

Literacy and Languages Series

The first in a series of articles on Literacy and Learning Languages, by Dee Edwards

[Read more here](#)



Languages Workshop

Stimulating first workshop on 'introducing or restructuring a language programme' at full primary or intermediate schools.

[Read more here](#)



Language Assistants

Language Assistants provide language and cultural input for students of French, German and Spanish. We asked the about their New Zealand experiences.

[Read more here](#)



Year 8 passes exam

For the first time in New Zealand, year 8 students pass an international examination for German language.

[Read more here](#)



Chinese Culture Day

Holy Cross, Western Heights Primary School, Henderson North Primary School and St Dominics College celebrated their first Chinese culture day.

[Read more here](#)

Challenging the Myths of Learning a Language:

A Literacy Perspective

This is the first in a series of articles on Literacy and Learning Languages, by Dee Edwards

Myth 1: Achieving literacy is difficult so it would be better to focus on English rather than waste time on other languages.

The practices parents associate with Literacy, because of their own Literacy experiences, are not those of their children in this age of technology and global interconnectedness. Additionally, given global connectedness, new technologies and multi-media, it is important for children to know how to manage communication and knowledge transfer across languages and cultures. The study of language in addition to English is highly beneficial.

Myth 2: The English learning area is the only area where Literacy can really be addressed.

Literacy does not equal English. Literacy is about language, the study of a second or third language can enhance Literacy, language and communication skills: it supports lifelong learning. Literacy is central to thinking, learning and achievement, and can be developed in any language context through the explicit use of effective Literacy strategies.

Myth 3: How can learning a second language possibly enhance Literacy?

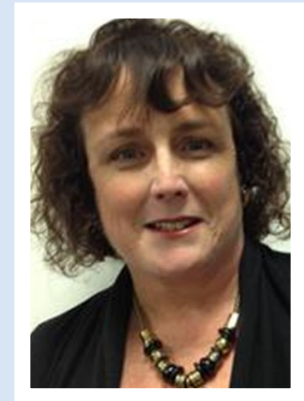
There are cognitive advantages to learning a second language - as well as learners developing flexibility in learning and dealing with linguistic concepts, their thinking skills are enhanced. As they develop metalinguistic awareness by comparing the features of their first language with those of a second or third language, learners are better able to understand the structure of English. Second language learners who develop and enhance their skills and strategies for decoding and meaning making transfer these skills to English.

A second language can provide a new language beginning for learners who have struggled with English. This has been shown to be beneficial, both in terms of English language development and for the self-esteem of learners.

Myth 4: If a student is not performing at curriculum expectations in Literacy and/or other learning areas, what is the point of that student learning another language?

Research studies with students who experience learning difficulties show that the learning of a second language can, in fact be advantageous. *Two Languages Too: Second Language Learning and Children with Special Needs* (2001) documents the evidence of special needs children learning a second language. Such children gained in areas such as listening and attending skills, general communication skills, and even more importantly, in self-esteem.

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Dee is National Co-ordinator Learning Languages in the Secondary Student Achievement Contract with responsibility for the Northern and Central North regions. She has been working as a Facilitator at Team Solutions, Faculty of Education, University of Auckland for the past three years. Dee has formerly taught French at Secondary level, along with Spanish and German in Intermediate and Middle School settings. She is currently the Secretary of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers, and is a member of the ILEP Advisory Group. Dee has a particular interest in integrating Literacy, and ICT into Learning Languages programmes.

A Literacy Perspective continued...

Myth 5: If English is a student's second language why should the student learn a further or subsequent language?

Studies in multilingual acquisition show no negative effects from the learning of more than two languages. In fact, for many people in the world, this is the norm. It seems also that, the more languages you learn, the more able you are to learn language. There is also the advantage gained from being able to experience the cultures and ideas of different people through their language.

For ESOL students, learning a third language can be an extremely positive experience in that their developing English is not a disadvantage. It also provides these students with further opportunities to consider English as a system.

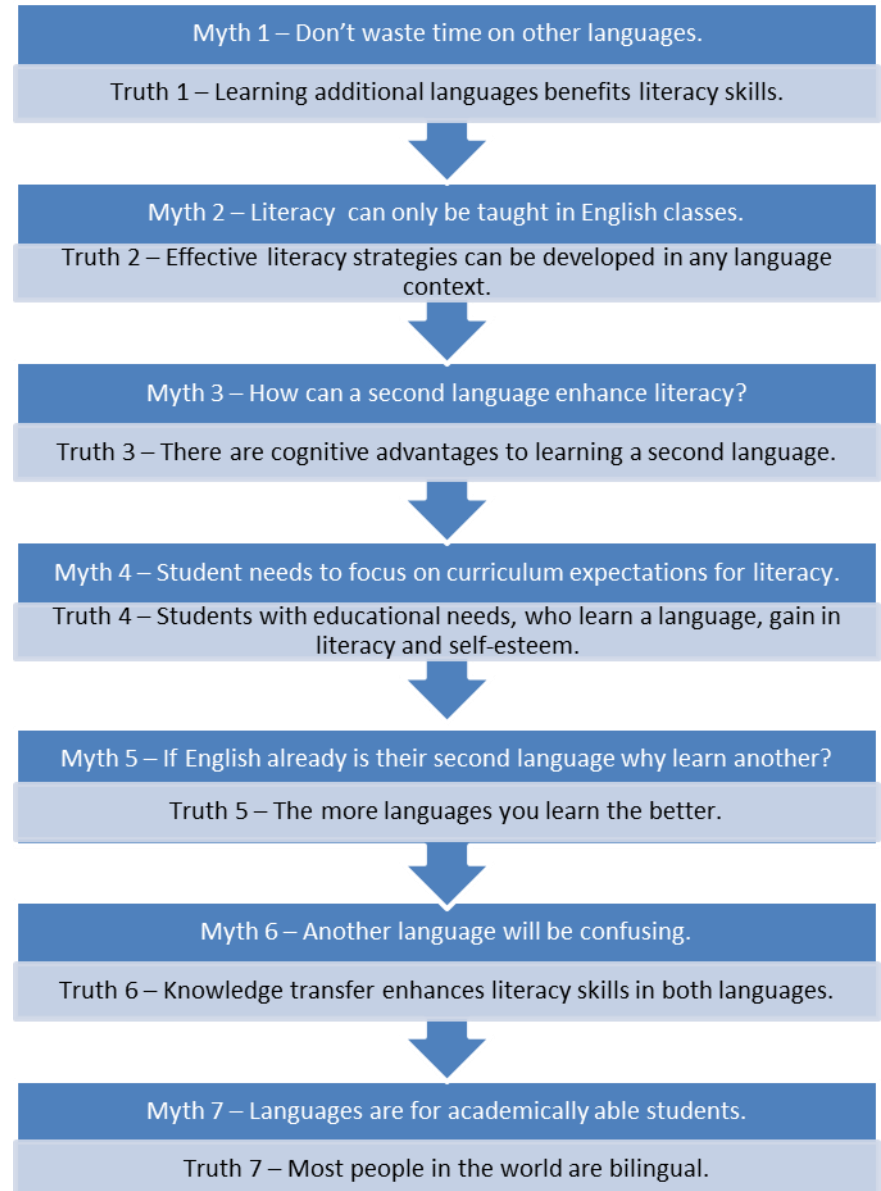
Myth 6: Doing another language will be confusing for children.

Successful second language learners transfer their knowledge about language learning from one language to the other. By using cross-linguistic strategies, learning and literacy in both languages can be enhanced. It is when learners try to keep languages separate, by not recognising the connections that all languages have, that there is a possibility for confusion. (Garcia, 1999).

Myth 7: Languages are for academically able students so less able students shouldn't have to do them.

Most people in the world are bilingual. This assumption is based on the traditional academic approaches of associating language study with the classics. This historical practice has nothing to do with the ability of people to acquire language because we know that this ability is not linked to intelligence.

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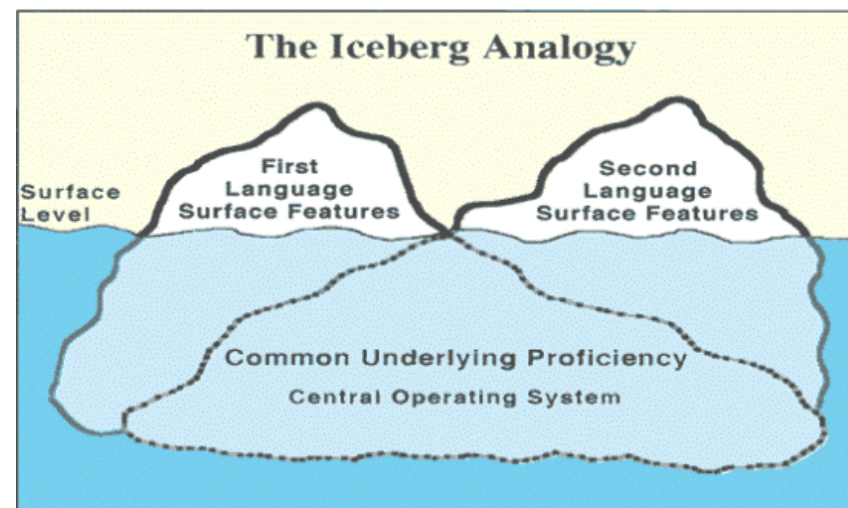


A Literacy Perspective continued...

The Learning Languages and Literacy Partnership

Learning any language means learning about language and about what it means to be literate, and it involves critical thinking. This is a transferable skill associated with literacy development that is increasingly becoming a focus in first language to second language pedagogy. Co-operative second language learning experiences that are considered to be enhancing literacy involve students learning to solve problems, helping each other, soliciting opinions, presenting rationales, defending, synthesising, listening to others, and asking relevant questions that allow students to refine their own thinking.

Studies in metacognition and metalinguistics suggest that learning more than one language helps develop sensitivity to language as a system and argues strongly that the formal acquisition of a second language develops a conscious awareness of language as a system and that this is advantageous for learners. Exposure to both English and other languages provides students with the opportunity to appreciate that literacy is about culture as well as different ways of thinking and being. Even when two languages use different writing systems, students are still able to apply the visual, linguistic and cognitive strategies they acquired when learning their first language to the second language. Cummins (2000) hypothesises that cross-lingual proficiencies promote the development of cognitive, and academic skills. This hypothesis, known as the *Common Underlying Proficiency Theory*, Cummins refers to the interdependence of concepts, skills and linguistic knowledge found in a 'central processing system'.



Teachers of second languages who would like to develop the Literacy and Learning Languages partnership further in their programmes can read more on this in the *Learning Languages and Literacy* brochure which is available as a .pdf on the [NZALT website](#). Resources to support strategic approaches to Literacy that can be integrated into Learning Languages programmes across a range of levels are outlined on the [Learning Languages PLD wiki](#).

References:

- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, Power and Pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Garcia, G. (1999). Bilingual Children's Reading: An Overview of Recent Research. *ERIC/CLL News Bulletin*, Fall/Winter, 1 - 4.
- Norris, L. (2001). *Two Languages Too: Second Language Learning and Children with Special Needs*. Education Department of Western Australia. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. 465282.)

Introducing Language Programmes - First Workshop

The first workshop on 'introducing or restructuring a language programme' at full primary or intermediate schools facilitated by International Languages Exchanges and Pathways (ILEP) was a very stimulating experience, says Christine Biebricher, our Professional Learning Coordinator.

It was good to see that representatives of both primary and intermediate schools from a wide region across Auckland participated and that some schools were represented not only by their principal or senior management team, but also by curriculum designers, heads of literacy sections and language teachers.

It was a great opportunity for the participants to meet members of ILEP, in particular the Professional Learning Coordinator (Christine as facilitator of the workshop) and the two National Advisers for Chinese (Wang Yu) and for French (Glenda Palmer). It was an equally good opportunity for the ILEP members to discuss possibilities and available support for language programmes, to establish contacts with school leaders and practitioners and it was appreciated by the participants that ideas, concerns and different views could be exchanged with each other.

The participants discussed reasons for having a language programme, especially from a school's perspective in order to raise the school's profile, but also incorporating curriculum requirements and research findings.

Many possibilities were found to relate a language programme to literacy programmes as a tremendous chance to increase literacy development both in English and in an additional language.

Some of the major concerns seen when implementing a language programme were time constraints and the lack of qualified teachers. The group debated various possible solutions and possible models to overcome such problems and the ILEP members provided extensive information on the support they can offer with such difficulties.

Stephen Lethbridge, Principal of Taupaki School, presented their model of language teaching and learning and his contribution to the workshop was greatly appreciated by the participants.

Some feedback:

"Very useful. Thank you – has got me motivated to start pushing things again!"

"Good to hear about the support being offered to schools! Also good to share in the enthusiasm for this learning area exhibited by the presenter."

"It was great to have Stephen present, to hear what his staff is doing and the practicality of it all."



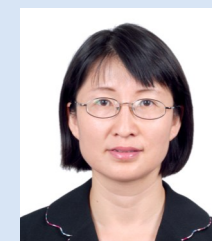
Dr Christine Biebricher
Professional Learning
Co-ordinator

c.biebricher@auckland.ac.nz



Glenda Palmer
French National Adviser

french@ilep.ac.nz



Wang Yu
Chinese National Adviser

chinese@ilep.ac.nz

A French Language Assistant in NZ



Henry, the snail-puppet.

At home language programmes focus on grammar and writing, whereas here it is more about active speaking and the culture of the foreign country. Teachers also use great exercises to stimulate interest. For example, Maud loved seeing the younger students wake up a snail-puppet called 'Henri' and sing him to sleep with the song 'Frère Jacques'.

Maud works with teachers that are either native speakers or very fluent in French. So, she feels like she cannot make a huge difference there. But she has helped where she can, for example with a little novel they created.

Maud mainly works with years 9-13 and has tried a lot of different activities. For example, playing the game 'taboo' in French during lunch time, or creating a quiz on local food from various French regions, or working with

We asked Maud, from Southern France, about her experiences as a Foreign Language Assistant in rainy Auckland.

She said that schools in New Zealand are much more interac-

French Art to use the visual experience, or asking students about their best childhood memories. She also attends any events her students participate in, to show that she cares and is interested, which students love.

At home, Maud has completed a degree in English Studies and Translation and then worked in audio-visual production working on documentaries. She is not quite sure yet, what she will do after her time here in New Zealand.



Applications Closing Soon

Applications to employ [Foreign Language Teaching Assistants](#) in your school need to be completed and returned by Friday, 28. September 2012. The scheme is available to all schools offering languages at secondary, intermediate and primary level.

A Spanish Language Assistant in NZ

One of my professional goals in the beginning of my stay was to learn how to make language programmes more interesting and motivating for the students. I think I'm on the right track now, because I can see more enthusiasm on the kids' faces.

I also wanted to establish links between students and the Spanish-speaking world, so I have started a pen-friend programme between my year 11 students at Albany Senior High School and the pupils of an English teacher back home in Spain.

Personally, I wanted to improve my level of English but I'm finding it quite hard since Spanish is my working tool. Besides, when you have been speaking and learning a language for so long it is difficult to get rid of bad habits.

In some aspects NZ reminds me of the UK, but there are many things which are unique. I admit, that the main difficulties for me have been dealing with the quality



of the internet connection and the public transport. Both more expensive and less "steady" than in Europe.

The cultural differences are many; I think the NZ society is much more sporty than the Spanish, almost everyone is involved in a sport club or, at least, go to the gym or running. In Spain we prefer watching rather than playing the sport



games, even better if it's at a bar with friends. I miss the "street life" we have in Spain.

Another thing that I found quite strange is that in Spain you always say hello when you enter a room and there is someone

inside while here people usually don't say anything if they don't know you.

I find the NZ school system much more exciting and motivating to students. I can see that both the students and specially the teachers involve themselves much more in the learning/teaching process, resulting in a more authentic and productive programme.

Both the Spanish and the NZ system share some difficulties, like the number of students in class or the lack of perception on the students' side of a real need of learning another language since they already speak an international one. The aspect that I find more positive in NZ is that the teachers, in average, are better prepared and, above all, more passionate about what they are teaching.

With the best students I do some extra work about pronunciation. I meet them in small groups every one or two weeks and help them with the questions they may have and we do different exercises to improve their pronunciation. I also meet the weakest students, in case they are interested in receiving help, and do some extra exercises on the topics and grammar point we have seen during class. I try to make it in a relax way so that they feel more comfortable and self confident.

Year 8 language students sit international language exam

As a direct result of the experience of sitting the basic A1 level examination early in the TPDL (Teacher Professional Development Languages) year, Hayley Johns decided that her students could aim to sit the equivalent examination for young people, '[Fit in Deutsch 1](#)', by the end of year 8.

It was a New Zealand first, as this examination had only ever been sat by secondary school students before. First of all year 7 and 8 students normally don't sit language exams, especially not in four different language skills; speaking, listening, reading and writing. Hayley selected students who had demonstrated proficiency in these areas to take the exam. In order to prepare students for the exam they met weekly for 45 minutes for 2 terms as a small group; in addition to the weekly 45 minute class sessions.

The exam 'Fit in Deutsch' by the Goethe-Institute has a very practical, relevant approach to the language. It is not about teaching to an exam, it is about teaching students German for daily use of the language.

Get going. With Fit in Deutsch 1 – the examination for young people



Passing the **Goethe-Zertifikat A1: Fit in Deutsch 1** examination proves that you can make yourself understood in simple German. The examination requires a basic knowledge of German. It corresponds to level one (A1) on the six-level scale of competence laid down in the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages](#).





Chinese Culture Day at Holy Cross

On July 25th, Holy Cross held its first Chinese culture day with three other schools: Western Heights Primary School, Henderson North Primary School and St Dominics College. Six Chinese teachers and their MLA designed and implemented the programme. Students engaged in quite a few Chinese culture activities: Paper cutting, using chopsticks, making spring rolls, playing card games, calligraphy and Chinese painting.

A Maori culture opening ceremony highlighted the special culture feature of New Zealand, followed by two Chinese culture performances: fan and silk dance by girls dressed in Qipao and a Zodiac dance by boys in Zodiac masks.



Angelina was very happy doing her Chinese painting on rice paper. She was painting an orchid, a traditional painting item in Chinese culture. She also said she liked the butterfly in her painting, even though it looked more like a ladybug.



"I love the butterfly!" - Angelina

"Ninhao!": 您好!

"When we were leaving, some little kids of 5-6 years old just started to have their lunch. They were lining up and held their plates, all dressed in red uniforms. They were so cute that I could not help to stop and say "Ninhao" to them, and they answered me with "Ninhao!". I was so surprised!

This was the first time I had visited a school and been addressed with "ninhao", a formal and respectable way to greet people who are older than you.

Their Chinese teacher Vimi Chandra is really doing a good job of teaching!" - Yu Wang



Coming Up ...

◇ New Zealand 2012 International Film Festival

The New Zealand [International Film Festival](#), runs from **July to November** every year. A fantastic opportunity to watch movies in their original language.



◇ German Film Festival in Wellington

This year's [German Film Festival](#) with a focus on Wim Wenders starts **28. August** in Wellington.



◇ [APPA Speech Competitions](#)

- ◇ 17. August, Japanese by Massey Univ in Palmerston North
- ◇ 18. August, Japanese Speech by AUT in Auckland
- ◇ 29. August Mandarin
- ◇ 30. August Cantonese
- ◇ 21 September, Japanese in Christchurch
- ◇ 21. September, Japanese in Christchurch

◇ Japan Festival

Wellington's third [Japan Festival](#) on **9. September** is a great opportunity to enjoy some Japanese food, crafts, culture and performers.



◇ Japanese-Language Proficiency Test

Applications for the [Japanese-Language Proficiency Test](#) (JLPT) close on Friday, **14. September**.



◇ Japanese Holidays

- ◇ 17. September "Keirou no hi" (敬老の日) 'Respect - for - the - Aged Day'
- ◇ 22. September "Shuubun no hi" (秋分の日) 'Autumnal Equinox Day'

◇ Chinese Moon festival

also called [Mid-Autumn Festival](#), coming up on 30. September

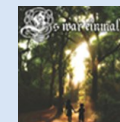
◇ Haiku & Shodo Competition 2012

In the Haiku & Shodo competition learners of Japanese language (year 10-13) will express themselves in a Japanese Haiku poem and get a chance to experience traditional Japanese calligraphy. [Entries close](#): Friday, **21. September**.



◇ German Language Short Film Fest 2012

This year's [film competition](#) for high school and university students is open for entries. Closing date for all entries is Friday, **28. September**.



◇ Speak Up Award for Primary & Intermediate Teachers

NZALT members who teach up to and including Year 8 can apply for financial assistance for a [language proficiency course](#). Applications close **30. September**.



◇ NZQA [Best Practice Workshops](#) for Languages

- ◇ Blenheim (28. September)
- ◇ Counties Manukau (6. September)
- ◇ Nelson (28. September)
- ◇ Taupo (10. September)
- ◇ Tauranga (10. September)
- ◇ Whakatane (10. September)



Your Feedback

- * Do you know about any upcoming events and deadlines? Let us know, so we can include them in our next newsletter.
- * Do you have a story for us? We would love to hear from you if you do.
- * Any other feedback? Please email us at plc@ilep.ac.nz

Key Contacts and Links

Advisory Support

National Advisers for Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish provide language specific support and can also offer advice about foreign language assistants and scholarship and immersion opportunities for each language.

National Coordinators for Learning Languages, Secondary Student Achievement Contract, focus on effective implementation of the New Zealand Curriculum and the NCEA realigned achievement standards as well as the development of literacy and language practices.

- ⇒ Northern & Central Regions please contact: [Dee Edwards](#).
- ⇒ Southern & Central South Regions please contact: [Jo Guthrie](#)

Key Contacts and Links

Professional Development Opportunities

TPDL (Teacher Professional Development Languages) is a Ministry of Education funded programme aimed at developing teacher language proficiency and second language teaching capabilities in order to improve student language learning outcomes. TPDL is available to beginners as well as language experts.

ILEP (International Languages Exchanges and Pathways) supports schools and teachers to implement the Learning Languages curriculum area, particularly at Years 7 and 8.

Language Immersion Awards are provided by the Ministry of Education for teachers of languages to undertake immersion experiences overseas. Applications close on 30. August 2012. Further details are available at the [AFS website](#).



Don't forget!

Check out the [Learning Languages Website](#) for regular updates and more information.

