

# Australian LOTE

**Achieving Broad and Deep Competence in  
Languages at School**

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Thank you to parents, staff and students of  
Treetops Montessori School,  
The Foothills School,  
Perth Montessori School,  
Riverlands School,  
Carrum P.S.,  
Edith Vale P.S.,  
Clayton North P.S.  
Meringandan S.S.,  
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Toowoomba SHS,  
Nymboida P.S.  
Candelo P.S.  
and other Australian schools  
for their pioneering work  
developing the effective LOTE programs  
which lead to the development of this strategy.





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## Introduction to the Crisis in Languages Education

In June 2007, Group of Eight Deans of Arts (Go8) at major Australian universities held a summit to discuss the current crisis in Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Education in this country.

Their report *“Languages in Crisis: A Rescue Plan for Australia”* expressed urgent concern for:

- ▶ the poor reputation of LOTE education in Australia,
- ▶ the low rate of student participation in LOTE education at all levels,
- ▶ the impact of this on both individuals and the prosperity of the nation,
- ▶ the shortage of teachers to remedy the situation,
- ▶ the wasted opportunity for an early start in languages,
- ▶ difficulties for the tertiary sector in providing good LOTE programs for a sparse participant base,
- ▶ reasons why English is not enough,
- ▶ risks of monolingualism to security and Australia’s economy.<sup>1</sup>

The Go8 saw a need for a “nationally consistent approach” which ensures that “students have continuity in learning a particular language” and staged introduction of compulsory LOTE programs from primary to year 10. Incentives, increased funding and publicity were recommended and yet the Go8 still called for **“creative solutions”** with the aim of **“a significant majority of Australians having a second language by 2020.”**<sup>2</sup>

The strategy presented here is such a solution, to the question:

*“How can the Australian Government provide ethical, effective, equitable, affordable and appropriate LOTE education for all Australian school students?”*

The Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) takes the question very seriously, stating:

*“Ministers of Education are committed to the vision of quality languages education for all students, in all schools, in all parts of the country.<sup>3</sup>”*

MCEETYA's National Statement and Plan on Languages, recognised room for improvement in many aspects of LOTE education, including:

- ▶ participation rate,
- ▶ language choice,
- ▶ need for appropriately trained and qualified teachers,
- ▶ continuity in language education,
- ▶ time allocation,
- ▶ time-tabling practices,
- ▶ resourcing,
- ▶ whole school commitment,
- ▶ public perception, and
- ▶ inclusiveness.<sup>4</sup>

Dissatisfaction with LOTE provision is not new, as the Australian Language and Literacy Council noted in 1996:

*“The key finding of the council’s investigation is that our education systems are consistently failing to deliver any worthwhile proficiency in languages.<sup>5</sup>”*

Nor is it uniquely Australian, as reflected in the Final Report of the Nuffield Project in the U.K.:

*“[...] by any reliable measure, we are doing badly. We talk about communication but don’t always communicate. There is enthusiasm for languages but it is patchy. Educational provision is fragmented, achievement poorly measured, continuity not very evident.<sup>6</sup>”*

Although Australia spends up to \$50 million a year on LOTE education<sup>7</sup>, the Executive Summary of the LOTE Report, 2002, commissioned by the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training stated that:

*“Given the questions and concerns that have been raised in relation to LOTE, it is appropriate to ask whether the current model of provision can ever produce better results in terms of language learning, regardless of the amount of funding injected into it.<sup>8</sup>”*

Development of strong, lasting, general and productive commitment to a strategy for language education in Australia must start at the top.

*“We believe that MCEETYA, through its taskforces, must ultimately accept responsibility for the strategic development of Languages education in Australia.<sup>9</sup>”*

The English, like us, have been trying but failing to produce bilingual children through their normal school programmes for a very long time. The Nuffield Report blames “a lack of joined up thinking.”<sup>10</sup> The challenge for Australia is to “join up” our own thinking, both well and soon.

*“We believe there is a need in the longer term for a new policy to provide a broader framework which encompasses both language and cultural studies, and that has intercultural awareness and engagement as the underpinning rationale.<sup>11</sup>”*

We can do this by recognizing that most of the existing problems with LOTE are logistical and derive from the irregular way LOTE education is managed in our schools. The remaining problems are to do with political pressure to offer programmes too ambitious for the available resources.

## Providing the Five Missing Ingredients

Reviewing the reasons why Australian and overseas LOTE programs are failing, or why they have been dropped<sup>12</sup>, five overlapping themes emerge:



The following section looks at how we can ensure consistent provision of each of these essential ingredients for success.

a. **Teachers:** Sufficient, Skilled, Empathetic and Supported

Normal primary school practice is to provide general education through generalist teachers, which is both logistically efficient and developmentally appropriate for young children.

Nevertheless, LOTE (more than any subject except Music) is commonly taught by a visiting specialist, contributing to a worldwide “chronic shortage of teachers despite measures to encourage recruitment <sup>13</sup>” which has grievous implications for the quality, quantity, timing and equitable provision of language education.

In Australia, teacher supply problems were cited as the reason for program failure in 50% of the cases reported in the LOTE Report.<sup>14</sup>

The classroom teacher is a very powerful role-model for children. S/he teaches almost everything but doesn't know any other languages. What does that say about LOTE?

In contrast, when a specialist LOTE teacher comes to the school representing a different culture and language, that culture is clearly a part of her/his identity in a way that it will never be for the mainstream child. What does that say about LOTE?

It is time to ask ourselves:

*Is there any reason to propose teaching our primary school children any subject which is either too difficult or too unimportant for their teachers to master?*

It is true that most current generalist teachers do not yet have the language skills to teach a LOTE, but they are able to learn and they already have unparalleled advantages and expertise in teaching their own classes.

The English note that:

*“Transforming language competence in this country means first of all transforming language learning in schools — we depend on embedding language learning in primary schools to make our strategy work.”<sup>15</sup>*

Yet still conclude:

*“The minister responsible for the recruitment of teachers should implement a series of radical short-term measures to attract more (specialist) language teachers.”<sup>16</sup>*

In our own country we recognise that proficient language teachers are proficient both in language and in the specific teaching role they fulfil and neither one nor the other is enough:

*“Focusing on linguistic knowledge appears to neglect the need for teachers to be able to impart that knowledge to students and trivialises the teaching knowledge needed to do so.”<sup>17</sup>*

The same author continues:

*"A more holistic understanding conceptualises language teacher proficiency in terms of multiple knowledges, in other words, the qualities, skills and knowledges needed for teachers to teach languages effectively.*

*These knowledges include not only linguistic knowledge, but also a sound understanding of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic knowledge and understanding of appropriate pedagogy including the ability to represent complex linguistic concepts, the flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and the contingencies of the second/foreign language classroom and the capacity for reflection and self-evaluation.<sup>18</sup>"*

Probably few existing teachers, specialist or generalist, have a comprehensive grasp of all of these types of knowledge but the generalists are in place and accessible for pre-service and in-service training. We don't have to find them or provide them with general education and experience, before starting training and resource development for them.

*"Languages should take their proper place... To do this we must recognize the limitations of the current system and build the capacity to deliver a more flexible, responsive system of learning which embeds learning in primary schools and provides provision tailored to the needs of individuals of all ages, throughout their lives.<sup>19</sup>"*

Maybe we can take courage from the Nuffield Report which declares that:

*"Research findings tend to confirm public perceptions: the more radical the scheme, the more successful the outcome.<sup>20</sup>"*

So, we propose that the best person to teach a young child a new language is that child's own usual teacher because s/he:

- ▶ knows the child's abilities and is least likely to condescend or confuse the child,
- ▶ knows the child's maturity and motivations,
- ▶ has effective techniques for managing the class,
- ▶ is appropriately skilled, qualified and experienced,
- ▶ is with the child all day and can provide extra time or a new task when needed,
- ▶ has the support of colleagues, administration and parents,
- ▶ has control over the classroom environment and timetable,
- ▶ has access to professional learning opportunities,
- ▶ can integrate language use into classroom life and other subjects,
- ▶ has the trust and respect of the child.

*One great strength of the strategy of providing LOTE and LOTE methodology to generalist teachers is that there is not, in general, a shortage of primary school teachers.*

In-service training can be very easily targeted and organised and pre-service courses are relatively easy to add; especially when compared with the difficulty of either training native language speakers to be effective primary teachers, or persuading Australian students to gain both a national language plus teaching qualifications, and then supplying the graduates to the schools where they are needed, in appropriate time-slots, at primary teachers' salaries.

Some languages require a prohibitive investment of time to acquire, while others do not:

*Motivated adults need on average over 3000 hours to gain basic competence in Japanese, 700 hours for French or German, and only 300 hours for Esperanto.<sup>21</sup>*

Primary use of Esperanto, a purpose-built international language, makes the learning load as light as possible for generalist teachers and students.

There is no need for complete language mastery before useful teaching can begin. A head-start of a few hours in the first year of implementation becomes over a year in the second and more in the third. Excellent resource design can enable efficient, low-stress, and productive transition through the "Beginners Together" stage and into comfortable LOTE integration.

We have all we need to solve the problems of teacher supply and time by this strategy: Suppliers such as the Curriculum Corporation are well able to produce appropriate support materials, our Universities are expert in producing and delivering effective courses and State Education Departments and the Unions have the experience to negotiate such provisions as release time, to support generalist teachers in developing new skills to fill this role.

## **b. Time: Sufficient, Early and Optimally Distributed**

Time was identified as a cause for program failure in about 30% of cases reviewed in the LOTE report. There are several aspects of time which are critical to LOTE learning success:

- ▶ total time allowance
- ▶ starting time,
- ▶ lesson frequency,
- ▶ practice frequency,
- ▶ lesson duration,
- ▶ disruption or continuity of the program,
- ▶ time on task,
- ▶ program duration,
- ▶ time flexibility to allow for individual needs.



*Control of most time factors is constrained by dependence on specialists. Well-prepared generalist teachers can optimize these variables for the age, circumstances and character of their particular classes.*

#### **i. Total Time Allowance**

Currently, as many as a third of all students learn no LOTE instruction at all, a few receive generous allowances, and most have 45–60 minutes a week<sup>22</sup>.

The Nuffield Report proposed:

*"[...] the government should declare a ten-year target to provide an entitlement for all pupils to learn a new language from age 7, based on 10% of curriculum time, integrated with other subjects or taught separately."<sup>23</sup>*

10% of instructional time is about 150 minutes a week or, more usefully, 30 minutes a day.

It would seem to be a moderate and realistic goal, therefore, to provide 30 minutes per school day for every primary school child in Australia, and improved choice of languages for secondary students.

Even 15 minutes a day would be an improvement for many schools, and may be a useful interim target.

Our National Statement declares that:

*"By centring attention on intercultural understanding and engagement as the main focus, the question of "which LOTE" becomes largely irrelevant at the National Level."<sup>24</sup>*

However, as we have seen, if actual language acquisition is the goal, it matters a great deal which LOTE we teach and the opportunity costs, in both money and time, vary too much between languages for the differences to be glossed over.

In spite of advantages in some aspects of their learning capacity, children learn languages much more slowly than adults<sup>25</sup>. As our primary children have about 300–600 hours to learn, we can offer them very different fractions of a language, depending on which we choose.

Also, it must be recognised that language choice does matter to the learner, if serious life-long, cumulative learning is envisaged. Different languages have differing degrees of transferability and difficulty, and offer access to different cultures with different strengths and personal significance.

The learner will be making a very significant investment in learning and maintaining a second language and so has a right to make an informed choice on well-prepared foundations in early secondary school.

## ii. Starting Time

Expert opinion says:

- ▶ *“An **early start** makes sense in both educational and social terms. On the educational front, learning a new language can inform, enrich and draw upon the broader development of communication skills and literacy, as well as giving young learners a flying start in languages at a very receptive age. In social terms, it is vital that positive attitudes to language diversity are established early in a child’s education, so that learning and using other languages are seen as a normal feature of life.”<sup>26</sup>*
- ▶ *“A clear national action programme is now needed to introduce the learning of other languages into primary school education. For this to become generalised in UK schools, a range of imaginative short and longer term measures will be necessary to overcome the organisational and resource issues.”<sup>27</sup>*
- ▶ *“There is a widespread public perception, backed by research, that learning another language **needs to start earlier** if the next generation is to achieve higher standards. An early start to language learning also enhances literacy, citizenship and intercultural tolerance.”<sup>28</sup>*
- ▶ *“The government should declare a firm commitment to early language learning for all children and invest in the long-term policies necessary for pupils to learn a new language **from age 7**.”<sup>29</sup>*
- ▶ *“The results of the survey of more than 3000 parents, students, principals and teachers also revealed strong support for starting language education in **early** primary school.”<sup>30</sup>*
- ▶ *“Children taught **from age 5** clearly make more progress than those who start later.”<sup>31</sup>*

*Our literature search found substantial consensus in the call for an early start. It would seem that the rarity of early LOTE programmes is, therefore, not deliberate, but due to change barriers such as curriculum crowding, cost and/or logistical problems.*

## iii. Other Time Issues

- ▶ Weekly LOTE lessons are usual in primary schools. Expert opinion recommends greater **frequency** but specialist timetables constrain school choices.<sup>32</sup>

Especially in many rural and disadvantaged areas, schools depend on the supply of appropriately qualified specialist language teachers, who cannot be expected to travel for 15 minute time-slots. Empowering generalist primary teachers to take responsibility for LOTE in their classrooms provides more flexibility to provide the frequent short lessons which are most effective for young language learners.<sup>33</sup>

- ▶ Unless the classroom teacher can use the target language, **practice** opportunities between lessons are also restricted or non-existent. Unsurprisingly, the Nuffield Report noted that:

*“teaching children the whole or a major part of the curriculum through the medium of the target language achieves more than teaching the language for a few short lessons per week”*

Some Australian schools already offer such “language immersion” experiences but realistically this can only be made available for all of Australian students by systemic education of generalist teachers, in a language not unduly onerous to them.

- ▶ Because the course often depends on the attendance of a specialist, lessons are not easily rescheduled in the case of absence, sport days, excursions and the like. Consequently, a 40-week year does not often allow completion of a 40-hour course. 2-or-3 week **gaps** between lessons are also a significant challenge to memory, especially for young children.
- ▶ Many factors influence the **time on task** which occurs within the official time allowance. These include: accommodations for aptitude variation, whether the teacher needs to re-establish authority and expectations, whether the class must relocate to a different room and whether the “how I scraped my knee” story needs to be repeated for a new audience. A class taught by the usual teacher in the usual place achieves more in a given time.
- ▶ It is good pedagogy to **vary time allowance for individual needs**, thus allowing an experience of success for slower workers. However, this can be too difficult to do when a) the children are not well known to the teacher, and b) when there is limited time before the teacher must leave.

*Language education can start at the right time, in optimally-sized blocks integrated into the curriculum. The key is to use the teachers who know the students and are empowered to meet their needs.*

### c. **Continuity:** a Coherent K-12 Plan

Related to the issue of time allocation to LOTE learning is the matter of duration and continuity of the course.

The English note:

*“Language learning initiatives in the primary sector are patchy and uncoordinated.”<sup>34</sup>*

While the Australian National Statement observes that:

*“Learning languages is a cumulative process. The development of deep understanding and language proficiency requires extensive engagement (with the same language) over a prolonged period of time.”<sup>35</sup>*

Challenges to continuity of primary LOTE programmes may be either logistical or ideological:

- ▶ **Logistical challenges** include program disruptions due to staff changes, government funding changes or student movement between schools or classes, and (on a smaller scale) sport days, public holidays, and sick days, which have a bigger impact than on most other subjects because the teacher is usually only available one day a week.
- ▶ **Ideological challenges** include changes in language choice due to a belief that a different language would match the background of more students, access a more economically important language, be easier to learn, or would simply broaden the students’ cultural experience by providing a change of focus.

*DEST has declared that: “the choice must not be between cultural studies and communication skills.”<sup>36</sup>*

Unfortunately, it has been hard to see how it could be otherwise, when cultural studies would be best served by frequent changes of the language being studied, to gain a wide cultural focus, but communication skills require a continuity of focus on one language and therefore, usually, one culture.

While their teachers often console themselves with the thought that the children learn about a more balanced variety of cultures when they have to start over with yet another new language, no-one doubts that their chances of ever becoming bilingual are badly damaged.

Once primary schooling is over, here as in the United Kingdom:

*“Continuity into secondary schools is a key problem: One of the main obstacles to success, identified by the national experiment in the 1960s and largely unresolved since, has been how to coordinate transition from the primary to the secondary school. Ensuring continuity of learning has proved elusive, and has often given rise to frustration and disillusionment for both teachers and learners. The situation has become even more complex since the introduction of parental choice of secondary school. Secondary schools often receive pupils from a greatly increased number of primary schools, making it more difficult to ensure continuity, especially when a proportion of pupils have already started a language.”<sup>37</sup>*

A British solution is:

*“Reward cooperation between schools: Continuity into secondary education is a cornerstone of success, and diversity should not be allowed to dissolve into confusion. The government should offer financial incentives to encourage primary and secondary schools to form groups in order to agree a common pattern of provision for early language.”<sup>38</sup>*

The price of this approach is that language choice for every child is decided by external agencies for the child's entire schooling. Surely a citizen should be allowed to choose **not** to invest 12 years in study of language X!

The proposed Australian solution is to equip our Primary teachers to deliver excellent intercultural education through and alongside user-friendly international Esperanto, in most primary schools.

This allows all primary children a real likelihood of both becoming bilingual, and gaining a useful over-view of all world cultures, so preparing for broader language choices in secondary schools. This solves the continuity problem whilst broadening (rather than limiting) free choice and enthusiasm at the teenage boundary, when it is most valuable.

*By thinking outside the square of National languages, our young children can gain a working LOTE whilst exploring their place amongst the diverse and multifaceted cultures of the world.*

#### d. Focus on the Learner

Good pedagogy demands close consideration of the needs and characteristics of the learners, both as a group and as individuals. Teaching professionals, and parents, are often unsure whether any particular language is the best use of time for particular learners or classes.

Perhaps in response to such concerns, LOTE professionals and academics increasingly draw attention to more deep, general and, arguably, more important advantages of LOTE education than the simple acquisition of a smattering of language X.

If resources are invested in LOTE education for all children because doing so offers them particular benefits, then it is legitimate to compare the potential of different language choices to deliver those benefits.

These include:

- ▶ empathy<sup>39</sup>,
- ▶ cognition<sup>40</sup>,
- ▶ perspective<sup>41</sup>,
- ▶ literacy<sup>42</sup>,
- ▶ self-confidence<sup>43</sup>, and
- ▶ capacity to learn other languages<sup>44</sup>.

#### i. Empathy

Because Esperanto is relatively straightforward, learners will have time to experience real use of their second language and will therefore be able to empathise with members of the community who must exert effort to use a second or third language in daily life.

In addition, learning the uncomplicated (though novel) grammar, spelling and pronunciation of Esperanto allows children to appreciate the complexity of English, building empathy for both non-native English speakers, and those who struggle with English as a first language.

The Nuffield Inquiry Report found that, in Britain:

*“Many schools have few or no links with schools in other countries, despite the increasing ease of international communication and the important motivational effect of linking language learning to real-life communication.”<sup>45</sup>*

It seems doubtful that language teachers are unaware of this motivational effect but :

- ▶ Most languages require considerable learning time before students are able to use the language for communication and that might explain the delay. Esperanto is ready for use in a fraction of the time.
- ▶ Centralized support to help forge appropriate links with schools in other countries would be easier to provide under the more uniform arrangements of the Primary Esperanto Strategy.
- ▶ As an extra advantage, pen-friend and e-mail relationships in Esperanto engage both parties in the same language learning experience on an equal basis, whatever the differences in their cultures and circumstances. This offers a solid contribution towards a harmonious multicultural Australia.

## ii. Cognition

Literacy skills, problem solving skills and thinking skills are developed in learning any language.

However, students learning Esperanto spend more time practising higher order thinking skills such as application of understandings to creative tasks, synthesis and analysis of texts and evaluation processes. This is because less time is needed for recognition and recall in Esperanto, because it lacks the idiosyncratic variations in spelling, grammar and pronunciation found in most national languages.

Wisdom has been defined as perceptiveness to patterns.<sup>46</sup> Pattern use in Esperanto is extensive and consistent, which makes pattern recognition intrinsically rewarding and a source of competence. The effect of six or seven years of this experience at an impressionable time invites further investigation.

## iii. Perspective

Stephen Jones, former Head of International Relations at the British Department for Education and Employment wrote:

*“In too few schools is there a firm internationalist ethos in which all subject areas are encouraged to look outwards to the wider world. All of these weaknesses can be traced to a lack of strong policy at national level.”<sup>47</sup>*

Our new Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, has shown great interest in developing just such a firm internationalist ethos<sup>48</sup> and adoption of the Primary Esperanto Strategy could well be an example of strong national policy to achieve this end.

The Primary Esperanto Strategy is a tool to put languages and cultures in perspective which will result in students:

- ▶ Understanding that there are real equivalent alternatives to English. Not just different words for fruits and animals but different ways to make sentences, different sounds to make words and different concepts with names.
- ▶ Knowing how languages relate to cultures, how cultures relate to countries, how countries relate to continents, and how geography and history have influenced them all.
- ▶ Appreciating the fact that everyone learns a first language more or less by chance, but that subsequent language acquisition is a choice and a privilege.

This provides an excellent basis for more choice and more detailed study of particular languages and cultures later.

The LOTE report gives some emphasis to this function of LOTE education:

*“There is now little support for the study of LOTE for its own sake, or for the purely economic rationale or instrumental outcomes which are assumed to have largely driven NALSAS. Rather, there is an emerging consensus that the key rationale for learning a language other than English is to acquire and develop knowledge and skills for intercultural engagement. This consensus incorporates the belief that learning for the fullest possible economic, cultural and social participation should encourage people to have a greater understanding of and engagement with the wider global community and the many societies and cultures which constitute it.”<sup>49</sup>*

It is not hard to see how the Primary Esperanto Strategy and associated Intercultural/ Interlinguistic studies, can better contribute to understanding the “many societies and cultures” of the world than can a focus on any individual national language.

#### **iv. Literacy**

There is widespread recognition that LOTE has much to contribute to English Literacy.<sup>50</sup>

The Nuffield Report recommends:

*“An emphasis on transferable language learning skills and solid competence in grammatical structures, which assist the process of learning new languages or refreshing existing skills at short notice”<sup>51</sup>*

Esperanto is particularly useful for developing such “solid competence” in grammar which is applicable to English as well as other languages, through transparent grammatical structure, sound/symbol constancy and use of Latin roots.

The grammar is transparent in that even unfamiliar Esperanto words are recognisable as nouns, adjectives, present tense verbs etc. The 28 letters of the Esperanto alphabet always sound the same and each sound can be written in only one way. No letters are silent or capriciously doubled. Latin roots help build English vocabulary and promote an interest in connections between languages.

Esperanto also promotes numeracy, to more than the usual extent, by the exact match of words and concepts to both the base ten number system and other primary mathematical concepts such as fractions and multiplication.

#### **v. Self-Confidence**

Knowing his or her own practical competence to think and communicate in other languages is a genuine and meaningful aspect of self-concept and confidence for a child.

The Primary Esperanto Strategy supports self-confidence by both offering a language which is realistically attainable by a child in the time available, and by having it offered by an accessible teacher empowered to adapt the program to suit the needs of the child.



Esperanto is attainable in less time than most languages because it is unusually regular and phonetic. This makes it encouraging, empowering and inclusive. Educationally disadvantaged students often experience psychologically valuable spelling and reading success in Esperanto, even if it has been elusive in English.<sup>52</sup>

This accessibility does not make Esperanto less ideal choice for able students because, like all languages, it has much more creative potential than most users have time or ability to exploit. A child who has already learned to conduct normal conversations in Esperanto can go on to use it to write beautiful Haiku, describe a scientific investigation or compare cultural mores with pen-friends.

Young children naturally extrapolate from their language creating plurals like “mouses”, odd pronunciations of unusually spelled words and incorrect verb forms. Older children find this embarrassing and discouraging when it occurs in their LOTE learning. Esperanto minimises this effect because words can be reliably created from word-parts of fixed meaning, to provide a broad vocabulary with minimal rote-learning.

This freedom encourages creativity, analysis and synthesis and a measure of encouragement for intellectual risk-taking.

#### **vi. Linguistic Potential**

There is general consensus that: “Learning more than one language at an early age also supports later learning of other languages, and tends to confer a greater awareness of the significance of language<sup>53</sup>”

The same source notes:

*“The future of languages cannot be exactly forecast. During the course of the next two decades language priorities will change, perhaps in unexpected ways.”<sup>54</sup>*

Therefore, the most appropriate goal for Australian primary education is:

*“Adaptability to learn new languages as the need arises, requiring generic language learning skills.”<sup>55</sup>*

Because Esperanto has few exceptions to its “rules”, students spend more time learning transferable generalities than exceptions. This provides an unusually solid basis for learning languages in future.

Appendix 2 provides a review of some of the evidence that Primary Esperanto has already improved achievement in both English, and first and subsequent LOTEs, in Australia and overseas.

#### **e. Commitment: a Team Effort for Australia's Children**

Attitude is (almost) everything. Most obstacles can be overcome with a deep enough conviction that the goal matters and the strategy is sound.

In LOTE education, the commitment of the students, the parents, the teachers, the principals, the wider community and the policy makers have all been called into question from time to time. These kinds of issues were cited in the LOTE Report as contributors to program failure about 20% of the time.<sup>56</sup>



To harness the wholehearted energy of the Australian community, our LOTE provision must be fully coherent and demonstrably:



The Primary LOTE Strategy meets these criteria to an unusual degree:

**i. Commitment to an **Ethical** Strategy**

Whilst some parties champion multilingualism for instrumental reasons (economic and defensive) , the prime beneficiary of decision-making for childhood education must be the child.

In adult education, national and individual needs may often be closely linked by the prospect of imminent well-paid employment, and voluntary participation in study, but this cannot and must not be assumed in primary education.

We do not nominate schools to teach no sport except gymnastics, to fulfil national aspirations to Olympic gold, or others to teach no music but cello to ensure a constant supply of cellists. It would not be fair, and would be unlikely to be effective, and yet a similar practice is often considered acceptable in LOTE.

This may seem too strong a protest, but it has been suggested that LOTE should be made compulsory to age 16, or perhaps to university entry, to provide multilingual employees for industry, despite the cost to students who would lose the chance to learn Chemistry or Art because they were required to study a language they didn't want anyway. This is a misuse of power and a betrayal of confidence.

Also, from a practical viewpoint, educational change is most likely to be fully, promptly and sustainably implemented with the full support of parents and teachers; both parties heavily invested in seeing children as ends not means.

Our choice of language offerings should also model ethical behaviour. If we choose to teach our young children the languages of affluent linguistic communities, rather than those with less economic power, what values are transmitted by that decision?

Other ethical dimensions of LOTE strategy include equitable provision, fiscal responsibility and quality control, which are addressed in other parts of this document.

## ii. Commitment to an **Equitable** Strategy

Our aspiration to equity is expressed in the Australia's Common and Agreed National Goals of Schooling:

*"Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision."<sup>57</sup>*

Decision makers must remember that:

- ▶ Many language programs are too expensive or impossible to organize for all Australian students while others are not. We should choose to be fair.
- ▶ Some children already speak Greek, others don't. The same LOTE provision is not an equal service for them both.
- ▶ Half of our children are below average in literacy skills. Their ability to benefit from a LOTE depends on it being an accessible one.

*"Commonwealth responsibility therefore lies in ... ensuring that LOTE delivery in all candidatures is possible."<sup>58</sup>*

## iii. Commitment to an **Effective** Strategy

Few would disagree that it is important for Australia's LOTE strategy to be effective, but there are differences of opinion about the chief purpose of LOTE and, therefore, how to judge its effectively achievement.

- ▶ The simplest perspective is that a program designed to teach a language, is effective if the student **learns the language**.
- ▶ A second perspective puts intercultural perspective and preparation for global participation at the centre of the enterprise, as our LOTE Report says:

*"the key rationale for learning a language other than English is to acquire and develop knowledge and skills for **intercultural engagement**...(by)...greater understanding of and engagement with the wider global community and the many societies and cultures which constitute it."<sup>59</sup>*

► A third perspective is that LOTE is (often) mainly valuable for its by-products, the **skills, attitudes and habits of mind**, such as empathy, cognition, perspective, literacy, self-confidence and linguistic capacity for later use .

►

Each of these three perspectives warrants further consideration:

- **An effective LOTE education gives students a new language**

Seeing effective LOTE education as nurturing the highest level of functional bilingualism for a given investment of time and resources, makes effectiveness relatively easy to measure, and even to predict, objectively.

Languages vary in complexity in relation to a large but finite number of variables. They are also similar to, and different from, any other given language (say, English) in a particular array of respects which are amenable to analysis.

Since Esperanto, uniquely among contending languages (with the possible exception of Auslan), was designed with ease of learning in mind, it would be unsurprising if such analysis showed Esperanto to be the easiest. In consequence, it would be reasonable to predict that it would be most thoroughly and effectively learned in the time available.

(Having Esperanto taught by generalist teachers offers even more improvements in effectiveness.)

- **An effective LOTE prepares students for global participation**

A LOTE may be considered effective if it provides a broad perspective on the world and promotes global participation.

Again, since only Esperanto was designed for the purpose, it is no great surprise that it is the closest we have to a perfect fit.

Esperanto and broad intercultural/interlinguistic studies, under the guidance of class teachers, serves this purpose better than a focus on any individual national language.

- **An effective LOTE maximizes positive by-products of LOTE education**

We have already reviewed reasons why Esperanto education is more likely to promote development of LOTE 'by products' such as empathy, cognition, perspective, literacy, self-confidence and linguistic potential in section 2d. (Focus on the Learner.)

#### iv. Commitment to an **Appropriate** Strategy

Few adults choose to watch the Australian Broadcasting Commission's hugely successful program "Play School", and that is fine as it wasn't made for them. It is designed for Australian pre-school children and its simple, clear, friendly format continues to delight and educate its target audience.

As communication tools in their native cultures, "all languages are equally valid."<sup>60</sup> However, as tools for early intercultural and linguistic learning for Australian schoolchildren, they are not necessarily so. Tools for primary teaching need to be accessible, encouraging, inclusive, flexible and empowering. Tools which better promote literacy and numeracy in young children can objectively be considered more valid than those which do not. The best tools in primary education stimulate creative, analytical and other thinking skills and encourage peer teaching and independent learning.

Primary children don't play tunnel ball with thoughts of turning 'pro', any more than they aspire to professional recorder-playing careers, but tunnel ball and recorders are good

teaching and learning tools. They prepare the way for later development, and teachers and parents have been happy to commit to their use for a very long time.

Esperanto is a powerful and well-designed educational instrument. Apart from being a useful language in its own right, its simple, reliable structure and broad intercultural base make it an ideal tool for later language learning and intercultural studies.

#### **e.v. Commitment to an Affordable Strategy**

*“A mandatory programme must be adequately resourced and with options for flexible delivery.”*

To earn the commitment of all stake-holders, the strategy should support other programs and the delivery of their benefits, and not be wasteful of limited resources such as time, money and effort.

As a rough indication of the cost of the Strategy, if all of Australia’s 100, 000 primary school teachers were equipped with a copy of “Talking to the Whole Wide World”, every Australian primary school child could have a guaranteed, uninterrupted, properly qualified, ever present LOTE teacher for the rest of her/his primary career, for the cost of the one fifth of the LOTE budget of 2002, which did not serve as many students.

Funds could then be diverted to secondary LOTE or other areas of need.

For cost benefit comparison, here is an example of a current strategy from Victoria.

*“Action 5: The Government will assist teacher/s in rural schools to retrain in areas where schools have problems in attracting teachers in particular curriculum/subject areas.*

*This may involve retraining existing teachers in an additional curriculum area, or upgrading a teacher’s qualifications to allow them to teach at more senior levels within their school. Up to \$20,000 will be provided per teacher for course costs and relief teaching assistance where necessary.*

*The Department of Education & Training, in collaboration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), will work with universities to identify flexible and fast-track study options appropriate for teachers to undertake this retraining, including summer school, online delivery and use of semester breaks. This work will be informed by the Languages other than English (LOTE) retraining program, which has been operating for several years as part of the Department’s Languages Strategy and the recently completed Science Graduate Certificate Program.*

*Targeted study areas will include mathematics, physical sciences, technology studies, information technology and special education. Approximately 125 teachers are expected to benefit from this program. This initiative has been estimated to cost \$2.5 million over three years.*

*In addition, up to 60 teachers will be retrained as language teachers under the Excellence in Languages Initiative, with a cost of \$0.75 million over 3 years.<sup>61</sup>”*

*This proposal, in contrast, provides 100,000 language teachers, enough for every Australian primary student, for only 10 million dollars and eases the chronic shortage of secondary LOTE teachers in the process.*



## Considering The Key Stakeholders

The priorities in this plan are:

- ▶ the educational needs of individual Australian primary school students
- ▶ the welfare of Australia as a nation,
- ▶ Australia's global citizenship,

MCEETYA's recognised key stakeholders: the teachers of modern languages (represented by the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers' Associations, the AFMLTA), the principals of schools, parent associations, the tertiary sector, the ethnic schools and the custodians of indigenous languages, share at least some of these values but have other priorities too.

### a. Modern Language Teachers

These teachers may, initially, be offended by the emphasis on non-language specialists playing a larger role. However, they are well equipped to appreciate that:

- ▶ This proposal will not disrupt any language program which is already established and successful.
- ▶ Small children usually learn language skills from people close to them and that short, frequent, well-integrated, relevant lessons will build skills and enthusiasm for later learning from specialists.
- ▶ The extension of language learning opportunity to all children, all over Australia is an AFMLTA priority.
- ▶ It will be a great deal easier for them to plan effective and cohesive programs for junior secondary classes when the primary graduates arrive with more uniform experience: sound language learning skills, general knowledge about the structure and functions of languages, a positive attitude, functional English and Esperanto, and a blank slate in relation to the new target language.
- ▶ In the short term, there will be more employment opportunities for language specialists in teaching methodology to their peers.
- ▶ In the longer term, there will be more opportunities to teach the larger cohorts of better-prepared elective language students who will see a point in language study, having tasted success, and gained a glimpse of the world and opportunities beyond, already.

## b. Primary Principals

- ▶ Many principals will find it a great relief to be able to provide the required 8th Key Learning Area with centralised support and without compromising other valuable programs.
- ▶ LOTE will cease to have special time-tabling requirements and so the schools can enjoy greater freedom in choosing what fields of specialists to engage to offer educational services to students and preparation time to teachers.

*"According to principals, the geographic and demographic nature of many Australian primary schools significantly challenges their capacity to deliver effective, ongoing second language programmes. If LOTE is to remain universal for all primary students, then it needs to be universally resourced, ensuring quality for all schools, without harming the overall curriculum. Otherwise the pressures of an overcrowded curriculum, thinning of resources, access to quality specialists and intermittent programmes will continue to erode the value of primary school LOTE programmes.<sup>62</sup>"*

- ▶ Allowing teachers to choose an alternative to LOTE as their DOTT (Duties Other Than Teaching) or RFFF (Relief from Face to Face) time offers the chance to import specialist help in areas of need improving outcomes in other Key Learning Areas and boosting teacher morale.

*We note that it is not LOTE per se, which is currently a problem, but the organizational corollaries of the dependence on quality specialists of limited availability. By ensuring consistent staffing and resourcing, LOTE provision in primary schools will cease to be so problematic.*

## c. Parents

- ▶ Parents will be glad to know that all children will have the chance to really learn a language, in conjunction with acquiring a broad intercultural education, from early primary.
- ▶ To see funds invested directly into materials and training of immediate benefit to current students, as well as future ones, will be welcome.
- ▶ Some parents think that gain needs pain and will resist a solution which seems easier, as well as less familiar. Advice can be given, and results will show, that consistent presentation of achievable goals will achieve more success for more students.

*"There is a general sense that languages education is going to be increasingly important in a globalised world, but the frustration is that it isn't happening in an accessible way.<sup>63</sup>"*

#### **d. The Tertiary Sector**

- ▶ This sector stands to benefit a great deal from this strategy both immediately and lastingly, as it will drive demand for their language and methodology courses.
- ▶ Within the decade, it will increase the number of prospective students for all language courses as more students choose languages in high school, more succeed, and more look for careers in languages and language education.
- ▶ More students simplify course logistics as well as helping the Universities build their vision of a multilingual Australia participating internationally.

#### **e. Ethnic Schools and Custodians of Indigenous Languages**

These represent Ethnic and Indigenous teachers, students and their communities.

- ▶ This proposal will have no impact on any schools or communities who already have, or are planning, a program which satisfies their needs.
- ▶ Some after-hours schools may lose some students if they are currently providing the only language education available in an area but, equally, they could gain students as more children learn to be interested and confident in languages and demand for language qualifications increase.
- ▶ In some cases of in-school programs, there may be a need to weigh the advantage of positive discrimination when Ethnic or Indigenous children are taught their own language at school, along with mainstream beginners, against the advantage of a chance to start learning something new at the same level as the class as a whole.
- ▶ The intercultural education which accompanies the Esperanto program aims to give all Australian students more insight into and respect for, all of our Ethnic and Indigenous communities as well as others around the world.







## Why Now?

Some readers may know that Esperanto has been taught and used in Australia for over a century and may wonder, therefore, why the Primary Esperanto Strategy is a new proposal today. It fits our circumstances better now than in the past because of our awareness of:

### Educational Psychology

We know now that high school is not the strategic time to begin learning one's first LOTE and we know that frequent lessons integrated into normal life work better than a weekly session.

### New Attitudes to Language, Culture and Identity:

Since the 1990's, we have been trying to match the old paradigms of elitist language education with a new visions of LOTE for all. We need a common experience of successful second language learning to gain a deep understanding of the nature of language and its relationship to thought and identity, culture and humanity.

### Global Unity:

Our interests extent beyond the national interest now. Time Magazine had a recent cover story "10 Ideas that are Changing the World"<sup>64</sup> and top of the list was "Global Unity": the idea that saw all 191 UN countries, including Australia, commit to attaining the Millennium Development Goals. This is the world our children will inhabit and they need flexibility and perspective to make the most of being a "middle-power"<sup>65</sup> in an increasingly globalised world.

### Mobility and Communications:

More of us travel overseas now, heading for different destinations every time depending on interest or business opportunities. At the same time, modern telecommunications have opened the door to a very real, compact and varied virtual world which is becoming less English-dominated over recent years. We need linguistic flexibility to make the most of this diversity as individuals.

### Quality Assurance, Accountability and Economic Rationalism:

We are teaching our children to be discerning and assertive. We expect to get what we pay for, and for our purchase to perform as it should. We want LOTE education to do its job well within the time and budget available.

## Meeting DEST Targets

The following table shows how this proposal will meet the DEST (Federal Department of Education, Science and Training) targets set for the MCEETYA Languages Taskforce by 2012<sup>66</sup>:

TARGET	CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS TARGET
Establish a level of resourcing from Commonwealth, State/Territory and local sources adequate to deliver the established targets.	Provides a <b>concrete and common basis for costing projections and negotiations</b> between various levels of government to ensure adequate resourcing for delivery of meaningful and equitable targets.
Identify key responsibilities and consequent actions for school leaders to support the plan and its implementation.	Provides a <b>clear and common plan</b> thus facilitating identification of achievable key responsibilities and actions for school leaders.
Provide an effective approach to issues of teacher supply, including effective incentives to attract, train/retrain and retain appropriately qualified specialist or generalist teachers.	Provides an equitable, ethical, affordable, efficient, effective and appropriate solution to the problem of teacher supply which is both <b>sustainable and self-renewing</b> .
All students in primary and secondary years should participate in meaningful, effective and sustained programmes in one or more languages.	Provides <b>means to ensure that all students</b> in primary and secondary years <b>do participate in meaningful, effective and sustained programmes in one or more languages</b> .
All students from Year 3 to Year 10 should display an appropriate level of communicative competence, linguistic awareness and intercultural understanding and skills related to a language.	Provides <b>means for teachers to ensure</b> that all students from Year 3 to Year 10 should display an appropriate level of communicative competence, linguistic awareness and intercultural understanding and skills related to a language.
Through a variety of incentives, an increasing number of students are encouraged to continue language study in Years 11 and 12.	Provides <b>genuine intrinsic incentives</b> for an increasing number of students to continue language study in Years 11 and 12, through their own <b>experience of success</b> in language learning, and <b>early modelling</b> of both <b>lifelong learning in languages</b> , and <b>application of language skills to normal Australian life</b> .

There are only two years left to meet these targets yet it may still be possible to do that, with the funding which is currently available to run existing language courses in schools, by implementation of this strategy.



## Strategy Implementation

### Commitment to Change

Sharyne Rankine, of the Association of Independent Schools in Victoria, declared in The LOTE Newsletter of June 2007 that:

*“Learning a language in Australia should be seen like learning Maths or English, kicking a ball at recess time or eating lunch — it is a normal part of the curriculum in which every student should participate. It is a part of education for life.”<sup>67</sup>*

Her statement expresses both an explicit professional opinion about what should be, and an implicit assertion that it is not yet the case. Is that acceptable?

Before adopting the Primary Esperanto Strategy, ACARA will need to compare it to alternative strategies for solving Australia’s LOTE crisis and to the consequences of making no choice for change.

- ▶ Will Australian programs continue to fail due to lack of teachers, time issues, continuity, student-focus and commitment issues?
- ▶ Is there good reason to believe that the Primary Esperanto Strategy can address and remedy these problems by empowering generalist primary teachers to deliver a manageable intercultural language in the context of normal schooling?
- ▶ Has an alternative strategy been proposed which can achieve as good or better results for the same cost or less?
- ▶ Can Australia afford to wait for a better offer?

The National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008, states that:

*“Effective languages programs require **whole school support**, particularly by school leaders.”<sup>68</sup>*

The Australian educational community has good reason to support a strategy which is ethical, equitable, effective, affordable and efficient.

Primary school students will commit to any program valued by their parents and teachers, especially if it is both enjoyable and “serious” as Professor Joseph Lo Bianco has reported recently.<sup>69</sup>

We now have all we need to ensure that it is so.

## Resourcing Change

If the Primary Esperanto Strategy is agreed to be the fairest and best solution available, the next step is to decide how to implement it on at least a trial basis.

The two years since the first edition of this report have seen the development of “Talking to the Whole Wide World”: a stand-alone resource specifically designed for Australian generalist teachers choosing to provide Esperanto LOTE to their own classes.

The materials were produced by with the help of a development grant from the Australian Esperanto Association and input from the International Association of Esperanto Teachers (ILEI).

## “Talking to the Whole Wide World”

“Talking to the Whole Wide World” contains 40 simple but fundamental lessons in grammar and basic linguistics, combined with a wealth of practice play and creative application activities, which encourage awareness of global unity and diversity.

Activities include 30 songs and 73 games with variations to reinforce learning throughout the course.

Orientation information and activities for parents and students facilitate the early understanding and acceptance of the program.

The 40 learning units could be managed in one year by a capable class of senior primary students with Victoria’s recommended time allowance of 150 minutes per week. Classes less able, younger or with less time per week may progress more slowly, or cycle through the process more superficially, reinforcing and extending the learning in spiral fashion over two or three years. Whether it takes one, two or three years to complete this course, the learner is then functionally bilingual and can extend and implement this understanding in exploration of dozens of cultures and in creative and diverse aspects of language. Some schools may be tempted to introduce a second LOTE before the start of high school but this needs careful thought to ensure that it does not deprive any students of the satisfaction of achieving comfortable biligualism first and that it does not deprive high school classes of the chance to begin together with a new language.

A comprehensive set of posters are available, to reinforce key concepts and promote participation in singing and speaking activities, and access is provided to the full 77 minutes of “Mazi en Gondolando”, and many other valuable digital AV sources and interactive learning opportunities.

Vocabulary of well over 1000 words is provided through mastery of a very much smaller number of phonemes.

Appealing graphics in the student workbook and posters feature a "small world" mascot who reads, writes, plays and sings as a visual reminder that Esperanto is a language of the whole world.

"Talking to the Whole Wide World" is available direct from [www.mondeto.com](http://www.mondeto.com)

## Supplementary Resources

- A West Australian company, LOTE Teaching Aids, has already produced a wide range of posters, student books and learning games in Esperanto.
- An Esperanto language training program developed by Tasmanian Robert Budzul is proving very popular and effective among university students there. Students log on whenever it suits them and enjoy being able to readily quantify and compare their progress. This would be very suitable for use by teachers and could easily be adapted for use by primary school students of various ages.
- The BBC's Esperanto-educational video "Mazi en Gondolando" is familiar, and popular, with many LOTE teachers in a variety of languages.
- Excellent dictionaries exist for all ages along with music in a range of genres, fiction and non-fiction books, magazines, interactive websites and intercultural resources.
- The current Primary Esperanto kit from the UK "Springboard to Languages" includes:
  - ▶ a student workbook,
  - ▶ a teacher's guide,
  - ▶ supplementary worksheets,
  - ▶ word-lists linking words to other foreign languages,
  - ▶ CDs with songs and dialogues,
  - ▶ related worksheets for differentiation and support,
  - ▶ picture flash-cards,
  - ▶ stickers,
  - ▶ a copy of Usbourne's "First Thousand Words in Esperanto" and related activity cards,
  - ▶ An Esperanto version of the multicultural book 'United Nations: Come along with me!' and
  - ▶ a small pocket dictionary suitable for beginners.

The Springboard materials are not designed for independent use by monolingual teachers, but would be useful after a teacher has learned Esperanto by using "Talking to the Whole Wide World".





## Conclusion

The Primary Esperanto Strategy is the empowerment of generalist primary teachers to teach Esperanto (LOTE) and associated intercultural studies in most Australian primary schools.

We expect this to promote empathy, cognitive development, intercultural perspective, literacy and communication skills, a sense of achievement and increased capacity to learn other languages as well as providing a useable second language and a sound basis for a third, if desired.

Implementation of the strategy should take 15–30 minutes a day, be no more expensive to provide than other primary school subjects, and be equitably available to all Australian children.

This Strategy is unconventional and may be arriving later than is ideal. However, it does offer a coherent solution to the problems of staffing, time, continuity, consideration for the learner, and commitment to a common plan.

As such,

*it is an opportunity to realise the Group of Eight's vision of a "nationally consistent approach" which ensures that "students have continuity in learning a particular language" so that "a significant majority of Australians (have) a second language by 2020."<sup>70</sup>*

That is a victory Australians would be glad to share.

## Summary

To recap, the **Primary Esperanto Strategy is the most effective choice for Australia** because:

- ▶ To do so models fairness, and equal respect for all cultures.
- ▶ It is regular and phonetic which make it accessible, encouraging, empowering and inclusive.
- ▶ Educationally disadvantaged students often experience valuable spelling and reading success in Esperanto, even if it has been elusive in English.
- ▶ It promotes literacy through transparent grammatical structure, sound/symbol constancy and use of Latin roots.
- ▶ It promotes numeracy by the exact match of words and concepts to both the base ten number system and other primary mathematical concepts such as fractions and multiplication.
- ▶ Esperanto encourages creativity, analysis and synthesis through regular word-building and a minimum of rote-learning.
- ▶ Esperanto gives access to the widest variety of cultures in all dimensions: language, religion, arts, environment, politics, economy, resources, intercultural relationships etc. A broad perspective sets the scene for later detailed studies.
- ▶ Esperanto has no exceptions to its “rules” so students have time to learn more transferable general LOTE concepts, skills and attitudes which greatly facilitate learning other languages later.
- ▶ Esperanto allows quality preparation for generalist teachers in a time frame affordable for education providers.
- ▶ Generalist teachers model life-long learning and the value of languages.
- ▶ Language learning is an integral part of school culture and teachers have the full support of their colleagues, administration and communities.
- ▶ Primary school graduates, with a good grounding in successful language learning, are both motivated and well-prepared to make a meaningful commitment to the study of a third language and culture in secondary school and beyond.
- ▶ By concentrating Australia’s language specialists in the secondary schools, the supply problem is alleviated and there is more freedom to match language strengths, interests, school types, timetables, character, experience and other relevant variables.
- ▶ A general adoption of one language in most primary schools facilitates production and distribution of quality materials, in-service training, assessment support and general networking.
- ▶ Transfer students, their teachers and peers find it easier to maintain momentum in language learning if most schools are using the same language and resources.
- ▶ The status of the teaching profession is enhanced as the majority of language students (primary and secondary) learn their subject to a useable standard, as we expect in most other disciplines.
- ▶ Esperanto is not the first language of any Australian child. It is, therefore, the only language which can offer something new to every child in every class from lesson one, and provide a relatively level playing field for them all.



## Appendix 1: Research and Pilot Studies

This following material was compiled and prepared, in November 2005, Renato Corsetti, professor of psychology at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'.

### The Propaedeutic Effect

Numerous studies since the 1920s have consistently confirmed that learning Esperanto increases a learner's motivation through a sense of early achievement, leading to a subsequent improvement when learning additional languages. Such a 'propaedeutic effect' — facilitating further study — is well known in educational psychology and is regularly exploited in a range of disciplines from music to mathematics.

The usual experimental model involves two parallel, matched groups of children studying for typically two or three years. One group learns a foreign language – say, French or German – for the whole period; the other studies Esperanto for one year (or longer in some cases), followed by the foreign language for the remaining time. At the end of the experimental period, both groups are given a standardised test in the foreign language. Consistently, the group who studied Esperanto before the foreign language performs markedly better than the control group.

For example, in Budapest in the 1960s, Professor István Szerdahelyi found the following propaedeutic effects on Hungarian children: in learning Russian, a gain of 25%; in German, 30%; in English, 40%; and in French, 50%.

A similar study in Germany in the 1970s used a larger sample and concentrated on learning English; it found a gain of 30% in standardised tests. In terms of a five-year course, this is equivalent to gaining a year and a half.

### Language Awareness

Bilingual children possess greater 'cognitive flexibility' than their monolingual peers. This idea was first proposed by Peal & Lambert (1962), and the literature of recent years has increasingly confirmed it. Cognitive flexibility reveals itself in a variety of forms of thinking, from spatial perception through logical-mathematical reasoning to various aspects of language processing, particularly those involving metalinguistic behaviour — for a review of the literature, see Reynolds 1991. See also Baker & Prys-Jones 1998, and Pinto 2002.)

Monolingual and bilingual children therefore differ in their 'language awareness': their awareness of certain patterns — parts of speech, word order, endings, inflexion, agreement, and number — and of how these vary between one's mother tongue and other languages.



Good language awareness makes language learning significantly easier. It is precisely for this reason that monolingual British children gain so much from learning a second language.

One can draw upon the heightened language awareness associated with bilingualism to increase competence in English itself, and in any other language subsequently learned. As Bialystok (1988) has noted, important effects of this metalinguistic awareness are that it can facilitate the earlier acquisition of reading, and that it may relate to higher levels of attainment in a variety of curriculum areas. Several studies demonstrate just such an effect on mother-tongue competence in children who learn Esperanto, even if only for one hour a week over a period of one year (Pinto & Corsetti 2001).

Language awareness is an important predictor of third-language acquisition (Jessner 1999), where the connections between two languages already known act as a stepping stone to the third. To quote Safant Jordà (2005) directly:

*“Considering current research, we are able to assume that bilingual learners will acquire an additional language faster and more efficiently.”*

Studies on third-language acquisition are now on the increase, mainly in Europe, where to the learner’s regional language is often added the national language, and later a language for wider communication, such as English (Broeder & Extra 1999). But three-language situations can be found in other continents too (Rubagumya 1994, Tickoo 1996, Dutcher 1998). These studies demonstrate that knowledge of a second language always assists the learning of a third.

## The Nature of Esperanto

Esperanto is, relatively, a very easy language. Its lexicon is borrowed from national languages, but its distinctive grammatical character places it centrally among inflected, agglutinative, and isolating languages. There are in fact elements of all these types of language in Esperanto (Gledhill 1998).

- ▶ The lexicon derives mainly from languages of the Romance (Latin) and Germanic groups, although there is significant input from other groups too.
- ▶ The language’s grammar is, however, unique. As well as the lexical morphemes, there is a range of grammatical morphemes that specify each word’s role within a sentence. Wells (1989) summarised the character of Esperanto as a) highly agglutinative, b) not particularly synthetic, c) having regular morphemes, and d) having only one declension and one conjugation.

Many experiments have been conducted to discover how easily Esperanto can be learned, beginning with the pioneering work of Thorndike (1933). Without exception, conclusions have been positive. The only question remaining today is how easy Esperanto is to learn relative to the various mother tongues of different students (Nagata & Corsetti 2005).

Esperanto’s regular structure and grammatical transparency lead the learner to reflect on how languages operate. By contrast, the general absence of function indicators on the words of an English sentence – a lack that English compensates for with a fixed word order — means that a monolingual speaker of English cannot begin to imagine how other languages, with richer morphological systems, work.

The fact that Esperanto is easy to learn allows children to start genuinely using it earlier; this gives them a sense of success, which in turn motivates them to further language learning. Such observations of the propaedeutic effect are to be found throughout the literature on the teaching of Esperanto.

## Linguistic Distance

Another important factor in the acquisition of a third language is 'linguistic distance'. It is likely that a learner will find it easier to master a third language that is typologically close to their second.

Linguistic distance can only be defined in relative terms: some language pairs are mutually closer or more distant than others. It must also be analysed at various linguistic levels: phonological, lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic. For example, English is typologically a Germanic language, but historical events have produced a large number of loan-words from Latin and the Romance languages.

Similarly, Esperanto has a linguistic structure that contains elements of all language groups (Wells 1989) and a lexicon drawn mainly from Romance and Germanic. For an English-speaking child, the propaedeutic effect derived from Esperanto therefore applies (at least at the morphological level) to all Indo-European languages that are more conservative than English — that is: to all such languages with the possible exception of Persian. It can even assist the learning of languages as distant as the Slavic languages, or Urdu or Hindi. On the other hand, at the lexical level, help with learning Romance or Germanic languages is more apparent.

For studies on the propaedeutic effect of Esperanto on the learning of subsequent languages by English-speaking children, see for example Halloran (1959).

## Field Studies

The first documented field study was made at the Girls' County School, Bishop Auckland, UK, from 1918–21, under the supervision of HM Inspectors of Schools. Since then, major studies have included:

- ▶ 1920 Green Lane School, Eccles, UK
- ▶ 1922 League of Nations Official Enquiry, Geneva, Switzerland
- ▶ 1922–24 Bishop's Elementary School, Auckland, New Zealand
- ▶ 1924 Wellesley College, Ohio, USA
- ▶ 1925–31 Columbia University, New York, USA (Prof. E. Thorndike)
- ▶ 1934–35 Public High School, New York, USA
- ▶ 1947–51 County Grammar School, Sheffield, UK (University of Sheffield)
- ▶ 1948–61 Egerton Park School, Manchester, UK
- ▶ 1950–63 Somero, Finland (Ministry of Education)
- ▶ 1962–63 Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary (Prof. I. Szerdahelyi)
- ▶ 1971–74 22 classes from Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Bulgaria
- ▶ 1972–73 Scuola Elementare Dante, Forlì, Italy (Ministry of Education)
- ▶ 1975–77 300 pupils from Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Netherlands
- ▶ 1977–83 University of Paderborn, Germany (Prof. H. Frank)
- ▶ 1983–88 Scuola Media, San Salvatore di Cogorno, Italy
- ▶ 1993 Official Report: Ministry of Education, Italy
- ▶ 1994–97 Monash University, Victoria, Australia (Prof. A. Bishop)

Of all these studies, perhaps the most thorough were those by Professor Helmar Frank of the University of Paderborn, Germany, in the 1970s and 1980s. It was these large-scale studies that led to the concept of language awareness.

It has been observed that language awareness is most easily developed through a relatively simple, regular, phonetic, and recognisable language such as Esperanto. Professor Alan Bishop of the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia, summed up the research evidence in the final report of his own field study (2000):

*“It was clear from experiments (...) that Esperanto helped learners make a good, quick start in learning their second language.”*

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## Current Australian and Other Pilot Schools

Since Professor Corsetti's summary of Pilot studies was compiled, several Australian Primary schools in Australia chosen Esperanto as their LOTE. Among these are Treetops Montessori School (since 2000) in W.A., Hackham South P.S. (since 2005) in S.A. and Candelo P.S. (since 2005) in southern NSW.

These schools can be considered as pilots for this proposal in some respects, but not in others:

- ▶ All programs are taught by generalist teachers only one of whom had studied Esperanto at any length before they started teaching it.
- ▶ All have been accepted and supported by staff, students and parents for 3–8 years.
- ▶ None of the teachers started with anything like the preparation and support materials proposed here, and
- ▶ the time available for teaching has usually been an hour a week, or less, usually compacted into one session per week.
- ▶ Each of these programs has had the additional burden of establishing itself without any special blessing from government agencies. Still, they have achieved results worthy of further attention.
- ▶ The "Springboard to Languages" Primary Esperanto program, is currently being implemented in four British schools, and a home-schooling community.

Further details of these trials, and an evaluation of the programme at two of the current pilots being undertaken by Manchester University, can be found at: <http://www.springboard2languages.org>.

- ▶ A further 60 schools in 24 different countries are using variations on the Springboard program, with adaptations to suit their non-English-speaking backgrounds.



## Appendix 2: Collaborators

Collaborators, teachers and critical friends for Esperanto programme development in Australia.

### **Saani Bennetts**

B.A (Education) 10 years teaching experience. Member of Establishment Team of Bunbury Community School which involved extensive development of curriculum, policies and teaching materials. Taught Esperanto LOTE for 3 years at Treetops Montessori School, including establishing an international exchange program.

### **Jennifer Bishop**

BA Hons (German/French) Dip Ed. GCSE. 16 yrs work in International Education with the Cambridgeshire Education Dept., 10 years teaching including 3yrs teaching Esperanto in Australian Schools. Director of Project 'Ekparoli'. Emeritus Professor of Education at Monash University, specialising in multicultural education.

### **Carol Brands**

Carol Brands is Principal of Treetops Montessori School where Esperanto has been taught to primary and secondary students for the last six years with remarkably successful results. Carol's background includes 37 years of teaching, across all age ranges from pre-primary to University, educational research and administration and media production for film, television and radio.

### **Gordon Coleman**

Dip Teach, B Ed. Teaching Esperanto at Hackham South Public School in S.A. since 2005.

### **Hazel Green**

BVSc, Certificate A in Cseh Course (teaching Esperanto by direct method). Administrator and tutor in Esperanto Correspondence Courses of AEA, 1997 to present. Taught a beginner Esperanto class at Kingsthorpe State School for 4 years and classes of children and adults at AEA summer school 2007. Active member of International League of Esperanto Teachers (ILEI).

### **Dianne Lukes**

BSc. Grad Dip Teach, Grad Dip Psych. Taught Esperanto: in Qld State Primary schools for 4 years; at Toowoomba State High for 3 years, at USQ for 4 years; and at clubs in Australia, Japan, The Czech Rep. and Indonesia for 8 years. Committee member of the Australian Esperanto Association for 10 years. Current AEA president.



**Miranda Lutz**

B.Sp Path, CPSP, Mem SPA and MIG, Adv. Cert LOTE (Esperanto), Adv. Cert TESOL, Postgrad Cert Managing Language Programs. Speciality: language, children, education and bilingualism. TAA40104: Cert IV in Training and Assessment. Taught Esperanto in various locations. Current AEA director. MAppLing in Language Program Management (in progress).

**Martin Gray**

B.A, Dip Ed, M.App.Ling Teaching Japanese since 1997.

**Debra McCarney**

BA (Language Studies), Grad. Dip. Ed (Primary). Speaks Spanish, French, German, Japanese, English and Esperanto. MSc in progress, learning Welsh.

**Margaret Skeel**

BSc (Hons) Dip Ed, 20 yrs teaching. Seven years teaching Esperanto at Nymboida P.S.

**Angela Tellier**

BA (Language and Education) Montessori Dip Ed, Dip Esp, MA Linguistic studies (in progress) 30 yrs language teaching. Co-author of “Urso-Kurso” Esperanto course for children and correspondence course for adults. Author and co-ordinator of Springboard project in UK

**Penelope Vos**

BSc Dip Ed, 20 years teaching in Australian Schools, extensive in-servicing in 10 years as LOTE Head of Dept., 2 volumes of Curriculum Development published by Macmillan Australia. Commissioner for School Education in the Australian Esperanto Association. Past president of the Australian chapter of the International Association of Esperanto Teachers (ILEI). Author and instigator of the Primary Esperanto Strategy and “Talking to The Whole Wide World”.

**Max Wearing**

MA, FTCL, retired matriculation English and French teacher (6 years), Drama lecturer (15 years), curriculum writing experience. Esperantist since 1985 (AEA's Elementa Diplomo) has been a member of ILEI since 1990, attending ILEI's annual world conferences between 1991 and 1997; Tutor of Gordon Coleman, SA's first teacher of Esperanto as a school LOTE language.





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