University Library



A gateway to Melbourne's research publications

Minerva Access is the Institutional Repository of The University of Melbourne

Author/s:
Lo Bianco, J;SLAUGHTER, Y

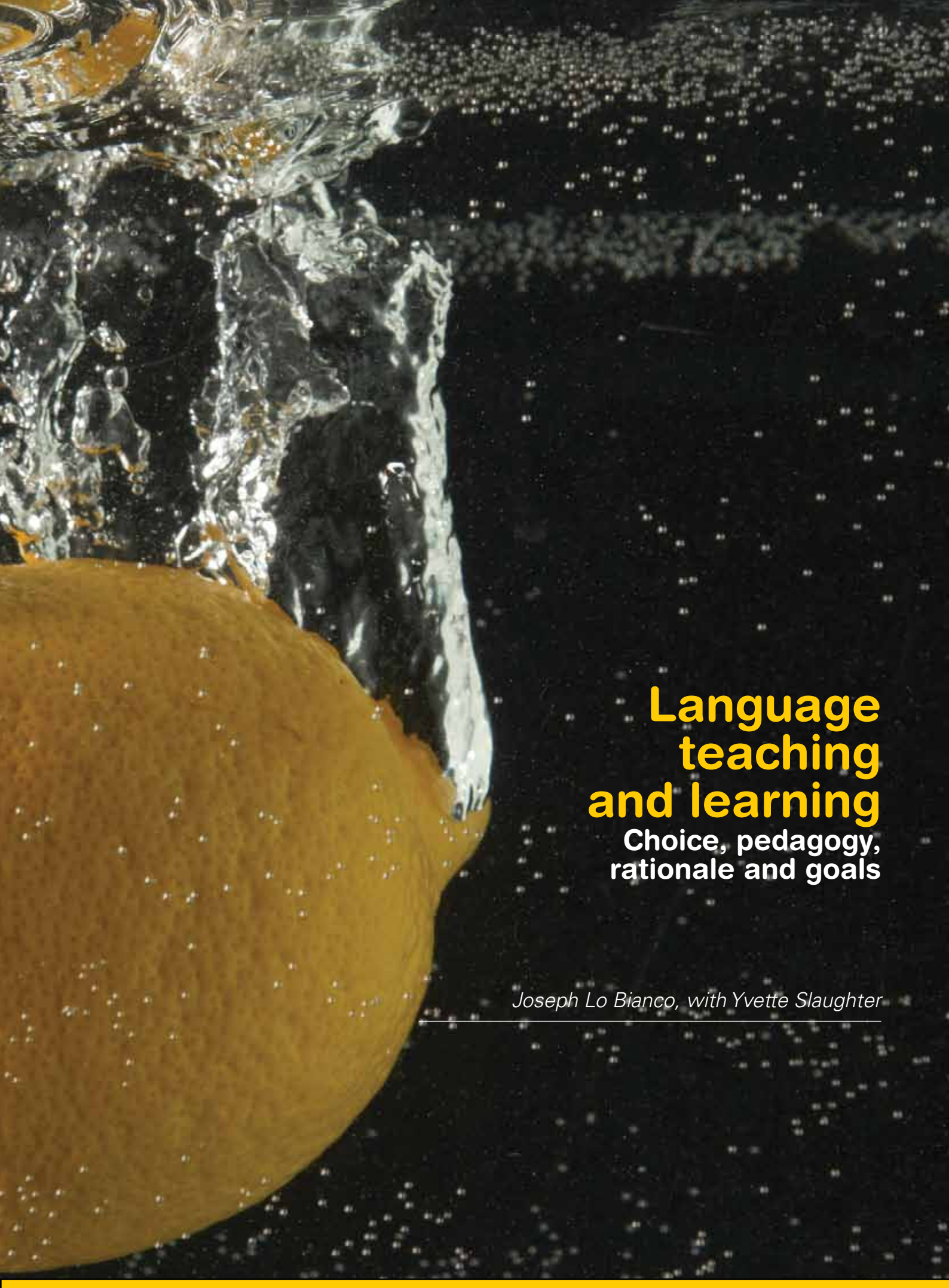
Title:
Language teaching and learning: choice, pedagogy, rationale and goals.

Date:
2009

Citation:
Lo Bianco, J. & SLAUGHTER, Y. (2009). Language teaching and learning: choice, pedagogy, rationale and goals.. Babel, 44 (1), pp.24-35

Persistent Link:
https://hdl.handle.net/11343/247792





Language teaching and learning

Choice, pedagogy, rationale and goals

Joseph Lo Bianco, with Yvette Slaughter

EFFECTING CHANGE

In his examination of successful innovation and change in education in many settings, Fullan (2001) identifies the three broad options for effecting change that public authorities have at their disposal. They can seek to bring about change through imposing accountability (system-wide or targeted), or through providing incentives (either 'negatively' as pressure or 'positively' as support), or they can direct their attention towards 'capacity-building' for key agents in the field being addressed, such as teachers, schools or universities.

> *It is exceedingly difficult to combine accountability, incentives, and capacity-building, as evidenced by the fact that no government has ever done it effectively. It is complex and there are in-built tensions. It is easy to err in providing too much or too little control.*
>
> *(Fullan, 2001, p. 232)*

The review of Australian language policy shows that rarely has there been a consistent process of building on previous innovation and rarely are these three meta-strategies of accountability, incentives and capacity-building used in the judicious combination which is most likely to succeed. A central feature of education policy making is the critical, professional role of teachers and it would be to this that a capacity-building approach would be directed.

> *Capacity-building at its heart is a system of guiding and directing people's work, which is carried out in a highly interactive professional learning setting.*
>
> *(Fullan, 2001, p. 236)*

LANGUAGES PROVISION

The picture of which languages are provided, studied and learnt involves a complex interplay, an ecology, of interacting and therefore dynamic forces. There are top-down pressures and bottom-up pressures. There are constraints in availability of needed resources, such as suitably qualified teachers. There are the confounding effects of private decisions. There are the residue effects of past policy choices. There is an inescapable influence from prevailing attitudes, ideologies and biases.

Ultimately language learning is the preoccupation of individual students, in the same way as language teaching is the preoccupation of language teachers. In recent policies, written with the hand of diplomats, trade officials and other elites, there has been far less consideration of the practical issues involved in schooling, and therefore a tendency towards stressing accountability and imposition of numerical targets, with less focus on capacity-building, acknowledgment of the learner population, issues of motivation, resource constraints, personal aspirations, experiences and motivation, identity issues and family background. All too often it is assumed that the motivations learners have available to them are the prospects of employment and other material advantage that attach to language learning.

This outsider perspective on motivation is less tenable today in light of the powerful shifting of emphasis towards the internal perspective and experience of learners, and on the quality of micro-school experiences in influencing motivation, persistence and interest among language students (Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b, 2005, 2009).

This research is important to language education planners because it shows that even in the face of negative attitudes students might inherit from the wider society, or from their parents, about languages being unimportant, or that 'everyone speaks English', micro-motivation effects (good teaching, concrete perceptible sense of achievement, success) can override negativity and sustain student interest. Here policy is practice, in the hands of individual teachers and schools.

ECOLOGY OF POLICY INFLUENCES

Effective provision of a multilanguage education for Australian learners that is wise to the many problems of past implementation would pay close regard to close interaction between policy and attitudes. Commenting precisely on the many parties involved and their roles facilitating or obstructing effective language education (policy makers, schools, parents and students, etc.), Christ observed that:

> *… attention must be paid to the question of whether and to what extent educational policy measures … serve to strengthen or even create attitudes towards language … language attitudes possess their own political dimensions – a fact of which educational policy needs to take productive cognisance.*
>
> *(Christ, 1997, pp. 9–10)*

Bringing about congruent action from the diverse array of players who impact on language education policy is often elusive and sometimes impossible. In Britain, the term 'joined-up thinking' is used to call for coherence and articulation across government departments in policy areas that are spread across more than one jurisdiction. Australia's federal and highly devolved system of governance, and the extremely large number of players involved in the multi-subject reality that is simplified as 'language teaching', mean that language policy is in strong need of having its various parts 'joined up'.

Administratively there is a complex interaction between the federal government which, while it is prominent in language education policy, does not hire a single school language teacher, nor does it run a single school in which a language is or might be taught. In recent years federal government language education policy has tended to work through positive incentives; for example through provision of discretionary funding and capacity-building and through initiatives in teacher education

or professional development. State-level policy decisions are fundamental to the effectiveness of the federal initiatives but are also independent and responsive to local conditions. School- and jurisdiction-based initiatives and priorities and their varying responses to federal and state initiatives further complicate this already complicated picture. In addition, there are complementary school systems conducted by ethnic minority communities whose priorities and practices are dictated by internal needs and ideas. There have been many attempts to co-ordinate and synchronise these administrative efforts with institutional ones and with the key policy voices identified above.

The most effective and celebrated case was the initiative of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia during the early 1980s (Clyne, 1991; Ozolins, 1993; Scarino & Papademetre, 2001). It is worth recalling that this small community-based organisation, working under the multicultural remit of general policy at the time, commenced with state level agitation conferences demanding a national language policy. This culminated in a national level conference and led directly to the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Arts conducing Australia's first public inquiry into language needs. Reporting in 1984, the Senate recommended that a language policy be promulgated at the national level, but government interest had by this stage faltered, provoking bottom-up demands for change. Ultimately a new process of broad public consultation was embarked on in 1986 and this led to the formal adoption by Federal Cabinet in June 1987 of the National Policy on Languages. Subsequent policy was much more characterised by top-down approaches, and much more restricted in scope and remit of activity, concentrating not on broad whole-of-government language planning but specifically on the teaching of foreign languages in schools (Herriman, 1996).

PEDAGOGY

The teacher as the ultimate resting point

The ultimate target of all language education planning and policy work is the effectiveness of the teacher, such as the skills they are able to marshal and their persistence in their roles. Good teaching is the single most important controllable variable in successful language learning and this in turn depends crucially both on the receptiveness of schools hosting language programs and the quality of teacher education, ultimately determined by university and federal government support.

It is a frequently heard lament of the language teacher that they are not just teacher but also subject advocate, called upon continually to defend the integrity and presence of Indonesian or German in this or that school against complaints about the crowded curriculum, lack of student interest and a host of other pressures. Continuation of language programs is deeply dependent on replacement of departing teachers, attitudes towards language study in general and often to particular languages.

Languages are also hostage, as it were, to international relations. During the French nuclear testing at Muroroa Atoll in the South Pacific in 1994 protesting university students poured (presumably inexpensive) champagne into drains and refused to attend French classes. More insidiously, negative attitudes towards Indonesia, generated by Indonesian foreign policy, conviction of drug runners, extremist terrorist violence targeted at Australian tourists and other images, clichés and prejudices in the mass media have made Indonesian, certainly Australia's most important and only true regional language, subject to continual interruptions in its teaching. While Australia can boast a substantial effort in Indonesian language education, possibly the most extensive in the world, it is in truth fragile, continually endangered and disrupted, largely due to the vicissitudes of politics and conflict.

After the obliteration of many school language programs with the 1918 legislation banning bilingual programming, it was not until the mid-1970s that languages returned to the primary school. The 1970s policies resulted in one of the several school success stories of recent language planning. In some states very many students still experience second language study, and for many of these it remains available throughout the years of formal education. Approximately half of primary students and one-third of their secondary school counterparts in the compulsory years engage in language studies. However, fewer than 10 per cent of tertiary students take up the option (Nettelbeck, Byron, Clyne, Hajek, Lo Bianco, & McLaren, 2007), leading these writers to conclude that 'Language teaching is beset by continual commissioning of new information that is hardly ever used to inform policy.'

THE 1970S POLICIES RESULTED IN ONE OF THE SEVERAL SCHOOL SUCCESS STORIES OF RECENT LANGUAGE PLANNING. IN SOME STATES VERY MANY STUDENTS STILL EXPERIENCE SECOND LANGUAGE STUDY, AND FOR MANY OF THESE IT REMAINS AVAILABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS OF FORMAL EDUCATION.

Progress in pedagogy and program design

Over the 25 centuries of language teaching discussed by Kelly (1976) there have been major developments in methodology, understanding of language and confidence in the effectiveness of the enterprise. Here only some of the major phases of recent thinking and teaching in second languages are considered. For most of the 20th century the grammar–translation (GT) method prevailed in language teaching in Australia. Originating in the 1840s, the separate operations of grammatical analysis and translation practice constituted the bulk of activities in language learning and, while today the default position in discussions of method is to treat GT like 'the bad old days of yore', it had the virtues of being systematic, analytical, and many people learned languages quite effectively. GT is, however, oriented mostly towards accuracy rather than fluency, and to knowledge about language rather than competent use of it, and these are serious limitations when the goal is bilingual speaking skill.

The chief focus of GT was prestigious literary texts. Grammatical structures were introduced

THE ESSENTIAL PROPOSITION OF IMMERSION EDUCATION IS THAT ACQUISITION OF STRUCTURE (ACCURACY, OR GRAMMATICAL CORRECTNESS) FOLLOWS FROM THE ACQUISITION OF MEANINGFUL INPUT.

singly, and in an ordered sequence. Vocabulary was introduced and discussed, and then sentences were considered, employing the new grammatical structure and vocabulary, in patterned native speaker models. These were translated from the second into the first language, and vice versa. The main goal of GT was to read literature, the main cognitive justification was that mental discipline and intellectual rigour were associated with formal language study and the texts, prestige writings of the western literary canon, would connect a learner with his or her civilisation. Far less attention was devoted to verbal competency and in most cases little was acquired. As a learning method, GT is more strongly associated with classical languages, especially Latin.

Audiolingualism

From the 1950s to the 1970s a reaction against GT led to audiolingualism. This was informed by behaviourist psychology and emphasised learner responses to external stimuli. By patterned imitation, a learner was believed to emulate correct forms and master them. Audiolingualism coincided with the expansion of technology, specifically the introduction of the language laboratory and the dominant paradigm of the language sciences, structural linguistics, which viewed language as a finite set of patterns capable of generating an infinite number of correct utterances. Learners were expected to perform pattern drills and dialogues of accurate speech and through repetition they would form habits, which were essential to keep learner errors to a minimum. In 'language labs' students would listen to tapes, repeat and practise patterns and follow drills of substitution. The instructor would listen and correct errors.

Audiolingualism had a poor record of verbal fluency and was unpopular for its focus on rote-learning, which bore little resemblance to communicative situations in the real world.

Second language acquisition (SLA)

During the 1970s the field known today as SLA (second language acquisition) emerged (Hatch, 1978). This has grown to become a vast international discipline, relevant to the huge expansion of second language learning across the world in the decades since. Many social developments have stimulated major growth in SLA, especially the legislation of employment and residential mobility within the European Union, but also immigrant settlement policies in the United States of America and Australia, and Guest Worker schemes in Germany and northern Europe.
Communicative language teaching (CLT)

Combining SLA research, social science and humanities work on natural communication processes, CLT is based on the idea that learners are capable of more than imitation and in fact that they generate and manage their own meanings, that fluency is as important as accuracy, that communication is often a negotiated and iterative process between the participants in an interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). These developments and points of principle have led to what is today the dominant meta-method in language teaching, the so-called communicative approach or communicative language teaching (CLT). In some ways CLT is a meta-method rather than a method, since in practice what is called CLT appears to encompass many subsidiary and optional practices.

Since there is no one definitive text or technique of CLT, it is best seen as a set of beliefs about how language operates, and of principles about how language is learned, all of which are premised on a view of language as essentially, or most characteristically, social in nature and dialogical in form. In CLT learners are encouraged to:

- take risks, as errors are considered integral to learning, exposing for the teacher the learner's internal hypothesis as to the rules of the target language
- express their own views and ideas rather than repeating drill patterns
- teachers are expected to offer learners direct method instruction, i.e. use the target language at all times and deal with substantive content and meaningful communication.

Authentic texts are preferred over drills or idealised patterns and communication involving integration of different language skills is preferred over isolation of individual skills or components (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Other developments, or refinements such as task-based teaching, and more recently intercultural language teaching have refined and developed CLT. CLT is the now the dominant second language approach all over the world, though it is often not implemented systematically.

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)

Originating in Europe is the new major methodological innovation of CLIL, content and language integrated learning (Coyle, 2008). CLIL uses regular school subject content, carefully selected and supported by appropriate materials, to be taught directly in the target language. It thereby displaces the focus of language teaching away from language itself and onto meaningful and significant communication around concepts and information drawn from regular school subjects.

Intercultural language teaching and learning (ILT)

Intercultural language teaching and learning (ILT) responds to the idea that culture teaching should not be left until learners have acquired language competence and then taught as a series of items, or units, of study, but that cultural differences are inherent in all communication, and that since learners notice these, culture should be taught immediately. ILT involves close research of the linguistic and communicative elements of different languages, making these explicit to learners. Culture is therefore not 'a fifth skill', or separate content, or an afterthought to the traditional skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Kramsch, 1993; Crozet & Liddicoat, 2000; Lo Bianco & Crozet, 2003; Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino, & Kohler, 2003). ILT distinguishes between simply knowing

about another culture and knowing the culture from within through learning the language.

ILT, CLIL and a new US-based focus on heritage languages, linking languages and identity, are the major forces for innovation and change in contemporary second language education. These three innovations share some common ground, in that they are all based on practical communication grounded in real-world settings in which the identities and purposes of learners are given central importance in curriculum design and which reflect the sociological reality of multilingual and multicultural contemporary societies. This is in contrast to older conceptualisations in which the target language was assumed to be 'foreign', both physically distant from the lived world of the learner and culturally foreign as well.

Immersion

Immersion (Fortune & Tedick, 2008), bilingual education and CLIL all refer to the use of two languages in instruction. Students study particular subjects, or, as in CLIL, components of subjects, such as science or history (content-based teaching) or, typically, half the curriculum (partial immersion), or the entire curriculum, apart from first language literacy (total immersion), through the medium of a second language. Immersion education relies on the idea that children learn language by focusing on subject content; that is, they learn English via understanding, in the famous formulation of Stephen Krashen, 'comprehensible input'(Krashen, 1984). In this process the learner focuses on understanding messages, not on studying linguistic form, messages whose meaning is made more or less clear to the learner. The essential proposition of immersion education is that acquisition of structure (accuracy, or grammatical correctness) follows from the acquisition of meaningful input (i.e. immersion, communication and fluency).

Research into immersion

Consistently positive findings on key questions asked in immersion education evaluations have made increasing numbers of parents and education administrators the world over confident that it is a reliable method for teaching languages, for teaching content and for achieving success in these with no damage to the first language of learners. These three foci, second language teaching, academic success and first language maintenance, form the bulk of the research questions asked of immersion programs. The Australian experience with immersion is consistent with both the models and the findings from international research. De Courcy (2002) summarises the results of Australian immersion research in Chinese, German and French, confirming the international pattern. At the beginning of a new bilingual immersion program parents, administrators and teachers typically have concerns or ask questions about the likely effects on student learning in three areas:

1. What effect will studying through the second language have on the learner's mother tongue?
2. Will the learner be academically disadvantaged by learning subject content delivered in the second language?
3. What improvements will there be in the learner's acquisition of the second language?

Children who start early immersion and sustain it over the long term have been shown to gain additional advantages in general intellectual functioning. Australian research confirms and extends international findings into families, different scripts, and various aspects of learner reaction and experience as well as the academic functioning of Australian children in immersion programs (Eckstein, 1986; Döpke, McNamara, & Quinn, 1991; Rado, 1991; Berthold, 1995; Lotherington, 2001).

Eckstein (1986) found that Melbourne primary school children who studied science in German successfully transferred concepts learnt through their second language to their first, and demonstrated heightened cognitive flexibility and more divergent thinking than children who had learnt the same content through their first language. Australian schools typically offer only partial immersion, so that children are taught in the L2 for part of the day, or in particular subjects while the rest of their classes are in English (Truckenbrodt & De Courcy, 2002).

The three recurring questions are the main framework for addressing overall objectives in immersion teaching: second language, first language and subject mastery, with the majority of the evidence being consistent and reassuring on these questions. In broad terms, the research concludes that immersion methodology is a valid, effective and durable mode for second language learning as well as for imparting the general curriculum to young learners, while supporting their English development. Although the number of studies on immersion education is vast, the results do not vary greatly. Reviewing many research studies Krashen (1984) summarised the findings as:

- *Immersion students' English language skills are more or less the same as the performance of students taught only in English.*
- *Immersion students' mastery of academic subject matter is on a par with students taught that academic subject matter only in English.*
- *Immersion students learn the second language well, outperforming students who study that language only as a subject. After several years immersion students' performance on some measures comes close to the score levels for native speakers. Immersion students tend to speak with an English 'accent', and make minor grammatical errors, but are*

MELBOURNE PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WHO STUDIED SCIENCE IN GERMAN SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFERRED CONCEPTS LEARNT THROUGH THEIR SECOND LANGUAGE TO THEIR FIRST, AND DEMONSTRATED HEIGHTENED COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY AND MORE DIVERGENT THINKING THAN CHILDREN WHO HAD LEARNT THE SAME CONTENT THROUGH THEIR FIRST LANGUAGE.

ONE REASON WHY IMMERSION WORKS MAY BE BECAUSE IT MAKES USE OF A KEY FEATURE OF LANGUAGE. IT LINKS *LEARNING* WITH *USE*.

> *by most measures competent second language speakers.*
>
> *(Krashen, 1984, p. 61)*

Genesee's (1987) analysis finds that under standardised testing in English early full immersion students experience a lag in literacy-based language skills (reading, spelling and written vocabulary), but few problems with communication skills (speaking and listening comprehension). They overcome this lag usually within one year of receiving English Arts instruction.

As far as mathematics and science are concerned, standardised testing shows that both early and late Canadian immersion students who are also taught French throughout the primary grades do not encounter any lags in achievement as a result of being taught mathematics and science in French.

Writing specifically about Canada's huge 45-year experiment in French immersion education one of the world's foremost researchers in second language acquisition wrote:

> *Canadian immersion is not simply another successful language teaching program – it may be the most successful program ever recorded in the professional language-teaching literature. No program has been as thoroughly studied and documented, and no program, to my knowledge, has done as well.*
>
> *(Krashen, 1984, p. 61)*

Something like immersion style language teaching is in fact a very old practice in language and in fact has echoes of the naturalistic process of first language learning discussed in Section 1. Teaching languages through content has been done perhaps for hundreds of years (Kelly, 1969) – and is in fact more ancient than teaching language by focusing on language itself as the *object of teaching*. However, since Canada embarked on its vast program of immersion we have benefited from a massive database of research findings. The overall conclusion from this sustained research effort is that we can say with confidence that, properly implemented and sustained for a significant period of time, immersion education is a very effective method for achieving its three main goals: (i) learning a second language, (ii) learning subject matter effectively through the second language, and (iii) developing literacy and academic skills in the first language.

One reason why immersion works may be because it makes use of a key feature of language. It links *learning* (the principal activity of schooling) with *use* (out-of-school activation of what is learnt). In many societies today education is being reformed to give a much more prominent role to English in education. In 2002 Malaysia reverted to compulsory use of English to teach certain subjects, science, mathematics and technology in particular. In China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, and in many parts of Europe, there has been a growing emphasis on some kind of dual language education, often directed at enhancing the learning of English and recently this has been booming across China, including the use of English as a language of instruction from primary to tertiary levels (Feng, 2007). Conversely, in some English-speaking societies there is also a growth in two-language education, usually among elites keen to overcome the systemic failure of mass language education policy in English-speaking countries, through, first, immersion education in key languages of global trade, often in elite schools, for English-speaking children; and second, bilingual education (mother tongue maintenance plus ESL) for immigrant and Indigenous children as a transition to English-only education or full maintenance bilingual education.

Immersion education aims to compensate for the absence of inductive learning of a second language; that is, picking up the language in ordinary life, by adding actual language use, in which the language that is being taught in school is used to do real communication.

Immersion education is also found in contexts of language revitalisation, such as in Ireland where the most successful language schools for the teaching of Irish (Gaelic) are the Gaelscoileanna; all-Irish immersion schools producing the highest levels of achievement in Irish, in general academic results and also very high in English (Harris, 2006). For many Irish students Irish is a foreign language, despite being the official and national language of the country, though in some parts of Ireland the language is used regularly. In the majority of cases where Irish is taught, either as a subject or in transitional bilingual programs, students achieve less well than in the full immersion all Irish schools.

Two-Way Immersion

Two-way bilingual education programs like the Irish Gaelscoileanna are growing in popularity in the United States of America and differ from the Australian and Canadian programs in that they involve approximately equal numbers of children from language minority (mostly Spanish) and language majority (English) backgrounds, usually in the same classroom. Both Spanish and English are used for instruction and assessment with the usual aims of immersion education; that is, bilingual proficiency and academic skills, along with multicultural harmony and integration. Lindholm-Leary (2001) analysed 18 schools conducting Two-Way Immersion programs looking at student linguistic and academic outcomes as well as socio-cultural and attitudinal variables. Her study compares the outcomes from various kinds of two language combinations typically found in the United States of America: transitional bilingual education (where the non-English home language is used for initial literacy but discontinued as soon as children have sufficient English to learn in it); English as a second language programs; and two models of Two-Way Immersion (90:10 Dual Language Model and 50:50 Dual Language Model). These figures refer to the proportions of Spanish to English. Lindholm-Leary concluded that:



IMMERSION EDUCATION AIMS TO COMPENSATE FOR THE ABSENCE OF INDUCTIVE LEARNING OF A SECOND LANGUAGE; THAT IS, PICKING UP THE LANGUAGE IN ORDINARY LIFE, BY ADDING ACTUAL LANGUAGE USE, IN WHICH THE LANGUAGE THAT IS BEING TAUGHT IN SCHOOL IS USED TO DO REAL COMMUNICATION.

WHILE IMMERSION IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE IS IMPORTANT TO PROMOTE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING WITHOUT SACRIFICING FIRST LANGUAGE SKILL OR ACADEMIC RESULTS, THE SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION CAN BE ACCELERATED IF THE IMMERSION IS SUPPLEMENTED BY EXPLICIT TEACHING, AND LINKS TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL USE.

- Reduced time in English did not negatively affect students' achievements in English compared to matched groups of learners in both ESL and 50:50 programs; students in both 90:10 and 50:50 programs were outperforming the California state average of English speakers who were taught only in English, by some 10 per cent on reading tests, and on several mathematics measures.
- 90:10 learners of Spanish achieved considerably higher proficiency in both Spanish and English than those in 50:50 programs.
- English proficiency for Spanish background learners was approximately equal for both the models of Two-Way Immersion.
- Increases in bilingual proficiency were correlated with higher reading achievements.

Immersion, explicit teaching and out-of-school use

A highly productive variation of immersion has been extensively trialled in Europe, finding essentially that while immersion in the target language is important to promote second language learning without sacrificing first language skill or academic results, the second language acquisition can be accelerated if the immersion is supplemented by explicit teaching, and links to out-of-school use. With immersion only, students often continue to make grammatical errors in language use, but when explicit teaching is added to immersion, either before or alongside the use of the target language as a medium of instruction, significant improvements have been recorded (Baetens Beardsmore, 1993).

The European School Model (ESM) is a Europe-wide network of schools located in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Norway with a strong reputation for academic achievement, equal linguistic treatment and high multilingual proficiency. In the early 1990s some 12,000 students were enrolled in this network of elite institutions, designed to provide a quality education for the children of civil servants working for EU institutions.

A key feature of the ESM is that the target language is taught formally as a subject, as the object of teaching, prior to being used as a medium of instruction (Walter, 2008). In this way students are given intensive target language instruction; that is, they learn *about* the language before they begin learning *in* the language. Even after the target language has become the medium of instruction, it continues to be taught separately as a subject. According to Baetens Beardsmore (1993, p. 123), this factor accounts for the high level of grammatical accuracy achieved by ESM students. The expectation of the ESM is that students will write and speak at levels comparable to native speakers.

Comparing the French skills of ESM students with Canadian immersion students' French, the research found that European children required 1300 classroom contact hours to achieve set scores, whereas Canadian immersion children required 4500 contact hours to get to the same point. This difference is also attributable to the different environments or settings in which the schools are located. French is the out-of-school language for the European learners but not for French immersion students in Canada. There is also likely to be a selective effect from the broader demographic represented in the Canadian case, but the difference is so great it cannot be ignored or discounted because of social origins of the two populations. This out-of-class role is a significant advantage for high-level academic work as well. Out-of-class use makes student language more varied and interactive, extending student's language skills beyond the academic register which classroom language requires.

Conclusion to immersion research

The broad generalisations that we can draw from this consideration of pedagogical developments and program design are crucial to what is advocated in Australian language education policy. The promising developments in second language teaching highlight that improvements are possible in the achievement of learning standards for ever greater numbers of learners. The program design developments, especially concerning immersion teaching (CLIL) and the practical importance of identity research and issues of out-of-school use of languages all point to the reasons and aims contained in language policy. The next section considers the reasons and aims in light of what is now a clearer set of understandings about what is involved in serious second language education.

RATIONALE AND GOALS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this section key values and aspirations for proficiency in languages other than English relevant to the Australian context are explored. In Australia's first explicit language policy, the National Policy on Languages, adopted by Federal Cabinet in June 1987, four overarching legitimations for explicit language planning were proposed. These broad aims, reproduced below, remain relevant today and can help formulate the national language effort. The broad reasons sit along a continuum from instrumental and pragmatic to cultural and intellectual. All are important, each has a place and importance and a domain in which it is distinctively relevant. The overarching goals were:

1. **Enrichment:** cultural and intellectual
2. **Economics:** trade, commerce and enterprise
3. **Equality:** opportunities for minorities to acquire English and maintain their other languages
4. **External:** facilitating Australia's integration into regional affairs and fostering and global connections.

These four aims of the NPL were then specified in the document as four broad statements/principles of ultimate language planning goals:

1 **Literate English:** the aim of universal acquisition of standard Australian English supported by an array of programs for identified problem areas

2 **Second Languages:** the aim of all Australians knowing languages other than English, with opportunities and encouragement for speakers of other languages to retain those languages and transmit them to their children and that English speakers would acquire a second language through formal education

3 **Indigenous Languages:** the endangered state of Australian languages was signalled as a priority for maintenance and support, but also that all Australians would at least learn about the unique Australian languages

4 **Language Services:** the need for widespread and equitable language services such as interpreting and translating, and multilingual media, was identified.

These four aims and four principles were then elaborated into four interrelated strategies so that the bilingualism produced in the intimacy of families and communities can complement and extend the cultivation of language skills in institutions through deliberate planning. The four interrelated strategies were:

1 **Conservation** of Australia's existing linguistic resources

2 **Development** and expansion of these linguistic resources

3 **Integration** of Australian language teaching and language use efforts with national economic, social and cultural policies

4 **Provision** of services and information multilingually.

Language learning and use in Australia will always be a diverse and multifaceted activity. While individual interests cleave more to some purposes than others, and advocate often irreconcilable priorities, the realities of a diverse, democratic and participatory state inevitably mean that in practice we will always teach many languages and know and use them. However, from the review of progress in pedagogy, and especially the critical importance placed on the actual use of the studied language, the key message is that second language education policy should strongly target immersion teaching with active cultivation of out-of-class use. The latter will require connections between school language programs and community language providers, collapsing the rigid distinctions between providers and between the separation of foreign and community language education.

The real national effort in language education and use is always far more widespread than what occurs in formal systems and under the formal jurisdiction of policy. What goes on in school (*in vitro*) and what happens out of school (*in vivo*) though interconnected are also autonomous zones. While schooling increasingly tries to emulate the naturalistic patterns of use of language out of school, its primary function is instruction. As such, the primary aim of school language education, notably of instructed language, is to select from the vast range of uses and practices of communication only those elements which assist the acquisition of language accuracy. However, in the wider community, the *in vivo* context, the principal point about language is fluent usage. This is why the European School Model, able to combine instruction and usage in classrooms (i.e. grammar teaching and immersion) with out-of-school usage of the target language, and also support to learners on how to engage in strategic communication, produces such promising results in both accuracy and fluency.

In this way languages are like only a few other learning areas or subjects of formal education, in that they combine instruction with application, and become performance. In addition, since personal identity is negotiated and displayed in communication and must make use of the resources individual languages make available, a learner is required to take on the assumptions and cultural scripts the target language contains. These are special qualities that language learning contains, making them rare if not unique in the curricula of schools with respect to the extent that they potentially challenge and extend the sense of self of the student.

LANGUAGES ARE LIKE ONLY A FEW OTHER LEARNING AREAS OR SUBJECTS OF FORMAL EDUCATION, IN THAT THEY COMBINE INSTRUCTION WITH APPLICATION, AND BECOME PERFORMANCE.

Cultural and intellectual benefits of bilingualism

Many early views of bilingualism and cognition were either neutral or negative. A watershed in research, setting the pattern of more rigorous studies that repeatedly find bilingualism cognitively enriching, was Peal and Lambert's (1962) French–English Canadian study, notable for strictly controlling the socio-economic status and language backgrounds of its 364 bilingual and monolingual subjects. With careful control over sample selection, controlling for economic and social position, age and sex and language proficiency this work considerably raised standards of study design, finding that bilinguals outperformed the monolingual subjects on IQ. In the words of Hakuta and Diaz (1985, p. 322) this was 'the punctuation point in research' on the relation between bilingualism and intellectual functioning. The Peal and Lambert study was criticised for including potentially more intelligent subjects in their bilingual sample, leaving unresolved what distinctive contribution bilingualism itself makes to intellectual functioning. This possible oversight was addressed in the work of Hakuta and Diaz (1985), whose longitudinal approach isolated the independent contribution of bilingualism to cognitive functioning, in effect exposing a causal relationship between intelligence and bilingualism.

In educational settings a key hypothesis proposed to explain such results and the immersion education they have stimulated, is linguistic interdependence, most closely associated with Cummins (2000) for which substantial confirmatory evidence is now available. Linguistic interdependence builds on longstanding awareness of differences between mundane and academic language uses and a sense of implausibility that the two languages of a bilingual would be neurologically compartmentalised. The most



IT HAS LONG BEEN CLAIMED THAT LANGUAGE LEARNING ENHANCES COGNITIVE PERFORMANCE IN UNSPECIFIED WAYS; HOWEVER, IN RECENT DECADES A SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE HAS CONFIRMED THAT THIS INTUITION IS CORRECT.

common practical assumption encountered about second language learning is maximum exposure; that is, the more time spent studying the language, the greater will be the level of proficiency attained. By contrast, linguistic interdependence posits an 'additive bilingual enrichment principle' (Cummins, 2000, p. 175), meaning essentially that bilingual children's academic achievements are tied to the cognitive relations between first language skill and second language performance.

It has long been claimed that language learning enhances cognitive performance in unspecified ways; however, in recent decades a substantial body of empirical evidence has confirmed that this intuition is correct. The research has, moreover, identified the circumstances under which cognitive functioning is positively influenced by bilingualism. In the past 40 years more than 150 studies have confirmed some of the mutually reinforcing relationships between non-linguistic and linguistic intellectual functioning and bilingualism (Cummins, 2003, p. 61).

However, second language skill would not on its own necessarily nourish cognitive functioning, unless high levels of proficiency are gained. In some ways second language skill is like the process of becoming literate. Becoming literate involves a growing understanding that language is a system, governed by rules and patterns. Learning a second language leads to a similar, perhaps more intense, appreciation of this systematic character of language. This insight is called 'meta-linguistic awareness' and has been shown to have considerable academic benefit for children who are able to reflect on language in more careful ways, if they become aware that any one language is an arbitrary and not a natural system. Children who are exposed to two languages at home (Ng & Wigglesworth, 2007) can show enhanced cognitive flexibility and greater meta-linguistic awareness (Bialystok, 2001).

Meta-linguistic awareness is itself a precondition for becoming literate. Children need to learn to think about language as a systematically organised object, to analyse the continuous stream of sound into phonemes (which are then mapped onto graphemes), and understand that the relationship between word form and meaning is arbitrary (so that, for example, a small object need not be represented by a small word) (Garton & Pratt, 1998). Scientific hypothesising and functioning were also found to be favourably correlated with precocious bilingualism (Kessler & Quinn, 1982). Research has also isolated the way in which bilingualism itself directly contributes to enhanced intellectual functioning and is not merely an artefact of flawed research designs, or a correlate (Ng & Wigglesworth, 2007).

However, despite the high level of proficiency condition, research has also shown how even limited contact with a second language (one hour of Italian instruction per week) can have a positive effect on the word awareness of Prep and Grade 1 students in Melbourne (Yelland, Pollard, & Mercuri, 1993). In several ways learning a second language supports and illuminates knowledge of the first, by permitting an objectification of the systematic character of the first language in comparison to features of the second. One of the key reasons why bilingual and immersion education succeed is because:

> *… the linguistic and literacy-related knowledge and skills that an individual has learned in his or her L1 will be brought to bear on the learning of academic knowledge and skills in L2.*
>
> *(Cummins, 2000, p. 190)*

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The conclusion we must draw from these considerations is that language education policy should aim only for high-quality programs. It is an unfortunate aspect of past policy that utilitarian rationales, and the often crisis-driven pressure to establish programs quickly, have resulted in a proliferation of rather superficial second language teaching endeavours. In recent research in a range of disadvantaged schools Lo Bianco and Aliani (2008) found that students themselves are all too aware of the disparity between what policies, politicians and often even schools claim and proclaim for their language learning efforts, and what is actually delivered.

REFERENCES

For references visit
www.acer.edu.au/research_reports/AER.html

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco is Chair of Language and Literacy Education and Associate Dean (Global Relations and Knowledge Transfer) in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. His recent publications include *China and English, Globalisation and Dilemmas of Identity* edited with Jane Orton and Gao Yihong (Multilingual Matters, 2009), as well as work for UNESCO on language planning for the UNESCO *World Report on Cultural Diversity* (2009). He is a member of the Council of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and convened the national conference on tertiary languages teaching in February 2009 and the roundtable with policy makers during the annual *HASS on the Hill* in October 2009. He can be contacted at **j.lobianco@unimelb.edu.au**

Dr Yvette Slaughter is a Senior Research Fellow in the School of Languages and Lingusitics at the University of Melbourne.

This is an extract from *Australian Education Review 54, Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, by Joseph Lo Bianco, with Yvette Slaughter, published with kind permission. *Australian Education Review 54, Second Languages and Australian Schooling*, can be downloaded at **www.acer.edu.au/research_reports/AER.html**