

Four Languages, Four Stories

Chinese

The Key Issue

How to increase the cohort of continuing L2 learners? How to attract this cohort and provide conditions in which it can develop competence in a language with particular challenges?

- First priority is to increase numbers in Year 12 Chinese: retention of L2 learners.¹
- Learning Chinese is different from learning a European language and requires different conditions.
- L2 learners cannot compete at senior secondary levels with those who speak Chinese from birth.

Context

- Teaching and learning of Chinese began in Australia 20 years ago due to a government-initiated drive to produce 'Asia literate' graduates from Australia's schools to serve Australia's economic interests.
- 1990s saw numerous projects to promote and assist Chinese teaching and learning at every level of schooling. Great and lasting improvements made.
- Asia literacy drive faltered in early 2000s; re-ignited by the Rudd government in 2007.
- School sector administrators unconvinced of the capacity to enhance Chinese language provision and participation. They appreciate the growing significance of China for Australia, but know that Chinese, in particular, has proven 'too hard'.

¹ In this document 'L1' refers to first/native speakers of a language who have also mostly or completely been educated in that language; 'L2' to speakers who have acquired or are acquiring a second language. L2 learners may be further categorised as 'Beginners' or 'Continuers', the former starting from scratch, the latter having had some learning experience in the language; 'LH' refers to 'Heritage speakers' who, in broad terms, speak the language at home but are educated and live in a country where another language is the lingua franca.

Indonesian

The Key Issue

How does a 'big' language without a significant advocacy group arrest a steep decline?

- Student enrolments declining annually by 10,000 students since 2005.
- This is matched by a reduction in numbers of school programs offered.
- 99% of Australian students studying Indonesian discontinue doing so at some point before Year 12.
- Indonesian is now an 'at-risk' language in Australian secondary schools.
- No support for a national representative body advocating its interests.

Context

- Indonesian language teaching and learning in Australian schools began in 1950s.
- First *National Policy on Languages* (1987) identified Indonesian as a 'language of wider teaching'; the *Australian Language and Literacy Policy* (1991) named Indonesian as one of 14 priority languages; in 1994, it was one of 4 languages targeted through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) strategy.
- Australia is the world leader in teaching Indonesian as a foreign language – only Western country to support the teaching of Indonesian in schools. Australia has been a centre of expertise on Indonesian politics, history, economics, anthropology and other disciplines.
- Significant pool of expertise at school level in teaching, curriculum and assessment – with a focus on Non-background learners.
- However, Indonesian is 'a language without a clearly articulated educational rationale that resonates with students, families and school communities'.

Japanese
The Key Issue
<p>How does a 'big' language capitalise on its strengths while addressing issues which have led to its decline?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student enrolment in Japanese has fallen significantly over the last decade, particularly at the primary level. ▪ Serious questions about the role and nature of primary school Japanese programs. ▪ Need to consolidate and strengthen the overall quality that has been achieved. ▪ Need for different pathways and courses at the secondary level to respond to changes to the student cohort. ▪ Significant disincentives for LH and L2 learners to continue studying Japanese in Year 12 in some states and territories.
Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Japanese teaching in schools commenced in the early 20th century and was revived post-WW2 due to growing economic ties with Japan, and supported by increased interpersonal links and interest in Japan's cultural heritage. ▪ In 1970–80s, a series of Japanese textbooks produced by a national project consolidated teaching nationally and established Australia as a world leader in Japanese language teaching in schools. ▪ 1980s and 1990s saw a massive growth in the teaching of Japanese in the tertiary and then secondary sectors, as well as its widespread introduction in primary schools. ▪ By 2000, Japanese had become the most widely taught language in Australian schools and universities. ▪ In the early to middle years of the last decade enrolments began to decline, especially at primary level, but also in secondary school programs. ▪ Japanese remains the most widely taught second language with a strong core infrastructure but curriculum, resources and teacher skills now require upgrading and renewal. ▪ The rationale for teaching and learning Japanese needs updating and reaffirmation.

Korean
The Key Issue
<p>What conditions will allow a 'small' language to grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Korean has been a priority language for Australian schools for 20 years. ▪ However, only 49 of the 9,562 Australian schools offer Korean, nine of these as part of International Baccalaureate courses for international first language (L1) students. ▪ There are 69 teachers of Korean across Australia. ▪ Student enrolment in Korean around 1% of student enrolment in Japanese. ▪ Year 12 enrolment mostly L1 speakers. ▪ No provision for Heritage (LH) learners at Year 12.
Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Korean is spoken by 80 million people, including 6 million Korean expatriates – it is the 11th most commonly spoken language in the world. It is the first language of 150,000 people living in Australia. ▪ Korean first gained recognition in Australian language policy in the late 1980s – the <i>National Policy on Languages</i> (1987), <i>NSW State Language Policy</i> (1988), and government-commissioned reports such as the 'Garnaut Report' (<i>Australia and Northeast Asian Ascendancy</i>, 1989). ▪ Korean curriculum and syllabus documents developed through the National Korean Curriculum Project. ▪ Australian schools began teaching Korean in NSW, ACT, then Vic in 1990s; mid-1990s saw significant curriculum and delivery projects such as Korean Using Technology (NSW DET) undertaken, while tertiary and secondary Korean programs were supported by the National Korean Studies Centre (now defunct). ▪ 15 years of development stages – summarised by Korean language specialists as 'honeymoon, adjustment, and fight-for-survival periods'. ▪ Current state of Korean language in schools gives cause for concern.

Chinese
Students
<p>Enrolled in all programs: 2000: 78,765 2008: 92,931</p> <p>Enrolled at Year 12: 2000: 2,935 2008: 5,256</p> <p>Student attrition by Year 12: 94% of L2 learners</p> <p>Current source of growth: L1 learners from China, Chinese-speaking countries and Australia</p> <p>Intervention target group: L2 and Heritage (LH) learners</p>
Programs
<p>Number of schools offering programs: 2000: 569 2008: estimated to be 380+</p> <p>Quality: concerns in primary sector; inadequate provision for L2 and LH learners in senior secondary</p>
Teachers
<p>Background: 90% L1 speakers, mostly from China</p> <p>Availability: varied according to geographic location; L2 teachers generally keenly sought after by schools</p> <p>Teacher education programs: require renewal and tailoring for different teacher cohorts</p>
Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 An Australian Centre for Chinese Language Education be established. 2 Standards of language proficiency and pedagogy for teachers of Chinese be developed. 3 Survey teachers of Chinese and develop recruitment and workforce plans. 4 Education authorities create three streams of Chinese learning that are recognised nationally; time spent learning Chinese in all programs be extended; decisions made about the definition and support of Chinese classes at primary level; innovative programs be initiated to permit seriously concentrated periods of time spent on Chinese language learning.

Indonesian
Students
<p>Enrolled in all programs: 2000: 265,356 2008: 191,316</p> <p>Enrolled at Year 12: 2000: 2,089 2008: 1,311</p> <p>Student attrition by Year 12: 99% of all learners</p> <p>Current source of growth: no apparent growth</p> <p>Intervention target group: L2 learners</p>
Programs
<p>Number of schools offering programs: 2000: 1,795 2008: reported to have declined by around 40%</p> <p>Quality: concerns in primary sector; unknown in secondary sector</p>
Teachers
<p>Background: 95% Australian-born L2 speakers</p> <p>Availability: contradictory reports of oversupply and undersupply</p> <p>Teacher education programs: require renewal and tailoring for L2 cohort</p>
Recommendations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 An Indonesian Language Education in Schools Working Party be established to develop a detailed action plan specific to Indonesian language for the next 3–5 year period including renewal of the rationale for Indonesian in schools. 2 An intervention strategy targeted at upper primary and junior secondary Indonesian be designed and implemented to increase retention of students into senior secondary years. 3 Students' motivation in continuing or abandoning study of Indonesian be investigated, along with the supply of and demand for teachers of Indonesian, and the nature of primary Indonesian programs.

Japanese

Students

Enrolled in all programs:

2000: 419,488 2008: 351,579

Decline in enrolments – primary 21%,
secondary 6.4%

Enrolled at Year 12: continuing L2 learners:

2000: 4,601 2008: 3,838 (-16.6%)

Total across all groups: 2000: 5,143 2008: 4,910

Student attrition Years 7/8–12: 88–94% of all learners

Current source of growth: Beginners at senior
secondary level and Heritage learners

Intervention target group: L2 learners, then
Heritage learners

Programs

Number of schools offering programs:

2000: 2,276 2008: 1,921

Quality: concerns about primary sector; effective
pathways to, and through, secondary school
programs need to be addressed

Teachers

Background: majority L2 speakers; need regular
language upgrades

Availability: meeting demand in most urban areas;
problematic in rural and regional areas and where
employment conditions are unsatisfactory

Teacher education programs: require renewal
and language-specific components

Recommendations

- 1 Establishment of a National Council for Japanese Language Education.
- 2 Research into factors relating to retention and attrition at senior secondary level.
- 3 Reform for Japanese in primary schools.
- 4 Detailed curriculum and materials development.
- 5 Profiling teachers including their linguistic/pedagogic qualifications and age.
- 6 Partnerships of government, universities and industry in Australia and Japan to support programs to recruit and train native speaker assistants from Japan. Provide opportunities for students to apply and develop their Japanese skills in authentic situations.

Korean

Students

Enrolled in all programs:

2000: 3,672 2008: 3,190

Enrolled at Year 12: 2001: 210 2008: 177

Student attrition by Year 12: 78% of all learners

Current source of growth: international students
in International Baccalaureate program

Intervention target group: Heritage learners then
L2 learners

Programs

Number of schools offering programs:

2000: 42 2008: 46

Quality: concerns in primary sector; inadequate
provision for LH learners at senior secondary level

Teachers

Background: vast majority L1 speakers; limited
supply of L2 speakers

Availability: stable to support a no-growth
situation

Teacher education programs: limited offerings;
both L1 and L2 teachers require tailored and
ongoing professional learning

Recommendations

- 1 A Korean Language Working Party be established within the next six months to develop a five-year strategic plan for the language.
- 2 Education authorities take action to support the large untapped pool of Korean LH speakers to complete Year 12. At the same time, the growth of the L2 cohort must have a targeted and sufficiently resourced strategy.
- 3 The professional learning needs of the two different cohorts of Korean teachers be effectively supported.
- 4 A project be established to ensure that every Australian school teaching Korean has a direct partnership with a school in Korea.