

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

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EVENTS

International Mother Language Day

21 February 2009

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO in November 1999, and observed every year since February 2000 to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.

Languages are at the very heart of UNESCO's objectives. They are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage.

All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to development fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

You will find some background information on the UNESCO site at http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35097&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

This is an opportunity to engage and include the multilingual and multicultural families of your community in a school-wide celebration of the importance of languages and culture in our multicultural society.

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Melbourne's First Ever Language Picnic

Sunday 1 March 2009

Jells Park, Wheelers Hill – 11.00 am to 2.00 pm

Do you have an interest in language? Come along to Melbourne's first-ever Language Picnic – to be held on Sunday 1 March at Jells Park, Wheelers Hill, near the playground behind the café (Entry Waverley Rd – Melways Ref: 71, J5)

Bring family and friends, some goodies, a rug, a chair – and

- Share your language experiences
- Swap ideas on raising children in more than one language
- Find out more about language learning
- Celebrate Australia's linguistic and cultural diversity.

Everyone welcome! To register your attendance – and specific language of interest – email Angela (dacafarella@optusnet.com.au) or ring Brigitte on 0408 991 894

This event is a non-profit initiative of the Languages Action Alliance – find out more about LAA at <http://www.lingo.org.au>

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Harmony Day

21 March 2009

Harmony Day is held each year on 21 March to celebrate the richness and diversity of our school communities – and the vibrant potential of our successful multicultural society.

Parent organisations in all parts of the country are encouraged to work with their school and wider community to make this an important and inclusive celebration of the cultural diversity that underpins and enriches each community.

For some school communities, Harmony Day is the “launching pad” for an ongoing series of activities and events right through the year and right across the curriculum.

Harmony Day is managed by the federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship for the Australian Government – and you are invited to visit the website at <http://www.harmony.gov.au> for ideas and suggestions on how to become involved.

Here you can register your school's events – and order free materials to make your event even more successful.

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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES AND CULTURE

NSW Teachers Learn to link cultures

Anna Patty, Sydney Morning Herald, 18 November 2008

All 93,000 people who work for the NSW Department of Education will spend up to 10 hours learning about indigenous culture under a new Aboriginal education policy to be launched today. The policy updates a 1996 policy that the NSW Minister for Education, Verity Firth, said needed “rejuvenation”.

"The new policy is much wider in its commitment to support system-wide action to close the gap in learning," she said. "We see it as a major way of achieving the goal that by 2012 Aboriginal student outcomes will match or exceed the outcomes of the broader student population."

As part of the new strategy, it will be compulsory for all Department of Education staff, including bureaucrats and teachers at schools and TAFEs, to learn more about Aboriginal culture.

Read entire article: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/teachers-learn-to-close-culture-gap/2008/11/17/1226770355946.html>

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Spirit of country

Natasha Robinson, The Australian, January 08, 2009

Guyula, 50, was born at Mirngatja, a homeland surrounding the Arafura swamp in central Arnhem Land. His education was survival, learned from uncles and grandfathers in the harsh but bountiful bush. Conservation and respect for country were its central themes.

Guyula began school at 11 at the Elcho Island mission. There he encountered a learning culture diametrically opposed to his own. "In balanda school you ask lots of questions, but in Yolngu school you don't ask questions. It's bad manners because you are trying to steal something from the knowledge of the senior elder. He alone can give you information. But you don't force it. Wait until he can see that you are ready. He knows when to tell this story."

Guyula went on to become a pilot.

Guyula, a lecturer in Yolngu matha (languages) at Charles Darwin University in Darwin, teaches me to twist my mouth around the difficult shapes of his mother tongue. I manage the easy ones. Yo. (Right on, yes, I agree). Manymak. (Good.) Yaka main ma. (Bad.) Later, the children in Mapuru call me yapa - sister - and they won't let me forget my new word. I hear it everywhere I turn: "Yapa! Lolly?" (They know I have a tin of butterscotch and cannot say no). "Yapa! Me have four lollies, no, five!" "Yapa, where you from? Have boyfriend?"

Through the subtleties of his mother tongue, Guyula opens Western minds to the sophisticated, holistic Aboriginal worldview.

"Most of the things around here, all of the land, all of the rivers, they are all associated," Guyula says.

"It is yothu yindi, mother and child. That is life. Every bit of land is related to another bit of land, it calls it mother, or calls it child. And a person also calls a bit of land mother or child," he says.

Yet this is the land that for almost 200 years the crown called terra nullius, the land of no one. Guyula remembers the insult with pain and frustration, his memories curiously crystallising around the snowy-haired stalwart of Queensland monoculturalism, former premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24884254-28737,00.html>

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ASIAN LANGUAGES

Rudd sparks surge in Chinese studies

The Australian, January 09, 2009

Mandarin-speaking PM Kevin Rudd has helped spark a renaissance in Australia's study of Asian languages, with record numbers of students signing up for Chinese.

"There has been a significant increase in students wanting to study Mandarin, probably reflecting that we have a prime minister that speaks Chinese," said Australian National University's Kent Anderson.

"But across the board Asian languages are proving popular with students which fits in nicely with the government's languages programme," the head of the university's Asian Studies faculty said in a statement.

There was a 23 percent increase overall in the number of Asian studies applicants for 2009 at the university, with growing demand for classes in Japanese, Thai, Korean and Vietnamese, he added.

After becoming Prime Minister Mr Rudd quickly put in place a \$62 million Asian languages programme for high schools.

By 2020 the program aims to have 12 percent of school-leavers fluent in either Mandarin, Japanese, Indonesian or Korean.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24891511-12332,00.html>

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EARLY CHILDHOOD BILINGUALISM

Learning two languages – it's child's play!

Dr Mandy Scott

In an article last year I discussed the multiple benefits that young children can gain from learning a second language. These benefits include adding to communicative and intellectual skills, and laying the foundation for successful learning of further languages later in life.

This article introduces readers to a growing area of interest among parents – bilingual playgroups.

Over recent months I have visited three language-based playgroups in the ACT. All are providing a bilingual experience for children and highlighting the fact that speaking more than one language is a natural and fun thing to do.

First I visited the Yeppeun Byol Playgroup at Hughes, where I found a warm centre of activity and intercultural communication. The group focuses on Korean children under school age, but includes parents of various ethnic backgrounds who have adopted children from Korea. Food was a major part of the morning's activities, reflecting its cultural significance and the interest of the Korean mothers in various non-Korean recipes and vice versa - The Aussie pikelets were a bit hit with the children on the day I was there! The Korean parents take a leading role in teaching Korean songs, music, games and other activities to the children and the other parents.

The German playgroup Spiel und Spass, is held in Cook. Again it was a busy morning, with about 20 children. After a period of individual play and a craft activity, the group came together to sing songs from the "German songbook", collated by and for the group over time. Most parents have some connection with the German language, either coming from a German speaking country or having German speaking partners.

As with all playgroups, the activities allow parents to get together as well as the children. One mother told me of her pleasure at being able to speak her native language with others. Another, a non-German speaker, was attending to broaden her own and her child's experience.

I also visited a Chinese playgroup, which is held in the homes of various parents. This was less structured than the other groups, and a happy, boisterous atmosphere was the order of the day. Again, food was an important part of the activities.

The mothers were all Chinese and obviously enjoyed being able to discuss family and life issues in Mandarin. Not that the group does not welcome non-Chinese: others are welcome – though as with the two previous groups, culture and language maintenance was the guiding aim.

There is a place in Canberra for language-based playgroups which focus on English-only families. These are springing up in other cities across Australia as parents realise the value to young minds of being exposed to more than one language. Canberra is a highly educated city with a talented multilingual community – and plans are already afoot for new bilingual playgroups here.

One of the Chinese parents at the existing playgroup is thinking of starting a group which will focus on non-Chinese families, where parents and children can experience a Mandarin-speaking environment and learn Chinese songs and cultural activities together.

An experienced preschool teacher from Belgium has also just moved to Canberra and is exploring the possibility of starting sessions for teaching French or Dutch to young children (see next item below)

So: watch this space!

Playgroups are ideal environments for introducing children to a new language in a fun way. Parents can also be fully involved and can continue activities in the chosen language with their children at home if they wish.

Mandy Scott has a PhD in Linguistics, speaks several languages and is an active supporter of languages education; she can be contacted at mandy.scott@anu.edu.au This article first appeared in PlayACT, the newsletter of the ACT Playgroups Association, in 2008

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RESOURCES

“Farmland”

Virtual animal welfare video game available online in German, French, Italian, Greek, Spanish, Dutch & Swedish as well as English

Reviewed by Carole de Fraga

A new online video game released by the European Commission (EC) shows children what animal welfare can mean on a farm. Interactive and informative, "Farmland" is for children aged between 9 and 12 and aims to help tomorrow's consumers make informed choices about the food they will be buying.

Throughout the game children are encouraged to think about the welfare of animals in the context of food production and consumption. This is a global concept.

The game teaches that to be a good farmer, the player needs to show total respect for the animal and follow the principles of the Five Freedoms:

- Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury and disease
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

An online teacher's toolbox is being developed containing exercises that can be used in class to help children better understand the issue of animal welfare. It will be released later this year.

The website is translated in nine European languages, so it is also potentially useful in Australia for teachers of Languages Other Than English (LOTE) – including German, Greek, Spanish, French and Italian, Dutch and Swedish.

Read more at <http://www.farmland-thegame.eu>

Carole de Fraga is the Oceania representative for Compassion in World Farming
<http://www.ciwf.org.au>

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Linguascope

"The most valuable resource for schools for French, German, Italian, Spanish or ESOL - from 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:

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

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LOTE@HOME - Learning languages at home from the early years

"Children who have grown up learning two or more different languages are better problem solvers"

[LOTE@HOME](#) is an innovative way for parents to participate with their kids as they all learn a second language.

[LOTE@HOME](#) packs are not intended to replace formal LOTE lessons, however they are intended to build an "in country environment" in the home that will support the formal learning of a second language.

Devised by a parent who was unable to identify an approach to learning a language other than English that focused on a home, family-based setting, these family-friendly kits are now available in ten community languages.

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

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National Forum on Future of Chinese Language Education in Australian Schools:

Proceedings of October 2008 Forum now on Website

You can listen to vodcasts of keynote speakers and workshop presenters, Group Leaders Reports and Plenary summaries. You can view or download:

- National Forum Report.
- Report on Chinese Language Education in Australian Schools by Dr Jane Orton
- Powerpoints and speech notes

The National Forum Report encapsulates the main themes of the Forum that includes:

- Overview of the Forum
- Summaries and key points of presentations
- Key recommendations of the report on Chinese Language Education in Australian Schools
- Main ideas arising from discussions and plenary summaries.

The website for the National Forum for the Future of Chinese Language Education in Australian Schools is now live at http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/public_html/future_forum.htm

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FROM HERE AND THERE

Ireland: Reviving Ireland's lost tongue

Bernard Lane, The Australian, January 21, 2009

WHO will help Ireland revive its native language? Joe Lo Bianco - an Australian born in the Victorian country town of Myrtleford to Italian tobacco farmers. He readily acknowledges it may seem odd for an Aussie to play in the Gaelic league but language policy is his game.

"I've done it in Canada, Scotland, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Samoa and Singapore," says Lo Bianco, who holds a chair in language and literacy education at the University of Melbourne.

It was his work in Scotland that caught the eye of Peadar O Flatharta at Dublin City University.

In 2003, Ireland had embarked on a new bilingual adventure. Within the European Union it reconstituted itself as a nation of two languages, Irish and English.

At home, Ireland wanted expert help in crafting a 20-year plan that would dramatically lift the number of people making daily use of Irish.

O Flatharta put together a consortium in 2007; Lo Bianco and colleagues from Wales and Switzerland joined. They got the job, presented their draft to the Irish Government just before Christmas and await a response.

Lo Bianco admits the goal is ambitious: to nudge a quarter of a million Irish into daily usage of the language by 2028, compared with 70,000 today.

"The failure in language policy work in the world is enormous," he says.

After all, official promotion of Irish and a marked decline in its use have gone hand in hand since the Irish republic was founded in 1922.

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24940111-12332,00.html>

Read more about the 20 Year Irish Language Strategy at: <http://plean2028.ie/en>

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UK: Class divide opens up in teaching of languages

State schools trail private sector in GCSE league tables

Richard Garner, Independent, 16 January 2009

The stark divide between language teaching in state and private schools was exposed in exam league tables published by the Government yesterday.

Figures show that at 550 state comprehensive and secondary modern schools fewer than one in 10 pupils was awarded a top grade A* to C grade GCSE pass in a language.

In 34 of them – including two of the Government's flagship academies, the Madejski Academy in Reading (named after its sponsor, the Reading football club chairman) and Havelock Academy in Grimsby, not a single pupil gained a high pass.

This is in stark contrast to those at the top of this new table, which for the first time ranks schools on their performance in modern foreign languages. Of the 62 schools where all pupils received an A* to C, 58 are independent schools and four are selective grammar schools. The figures underline what language-teaching specialists have been claiming for years – that language teaching is becoming the preserve of the affluent middle classes and is dying a death in state schools following the Government's decision four years ago to make the subject voluntary for 14 to 16-year-olds.

Last night it was being said by education experts that the state of language teaching in schools was the sharpest example of the way the class divide operates within the education system.

Read entire article: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/class-divide-opens-up-in-teaching-of-languages-1380399.html>

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The Language Of Emotion: Ad Slogans In Native Tongues Connect To Consumers' Emotions

ScienceDaily (Dec. 15, 2008)

In our globalized world, consumers are exposed to marketing messages in many languages. But a new study in the Journal of Consumer Research says messages expressed in people's native languages are most effective at triggering emotional reactions.

Authors Stefano Puntoni, Bart de Langhe, and Stijn van Osselaer (Erasmus University, the Netherlands) studied bilingual and trilingual populations in Europe. They tested different slogans with participants and found differences in how the messages were perceived. "Our findings show that, in general, messages expressed in consumers' native languages tend to be perceived as more emotional than messages expressed in their second language," the researchers write.

The authors believe this effect is not due to differences in languages or participants' difficulty in understanding ad copy written in foreign languages. "We find that the emotional advantage of consumers' native language depends on personal memories and the language context in which those memories were generated. Thus reading or hearing a word (unconsciously) triggers memories of situations in which that word played a role...Because consumers usually have more personal memories with words in their native language than in their second language, marketing messages in their native language tend to be perceived as more emotional."

"We found that, regardless of whether their native language was French or Dutch, native language slogans were perceived as more emotional than second language slogans," write the authors. "All else being equal, it is generally preferable to communicate with consumers using their own native language, as doing so should result in more emotional messages."

Read entire article: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081215111433.htm>

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Speaking More Than One Language May Slow The Aging Process In The Mind

ScienceDaily (May 8, 2008)

Children who speak a second or third language may have an unexpected advantage later in life, a new Tel Aviv University study has found. Knowing and speaking many languages may protect the brain against the effects of aging.

Dr. Gitit Kavé, a clinical neuro-psychologist from the Herczeg Institute on Aging at Tel Aviv University, together with her colleagues Nitza Eyal, Aviva Shorek, and Jiska Cohen-Manfield, discovered recently that senior citizens who speak more languages test for better cognitive functioning. The results of her study were published in the journal *Psychology and Aging*.

However, Kavé says that one should approach these findings with caution. "There is no sure-fire recipe for avoiding the pitfalls of mental aging. But using a second or third language may help prolong the good years," she advises.

A person who speaks more languages is likely to be more clear-minded at an older age, she says, in effect "exercising" his or her brain more than those who are monolingual. Languages may create new links in the brain, contributing to this strengthening effect.

The research was based on a survey taken in 1989 on people between the ages of 75 and 95. Each person was asked how many languages he or she knew, what his or her mother tongue was, and which language he or she spoke best. The researchers compared bilingual speakers to tri- and multilingual speakers.

Read entire article: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080507152419.htm>

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Linguistics Expert Warns Of Language Extinction

ScienceDaily (Mar. 4, 2007)

Humans speak more than 6,000 languages. Nearly all of them could be extinct in the next two centuries.

So what?

University of Alaska Fairbanks professor emeritus Michael Krauss addressed that question during his presentation at the American Association for the Advancement of Science annual meeting, which begins today in San Francisco.

"I claim that it is catastrophic for the future of mankind," Krauss said. "It should be as scary as losing 90 percent of the biological species."

The reasons are multiple, he said. From an ethical standpoint, all languages are of equal value, he said. But the value of a language goes far beyond academic discourse, Krauss said. Languages contain the intellectual wisdom of populations of people. They contain their observations of and adaptations to the world around them. Humanity became human in a complex system of languages that interacted with each other.

"That is somehow interdependent such that we lose sections of it at the same peril that we lose sections of the biosphere," Krauss said. "Every time we lose (a language), we lose that much also of our adaptability and our diversity that gives us our strength and our ability to survive."

Read entire article: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/02/070218140348.htm>

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CONFERENCES

Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers Annual Conference

26-27 February, Melbourne, VICTORIA

The 2009 Victorian Indonesian Language Teachers' Association's annual conference will be once again held at the Hemisphere Convention Centre, South Road, Moorabbin.

Read more at <http://www.mltav.asn.au/indonesian/content/view/146/163/>

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35th Congress of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association (AULLA)

4-6 February 2009, University of Sydney, NSW

As the first decade of the twenty-first century draws to a close, it is time for a major reassessment of the human and humanities in literature, language and culture.

The conference has a dual aim of promoting detailed research into the human (and inhuman) in literature, languages and culture; and broad-scale exploration of the past, present and future definitions of and directions for the humanities.

Read more at <http://aulla.com.au/AULLA09.html>

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Sixth International Conference on Language Teacher Education

28-30 May 2009, George Washington University, Washington DC, USA

Preparing Language Teachers for the 21st Century

Designed for practitioners and researchers involved in the preparation and ongoing professional development of language teachers, LTE 2009 will address the education of teachers of all languages, at all instructional and institutional levels, and in many national and international contexts in which this takes place including:

- English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) instruction;
- foreign/modern/world language teaching;
- bilingual education;
- immersion education;
- indigenous and minority language education;
- the teaching of less commonly taught languages

Read more at <http://www.nclrc.org/lte2009/>

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AFMLTA Biennial National Conference 2009

Dialogue, Discourse, Diversity

9-12 July 2009, Darling Harbour, Sydney NSW

The MLTA of NSW is pleased to be hosting the AFMLTA's 17th Biennial Conference 2009 at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, Darling Harbour, Sydney.

The theme for the Conference is Dialogue Discourse Diversity and the conference committee invite teachers, linguists and scholars from all relevant fields to participate and present about their research or professional practice.

Invited Plenary Speakers: Professor Miles Turnbull; Professor Ofelia Garcia; Professor Joseph Lo Bianco

The Conference will begin with the Welcome Reception on Thursday 9th July.

Conference sessions commence at 9.00am on Friday 10th July, and conclude at 1.00pm on Sunday 12th July.

Further details at: <http://www.mltansw.asn.au/afmltadetails.htm>

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Australian Society of Indonesian Language Educators (ASILE) 2009 Conference

Working together to build Australia's Indonesian language potential

14-15 July 2009 at St Catherine's School Waverley NSW

The theme for the conference is Maju bersama - Working together to build Australia's Indonesian language potential.

The conference committee invites teachers, linguists and scholars involved in Indonesian language education to participate and present their research or professional practice.

For details: <http://mltansw.asn.au/asiletheme.htm>

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REMINDERS

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>

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ACSSO 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)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at letters@acsso.org.au

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