

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume Two, Number 17: 8 December 2008

Read this on the web at <http://www.languageseducation.com/news1081208.pdf>

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CHINESE LANGUAGES EDUCATION

Letter to the Editor

Dr Lijian Hong, Senior Lecturer, Chinese Studies, Monash University

I always feel good to read feedback on my views. I think it is important to have a debate on the nature of teaching Chinese in Australia.

Anyone who has read Dr Orton's lengthy report should appreciate her effort to collect a huge amount of statistical data, which should be a solid foundation for any serious research.

However, like many things in the world, statistics can be interpreted in a quite different way - just like my name has been interpreted by a non-Chinese speaker as a female's name. This Jian is not that Jane.

When one feels that he/she is misinterpreted by media report, people like Professor Marginson would immediately issue a statement to clarify his position. Indeed, Dr Orton is aware that there are different kind of Chinese background students, but she said clearly to ABC presenter Sen Lam that a "classroom learner is somebody who does not speak Chinese at home, whatever their ethnic background is." (<http://www.abc.net.au/ra/programguide/stories/200810/s2393953.htm>).

As most Chinese kids speak certain degree of Chinese at home, doesn't this suggest that we should exclude them from classroom? If somebody speaks Chinese at home but who is unable to read and write Chinese, shall we get them "out of the way of the beginners", as Dr Orton said?

Read more at <http://www.languageseducation.com/hong081208.pdf>

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Proceedings of National Forum on Chinese Language Education

28 October 2008

Proceedings of the National Forum held in Melbourne on 28 October 2008 are expected to be published in the next few days on the Asia Education Foundation Website – watch for details on the index page of their Website - http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/index_flash.htm

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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

New Report on Indigenous Language in Schools

Hon Julia Gillard MP, 5 December 2008

The Minister for Education, the Hon Julia Gillard, today released the report Indigenous Language Programs in Australian Schools — A Way Forward.

The report was prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), funded by the Australian Government’s School Languages Program.

The report provides a snapshot of the current situation of Indigenous language education in schools across Australia.

Over 16,000 Indigenous students and 13,000 non-Indigenous students located in 260 Australian schools are involved in an Indigenous language program.

The report reveals that over 80 different Indigenous languages are taught in schools throughout Australia.

The report found that learning an Indigenous language can enhance a range of social and academic outcomes for all students.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting languages education in Australian schools. The School Languages Program provides funding of \$112 million from 2005 to 2008 to support the learning of all languages, including Indigenous languages.

The Australian Government has also committed \$540 million to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes and close the gap in educational attainment for Indigenous Australians.

The Government firmly believes that all Australian students need to be proficient in English to be able to full participate in the world of work and further study.

The new report Indigenous Language Programs in Australian Schools — A Way Forward is available at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/Indigenous+Languages+Programs+in+Australian+Schools+-+A+Way+Forward.htm

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STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Languages Matter! Writing Competition

Results are just in from the Independent Schools Queensland writing competition for Students of Languages (LOTE) in ISQ Schools to celebrate the United Nations International Year of Languages (IYL) 2008.

Students from Years 8-9 and Years 10-11 were invited to enter the competition. They were required to write a persuasive piece of text on: Languages Matter! Why learning another language other than English matters to me, my future, as an Australian and a global citizen?

Here's a brief extract from the winning entry in the Years 10-11 category, by Edith Cham from All Saints Anglican School:

Moi, I am a 15 year old Australian born Chinese student who is fluent and literate in both languages and am now learning French.

I am, to say the least, bilingual and bicultural, and indeed, agree that 'A different language is a different vision of life'.

I live a life of two cultures, two cultures that differ so, so, so indescribably, yet, have even more in common.

Looking through a pair of Chinese glasses or a pair of Australian ones, life looks great. When I look through both, however, *voilà*, life looks sensational. And really, I can see it, smell it, hear it, taste it and feel it.

And now French: A whole new door clicks open and invites me in. Not at all am I disappointed when I enter and 'sense' French.

My unfamiliarity with European cultures has enhanced my awe and curiosity of the French language, culture and life.

The linguistic beauty, the historical profundity, and vibrant lifestyle all blows me away.

Eh bien! In my opinion, one does not truly know and live one's life, until one experiences a foreign one.

Read more of Edith's entry and nine other winners and placegetters at <http://www.aisq.qld.edu.au/Page.aspx?category=1&element=196>

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TEACHER PERSPECTIVE

Letter to the Editor

As a LOTE co-ordinator I've not often had the spare time to read this newsletter. Now I've done it I certainly will continue to do so!

Re: indigenous education and articles that refer to Julia Gillard's support for decisions to further decimate bilingual indigenous education:

There is no indication in the article that she has been given the information that is referred to in one of the previous articles: CHILDREN BETTER LEARN LITERACY AND NUMERACY IN THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE.

Is there a petition that we could get going or a letter to go to Ms Gillard to acquaint her with this extremely important fact – one that has been known about in language and literacy circles for at least the past 20 years?

PS: As a rather long aside, I agree with the 'joke' at the end of the newsletter about why there is so much French taught in US. Because there are so many French teachers. It's a chicken and egg situation. We as language teachers know the importance of being highly culturally and linguistically capable in the language that we teach.

How do we get more people being culturally and linguistically capable in Chinese and dare I say Indian languages? I don't think the answer is to swamp our schools with Chinese speaking teachers who are not in tune with our education and culture. I also don't think the answer is to swamp our schools with teachers who have minimum linguistic and cultural knowledge of China....!

Governments have been talking about Asian languages since the 80's. I don't know what the longitudinal figures are, but what I observe is that European languages continue to be more popular than Asian languages.

As a linguist I do not accept that it's because European languages are 'easier'. Each language has aspects of ease and difficulty.

We need to be encouraging (and what other way is there than by increased funding?) of students at university to take up Asian languages AND THEN TEACH THEM IN SCHOOLS.

We need to be supporting schools FINANCIALLY in developing study of Asian (and Arabic) languages.

In order for us to work in and understand the world, we must be able to communicate with those in the world.....

(Name & address supplied)

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PARENT PERSPECTIVE

Peta Lowry, [LOTE@HOME](#)

Peta Lowry is a mother of two young boys, a full time business professional and the founder of [LOTE@HOME](#).

Peta began using the concept of creating a "little Italy" in her home over 5 years ago, when her younger son began Primary School.

Being a non Italian speaker, she felt the best way to support her son's school LOTE (Italian) lessons was to use the language as actively as possible around her home. Peta and her family used post-it notes to identify objects in the home, played games built on word identification and pronunciation, spoke as often as possible in Italian and explored related cultural aspects such as Italian food and cooking.

This worked so well that in 2006 Peta evolved the sticky yellow post-it note version of her concept into [LOTE@HOME](#).

In Term 4, 2006, Peta worked with the Italian LOTE Teacher and Principal at her local Primary School to run a trial of the [LOTE@HOME](#) concept. This trial was so successful that she rolled out her first [LOTE@HOME](#) Italian packs earlier this year.

The [LOTE@HOME](#) Packs are now available in Mandarin, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Maltese, Spanish and Vietnamese.

Peta sees the [LOTE@HOME](#) concept supporting the efforts being made by Language Teachers and Associations attempting to solve the current language crisis in Australia.

Immersion in a language is the simplest and fastest way to learn a new language. Every day use of the language brings meaning and relevance to your children's LOTE classes. It encourages the use of language and tests the knowledge gained in class on a regular basis.

If you're not familiar with your child's LOTE you may find the pronunciation of some of the words challenging. Encourage discussion with your child / children on how to pronounce the words and if there is confusion suggest that they ask their LOTE Teacher for some guidance and then get them to teach you the correct way of pronouncing the words. This will help them to understand the word and give them a sense of pride in being able to teach you something too.

Read more at <http://www.lote-at-home.com.au>

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OPINION

Education (in core skills like languages) is key - so why are we failing?

Michael Baker

More often than not government is the problem and not the solution. Such is certainly the case with the public education system that News Limited chairman Rupert Murdoch railed against in his now-famous ABC Boyer Lecture this month.

Clearly, asking the government to fix up on its own what it botched in the first place is too big an ask. So business groups are right to call for a role in the remediation process.

However, we need more broad-based input into education reform than from business groups alone, or we risk turning our children into drones who are fully equipped with a narrow set of soon-to-be-obsolete job skills but ill-equipped for healthy and productive lives. The end game of education is a productive and happy life, not a good job. If you're prepared for the former, the latter will take care of itself.

Paradoxically, any move to make our education system a big feeder farm for the nation's businesses will end up undermining our competitiveness even further. That's because most job-specific skills are best learned on the job, not in primary or high school.

Small business owners would first prefer to see schools adequately execute the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. Second, they would like kids to be able to reason and think critically, to value and understand the big picture, to be curious, to embrace diverse views, to be willing to listen and to engage intellectually. Third, they would like children inspired to lead and not follow.

Admittedly, these attributes are challenging to teach, and are easily drowned out by the many anti-intellectual influences that lurk in every corner of our dumbed-down society.

The primary school attended by my nine year-old son and six year-old daughter provides less than one hour per week of foreign language instruction. Computing is accorded an equal amount of time. This is typical of a set of priorities that prepares them neither for the workforce nor for life.

Computing is ephemeral - techniques, hardware and software all change constantly and what the children learn now will be of little or no value when they leave school. Besides, computing has to be the easiest thing in the world to learn without a teacher.

Foreign languages, on the other hand, provide a tool that helps kids lever open a window on the world, to understand not just the grammar of language but the grammar of culture itself, to see human experience from multiple perspectives.

Languages are, of course, just part of a broad-spectrum education in the established academic disciplines which, if thoughtfully administered by skilled practitioners, offers a plausible pathway to the attributes mentioned above that a business owner would die for.

Read more at <http://smallbusiness.smh.com.au/managing/management/education-is-key-so-why-are-we-failing-910076940.html>

Michael Baker is a global retail and property analyst and consultant. This is an abridged version of an article that appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald of 28 November 2008

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NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

Scots – Irish program opens doors to early childhood language skills building

Davyth Hicks, Eurolang, Bruxelles, Belgium, 05 December 2008

A unique partnership between Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle and the Ballycastle Community Development Group, Pobal an Chaistil is set to create waves on both sides of the English Channel with a brand new program for parents who wish their children to acquire Gaelic.

Sheena MacKellar, Gaelic Tutor at Ionad Chaluim Chille Ìle said: "Islay is only 20 miles from the coast of Antrim and we share a common language and culture. In the past 12 months both our communities have been rebuilding these historic connections and we have discovered that Gaelic has faced very similar challenges on both sides of the channel. However, people throughout Scotland and Ireland have renewed their commitment to the process of language renewal.

Dr Réamaí Mathers, Chairperson of Pobal an Chaistil and one of the program developers said: "The similarities between Islay and North Antrim are striking, with parents in both areas expressing a will that their children should acquire a knowledge, fluency and love of our language. We found that in Islay, as in Antrim, parents who do not have the language often feel unsure about what they can do to give their child the benefits of a rich Gaelic culture."

Read more at

http://www.eurolang.net/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3122&Itemid=1&lang=en

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No increase in take-up of languages in state schools

Anthea Lipsett, Guardian, UK, 3 December 2008

The number of teenagers dropping languages at GCSE has not increased, but there is little sign of any improvement despite efforts to raise interest, new research suggests.

Teenagers at state schools dropped foreign languages in droves after ministers made the subject optional for pupils over 14 in 2004, though languages have remained popular subjects in private schools. Ministers backed last year's Dearing review, which called for initiatives to be put in place to help schools motivate pupils to increase take-up of languages.

But the 2008 language trends survey published today by the National Centre for Languages, (Cilt), suggests that while the decline in participation in language learning has now halted, overall numbers have not risen.

The survey shows that state schools are introducing changes to make languages more appealing. It found that 31% of state schools have introduced new courses and teaching approaches, and report improvements in attitudes as a result.

Spanish, Italian and Mandarin continue to rise in popularity, showing the increase in the diversity of languages on offer. Spanish is set to overtake German as the second most commonly taught language after French. This is already the case in private schools. Other languages, such as Urdu, Russian and Mandarin, also appear to be generating interest following changed guidelines on which languages schools may offer.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/dec/03/languages-gcses-secondaryschools>

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The quiet revolution

Stephanie Sparrow, The Guardian, UK, 18 November 2008

With more native speakers of foreign tongues in the UK than ever before, how can schools use this to increase pupils' interest in languages?

Speed learning in languages ranging from Greek to Swahili was on offer during a European day of languages at Sheffield's King Edward VII language college earlier this term. "The students had 10 minutes to learn a few words of language from each other and then they moved on. It was so powerful and broke down barriers," says college language director Eva Lamb. "A typical comment from students was 'I didn't know that we had so many languages in the school'."

Twenty languages were available that day from the pupils who volunteered to teach their mother tongue to their peers. But what about Swahili on a "European day"? "The children understood that they were in a European country, learning languages," comes the reply.

Lamb's approach is indicative of the quiet revolution slowly transforming language teaching. Since the Languages Review of 2006 highlighted the potential of community languages for rekindling interest in learning a foreign tongue, the choice has moved beyond the traditional options of French and German.

Lord Dearing, author of the review, described community languages as "a national asset" as he predicted their increasing commercial importance. Following the report, the secondary curriculum replaced the requirement to offer a working language of the European Union at key stage 3 with guidance that the study of languages may include major European or world languages, such as Russian or Urdu.

Progress has been helped by Our Languages (<http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk>), a two-pronged initiative funded by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), to improve the status of community

languages in the curriculum and recognise the work of the self-funded and voluntary supplementary schools in England (see panel).

The scheme is run by a consortium of Cilt (<http://www.cilt.org.uk> - the national centre for languages), the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) and ContinYou (<http://www.continyou.org.uk>), the national resource centre for supplementary education.

"We want to promote the message that all languages are of equal value," says the SSAT's national network coordinator for languages, Alice Harrison.

She is into phase two of a matching project that creates clusters of mainstream and supplementary schools. The idea is to get the supplementary schools to share expertise in language and culture with the mainstream schools, which in their turn will share resources and best practice in teaching methods. The pairings are then expected to disseminate their work.

Read more at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldwise/1>

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Early Language Education is Critical For U.S.

Dennis Yang, Columbia Spectator, USA, October 27, 2008

One fundamental issue of paramount concern that was not touched upon in the recent educational debate at Teachers College was the foreign language deficit we have in this nation.

Consider this: there are more English learners in China than in the whole population of the United States. Hindi, Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Turkish, and many other critical languages of commerce and engagement are not being learned and spoken at an early age in the United States.

In order to engage with the world and remain a potent force, we need to speak the languages of the world. In order to start companies in Dubai and sell products and services to the Indonesians and the Chinese, we need a public education system that recognizes and, most importantly, is willing to underwrite investments in foreign language acquisition.

Offering an array of college-level foreign language coursework at American universities is essentially useless without a concrete foundation in all aspects of foreign language acquisition at an early age.

According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, only 7 percent of public elementary school students are adequately learning a foreign language, whereas in Korea, China, Japan, and many countries throughout Europe and Latin America, they have officially mandated the learning of a second language in elementary education.

There is no excuse for our obliviousness to the outside world as English—though still the lingua franca of international business, internet websites, and scholarly discourse—is being increasingly challenged by languages of the future.

Read more at <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2008/10/27/early-language-education-critical-us>

Dennis Yang is an Ed.M student in International Educational Development at Teachers College, Columbia University

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What We Don't Know Can Hurt Us

Margie Ensign, The Huffington Post, USA, 8 October 2008

As we debate whether being able to see Russia from a window counts for foreign policy experience, there is another view of what constitutes adequate knowledge of foreign affairs and very different standards about how to gain an international perspective that universities have supported for decades.

The three legs of this global literacy include international experience, gained through study abroad, knowledge of global economics, politics, world history and geography, and cross cultural and linguistic competency.

Understanding other countries and cultures requires the ability to speak a foreign language. Cross cultural understanding facilitates diplomacy and business. Knowledge of politics, economics, history and geography is essential for understanding the world and being able to act pro-actively rather than reactively in dealing with other nations. A proactive policy means that we have an ongoing involvement in issues that prevents them from becoming crises.

Unfortunately, Sarah Palin is not alone in her global ignorance. Our colleges and high schools are not doing what is necessary to boost America's international competence, and the current generation is not gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to understand other continents and cultures.

Last academic year, less than eight percent of undergraduates enrolled at universities in the US were taking a foreign language course, and less than one percent of our 15 million college's students in the United States studied abroad.

Read more at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/margee-ensign/what-we-dont-know-can-hur_b_132817.html

Margie Ensign is Dean of the School of International Studies, University of the Pacific.

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Why Foreign Language Education Matters

Rep. Rush Holt, US Congressman, 18 September 2008

The problem is not only in the area of national defense. Our companies lose international contracts to competitors, our scientists miss important collaborations, international assistance organizations fail to understand local customs critical to advancing America's interests, and average Americans are deprived of a cultural enrichment in their lives.

Illinois Senator, Barack Obama, recently expressed concerns about our nation's foreign language deficit saying, "You should be thinking about how can your child become bilingual. We should have every child speaking more than one language."

Senator Obama's opponents seized upon his remarks, making the claims that he was trying to force Americans to learn a secondary language. Such criticism is not only foolish, it is dangerous.

Rather than attack Senator Obama, I would hope we could reach a political consensus in this country that our government must change course and stop undervaluing and under-investing in foreign language

education. Leaders from both parties should recognize the issue's importance and bring forth strategies to increase our interest and our ability in foreign languages.

There are other approaches to strengthening America's foreign language education, and all of these should be discussed. Unfortunately, some would rather score cheap political points than have a serious discussion about an issue that directly affects our economy and national security.

Another Illinois Senator, the late Paul Simon, in his book, *The Tongue-Tied American*, once called the United States a "linguistically malnourished" nation. He said that almost 30 years ago. Our nation's appetite for learning a foreign language sadly still needs to be filled.

Read more at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-rush-holt/why-foreign-language-educ_b_127588.html

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Obama's Right: More Americans Should Learn a Second Language

Stacie Nevadomski Berdan, The Huffington Post, USA, 4 August 2008

An avalanche of criticism from English-only advocates has tumbled down around US Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama's recent comment that Americans should get their children to study Spanish or another second language.

Obama is absolutely right. We live in a global economy and whether it's Spanish, French, Russian or Chinese, Americans lag behind the rest of the industrialized world when it comes to mastering a second -- or even a third -- language.

Here's what Obama actually said in response to a question on bilingualism: "I agree that immigrants should learn English. I agree with that. But understand this: Instead of worrying about whether immigrants can learn English -- they'll learn English -- you need to make sure your child can speak Spanish. You should be thinking about how your child can become bilingual. We should have every child speaking more than one language."

Whether it's Chinese, a language critical to future global commerce, or Spanish, the most widely spoken language in the U.S. after English, as a nation we need to get going.

Read more at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/stacie-nevadomski-berdan/obamas-right-more-america_b_116583.html

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RESOURCES

Linguascope

A valuable resource for schools for French, German, Italian, Spanish or ESOL - Year 1 - 12

Registration to Linguascope gives teachers access to thousands of resources - and enables every student to access to games and activities at all levels when they login at school - or at home.

When teachers discover Linguascope, they never want to give it up! With a re-subscription rate of 99%, it shows the value to teachers across Australia – and worldwide.

Linguascope's clear instructions and attractive colourful graphics will ensure that the site is a hit with your students. Linguascope encourages them to log on at school and home giving them the opportunity to revise and do extra study at night or during their lunch break. Students using Linguascope are able to work at their own pace, and teachers love it:

"Already, some of my year 9 students have looked at the site and returned at lunchtime to have another go...we only have a limited amount of class time with our language students and it is a great help for them to be able to revise school work at night or at lunchtime via Linguascope.

"The worksheets are well presented and simple in content, thus instilling confidence in our students' ability to understand and participate in oral activities in the classroom...

"...hooking on to the website was very fast. By week's end I was able to assess the material and include it in my class planning for the following week." (Jacqueline Guille, language teacher)

Read more at <http://www.linguascope.com.au>

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Link up with the Languages Action Alliance - and Lingo

The Languages Action Alliance is a coalition of like-minded individuals who not only believe in the importance of establishing bilingualism as an Australian way of life but actively seek ways to make that a reality, both individually in their various day-to-day working lives but also working together on projects.

Lingo is currently running a National Survey which you can access on the website until 19 December.

Read more at <http://www.lingo.org.au>

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REMINDERS

11-25 January - A Summer of Esperanto in Sydney - Sydney, NSW - <http://aesk.esperanto.org.au/>

1 May - Victorian Association of Teachers of Italian Annual Congress - Preston, Victoria - <http://www.vati.vic.edu.au/congress.html>

28-30 May - International Conference on Minority Languages - Tartu, Estonia - <http://www.icml.ut.ee>

23-26 June - International Association for Improvement of Mother Tongue Education - Toronto, Canada - <http://www.ilo.uva.nl/Projecten/Gert/iaimte/default.html>

9-12 July - AFMLTA Biennial National Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://www.mltansw.asn.au/afmltadetails.htm>

14-15 July - Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators Conference - Sydney, NSW - <http://mltansw.asn.au/asiletheme.htm>

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ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

Subscription is available free to ACSSO's current range of email newsletters:

- **Australian Education Digest** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/aed.htm> (weekly)
- **International News Roundup** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup.htm> (monthly)
- **Values Education** : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Languages Education** : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Ensemble - Music Education** : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- **Public Education Voice** : <http://www.acsso.org.au/pev.htm> (quarterly)
- **Family School Partners** : http://www.familyschool.org.au/?page_id=6 (quarterly)

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