

Essential Learning Prep to Year 10 Languages Other Than English Curriculum Area

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Victorian Essential Learning Standards

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1. Introduction

1.1. Inevitability of pluralism

Globalisation is one of the most powerful forces driving social change today. Globalisation combines the integration of national economies, vast and deep changes in information and communications technologies and unprecedented population mobility. These population transfers (the poor and displaced alongside elites and the wealthy curious) are making virtually all states ethnically and linguistically diverse.

Service-based commerce, not least tourism and pressures to convert education into a tradeable commodity, intensify this engagement with cultural/linguistic difference. As a result languages are on the agenda of decision makers in more and more countries. For many, these changes stimulate demand for the acquisition of English, but the relevance and immediacy of languages other than English is also elevated by these changes.

Claims to recognition of Indigenous rights also place languages on policy agendas. In these ways we can see that globalisation is multi-directional and even contradictory. Economy-based globalisation animates resistance from groups interested in protecting local identities from the pressures of homogenisation that undoubtedly are contained within globalisation. However, alongside this intensification of the local, there is also the emergence of supra-national entities (e.g., the Asia Pacific Economic Community, the European Union and the African Union) that suggest the beginnings of a decline in national sovereignty. It appears that localisation, regionalisation and globalisation are all occurring at the same time. The world is re-forming rapidly into blocs, alliances and connections of mutual self-interest, economic advantage, geographic proximity, security, as well as historical, linguistic and cultural affiliations.

Information and communications technologies, and travel, also make possible the creation of communities. Virtual communities transcend limits of physical distance. In all of these ways we can see that the world, all parts of the world, are dealing with difference in historically unprecedented ways.

These changes also herald more subtle developments, the transfer of identification to professional, personal and recreational activities and a lessening of traditional modes of identification, class, religion, nation and 'race', though these too have asserted a possibly surprising presence in the 21st century.

However, alongside the divergence of identity there is also convergence. One key indicator of this is the way that English has overcome historical associations of ethnicity and nation to be accepted as a widely shared code of human communication.

1.2. Global English and World Englishes

The emergence of English as a common, convenient, instrumentally demanded global language makes the case for bilingualism, and knowledge about languages, considerably greater, rather than less. It is no accident that in both the United States and the United Kingdom, the two states whose historical prominence has forged the global role of English, recent years have witnessed energetic efforts to expand and

improve second language education. To have only English is as much a disadvantage as to not know English.

The national varieties of English that have emerged in many parts of the world are becoming recognised as the appropriate local standards to impart in education systems. In part this simply recognises inevitability, since local norms emerge as a result of the interaction between existing languages and the introduced code. English is increasingly evolving into ‘World Englishes’, characterised both by intelligibility across varieties and local norms that provide sources of identity.

The important effect is that native speakers of English will increasingly need to understand background cultural values and communication practices to use English effectively in international settings.

1.3. Languages as an Essential Learning

We can see the effects of this massive expansion of globalisation-induced pluralism in the explosion of language education policies across the world. These are inevitable, as states must increasingly manage multicultural demographics. The forging of closer economic relations across national states reinforces domestic population diversity. Bilingualism provides unique insight into communication practices, and the underlying identity structures, and this insight is increasingly valuable for English teaching and learning. Awareness about language and how to produce more effective communication is informed in unique ways by bilingualism and so languages other than English play a wider and more substantial role in general educational objectives than is often appreciated.

The traditional claims about the value of languages, that languages are a window onto other cultures and societies, are as valid today as ever. However, languages are also capable of adding depth and rigour to public schooling, of providing order in the sequencing and pattern of educational experiences of young people. This is because languages require cumulative teaching and contribute this quality of sustained year-by-year progress and refinement to the general curriculum. While language professionals have long appreciated that languages contribute ‘ballast’ (seriousness and continuity) to the educational experience of learners, and that they are therefore mainstream and essential intellectual engagement for all, this appreciation is now becoming more widespread.

In these ways languages contribute materially to the universal purposes of schooling, as the induction of young people into the culture and wider civilisation that surrounds them and into which they will enter. Languages in this sense are intellectual disciplines. As such languages nurture reflective, deep and creative thinking. Languages are capable of infusing the entire curriculum with personal insights into how knowledge is organised and arranged, and capable also of introducing awareness of important distinctions in meaning, sound and sound patterns, order and sequence, categories and relations, and other meta-cognitive skills, that directly impact on general intellectual development. Because languages allow a learner to reflect on and view English as an organised system ‘from outside’ its own structures and patterns the impact on a learner’s acquisition of English, both the spoken language and literacy, can be considerable, and is certainly unique. Many research studies converge around the conclusion that a high level of skill in two languages stimulates general intellectual functioning, applicable to science, mathematics and general reasoning, as well as some

benefits that are more creative in nature. These benefits usually only result from high levels of proficiency being achieved at an early age. Some research has shown however that even short-term participation in language study can produce benefits for children's reading.

The evidence for retaining languages as an essential learning for all Victorian students is pervasive and persuasive.

2. Before schooling

Much of early learning involves the learning of language, during which time learning and learning language are often indistinguishable. As language is learned it then becomes used as the tool through which other learning takes place. Among this other learning is the reflection on language itself. Language is therefore inextricably connected to all learning and most learning, and all higher learning, is deeply dependent on language. The sequence has often been identified as Learning Language, Learning through Language and then Learning about Language, though there are not tight boundaries between these characterisations.

Prior to schooling children do an immense amount of learning, much of it devoted to acquiring the code, at least in its oral form, which will constitute the tool of most schooling. However, from an early age children are learning about print, and writing, and other symbolic characterisations of language, and other languages. In Australia, and more so in Victoria than other Australian states, children are also learning in, through and about languages other than English. There are considerable numbers of young Victorians who are also learning in through and about two languages, and who therefore have two mother tongues. It is important to appreciate at the outset of a discussion paper on languages that Australian families are very linguistically diverse and that Victorian children come to school with a wide array of knowledge about, proficiency in, and attitudes towards languages, including English and a large number of other languages.

Educational efforts to encourage more children to encounter languages other than English in pre-school, in child-care, in kindergarten and in other settings of care and education prior to formal compulsory schooling are important. These efforts are important because young children are likely to be more receptive and in some ways ultimately more successful in their acquisition of languages from an early age. This, as will be argued repeatedly in the present document is intrinsically worthwhile because languages are essential markers of human diversity, identity, and of the organisation of society, Australia's as well as all others, but also because this encounter with multilingualism, particularly if it results in enhanced proficiency gains will significantly and positively impact of children's general academic and cognitive growth.

The pre-school language experiences of children are not only significant in terms of how they prepare the ground for subsequent learning. Each stage of learning language, learning about language and the quality and depth of learning through language is intrinsically important. Developmental processes in the acquisition of language effect constraints on what is most readily learned at each stage and phase of education. Therefore what is particular about the language and learning possibilities at each age level of children, meaning the relation between acquired language skill and potential

new learning, as they mature requires attention to the distinctive language demands of the new learning. If genuine efforts are made to make rich and productive the encounter with second languages, and the maintenance of non-English languages, at the pre-school level a pattern of serious appreciation of the central importance of language can be established.

3. Schooling

In an important sense education is an inculcation into forms of otherness. Geography teaches us about places, our own and other places. History teaches us about other times. Religion and religious education teaches us about our faith and other ways to be devout and spiritual. Languages teach about other ways to be human, not just as instruction, but how to live otherness. In this way languages are a distinctive and special component of education.

Little about language study is inert, in which knowledge, or skills, are imparted that are not expected to be enacted. This dimension of performance in languages requires of learners that they acquire knowledge as well as behaviours, attitudes as well as actions, ways to think as well as ways to be, difference. Languages should not just ask children to look at difference, as might be the case if we study in English about other societies, times and places, but ask learners to live, act out and participate in these differences. As such languages are challenging personally as well as intellectually and clearly invoke the deepest goals of education.

As an educational domain therefore languages impinge on all other fields of learning. The whole person is engaged when language teaching is as rich and wide ranging since it is capable of dealing with content that comes from potentially any source, from mainstream or prestigious school subjects, from popular culture and lived daily life, with their authentic texts, as well as from physical activity, drama, sport, science, geography, mathematics or music. The following sections elaborate some of the characteristics of languages in an educational setting that reinforce their status as essential learning for all Victorian students.

What does it mean to say we ‘know’ a language?

3.1. Knowledge

Language

- *Languages are content.* When we acquire a language we learn words, and rules for organising these words, such as morphology and syntax, sounds and sound patterns, and an orthography, or writing system, with its own rules and patterns and cultural history. These rules and patterns make sense as strategic and pragmatic skills that are used to influence people, exchange messages, advance our desires, socialise, learn and generally interact with others. As we learn these units that comprise a language we notice their differences with the English equivalents. We also notice similarities with English, and can identify what is familiar, and therefore characteristic of English, and what is difference and therefore characteristic of the language we are studying. We become engaged in a process of contrasting, comparing and relating two codes that humans have evolved to make and exchange meanings together.

The specific units of knowledge that we acquire are like the content, or the data of a language and are a benefit to the learner regardless of the specific language he or she is studying. Between languages that are similar the learner acquires insight into their common roots, and connections, and between languages that are not cognates in this way, the learner can acquire awareness of what is distinctive about English, and some insight into the vast array of human communication systems that exist.

Literacy

- *Literacy in the Target Language.* When we acquire a language we also acquire its unique literacy. This literacy may differ more or less from English. The sequence from closest to furthest from English involves at least the following four distinctions:
 - i. *Latin alphabet languages.* Languages, mainly western European languages, but also Indonesian and Vietnamese, that use the roman or Latin orthography, such as Italian, French, or German, (though each of these has its own features, such as distinctive symbols, like the ‘esszett’ in German, or punctuation conventions such as the eminently functional inverted question or exclamation markers that precede Spanish sentences (giving the reader advance information about the type of sentence that will follow), and other peculiarities such as accent markers, (e.g. acutes, cedillas, and macrons) and the complex tone diacritics used in Vietnamese. These signs render the spoken features of a language into its various written forms. Even when the forms are similar, their phonetic value can vary greatly, such as between English and Italian where the same graphemes for ‘China’ would produce Kina in Italian, and ‘Cile’ in Italian is not Chile but Silly, and ‘Children’ would become ‘Kildren’ in Italian;
 - ii. *Other alphabets.* Languages, mainly beyond Western Europe, that use alphabetic systems based on the idea that written symbols, graphemes, more or less closely correspond to phonemes. Among these are Russian and Greek, Khmer or Devanagari, whose principles of literacy are almost identical to those of English but for whom the specific alphabetical markers are different from those of the Latin alphabet;
 - iii. *Syllabic scripts.* Languages that use syllabic scripts, and in the case of Japanese combine the syllabary with another system, characters, or logograms, are many. Among these are Tamil or Sinhala whose distinctive writing system is derived from the same underlying system of Brâhmi, though the specific version of this broad approach that they use differs, and many other syllabaries that more or less use alphabetic markers and diacritics too;
 - iv. *Logograms, pictograms, hieroglyphs, and ideograms.* The main, but by no means only, example of ideographic, or logographic writing is Chinese, in which symbols represent whole ideas, or grammatical particles, but there is a large variety of other types, both ancient and current.

These differences in writing system are by no means the only kinds of variation that exist. Hebrew for example, with its complex elaboration of writing styles for religious and secular writing, allowing vowels for learners, but deleting them for higher writing; the directionality of Arabic, for example, which reverses that of English in how text is distributed on a page. Variations including whether text is read from left to right, or right to left, or from top to bottom, from left to right or right to left suggest that almost everything about writing and language is arbitrary, a selection, and therefore potentially able to reveal an underlying cultural practice, or value, or historical or political choice. These variations in how text is conceived and arranged is a potential source of learning about wider issues of cultural difference, how pervasive these differences are, how arbitrary any one system actually is, and how a learner should be encouraged to see that such differences and variations are essentially a reflection of the vast creativity and diversity of human cultures. This insight, in turn, can reinforce the strong sense that runs through all language education, i.e. interculturalism, so that the learner might reflect that his or her own literacy practices, and indeed their culture, are essentially a set of choices made from among a vast array of possibilities.

It is difficult to imagine any other part of the curriculum being able to stimulate this kind of reflection and self-awareness and is one additional reason we can adduce to ensure that languages are an essential part of the curriculum of all learners.

- Contribution to Literacy in English

These insights have a pragmatic learning dimension. As we acquire our first language we tend to focus our attention on communication, learning our language for getting things done, asking questions, making commitments, understanding messages, sending messages, organising our social world and much else besides. Inevitably this functional aspect of initial language learning characterises virtually the entire process of gaining our mother tongue.

An English speaking Australian child will therefore have been learning language, speech, for some 5 years, before they systematically encounter writing. Although the social world is saturated with writing, in advertising, instructions, letters, newspapers etc., and children are immersed in this from the moment they are born, the overwhelming majority of their effort in learning prior to beginning school is focused on acquiring speech.

Learning to read produces a major stimulus to what is called meta-linguistic awareness. A learner comes to realise that language is not just necessary for participating in the world, it is also organised and structured. Writing is organised into paragraphs, sentences and clauses; it is shaped by punctuation, and packaged into different kinds of texts, with chunks arranged according to themes, purposes and audiences. These features provide coherent textual organisation patterns, so that we can predict what kind of text we are dealing with, and how to approach it. Language is also formed for authority as well. Authority is carried in citation, in grammatical choices, in emphasis modes (italics, underlining, capitalisation practices). This kind of meta-linguistic awareness is a feature that second languages share with first language literacy.

- Metalinguistic awareness

Learning a second language stimulates a similar kind of meta-linguistic awareness to writing. As we acquire a second language we not only notice and learn that the new language, the target language, is organised and structured, but that its organisation and structure differs from that which applies to English. This awareness is potentially much more wide-ranging the meta-linguistic awareness that derives from literacy in English because it applies across the totality of the language: its grammar, writing, communication practices and cultural connections.

Grammatically a learner will need to acquire the tools to talk about language in general, including his or her mother tongue, to learn a second language. While it is possible to teach a second language with little reference to grammar it is unlikely to occur given how reduced the time encounter is, usually only a few hours per week. Grammatical knowledge is compressed information, allowing a learner to generate a large number of original expressions from a small number of rules. While the specifics of the grammar may differ between the first and the second language, the learner is nevertheless engaged in learning about language in general. This kind of knowledge is invaluable and lasting.

- Objectification

An important dimension of this meta-linguistic awareness can be called objectification. Objectification refers to the process of reflecting on the learners' first language in an empirical, objective, and distanced manner. This result of learning to communicate and understand a different language is that the differences between the target language and English are highlighted, but also that similarities and familiarities can surface in the consciousness of the learner. It is difficult to see how any other way to teach about language could be as effective as an approach that includes the systematic study of a second language.

Objectification is likely to be a lasting benefit of second language study, removing the unhealthy and inaccurate inclination that a mono-lingual might experience of imagining that their language is the only one possible, that its norms and practices are either "natural" or superior to others. More positively, objectification can actually enrich the learner's sense about the unique, positive and characteristic features of English, given that they will come to know what these features actually are rather than to depend of an uninformed sense of what is different or distinctive about English.

- Acceleration of literacy

The final effect of meta-linguistic awareness in relation to bilingualism is the likely effect of an acceleration of literacy. It is likely that this acceleration will follow a lag during which time the learner sorts out the similarities and differences between the two codes. However it is important to see this slight time delay in a learner's literacy as an investment in eventual higher levels of performance and awareness.

The knowledge of what literacy actually is, and of its various forms, and their cultural meanings, is a uniquely powerful effect of second language literacy that is constantly reinforced each time the learner reads or writes.

- Awareness of Literacy itself.

It has been pointed out that noticing differences is a potentially very positive aspect of second language literacy learning. This has been called meta-linguistic awareness. Just as a pre-literate child will gain an awareness that language has predictable and conventionalised structure and organisation as he or she learns to read and write, so too will the child come to gain meta-linguistic awareness as they study a second language.

Because the new language they are studying will have its own distinctive writing system and conventions, the meta-linguistic awareness will be more widespread impacting on both speech and writing. Noticing two systems are possible makes it more likely that a learner can come to accept and be aware that the system of writing, which is ultimately an arbitrary set of conventions that vary by culture and express differences of history and culture, is itself a system. Writing, and therefore literacy, is a symbol of a symbol. Speech is a symbolic representation of thoughts and intentions, and writing is a further symbol of this speech symbol. This self-referencing awareness is a potentially very deep impact that is unique to second languages.

Literacy can be functional, cultural and multi-modal. Multi-modal literacy is a feature of the present age. Computers allow writing to combine with image, moving images as well as still, voice, both recorded and real-time, and other modes of communication. Languages are an important ingredient of the new, contemporary kind of literacy appropriate to the intense globalisation of our time.

- Literature.

The systematic organisation of language into texts of high status and prestige is both oral (proverbs, stories, common sense), and written (poetry, novels, prose, etc.). If grammar and structure of languages suggest micro-differences that express divergent worldviews and experiences then literatures code express and code in a major way the particular histories and worldviews of different populations. Oral literature is a vast field of activity that varies across cultures. In many societies oral skills are greatly valued and children are expected to acquire mastery of whole texts, and forms of speech that are traditional, creative or interpretive. Written literature is also immense and varied according to different social and cultural traditions. It is of course national literatures that distil the thoughts, collective experience, ideals, historical interpretations, ambitions and actualities of diverse communities. In this respect we can understand cultural groups as being in constant conversation among themselves, conversations conducted in and through writing, whose lasting presence constitutes a record of knowledge of self and other.

Learning second languages, ultimately aspiring to access and appreciate and sample this literature, in its original language forms, involves an unequalled opportunity for appreciating parallel worlds, diverse interpretations and experiences and therefore is self-educating.

Grammar

- Even the minute levels of grammar offer attentive learners and teachers sources of cultural information. Pronouns choices express social distance, politeness and other aspects of interpersonal relationships. As learners acquire grammar, either explicitly or implicitly, to enhance accuracy of use of the language they are also learning social values. Functional views of grammar relate the choices that are made in realising different purposes in communication as reflecting a context of the situation in which speakers and writers find themselves in but ultimately a context of culture.

It is this view of second languages that helps to reinforce their centrality for all learners, languages tell us a great deal about human social relations.

Learning even grammar therefore the learner gains knowledge that is more than just the tool for accurate expression.

What is skill in a language?

3.2. Skills

In addition to knowledge languages also involve skills. Skills are a kind of automated knowledge, or knowledge that is enacted. Language is a perfect exemplar of skill. We see skill in action when we see practitioners of trades, professions, sports, or other activities performing their mastery of their field. In language skill is often associated with expressive ability, sometimes accuracy, but mostly fluency.

Communication

The most common aspect of language that we readily identify is communication. Communicative ability in a language is the most obvious skill. Communication ability is a very complex practice skill. Communication involves knowing the interactive dimensions of the target language; skills such as turn taking, politeness, distance, and what it is appropriate to disclose to others, and for others to disclose to strangers, to people who are similar or different in age, in gender, and in other relationship markers. The topics that are permissible for conversation, and how these are dealt with, are features of communicative skill.

Turn taking, for example, refers to the pattern for deciding who will speak and who will listen, and the complex micro-mechanics of signalling a shift, or a take-over, of turns. These skills can be acquired initially as knowledge, but rapidly become skill, automated practice, the more success a learner has with their use. It is clear from this simple example alone that second languages require performance of learned material and are therefore connected intimately to other parts of school learning that address performance. Indeed it is often a failure to understand and deal with performance that can result in de-motivation for some learners.

Discipline

It is not possible to gain proficiency in a language without devoting a lot of time and effort to the task. Languages are therefore a discipline, in a scholarly sense as well as in their expectation that considerable effort is required to gain this knowledge and skill. Because of this quality of language they tend to contribute solidity and rigour to the

entire curriculum. Languages, perhaps more than most other key learning areas, demand sustained and cumulative learning.

Indeed some aspects of language are psychologically difficult to attain and master before necessary prior features are gained. In this way we can see that a learning order, not a rigid and narrow one, but a broad pattern, lends a progressive and continuously refining character to school curriculum. Languages therefore are an essential part of the wider effort to make the overall approach to teaching and learning in Victorian schools more systematic, more coherent and intellectually demanding.

Reasoning

Different languages organise knowledge in different ways. Acquiring a language will also involve learning the unique classification systems that different languages use, and the underlying reasoning that produces these orders and categorisations of knowledge. In this way we can see that languages can contribute to the underlying common goal of all schooling that must surely be to equip young people with reasoning skills.

Reasoning skills are of many kinds and bilingualism, and even small amounts of exposure to second languages, has been shown in careful and systematic research to contribute to most kinds of reasoning. Among these is creative thinking. Creative thinking implies that a person will organise existing information in new or original ways, will reflect on existing knowledge from diverse perspectives and angles, or will predict or imagine new ways in which information is possible, and how new information could be connected to existing stocks of knowledge.

Because different languages organise the world in different ways they offer insight into the kinds of creativity that diverse societies have engaged in to achieve their present modes of expression. A learner can be assisted to see that the inferences they will be required to make to understand expressions that contain information organised in different ways from what they are familiar with will assist this process of thinking creatively. However creativity will also reinforce what is familiar, because links and connections across cognate languages, and across languages that have borrowed from each other, communicates to us about social needs in historical time.

For example, English uses the terms *maestro*, *diminuendo*, *crescendo*, *piano*, *forte*, and even grammatical features of Italian, such as *fortissimo* to express increases, in its classical music terminology, Japanese has borrowed its words for bread, shirt and table from English and Portuguese, English borrowed words for home building from some Indian languages, and when we discuss religious practices and wisdom that come through meditation a great deal of the terminology is from Sanskrit, or Pali. Similarly today when operating on most Internet sites from Italy to China, in Indonesia or Bulgaria the terminology is English or English derived. These examples tell us that interaction across differences is a major contributor to originality, because it negotiates across experiences.

Creative thinking involves lateral ways to approach situations, art forms, knowledge and information. In this way the learner is able to transform the original form into a new entity. Languages are well placed to stimulate this kind of thinking because ultimately each language is a new kind, or a lateral practice, of the same system, that is communication, and identity, in speech or writing. Creativity also combines existing stocks of knowledge in new ways and this combinative reasoning is enhanced or stimulated by second languages because word classes and entities in the real or

imagined world are combined, classified and organised differently, according to systems of organisation that different cultures value. One example is the system for what kinds of entities are given agentive capacity in verbs. In some languages only humans are given agency, and are able to act and shape their world, in other languages only some humans are attributed this power, while in other languages animals, or some animals, or spirits, or abstract entities are able to act and impact on the world.

Other kinds of reasoning that are enhanced by bilingualism are in science thinking. For example studies have shown that the quality of bilingual children's hypotheses to explain phenomena is considerably superior to that of monolingual children. It must be stressed that this advantage is a result of high levels of language proficiency in children but it is indeed impressive. Bilingual children have been found to be superior in divergent thinking, in which they are asked to speculate about the diverse kinds of explanation that might account for observed phenomena, and in convergent thinking, in which they are asked to see how disparate accounts might derive from common sources. Divergent thinking is rich in speculation and imagining, convergent thinking deploys metaphors that combine and connect and see and make associations.

Intercultural competence

Intercultural education and competence is so strong a support for languages to be seen as an essential learning for all Victorian students that this is discussed separately below.

4. Post schooling

In the post-schooling context, as indeed for the higher levels of schooling, vocational dimensions of language study become more salient.

4.1. Further study competencies

Languages contribute to the higher order reasoning capabilities that further study demands. Advanced literacies are enhanced by the very doubling of literacy that mastery of a second language represents. This impact of reading in two languages, inevitably in two forms, or modalities of reading, using a different symbolic system is, unsurprisingly, enriching of literacy in general.

It has been shown that bilingualism can be a major contributor to enhanced intellectual functioning when the learner achieves a high level of skill in the two languages. However, Victorian research has shown that even minimal exposure to a second language in early primary school enhances children's awareness of what words are and therefore impacts positively on their reading and reading preparedness.

It is reasonable to assume that the rigour and sustained learning that is required to achieve high levels of skill in two languages will impact positively on learning in general and further study competencies in particular. This claim is supported by observations made at tertiary level, though perhaps not yet empirically tested, that completion of Year 12 languages is a good predictor of minimum time tertiary completion rates. It is certainly reasonable to extrapolate from the vast body of empirical evidence about the intellectual functioning enhancements produced by languages

Essentially research on the connection between intellectual functioning and bilingualism has been through three clear stages. The first involved a belief that bilingualism has negative effects on intellectual functioning, the second was based on the idea that bilingualism has no distinctive impact on intellectual functioning. For some decades now we have been in the third phase in which a broad consensus prevails that bilingualism has positive effects on intellectual functioning.

Since the middle of the 1960s the vast majority of the large number of studies devoted to exploring the connection between bilingualism and intellectual functioning concurs in showing positive effects, consistently applying rigorous research design methods that appropriately control for critical variables. Bilingualism's positive contribution to intellectual functioning is now established on tasks requiring cognitive flexibility, and in the consistently superior performance of bilinguals compared to monolinguals in relation to metalinguistic awareness.

Cognitive flexibility mostly means creativity or divergent thinking, an enhanced ability to generate multiple associations from one concept, or to reorganise elements of a problem or situation. In relation to meta-linguistic awareness, bilinguals are consistently superior to monolinguals in analysing language forms, for example in children's ability to analyse linguistic input, to focus on different levels of linguistic structure, to apply more intense analysis to language, in awareness of words as discrete units, awareness of the arbitrariness of language, phonological awareness, sentence and semantic awareness.

A key hypothesis proposed to explain these results is the notion of linguistic interdependence, the idea that the two languages of a bilingual positively reinforce each other and the envelope of cognition that surrounds them and is nourished by them.

4.2. Workplace competencies

The case for regarding languages as contributing positively to workplace functioning is beyond the scope of the present paper, but since vocationalism begins to make its presence felt in upper schooling it is useful to state that some of the key capabilities that it is often argued are essential for contemporary workplaces are connected to language skill, and that languages are themselves relevant to the world of work. These skills are of course generic skills and not directly attributable to languages competence but the specific interaction between these competencies and bilingualism are useful to reiterate even if they cannot be explored here.

5. Citizenship, rights and democracy

The changes currently sweeping the world are making present social realities ever more complex and multifaceted. This greater complexity is revealed in discussions of citizenship, of rights and identity.

New and more complex notions of citizenship, rights and identity are key examples of the contemporary experience of diversity resulting from globalisation.

Diversity and difference are normal

Diversity and difference are normal and desirable. The spread of multiculturalism to all parts of the world is irreversible. In this context of intensifying diversity the processes of globalisation have produced an elevated need for articulate, literate mastery of language and language styles to prevent or to contest social, economic and educational discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation.

The new literacies

A further consequence of the information and communications technology revolution has been to make more complex the kinds of literacy that are required in work and education settings. These new literacies involve much more than traditional 'book and letter' mastery. All public education and training as well as labour market policies and systems need to deal with the greater complexity of textual life (Cope and Kalantzis 2000). In turn this necessitates a recognition in literacy policy that literacy is a complex phenomenon (better understood in the plural as 'literacies') that is delivered at all levels of schooling, higher education and training in a commitment to notions of life-long learning for all (Lo Bianco and Freebody 2001). These new literacies are necessarily multilingual, and also multicultural; we read and write across differences of first languages and constantly in the modern world of intensified international interaction make and negotiate with others whose background assumptions, knowledge and values may differ from our own.

Interdependence

The aggregation of vast areas of the globe into gigantic trading blocs has not only produced an unprecedented mobility of populations. It has also created a kind of interdependency of economies and a multiplication of interest alliances. One of the axes of the contemporary manifestation of identity in the post-national state is along the lines of Diasporas-Homeland. Virtually all national groupings combine a homeland site with a diaspora in which the group is dispersed across large areas of the globe. This kind of 'spread' identity co-exists alongside persisting attachment to place and origins.

At the same time as locality and place are asserted as critical in the face of the alienating consequences of globalisation we are also moving past place and locality into virtual worlds of identity and connection. Identity is a moving and shifting phenomenon and in the contemporary world most people have available to them multiple layers of identity and attachment. The language consequence of this is that more and more languages have local and 'homeland' forms, or varieties. In learning about languages and their forms we learn increasingly about how English operates as a language carrying many cultures, and how solidarity, and identity, which are the main reasons for the proliferation of language varieties, are normal practices of humans in their social lives.

Hybrid identities

Victoria's ongoing connection with immigration has influenced its identity. The mobility which has brought about such transformations is itself accelerating and diversifying. Professional and hybrid kinds of identity supplement and extend older kinds of identity and sometimes replace them. Professionals and elites find forms of attachment that are cross-ethnic and cross-national based on professional associations,

life-style and values at the same time as local and 'ethnicity-based' national attachments are revived.

It is important to keep this in mind because the idea of the 'native speaker' as the sole model for language study is under challenge. Hybrid forms of communication and partial competencies are normal today. Many people know some languages well, and have partial competencies in other languages that they require for occasional or very specific purposes. In Europe, for example, some people engage in bilingual dialogue. By this practice they learn to accentuate their skill in listening to another language, while they speak in their mother tongue. The person with whom they engage in this dialogue does the same.

The result is communication in two languages, each using their stronger mother tongue for 'productive' competency, speaking, while they hone listening skills in the other language, a 'receptive' competency. Hybrid identities, like hybrid communication practices, are just some of the innovations that increased diversity has produced in response to multiple language communities coming into more frequent contact.

Citizenship and universal multiculturalism

In the wake of population movements diverse societies emerge in every part of the world. Policies on the management of multilingualism and cultural diversity are becoming a necessary feature of contemporary life. As a result of the greater diversification of most societies a new onus is placed on public education. This is to ensure wide access to a common and shared instrument and practice of communication. In this context traditional understandings of citizenship are challenged. Old and somewhat passive constructions of citizenship stressed the duties of the citizen to the collectivity represented by the state, and the reciprocal rights to which the individual was entitled. Universal multiculturalism requires a more substantive kind of citizenship.

Substantive citizenship stresses the need for investment in the language and communication capability of the people that constitute contemporary nations to give effect to more participatory kinds of governance. At the same time simple notions of equality (in which all citizens receive the same education content and skills) are under challenge and may be discarded in favour of more complex notions of equality in which access to goods and services (old equality) is seen to be supplemented by active pluralism in which we theorise equality within and across difference (new and complex equality) (Kymlicka, 1995; Dauenhauer, 1996; Janoski, 1998; Benhabib, 1999).

In all of these developments second languages are the most tangible evidence of the changes. These are not the traditional rationales and warrants for languages, where it was often argued that languages were relevant only to elites who might travel, or have recreational time to pursue cultural interests. These warrants for languages are relevant to the pluralising world of global multiculturalism, which far from being redundant today is in fact emerging as a major characteristic of globalisation.

6. Language as a resource¹

It is useful to reconceive how we imagine second languages, to ensure that current understandings are appropriate to the context in which we are located.

‘Language’ in its widest sense can be productively thought of as a social and personal resource and asset. By this logic a society can cultivate and develop its language resource enhancing its social communication, and unity, by ensuring that the many ‘voices’ of its community can be heard. Second languages, and therefore bilingualism, can be understood also as a personal and social asset, a resource.

Changes to the world of culture, identity and belonging, as much as to international trade, finance, tourism and other economic and technological endeavours are making the world more ‘semiotically complex’ (Halliday, 1993). We are called upon to act in a world with more cultural signs, signs which reflect and inflect each other, signs that mark belonging and exclusion. In such an environment enhanced public investment in knowledge is essential, and languages, ultimately, are systems of signs.

Notions of citizenship that is richer than past yes/no determiners of belonging to states are predicated on greater numbers of the community commanding powerful registers of communication. Increasingly this kind of communications mastery will directly affect public participation and involvement. This understanding of citizenship forging closer, more productive and iterative relationships between government, bureaucracy and citizens will be of increasing importance. Many citizens in western democratic states are better educated than ever before and demand ever more open and participatory relationships with government. The task and act of governance is itself more difficult due to the ever rapidly expanding quantum of knowledge (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 1995; 1996; 1997). The knowledge explosion challenges one of the core principles of democracy itself (popular sovereignty) with technocratic domination of many fields of life (e.g., medicine, environmental management). In all societies there is this tension between expertise and executive-democratic power.

The articulate use of language, the mastery of more than one language, and high levels of literacy are resources of citizens to participate in the public life of their society as much as they are acts of identity and communication. One of the contemporary roles of language education and planning is to bring about investments in the creation of mastery and skill over language (the single most powerful semiotic practice for public participation) and its wider and deeper spread among the population. Language understood in this way is specified as a resource with intellectual, cultural, economic and social manifestations.

Intellectual resource

All human knowledge is constructed in and through language. Language therefore involves the particular disciplinary and literacy conventions, the discourse and vocabulary and styles of particular fields of knowledge. Intellectual functioning of any high order is totally and inextricably involved with language. As already noted above

¹ This section is drawn from Lo Bianco, J. (2001) *Language and Literacy Planning in Scotland*. SCILT: University of Stirling.

research on the intellectual effects of bilingualism consistently finds that bilingualism in which the two languages of a bilingual child are encouraged to develop to literate mastery can produce significant cognitive advantages.

These cognitive advantages refer to both language and non-language related intellectual functioning. To the extent that education aims to enhance the cognitive capability of learners, bilingualism warrants inclusion as a goal of schooling.

The connection between language and intellectual functioning, however, pervades all areas of education and is an essential component of national efforts to build a competitive economy and a participating citizenry.

Cultural resource

Language is also a critical resource of cultural vitality. The literary and performing arts utilise language directly as the means of cultural expression. But cultural vitality also involves the mastery of ways to understand, speak about and participate in understandings of new forms of representation. Hybridity (mixing of forms) of culture has often indicated periods of intense creativity and development. Multiculturalism therefore can be nurtured so that expressiveness and cultural values are able to become part of wider society to enrich its cultural and artistic forms. Acts of cultural exclusion have also always involved the high arts whose appreciation was expressly denied to all citizens bar the wealthy, the aesthetes or the enculturated.

All learners in school can attain useable levels of bilingualism and it is a social equity goal that this should be facilitated. In addition access to the language of criticism, of art, literature and performance needs to be treated as cultural capital that should be consciously made available to growing numbers of citizens.

Economic resource

The 'knowledge explosion' continues to increase the available stocks of information. Economies now compete on the basis of their relative investments in science, technology, research and general productive capability. It used to be the case that economic success depended on the natural endowments of economies. Successful economies were able to exploit the 'gift' of raw materials or primary produce that climate and geography had endowed. Luck is less a predictor of success in the global economy of 'fast' capitalism. The 'information society' has transformed the basis of national wealth in favour of the capabilities of economies, and most especially of their populations (Machlup, 1984; OECD, 1992).

Understanding humans as capital assets makes literate practice, and spoken communication effectiveness, central capabilities in emerging markets of expertise, knowledge, and capability.

Globalisation has also brought about the transfer of wealth away from the post-1945 domination of the world economy by Anglophone zones of the world. New economic powerhouses have emerged in Asia and in non-English native speaking parts of Europe. By some contemporary predictions the BRIC will be the driving four of a period of time from 2030 on, these nations being Brazil, Russia, India and China, with the huge populations, great territories and, at least in two cases already, burgeoning economies. Only India has significant population components who use English, although in all the others English is a strong presence in the education system.

Communicating with the BRIC into the future only on the basis of English alone would be an absurd principle of planning no matter how widespread English might become in these countries.

Most of the world's economy does not function primarily in English. The centrality of language as the overwhelmingly dominant intellectual resource on which all knowledge depends is essential as an object of investment for expanding the human capital of the nation. The centrality of languages is a result of more parts of the world becoming target markets for Victorian goods and services.

Social resource

In human social interactions the overwhelming majority of all encounters gravitate around communication. Society itself is inconceivable in any sophisticated way without elaborated forms of dialogue and interaction. The communicative function of language is its most obvious one but communication is often far from effective or smooth. Many political, legal, personal, marital and familial problems reside in difficulties of communication. In popular culture we frequently discuss issues and problems of youth and teenagers, family conflict and political alienation in terms of communication difficulties.

Language, and its manifestation as open communication, is a central feature of the entire organisation of social life. A resource so vital to social life receives relatively little direct attention and cultivation considering its psychological, social and community centrality. Bilingualism of course is intimately connected to all forms of sociality, since so many of these are located in and performed through language.

Citizenship resource

Comments have already been made about language and public participation. There are ways however in which language use denies and restricts participation. In its capacity to convey, entrench and animate hostility (language imbued with racist, sexist, sectarian, exclusionary and divisive meanings) language has power and potential for abuse.

All political and social movements are characterised by the deployment of forms of language to advance their cause. Typically this takes the form of debate and argument, polemic and propaganda, rather than conversation and discussion. Debate and argument are generic ways of organising talk just as discussion and conversation are. In debate turns are allocated formally, in conversation they are allocated informally, in argument they are denied. There is a rich and ancient array of devices of persuasion and rhetoric. Language deploys many characteristics of suggestion, implication, accusation along with divisive nominalisation, systematic depiction of antagonistic groups as passive, immoral, less human, defective, hostile, incorrigible others. These techniques of the language of hostility can be mobilised by any group or individual against any others.

Citizenship is the only common social role of adults in society. A wider and deeper capability of public language mastery is a pre-condition of substantive citizenship. Citizenship education (for the young as they grow into citizenship and newly arrived adults as they are admitted to it) ought to be much more systematically part of education endeavours. New notions of citizenship aim to achieve greater levels of active engagement with the public life of the nation by greater numbers of citizens.

Substantive citizenship must therefore pay attention to the obstacles placed before many groups in society by how the language resources of society are arranged. Prejudiced language distances participation, and technical language elevates barriers to involvement. The technical nature of much policy debate precludes or makes difficult public access to knowledge and inhibits the free expression of views.

In multilingual societies education policy should take seriously the language connections with citizenship.

Rights resource

There is no social or political movement that aims to impact on society that does not generate and utilise particular kinds of discourse and language to sustain its logic, ideology and intentions. It is important therefore that the ways in which language serves to locate and position individuals and groups, to deny or limit their social role (or to effect some kind of exclusion) be analysed and understood. Such a critical disposition towards language is a necessary part of democratic dialogue and participation in open societies.

Victoria's citizenry will never be homogenous; it is not now. Public discourse therefore, to the extent that this creates and makes social participation, regard and representation possible, needs to reflect values of inclusion, rights and legitimate difference. Second language education takes its place in this wider rubric too as an element of the construction of a cultural democracy where citizen participation can be multilingual and elaborated, not restricted by some people's partial knowledge of English.

Understanding language as a resource in this kind of way leads to the important consequences which make its incorporation into education policy as essential, universal learning.

7. Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT)

Three key concepts frame the idea that second language teaching and learning should make interculturalism a principal concern from the very beginning of language education, for all learners, and at all levels. Although culture is a traditional goal of much, though by no means all, second language teaching, intercultural education is a particular and contemporary development of this longstanding view.

It was traditionally supposed that a learner would acquire proficiency in a language and then study the related culture, either as an add-on, or in a separate curriculum of its own. Communicative language teaching has tried to include culture, but only to the extent that actual communication might sometimes be inhibited by a lack of knowledge of culture. ILT is different from these approaches and directly relevant to the idea of languages as 'essential' for all learners. ILT sees culture and language as inseparable, and the teaching of cultural knowledge as intimately connected with all language teaching, even its most grammatical, phonological or lexical aspects.

These key concepts organise the idea of essential learnings and ILT. These will influence the dimensions of the domain of LOTE, and the descriptions of these dimensions, and impact on the performance standards that evolved from these dimensions. It will be important to assist teachers with materials, activities and

professional development. ILT reinforces general learning concepts and aims in Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE), English and other areas of the curriculum. These three key concepts, or dimensions, are generic statements that apply equally, but in distinctive ways, to all target languages.

The first concept states that:

Culture is expressed in communication

When we learn a second language we learn its socio-cultural norms alongside its grammatical rules, vocabulary and other linguistic items. Socio-cultural rules and conventions are essential for effective communication, even at the earliest stages of acquisition. Grammatical items do not exist simply for conventional purposes; rather they are the product of how different cultures express their unique values and therefore even formal grammar potentially has important cultural meaning in human interaction. In language learning and communication practices therefore we find cultural patterns that indicate the worldview and ethos of the society and tradition concerned. If learners acquire only the formal rules of speaking or reading the language they are studying, without any understanding or ability to use particular cultural traits, they will be ineffective communicators.

The second concept is:

Interculturalism: understanding culture in self & other.

Cultural dimensions in spoken language are the expression of the different values and social relationships in the target language society. These raise for the learner the experience of 'self' and 'other' along with the expression of the values attached to the relationship between 'self/other' in different personal, physical and social environments. This concept is elaborated as subsidiary ideas that are culture-general, and culture-specific. The culture-general dimension involves learners noticing that Victorian students' backgrounds and communication practices, and the Australian national values these express, influence how they communicate. In noticing that their communication practices are culturally influenced, the principle aims to suggest that culturally specific different ways of expressing and conducting social relationships exist for everyone. Noticing differences is the initial part of the learner's journey into a second language context.

This aims to go beyond noticing to support positive attitudes towards 'differences' in general. The culture-specific dimension involves learners noticing differences between their Australian backgrounds and particular characteristics of the society associated with the language they are studying.

The third concept states that:

Intercultural communication develops in the 'third place'

Effective communication is a two way street. This principle focuses attention on actual interactions between Victorian students and counterparts in other national cultures. The third place suggests that they will engage in mutual accommodation to each other, since both will be intuitively aware that they are communicating across cultures. Both the Victorian students, and the people with whom they interact will adjust and adapt to each other. Neither will remain totally within the original culture of their background.

The third place refers to this dynamic zone or practice of mutual adaptation. It is a realistic goal for communication given that speakers and listeners; readers and writers, always bring cultural background, assumptions, knowledge and expectations of each other to the communication tasks at hand. The sub concepts, learning outcomes and activities aim to provide students of various languages with insight into, and effective tools for, making intercultural communication more effective.

Specifically addressed are awareness raising activities, scaffolded experimentation, guided production and feedback which aim to support the learner to find his or her distinctive 'voice', or identity, in communication. A personal 'voice' is a mechanism for a secure personal and cultural identity in intercultural communication.

7.1. Culture in communication practices.

Culture is expressed in language and communication practices, and this key idea specifically addresses the following concepts, each a supportive dimension of the domain of LOTE as an essential part of Victorian education.

The term 'verbosity' is used here in its technical meaning, without any negative connotation and refers simply to the amount of speaking considered acceptable in a given society. Verbosity varies considerably according to age, hierarchy and culture. However, in general, cultures are high or low on a verbosity continuum and vary according to the degree and times of silence and its interpretation in communication. In many settings Chinese culture for example places a premium on low verbosity and considers silence indicative of wisdom, while in some other cultures silence may be interpreted as socially threatening or indicating inability to participate in verbal culture. Verbosity is indicative therefore of some kinds of cultural values as expressed in communication practices.

Cultures of speaking

All languages have distinctive historical and contemporary patterns of speaking in which degrees of speaking and silence are expected according age, occupation, gender, formality and status hierarchy.

Learners need to adapt their language style and lexicon according to requirements of various social situations, particularly to be aware of when it is inappropriate to speak, or to speak loudly, or too much, and with whom such patterns of conversation are appropriate. This learning is a significant component of the performance of language competence.

Verbosity refers to the culturally specific ways that different societies deal with speaking and the importance they place on speaking. Low verbosity cultures tolerate silence whereas high verbosity cultures discourage silence. At its least complex this idea refers to how much or how little time is devoted to talking in different societies, to asking questions and to 'filling up the air'.

Interpersonal relationships

Relating to other people is perhaps the single greatest task of language. Students need the skills and knowledge to manage social and interpersonal relationships of many kinds, and with people of different ages and social positions. Turn taking in speech, interruption or overlapping, appropriate expression of deference, hesitation, and

various kinds of message and politeness-signaling during communication are important features of language learning for effective handling of inter-personal relations. This principle refers to the ways in which various languages express social relations between people and how consensus is achieved in communication while still allowing for the expression of views and disagreement. Interpersonal relationships and how these are organised informs history, society and language studies alike.

Interpersonal relationships therefore refer to different societal practices and expressions of how individuals are to relate to each other. Learners acquire this general knowledge, and the skill to use and apply this knowledge in conversational practices. This is a highly complex and culture specific area of human interaction but in general terms speech communities range along three related but distinct continua according to how they handle interpersonal relationships in conversation. These are:

Proximity ~ Distance
Hierarchy ~ Equality
Consensus ~ Conflict

These continua describe social regulation, much of which is accomplished linguistically. Some of the means whereby social values are expressed are:

Social regulation

Along the Proximity ~ Distance continuum all languages deploy a complex range of precise pragmatic values enacted by the use of different linguistic forms in encounters that are among friends, family, professional acquaintances or strangers. There are many markers of social distance or proximity.

These can involve the degree of physical contact that is permitted or discouraged between people during interaction; the availability of terms of address that code required distinctions such as polite/formal or informal/familiar second-person pronouns or other grammatical markers; the use of different address forms, such as titles and honorifics, or full name use, or contractions, according to age, familiarity, professional seniority, gender etc.

Expressing social standing

The Hierarchy ~ Equality continuum expresses social stratification and its role in facilitating social relations. The histories and values expressed in any one language will differ markedly from those of Australian English. While Australian English has a restricted set of hierarchy and status markers, expressing values of communicative equality among interactants, Chinese or Indonesian, for example, each have a more extensive range.

Consensus and conflict

The Consensus ~ Conflict continuum expresses social histories of preferred ways to govern social relations. For example, a feature of Japanese communication style is its emphasis on *omoiyari* (empathy), over explicit verbal communication. *Omoiari* is a social convention expressed linguistically that precludes overt expression of conflict as a threat to a preferred social harmony. *Omoiari* is often realised as indirectness in verbal interaction, and functions as a linguistic mechanism to forestall potential conflict. While Australian English is not overtly a conflict communication culture it does have a much more restricted set of devices for expressing harmony than Japanese.

Understanding politeness

Politeness extends from the ‘basics’ of etiquette (such as table manners) to extra and para-linguistic behaviour. Para-linguistic behaviour includes the appropriate use of bowing, handshaking, touching, physical closeness or distance, removing shoes, bathing, and so on and all para and extra linguistic communication is highly culturally specific. However taboo, body posture, face (‘giving’ face, ‘respecting’ face, and acceptable or unacceptable topics for humour, or opinion expressing are immediately part of politeness practices that are highly culturally specific). Essentially politeness refers to the distinctive ways that different languages include in communication behaviours, verbal and non-verbal, that help to make communication smooth and effective in various daily interactions. This principle is a significant dimension of social competence in general.

Rules of politeness pervade all verbal interactions and their transgression can lead to serious communication breakdown. Linguistic politeness refers to the various devices that different speech communities adopt to ensure verbal communication remains harmonious. A critical dimension of politeness is the concept of ‘face’.

Verbal politeness and face

Verbal or linguistic politeness revolves around the complex and culturally highly varied practices of face. Negative face refers to a person’s need to protect his or her personal space, time and possessions while positive face refers to people’s need to project a positive image when interacting with others. Verbal behaviour which is a potential threat to a personal face, either the positive or the negative face, is referred to as a Face Threatening Act (FTA), and takes the form of direct insults, indiscretion about a person’s private life, or adopting an ordering or bossy tone to another person. The opposite of an FTA is a Face Flattering Acts (FFA), such as a compliment, which aims to have a positive ‘face effect’.

Conversation in many cultures is governed by the ‘face work’ of native speakers who are aware of the gravity of FTAs, or the inappropriateness of some FFAs, and how what is appropriate is influenced by social distance, power relations, tradition and the interpersonal relations addressed above. Speech communities are located along a continuum. At one end are speech communities that favour negative politeness (characterised by high respect for personal space, where conversations often contain a softening of FTAs); to speech communities that favour positive politeness (where there is a high production of FFAs).

Understood in this more robust way, politeness is a crucial part of all language teaching and of considerable importance to all learners.

Degree of ritualisation

There are specific settings in which particular kinds of communication rules apply, for example, meals, telephone demeanour, letter writing, meetings etc. Learners need to appreciate the settings and times in which certain ritual uses of language, greetings and formality in particular, are required. The extent to which individual's deviation from ordered communication rules is tolerated is a feature of communicative ritualisation. Among the many impacts of learning about ritualisation is one connected to extra-human forces in social life. Ritualisation sometimes derives from the role of religion in society, since ritualisation is often a reference to supra-human influences on what humans can do, and their ability to change the world or to accept its pre-destined course. Ritualisation therefore deals with communication traditions where behaviour requires strict observance of rituals and routines. The opposite of highly ritualised communication requirements are those where conversational rules are more malleable, so that individuals modify rules to personal taste without encountering significant disapproval. It is clear what a significant personal skill this kind of skilled knowledge would represent, for any learner.

Expression of emotions, feelings and opinions

This concept distinguishes between societies with a strong emotional ethos in which the overt and even intense expression of feelings and emotion is either acceptable, or even encouraged, and others in which a more inhibited, or controlled ethos over emotional expression is required. This is relevant to learners since engagement with different cultural mores and expectations will sometimes be challenging.

Understanding culturally appropriate ways of expressing specific feelings, and general emotional states, is an important feature of being able to participate actively in another culture.

7.2. Self and others

It is critical to see that language learning, and cultural learning, is more than 'us' learning about 'them'. All such learning, especially if it is based on the principles of 'intercultural language learning' involves understanding self and others as cultural beings and specifically addresses the following

Spoken language interactions that use culturally different patterns from learners will stimulate learners' awareness about general cultural differences, beyond the specific ones being studied. Some learners find actual differences threatening, challenging, or difficult. Others find them interesting, attractive, and appealing, while still others react neutrally. However they are responded to emotionally, students may gain both culture-specific and culture-general insights and information simply by observing and noticing difference. These raise for the learner the experience of 'self' and 'other' along with the expression of the values attached to the relationship between 'self/other' in different personal, physical and social environments. The process that many learners pass through is the following:

Noticing cultural differences

Noticed differences may be implicit or explicit, verbalised or silent, evaluated or accepted neutrally. A key aim in intercultural language teaching is for learners to discuss cultural differences openly, to compare noticed differences with the source culture of the learner, and to encourage learners to devise theories of communication that are general and also particular to the language they are learning. A key objective is to bring about more effective use of the target language, but also to gain knowledge about communication styles and communication profiles of others and reflectively of oneself.

Noticing differences is the initial part of the learner's journey into a second language context. The aim, however, is to go beyond noticing to support the development of positive attitudes towards 'differences' in general.

Discussing cultural differences

Noticing differences in cultural practices in second language communication will encourage Victorian students to reflect on and discuss their own communication practices and how these express values of their society and culture.

Learning that differences are normal

Intercultural language teaching aims to suggest that cultural differences are normal and inevitable for all cultural groups. The growing awareness among students that they themselves are also cultural beings, and the Australian English that they use is influenced by our national culture, will encourage learners to see that expressing and conducting social relationships in culturally specific ways is not just something that 'others' do, but is a universal characteristic, found within 'Englishes' as within other languages.

Learning how to learn, and talk, about language and culture

Discussing cultural differences with the language of comparison and the tools of classification, and with respectful attitudes, encourages learners to develop techniques for enhancing and self-directing their own learning of the target languages, but also meta-cognitive and meta-linguistic knowledge.

Culture-specific learning

Coming to know the myriad of ways in which speakers of target languages express cultural history and values of their societies is a major goal of intercultural language teaching. It is also a goal that directly impacts on other parts of the curriculum.

7.3. The third place

The third place is a term that refers to the idea that competent intercultural communication rarely involves the total prevailing of one set of linguistic, cultural or pragmatic norms of communication. When we communicate across cultural differences there is mutual adaptation, and negotiation. Both parties understand implicitly that the communication is not a native speaker–native speaker interaction. Such communication is often highly dynamic, sometimes involves code and mode switching, and cultural adaptation.

While the goal of second language teaching is to approximate standard norms, much interaction takes place in a more dynamic zone of adaptation and mutual accommodation. The third place is a way to express that this interactive communicative space is a rich opportunity for learning, about self and other, about expectations, stereotyping, adaptation, flexibility or rigidity, and about the fluency, accuracy and the necessity for some level of shared norms to permit the effective exchange of meanings.

Awareness

Cross-cultural communication directly stimulates awareness of one's own particular communication style and practice. This awareness rarely arises when one is speaking one's own language, among people whose background cultural norms are known, and therefore silent, or assumed. Self-awareness, through contrast, and objectification, becomes very marked when communicating cross-culturally, cross-lingually. However, unless teachers guide learners these experiences are not always interpreted positively, or understood as pointers to new learning. Intercultural language teaching aims to support learners to be reflective about their own communication style so that they can adapt sensitively to the expected communication styles and practices of interlocutors in other languages. Students should also develop a strong awareness of the communication styles of the target language, and speakers adapt their speech to accommodate and include them. The awareness of both aspects of the communication will support the growing realisation that effective communication involves mutual adjustment.

New input through learning activities will stimulate comparison and contrast, but its explanation and exploration is not a strictly linguistic activity. Social knowledge, and even sociological knowledge, and cultural, familial, and age, professional and occupational categories will impinge on effective communication skills and on interpreting third place encounters. Explanations should be offered to ensure that students derive accurate information from the differences they notice.

Experimentation

Learners should study and experiment in different communicative tasks with scaffolded support so that they succeed and gain confidence. Focused practice is required which allows the student to put together the pieces of a whole communication episode. Experimentation will often involve support for negotiation of meaning, through verbal clarification, circumlocution, gestures and miming. Skills in problem solving, boundary setting, 'embarrassment management', communication repair and strategies for communication maintenance, are important areas for scaffolding or advance preparation. It is clear that second languages used in these circumstances are performative, and drama education, English teaching, social studies, history and other domains of knowledge are relevant to the learning that is undertaken.

Production

The third place notion lends itself well to scenario based activity which in turn encourages learners to extend their growing knowledge of the cultural patterns and rules of communication. Full role simulations, and engaging in actual communication activity, in which previously scaffolded experimentation is applied to accomplish various speech acts for different purposes, takes languages away from academic or scholarly dimensions and towards direct engagement with others, and with otherness.

Feedback

Feedback is critical to support learners' growing theories and skills in actual target language communication. Feedback will also extend a learner's experimentation and production evaluation with explicit information about terms of address, formality, telephone etiquette, and various speech acts which have formal requirements (thanking, apologising, complimenting, and deferring), as well as extending lexicon and related matters. Feedback about direct engagement with meaningful communication can claim its place as an essential self-learning, self-objectifying practice – seeing yourself as others see you.

The learner's voice

A personal 'voice' is a mechanism for a secure personal and cultural identity in intercultural communication. It is very important for students to retain a clear sense of personal identity and confidence, as they grow in capability in the second language. Their distinctive personal 'voice', or identity, in communication will assist in their ability to seek out new and more complex communication opportunities in the languages they are studying. The third place suggests that effective communication often involves a dynamic process of mutual accommodation, based on speakers' intuitive awareness that they are communicating across cultures. This is a realistic goal for communication given that speakers always bring cultural background, assumptions, knowledge and expectations of each other to the communication tasks at hand. The learner's voice also requires an ability to create points of connection with strangers and with peers. This will involve a specific discourse of self and self-presentation, and personal disclosure that is culturally sensitive and aware. In this dimension it is clear that second language study relates closely to human development, personal identity, and other parts of the curriculum where a growing reflective personhood matures in learners.

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