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Teaching young second language learners in LOTE contexts

Abstract

The study of languages has long been considered to have important social, cognitive and economic benefits for individuals and the nation. In Australia, however, despite its growing strength in linguistic resources and the various Government initiatives, there has been a disturbing decline in languages study by school-aged children in Australia. For example, in the 1940s and 50s, over 40 percent of students graduated with a language (Teese & Polesol, 2003) which had declined to only 12 percent in 2012. In primary schools, aggregated cross-sectoral data from government, private and catholic systems in Sydney and Wollongong indicate that 30-40 percent of New South Wales primary schools provided a languages program (Board of Studies, 2013). Among many factors, the quality of languages teaching is regarded as “the single most important controllable variable” (Lo Bianco & Slaughter, 2009, 27) that affects learners’ decision to study a language. Yet with languages not currently being mandated in primary schools, the decision for offering a LOTE curriculum largely depends on the principal and the school context. In some schools, languages are taught because a class teacher “happens” to be bilingual, and in other schools, qualified language teachers come to the school for scheduled-in language lessons (which is often funded by parents), resulting in large variations from school to school in terms of program structures, allocated time, pedagogical approaches and expectations.

With the Australian Curriculum: Languages being implemented in Australian schools, it becomes crucial to examine effective pedagogic and assessment practice that can sustain interest in LOTE learning in the primary school context. In this chapter, we will draw on contemporary principles of pedagogic practice underpinned by a social cultural approach to explore pedagogical activities and assessment tasks that facilitate the development of language skills in young learners in the LOTE context. In doing so, we will foreground theories of language teaching and learning that are relevant to the LOTE context and demonstrate how these can be transformed into pedagogic and assessment practice by examining vignettes of language teaching episodes for both younger and older primary students.

Keywords

young, language, learners, teaching, lote, contexts, second

Disciplines

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Chapter 6

TEACHING YOUNG SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN LOTE CONTEXTS

Honglin Chen

Janica Nordstrom

Introduction

The study of languages has long been considered to have important social, cognitive and economic benefits for individuals and the nation. In Australia, however, despite its growing strength in linguistic resources and the various Government initiatives, there has been a disturbing decline in languages study by school-aged children (Cruickshank & Wright, 2016; Oliver, Chen, & Moore, 2016). In the 1940s and 50s, over 40 percent of students graduated with a language (Teese & Polesol, 2003) but by 2012 this had declined to only 12%. In primary schools in New South Wales, for example, data collected across the various systems and sectors (i.e., public, Catholic and independent schools) indicate that only 30% of primary school students study a language in addition to English, and there are also large regional and sectoral differences (Cruickshank & Wright, 2016). The current status of LOTE teaching has led to an inconsistent syllabus being offered in primary schools. As a consequence LOTE teaching can be ad hoc, making the goal of **communicative competence** difficult to achieve.

Among the many factors that contribute to this reduced status and provision of languages teaching in Australian primary schools is the lack of effective, experienced, trained and qualified LOTE (Languages Other Than English) teachers (de Silva, 2005; Opie, 2006). With language teaching not currently being mandated in primary schools in most states in Australia, with the exception of Western Australia, the decision to offer a LOTE program largely depends on the principal and the school context. However, it should be noted that LOTE programs have recently gained an important place in the **International Baccalaureate (IB)** Primary Years Program, where the ability to communicate in more than one language is perceived as an essential part of education (International Baccalaureate, 2011). With the exception of IB programs, in schools in many parts of Australia LOTE is taught because a class teacher ‘happens’ to be bilingual (Opie, 2006). While these class teachers may lack

appropriate training in language teaching they may have an advantage in that they are already part of the school culture, have knowledge about what is being taught in other curriculum areas as well as considerable knowledge of their students and their capabilities (Driscoll et al., 2004). At other schools, language teachers may include teachers, parents or community members who come into the school only to teach languages, but who may lack appropriate language teacher training and may be largely unfamiliar with the rest of the curriculum, or 'neutral' languages are chosen to be taught over locally spoken community languages to avoid unnecessary tension within a highly multicultural community (Slaughter & Hajek, 2007). Other disadvantages facing these LOTE programs where languages teachers come in for a short period each week include teachers' limited knowledge of individual students' abilities, which in turn has been found to affect their classroom management (Driscoll et al., 2004). Overall, this lack of a principled approach to the provision of LOTE programs in Australian schools has resulted in large variations from school to school in terms of the way the program is structured and delivered, the place of LOTE in the curriculum, the amount of instructional time allocated to LOTE teaching, the pedagogical approaches used and the expectations that those involved in the program have. It is the purpose of this chapter to describe these aspects, but with such large differences it is not possible to be comprehensive, rather what we describe should be considered indicative.

Provision of LOTE programs in Australian primary schools

Some of the various ways that LOTE programs in Australian primary schools are structured and delivered include content-based (bilingual) programs, language-based programs, and language and cultural awareness programs (Slaughter & Hajek, 2007; Turner, 2013). These programs cater for a diverse range of learners who are studying languages as first language (L1) users, second/additional languages, or background languages. Content-based or bilingual programs have the advantage of offering opportunities for simultaneous development of both first language and second languages (L2), while also developing content skills and understanding at the same time. However, there are a limited number of schools offering such programs in Australia (Molyneux, 2006; Tong, Irby, Lara-Alecio, & Mathes, 2008) (See Chapter 7 for an in-depth description of this approach). In contrast, language-based programs have a strong focus on the teaching and learning of the target language. These are more common and are one of the main ways that background and

heritage language speakers¹ can maintain and develop their languages (e.g., a child who has parents with an Italian background learns Italian at school). Nevertheless, the majority of second language (other than English) learners are mostly exposed to 'language and cultural awareness' classes. These classes are sometimes referred to as 'taster' classes which have a limited focus on common vocabulary and aspects of society. Language and culture are often taught through the medium of English (Slaughter & Hajek, 2007), therefore lacking a systematic approach to language learning.

Perhaps the reason languages teaching is yet to be recognised as a core learning area in Australia, and why there are the type of difficulties we have outlined above, is that LOTE programs are largely seen as peripheral to the curriculum (de Silva, 2005; Rhodes, 2014). This means that in many LOTE programs the quantity of students' contact hours are being reduced, particularly as schools face pressure to produce results in the areas of literacy and numeracy because of high stakes tests such as NAPLAN (de Silva, 2005; Paolino, 2012; Scarino, Scrimgeour, & Kohler, 2013). Unfortunately the peripheral status of LOTE, coupled with lack of support from school administration, colleagues, parents and other family members, as well as the community at large, has had a negative impact on students' attitudes towards learning languages (Opie, 2006). This, in turn, has created problems with engagement and retention of learners in the subject area of LOTE (Scarino et al., 2013).

Yet, as Lo Bianco and Slaughter (2009, p. 27) argue, the quality of languages teaching is "the single most important controllable variable" that affects learners' decision to study a language. With the *Australian Curriculum: Languages* being implemented in Australian schools, it has become crucial to examine effective pedagogy that can sustain interest in LOTE learning in the primary school context. In this chapter, we will draw on contemporary principles of pedagogic practice underpinned by a social cultural approach and findings from our large scale study into languages other than English in Australian schools² to explore pedagogical activities and tasks that facilitate the development of language skills in young

¹ Heritage speakers refer to those who speak the language at home; who were born and initially educated in a country that speaks the target language; or who have had community schooling in that language.

² Cruickshank, K. Wright, J. Tsung, L., Morgan, L. Chen, H. (2011-2016). *Maximising the potential of Australia's language resources: exploring and developing languages across sectors, schools and communities*. Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage.

learners in the LOTE context. In doing so, we will reference theories of language learning that are relevant to LOTE teaching and demonstrate how these can be transformed into pedagogic practices by examining vignettes of language teaching episodes for both younger and older primary students.

Focus question

What are the issues and challenges in teaching Languages Other Than English to primary aged children?

Young language learners: needs and effective learning environments

Young learners of LOTE have different needs depending on their cultural background and prior experience in learning languages. The requirements of beginner learners of a language are different to background and heritage speakers (Iwashita & Liem, 2005; Scrimgeour, 2012). Learners with a home language background other than English have often developed an oral language base on which to build rapid literacy development in that language. Their constant exposure to the language affords many informal learning opportunities outside school, which contributes to their learning and ultimate language development (Scrimgeour, 2012). It is important to note that beginner second language learners, however, require opportunities to engage with learning the language and to use it in a more intensive and sustained manner (Iwashita & Liem, 2005; Scrimgeour, 2012).

In addition to access to languages, motivation to study also differs depending on learners' background as well as the language offered. Background learners of a language may study the language reluctantly as a result of parental expectations to do so (Iwashita & Liem, 2005). In contrast, non-background learners can be highly motivated to engage with language learning (Iwashita & Liem, 2005; Jurišević & Pižorn, 2013), although some research has suggested that the type of motivation may differ depending on what language is offered. For example, 6-8 year old learners of English as a foreign language (FL) has been found to be more driven by instrumental motivation, perceiving the learning of English to be

useful for communication and to engage in social and popular media and music (Jurišević & Pižorn, 2013). On the other hand, motivation to learn languages other than English in places such as Europe has been more strongly linked to learners' experience of classroom practices (Edelenbos, Johnstone, & Kubanek, 2006).

Some research focusing on teenagers and adolescents motivation for language learning also suggest that students' attitudes towards foreign language learning is likely to be affected by their parents' attitudes (Bartram, 2006). Parents who are speakers of another language themselves are more likely to encourage positive attitudes, although attitudes to the learning of languages are also related to the perceived status and usefulness of proficiency in the particular language being studied. For example, comparing parents' perceptions and attitudes to learning languages in England, Germany and the Netherlands, Bartram (2006) found that students in England perceived their parents to be far less positive than their peers' parents in Germany and the Netherlands. For parents of students studying a background or heritage language, motives for language learning are often embedded in a sense of identity but also frequently seen as having instrumental value for the students' future in terms of travel and education (Bradshaw, 2006; Nordstrom, 2016). While we have this understanding of parents' perceptions and support for heritage language learning, less is however known about parents' perceptions and support of foreign language teaching (Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006), particularly in Australian primary school contexts and when there is no heritage connection between the learner and the language studied.

Primary students' and parents' reasons for learning LOTE in Australian schools

Compare the comments of the children and the parents below. How do these perceptions match those you have encountered?

Students:

'I find it fun' – student learning French, Year 3

'I feel lucky and privileged' – student learning French, Year 5

'[Learning LOTE] opens up my mind to other things – student learning Japanese, Year 4

'Language helps you get a job' – student learning Japanese, Year 4

'[Learning LOTE] makes you a more interesting person' – student learning Japanese, Year 4

Parents:

'I think English is the most important because of where we live and that, but it is important

when they [the children] want to visit their home land' – Mother

'Well, I think it just broadens your horizon. It gives you job opportunities.' – Mother

'I think the problem is the usage of it. You can learn it but if you're learning in isolation - it's good if you've got a parent or a relative or someone you can conversationally use it with. But otherwise it's very hard to get really good at it ... Other than the benefit of being able to communicate, it helps with decoding and all sorts of things. But it's just hard to...' – Mother

'But I like the fact that they have some background and understanding of where my family came from.' – Parent (gender unknown)

'I don't know that I could give a practical value in terms of anything day-to-day but it's a source of unquantifiable pride and hope for the future, just that it can be a part of who they are, that they can be like the rest of the world which isn't so self-absorbed with their own language. Coming from a European background, it's like it's just the Aussies who think that it's – expect the whole world to speak English. Dutch five-year-olds are speaking six languages and if it happens – if an Australian speaks five languages, they think that they're the General Secretary of the United Nations when it's just normal everywhere else' – Father

In general, it has been found that younger learners are more positive towards learning a language than their older peers (Djigunovic, 2009), but for younger learners their motivation often reflects their perceptions of the learning environment and their preference for their teacher rather than because of any beliefs associated with the benefits of long-term language learning (Nikolov, 1999; Nikolov & Djigunovic, 2006). Even so, languages can be learned more effectively when learners – including young learners – are able to see the relevance of the target language in their lives and have opportunities to use it or see it operating outside of the classroom (Opie, 2006). Connection to and support from the school and wider community provides an effective environment for the learning of a language where the broader community can be a valuable resource to enrich the learning experiences of students, especially for those who are not heritage language learners (Iwashita & Liem, 2005). Native speakers of the target language can be recruited to provide support, interest and context to language learning. Another effective way of connecting with the community is involving students directly in community outreach where they visit nursing homes or places where people speak the language and interact in the language (Rhodes, 2014). Cross-age tutoring, where older students or native speaking students

interact with younger ones in the second and foreign language also builds up a sense that learning a language is part of everyday life (Rhodes, 2014).

Case studies of two learning environments

The classroom is specially designated for Greek classes in Year 2 in Greenfield Public School³ in Sydney. The room is decorated with Greek related pictures, the Greek alphabet, and hanging cloths with children's Greek names printed on them. There is a bookshelf filled with Greek children's books, such as Dora The Explorer, a storybook about a koala and some more traditional storybooks. On one of the right-hand side of the wall of the classroom, there is a wall painting, a fresco of a Biblical scene. Across the room there are four strings to hang things on. On one clothes are hung and these are labelled with their Greek names, on the second there are the Greek alphabet letters and on the third and fourth there are children's paintings with a short text in Greek attached.

What do you think of the learning environment presented in this language classroom?

At St Maria's Catholic Primary School, French is taught during RFF⁴. Apart from French lessons, the school assembly which is held every Wednesday morning features items spoken in French, including Hail Mary and other prayers. There is also an annual French day and students dress up in traditional French clothing, French food is supplied and French films are shown. Throughout the year students also visit the theatre where a local French acting group perform, and there is an annual overseas trip for high school students to countries where French is spoken.

How may the language learning environment created at St Maria's PS influence students' attitudes towards FL learning?

Effective pedagogy in LOTE teaching

Traditionally in second and foreign language teaching, including for young language learners, the focus was on the mechanics of language and particularly its grammar rules. This approach was adopted in Australia in the early years of second language instruction. This is now considered to be developmentally inappropriate for young learners (Uilenburg, Plooi, de Glopper, & Damhuis, 2001) as the approach gives little consideration to the needs of the learners nor to the contextual aspects of language use (Henderson, 2002). By the 1990s the goal of developing communicative competence was adopted for Australian LOTE

³ All school names used in this chapter are pseudonyms.

⁴ Relief from face to face teaching provided in primary schools to support teachers in their classroom teaching role.

students and included the use of real-life situations and authentic materials on the premise that it provided optimal learning conditions for second language learning (Henderson, 2002). Despite its merits, it has since been argued that the communicative approach may not be appropriate for Australian FL classrooms because they are not the same as the teaching and learning conditions for which it was initially developed (e.g., European adult intensive training centers) (Henderson, 2002). In more recent times arguments have been put forward for LOTE to include both meaning making, but also opportunities for learners to explore how the target language works as a system (i.e., the nature and structure of language) (Villacañas de Castro, 2016). This requires overt L2 instruction involving helping learners to be consciously aware of both the meaning and form of the language through the use of explicit metalanguage (Chen & Myhill, 2016; Singh & Ballantyne, 2012), including explicit teaching of grammar and genres. Indeed, it has been found that young language learners who are exposed to this type of focused and explicit instruction achieve substantial gains in their language learning (Tong et al., 2008).

Effective pedagogy will, however, depend on such things as the goal and purpose of what is being taught, on who is being taught and on the individual teacher's teaching styles (DET, 2016; Driscoll et al., 2004; Richards & Bohlke, 2011). So you can see we use the term 'effective pedagogy' because we believe there is not a single best approach, but rather a range of practices that can help students progress and learn. This includes practices that promote language acquisition, cultural awareness and positive attitudes towards learning. Effective pedagogy in the primary LOTE classroom include the need for meaningful learning outcomes, supportive learning environments, opportunities for target language use as well as age-appropriate scaffolding for all learners (Edelenbos et al., 2006; Richards & Bohlke, 2011). Children learn differently from adults (see Chapter 1) and to understand effective pedagogy in the primary years it is necessary to draw on work from current theories of language learning research and second language learning development, but also from child development, learning theory and first language development (Cameron, 2001, p. 2).

Case studies of Greek and Indonesian classrooms in Year 2

Greek classroom: The children are sitting on the floor in front of the smart board which is

initially turned off. They start the class by singing Frere Jacques in Greek. Then the teacher takes the class roll in Greek. To do this the teacher calls their Greek name and the children answer back in Greek. Next the smart board is turned on and they read the 'Weather Channel – Friday, Cloudy, 1st November'. 'November' is repeated in both English and Greek as it is a new word for children. The teacher uses almost only Greek in this weather activity. The children demonstrate a good reading ability perhaps because it is something they practice every morning.

Indonesian classroom: The class starts with all students sitting on the floor at the front of the class. There are two Indonesian teachers who teach the class, Vera and Wayne. Vera takes them and waits for them to settle down. The class sing a song called *selamat pagi* with the teacher. Wayne comes to the front and introduces body parts using power point. Wayne asks the class in English, "Can we think of a part of the body that hurts?" One student answers, "my nose hurts". Wayne then shows a picture of this with an Indonesian sentence written underneath. He asks 'How do we say this?' The students then read "*kepala saya sakit*". Wayne continues to the second slide, "yes, what does this mean?" Students read, "my belly hurts". This continues until all of the power point slides have been read.

How would you describe the different approaches that have been used for teaching languages in these lessons? Do you think one approach is more effective than the other? If so, why?

Scaffolding and engagement in the younger years

As you can recall from Chapter 1, from a Vygotskian sociocultural perspective, pedagogy is about creating learning conditions that support and enable language development while taking into account the broader social context. In this way effective pedagogy is not simply the use of theoretically informed teaching techniques, but rather it is about creating challenging learning environments that scaffold and assist learners, and promote their development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Mariani (1997) argues that most effective environments are those where tasks are challenging, but where students are guided to successfully complete them. Learning environments that do this are likely to generate high interest and engagement (for example, see again Chapter 7 of this book, also see Chapter 2 and 5 and their description of TBLT). Challenging activities are those that foster higher order thinking skills and deep thinking, and in what some scholars refer to as **metacognition** or the thinking about process of thinking (Gibbons, 2009). Pedagogical practices that provide structured support for LOTE learners will require learning activities that build

cultural and background knowledge; that are carefully sequenced to provide multiple opportunities for repetition and practice; that connect LOTE learning to other curriculum areas to make learning more relevant and meaningful; and that engage students in group interactions (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005).

Effective pedagogy for very young learners requires us to organise our teaching so that the students gain gradual control over what they have learned. For example, in Kindergarten, where students are aged approximately 5-6 years, learners require well-established routines and short episodes to maintain motivation and enthusiasm (Cameron, 2001). Additionally, because many Kindergarten learners are not yet literate in their first language, teaching and learning will require more speaking and listening activities and things that rely on their memory, including play, games, songs and rhymes. This means that for this age group there might be more teacher talk, lots of repetition, gestures and prompts which all helps to keep the young students motivated. Effective pedagogy in early primary years also include deconstructing more complex tasks to age appropriate challenges; using 'building blocks' that breaks down demanding activities and ideas to smaller, manageable sections while providing opportunities for practice and consolidation. One such example is presented in the case study below. While reading the example, consider how the teacher has deconstructed the final task (constructing noun phrases using numbers, colours and animals) to more manageable sections for these young learners.

Case study of a Spanish lesson in Kindergarten

Spanish lesson: The teacher begins their Spanish lesson by revising, in turn, days, months, numbers, animals and then colours. This is done in short episodes lasting only a few minutes each, but each episode is clearly defined because the students move from one part of the room to another: revising months by the felt board and revising colours by the smartboard while listening to a song. For some parts of the lesson they sit on the floor, for others they stand up. After these activities she then gathers them on the floor and reads a story in Spanish about animals. Before turning each page, the students count the animals on the page and name the colours they see.

Next the students are given large picture cards with numbers, animals and colours on them. They sit on the floor and physically create noun phrases (e.g., *un gorilla gris* meaning one grey gorilla). When they have all shared their phrases, they are given a worksheet to take back to their desk. On these worksheets are pictures of animals and the students need to colour the pictures according to the written Spanish instructions

(e.g., *dos mariposa blanco* – two white butterflies). As the lesson ends, the teacher gathers them on the floor once more and they revise numbers and colours yet again, and talk about what they have learnt that day.

What different evidence of effective pedagogy for Kindergarten can you see in this example?

A play-based pedagogy

We can see from the example above, effective pedagogy for young learners should be developmentally appropriate, based on their needs and interests, and built on their prior knowledge and experiences (Banegas, 2013; Jurišević & Pižorn, 2013; Qiu, 2013; Scarino et al., 2013). As discussed in Chapter 1, play is particularly important in developmentally appropriate language programs. Young learners need to be able to play, to be active and experience activities (Uilenburg et al., 2001). In fact it has been found that in LOTE classrooms, play has positive effects on participation, attention, motivation, and improved learning outcomes (Alpar, 2013; Belz, 2003; Jurišević & Pižorn, 2013).

A play-based pedagogy for teaching language to young learners may involve combining language instruction with creative arts, such as music and drama. For example, music integrated into the teaching of languages can be an engaging and effective pedagogical tool (Ansari, Mehrdad, & Ahmadi, 2016; Paolino, 2012) that may also increase students' confidence (Paolino, 2012). Because of its repetitive language and the scaffolding this provides, a musical approach can improve students' language ability and understanding and help them learn the intonation patterns of the target language (Ansari et al., 2016). Similarly, the use of drama in a LOTE classroom can help increase learner motivation, engagement and participation in learning and it provides them with the opportunity to practice social communication and problem-solving skills (Araki-Metcalf, 2008).

Case study of an Indonesian lesson in Year 4

The teacher tells the class they are going to play a game outside. She says the name of the game in Indonesian “Pukul berapa sekarang, Pak Serigala” (What’s the time, Mr wolf?) and then she explains the rules... Before they go outside the teacher reminds them

- How could the wolf say...5 o’clock? The student says “Pukul 5” (five o’clock) in chorus in Indonesian.
- How would the wolf say...1 o’clock? Again students happily respond, “Pukul 1” (one o’clock).
- How would the wolf say dinner time? All students respond, “waktu makan malam” (dinner time). They get their hats and prepare to go outside.

Once outside, the teacher explains the rules of the game. The children then play the game in Indonesian. A student is chosen by the teacher to be the wolf. The other students ask the wolf in Indonesian “Pukul berapa sekarang” (what’s the time) and the wolf responds with a time. At some point, the wolf says “waktu makan malam!” (dinner time) and chases the other students. They do this for 6-7 times (with different students being the wolf) before they go inside again.

How did the teacher engage the students in learning Indonesian?

Target language use in the LOTE classroom

Students can learn languages more effectively when they have opportunities to use the target language regularly, intensively and purposefully (Henderson, 2002). Yet one of the key challenges in LOTE teaching is the lack of exposure and opportunities for language practice outside of the classroom (Duff & Polio, 1990). Therefore it is vital that the quality and quantity of target language is optimised within the classroom (Driscoll et al., 2004; Peng & Zhang, 2009) and teachers need to regularly use and model the target language as well as provide plenty of opportunities for students themselves to use and practice the language during lessons (Swain, 2000). While this seems obvious, research has found that there are surprisingly few opportunities for learners to use the target language in the primary LOTE classrooms (Edelenbos et al., 2006). The other problem with this is that spending too much time listening to the teacher talk, rather than using the language themselves, can result in them feeling less motivated (Driscoll et al., 2004).

Case study of an Italian lesson in a 5/6 composite class

When the lesson begins, the teacher asks the students to come and sit on the floor. She speaks Italian exclusively, but very slowly and uses plenty of gestures, telling them to sit

down, move forward etc. After a few minutes, she tells them (in English) that today they are going to work on 'describing words' and will learn a song about 'family'.

To revise family words, the teacher says the Italian word and the students respond by translating it to English. Next the students receive a copy of the lyrics for The Adams family theme song written in Italian. She then reads the words out to the students. At times she pauses and asks the students what an Italian word means. The class then listen and sing the song together supported by a video on the smartboard. When the song is done, the teacher points to each family member and asks the students for Italian word.

They are handed worksheets and return to their desks. On the paper there are two sections: the upper section is a word finder, and the bottom section has incomplete faces on it, lacking hair, eye colours etc. Under each face is a name. The teacher gives them instructions in English: She will read out the descriptions of the people in Italian and they will colour them in accordingly, but that first they will revise the Italian words for colours and different parts of the head and face. She says a colour in Italian and students hold up a pencil in that colour, and then ask them to point to corresponding head parts (e.g., point at your *capelli*). She puts together Italian sentences that students have to translate (if I say *occhio blu* what does that mean?), and a quick reminder that in Italian, adjectives come after the noun.

The teacher then reads out descriptions and the students colour in the faces. The descriptions become increasingly demanding using compound sentences. Students enjoy activity and some put up barriers so no one can copy their work, turning it in to a competition. When there is only one face left to colour in, Mrs E choses a girl to give the instructions in Italian to the rest of the class.

Describe the use of target language in this lesson. What strategies could the teacher use to encourage more students target language use?

Developing intercultural competence

Learning about culture is integral to learning of a language (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009). The importance of culture in language learning brings into focus the dynamic relationship between language and the cultural context in which language and its meaning are shaped and created (Scarino et al., 2013, p. 32). This cultural orientation places developing students' intercultural competence at the core of a LOTE program. Scarino (2017) points out that this is a necessary expansion from a sole focus on communicative competence in the context of languages education, to one that is increasingly characterised by linguistic and cultural diversity. This is because learning a language involves learning to communicate and to act and value in culturally appropriate ways. As such, an effective LOTE pedagogy includes as one of its goal developing students' understanding of language as part of a

complex set of cultural and social practices (Mackerras, 2010). At the same time it is a pedagogy that fosters learners' ability to become effective **intercultural users of language**. This can be achieved through an integrated approach where the teaching of language and culture are combined. By doing so, students can develop their intercultural knowledge, but also their language and metacognitive skills as they reflect on and talk about what happens when they use different languages (Moloney, 2008; Scarino et al., 2013; Singh & Ballantyne, 2012).

Key to developing **intercultural competence** is developing students' awareness of culture and communication. While we might include this in explicit ways in our teaching, Scarino et al. (2013) do warn us about the danger of teaching language and culture as systems, codes and factual knowledge to be learned. They suggest that languages learning should be embedded in social interactions as part of the process of meaning-making, including the interpretation of specific social and cultural contexts. For these reasons intercultural understanding and communication are best developed through participation and interaction. Typical activities that aim at promoting **intercultural awareness** involve students observing, participating, investigating, talking about and reflecting on the impact of culture on language, including reflection on how students' own culture has influenced the way they act and speak (Scarino & Kholer, 2014). Other activities may involve learning to understand and use language appropriately according to the context (Scarino et al., 2013; Villacañas de Castro, 2016) through, for example, role-playing suitable talk and communicating in imaginary contexts. Although these aims might seem hard to achieve for young learners, it is possible and, in fact, is desirable as doing so has been found to increase students' motivation and lead to positive attitudes to language learning (Yang, 2006).

Case study of a French lesson in Year 5

In this lesson the teacher selects individual students one at a time (all seem eager from the way they hold their hands up hoping to be chosen) to come to the front of the class and draw one of many small folded pieces of paper from a plastic bag held by the teacher. Each piece of paper has a question which the students answer aloud (These included some very straightforward (and quite basic) questions such as: How do you say "thank you" in French? Through to: How do you say the Hail Mary prayer in French?

Name two countries that border France?

What is the capital of France?

What is a baguette?

What is an escargot?

The students give an answer and the teacher either repeats it if it correct or provides the correct answer if the student has not answered correctly. The class then repeats it out loud and often in unison.

How does this teacher's practices promote cultural awareness?

Digital technology

Digital technology is highly engaging for young learners (Banegas, 2013; Simeone, Munro, & Silburn, 2006). Careful use of digital technology in LOTE classrooms can not only improve students' intercultural competence, but also provide them with more opportunities to engage with the target language (Huang, 2011). In remote and under-resourced contexts in particular, digital technologies can open up a vast array of learning possibilities. As we have shown in the examples above, smartboards offer useful access to the target language and provide strong visual support to young learners. Other technological opportunities include, for example, the use of tablets and the internet for engaging and motivating learning environments, connecting the learners with real-world problems and with authentic resources to promote deeper learning (Chun, Smith, & Kern, 2016; Kern, 2014). With the growth of the internet in the last twenty years, new opportunities have arisen for learners to engage with authentic texts and/or to communicate with native speakers through, inter alia, blogs, instant messaging, email, Skype etc. Software or online programs such as Kahoot.it, Powtoon (a free cartoon-making online program), and Education Perfect provide further opportunities to engage young children in using language actively. However, we must be mindful that technology per se does not replace or guarantee a good LOTE program, but needs to be used in appropriate ways as there are complicated relationships between the effect of various technologies and learning. So how to incorporate technology into LOTE classrooms needs careful pedagogical consideration (Butler, Someya, & Fukuhara, 2014).

Assessment

As in all learning, the learning of languages requires feedback that will enhance students' progress towards becoming a competent language user. While arguing for the important role of intercultural learning in LOTE teaching, Scarino (2017) also makes a compelling case for the need to shift to assessment practices that are **meaning oriented**, focusing on eliciting evidence of students' language learning in the act of communicating (p. 19). For young children it is especially important that teachers gather meaningful evidence through practical and hands-on activities, which will inform their judgements about students' capability to communicate appropriately in another language. These activities could take the forms of formative tasks such as simple picture annotations or story miming, along with summative tasks such as writing letters or storytelling. Naturally the choice of assessment tasks will vary according to learning outcomes set out for a target unit of work. Nevertheless, by using authentic and meaningful tasks, teachers will be better positioned to assess what it is that students have learned, and offer constructive feedback that will promote language learning and development.

Conclusion

Good teachers and high-quality instruction is the most effective environment for language learning, especially for young language learners. The case studies included in this chapter demonstrate that effective LOTE teaching requires a pedagogy that combines knowledge of content and curriculum, knowledge of content and teaching, and knowledge of content and students (Scarino et al., 2013, p. 38). The teaching of foreign languages will be more successful when language teachers design engaging and scaffolded learning experiences that are appropriate for young LOTE learners of all backgrounds. Although they might be young, language learning tasks should still be challenging and playful while promoting target language use and intercultural competence. It can also be made more meaningful if integrated into other subject content areas, just as the case studies above demonstrated (i.e., LOTE integrated into maths, science and religious education)(also see Chapter 7 for a discussion about CLIL).

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