

Welcome

UNESCO has proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages. This edition of *Research eLert* makes a contribution to that focus by exploring the local and international research on learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) by school-age children.

The report is also timely in that it engages with the current debate in the media regarding the relative merits of language learning in schools. While Victoria is leading the country in the number of students learning LOTE in schools, there are many issues to deal with around teacher availability, continuity in learning and the choice of languages to be taught. Australia is in a fortuitous position as an English-speaking country with a culturally and linguistically diverse population in the Asian region. We should be considering our future for LOTE in this context.

The report draws on contemporary research to illustrate the profound impact that learning a second language has on students' capacity to conceptualise their native language and culture and improve literacy and learning skills across the curriculum.

Significantly, the report discusses the importance of LOTE in the changed global context, drawing attention to the long term economic and employment benefits likely to accrue to those who learn languages other than English and the broader cultural competency this entails.

I trust that you will find this report a useful resource for generating discussion in your school on the importance of LOTE learning and its place in the mainstream curriculum.

We are keen to receive your ideas and contributions and encourage you to continue to provide feedback to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Dr Dahle Suggett
Deputy Secretary
Office for Policy, Research and Innovation

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Feature article

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

This report surveys the importance of learning Languages Other Than English (LOTE) by school-age children as identified in local and international research, and examines the relative merits of language learning in Victorian schools. It provides a succinct overview of LOTE as part of essential learning for students from a range of perspectives, beginning with a brief summary of policy developments in language teaching in Victoria and nationally. The main body of the report looks more broadly at language teaching in its contemporary context to explore the significant contributions of LOTE study to learning by students in the changed global context and recent developments in research into the principles and practices of effective LOTE teaching.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2008

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

Related research

Early childhood

Policy challenges for bilingual and immersion education in Australia: Literacy and language choices for users of Aboriginal languages, Auslan and Italian

Michèle de Courcy argues for the importance of bilingual support in early childhood education for students who already have some level of bilingual ability. She examines three disparate types of language learning and draws together similarities in the management of bilingual classrooms. In examining children whose home language is an Aboriginal language, deaf children, and children attending an Italian immersion program she contends that it is important in early immersion education to use the staircase model of bilingual education. Although the staircase model may be counterintuitive in its advocacy of more time in the home language, de Courcy explores Australian and overseas research that suggests the importance of fostering threshold competence in the first language, and promotes additive rather than subtractive bilingualism.

de Courcy, M 2005, 'Policy challenges for bilingual and immersion education in Australia: Literacy and language choices for users of Aboriginal languages, Auslan and Italian', *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, vol.8, no 2 & 3, pp.178-187.

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research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Carnival in a mainstream kindergarten classroom: A Bakhtinian analysis of second language learners' off-task behaviors

This article examines young children's second language learning through the lens of Bakhtin's 'carnival'. While conventionally activities that are 'off-task' are considered to have a negative impact on learning, DaSilva Iddings and McCafferty explore the positive possibilities that arise from children's play. They argue that the creativity and resourcefulness that young children display when thinking outside of their assigned tasks lead to 'contingent interaction' where skills from their first language are used to bridge the gap in understanding between the words and their meanings in the second. This combination of learning and play is documented in a case study of two five-year-old children in a classroom environment.

DaSilva Iddings, AC & McCafferty, SG 2007, 'Carnival in a mainstream kindergarten classroom: A Bakhtinian analysis of second language learners' off task behaviors, *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 91, no. 1, pp. 3–44.

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Schools (primary and secondary)

Primary modern foreign languages: An overview of recent research, key issues and challenges for educational policy and practice

The age that children start learning a foreign language in a school environment has been the subject of some debate. This article focuses on primary schools in England and the proposal to provide all children of primary school age an opportunity to begin foreign language study. The authors consider the value and efficacy of early foreign language learning and how it can be translated into success in later school years. They also consider the importance of facilitating transition between primary and secondary schools, and how to maintain student motivation in learning a foreign language.

Hunt, M, Barnes, A, Powell, B, Lindsay, G & Muijs, D 2005, 'Primary modern foreign languages: an overview of recent research, key issues and challenges for educational policy and practice', *Research Papers in Education*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 371–90.

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Teaching languages in the primary school: Examples from current practice

This publication is designed to help primary language teachers plan sustainable languages programs and put them into practice. The theoretical underpinnings of the recommendations are the principles and pedagogies of intercultural language learning, found to feature in successful teaching and learning practices across the curriculum. The publication is organised around three key themes—curriculum; learners and languages; and organisation and support—and provides practical examples of how to implement these concepts in the classroom environment. It also emphasises the importance of an inclusive model of language learning which includes teachers, students, parents and community groups.

Browett, J & Spencer, A 2006, *Teaching languages in the primary school: Examples of current practice*, Curriculum Corporation, Carlton South, <<http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/pdf/teachinglanguages.pdf>>.

See also: Asia Education Foundation 2006, *Teaching languages in the primary school: Examples of current practice: A Train-the-Trainer professional learning program*, Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra, <http://www.asiaeducation.edu.au/pdf/teachinglanguages_primary.pdf>.

Languages Other Than English in government schools 2006

This extensive report is commissioned annually by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and incorporates data collected from a web-based LOTE survey undertaken between August and October 2006. The study covers various LOTE providers in Victoria including: government schools; the Victorian School of Languages; and community language schools. It examines the statewide trend in both the decline of schools who provide language teaching and students who are studying languages. It also examines the increase in the teaching of language awareness programs in the primary years. This approach focuses more on the cultural aspect of learning another language rather than just teaching students to communicate in the language.

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development 2007, *Languages other than English in government schools 2006*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne.

Previous years' *Languages other than English in government schools* reports are available at <<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/lem/lotelotedata.htm>>.

For further information contact the Office for Policy, Research and Innovation at: research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Attitudes towards the study of languages in Australian Schools: The National Statement and Plan—making a difference or another decade of indifference?

This report was commissioned by the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council as a response to MCEETYA's *National statement for languages education in Australian schools*, and the accompanying *National plan for languages education in Australian schools 2005-2008*. It brings together attitudes to LOTE learning of six key stakeholder groups: students, parents, language teachers, principals, language advisors and tertiary language teachers. The report also challenges the efficacy of MCEETYA's Plan, and echoes the cry by the Group of 8 Universities that languages in Australian schools are in 'crisis'.

Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council 2007, *Attitudes towards the study of languages in Australian schools: The National Statement and Plan – making a difference or another decade of indifference*, <<http://www.languageseducation.com/attitudes.pdf>>.

National statement for languages education in Australian schools, <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/resources/languageeducation_file.pdf>.

Scaffolding and bilingual shared reading experiences: Promoting primary school students' learning and development

Three children attempting to read a book in a foreign language: a constructive pedagogical tool? This article examines how middle primary students can construct, apply and appropriate knowledge through the experience of bilingual shared reading. The metaphor of scaffolding was originally developed to describe adults supporting children's problem solving activities through

graduated assistance. However, in these three case studies, children with different language skills support each other to develop scaffolding in foreign languages with minimal interaction with a teacher or adult. Using Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory of cognition this article examines the value of structured and naturally occurring scaffolding when it is embedded and renewed by dialogue, contexts and partnerships.

Cumming-Potvin, W, Renshaw, P & van Kraayenoord, CE 2003, 'Scaffolding and bilingual shared reading experiences: Promoting primary school students' learning and development', *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 54–68.

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What do schools really want in a language teacher?

What do schools really want in a language teacher? Ruth West undertakes an analysis of school hiring practices in New South Wales, collecting her data from predominantly non-government schools. West implemented a two-part process in her study: firstly analysing newspaper advertisements for language teachers, and then consulting the primary decision makers for those schools about their hiring practices. She rates which professional and personal attributes are most attractive to employers and analyses whether the specialised nature of foreign language teaching leads to markedly different expectations of LOTE teachers in comparison to other disciplines.

West, R 2006, 'What do schools really want in a language teacher?', *Teacher* (April 2006), pp. 38–44.

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research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Learning a second language: Why bother?

This article outlines some facts and figures about the different expectations of LOTE learning in Australia on a state-by-state basis. While there is significant variation between the states within Australia, overall Australian levels of second language learning are very low when compared to international standards. The article makes a case for greater importance to be placed in LOTE learning within Australian schools, arguing that there is significant evidence that second language learning contributes to enhanced communication and literacy skills in English, as well as having social and cultural benefits. This is particularly important to students completing their schooling as they transition into an increasingly globalised workplace.

Independent Schools Queensland 2007, 'Learning a second language: Why bother?', *Independent Schools Queensland Briefings*, vol.11, no. 7, pp. 1–3.

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research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Further reading:

Clyne, M, Pauwels, A & Sussex, R 2007, 'The state of languages education in Australia: A national tragedy and an international embarrassment', *Curriculum Leadership*, vol. 5, issue 19,
<http://cmslive.curriculum.edu.au/leader/the_state_of_languages_education_in_australia,19754.html>.

See also: <<http://www.languageseducation.com/clyneetal070328.pdf>>.

Application of comparative grammar in second language teaching

There has long been debate over the formal teaching of grammar in English classrooms, which has spilled over into LOTE classrooms and teaching methods. Dr Yavar Dehghani contends that while young children are able to learn languages via immersion methods, older learners are better served by learning language tools such as grammar. Dr Dehghani, in this conference paper, makes the analogy between learning grammar versus learning complete sentences, and the proverb of teaching someone to fish, rather than just giving them the fish. By teaching grammar of a language it empowers the learner to construct their own sentences rather than being confined to set sentences they have learnt in class. Dr Dehghani advocates for the teaching of 'comparative grammar' which makes the learner aware of similarities and differences in native and target languages and includes a case study in using English grammar as a tool to unlock Persian grammar, and thus the Persian language.

Dehghani, Y 2006, 'Application of comparative grammar in second language teaching', Paper presented at the *Australian Association for Research in Education Annual Conference 2006*, Australian Association for Research in Education, <<http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/deh06184.pdf>>.

Language choices and pedagogic functions in the foreign language classroom: A cross-linguistic functional analysis of teacher talk

Should language teachers use learners' first language as the language of instruction while teaching a second language? This article examines different ways that native-speaker teachers of languages balance native and target languages in New Zealand secondary school classrooms. Sun Hee Ok Kim and Catherine Elder work within a framework which considers that for students to have an 'authentic' communication experience it is preferable to use the target language as much as possible, and their case study follows seven teachers and charts their use of the target language in the classroom. This article reports the varying degrees of success that the different teachers had in using the target language to explain grammatical structures and maintain classroom discipline.

Kim, SHO & Elder, C 2005, 'Language choices and pedagogic functions in the foreign language classroom: A cross-linguistic functional analysis of teacher talk', *Language Teaching Research*, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 355-380.

For further information contact the Office for Policy, Research and Innovation at: research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Strategies for language learning and for language use: Revising the theoretical framework

This article examines current trends in learner strategy research. This research has attempted to explore and document strategies that learners of a second language use when either learning or using a second language. Ernesto Macaro investigates claims that strategy research lacks theoretical rigour, and proposes suggestions for how the concept of learning strategies can best be understood, and how this closer understanding can contribute to further research in the field. However, while he is not interested in offering an all-encompassing definition of a strategy, he is aware that in leaving the term open to interpretation it is also left open to criticism of strategy proliferation.

Macaro, E 2006, 'Strategies for language learning and for language use: Revising the theoretical framework', *The Modern Language Journal*, vol. 90, no. 3, pp. 320–337.

For further information contact the Office for Policy, Research and Innovation at:
research@edumail.vic.gov.au

Upcoming events

Below is a list of upcoming conferences which may be of interest. For a comprehensive list of conferences, workshops and events, visit the Education Network Australia site at:

<http://archive.edna.edu.au/edna/go/pid/225>

The University of Sydney: Body image: Eating disorders, self esteem and weight issues in primary and secondary schools

7 March 2008

Sydney NSW

Teachers in both primary and secondary schools are required to address issues of health, food, nutrition, growth, development and body image. This one day conference provides updated content about these areas of the curriculum as well as new research findings and classroom strategies for addressing these issues. Teachers can take the knowledge and ways of using the teaching resources back to their classrooms and directly apply what they have learned.

<http://www.cedd.org.au/>

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) 2008 Annual Conference: 'Reinventing schools: courageous leadership for positive change'

15-17 March 2008

New Orleans, United States

The 2008 ASCD Annual Conference and Exhibit Show has the theme 'reinventing schools: courageous leadership for positive change'. Educational leaders will explore topics including: what it takes to create better schools; how to improve programs for teaching and learning; which education approaches are most likely to work; how to build stronger learning communities; which practices ensure that all students are learning; how to get results and what to question about traditional practices.

<http://www.ascd.org/annualconference>

Effective Early Learning Practices: Research, Policy and Practice Conference

16-19 March 2008

Banff, Alberta, Canada

Organised by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, this three-day conference will review effective early learning programs on: language and literacy, numeracy and social learning.

<http://www.banffbehavsci.ubc.ca>

Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference

3-4 April 2008

Adelaide, South Australia

The 11th Annual Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Conference will be held on 3 and 4 April 2008. The traditional pre-conference workshops will be included in the new two day program format. The conference theme is VET in context.

http://www.avetra.org.au/annual_conference/index-old.shtml

Australian College of Educators National Conference 2008: 'Imagination Inspiration Innovation'

13-15 April 2008

Hobart, Tasmania

The aim of this conference is to focus on, and promote, the need for curricula at all levels of education to provide opportunities for the development of imagination and inspiration which leads to innovation.

http://events.conventionwise.com.au/...p?id=212&pageid=_23V0MSA0S

Inclusive learning technologies conference 2008

12-15 May 2008

Surfers Paradise, Qld

This conference (hosted by Spectronics) focuses specifically on 'inclusive learning technologies' - those technologies designed to support people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. It includes sessions looking at these technologies in the following three different interest streams: Struggling Students, People with Complex Communication Needs, and People with Disabilities.

<http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/conference/2008/>

National Disability Services and Families Australia: Every Child Matters: National conference on children and young people with disability and their families

14-15 May 2008

Melbourne, Vic

The aim of this inaugural conference is to identify issues, share solutions and celebrate successes. Additionally, discussion will focus on enabling services to better respond to children's and families' needs by focusing on family wellbeing, all-inclusive communities, policy, practice and priorities, and the voice of children, young people and families.

<http://www.nds.org.au/conferences/CYF2008/home.htm>

Kindergarten Parents Victoria: Early Childhood Education Conference 2008 – Call for presentations

30-31 May 2008

Melbourne, Vic

The conference theme for 2008 is Together we grow - embracing the challenge, with two sub themes: embracing change, and embracing community. This conference brings together early childhood educators, early years professionals and staff, volunteer committees, employers and parents.

For further information download the [Conference presentation proposal form \(PDF 204KB\)](#) or visit <http://www.togetherwegrow.com.au/>.

Education Week – Victoria

18-24 May

<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/edweek/>

Child and Youth Research in the 21st Century: A Critical Appraisal

28-29 May 2008

European University Cyprus, Nicosia, Cyprus

First international conference organised by the International Childhood and Youth Research Network.

One of the main aims of the conference is to critically explore the intersection between research, policy, and practice by facilitating a dialogue between the different perspectives. The conference envisions a productive, inter-disciplinary dialogue among the various stakeholders who are, in different ways, implicated in the lives and welfare of children and youth.

<http://www.icyrnet.net/index.php?page=conferences&id=137&lang=en>

Contributions & feedback

- Do you have or know of a research paper that you think would be worth considering for inclusion in *Research eLert*?
- Are you currently undertaking education research that you would like to share with our readers?
- Is there a particular topic or theme you would like *Research eLert* to cover?
- Do you have information on new publications, upcoming events or interesting websites that would be of interest to education researchers and practitioners?


- Would you like to provide feedback – including suggestions to improve *Research eLert*?

If you answered yes to any of the above – then we'd love to hear from you. Please forward your information, suggestions or comments to: <research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Reflections & action

Below are some questions to assist in reflective practice and to explore future actions.

- Which language learning research papers would be worth tabling for professional reading in my workplace? How will I facilitate this?
- What are we currently doing that supports current research on language learning? Do we have strategies in place that would be worth sharing via the Research eLert?
- What new knowledge have I gained in the area of language learning? How can this learning be used to inform and support school/organisational transformation?
- What research information would I like to share with others? How will I do this?



The poster for the 2008 International Year of Languages features the year '2008' in large white numerals on a purple background. The numbers are filled with various words in different colors and fonts. Above the numbers, the text 'Languages matter!' is written in multiple languages: English, Spanish ('¡Querid idiomas!'), Arabic ('لغات بشان!'), Spanish ('¡Los idiomas sí que cuentan!'), French ('Les langues, ça compte!'), and Chinese ('语言至天重要!'). At the bottom left is the UNESCO logo, and at the bottom right is the Chinese text '2008年国际母语年'.

2008, International Year of Languages

Languages matter!

On the 16 May 2007, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2008 the International Year of Languages in effort to promote unity in diversity and global understanding. The text affirms that 2008 will serve to promote unity through linguistic and cultural diversity. As language issues are central to UNESCO's mandate, UNESCO has been named the lead agency for this event. For further information, please see:

- [Press Release, 16 May 2007](#)
- [UNESCO, International Year of Languages website](#)

Next edition

The next edition of *Research eLert* will feature a report entitled *Numeracy Learning and Teaching in Victorian Schools* which reviews Australian and international research to identify key features of effective numeracy education. This report complements the publication *Literacy Teaching and Learning in Victorian Schools* featured in Issue 9 of the *Research eLert* in August 2006.

We are keen to include information on how schools and other learning organisations are using research to inform and guide their practice and would like to include some of this work in the *Research eLert*. If you are interested, please contact the Research Branch at:

<research@edumail.vic.gov.au>.

Research eLert *extra*

The *Extra* is part of the Office for Policy, Research and Innovation's knowledge sharing initiative. The *Extra* provides information on the Department's research forums and keeps you up-to-date with the latest news about education research. The next issue of *Extra* will provide information on the research summaries database with links to a selection of a few recently prepared research summaries. The research summaries cover a broad range of educational themes and topics, which are grouped under four main categories and 12 subcategories. Previous issues of the *Extra* are available at:

<<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/research/researchpublications.htm#H2N4001E4>>.

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