

LANGUAGES EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Volume 3 Number 3, 19 March 2009

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AUSTRALIA-INDONESIA CONFERENCE

Australia and Indonesia: Partners in a New Era

The relationship between Australia and Indonesia has never been at a better or higher level according to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Stephen Smith.

Mr Smith's comments came as part of "Australia and Indonesia: Partners in a New Era" conference held in Sydney on February 19 and 20.

The Conference brought together leading Indonesians and Australians from a range of backgrounds, including government, industry, academia, the media, community organisations, faith groups and youth.

Read more at http://www.usaid.gov.au/hottopics/topic.cfm?ID=4384_9714_1438_6456_2409

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Encouraging signs on Asian front

David T. Hill, The Australian, February 25, 2009

AT a landmark conference in Sydney on the Australian-Indonesian partnership last week, Kevin Rudd acknowledged that "Australia needs to do better, a lot better in our level of Indonesian language studies, in the development of Indonesian studies within our universities and in our schools, and in our understanding of the enormous complexities of Indonesian Islam".

There was consensus at the conference that Australia needed to reinvigorate Indonesian studies in our education system, to reverse what Foreign Minister Stephen Smith referred to as the loss of our "cadres of Indonesianists".

Academics have long recognised that senior Indonesianist scholars are not being replaced on retirement from our universities. Indonesian language programs have closed in several universities recently as years of disinvestment in tertiary education takes its toll. Data collected by the Asian Studies Association of Australia notes that between 2001 and 2007, university enrolments in Indonesian fell by 23.8 per cent.

What is less well known is that as the number of Indonesian-speaking graduates and specialists declines, employment demand for them has grown strongly. Government departments, agencies and private sector firms often are unable to

fill vacancies. Skilled applicants earn a premium, with staff in departments such as defence, foreign affairs and AusAID paid a loading of \$2000 to \$4000 a year for appropriate language proficiency.

For years Australian academics have been concerned at the lack of government awareness of the plight of Indonesian studies. Now clear statements from senior government ministers indicate the message from the trenches is getting through: the Government has recognised the problem and wants to do better in Indonesian studies.

The question is, what practical steps will it take to rectify the situation?

Read entire article: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,25101296-25192,00.html>

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Indonesian studies at a tipping point

David T. Hill, Jakarta Post, 4 March 2009

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd captured the upbeat mood, and the critical challenge, when he opened the recent landmark conference "Australia and Indonesia: Partners in a New Era" held in Sydney over Feb. 19-21. Putting aside his prepared speech, he spoke passionately about the depth and closeness of the bilateral relationship.

But he also acknowledged that "Australia needs to do better, a lot better in our level of Indonesian language studies, in the development of Indonesian studies within our universities and in our schools and in our understanding of the enormous complexities of Indonesian Islam."

At several points during the high-level conference, there were declarations that the government-to-government relationship was in better shape than the lagging people-to-people links.

Academics have long recognized that senior Indonesianist scholars were not being replaced on retirement from our universities. Indonesian language programs have closed in several universities recently as years of disinvestment in tertiary education takes its toll.

Read entire article: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/04/indonesian-studies-a-tipping-point.html>

David T. Hill is professor of Southeast Asian studies and fellow of the Asia Research Centre at Murdoch University in Western Australia.

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Rudd's Broken Promises Bode Ill for Relations with Indonesia

Brook Nolan, Jakarta Globe, 5 March 2009

Last week at the Australia-Indonesia Conference held in Sydney, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd declared yet again his intention to "create in this country, in Australia, the most Asia-literate country in the West."

Indonesian studies departments in universities across Australia are quickly becoming accustomed to hearing these fine sentiments, but the gaping discrepancy between the rhetoric and the reality is growing.

From August to December 2008, I had the privilege of studying at Universitas Muhammadiyah, in Malang, East Java Province, as part of the Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies, or ACICIS, program.

Upon my return to Curtin University in Perth in February, I was dismayed to find that most Indonesian courses had been slashed. The degree program in Asian Studies (Indonesian) has been abolished and it is no longer possible to major in Indonesian. All Indonesian language courses except one have been cut.

However, what is most concerning is that the assault on Indonesian studies at Curtin — incidentally, the university where President SBY's son Edhie Baskoro Yudhoyono graduated in February 2005 — is not an isolated incident but reflective of a wider trend across Australian universities.

Read entire article: <http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/opinion/article/11923.html>

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An Open Letter to Hon Stephen Smith MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Dear Minister,

I write to you with deep concern.

Recently I watched news reports of the Australia - Indonesia Bilateral Conference with great interest. I am a B. Asian Studies (Honours) student, majoring in Indonesian, at Curtin University in Perth.

I was most encouraged by your opening comments at the conference. You said, "One of the areas where I think it's true to say Hassan and I both believe very strongly we can enhance the relationship, is through education," This is indeed true.

You continued, "At the same time we'd like to see more Australians taking part in educational activities in Indonesia itself and also studying Indonesia, not just Bahasa Indonesia as a language, but studying Indonesia; its culture, its history, its relationship. One of the programs the Australian Government has is a \$60 million to encourage the studying in our schools and universities of languages from our region, including Indonesian."

As a student of Indonesian, and as someone who has spent several years working, studying and travelling in Indonesia, I would be interested to know where exactly this \$60 million is being spent, Mr. Smith. For the latter half of 2008, I studied at Universitas Muhammadiyah, Malang, as part of the ACICIS (Australian Council for In-Country Indonesian Studies) program. I returned to Curtin University to be told that all but one of the Indonesian language courses were being shut down this year.

Students who had been majoring in Indonesian were told two weeks before classes began that Indonesian language was no longer on offer and perhaps they should switch to Chinese, clearly an absurd suggestion for students with several years of Indonesian training, and none of Chinese.

You continued in your press conference with Mr Wirajuda, "So I think education, further enhancing our education exchanges, making sure that in Australia we have students who are studying Indonesia as a language, but also studying Indonesia as a nation; a country, its culture and its people. And so we, in particular, encourage those educational academic exchanges."

ACICIS and similar exchange programs require an adequate level of proficiency in bahasa Indonesia before students are permitted to participate in the program. If Indonesian language units are no longer available at Curtin University, these students will not have the opportunity to participate in these exchange programs, which are vital to maintaining close Australia - Indonesia ties. In fact, the university is not only acting against the stated aims of the Federal and State governments, to boost Indonesian and Asian Studies programs at a tertiary level, but also contradicting its own goals, to provide students with a degree which is globally competitive and internationally focussed.

The following article appeared in The Jakarta Post today. <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/02/21/education-main-driver-closer-indonesiaaustralia-ties.html> [see next article below]

Your comments towards the end of the article were particularly interesting: "Academic links are particularly important as we look to build a new generation of Australian-Indonesian specialists. They've almost become an endangered species."

Your last sentence could not be more true, Mr Smith. And if Australian universities continue to cut Indonesian programs, the Indonesia-Australia relationship, as I'm sure you're well aware, will suffer. Where are these Australia-Indonesia specialists going to come from when universities are permitted to cut their Indonesian programs based on one consideration only: financial viability?

Last semester 31 Australian students participated in the ACICIS program. This semester it's down to 19. With the scrapping of Indonesian language courses from Curtin University and others across the country, this figure is set to continue plummeting. What leadership is your department taking to ensure that the \$60 million of investment you talk about is put to good use, yielding practical results, such as the expansion, rather than the closure, of Indonesian studies at a tertiary level?

I look forward to your reply.

Best Wishes,

Brooke Nolan

Brooke Nolan is a graduate student at Curtin University in Perth.

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Education the main driver for closer Indonesia-Australia ties

Endy M. Bayuni , The Jakarta Post, 21 February 2009

As the Indonesian and Australian governments try to give more substance to their relations, their foreign ministers have agreed that education could be the main driver to building what they termed stronger people-to-people contacts.

Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith, addressing the Australia-Indonesia conference Friday, pledged that Canberra would seek ways to promote the teaching of the Indonesian language at Australian schools and reinvigorate Indonesian studies at Australian colleges.

His Indonesian counterpart, Hassan Wirajuda, noted the declining number of Australians who were experts on Indonesia, down from a decade or so ago.

The three-day conference, opened by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Thursday, seeks ways to promote greater people-to-people links between the two countries as part of government efforts to broaden and deepen bilateral relations.

Rudd, in his keynote address, and Smith both observed that relations with Indonesia had reached an unusual stage, where government-to-government links were ahead of the other sectors, including even the trade and investment sectors.

Besides building stronger bi-lateral ties, the two governments also work together on many international and regional issues, including in climate change, counterterrorism and at the World Trade Organization.

But more work is needed to promote ties at the grassroots level, both governments recognized.

Read entire article: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/02/21/education-main-driver-closer-indonesiaaustralia-ties.html>

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RI, Aussie students allowed to get work and holiday visa

Irawaty Wardany, The Jakarta Post, 4 March 2009

Indonesian and Australian university students will soon be able to benefit from a reciprocal work and holiday visa deal between both countries.

A memorandum of understanding was signed in Jakarta on Tuesday by Indonesian Justice and Human Rights Minister Andi Mattalatta and Australian Immigration and Citizenship Minister Chris Evans.

The MOU allows university-educated Australian and Indonesian travelers, aged between 18 and 30, to work and vacation in each other's countries for up to 12 months.

"The work and holiday visa arrangement allows young people from both countries to travel and experience a different lifestyle and culture and subsidize their holiday," Evans said during the signing ceremony.

He added the work and holiday visa differed from a working holiday visa because it required applicants to have the support of their government, possess or be studying toward a tertiary qualification, and speak functional English or Indonesian, respectively.

Read entire article: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/04/ri-aussie-students-allowed-get-work-and-holiday-visa.html>

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INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF LANGUAGES 2008

Where has it brought us? Where to from here?

Michael Clyne

For the United Nations International Year of Languages, countries all over the world have been reflecting on their achievements in languages and what they could be doing better.

In a newspaper article published at the beginning of this year, I argued that this was an appropriate time for us to take stock of how we as individuals and as a nation make the most of our language resources, and how we communicate with and about those of differing cultural backgrounds.

I pointed to the opportunity for our then-new government to consider the place of languages in schools, to review the citizenship test, provide better funding for English as a second language and to commit to our cultural diversity.

So what has this year achieved for Australia?

A considerable number of conferences have taken place around the country, focusing on the teaching of languages other than English. A grassroots Languages Action Alliance has been formed to promote multilingualism. Perhaps the most spectacular affirmation of the importance of mastering a second language and its value to the nation was Kevin Rudd's speech in Mandarin in Beijing.

A report appeared on the state and nature of languages in Australian schools, one of a long series of reports over the years to make sound recommendations for improvement.

In the past couple of years the media, some politicians and business lobbies, among others, have rediscovered the importance of languages. The case for languages in the wider public discourse is largely motivated by instrumental, economic and sometimes also by strategic arguments.

The federal government wants students to learn the languages of our major Asian trading partners: Mandarin, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean. But there is no indication that the promotion of particular languages is actually achieving an expansion and improvement of languages programs as a whole, or merely a replacement of some languages in schools by others. And the government is still not prepared to make a commitment to requiring all students in the compulsory years of education to take a language other than English as is being taken for granted for some other core areas.

Read entire transcript of ABC Radio's "Lingua Franca" program 13 December 2008 at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/linguafranca/stories/2008/2444995.htm>

Michael Clyne is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Monash University and Honorary Professorial Fellow at the University of Melbourne, author of numerous books including "Australia's Language Potential".

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New edition of UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger

UNESCO, Paris, 20 February 2009

UNESCO launched the electronic version of the new edition of its Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger on 19 February.

This interactive digital tool provides updated data about approximately 2,500 endangered languages around the world and can be continually supplemented, corrected and updated, thanks to contributions from its users.

The Atlas, presented on the eve of International Mother Language Day (21 February), enables searches according to several criteria, and ranks the 2,500 endangered languages that are listed according to five different levels of vitality: unsafe, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct.

Some of the data are especially worrying: out of the approximately 6,000 existing languages in the world, more than 200 have become extinct during the last three generations, 538 are critically endangered, 502 severely endangered, 632 definitely endangered and 607 unsafe.

Read more at http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=28377&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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Endangered languages, endangered thought

UNESCO Courier, 21 February 2009

With the death of Marie Smith Jones, the Eyak language of Alaska (United States) died out last year and Ubykh (Turkey) vanished in 1992 with the demise of Tevfik Esenç.

Some 200 languages have become extinct in the last three generations, according to the new edition of the "UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger".

The Courier's feature, published in honour of International Mother Language Day (21 February), focuses on this worrying trend. When languages die, not only words disappear, but ways of seeing and describing reality; we lose valuable knowledge and worlds of thought.

The interactive digital version of the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger provides updated data about approximately 2,500 endangered languages around the world and can be continually supplemented, corrected and updated, thanks to contributions from its users.

It enables searches according to several criteria, and ranks the endangered languages that are listed according to five different levels of vitality: unsafe, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct.

Read more at: http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=44549&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

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UNESCO Project List

The UNESCO website lists 225 projects and events around the world that related to the International Year of Languages at

http://portal.unesco.org/culture/admin/ev.php?URL_ID=35835&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201

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A Video to Celebrate International Mother Language Day, 21 Feb. 2009 and the Official Close of the International Year of Languages

The Orphan's Lullaby project is a multilingual celebration of languages spoken in Africa, and a multilingual expression of uniting for children and uniting against AIDS.

Volunteers from around Africa and the world translated the very simple Orphan's Lullaby for inclusion in a picture book of many languages. Translations have been collected over the past seven months, the last ones received at the end of January 2009, and more are still on the way.

At this stage 29 languages are featured in the project, they are: Wolof, Xhosa, Zulu, English, Sotho, Arabic, Lingala, French, Afrikaans, Chichewa, Hindi, Igbo, German, Mandarin Chinese, Hausa, Polish, Swazi, Siswati, Italian, Amharic, Venda, Masry, Portuguese, Tsonga, Swahili, Spanish, Greek, Malagasy, and Oromeffa.

Below is a video prepared for International Mother Language Day, using some of the images developed for the picture book, together with lines from a selection of the translations, and set to the lullaby sung in English.

Read more at <http://tinyurl.com/cyx82l>

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OPINION

Our apathy about languages fails our future global citizens

Claire Leong

I am an educator in the field of languages. This paper discusses my observations as someone who has taught in the classroom, now works as a languages education consultant and as someone who has married a man of Chinese ethnicity and whose children are actively participating in two cultures.

I believe that we have had a 'piecemeal' approach to the teaching of languages in Australia and that we are paying socially, economically and politically for our inattention and apathy towards languages education.

I am saddened at how undervalued languages are in Australia, including aboriginal languages. We simply don't hear them.

This is a big problem to address - but before we can move forward there needs to be a shared understanding of why the learning of languages is a vital component of an education that is relevant to the world our children live in.

My observation is that languages learning is not clearly understood nor valued by our teaching community and the wider community and hence there is no shared understanding or priority attached to the role of languages in a child's schooling.

Why is languages learning important?

We need to address this question first.

Principals, in conversations with me over the past four years, often articulate their vision for the students at their school. One of the most important goals they have, they tell me, is that they want their students to be global citizens.

Languages learning is the key to this citizenship.

Read entire paper at: http://wapolicyforum.org.au/files/essays/A_Peace_About_Languages.pdf

Claire Leong is Languages Consultant to the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia

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One nation, many cultures

Matthew Albert & Samah Hadid, the Age, March 18, 2009

It is time for the Australian national self-image to fit better with our national profile. A refreshed Australian identity would encompass many cultures and diverse lifestyles. Australia needs an identity that the world recognises as being global, and therefore, like the world, multicultural. The new identity will make our diversity a high-profile asset. We need an identity of a chameleon nation.

Second-generation migrants, first-generation Australians, "minority" young people (and the labels go on) like us, have been considered by conventional wisdom to be prone to identity crises. But with minorities making up the majority, maybe it's the nation's identity that is in crisis.

For us, the Australian B3 (beaches, blondes, barbecues) never truly made sense. Not for our sense of Australia anyway. The streets we live in are not like Ramsay Street or Summer Bay. Our nation is made up of different languages and of rich cultural and religious diversity. For this reason, it is perplexing that our projection of Australian identity is built around stories that still have Paul Hogan-like Australians at their centre.

Imagine an Australia where we did not project an image that most of us do not see in the mirror, but one that embraces who we are.

Our homes, in Maribyrnong and Bankstown respectively, reflect the sense of multiculturalism that is felt and driven by people in our communities.

With 23.9 per cent of our population born overseas, Australia is home to people who speak more than 300 languages. It is a microcosm of the world itself. Australia can make better use of this. Our national identity should be built around this Australian identity.

There are many initiatives aimed at embracing our cultural diversity and attempting to address cultural, racial and religious intolerance. Two days after Australia Day 2009, the Federal Government introduced the Diverse Australia program. This resulted from a review that pointed to the need for government programs to promote cultural diversity to broader audiences.

On Monday, the Human Rights Commission launched a discussion paper aimed at identifying the major issues faced by African Australians. Race Discrimination Commissioner Tom Calma noted that "even though Australians pride themselves in giving everyone 'a fair go', it would appear that many African Australians have not been fully given this chance". These are steps in the right direction.

But our national identity needs to become similarly inclusive in its terms, not least because mixing with people from different cultural and religious groups is part and parcel of our fair dinkum Australian experience.

Harmony Day this Saturday provides an opportunity to showcase the asset and the value that diversity can bring to Australia. It is a day in which we demonstrate cohesion and inclusion, without limiting such demonstrations to times when we need to respond to bigotry.

In the future, we imagine an Australia that accepts and celebrates its demographic reality, a chameleon nation that tells itself, through its national identity, that it is diverse, and proudly so.

Matthew Albert is the founder of the SAIL (Sudanese Australian Integrated Learning) Program and is completing a masters degree in international law and relations at Oxford University. Samah Hadid sits on the Council for Youth and is co-founder of the non-profit community magazine Reflections.

Read the entire article at: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/one-nation-many-cultures-20090317-911y.html?page=-1>

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CALLING ALL EARLY YEARS & PRIMARY TEACHERS OF GERMAN!

Unique professional development seminars by Beate Widlok

- Brisbane 23 May 2009
- Melbourne 26 May 2009
- Adelaide 30 May 2009

Good news from the Goethe Institut! You may well have come across Beate Widlok's name and work with the Goethe Institut in Munich through reading the magazine "Fruhes Deutsch".

You will certainly be keen to take up the opportunity to meet her in person and get first-hand information about the latest classroom materials developed by her department for early language learning at the Institut.

On 26 May in Melbourne Beate will be joined by Victorian colleagues who will contribute to a range of presentations on transition, assessment and other key issues.

Beate will also contribute to the SAGTA Conference in Adelaide on 30 May – and will previously be visiting Brisbane on 23 May.

Full details of these events will be published shortly at <http://www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/enindex.htm>.

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INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Australia losing indigenous languages

Tara Ravens, The Age, March 13, 2009

Australia is losing more indigenous languages than anywhere else in the world and it's happening at a faster rate, a researcher says.

As few as 20 of the 230 Aboriginal languages spoken 200 years ago are still alive today, says Jeanie Bell, a lecturer at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education's Centre for Australian Languages and Linguistics.

"Recent figures show that we're in a worse situation than anywhere else at the moment," she said on Friday.

"We're losing more language than anywhere else in the world at a faster rate, and the decline across the globe is pretty dramatic."

Read entire article: <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-national/australia-losing-indigenous-languages-20090313-8xr0.html>

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Linguists fear Indigenous language extinctions

ABC News, Mar 1, 2009

A linguist working to preserve threatened languages in a Northern Territory town has criticised the Territory Government for its policy of forcing Aboriginal language schools to teach in English.

Garth Agius says bilingual education is the most powerful way to stop languages from being lost.

The Katherine region, south of Darwin, is home to a rich diversity of Indigenous languages but only one, Warlpiri, is considered culturally strong and safe.

The Katherine Language Centre is working to preserve 22 of the region's 29 languages.

Mr Agius says the Northern Territory Government's uncertain policy for the future of bilingual education is damaging the centre's work in remote community schools, which involves supporting elders in sharing their language.

"It does hinder because with the new Government policy, kids have to speak English for the first four hours of the day," he said.

"When those sorts of things happen it cuts back the time that they have with the kids in schools."

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/03/01/2504357.htm?section=justin>

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A better future starts with indigenous history

Tim Goodwin, The Age, March 17, 2009

YOU know the story. Don't pretend you don't.

Indigenous Australians are behind on virtually all socio-economic indicators compared with non-indigenous Australians.

Indigenous Australians have a life expectancy 17 years lower than that for the total Australian population.

Indigenous people are three times as likely to have diabetes. Indigenous students are half as likely to complete year 12.

Indigenous babies are more than twice as likely to have low birth weight, similar to many African countries experiencing extreme poverty.

The phrases almost roll off the tongue nowadays. Not all, but most of the shock factor has gone.

That's a sad situation considering the devastating nature of the statistics. My point is not to say people no longer care but simply to highlight how much we have become desensitised to the information.

I can't distance myself from those statistics. They are about my mother and sister. They are about my grandfather, my goddaughter and godson. They are about my cousins. They are about my aunts and uncles. They were about my grandmother until she died, partly due to the diabetes that plagues our communities.

Read entire article at: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/a-better-future-starts-with-indigenous-history-20090316-8zvt.html?page=-1>

Tim Goodwin is the deputy chairman of the National Indigenous Youth Movement of Australia and a contributing author to *The Future By Us*, published by Hardie Grant.

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Canada: Importance of indigenous mother-tongue education promoted

Shaunna Grandish, 1 February 2009

A New Brunswick Native Studies professor wants Canadian governments to live up to their obligation to provide the option for First Nations youth to have school courses taught in their mother-tongue language.

Prof. Bear Nicholas said research points out students who are taught their mother-tongue language from an early age do better academically than students who are only immersed in English.

"Research is now telling us that young people who get the chance to be educated in their mother-tongue actually learn English better, and they also do better in school," said Bear Nicholas.

Bear Nicholas believes that the percentages of Aboriginal students entering and graduating from university would improve if the students were educated starting from an early age in their mother-tongue language.

Read entire article: <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Mother-tongue+language+education+promoted.-a0194818211>

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FROM HERE AND THERE

South Australia Chinese Language Boost

Hon Jane Lomax Smith MP, SA Education Minister, 17 March 2009

South Australian schools teaching Chinese will be able to tap into the expertise of the University of Adelaide's Confucius Institute through a new agreement, signed today.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith and University of Adelaide Vice Chancellor Professor James McWha today formalised the arrangement through a Memorandum of Understanding.

The Confucius Institute brings Chinese language teachers and cultural experts to Adelaide to work with schools and teachers across the Government, Independent and Catholic education sectors.

The Institute also runs courses to update Chinese language teachers on the latest information and techniques to keep students involved in their learning.

"Through this agreement, our young people will be able to continue to learn the contemporary language and culture of China," Dr Lomax-Smith says. "That knowledge will help them prepare to engage in the global society and economy in which China is a major player.

Read more at http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/mediacentre/files/links/Chinese_agreement.pdf

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Vatican website to be available in Chinese

The Age, March 17, 2009 (AAP)

Chinese speakers will soon be able to consult the Vatican's official website in their own language, the Holy See said Monday.

From Thursday, "Internet users from throughout the world will be able to navigate in Chinese to access the texts of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI," the Vatican said in a statement.

Chinese will be the first non-European language on the site, <http://www.vatican.va>, which is already available in Italian, English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Latin.

China and the Vatican have not had diplomatic ties since 1951, when the Holy See recognised Taiwan.

Reestablishing ties would be a boon for Beijing's image abroad, but the Vatican first wants all Chinese Catholics to be brought under papal authority.

Read more at <http://news.theage.com.au/breaking-news-technology/vatican-website-to-be-available-in-chinese-20090317-903n.html>

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USA: Elementary Foreign-Language Instruction on Descent:

Cutbacks Expected to Continue in Recession

Mary Ann Zehr, Newsweek 4 March 2009

The United States lost ground over the past decade in the proportion of elementary schools that offer foreign-language lessons, following a decade during which those schools had increasingly launched such programs.

And the decline is likely to continue as a number of districts consider cutting back their foreign-language programs at all levels because of the recession.

Robert Slater, the director of the National Security Education Program, which is housed in the U.S. Department of Defence, said it was troubling that elementary school foreign-language offerings are slipping nationwide, "because children learn second and third languages easier at that level."

"That's what the rest of the world does," he noted, implying that the United States will fall even further behind other nations in producing bilingual people if primary schools aren't engaged in the task.

Fewer elementary schools are teaching a foreign language than they were a decade ago. The decline of foreign-language instruction at the elementary level could make it harder for the United States to create a pool of language specialists who can speak both English and those languages deemed critical to the country's economic success or national security, such as Chinese and Arabic.

But, in fact, while fewer elementary schools overall are teaching foreign languages, Chinese and Arabic offerings at that level have increased slightly, while French and German classes have decreased over the past decade, according to preliminary results from a survey by the Washington-based Centre for Applied Linguistics, which will be published in a report in the fall. Spanish is provided in 88 percent of the elementary schools that teach a foreign language.

Overall, one in four elementary schools offered foreign-language classes in 2008.

Read entire article: <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2009/03/04/23language.h28.html?tmp=202887267>

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Two snippets from the "Curriculum Leadership Journal" March 2008:

A perspective from the UK: recent developments and future opportunities for community languages in schools

Languages Victoria Volume 12 Number 2, 2008; Pages 32-35, Claire Dugard

England is thought to be the most linguistically diverse country in Europe, with around 300 languages spoken.

Language education is currently moving towards encouraging more diversity in the languages taught, both in mainstream and community contexts.

The community languages most commonly spoken by the school-age population are Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati and Somali.

Students have a broad range of capabilities in these languages, ranging from those who are bilingual and biliterate to those whose language skills are limited to the family context.

Read more at <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=58&issueID=11737#art26429>

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Pre- and in-service professional development of teachers of community/heritage languages in the UK: insider perspectives

Language and Education Volume 22 Number 4, 2008; Pages 283-297, Jim Anderson

Community language teachers can often feel unsupported due to a lack of clarity about appropriate pedagogical methods for their language learners, limited resources and restricted opportunities for professional development.

To combat this, Goldsmiths College in London has recently introduced a Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) in community languages. Certificates in Arabic, Mandarin, Panjabi and Urdu are currently available.

Interviews with five graduates of the course now working in London schools were conducted in order to clarify the specific professional development needs of community language teachers.

Despite the differences between language communities, several common themes emerged.

Graduates generally felt that a modified second language pedagogy was more appropriate than a 'mother tongue' approach, and all emphasised the importance of making lessons enjoyable for students, particularly those who gave up their weekend time to come to classes.

Read more at <http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/default.asp?id=58&issueID=11737#art26429>

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AWARDS & PRIZES

MLTAQ: Queensland Awards for Excellence in Language Teaching

To help commemorate our 50th Anniversary in 2009, the MLTAQ will offer 50 awards to teachers who have made an outstanding contribution to Languages Education. Any member of the Association may nominate another member for one of these prestigious awards.

The awards will be presented at the 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner to be held at the Greek Club, South Brisbane, on Saturday 16th May 2009.

All members from throughout the state are encouraged to consider nominating someone for one of these awards. Download more information and application form [here](#).

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

Second Language Research Forum (SLRF) Conference:

"Diverse contributions to SLA: Integrating the parts of a greater whole"

29 October 29-1 November, 2009: Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. USA

This annual conference aims to create a forum for the presentation and discussion of research in second language acquisition from a variety of subfields including, but not limited to: theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, cognitive science, psychology, and educational science.

SLRF 2009 asks how these varied methodologies and approaches compose a single field of SLA.

We solicit papers, posters, and colloquia that address this question and that add to our understanding of SLA.

Plenary Speakers:

- Dr. Robert DeKeyser, University of Maryland
- Dr. Susan Gass, Michigan State University
- Dr. Jim Lantolf, Penn State University
- Dr. Bonnie Schwartz, University of Hawaii

SLRF 2009 offers two workshops and three colloquia (one invited and two refereed). The invited colloquium will be organized by Dr. Shawn Loewen, MSU. We invite submissions for the other two colloquia.

Please direct any questions to the SLRF 2009 organizing committee at slrf2009@msu.edu, or view the conference website: <http://sls.msu.edu/slrf09>

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REMINDERS

1-2 April - Puliima National Indigenous Languages & Information Technology Forum - Melbourne, VIC - <http://www.acra.org.au/puliima.html>

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

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

28-30 May - International Conference on Language Teacher Education - Washington DC, USA - <http://www.ncirc.org/ite2009/>

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 National Conference 2009 - Sydney NSW - <http://www.mltansw.asn.au/afmltadetails.htm>

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

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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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