/05/weekend-work.html>

Best wishes from Nicole

---

## **FIPF World Congress**

***July 21-25 2008 Quebec City, Quebec, Canada***

World French Teachers Conference run by the Fédération Internationale des Professeurs de Français.

Lisez plus à <http://www.fipf-quebec2008.com/>

---

## **"Small World - Big Family"**

## **Toowoomba Languages & Cultural Festival 2008**

***10 August, Queens Park Toowoomba Queensland***

Now in its third year of successful operation, the 2008 Toowoomba Languages and Cultural Festival will feature events focusing on the languages taught in schools and the work of all cultural groups in Toowoomba - a whole community celebration of languages and cultures.

Come and taste the foods of the world, see demonstrations and displays from local cultural and student language groups. Experience the sights and sounds of dance and songs from the wonderfully diverse cultural groups who have made this region their home.

Read more at <http://www.mltaq.asn.au/mltaq/branch%20stuff/darlingdowns.htm>

---

## **REMINDERS**

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.clfta.asn.au/confreg08.pdf>

-----  
5-8 August - WorldCALL - Fukuoka, Japan - <http://www.j-let.org/~wcf/modules/tinyd0/>

-----  
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/>

=====  
To unsubscribe from ACSO mailings click here: <mailto:webmaster@acso.org.au?subject=unsubscribe>