Beginners' LOTE (Languages Other than English) in Australian Universities: an Audit Survey and Analysis

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL OF THE AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF THE HUMANITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Funded by the Learned Academies Special Projects scheme, this study had the goals of:

- providing an up-to-date and detailed understanding of beginners' languages provision across the Australian university sector, and
- identifying – through a more detailed study of beginner's languages programs in a sample of ten participating universities – a range of best practice in course design and presentation, teaching (including the use of new technologies) and assessment.

Our sample group of ten participating universities can be considered as a reasonable cross-section of the Australian tertiary sector, containing as it does Group of Eight and other large urban universities as well as smaller and regional institutions.

Our research, conducted through the internet, questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews, sought to elicit qualitative as well as quantitative data.

1. RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

1.1 Enthusiasm, Commitment, Ingenuity and Innovation

Without exception, the languages programs at the participating universities are driven by enthusiasm and commitment, and despite having to operate in circumstances that are more and more difficult, there are numerous examples of ingenious and innovative teaching initiatives that promise well for the future of the sector.

1.2 The Realities of the Crisis

Many of the findings of our study reinforce the sense of alarm expressed in the 2007 report of the Group of Eight Universities, *Languages in Crisis: a Rescue Plan for Australia*. There is ongoing erosion of beginners' languages offerings in Australian universities, and a growing process of casualisation of teaching.

1.3 The Numbers

On average, fewer than 10% of first-year students undertake LOTE study of any kind. This number is moreover declining, with overall languages enrolments stagnant over the 2005-2007 period while student cohorts increased. In a majority of institutions, more students enrol in beginners' languages than at other entry-points. In all institutions, beginners' languages streams are an essential element in the economy of the languages programs.

2. PATTERNS OF GROWTH AND DECLINE

There is considerable variation among institutions in terms of growth or decline of beginners' languages enrolments. There are however general patterns, with growth being reported in first-year Korean, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, German and French,

and declines in Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Chinese. Against an overall increase of 12% in European beginners' languages, there is a decline of 9% in Asian languages, including Arabic. Spanish accounts for 80% of the growth in European languages, and in our sample, enrolments in first-year Spanish beginners' subjects were only slightly smaller than the sum of all the Asian languages, including Arabic.

3. RETENTION AND ATTRITION

3.1 Retention is a major issue in beginners' LOTE courses. Here there is even greater variation among institutions, and there is also variation among languages. On average, one third of students beginning a LOTE at university do not complete more than one semester; a third of those remaining do not continue into second year; there is further attrition after second semester of second year, and of those completing second year, only two thirds continue into third year. Overall, fewer than 25% of students beginning a LOTE complete a third year. Retention rates are better for some languages than for others, and for equivalent languages, some institutions perform markedly better than others.

3.2 Our respondents advance various reasons for these trends – including late take-up of languages by students, perceptions of heavy workloads, frustration with slow progress, and timetable and other structural problems. But it is clear that there is an urgent need for a large scale study of retention/attrition issues in languages at Australian universities, and for more extensive collaboration among institutions so that successful practice can be shared. That there is widespread willingness for such cooperation is evidenced by the enthusiasm of our interlocutors' participation, and by the generosity with which individual teachers opened their classrooms to our observers.

4. SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGES

As a subset of LOTE, Beginner's LOTE streams benefit from support offered to languages at various levels, or conversely, suffer from the lack of it.

4.1 In the absence of any 'languages culture' at a national political level, the only form of structural national support for the teaching of languages is in the DEST recognition of the need for a high weighting funding band for the LOTE sector as compared to the humanities generally [2.17:1]. The efficacy of the weighting is however undermined by the fact that DEST funding constitutes a diminishing proportion of overall university budgets, and because most institutions do not 'pass on' the weighting to their languages programs.

4.2 At an institutional level, structural support mechanisms include:

- a Diploma of Modern Languages, encouraging students from different faculties to pursue language study, including from beginners' entry.
- financial support for students selected for in-country study, and exchange links with a variety of overseas universities.

These mechanisms benefit relatively small number of students, although respondents identified the opportunity of overseas study as one of the motivating factors for students taking up language study.

4.3 In most institutions, faculties other than those in which languages are taught allow students to undertake language study as an elective. More extensive integration has been attempted in a number of places through the creation of specialised degrees in languages, or degrees in other fields (for example, International Studies or Asian Studies) for which language study is a formal co-requisite.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF MORALE

Only a quarter of respondents felt that their institutions supported languages to an extent sufficient to ensure a good level of morale among staff. If, from a management perspective, the major issue is seen to be funding, from a staff perspective, uncertainty of employment and excessive teaching loads are the major causes of anxiety, with the latter impeding research profiles, and hence impacting on promotion prospects. In cases where high morale was reported, good team-building, the ability to recruit, and the development of research programs were key explanations.

6. TEACHING AND LEARNING

6.1 Trends in Curriculum Design

Our study of course design gathered data for eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. The local nature of course design is illustrated in the very extensive variety of course descriptions and assessment. Not surprisingly for beginners' courses, emphasis is placed primarily on language acquisition.

In some instances, expected outcomes are clearly articulated and specific benchmarks are made explicit – good practice which could be more widely adopted.

Considerable creativity and dynamism is evident in the use of teaching materials.

In general, methodologies tend to be eclectic rather than to follow any given theory, a tendency borne out in the classroom practice observed.

In almost all cases, courses are designed on the assumption that beginning students will be undertaking a sequence of three year's study of the language in question. This assumption is problematic because, as we have seen, a significant majority of students do not do so.

On proficiency criteria, there are general perceptions of problems of coordination across languages within any given institution. In most instances, criteria have been developed locally, though there are cases where external benchmarks are used to good effect.

6.2 Trends in Curriculum Delivery

Financial constraints are causing a reduction in contact hours across the sector. However, this process is impacting unevenly both within individual institutions and between institutions, with the result that comparability of proficiency outcomes is

becoming increasingly difficult. In addition, there is little uniformity in relation to the private study hours expected of students, which further exacerbates the difficulty of evaluating proficiency outcomes. Casualisation of teaching has brought an additional workload burden in the need to provide increased tutor training, and timetabling is sometimes adversely affected by the need to accommodate casual tutor availability. On a more positive note, difficult circumstances have generated some innovative practices and ideas in the use of technology and the transmission of learning strategies to enhance student autonomy.

6.3 Classroom Teaching

The classroom observations focussed on aspects of teaching, structure of the lesson, materials and class size. The general excellence of the classroom teaching strongly illustrates the resilience and commitment of practitioners, despite often difficult circumstances. The individual teachers all showed great vitality and creativity in their classroom teaching and enthusiastic teaching emerged as an element common to all the classes we observed. The importance of teachers in beginners' language courses is of course crucial.

6.4 Trends in Technology Enhanced Language Learning

New technologies were interpreted in a variety of ways encompassing new and old, generic and language-specific technologies and applications. The use of generic rather than language-specific technologies and tools tended to predominate.

The use of newer, emerging technologies (video- and audio-conferencing, podcasting) was reported, although often in an experimental way.

Also notable was the use of new technologies in the support of smaller, non-economically viable languages. There were some examples of applications developed for assessment purposes. The use of new technologies for pastoral care was also mentioned.

It is clear there would be value in an information exchange to enable language departments and schools to share ideas and materials more readily.

6.5 Assessment Practices

Assessment practices are also characterised by extreme variation, both within individual institutions and across particular languages. The variation underlines how highly individualised the different programs are, and how difficult it would be to design instruments that would allow comparison of outcomes.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Strengthening the Sector

Recognition of a need for a structure to facilitate exchange among practictioners was universal.

Recommendation 1

Creation of a National Languages Task-Force/ Network for the ongoing analysis and support of beginner's LOTE courses in Australian Universities.

7.2 The Difficulties of Gathering Information

Collection of data for this project revealed that many basic facts about the LOTE experience of students are not routinely gathered or retained. The following recommendation is intended to address this issue.

Recommendation 2

Creation of processes to ensure that universities collect data in a readily accessible form on the LOTE experience of their students, including formal secondary training and background speaker experience.

7.3 The Need for Structured Policy Support for LOTE

In all institutions surveyed, LOTE teaching is underfunded, and in a growing number of cases, budget models actually *disadvantage* growth. Only a combined effort of policy and funding by governments, institutions (including faculties) and the programs themselves will allow the crisis to be solved.

Recommendation 3

There is an urgent need for governments and universities alike to recognise languages as a strategic and essential sector and to support them accordingly.

7.4 The Need for Further Study of Retention-Attrition issues and of Technology use in LOTE teaching-learning

The issue of retention rates was without doubt the prime concern of our interlocutors. Similarly, while our findings have revealed many useful applications of technology to the LOTE teaching and learning processes, more detailed analysis is needed to ensure the best use of the financial and intellectual resources available to the sector.

Recommendation 4

A large-scale national study of retention and attrition should be undertaken immediately, and its findings widely diffused; and likewise, a more detailed study is needed of the uses of technology.

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PREAMBLE

This project – conducted with the support of the Australian Research Council under the Learned Academies Special Projects scheme[1] – was based on the position that university language study is an important mechanism for maintaining and expanding Australia's language capacity. It is, therefore, critical to achieving national objectives with respect to improvements in trade, career pathways, international mobility, research capacity, technological developments, and community a well as individual engagement. Recent international events – around the world – only highlight the importance of expanding Australia's language capacity for the benefit of the nation and of providing the means to do so. Given the importance of such study, it is surely anomalous that there exists only a fragmented idea of the nature, success and problems of language provision, and beginners' courses in particular, across the sector. Warning bells have been sounded repeatedly in the national press and in academic channels about worrying contraction in the area, seen in a continuing pattern of reduction in the number and range of languages on offer, such as Indonesian and many others, without apparent concern for Australia's national interests. The long-running anxiety has recently been given renewed voice by the Group of Eight Universities in its report *Languages in Crisis: a Rescue Plan for Australia*, which called for a comprehensive policy to be developed at the national level that would embrace the learning of languages as an integral part of Australia's political security, cultural harmony, and economic and educational competitiveness. These principles also underpin the joint Call for Action of November 2007 by the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Group of Eight, the Australian Council for State School Organisations, and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The present project is strongly convergent with this current of thought, and seeks to bring to the discussion more detailed knowledge about the current state of affairs in relation to a particularly crucial area of the field, namely the teaching and learning of beginners' languages in the tertiary sector. The study focuses on 'modern' languages, and does not include classical languages such as Latin, Classical Greek or Sanskrit.

The reason for paucity of present knowledge about the area is in part historical. The expansion and contraction of beginners' language programs in Australian universities has for a long time occurred on a largely ad hoc basis. Each university has tended to behave in its own particular way, without necessarily responding to any policy determination, let alone the clear impetus of national priorities that should favour the

[1] Although formally a 2006 project, because of late ministerial approval, it became a 2007 project, linking the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the University of Melbourne, and Griffith University. The investigative team consisted of Colin Nettelbeck (First Chief Investigator), John Byron, Michael Clyne, John Hajek, Mike Levy, Joe Lo Bianco, Anne McLaren and Gillian Wigglesworth. The team was assisted by a Project Officer, Mary Stevens, and benefitted from administrative assistance provided by Doris Schupbach.

maximum provision of as many languages as possible to Australia's university students, the nation's future business community, researchers, analysts, policy makers as well as the core of Australia's human capacity for international interaction and exchange. This project has sought to address some of these deficiencies by:

- providing an up-to-date and detailed understanding of beginners' languages provision across the Australian university sector, and
- identifying – through a more detailed study of beginner's languages programs in the ten participating universities[2] – a range of best practice in course design and presentation, teaching (including the use of new technologies) and assessment.

Information for the project was gathered through four different channels: the internet, questionnaires, classroom observations, and interviews (telephone and on-site). The questionnaires were designed with extensive consultation, and sought to elicit qualitative as well as quantitative data. Similarly, the classroom observation template was created on the basis of expert advice and trialled before the observations proper were conducted.

1. RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CRISIS

1.1 Enthusiasm, Commitment, Ingenuity and Innovation

The most striking constant found in our study is the degree of enthusiasm of tertiary LOTE educators for their field and for their students. Without exception, in all of the programs we analysed, despite external environments that range from difficult to diabolical, we found unremitting commitment, and numerous examples of ingenious and innovative thinking directed to making sure that students will get the best possible experience in their language learning. In attitudes to both management of LOTE programs and to classroom teaching, a high degree of idealism and determination prevails. We can also note the spirit of openness and collaboration among our participants, without which the study would not have been possible. All of this does not mean that morale – which will be discussed below – is always high; but it does mean that in spite of the realities of the crisis facing tertiary languages, there is a strong sense of future.

1.2 The Realities of the Crisis

At first glance, as can be seen from Table 1, languages provision across the whole of the Australian university sector could appear quite healthy: of the 39 universities, only two offer no 'modern' languages; 24 languages are offered altogether, and the great majority of institutions offer a choice of 4 or more, rising to 15 at each of the ANU and 14 at the University of Sydney.(For a detailed overview of the languages taught at each university see Appendix 1.)

[2] The University of Melbourne, La Trobe University, the University of Western Australia, the University of South Australia, the Australian National University, the University of Sydney, Macquarie University, the University of New England, Griffith University, and the University of Queensland.

Table 1: Modern languages taught at Australian Universities 2007 – overview
(Participating universities in boldface)

University	No. of languages available	taught 'in house'	taught by collab. agreement	University	No. of languages available	taught 'in house'	taught by collaborative agreement
ANU	15	15		U Tasmania	5	5	
Macquarie U	13	13		U West. Sydney	5	5	
U Sydney	13	12	1	Bond U	4	4	
U Melbourne	12	10	2	Curtin UT	4	4	
UNSW	10	10		Deakin U	4	3	1
La Trobe U	9	7	2	U Newcastle	4	3	1
Monash U	9	9		U Wollongong	4	4	
Flinders U	8	5	3	Victoria U	4	4	
Griffith U	8	6	2	U Canberra	3	3	
U Adelaide	8	4	4	**U SA**	3	3	
UQ	8	8		U Sunshine C	3	3	
RMIT U	7	7		Charles Darwin	2	1	1
UTS	7	7		Murdoch U	2	2	
UNE	6	6		Swinburne UT	2	2	
UWA	6	6		Notre Dame	2	2	
Edith Cowan	5	5		ACU	1	1	
James Cook U	5	2	3	Central Qld U	1	1	
Queensland UT	5	5		U Ballarat	1	1	
U Southern Qld	5	3	2	Charles Sturt U	0		
				Southern Cross U	0		

Moreover, the languages most widely offered – Japanese, Chinese, French, Italian, German, Indonesian and Spanish (in descending order) – reflect a broad balance between Asian and European languages, with a leaning towards Asian languages that could reflect the general, if notably patchy, strategic directions of languages policy in Australia over the past 40 years.

Contextual data makes for a less rosy picture, however, and even a quite bleak one. *Languages in Crisis* points out that the number of languages offered in Australian universities has halved over the last decade, and this pattern of decline and erosion is closely documented in the White and Baldauf report.[3] Although the data from the present project does not indicate any further loss of actual offerings since the White and Baldauf 2005 statistics, a number of reports are pessimistic about the future, and strongly suggest that more losses are inevitable. White and Baldauf also signal the increasing casualisation of teaching within the languages area, and our investigation indicates that this process remains unchecked as continuing positions are abolished or left unfilled across the sector.

It needs to be noted, moreover, that in terms of volume of languages taught, while a handful of Australian universities are more or less on a par with a good British university such as Nottingham, none is in the same league as North American counterparts such as the University of Pennsylvania (which offers more than 20

[3] Peter White and Richard B. Baldauf, *Re-examining Australia's Tertiary Language Programs: A Five Year Retrospective on Teaching and Collaboration*: The University of Queensland, 2006.

languages) or the University of Toronto (more than 30). **More disquietingly, the question of whether languages offerings are truly informed by strategic thinking, either at the institutional or the national or state political levels is sharpened by the low level of offering of languages of such patently strategic importance as Arabic, Russian, and Hindi, and the absence of Australian indigenous languages, Pashto, Dari, and the languages of Africa.**

Yet another serious issue arises when the content of particular offerings is scrutinised more closely. In some instances, languages offerings are markedly limited in scope, being offered only sporadically or only to a limited level.

1.3 The Numbers

In what follows, detailed data has been gathered only for the ten participating universities. While this group cannot be claimed in any absolute way to be fully representative of the sector as a whole, it can be considered as a reasonable cross-section, containing as it does Group of Eight and other large urban universities as well as smaller and regional institutions.

The first part of our questionnaire (see Appendix 3) sought to elicit from participating institutions the following information:

- What percentage of first year students enrolled in the institution study a LOTE?
- What proportion of first year LOTE students at the institution are studying in a beginners' language course?
- What are the enrolment trends, in the various beginners' languages, over the 2005-2007 period?
- What are the retention trends, in the different institutions and in the different languages, over the 2005-2007 period?

It needs to be acknowledged that the additional work occasioned by this survey was in some cases very considerable, and we are grateful to the cooperative spirit and persistence of our participants. We must however note that some of the data received, while adequate for mapping general trends, was insufficient to permit in-depth comparative analysis, and the scope of the project's funding did not allow the kind of follow-up that would have been required. Further investigation, particularly in respect to issues surrounding retention, would be extremely valuable.

Some institutions do collect and centrally maintain data of this kind in a regular way, so that it was easier for them to provide the information required. In terms of self-awareness and self-management in the LOTE field, as well as in terms of any benchmarking that might be done across languages or institutions, the regular and ongoing collection of data on the above questions would seem to be useful practice and would contribute to strengthening the LOTE sector within institutions and across all universities.

What percentage of first-year students enrolled in the institution study a LOTE?

Using a mix of figures provided by DEST together with the most complete and reliable data from participating institutions, it is possible to see that there is very considerable variation, from institution to institution, in the proportion of students undertaking language study at university level. The proportion varies from under 5% to a little over 12%, with about half coming in at under 10%. We can deduce from this that the number of undergraduate students commencing in the participating institutions who do not undertake language study of any kind constitutes between 90 and 95% of the cohort. Whether this figure can be extrapolated across the whole university sector would require further study, but it seems to be a reasonable hypothesis.

This project has not sought to establish to what extent students undertake language study in later years, other than in the context of retention issues which are discussed below. For a more complete understanding of the state of languages in Australian universities, it would be important to gather this data as well. It cannot however be anticipated that such information would enhance the overall picture.

When one factors in the low percentage of students completing a year-12 language program (< 13%), it becomes clear that the extent of LOTE training within the formal education system in Australia is extremely limited. While some university students and members of the wider community may acquire LOTE proficiency through home use or other experience, this factor is not sufficient to dispel the overwhelming evidence of a languages culture that is complacently, and even quite aggressively monolingual.

What proportion of first year LOTE students at the institution are studying in a beginners' language course?

There is considerable variation, from institution to institution, among commencing students, in the proportion of beginners' enrolments to enrolments in other entry-point streams. In a number of institutions, beginners' courses constitute almost the entire language offering, while in a minority of cases they account for less than 50% of commencing enrolments. It is reasonable to assume that part of the explanation for this variation lies in factors that are independent of the programs themselves. Thus, for instance, the large size of beginners' Spanish courses probably reflects the relative lack of availability of Spanish in secondary schools. From another angle, the high proportion of post-beginners and advanced enrolments in languages at the University of Melbourne can be partially explained by a combination of the demographic of the institution's feeder schools (a strong majority of private institutions where languages are strongly promoted) and the university-entry bonus given in Victoria for students successfully completing a VCE LOTE. In every case, however, it is clear that beginners' programs are a crucial part of the overall economy of university-level languages offerings. It is therefore essential that the sector be as fully understood and as strongly supported as possible. Present aspects and levels of support are discussed in the following section.

2. PATTERNS OF GROWTH AND DECLINE

Figures on beginners' enrolments provided by 9 of the participating universities show that there has been hardly any change in the total number of first year students taking up language study. Over the same period DEST figures show that the increase in total numbers of commencing students in the same institutions exceeds 3.3%. There would therefore appear to be overall diminution rather than any growth. However, these averages mask very marked variations from language to language, and from institution to institution. Five of the participating universities report growth (between 4% and 6% in three cases, but 30% in two instances).

Some languages have grown during the period:
Korean shows the strongest growth (+79.6% – albeit from a low base)
Russian (>+36.5%) would seem to be making something of a recovery, after almost disappearing
Arabic (+23.2%) is consolidating its position as a language of significant attraction
Spanish (>+9.4%) is in the process of displacing French as the largest beginners' language cohort
French (+9.5%) continues to attract increasing numbers
German (+11.9%) appears to be recovering after a period of decline

Several languages are showing marked declines:
Indonesian (-41.3%) has, in our sample, fallen behind both Arabic and Korean
Japanese (-8.9%) remains strong, and maintains its position as having the fourth largest beginner's enrolment figures (after French, Spanish and Italian)
Chinese (-11.7%) is trending against the growth reported by White and Baldauf[4] for 2003-2005, and probably against overall Chinese enrolments.
Italian (-10.5%) still has the third largest beginners' enrolments, but it is declining faster than Japanese

These general trends are not replicated in all individual institutions. Some participating institutions report growth in a language where there is overall decline; and conversely, some institutions report declines where there is overall growth. Further research would be required to determine whether these anomalies involve teaching and learning practices that might be emulated or avoided, and the degree to which local support for languages is clearly articulated and implemented.

In our sample, there are only slightly fewer first-year students enrolling in French or Spanish than in all the Asian languages put together (including Arabic). More troublingly, against an overall increase of 12% in European beginners' languages, there is a decline of 9% in Asian languages, including Arabic.

Interpretation of the data is difficult. It may be tempting, in the context of a fairly stagnant overall enrolment pattern in beginners' languages, to see any small gains in the European area as coming *at the expense* of the Asian area. To reach this conclusion, however, would be to believe that increases in Spanish (which account for around 80% of the increases in the European sector) result from choices by students who, had Spanish not been available to them, would have chosen to study an Asian language. This seems unlikely. Rather, increasing interest in Spanish is more readily understood in the context of a burgeoning global interest, among the young, in the

[4] White and Baldauf, *op. cit.* p.14.

Hispanic world, particularly in South America. Furthermore, at the best-performing university in terms of overall beginners' enrolment patterns, there has been an increase in the Asian area as well as in the European area.

The case of Chinese deserves closer scrutiny. White and Baldauf show an increase of 60% in EFTSL for Chinese in the Australian university sector over the period 2001 to 2005[5]. Increases are also reported for the same period by the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) for all but one of the universities in our sample that offer Chinese. It seems unlikely that there has been a generalised decline since 2005, although it is obviously important that the ASAA continue to gather data. Even allowing for fluctuation, the contraction of numbers in the beginners' stream remains puzzling. Part of the explanation may lie in the statement made by the ASAA may lie in its submission to the 2006 Federal Budget process:

> *Although enrolments in Chinese language and studies courses are generally satisfactory, overseas students (mainly from China and Japan) make up a significant part of the Chinese language student body.*[6]

If this is indeed the case – and in our view the matter deserves further investigation – then an increase in overseas student numbers could account, at least in part, for the EFTSL increases noted above, without impacting on the numbers in beginners' streams, where one would expect enrolments to come largely from non-background speakers.

Concerning Asian languages more generally, for many years now, attention has been drawn by the nation's leading Asianists to the particular fragilities of the Asian languages area. Here is the view of the ASAA:

> *There is a decline in the number of students at school and tertiary levels learning about Asia. This decline is a result of complex factors, including community perceptions about lack of security and uncertain job opportunities in Asia. Declining enrolments have placed serious pressure on remaining teaching staff, who struggle to keep their jobs by increasing their student contact hours, as well as by finding innovative technological and collaborative arrangements to share precious resources. Morale among language teachers is low*.[7]

Our findings validate these perceptions, and its is our belief is that in the parlous general situation of LOTE teaching and learning in the Australian tertiary sector, the vulnerability of Asian languages is exacerbated. As with other parts of this study, more work is required to understand the situation more fully, and it needs to be undertaken urgently.

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[5] From 1031 to 1663 EFTSL. The figures include Classical Chinese, but those numbers are minimal. *Loc. Cit.*

[6] Asian Studies Association of Australia, Submission to the FEDERAL BUDGET 2006–07, December 2005, p.6.

[7] *Op. Cit.* p. 5.

3. RETENTION AND ATTRITION

In this section of the survey, we sought to gather information about two cohorts of students, one that began in first semester 2005, and the other that began in 2006. With the first cohort, we wished to determine retention patterns over three years of study. With the second cohort, which only included the first semester of the second year of study, we hoped to determine whether similar patterns were operating. Data collection was particularly arduous because many institutions merge beginners' streams with others at various points, and for those institutions, following the specific cohorts through required close analysis of actual class lists as distinct from overall enrolment numbers. We are grateful to those institutions that managed this task, and understanding towards those that found it too hard. Sufficient data was collected overall for it to be possible to make some important observations.

Data was collected semester by semester, a process which allowed us to see that with the exception of the third year of study, there is significant attrition at every phase of the learning process.

From our sample, across all languages and all reporting institutions, retention rates for the first cohort are as follows:

First-year semester 1 to First year semester 2: Retention varies from a high of 76% to a low of 50%. The average is 63%. **This means that about a third of students who commence a beginners' language study do no more than one semester.**
From First year S2 to Second year S1: Retention (based on those students who enrolled in semester 2) varies from a high of 82% to a low of 35%. The average is 68%. **This means that about a third of students who complete the first year of language study do not continue into second year.**
Second year S1 to S2: Retention varies from a high of 82% to a low of 60%. The average is 72%. **This means that about one fifth of students who begin second year terminate after one semester.**
From Second year S2 to Third year: Retention (based on those students who complete second year) varies from a high of 77% to a low of 48%. The average is 67%. **This means that a third of students completing second year do not continue into third year.**

Looked at overall, on the figures provided, retention from entry level to third year varies from a high of 34% to a low of 9%. The average is 25%.

Data for the second cohort shows a similar number of starting students, and a similar average percentage completing second semester (64%). The average percentage of continuations into second year is lower, perhaps significantly so (63% compared with 68% for the 2005 cohort). Variation across different institutions remains extreme, a fact which calls for urgent further study of issues affecting retention and attrition, above and beyond the commentary provided below.

The data allows us to see that some languages have better overall average retention than others, although with small enrolment languages such calculations are less

reliable and have not been included. Among the European languages, Spanish, German, Italian and French all perform a little above the average within the first year of study. French (29%) and German (29%) are relatively good performers in overall retention from entry to third year. Spanish (54%) is however well below average in first-to-second year retention, and even more so in overall retention to third year (17%). Italian (14%) is particularly low in retention to third year.

Data for the Asian languages is more fragmentary, and discerning patterns is more difficult, but from the figures available, it would appear that retention in Chinese is at least on a par with French and German, while Indonesian and Japanese seem to suffer from greater levels of attrition, and in terms of overall retention from entry to third year, are performing at a level similar to Spanish. In addition, however, Japanese has higher losses from first to second semester of First Year, and relatively low retention into Second Year.

There is no obvious reason for these differences. As will be seen below, the questionnaires provided our interlocutors in the different institutions to proffer suggestions, but it is clear that a general large-scale study of retention and attrition is required.

The final significant observation that can be made about the retention/attrition data gathered is that while there is significant variation among the different languages within most institutions, some institutions have substantially better overall average retention rates than others. Furthermore, although the trend observed above for Spanish is consistent throughout our sample, the same is not true for Japanese or Italian, where some institutions achieve quite high levels of retention. Perhaps we need to ask what such institutions are doing right: in any case, a collaborative and comparative approach to the issue is more likely to produce improvement than self-examination within the framework of single institutions.

In the commentary from our interlocutors, the main reasons offered for students not continuing their study beyond first semester or first year are:

- Many students take up a language as an elective late in their courses, for fun, or to try it out, or because they want to use it for travel (with Spanish, the particular interest is in South America); even if they enjoy it and would like to continue, they have no room left in their programs.
- Many students take up a language without being aware that the program involves a considerable workload and that the sequential learning process is demanding and difficult. They are not prepared or able to put in the time needed to reach the high marks they would like.
- Many students become frustrated with the slow rate of their progress
- Many students from other faculties experience timetabling problems and limits on the number of units they can take outside their main course.

It needs to be stressed that although retention levels constitute an important and urgent problem for beginners' languages courses, there is not likely to be any single simple solution. The specificities of individual institutions and student cohorts will need to be taken into account if improvements are to be made. At the same time, few language teachers, if any, would accept the notion that even a single semester

experience of learning a new language is a waste of time: in addition to the practical value such knowledge may have for life-developing experience such as travel, there are less tangible, but none the less real benefits in learning about other linguistic systems and the cultures that nourish them. Anecdotally, it would appear that many students who have had a taste of a language that they are unable to pursue further at university undertake further study of it later in life.

4. SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGES

As a subset of LOTE, Beginner's LOTE streams benefit from support offered to languages at various levels, or conversely, suffer from the lack of it.

4.1 The National Context

In the national context, over the past two decades, there has been a paucity of explicit policy supporting the teaching and learning of LOTE in universities, although some considerable efforts have been made, in some States, for varying periods of time, to foster LOTE teaching in the primary and secondary systems. We believe that at present there is nothing that could be described as a 'languages culture' at the national level, and that the absence of such a culture is part of the dilemma facing languages programs. The interest that has been taken by DASSH (Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities) and the Group of Eight has served to give a clear focus as to the nature and dimension of the problem and is hence welcomed. It is to be hoped that this focus will be maintained over the long term by the groups concerned, and that they will continue to agitate for a more comprehensive national approach.
One important exception to the lack of national support is the recognition by DEST of the need for a high weighting funding band for the LOTE sector as compared to the humanities generally [2.17:1]. While an absolutely crucial factor in the delivery of adequate languages programs, the efficacy of the weighting is undermined by the fact that DEST funding constitutes a diminishing proportion of overall university budgets. Moreover, as is shown below, institutions do not 'pass on' the weighting to their languages programs.

The LOTE bonus for university entry

The idea of a bonus to the university entry score for students completing a year 12 LOTE has functioned in the State of Victoria for more than a decade. Although a recent Go8 initiative to generalise the practice Australia-wide has not been taken up, the University of Western Australia has accepted the principle as a way of showing support for languages and of encouraging their study through to year 12. In addition to the positive pressure on secondary level LOTE learning, we can hypothesise that the bonus contributes to the tertiary sector in at least two ways. Firstly, cohorts entering in the advanced streams are larger in Victorian universities than elsewhere, thus creating a larger volume of students with higher levels of linguistic proficiency, which in turn fosters more extensive development of cultural knowledge and expertise. Secondly, students who have successfully completed year 12 in a given LOTE have the possibility of taking up another language at university level having acquired learning skills that will increase their chances of success. **Both these hypotheses are deserving of further investigation.**

4.2 Institutional support

Our survey sought to elicit both objective evidence about the support provided for languages in each institution, and more subjective perceptions about that support and about morale within the various programs.

Perhaps the most obvious evidence is budgetary. It is disquieting that a significant number of respondents for particular languages in our participating institutions either did not know whether they were receiving a loading (or at what level), or left the question blank. What appears however clear is that only 3 of the institutions are funding languages at 1.8:1 or above. Another five vary from 1.7:1 down to 1.4:1.Two are giving no differential loading at all. It also appears that within certain institutions, loadings are not the same for all languages. While more detailed investigation would be needed to determine the relationship between this aspect of resourcing and the retention issues raised above, it can be observed that the institution with the worst overall retention rates is one of those in which there is no differential loading.

Other forms of institutional support exist. Eight of the ten participating universities offer a Diploma of Modern Languages, which provides a structure to allow students from different faculties to pursue language study, including from beginners' entry. All participating institutions offer some form of financial support for students selected for in-country study, and have developed exchange links with a variety of overseas universities. It needs to be noted that such selection affects a relatively small number of students, and that it is therefore highly competitive. Overwhelmingly, respondents affirmed that selection is based on academic merit, with other factors such as maturity and commitment being taken into account, along with staff recommendations. Although in-country study is not generally recommended for beginners' stream students in the early semesters of their study, respondents identified the opportunity as one of the motivating factors for students taking up language study.

4.3 Integration of LOTE Studies

In most institutions, faculties other than those in which languages are taught allow students to undertake language study as an elective. We have no hard evidence about the extent to which this is taken up, other than the frequent observation that such students are not likely to pursue their studies far (often no more than one or two semesters, because of the constraints imposed by their home faculties). The value of this practice for the creation of a "languages culture" is thus limited, and indicates a tendency to see languages as a mere "add-on", to be tolerated rather than actively encouraged. This is not to suggest that the practice should in any way be diminished. Rather, there is a need for the development of policies that work towards genuine integration of language study with other fields.

Such integration has been attempted in a number of the participating institutions through the creation of specialised degrees in languages, or degrees in other fields (for example, International Studies or Asian Studies) for which language study is a co-requisite. Our project did not seek to establish whether or to what degree these structures have been successful in increasing or sustaining the study of languages in the institutions concerned, but such an investigation would be a valuable one, and its outcomes could be of benefit to the sector as a whole.

In view of the rather disjointed nature of policy frameworks and institutional support mechanisms, it is not surprising that our respondents' perceptions of institutional

support for languages were very mixed. Of twelve interlocutors interviewed, six stated plainly that their institutions were unsupportive of languages. One said, “How can we convince the rest of Australia of the importance of languages if there is so little support from our own institution?”. Another complained that higher management, “forced to back particular horses” do not support all areas equally, leaving languages unable to get replacements for vacated positions. Others also pointed to cuts in staff and in contact hours.

A further three respondents had mixed perceptions. One spoke of a “rhetoric” of support not matched by adequate funding. Another noted support for particular languages but felt that the institution was failing to provide adequate leadership in the area.

Of the three who saw their institutions as being supportive, the major factors were explicit encouragement at the level of Faculty or University and the possibility of new or replacement appointments. Two pointed out that structural measures had been taken to give languages a clear place and voice within the institution.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF MORALE

In relation to perceptions of morale, those respondents who saw their institutions as supportive also reported good or satisfactory morale among their colleagues. Those who were uncertain about support reported morale to be low or very low. Among those most forceful about the lack of support, perceptions of morale were split with two reporting low morale and four, somewhat paradoxically, reporting morale to be satisfactory or even good. Explanation for this counter-intuitive situation varied, including good team-building, satisfaction derived from successful research programs, and the recruitment of young, enthusiastic staff.

Perhaps not surprisingly, three respondents nominated the difficulty of keeping these younger staff, when asked to nominate their most major concerns. One reported feeling their “gaze is often elsewhere”, given the demands of an “unreasonable” teaching load. Another was particularly concerned with not overloading them, providing adequate guidance and “giving them some hope, but it’s very difficult”.

Other major concerns included, of course, funding for languages, which was described as “punitive” by one respondent. Only specifically mentioned by three other interviewees, responses suggest it is more of an implicit worry across the sector - one respondent stated that “we are under-funded and everybody knows that”. An issue related to funding is the non-replacement of positions, with implications for promotion prospects within language departments, as well as workload. One respondent was especially concerned with the lack of guidance for junior scholars where senior positions are not replaced.

The remaining concern nominated by our respondents, although beyond the scope of this report on beginner’s languages, was how to attract students into advanced language study. One argued that to be sustainable, current postgraduate programs needed to be redesigned in order to improve poor retention rates. Another reported a

flow-on effect into undergraduate units: "third year numbers sag when Honours numbers are low".

6. TEACHING AND LEARNING

6.1 Trends in Curriculum Design

Our study of course design gathered data for only eight languages: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish. The local nature of course design is illustrated in the very extensive variety of course descriptions, including, methodology and teaching materials, as well as assessment practices. Most programs refer to the four macro skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading), and about half address the question of how to integrate cultural knowledge into the language learning process. Not surprisingly for beginners' courses, emphasis is placed primarily on language acquisition.

In some institutions (e.g. UWA, UniSA) expected outcomes are clearly articulated for each language, and in some instances, language-specific benchmarks are made explicit (number of words/characters to be learned, tenses to be covered). On the face of it, this would appear to be good practice and programs may well benefit from its wider application.

Considerable creativity and dynamism is evident in the use of teaching materials. Choice of textbooks is highly individualised (although there appears to be some convergence in Italian and Japanese). In Indonesian, four institutions have created their own texts from scratch, and UNE uses the one developed by ANU. In addition to the use of textbooks, teachers most frequently devise and provide a multitude of support materials, including overhead transparencies, worksheets, detailed study notes, grammar notes, study guides, websites (e.g. WebCT), glossaries, multimedia programs, podcasts, quizzes, and tailor-made newspapers.

Many of our respondents saw their methodology as broadly "communicative" (i.e. based on active use of language for social interaction); a number described their work as "grammar-based". In general, methodologies tend to be eclectic rather than to follow any given theory, a tendency borne out in the classroom practice we observed.

In almost all cases, courses are designed on the assumption that beginning students will be undertaking a sequence of three year's study of the language in question. This assumption is problematic because, as we have seen, a significant majority of students do not do so. The 'sequence' is further complicated by the fact that few institutions have the resources to maintain beginners as a separate cohort throughout their cycle. 'Melding' with other groups of learners occurs at a variety of phases in the different institutions, leading to classrooms where teachers are commonly faced with different proficiency levels and the difficulty of articulating a common outcome. We found only one example of explicit attention being paid in the course description to learners who might intend to study only for a limited period.[8] This particular course outline

[8] Outcomes descriptions for the first semester course could, in some other instances, be interpreted as catering to those students. For example: "its function is to provide

states “while its primary purpose is to lay the foundation for all subsequent language-X courses at the university, the introduction it provides to another language and culture makes it also interesting and useful to those who do not intend to continue with language-X”.

Of seven respondents who commented on proficiency criteria, five affirmed that their institution pays conscious and consistent attention to the matter. A common response, however, was that there are problems of coordination across languages within any given institution not just in relation to the different expectations that are possible in Asian and European languages, but also in that local languages programs can be protective of their independence. In most instances, criteria have been developed locally, though there are cases where external benchmarks are used to good effect: two German programs (UWA, Macquarie) referred to the Common European Framework, and one Japanese program (Griffith) referred to the International Second Language Proficiency Rating.

6.2 Trends in Curriculum Delivery

While there is some evidence of attempts, in some institutions, to standardise the number of direct contact hours provided in the offering of beginners’ LOTE, this is far from always being the case. More significantly still, the variation (both within and across institutions) in expectations of self-study hours is very great. Across the sector, the variation for any particular language in total time given to teaching and learning is also considerable.

It needs to be noted that we observed a number of discrepancies between Handbook information as available on the Web, and course outlines as sent to us. Where this occurred, we have assumed that the latter would be more up-to-date and accurate.

Direct Contact Hours

Under this heading, we have included supervised laboratory sessions.
In seeking to establish how many hours instruction are provided in a given LOTE in each semester, we have been mindful that absolute accuracy is hard to achieve because of different practices in testing (sometimes conducted during class-time), and different starting times for actual teaching (as compared to official beginning of semesters).

Across the sector, the mean number of contact hours is 52 per semester, with a slightly higher mean for Asian Languages (56) than for European languages (52). In six of the participating universities (La Trobe, Macquarie, Sydney, UniSA, UQ and UWA), this is also the norm, with some variation down for some particular languages (to 39 for French at UQ and Sydney, for Hindi at La Trobe, for Croatian at Macquarie), or up (to 91 for Japanese and Chinese at Macquarie, to 78 for Chinese and Korean at UQ) where some languages are taught in more intensive mode, with a corresponding increase in credit-value. The University of Melbourne also has higher

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basic expressions to the students to enable them to survive and function day-to-day in Japan”; or: “the course outcome is that students gain the confidence to communicate effectively at the threshold level”

contact hours corresponding to additional first-year credit. (From 2008, UM will discontinue this process and revert to single semester subjects for languages.) In the other three universities, contact hours are more variable, and sometimes significantly higher. Discussions during our interview visits suggested that variation was essentially due to historical circumstances, whereby some languages have had their contact hours pared back more slowly than others. That the overall trend in contact hours is downward cannot be doubted, and is exemplified in the case of Italian reported by one of our interlocutors: from 8 weekly contact hours in 1964, there were four in 2007, and there will be 3 from 2008. Equally, it is hard to imagine that the historical decrease in contact hours, a response to ongoing and increasing budgetary constraints, has not had an impact on proficiency outcomes.

There are at present no existing national proficiency benchmarking measures for LOTE. When one looks at the number of contact hours, by language, across the range of participating universities, the need for such a mechanism is glaringly obvious. The lack of uniformity is illustrated in the following table (intensive mode examples not included). The last two columns refer to the contact hours combined with reported expected self-study:

Language	Low Contact	High Contact	Low Total Hrs	High Total Hrs
Arabic	52	65	91	169
Chinese	52	65	104	143
French	39	65	104	130
German	52	65	78	182
Indonesian	48	65	117	182
Italian	52	65	96	202
Japanese	52	78	108	182
Spanish	48	52	91	182

Between the highs and the lows there are many different cases.

Private Study
With the exception of the University of South Australia, there appear to be no consistent patterns within individual universities concerning expectations of private study, other than that, in general (though not always), more out-of-class work is expected in Asian character-based languages than in other languages.

This is not to say that private study expectations do not have a rationale, but the data suggest that curriculum delivery can operate in an erratic way that must raise student workload issues within particular institutions: how can one explain a student at University X is expected to do 182 hours for a semester's credit in German, while fellow students at the same university do 130 hours or 104 hours for French or Italian respectively?

What is even more disquieting is the implication of the data for proficiency outcomes. When total instruction hours vary as significantly as they do for any given language – and from the above table it can be seen that in four instances the difference is more than 100% and that in the best case (French) it is still 25% – the only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn is that students completing a beginners' LOTE at different institutions may not achieve comparable levels of proficiency.

Impacts of Casualisation on Curriculum Delivery

It was noted in a number of instances that the workload of coordinators has been significantly increased by the need to train and supervise casual tutors. Furthermore, timetabling (generally seen as one factor in the retention-attrition puzzle) is often negatively affected by the need to meet the availability of casual tutors; and tutor availability can lead to teaching hours being blocked in ways that are not ideal for the sequential learning of languages.

6.3 Classroom Teaching

The classroom observations

Two members of the project team visited each participating university for one day, observing between two and three classes at each institution. The project benefited greatly from the cooperative spirit shown by the coordinators of beginners' language units.

The languages observed were limited to eight: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese and Spanish.

During the observation, we took handwritten notes on a template (cf Appendix 3), recording the number of students in the class, the classroom design, as well as the nature and duration of each activity as the lesson progressed.

Overview of our findings: variables and limitations

We avoid any direct, close comparisons between individual lessons, as we are limited by the small sample size of 24 classes, and the considerable variation amongst these classes. For example,

- The term used to refer to a language class varies considerably according to institution and language, variously listed on timetables as tutorials, workshops, language classes, small group teaching, lectures, seminars, practicals, conversation classes and laboratory classes. Moreover, the same name may be used to refer to a different kind of lesson, which hinders direct comparisons between e.g. two 'tutorials'.
- Different languages necessitate different approaches, particularly considering differences between alphabetic (e.g. Indonesian) and non-alphabetic (e.g. Arabic) systems
- Stage in the semester: the visits were unable to be scheduled within a continuous period. This meant there was variation according to the number of weeks for which the students had studied the language.

We focus on aspects of teaching, structure of the lesson, materials and class size.

Teaching

The general excellence of the classroom teaching strongly illustrates the resilience and commitment of practitioners, despite often difficult circumstances. The individual

teachers all showed great vitality and creativity in their classroom teaching and enthusiastic teaching emerged as an element common to all the classes we observed. The crucial importance of teachers in beginners' language courses cannot of course be stressed too highly.

Some of the more innovative teaching practices we encountered should be more widely known, shared perhaps through the proposed network, through conferences and through more systematic publications on beginners' language teaching in Australia.

Structure

Some lessons were classically structured around presentation, practice, and performance (often with this pattern repeated throughout the lesson), while other lessons focused less on particular activities and more on the development of learning strategies which explicitly seek to train students to greater levels of autonomy. This last point is of particular relevance at a time when contact hours are falling.

We broke each lesson down according to time spent on teacher-led activities, pairwork, individual, and (small) group work. Teacher-led activities typically involved the use of textbooks and overhead transparencies, or a considerable amount of target language for listening, with keywords written on the whiteboard. Individual tasks were often based around audiovisual materials with a handout, while tasks completed in pairs often focused on production, e.g. reading and/or constructing dialogues or role-plays. We observed very few activities for small groups (more than 3 students). However, one notable group activity involved half the students having a word pinned to their front. With the help of the rest of the class, these students had to stand in the order that would form a grammatical sentence in the target language.

As to the breakdown into teacher-led, individual or pairwork tasks, we found that most lessons involved a balance of all three. The structure of the lesson around these three kinds of task did not appear to be influenced by the number of students, or by the nature of the language itself. There was a slight trend by language whereby three of the four French classes consisted of relatively more pairwork than the other languages; while the Arabic, Chinese and German lessons were almost entirely teacher-led. However, there is no common element (such as alphabetic v. non-alphabetic) that would distinguish Chinese, Arabic and German from the other languages. Further investigation is needed into how the language itself shapes the lesson structure, if at all. At this stage the observations suggested to us that the language shapes the teaching style, but not the lesson structure.

Materials

Across our sample of lessons, teachers used a range of traditional materials comprising the whiteboard, textbooks, workbooks, audio (tape or cd), video, flashcards, handouts and realia (traditional Japanese figures, clocks, real photos etc). Overall, every class used at least two of the materials listed above, alone or in combination, while none used more than six throughout the lesson.

Typically the lessons were based around a combination of three materials: textbook, whiteboard, and handout. Teachers used overhead transparencies relatively frequently

(12 of 24 classes), while other less frequent materials included realia (4 classes), audio, video and flashcards (each observed in three classes).

Some teachers used the materials listed above in more innovative ways, including using video, but playing only the audio in the first instance in order to maximise listening skills. Another notable method observed in one classroom involved the use of cardboard signs with useful phrases in the target language (e.g. *what does X mean; how do you say X*). These were fixed to the whiteboard in an Italian classroom at Griffith University, and we observed students initiating verbal exchanges in the target language, rather than in English, throughout the lesson.

Class size

In our sample of classes, student numbers varied from as few as five to more than 50, with an average of 15.5 students present. No clear patterns were found according to institution: we observed the smallest and largest classes at the same institution. There was a trend according to language across the institutions: numbers were relatively constant amongst the Indonesian classes (between 5 and 7 students), Italian classes (between 16 and 17 students) and German classes (between 10 and 14 students), whereas classes in the other languages observed showed a much greater range. The number of students in the class is known to impact on language learning (e.g. Horne 1970). Increasing class sizes – another result of inadequate and shrinking resources – is an issue that teachers raised with us, and a larger, and more controlled sample of data is needed to investigate its impact on language learning in Australian universities.

6.4 Trends in Technology Enhanced Language Learning

New technologies were interpreted in a variety of ways encompassing new and old, generic and language-specific technologies and applications. The use of generic rather than language-specific technologies and tools tended to predominate. Examples included BlackBoard, WebCT, PowerPoint and the word processor among others. These tools were often used to simply provide course outlines and lecture notes, although there were also examples of online study units and online partner interaction facilitated using BlackBoard. Online partner tasks included NS-NNS[9] interaction at a distance (Australia-Spain) and NNS-NNS activities in class. Use of the Internet and the World Wide Web were also in evidence with tasks created around online newspapers and Google Earth. In addition, webpages were developed for specific languages at beginner level and a DVD to assist learners with the formation of characters in Chinese.

Content was developed and delivered both through more traditional technologies such as OHPs, video tape or cassette players, and more recent technologies where audio and video files were stored digitally on CDs, or in an MP3 format so that audio files could be downloaded to players (e.g., to an iPod). The use of newer, emerging technologies was reported, although often in an experimental way, i.e. for evaluation

[9] NS= native speaker; NNS = non-native speaker

purposes prior to full-scale implementation. Such technologies included video- and audio-conferencing, podcasting (although only at advanced level) and mobile learning using phones. No information was provided on content or on pedagogy.

Other points of note were the use of new technologies in the support of smaller, non-economically viable languages. There were some examples of applications developed for assessment purposes. The use of new technologies for pastoral care was also mentioned: given the well-recognised importance of affective factors in language learning this role for technology is not to be underestimated. Lab sessions to accompany face-to-face class sessions were reported by a number of respondents, often at a rate of 1 hour per week, but no information was supplied on the actual materials in use.

Overall, the information received was fragmented and lacking in detail. Further work is needed to extract relevant detail on exactly how new technologies are being employed language by language. However, even with the information provided, there would be value in an information exchange such that language departments and schools would be more aware of what others were doing and thereby could perhaps share ideas and materials more readily.

6.5 Assessment

Given the divergencies of aims and methodologies, it is not surprising that assessment practices are also characterised by extreme variation, both within individual institutions and across particular languages.

The practice of making assessment requirements specific is generalised across all courses, which allows students to know in advance what they can expect, and to plan accordingly.

The vast majority of courses use a mix of assessment types: mid-semester and end-semester exams, in-class tests and quizzes, homework assignments, laboratory and on-line exercises. 24 of the 82 programs analysed allot marks for attendance or participation, mostly between 5% and 10% but in some instances 15% or 20%, and in one case 25%. This practice occurs at almost all institutions, though not in any uniform manner (either in terms of percentage or in respect to the languages offered). It thus appears to derive from decision by individual coordinators rather than from any policy. We did not find any rationale expressed for the practice.

The same seems true of the proportion of exams and tests, compared to total assessment. The mean percentage for exams and test across the board is 75%, but while a majority of programs vary between 55% and 85%, significant numbers allot over 90% to this kind of assessment, and as many 50% or under. The same extreme variation exists within the framework of individual languages: in French, exams and tests account for between 30% and 100% of the total mark (with most programs 60% or above); Chinese varies between 40% and 100% (with most programs 60% or above); Indonesian varies between 45% and 90% (with most programs 70% or above); Japanese varies between 40% and 100% (with most programs 75% or above).

It is not easy to interpret this information other than to point out that it underlines how highly individualised the different programs are, and how difficult it would be to design instruments that would allow comparison of outcomes. It does appear that assessment policy and practice could be a fruitful topic of discussion for the proposed Beginners' LOTE network.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Strengthening the Sector

Throughout this report, we have noted the enthusiasm and innovative activities of those most directly concerned with the provision of beginner's LOTE courses, namely the coordinators and teachers. The pressures on the sector are such that its very existence is constantly under threat, and practitioners are obliged to maintain constant vigilance and stressful defence of shrinking resources. In many cases, they are not fully aware of how the defence and promotion of their work could be facilitated by better knowledge of what is happening in other institutions, but the eagerness expressed at the possibility of sharing their experience with others indicates a willingness to do so in a more structured way than presently exists. A number of interlocutors stated their willingness to assume leadership in developing one or other of the areas of common interest.

The needs and aspirations of different universities mean that there will always be diversity in approaches to teaching and learning, and the beginners' LOTE sector is no exception. Our findings suggest, however, that the sector would benefit from a more coordinated approach, so that best practice can be emulated and unnecessary duplication of effort reduced. The following recommendations are an attempt to give the findings of our study some practical outcomes for the benefit of universities, teachers and learners alike.

Recommendation 1

Creation of a National Languages Task-Force/ Network for the ongoing analysis and support of beginners' LOTE courses in Australian Universities.

This proposal was met with almost universal enthusiasm by our interlocutors as 'a real vacuum to be filled'. The only reservations expressed concerned the need for a clear focus, or series of focal points for such a network. Many excellent suggestions have been put forward, including:

a. Determining what statistics would be useful to keep for general sharing
b. Devising means to attain a national convergence for outcome proficiency levels in beginners' LOTE courses
c. Exchange of information about the uses of technology in LOTE
d. Assessment policies and practice
e. Expectations of student workload in languages units
f. Staff workload issues
g. Strategies of recruitment and retention

h. Development of syllabi for students who can only study a LOTE for a semester or two
i. Organisation of a periodic national conference for practitioners of beginners' LOTE teaching

7.2 The Difficulties of Gathering Information

Collection of data for this project revealed that many basic facts about the LOTE experience of students are not routinely gathered or retained. The ability to track beginners' students through their course is obviously a pre-requisite to effective analysis of retention and proficiency issues, and effective course design is dependent on prior knowledge of students' previous experience. The following recommendation, insofar as it reflects point a) in the previous section, should be addressed at the program and school level; it needs, however, to be addressed at the university level as well in respect to information about students' LOTE experience at entry level.

Recommendation 2

Creation of a process to ensure that universities collect data in a readily accessible form on the LOTE experience of their students, including formal secondary training and, where possible, background speaker experience.

7.3 The Need for Structured Policy Support for LOTE

Only a few of the surveyed institutions have any explicit, public statement about the importance of LOTE, and in all institutions LOTE teaching is underfunded. Budget models in many instances – and this is a growing practice – actually *disadvantage* growth in LOTE by valuing EFTSLs at a lower rate than the cost of teaching. This situation cannot be addressed by institutions alone, because their own funding has in most cases been stretched to breaking point, a situation that makes the cross-subsidizing of LOTE politically difficult, if not impossible. Only a combined effort of governments, institutions (including faculties) and the programs themselves will allow the crisis to be solved.

Recommendation 3

There is an urgent need for governments and universities alike to recognise languages as a strategic and essential sector and to support them accordingly.

7.4 The Need for Further Study of Retention-Attrition issues and of Technology use in LOTE teaching-learning

Given the importance of beginners' languages in the economy of the languages programs at all participating institutions, the issue of retention rates was without doubt the prime concern of our interlocutors. It is very encouraging that, stimulated by the finding of our project, the languages programs at ANU have taken the initiative to conduct a detailed internal analysis of retention-attrition. It is, however, a matter of national concern, and for this reason the team involved in this project has applied for an extension through the LASP mechanism. Since ANU will remain a partner in the new project, there is an ideal context for achieving a potentially valuable synthesis

between the detailed findings (which can serve as a model for other institutions) and the national perspective that the investigative team will bring.

Similarly, while our findings have revealed many useful applications of technology to the LOTE teaching and learning processes, more detailed analysis is needed to ensure that the resources (financial and intellectual) available to the sector are being put to their best possible use.

Recommendation 4

A large-scale national study of retention and attrition should be undertaken immediately, and its findings widely diffused; and likewise, a more detailed study is needed of the uses of technology.

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APPENDIX 1

Modern languages taught at Australian Universities in 2007

University (participating universities in bold)	**Arabic**	**Chinese**	**Croatian**	**French**	**German**	**Greek**	**Hebrew**	**Hindi**	**Indonesian**	**Italian**	**Japanese**	**Korean**	**Macedonian**	**Persian/Urdu**	**Polish**	**Russian**	**Serbian**	**Spanish**	**Swedish**	**Thai**	**Turkish**	**Ukrainian**	**Vietnamese**	**Yiddish**
ACU											Y													
ANU	Y	Y		Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y		Y^2		Y		Y	Y		Y	
Bond U		Y		Y							Y							Y						
Central Queensland U											Y													
Charles Darwin U						Y^1			Y															
Charles Sturt U																								
Curtin UT		Y							Y		Y	Y												
Deakin U	Y	Y							Y	Y^1														
Edith Cowan U		Y^2		Y						Y^2	Y							Y^2						
Flinders U		Y^1		Y	Y^1	Y			Y	Y	Y^1							Y						
Griffith U		Y		Y^1	Y^1				Y	Y	Y	Y						Y						
James Cook U		Y^1		Y	Y^1					Y^1	Y													
La Trobe U		Y		Y^1	Y^1	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y							Y						
Macquarie U		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y				Y	Y		Y		Y	Y	Y	Y				Y		
Monash U		Y		Y	Y				Y	Y	Y	Y						Y				Y		
Murdoch U									Y		Y													
Notre Dame						Y				Y														
Queensland UT		Y^2		Y	Y				Y		Y													
RMIT U		Y		Y^2	Y^2	Y				Y^2	Y							Y						
Southern Cross U																								

University (participating universities in bold)	**Arabic**	**Chinese**	**Croatian**	**French**	**German**	**Greek**	**Hebrew**	**Hindi**	**Indonesian**	**Italian**	**Japanese**	**Korean**	**Macedonian**	**Persian/Urdu**	**Polish**	**Russian**	**Serbian**	**Spanish**	**Swedish**	**Thai**	**Turkish**	**Ukrainian**	**Vietnamese**	**Yiddish**
Swinburne UT										Y	Y													
U Adelaide		Y		Y	Y	Y[1]			Y[1]	Y[1]	Y							Y[1]						
U Ballarat											Y													
U Canberra		Y									Y							Y						
U Melbourne	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y[1]	Y		Y	Y	Y					Y		Y[1]	Y					
U Newcastle		Y		Y	Y[1]						Y													
U SA				Y						Y	Y													
U Southern Qld		Y		Y[1]	Y				Y		Y[1]													
U Sunshine Coast									Y	Y	Y													
U Sydney	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y[2]	Y	Y	Y	Y						Y		Y[1]				Y
U Tasmania		Y		Y	Y				Y		Y													
U Western Sydney	Y	Y								Y	Y							Y						
U Wollongong				Y						Y	Y							Y						
UNE		Y		Y	Y				Y	Y	Y													
UNSW		Y		Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y				Y		Y						
UQ		Y		Y	Y				Y		Y	Y				Y		Y						
UTS		Y		Y	Y					Y	Y							Y		Y				
UWA		Y		Y	Y				Y	Y	Y													
Victoria U		Y									Y							Y					Y	
Total	**5**	**27**	**1**	**24**	**20**	**10**	**2**	**3**	**20**	**23**	**34**	**7**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**5**	**1**	**19**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**

[1] taught by collaborative agreement
[2] limited availability

APPENDIX 2

Comments on Websites

Doris Schupbach

Although an analysis of websites was not part of the original project plan, they turned out to offer in a clear and potentially useful way a symptomatic picture both of the importance accorded to the languages sector in university self-presentation and of the relative ease/difficulty of accessibility of information for students.

By way of context, it should be noted that it is difficult to isolate issues relating to the websites, i.e. to look at websites as a completely separate issue. Overarching website protocols adopted by universities can help determine where languages are located within a university obviously also influences the look, structure, placement of particular websites, as do. It is also apparent that a number of websites are presently undergoing modification. Differences in terminology (e.g. course as degree, course as subject/unit of study) can make a search across universities quite confusing. Some websites have dictionaries (Melbourne) or lists of terminology (Uni SA), which are useful but not always placed in a prominent position. Others (e.g. UQ) have little windows (like the screen tips in Word) that explain some terms when one holds the mouse over them.

The websites of all Australian universities were reviewed from the perspective of a prospective student, who is interested in knowing what languages are on offer at this particular university and/or who is interested in specific information about a particular language. As a consequence, two sets of functions were explored:

a) the browse or guided search functions for prospective/future students (e.g. course finder): Starting from the home page of each university, the number of clicks required to get to relevant information as well as ease of use (intuitiveness, self-explanatory process) were used as guiding evaluation criteria.
b) the general search functions and the A/Z index functions available on the home pages.

The review of the websites took place between 17 and 21 September 2007 and it reflects a mixture of the offerings for 2007 and 2008 (although it was not always clear to which year the information referred to, i.e. whether the information had already been updated for 2008).

a) Browse/guided search functions:

The homepages of all universities provide a specific entry point for future students which leads to a browse/search function (termed ‘course search’ or similar).
These functions vary in flexibility and variety of approaches. Generally speaking, it would seem advisable to provide a variety of approaches to such a search, catering for a broad range of potential questions and preferred search styles. A combination of approaches would allow for free keyword searches as well as guided searches with drop-down menus, very general, basic searches as well as advanced, refined ones, broad search terms (e.g. ‘humanities’, ‘languages’) as well as more restricted ones (e.g. ‘Japanese language’).

Good examples/ features:

- 'Languages' are clearly presented as a field of study, easily accessible (e.g. Bond University): Languages are listed as a study area, the link leads to an overview page on language study including the languages available (http://www.bond.edu.au/hss/ disciplines/languages/index.html, only 4 clicks from the homepage) which in turn has links to further detailed information about the degrees and programs.

- A range of entry points and search modes is available, leading to identical information (within a few clicks from the homepage), e.g.
  Edith Cowan University: search via a 'courses and career finder', browse by courses or by faculty;
  University of Adelaide 'find a program' (http://www.adelaide.edu.au/programs/): search by keyword, browse by study area (which includes languages), search by subject and by career, 'Course planner' – while this web page offers a variety of entry points and approaches, it is not supported by its design which is rather cluttered so that the variety may seem confusing rather than helpful.

- Handbook as a genuine online document, with good indices and internal search functions and a clear presentation of search results. (By contrast, browse/search-functions of several other websites lead to program outlines or similar documents which are not linked to further information at all, indicating that the print version of the handbook was transferred onto the web with minimal links added.)
  University of New South Wales: the web site for future students links to the online handbook (a 'one-stop-shop' for program information, http://www.handbook.unsw. edu.au/undergraduate/2008/), which can be accessed in a variety of ways – via indices (Programs A-Z, Programs by Faculty, Courses A-Z, Courses by Subject Area, Specialisations A-Z, Areas of Interest, Careers) or by free keyword search. A search for the term 'languages' found 408 items which were presented in 3 categories – programs ('degrees'), courses ('subjects/units') and specialisations ('majors') – sorted by relevance within each of the categories.

  The University of Canberra's 'Courses and Units Database' (http://www.canberra.edu.au/courses/) has similar functionalities allowing for searches and browsing at various levels.

- Free keyword searches vs. guided browsing: both have problems depending on what kinds of search terms are possible/available. Many sites suggest only broad terms for guided browsing via drop-down menus (e.g. Arts, Business etc.) and limit the keyword search to the course/degree level (e.g. a search for 'language' leads to DML or BLang but not to BA; a search for 'Italian' may lead to the DML but not to Bachelors with a major or minor in Italian). In these instances, a search for actual units/subjects is not possible from the pages for future students but an integrated approach, using the online handbook as the major source of information (as implemented by UNSW), could make such searches possible.
  Other sites require very precise narrow terms for keyword searches in order to get relevant results (see comments on the general search functions below).

b) General search and A/Z index functions:

All university websites provide a **general search function**, normally accessible via link from the homepage and/or directly through a search window.
I tried a variety of searches (using keywords such as 'language' or 'languages', or a specific language I knew was on offer at the particular university). The type and/or finetuning of the search engine seemed to influence the results, particularly when the search terms 'language(s)' were used. Generic search engines (mostly Google) led to very broad and unstructured results, e.g. listing sites relating to 'computer language', 'English language support or requirements', 'inclusive language' etc. as well as language courses. This was particularly apparent when comparing universities who use such 'off the shelf'-search engines and others with a local, customised search engine. The University of Canberra's customised search engine, for example, prioritises the results: a search for 'language(s)' brings up 1) the School of Languages and International Studies as a so-called 'feature page', 2) 'fully matching results' (containing less prioritised results as per Google search). If searching more specifically for 'Spanish language', the results are listed as follows: 1) the School of Languages and International Studies as a 'feature page', 2) 'fully matching results' and 3) 'documents matching 1 out of 2 search constraints' (i.e. only 'Spanish' or only 'language'). Curtin UT has a similar search function which lists the Department of Languages and Intercultural Education in the first place.
The general search function of Charles Darwin University allows to specify whether courses, units, staff members, experts or the entire CDU-website should be searched, thus making it more targeted; a search for 'language' in 'units' brings up a list of language-related units (even if the term does not figure in the unit name).
→ Customised search engines seem to be superior as they allow the universities to define parameters which then influence the sequence in which the results are listed.
Another problem pertaining to the general search functions is that search engines list everything – including outdated and/or unlinked pages – as long as they have not been removed from the server. For instance, a search for 'Russian' on the UTS website links to a handbook entry for a Beginners Russian course from the 2006 handbook. As the entry follows the same layout as the current handbook, i.e. it is not easily identified as out of date.

Most websites also feature an **A-Z index**, an alphabetical list of links to the main information. These are of varying breadth and depth as well, some mainly focusing on the administrative side, others much more comprehensive. The University of Melbourne's 'A-Z directory' is a reasonably good example: it is prominently placed on the homepage and while clearly more focused on background information related to university management and administration than on study areas/the teaching side, it contains links to an overview page on 'languages' and 'language study', which in turn is linked the relevant Schools. Monash University's 'A-Z index' is equally accessible and – while not as detailed regarding the administrative side of things – it lists not only the 'School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics' under L but also 'French Studies' under F, 'Korean Studies' under K etc.

Summary of 'best practice'

- Languages (as a field of study) is included in the drop-down lists of study areas, areas of interest, careers, etc., which then leads directly to an overview page,

listing all opportunities for language study (including all languages on offer) at the university
- Languages (as a field of study) as well as the individual languages on offer are listed in the A-Z index
- The website (for future students) contains a range of search/browse options to cater for different approaches, leading to the same information
- The searchable/browseable information is not limited to the level of courses/degrees but encompasses majors, minors and subjects/units.
- A free keyword search for ‘languages’ leads to a (well-linked) overview page listing all opportunities for language study at the university

17.12.2007 / ds

APPENDIX 3

The Questionnaires used in the Study

ARC LASP QUESTIONNAIRE – General

University: _____
Contact person: _____

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(1) Beginners' languages taught in your institution:

(2) Collaborations with other institutions (e.g. beginners' courses offered by your institution in another university or vice versa):

(3) Are any of the beginners' language courses offered at your institution available to members of the community not enrolled in a formal degree? If so, please specify which courses.

(4) Are any of the beginners' languages courses taught by distance (i.e. to off-campus students enrolled in your institution)? If so, please specify which courses.

(5) Some universities have a discrete course, which can be taken concurrently with other courses and constitutes a major in a language (e.g. Diploma of Modern Languages (DML)). Does your university have such a course? If yes, what is it called?

(6) Distribution of points / subjects across the degree (full time student load):

	n subjects	Credit points
1st year:		
2nd year:		
3rd year:		
Total		

(7) Have there been previous reviews involving beginners languages (eg any surveys of student motivations, reasons for continuing / discontinuing, etc)? If so, please provide details; if the findings have been published, please provide full bibliographic details and attach a copy if possible.

ARC LASP QUESTIONNAIRE – Numbers

University: _____
Contact person: _____

Overall enrolment numbers

(1) We wish to calculate the % total student load at your university (or, if more than one campus, at your campus) enrolled in a language. Please provide the following student numbers (at census date, Semester 1):

a. total number of students enrolled in an undergraduate degree
2005:
2006:
2007:

b. of these, total number of first-year students
2005:
2006:
2007:

Enrolment numbers by language

(2) Intake of first year students by language

(2a) 2007, semester 1 intake of first year students (raw numbers at census date):

	Language 1	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
Beginners stream				
Stream B (e.g. post-beginners/continuing)				
Stream C (e.g. Intermediate)				
Stream D (e.g. Advanced)				

(2b) 2006, semester 1 intake of first year students (raw numbers at census date):

	Language 1	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
Beginners stream				
Stream B (e.g. post-beginners/continuing)				
Stream C (e.g. Intermediate)				
Stream D (e.g. Advanced)				

(2c) 2005, semester 1 intake of first year students (raw numbers at census date):

	Language 1	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
Beginners stream				
Stream B (e.g. post-beginners/continuing)				
Stream C (e.g. Intermediate)				
Stream D (e.g. Advanced)				

(3) Beginners stream: retention and attrition

(3a) 2007

Beginners stream	**Language 1**	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
2nd year semester 1				
3rd year semester 1				

(3b) 2006

Beginners stream		**Language 1**	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
1st	***semester 1***				
	semester 2				
2nd	***semester 1***				
	semester 2				

(3c) 2005

Beginners stream	**Language 1**	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
1st year semester 2				

(4) 2007, Semester 1: Number of students enrolled in the beginners courses who are ...

	Language 1	**Language 2**	**Language 3**	**Language 4**
... overseas fee-paying students				
... enrolled in a Diploma of Modern Languages or equivalent				

ARC LASP QUESTIONNAIRE - For each language

University: _____
Contact person: _____
Language: _____

General

(1) When was the Beginners' course introduced?

(2) Entry requirements for beginners course (including any exclusion indicators):

Credit system

(3) Number of points and/or % of total years credit for the 1st year beginners language course (semester 1 & 2):

(4) For funding purposes, how is this language weighted in comparison to the base humanities / social sciences (eg 1:1. 1.5:1, 2:1 etc)?

Pathways and progression

(5) Other entry paths (eg post-year 12, other - please give details)

(6) When were these streams introduced?

(7) 2006 semester 1 intake in these other (non-beginners) streams (at census date):

(8) Pathways
a. To major:

b. To honours:

[(9) No. of students enrolled in the beginners' course who are overseas fee-paying students:

(10) No. of students in the beginners' course who are enrolled in a DML or equivalent (cf. (6) in the General questionnaire):]

(11) Patterns of merging of streams
a. Do beginners' streams join with other streams? How? When?
b. Is there a system to continue to track beginners once they have joined other streams?

Retention and attrition

[(12) Enrolment numbers supplied separately]

(13) Do you have any anecdotal impressions you wish to provide regarding student motivations and reasons for continuing/discontinuing with the beginners' course (e.g. gender, workload, timetabling)?

In-country study opportunities

(14) Is there financial support available to students for in-country study? Please specify.

a. Are there language-specific scholarships? (If yes, state value and period of time supported.)

b. On what basis are students selected for assistance?

(15) Are there formal exchange/study abroad programs? If yes, what are they?

a. Are beginners encouraged or required to take in-country study? If so, at what stage of the course?

b. Approximately how many beginners students are involved each year?

Teaching and learning

N.B. Please attach a copy of all material on the beginners' course given to students throughout the semester. [Semester 1, unless otherwise specified!]

(16) Does the course have explicitly stated goals? If so, what are they?

(17) Does the course have predicted outcomes? (expected/desired proficiency of Reading, Writing, Listening Speaking?) If so, what are they?

(18) Is the preference for a particular theory/methodology of language teaching explicitly stated?

(19) Do you keep data on student satisfaction with course (eg quality of teaching questionnaires etc.)

(20) Syllabus

a. How much of the course is devoted to language?

b. To culture/literature?

c. How are these language and culture components integrated, and how explicit is the integration? (eg in course outlines)

d. Is target language instruction used? If so, at what point and for what purpose?

e. Are textbooks used in the Beginners course? If so, which ones?

f. Does teaching involve the use of locally generated course materials? (ie. produced in your department) If so, what do these consist of?

g. Is a language lab used in the Beginners course? If yes, for what purposes?

(21) Hours of instruction

a. Weeks of instruction per semester:

b. Class teaching

(i) hours of language class per week:

(ii) hours of lectures per week:

(iii) Total:

c. Self-instruction

(i) hours in the language laboratory per week:

(ii) hours of homework per week:

(iii) other? Please specify.

(iv) Total:

(22) Use of technology

a. Do you use new technologies in your teaching?

b. Which technologies do you use?

Technology	Yes/no
A Learning Management System (e.g., BlackBoard, WebCT)	
Email	
The World Wide Web and/or Internet	
CALL programs (e.g., Hot Potatoes)	
Audioconferencing	
Desktop videoconferencing	
Studio-based videoconferencing	
Mobile technologies (e.g., phones, PDAs)	
Other	

c. How do you use these technologies?

Use	Yes/no
to upload lecture notes	
to provide additional resources or learning materials	
to provide teacher-student communication	
to provide student-student communication	
to develop tasks or exercises	
to facilitate collaborative projects at a distance	
between native speakers & non-native speakers	
between non-native speakers	
to facilitate tandem learning (i.e., reciprocal use of L1 and L2)	
for assessment purposes	
for language learning at a distance	
Other	

(23) Assessment

a. How is the final mark for the course determined?

(i) % of total mark allocated to assignments;
number of assignments:

(ii) % of total mark allocated to exams (written, oral);
number of exams:

(iii) % Other. Please specify nature (eg periodic tests), how many and how often:

b. Is the culture/literature part examined? If so, how?

APPENDIX 4

Classroom Observation Grid

Institution:
Language:
Date & time:
Teacher:
Observer:

1. Map of classroom:

2. Ethnographic record of the lesson.

- Note down chronologically the main events in the lesson and their impact. (Brief and synoptic enough to keep records in real time; report what was done rather than actual language).
- The error: note some student errors. Note whether the teacher responded and if so, a brief note as to what was said/signalled. Note when in the lesson it occurred (to recall it later). Note whether there was a particular focus at that point in the lesson (e.g. accuracy, fluency).

Interaction/rapport: on the map of the classroom or on the grid, note who talks to whom, who questions, who responds

Time	**Activity**				**Notes**
	teacher	group	pair	other	*E.g., **content** subject matter/ theme (e.g. talking, reading, listening, procedural directives etc) **language** (reference to grammar, pronunciation, vocab, sociolinguistics)*