

LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFICIENCY OR TEACHER LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY?

**AN ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN OF INFORMATION RELATING
TO THE COMPETENCIES/QUALITIES/KNOWLEDGES
REQUIRED TO BE AN EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TEACHER.**

A REPORT PREPARED FOR THE NALSAS TASKFORCE

By

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In December 1992, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) convened a working group to prepare a report on a National Asian Languages/Studies Strategy for Australian Schools (NALSAS) with the object of enhancing Australia's economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. The final report entitled *Asian Languages and Australia's Economic Future* was completed in 1994. The report emphasised the need for a strategy which would significantly improve Australia's performance in Asian languages/cultures education.

One of the aims of the NALSAS Strategy was that by the year 2006 all students in years 3-10 in Australian schools will be studying a language other than English (LOTE) of which 60% will be studying an Asian language (Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian or Korean). The long-term supply of proficient Asian language teachers is critical to the successful implementation of the NALSAS Strategy. The NALSAS Report noted that *the quality of the existing stock of Asian language teachers is highly variable*. To this end, it recommended that:

a long term Asian languages teacher supply strategy [be developed] in order to supply adequate number of new teachers to the system with appropriate proficiency levels (pxiv).

This environmental scan was commissioned by the NALSAS Taskforce in response to the above recommendation and in view of the fact that most jurisdictions have not yet conducted systematic audits of the proficiency levels of their existing language teachers. According to the Report, where audits have been conducted they show 'a highly variable picture requiring intensive remedial strategies' (p127).

The issue of teacher proficiency is also of concern to language teachers themselves. Teachers want to know that they are up to date with their language and content knowledge.¹ There is currently a perception that language teachers are not as proficient as is desirable. An academic interviewed as part of this research stated:

¹ This emerged from an interview with Ms Leslie Harbon from the University of Tasmania. Ms Harbon has been interviewing language teachers who have been involved in implementation of LOTE in schools since the Australian Language and Literacy Council produced its report *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy*.

As soon as someone uses the term language teacher proficiency, I think tragedy, sadness, distance, cost, opportunity, lack of confidence, lack of awareness of low levels of proficiency on the part of the teachers.

The aim of this environmental scan is to provide information about:

- What Australian systems are currently doing to assess language teacher proficiency
- What other related work is being conducted in the area of Asian language teacher proficiency
- A netsearch for any relevant work being conducted in this area overseas

The report is structured into five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the research approach and methodology. The results of the literature review and netsearch are presented in the second chapter. The third chapter outlines what each of the Australian jurisdictions is currently doing to address the issue of language teacher proficiency at a system level. The fourth chapter provides a discussion of some of the issues surrounding the assessment of language teacher proficiency in the Australian context. The information for this chapter was gathered from interviews with Senior Curriculum Officers from each of the jurisdictions and leading Australian academics in the field of language teacher education. The final chapter is a summary of conclusions and findings from the research.

Comments in italics throughout the report represent quotes from individuals interviewed. Some of those interviewed are jurisdictional representatives, others are academics involved second/foreign language teacher education. The views expressed may not always reflect jurisdictional perspectives, but rather the experiences and opinions of these individuals.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 ELEMENTS OF THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted aimed to bring together best practice as identified in the literature review with expert knowledge in the field. This was done by linking together the consultation process with the Environmental Scan.

2.1.1 Interviews

The first stage of the methodology involved identifying people with knowledge of what is happening in terms of the monitoring of language teacher proficiency in each of the Australian state educational jurisdictions. To this end, the researchers determined to interview Senior Curriculum Officers from each Australian jurisdiction and, where appropriate, academics involved in second/foreign language teacher education at a tertiary level. Responses were not actively sought from non-Government jurisdictions. Each person identified was asked to participate in an interview, either by telephone or in person.

Interviews were conducted with two representatives from Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales. One representative was interviewed from the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria. Making a total of twelve interviews in all. Most interviews were conducted by telephone. Where possible, however, they were conducted in person. One representative chose to provide written responses to the interview questions.

Interviews were designed to elicit the following information:

- What the respondent understood by the term ‘language teacher proficiency’
- What they saw happening in their jurisdiction in terms of monitoring language teacher proficiency
- Whether there were any plans to change the monitoring system in the jurisdiction
- Whether they knew of any current research or models, either in Australia or overseas, related to language teacher proficiency or to the assessment of language teacher proficiency

While information gathered from respondents related to language teaching generally, respondents were also asked if they were aware of any specific initiatives in the assessment of

the proficiency of teachers of Asian languages. In addition, respondents were asked to supply documentation related to the assessment of language teacher proficiency in their jurisdiction.

Interview instruments are attached (Appendix A).

2.1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND NETSEARCH

A literature review and netsearch was undertaken to provide an overview of what was happening both in Australia and overseas to monitor language teacher proficiency. The review also emphasises the different understandings of language teacher proficiency. Most of the overseas literature is focused in the United Kingdom and the United States. The literature spans information relating to second/foreign language teaching and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in non-English speaking contexts. There was very little attention in the literature to proficiency as it relates to teachers of Asian languages. Information obtained from the interviews was used to supplement the literature review.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW AND NETSEARCH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

A review of the international literature reveals considerable confusion about what foreign language teachers should know and know how to do. This confusion is compounded by the varying interpretations of teacher “proficiency” and its relation to linguistic proficiency. This literature review is a selective analysis of the current debate within Australia and overseas. In searching a wide range of published sources, it becomes evident that at an international level there is considerable academic and intellectual debate about the conceptual issues involved in foreign language teaching. A holistic approach incorporates concepts such as teacher knowledge – the skills and knowledge which a teacher needs to have in order to teach their learning area effectively. The conceptual debate in Australia appears to have been subsumed by a more pragmatic attempt to develop a language proficiency framework in which other areas are seen as tangential.

The aim of this review is to identify a range of options, to inform the current debate and enable the relevant educational jurisdictions to make meaningful decisions about the direction of foreign language teaching in Australia.

3.2 TEACHER LANGUAGE / LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFICIENCY

In his discussion of the definition of proficiency in the context of foreign language teaching and learning, Chastain (1989:48) suggests that, ‘The term seems to fall into that category of words that are commonly used without conscious attention to exact meaning. The result is fuzzy thinking that characterizes our discussions and carries over into our teaching’. The literature in Australia reveals that terms such as ‘quality’, ‘proficiency’ and ‘competency’ are used almost interchangeably and with imprecise definition.

In compiling their recent report *Language Teacher Proficiency Assessment*, Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996:34) found that the definition of ‘language teacher proficiency’ held by those in the field was broad and included attributes of a ‘competent’ language teacher. It appeared, however, that with two exceptions the main area of concern of those interviewed for the report was actually ‘linguistic’ proficiency. This raises a question about whether those ‘in the field’ are taking a broad enough approach to foreign language teaching and are fully

aware of the more holistic and conceptual approaches to the discipline of teaching which inform the debate overseas. The authors' statement that, 'After the initial definition was elicited ... the comments of interviewees then tended to refer only to *linguistic proficiency*, indicating that this was the chief area of concern', raises some concerns about the structure of the interviews and how much the results represented the perceptions of the interviewers rather than a true reflection of the participants' responses.

If we do choose to concentrate on linguistic proficiency, what definition do we use? The Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLPR) describe language proficiency in terms of four discrete macro-skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). By contrast, Bachman and Palmer (1996), seeking to develop a basis for the design and use of language proficiency tests, identify six interrelated areas of language knowledge. These encompass: organisational knowledge pertaining to the way in which texts are structured; grammatical knowledge including knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and phonology/graphology; textual knowledge, which includes knowledge of cohesion and knowledge of rhetorical or conversational organisation; pragmatic knowledge, related to the communicative goals of the language user and the context in which the language is being used; functional knowledge including an understanding of ideational, manipulative, heuristic and imaginative functions, as well as socio-linguistic knowledge (p68).

Schulz (quoted in Chastain, 1989:48) found that while some authors identified 64 proficiency components, others contended that it consists of only one factor. Chastain suggests that:

the stress in second language learning and teaching [has shifted] from a language-based curriculum to a communication-based curriculum, and greater importance is placed on functional approaches. This orientation leads to a recognition that linguistic accuracy is only one component of proficiency and to an emphasis on communication as opposed to the memorization of linguistic forms for discrete-point test items. (p.49)

In Chastain's 1989 survey of a number of highly regarded leaders in the field of foreign language education in the US, one respondent refers to the ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines published in 1982. Although the Guidelines relate to student proficiency, the point made is also relevant to the testing of teacher linguistic proficiency:

The fundamental flaw is the assumption that there exists a single proficiency (which can, of course, be rated). Proficiency is person-specific and context-

specific. The Guidelines are no more than one committee's statement of those aspects of language functioning that the committee members value. (p49)

It is interesting that Chastain's concern about the impact of proficiency on the foreign language teaching profession and his prediction of a possible bandwagon effect, 'accompanied by unsubstantiated claims for the power of proficiency tests', seems to be relevant in the current Australian climate. It remains to be seen whether, in the words of one of Chastain's respondents, 'Like previous bandwagons, it could end up distorting instruction by focussing on glibness devoid of cultural referents' (p50).

Confusion is also increased by the haphazard use of other terms and concepts. Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996:42) use the terms 'teacher quality' and 'quality teaching' apparently interchangeably in consecutive sentences. But do they mean the same? The authors describe the reference made to 'quality teaching' in the Nicholas Report (1993) and the Australian Language and Literacy Council (ALLC) Report (1996) as encompassing 'much more than teacher language proficiency and competencies: it refers to the totality of language teaching and learning and encompasses many other factors, such as school/classroom conditions, teacher support, teacher morale and career structures, that contribute to successful language programs'. Briguglio and Kirkpatrick then conclude that 'descriptions of "quality teaching", ... are fairly ambitious and, many would argue, beyond the current reality in many cases' (p.44). This dismissal of the concept of quality *teaching* as ambitious and often unrealistic seems to be in contrast with the emphasis in Australia on quality *language* ability.

3.3 RECENT DIRECTIONS IN AUSTRALIA

3.3.1 Competency based teaching

A major trend in Australia in the 1990s has been the move toward the competency-based model of teaching (Briguglio and Kirkpatrick:1996; Fawns and Nance:1993; ALLC:1996; Commins:1995) which has formed part of industrial agreements between various government and teacher groups.

Once again, the issue of conflicting interpretations is raised. In summarising the description of teacher competencies used by Nicholas (1993) in *Languages at the Crossroads*, Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996:41) suggest that it is clear from that description 'that "teacher competence" is a fairly broad term and encompasses linguistic proficiency, cultural

understanding, pedagogical skills and teacher knowledge and understanding'. From their definition, it is unclear how a concept as broad as teacher knowledge can be measured by a competency test. The ALLC (1996:150) refers to Commins' (1995) report *Minimum Skills/Competency Standards for LOTE Teaching* as examining the 'professional (i.e. pedagogical) competency standards and skills required for successful language teaching'. So in this reference, competency appears to refer only to pedagogical skills.

A search of the wider literature indicates that there is concern about whether the competency-based approach is the most relevant and appropriate model of teaching. In Australia, Peacock and Bluer (quoted in Fawns and Nance, 1993:256) suggest that, 'Government policy initiatives are directed at transforming teacher education into a wing of industrial training on a competency-based platform'. In Canada, Jackson (1988:247) believes that, 'Where educators have seen in competency measures evidence of "conceptual confusion" and "mistakes", managers have seen the promise of "economy", "efficiency" and "accountability"'. She suggests that with a competency approach to curriculum design, 'learning is displaced by managing in the shaping of curricular organisation' and that the 'activities of teaching and learning become the object of a centrally organized management system'. These comments prompt the question of who is driving the competency-based approach – government administrators, teacher educators, teachers, learning area interests?

Fawns and Nance (1993:256) have listed a number of weaknesses of competency-based models identified in the literature:

- There are difficulties associated with identifying and measuring the body of knowledge and skills that derives from an agreed conception of the teacher's work (Lee, 1991)
- Existing competency standards tend to focus on the mechanics of teaching at the expense of the complexity and richness of the teacher's work (Peacock and Bluer:1991; Watson:1984)
- There is no evidence that shows that good performance on competency-based criteria predicts future success in teaching (Chappell:1989)

The observation of Fawns and Nance (1993:256) that 'there is the danger in any appraisal scheme that it becomes over-technical and standardised' echoes that of Shulman (1987:20), who suggests that, 'We have an obligation to raise standards in the interests of improvement

and reform, but we must avoid the creation of rigid orthodoxies. We must achieve standards without standardization’.

Writing in United States, Wing (1984) notes that, at that time, teacher candidates in 36 states of the US were being tested using standardised examinations in language skills, pedagogical knowledge and subject matter content. She argues that while proficiency testing promises to improve assessment of teachers’ language skills, further ‘exploration of the relationship between test scores and teacher effectiveness’ needed to be undertaken (p1). She also stresses the ‘need to identify competencies necessary for successful teaching’, and that these essential competencies are best identified through the analysis of successful classroom teaching, rather than through a standardised testing process (p4).

Although, directed at foreign language teacher education, Johnson’s (1996) observations seem to be relevant to the wider competency based approach to teaching as well. She believes that:

One of the most common criticisms of teacher education programs is that we continue to assess teachers based on observable teaching behaviors, or through paper and pencil tests that assess knowledge about teaching instead of assessing how novice teachers use their knowledge while actually teaching’.
(p1)

In discussing the use of alternative forms of assessment such as portfolio assessment, Johnson makes the following comments:

It means moving away from assuming there are right answers about teaching to accepting multiple perspectives. It means providing multiple opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their competencies. And finally, it means carrying out assessment that is less like external judgement and more like internal sense-making and self-analysis. (p14)

Brown (1993:12) believes that, ‘The challenge in second language education is to promote inspired teaching through professionalism. This involves a recognition ... that effective teaching does not originate in a particular theory of language acquisition or approach to language instruction. When teachers invest their methodology of teaching into a single theory or approach, they have abdicated their responsibility for instructional decisions and become passive technicians’. If this is the case, competency-based assessment on the basis of particular theories or methodologies would appear to be inadequate. If, as Brown (p.13) suggests, ‘professionalism is more likely to result when language teachers are encouraged to

make decisions on a variety of philosophical and theoretical approaches', rigid adherence to a competency-based model would be inhibiting of professional development and effectiveness.

In reviewing concerns about the use of competency standards and the wide range of current views on teaching, Commins (1995:8) suggests that, 'How to incorporate this many-faceted view of teaching within a competencies paradigm is a challenge that faces those charged with the task of developing competency standards for teaching'. Is it therefore possible that a competencies paradigm is not compatible with a many-faceted view of teaching, and if this is so, why is the Australian experience so fixed on the competency path? Yet the ALLC (1996:156) appears to want to take this fixation even further. It suggests a need to go beyond Commins' *Minimum Competency Standards for LOTE Teaching* and to 'identify and specify the necessary competencies required by language teachers in different roles and at different stages in their careers', including twelve categories such as distance education teachers, immersion teachers and advisory teachers. While recognising that there is a need to encourage a high level of foreign language teaching in Australia, educational jurisdictions may wish to consider how many innovative, flexible, dynamic, quality teachers will be produced or survive in this "little boxes" approach to teaching.

Lumley (1996) looks at the issue of foreign language performance assessment in Australia, in which the ability of teachers to perform particular types of language tasks is measured. He refers to performance tests developed by Language Australia-LTRC for Language teachers, in Italian, Japanese and Indonesian. Their purpose is 'to certify Language teachers, to select applicants for language teacher education, to identify professional development needs' (p2). The two aspects of the performance tests are task fulfilment and linguistic performance. However, Lumley raises a number of points about the fairness of performance assessment. He points out that the process 'relies on subjective judgements carried out by raters who are most commonly language teachers or others with language training of some kind' (p3). Lumley questions the level of training of raters, the inevitable discrepancies between raters, the conditions under which testing is administered and subjective decisions made during test development and administration:

These decisions affect: the test specifications (including content, tasks and items used, and their design); the content of the assessment criteria and/or scales used; the interpretations made of test scores; and the setting of standards (how much is enough for the specified purpose). (p3)

The points raised by Lumley could equally be applied to all aspects of competency and proficiency based testing and raise concerns about the emphasis on such testing in foreign language teaching in Australia.

Elder was involved in the development of the Language Australia-LTRC tests, and ‘makes it clear that the focus first and foremost is on language and not teaching skills as such’ (Briguglio and Kirkpatrick, 1996:35). Because of the difficulty of replicating the contextual features of the classroom in a test environment, her team separated classroom competence ratings from linguistic ones in reporting performance on the test. Elder (1993:7) explains that:

This will ensure that ability estimates for candidates demonstrating high levels of language proficiency will not be unduly influenced by failure to act out the teacher’s role effectively in the test situation. But this amounts to a weakening of the test’s claim to specificity. If information about general language proficiency is enough, why bother with measurement of classroom-specific competence?

The implication of this comment is that teaching competence (in its broadest interpretation) is secondary to linguistic ability for foreign language teachers. This view is reinforced by Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996:44) when they say rather dismissively that:

Questions relating to methodology for language teachers certainly have their place in discussions about pre-service courses, language teacher preparation and continuing professional development. They should not, however, distract from the main issue. It is comparatively easy, and takes a much shorter time, to provide someone with language teaching skills, especially if they are already trained teachers. It takes much longer and is much more arduous to equip the same person with high levels of linguistic proficiency in a language other than English

Such an attitude trivialises the skills, attributes and knowledge of professional teachers and implies that someone with a high level of linguistic ability will almost automatically be an effective teacher, which is not necessarily the case (cf Goddard et al: In Press). It also contrasts with the views of others such as Westgate (1988:152) whose research with student foreign language teachers has led him to conclude that ‘the practice and analysis of teaching [is] the foundation of teacher-training, for language teachers as much as for any others’. In a similar vein, at the University of Warwick (UK), student teachers of languages in the Post Graduate Certificate in Education course undertake language courses which all have a “teaching focus” (Barnes:1996, 62).

The comments of Briguglio and Kirkpatrick also raise the issue of foreign language teaching compared with other teaching areas. Have the disciplines of biology teaching or history teaching developed such a rigorous testing programme to measure their teachers' knowledge of biology or history, or is it assumed that a certain level of undergraduate and postgraduate education will adequately equip a teacher to become an effective biology or history teacher? While there may be concern in Australia about the level of linguistic ability of foreign language teachers in this country, it is doing both the teachers and their students a severe disservice to trivialise 'language teacher' proficiency while heavily promoting 'teacher language' proficiency.

A search of the literature found little discussion about foreign language education in relation to other subjects. Tedick and Walker (1995:499) believe that 'second language education is fundamentally different from other content areas in that it does not constitute a body of content per se, but rather involves the learning or teaching of a vehicle for communicating content'. The authors may be simply articulating the assumptions of those who are seeking to develop extensive testing programmes for foreign language teachers. It is arguable that more evidence may be needed to justify those assumptions.

3.4 AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Some of the overseas literature does replicate the Australian emphasis on linguistic proficiency. For example, Gergely and Hudak's (1993) description of the proficiency assessment process for trainee English teachers at Eötvös Lorand University in Budapest. Although the training programme emphasises the importance of developing students methodological expertise as well as their linguistic knowledge, the testing process used is only designed to assess the language and communication skills of the trainees.

Silvestro, Weiss and Janicki (1997) describe a new series of credential examinations for foreign language teachers devised by the California Commission on Teacher Certification. The system was required to reflect the US *Final Report of the National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project*, with its substantial proficiency-based emphasis. The emphasis in the test was thus on communicative skills, general linguistic knowledge, knowledge of the linguistics of the target language and knowledge of culture. There was little discussion of teaching skills or broader concepts of education and language teaching.

The direction taken by this report on foreign language education appears to be narrower than that of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. The Commission's recent report, *What Matters Most*, 'recommends that teachers be licensed based on demonstrated performance, including test of subject matter knowledge, teaching knowledge, and teaching skills' (Richardson, 1997:21). In fact, one of the Commission's recommendations was to 'Encourage and reward teacher knowledge and skill' (p22).

3.4.1 Teacher Knowledge

A number of writers refer to the role of the teacher in many schools as managers rather than teachers. Aronowitz and Giroux (quoted in Crookes, 1997:74) believe 'teachers are viewed less as creative and imaginative thinkers ... than as obedient civil servants'. Shulman (1987:1) suggests that 'while many characterizations of effective teachers exist, most of these dwell on the teacher's management of the classroom' rather than 'the management of *ideas* within classroom discourse'. He also believes that the traditional requirements of teaching – basic skills, content knowledge and general pedagogical skills – trivialise teaching by ignoring its complexities. In the effort to formulate general principles of effective teaching, 'critical features of teaching, such as the subject matter being taught, the classroom context, the physical and psychological characteristics of the students, or the accomplishment of purposes not readily assessed on standardized tests, are typically ignored' (p.6). Myers (1997:2) believes that educational reformers 'accept and perpetuate ... an image of teaching as a craft that is based more on previous, trial and error classroom teaching experiences for its knowledge base than constructed theory'.

Myers (1997:5) describes the conceptualisation of professional knowledge as being made up of a number of elements:

- The professional knowledge, skills, and values of teachers are constructed by teachers themselves rather than absorbed from elsewhere
- Teachers construct and develop their knowledge, skills, and values in the context of how they use that new knowledge, and those new skills and values
- The value of any set of professional knowledge, skills, and value perspectives is determined by its utility in helping individual teachers teach rather than by its esoteric origin

- The places that teachers turn to as sources of knowledge, skills, and values are not all external to themselves and their classrooms. Teachers also generate their own educational theories from their personal teaching, reflection on that teaching, and self-analysis
- The principles of evolutionary professional development apply to teachers' learning and to their evolving knowledge, skills and value perspectives.

Shulman (1987:8) has identified four major sources for the teaching knowledge base:

- Scholarship in content disciplines
- The materials and settings of the institutionalised educational process
- Research on schooling, social organisations, human learning, teaching and development, and the other social and cultural phenomena that affect what teachers can do
- The wisdom of practice itself.

Shulman believes that:

the key to distinguishing the knowledge base of teaching lies at the intersection of content and pedagogy, in the capacity of a teacher to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students. (p15)

The transformation process requires a combination of preparation; representation of ideas in the form of analogies, etc; instructional selections from various teaching methods and models; adaptation of these to the general characterisations of the class; and tailoring these adaptations to the specific children in the class (p16).

Lange and Burroughs-Lange have also developed a transformational model to account for the development of teacher knowledge. Their model 'takes a constructivist view where knowledge is continually transformed by the learner through cognitive processes which relate the knowledge to the situation' (Burroughs-Lange et al, 1994:24). A study by Lange and Burroughs-Lange of student teachers in a Primary Graduate Diploma Programme in Australia concludes that 'the capacity to transform the content of teacher professional knowledge into pedagogically powerful forms needs to be adaptive to the individual meaning-making in which teachers engage' (p.39). The researchers describe a 'filtering' process 'in which stored knowledge is retrieved and modified for use in a particular context'.

A number of researchers contend that teacher knowledge is not static, but continually evolves during the professional life of the teacher. Burroughs-Lange et al (1994:51) believe that ‘the fundamental processes of professional learning are preserved in the journey from student teacher to expert practitioner’ and that expertise does not come from accumulating examples of the same knowledge but by developing a range of strategies which are adaptable and can be productively employed. Through the process of attaining teacher knowledge, teachers ‘develop strategies for “getting comfortable” with their image of themselves as an effective teacher’ (p52). Shulman (1987:4) describes teacher-knowledge growth as ‘error, success, and refinement’, as teachers progress from novices to highly effective teachers. Myers (1997:4) also describes teaching as a career-long professional process, ‘that includes constant personal construction of new professional knowledge, constant personal development of refined professional skills, and constant personal sorting out of professional value perspectives...’.

While agreeing that teacher knowledge is dynamic and constantly evolving, Webb and Blond (1995:624) take the process further by constructing teacher knowledge as ‘dynamic and interactive with the knowing of students with whom the teacher is in-relation. What is radical about this view is that an individual’s knowledge is no longer conceived of as bounded and separate from the knowing of the other person’s (with whom they are in relation)’. In exploring the concept of the ‘caring’ teacher and the epistemological role for caring in teacher knowledge, the authors have developed a definition of knowledge ‘not limited to what one person knows, but the intersection where the knowing of two persons in-relation overlap and the consequences for student learning (and teacher development) when one of those persons is a teacher’. Webb and Blond also question the future effects of current moves toward greater top-down control of curriculum which ignore teacher knowledge.

3.4.2 Teacher Knowledge in the Australian Context

Much of the theoretical discussion of teacher knowledge has been conducted in the international literature, with the debate in the Australian literature being more limited. This may indicate a need to further the discussion of teacher knowledge within the Australian education context. In addition to Burroughs-Lange et al (1994), Fawns and Nance (1993) have also addressed the issue of teacher knowledge, particularly in relation to recent developments related to advanced skills teaching awards and competency-based teaching.

In considering the introduction of an Advance Skills Teacher (AST1) scale in Australia in the early 1990s, Fawns and Nance caution that there should be consideration of the knowledge criteria being developed for this award.

Teacher knowledge, reason and judgement rather than teacher behaviour should be emphasised as the basis of an account of exemplary teaching because adaptability is essential. Exemplary teachers are both knowledgeable and skilled enough to adapt to the unpredictable because it falls well within highly predictable limits which they also understand well. They would be identified as advanced skills teachers because they possess the combination of knowledge, skill, motivation and judgement needed to adapt to the contingencies they encounter within the regularities they expect. (p251)

Fawns and Nance examined the criteria developed by the Victorian Ministry of Education, as well as that of Methodist Ladies College (MLC) in Melbourne. They concluded that, ‘Within the matrix of moral and ethical purposes proposed by the Ministry, other criteria need to be elaborated which emphasise knowledge, skills and outcomes’ (p251). Conversely, the behavioural approach of MLC which emphasises ‘the provision of evidence of sustained excellence’ also ‘emphasises the observable knowledge and skills of teachers rather than the moral and ethical purposes of their teaching’ (p.251, 252). Fawns and Nance believe that both sets of criteria lack a sense of teacher development and that the questions which need to be asked are of the following type:

- What knowledge do teachers possess that the laity, including the academics, do not?
- What are the sources of this knowledge?
- How is such knowledge to be conceptualised?
- What are the processes of practical cultural reasoning that are associated with this knowledge and its development?
- What sort of research is required to comprehend and explicate this teacher knowledge and reasoning? (p252)

If education in Australia, including foreign language education, is to include the holistic rather than solely the pragmatic, these questions need to be addressed.

3.4.3 Teacher Knowledge and Foreign Language Teaching

While the literature on teacher knowledge in general appears to be quite extensive, and areas as diverse as mathematics and physical education are well represented in discussions of

teacher knowledge applied to particular disciplines, foreign language education literature is less well-represented.

In his paper, *Knowledge, Experience and Language Teaching*, Kenny (1996:449) identifies two types of syllabus in language teaching: the knowledge transmission syllabus which is an organisation of ready-made knowledge; and the experiential syllabus which is an organisation of people and which he believes is ‘better suited to language teaching and learning being wholly communicative’. Ellis (quoted in Kenny, 1996:450) ‘has noted that the structural/knowledge transmission syllabus “is probably still the most common in language teaching today”’.

Kenny argues for the use of the experiential syllabus in language teaching, so that,

teachers will [not] be selecting knowledge for our students but will be encouraging them to pursue their own experiences in the educational context. In discussions and reflections on these experiences the students may well come to say what they want, and will gain both language and knowledge. (p.451)

While Kenny is not referring specifically to teacher knowledge, the type of dynamic, interactive teaching which he describes does in fact match Webb and Blond’s (1995) definition of teacher knowledge as the intersection of two persons in-relation.

Met (1989:177) suggests that ‘there is a configuration of skills and knowledge that all teachers preparing to teach in elementary school foreign language programs should acquire’. She goes on to say that this knowledge includes,

a well-rounded background in the liberal arts and sciences; personal characteristics such as commitment to learning, leadership and communication skills; professional knowledge such as theories of learning, human development, educational psychology, and so on.

Met’s comments are significant because they apply the concept of teacher knowledge to the field of foreign language education and so identify the need for a broader view of foreign language teaching than that evidenced by competency and proficiency check lists. In saying that, ‘Above all, good elementary school foreign language teaching is simply good teaching’, Met in effect raises the question of who is controlling the foreign language teaching debate – teachers or linguists?

3.4.4 Other Aspects of Foreign Language Teaching

The literature reveals that one of the main concerns of researchers advocating a more holistic approach to foreign language teaching is the emphasis on the mechanics of language teaching rather than the complexities of teaching and language in its broadest context. As Tedick and Walker (1995:502) suggest, ‘programs that prepare teachers for foreign language and ESL settings have concentrated on the “how” without questioning the “why, what, or who”’.

One issue addressed by a number of writers is that of the incorporation of culture into the foreign language classroom. Ryan (1996:573) suggests that while ‘culture and language are inseparable’, ‘little is known about the foreign language teacher as a transmitter and handler of culture’ (p574). She carried out a two-year study with teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Mexico and teachers of Spanish in Pennsylvania, USA. Ryan’s study made the following findings:

- The teachers’ views on culture had evolved over their lifetime, they were not static
- Each teacher’s concept of culture was deeply embedded in his or her personal experiences
- Teachers projected distinctive ways of talking about culture
- They expressed strong views about the importance of culture in foreign language instruction and about the inseparableness of culture and language (p575-8).

Ryan believes that guidelines for including culture in foreign language curricula have been either nonexistent or very general. An Australian example would be one of the ALLC (1996:159) guidelines for teacher quality – ‘Knowledge and understanding of the target culture’. Ryan believes that ‘there is much complexity involved with teachers’ beliefs about the nature of culture that needs to be sorted out and reflected upon by the foreign language teachers themselves’ (p583). Such a process would ‘hopefully promote better understanding of sociocultural concepts in the language classroom and lead to better language teaching’ (p584).

Tedick and Walker (1995:500) attribute what they see as a ‘failure to consider the interdependence between first and second languages and cultures’ in North America as a historical view of bilingualism which saw first and second languages as separate entities, without a sense of wholeness of language and culture across the curriculum. Perhaps this is also true of Australia. The authors believe that the way that language is viewed as object in

the classroom denies the social nature of language as communication and reduces it to a narrow focus on parts and pieces. 'Language study is generally decontextualised, unrelated to the lives of students, their school, or the community, and much of language instruction remains grammar-driven and primarily teacher-directed' (p501). Tedick and Walker suggest that 'foreign language educators have traditionally given culture a polite nod' and that 'the resulting trivialization of culture and the separation of deeper cultural issues from second language pedagogy have been a true tragedy in the history of second language education' (p502).

Phillipson (quoted in Crookes:1997, 71) suggests that 'The professional training of ELT [English Language Teaching] people concentrates on linguistics, psychology and education in a restricted sense. It pays little attention to international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural contact, or the politics or sociology of language or education'.

Pennycook (quoted in Crookes:1997:74) refers to the 'trivialization of content' in foreign language instruction, which stems from 'the growth of communicative (ESL) language teaching, with its emphasis on interactive activities and games; thus, the content of an FL lesson or text (Kramsch:1988) rarely addresses social issues, but rather deals in stereotypical families, cultures that are apparently homogenous, and topics that are uniformly nonprovocative'.

Tedick and Tischer (1996:415) refer to the 'constant challenge that second language teachers face in developing and maintaining language proficiency and, at the same time, keeping abreast of current issues related to the individual target cultures taught'. In response to three perceived needs of foreign language teachers – 'to work on language proficiency, to learn about current topics in the target culture, and to enrich pedagogical knowledge' – a programme was developed in which preservice and inservice teachers of French, German and Spanish participated in a five-week language 'immersion' experience in content-based classes. The course was run at the University of Minnesota and ran parallel with one on language pedagogy, 'designed to allow teachers to explore ways of incorporating the content they were learning into their own classrooms and, at the same time, update their pedagogical skills'.

The evaluation of the course identified a number of significant points:

- While participants perceived gains in their language proficiency, this was not borne out by comparing pre- and post-course assessment, and was possibly related more to increased comfort level rather than improved proficiency. The authors concluded that this may have been due to the short length of the programme and the limited time the participants had in the immersion section (two hours per day) (p.418).
- Participants felt that the immersion experience ‘allowed them to experience first-hand the frustrations of having to try to make sense of complex concepts in a second language without the benefit of instructional techniques that aid comprehension’ (p421). Similar experiences have been reported by participants in another immersion programme at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Glisan and Phillips (quoted in Tedick and Tischer, 1996:421) found that experiencing language activities from the standpoint of the student led teachers to realise ‘...how factors such as anxiety level ... and teaching strategies affect language performance and improvement’.
- In the pedagogy course, participants found that the activities allowed them ‘to experience the methods being discussed and to feel more comfortable with them’ (p423).
- While Tedick and Tischer found that participants were favourably intrigued by the programme’s focus on culture, it was also evident ‘that the vast majority still see language per se as the goal and culture as the “fifth skill”, as opposed to seeing language as social practice and culture as the essence of language teaching’ (p.423). Significantly, the authors believe that, ‘In order for this mindset to change, a complete paradigm shift is necessary’.

While participants undoubtedly benefited from the programme, Tedick and Tischer (p423) do recognise the constraints of such short courses: ‘Perhaps the best one can hope for is to spark discontent with the traditional paradigm or to plant a few seeds that will encourage teachers to question the status quo of language education’. While it appears that the University of Minnesota programme was an innovative one, the constraint of professional development programmes is a matter of concern. The US *National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future* has said of teacher professional development, ‘traditionally organized, inservice education – usually conducted as mass-produced hit-and-run workshops – is not well-suited to helping teachers with the most pressing challenges they face in deepening their subject matter knowledge, responding to student diversity, or teaching more effectively’ (Quoted in Richardson, 1997:21).

In response to the increasing emphasis on the assessment of student language proficiency in the United States, the University of Oregon (1998:2) has introduced a professional development framework for teachers who are teaching in a standards-based education system. The purpose of the modules is expressed as being ‘to improve teacher performance, as measured by the ability to elicit higher levels of student performance’. The modules focus on teaching methodology, but specifically on assessing students’ second language proficiency and teaching towards that assessment. Such an approach provides a very one-dimensional view of both student and teacher education.

The issue of teacher development for foreign language teachers is also of concern to Ely (1994). He suggests that while in teacher training,

teachers learn clearly defined skills and behaviors appropriate to second language instruction ... teacher development is concerned with preparing teachers for the exigencies of unforeseen future teaching situations. It attempts to bring about pedagogical development through heightening teachers’ ability to observe, reflect upon, and modify their own instructional patterns. Teacher development seeks organic, attitudinal, holistic development along lines suited to the individuals themselves. It attempts not to mold teachers, but rather to empower them, to show them how to consider alternative approaches and choose among them. (p336)

Ely discusses the recent series of changes which have occurred in second language teaching methodology – audiolingualism, the cognitive code approach, the communicative teaching revolution and the innovative methods movement – and suggests that one major new trend, working with students’ language learning strategies, ‘is actually a fundamental shift in the language teaching/learning paradigm’ (p335). However, the process of empowering the student as ‘an autonomous, self-directed language acquirer’ creates a new instructional environment and makes entirely new demands on teachers.

Ely asks in relation to teacher development, how do we ‘inculcate in teachers new skills and knowledge while encouraging them to develop their own pedagogical belief systems’? (p336). Ely has found that some inservice teachers who undertake strategy training have admitted to recognising within themselves ‘a deep-seated disinclination to reconceptualise their own role in the learning process’ (p339). Those who have readily accepted the strategy approach have been ‘those who have become frustrated at their students’ rate and degree of progress and at their own apparent inability to promote more rapid student improvement’ (p340). Ely

comments that the incorporation of strategy instruction in teacher development ‘can help teachers provide their students with both the ability and the understanding required for intelligent control of their own learning’ (p340). Such a comment raises questions about the role of both teacher and student, and incorporates a much wider vision of the foreign language teacher than of an educator constrained by proficiency and competency tests.

It is ironic in light of the Australian emphasis on teacher language proficiency and competency that in a study of French students of EFL aged 12-17, Girard (1977:101) found that the qualities of the course which ranked highly with the students ‘referred not so much to the content of the course and the competence of the language teacher as to the special quality of the teacher-pupil relationship’. These qualities included showing interest in the students, showing patience and sympathy with them and making the course interesting. This relates to Webb and Blond’s (1995) theories about caring as part of teacher knowledge and the interrelationship between student and teacher.

A number of writers refer to the need for teacher self-inquiry or self-reflection as part of their professional growth, a process which includes problem-solving and refinement (eg Tedick and Walker:1995; Myers:1997; Shulman:1987; Burroughs-Lange et al:1994). Myers (1997:4) believes that if teaching is conceptualised as a life-long process encompassing self-inquiry, ‘it becomes a professional intellectual investigation that includes constant personal construction of new professional knowledge, constant personal development of refined professional skills, and constant sorting out of professional value perspectives’. Reflection is a process by which the teacher learns from experience as he or she reflects on the teaching and learning that has occurred, ‘and reconstructs, reenacts, and/or recaptures the events, the emotions, and the accomplishments’ (Shulman:1987, 19). These definitions contrast with Commins’ (1995:38) suggestion that one result of the testing and refinement of the *Minimum Competency Standards for LOTE Teaching* will be that the standards can ‘be used with confidence by members of the profession individually to critically reflect on their practice’. This appears to be a very narrow view of reflection, one which directs teacher thinking and development towards only those aspects of foreign language teaching which are to be found on a competency list.

3.4.5 Implications for Further Research

There are some aspects of foreign language teaching which do not appear to be widely discussed in the literature in terms of what knowledges teachers need in order to be able to teach a foreign language proficiently. Met (1989) appears to be one of the few writers to have addressed the issue of different knowledges according to programme type and level. For example, she lists areas of preparation which are unique to primary school foreign language instruction, compared with secondary school level. These include:

- The understanding of first language development and its relation to second language learning in childhood
- Skills in teaching, reading and writing as developmental skills to learners who are concurrently acquiring literacy skills in their first language
- The understanding of the process of first language development (p178).

Met also identifies additional skills needed by immersion teachers, which include:

- Sequencing objectives on the basis of students' linguistic proficiencies
- Planning for language growth
- Meeting content-obligatory and content-compatible language objectives
- Using an active repertoire of alternate teaching strategies to assist students who do not master concepts the first time around
- Evaluating, selecting and developing materials with the additional criterion of language development in mind
- A repertoire for assessing student growth in content and language (p.179-180).

In regard to linguistic proficiency, Met suggests that foreign language teachers involved in both conventional and immersion classes should have in-depth knowledge of the target culture. However, she also suggests that while the former should have functional levels of language proficiency, immersion teachers should have native or near-native levels in oral and written forms of the target language (p.177). This view is supported by the US National FLES Commission of AATF's list of competencies for elementary school foreign language teachers, which suggests that linguistic proficiency is the only competency which differs for immersion/conventional teachers (quoted in Met, 1989:182).

While the ALLC (1996:156) suggests the need to identify and specify the necessary competencies required by language teachers in different role categories, it does not refer to

programme types and levels (apart from immersion) and does not address the issue of broader teacher knowledge. This may be an area in which more research should be undertaken in Australia, as well as overseas.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The international and Australian conceptual approaches to foreign language teaching appear to be at opposite ends of a continuum. At the one end, a holistic approach incorporates broad concepts such as teacher knowledge, while at the other, a pragmatic approach to develop a language proficiency framework seeks to compartmentalise language teachers and language teaching. While there appears to be genuine concern within the Australian second/foreign language education community, there are very different views on how to ensure that second/foreign language teaching in Australia attains high standards.

While proficiency and competency are integral parts of language teaching, they do not make up the whole. The current debate indicates that there are many other aspects of teaching which must be considered if educational jurisdictions are to make truly informed decisions about the direction of foreign language teaching in Australia. Climbing aboard today's bandwagon is not the answer.

CHAPTER 4: SYSTEM PERSPECTIVES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of what Australian educational jurisdictions are currently doing to monitor language teacher proficiency both at a pre-service and an in-service level. Information for this chapter has been gathered from interviews with jurisdictional representatives and academics from around Australia and from documentation obtained as a result of the interviews. Respondents were asked about proficiency assessment systems in general, as well as information about specific initiatives in the field of Asian languages. Information received in relation to Asian languages was, however, limited.

4.2 ASSESSING LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFICIENCY

4.2.1 Pre-service Assessment

At present, only one of the Australian jurisdictions has a systematic mechanism for assessing the proficiency of potential language teachers prior to their entry into the system. This jurisdiction requires that all potential language teachers undertake a proficiency test based loosely on the ISLPR (International Second Language Proficiency Ratings) model. The test was originally designed to assess teachers' language knowledge in relation to four macro-skills. We were informed that the proficiency scales were introduced *as a response to complaints that language teachers couldn't speak the language they were meant to be teaching*. Since the inception of the tests, elements of cultural knowledge and knowledge of second/foreign language teaching methodology have also been incorporated into the assessment.

In one jurisdiction, although there was no monitoring system for general language teachers at primary or at secondary level, there was a mechanism for assessing the proficiency of teachers in Community Language Programmes. The Community Language Programmes were designed to enable primary students from non-English speaking backgrounds to have access to their first language. Teachers in these programmes have to be qualified primary teachers. In addition, they are required to undergo a language proficiency test designed by the Department in conjunction with one of the tertiary language institutes. The different procedure for Community Language Teachers is said to reflect the difference in their role from that of generalist language teachers. Community Language Teachers are expected to

have greater contact with the background community and so a higher level of linguistic knowledge is perceived to be necessary.

A third jurisdiction had tested the linguistic proficiency of new teachers of languages up until the late 1980s. This practice was regarded as *inequitable* and *time-consuming*, and has since been discontinued. The only remaining requirement is that teachers of languages who gained their qualifications through overseas studies and examinations in a second or foreign language show proof of their English proficiency. English language proficiency is rated according to the ASLPR (Australian Language Proficiency Rating) level 4 or the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) level 7. At the time of recruitment, *the Department...may also seek some clarification of English language proficiency if this appears to be an area of concern. It is not, however, a standard procedure.*

The other Australian jurisdictions rely on the Universities to assess the proficiency of language teachers prior to their entry into the system. This gives the impression that jurisdictions assume that if teachers have completed the requirements of their degree in relation to their language and their initial teacher education then they have adequate linguistic and educational knowledge to teach a second/foreign language. According to one respondent *this is a hell of an assumption.* The table below sets out the minimum requirements for becoming a language teacher in each of the Australian state educational jurisdictions.

TABLE 1

Jurisdictional Requirements for Becoming a Second/Foreign Language Teacher

Information in this table was obtained through interviews with jurisdictional representatives and, where supplied, from documentation received from jurisdictions as a result of these interviews.

Jurisdiction A	<p>The selection process for generalist teaching involves experience in a school, a profile from the University and an interview. Potential teachers are then ranked from S1 (<i>best thing since sliced bread</i>) to S7 (<i>mouldy</i>). The interview is focused on general teaching methodology and behaviour management.</p> <p>In addition, potential language teachers must undertake a proficiency test based loosely on the ISLPR. The test focuses on listening, reading, writing, speaking and cultural knowledge and</p>
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	<p>gives an indication of the person’s understanding of second/foreign language teaching methodology. The scale ranges from 1-5 (<i>Inadequate, Adequate, Good, and Very Good</i> (sic)). Judgements are based on detailed descriptors for each language. Interviewers are trained and assessment implements are updated annually and refined. <i>In 8 years we have assessed some 1200-1300 people.</i></p> <p>To be considered suitably competent, the person tested must achieve an adequate level in each language. In most languages this requires a score of 3 or more in each of the four macro-skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). For Japanese and Chinese, the level required is slightly lower (2.5 or more) in reading and writing.</p>
Jurisdiction B	<p>At the point of registration there is no screening done whatever. Registration is based purely on qualifications and experience.</p> <p><i>Things work by word of mouth. We find out that there is a new Japanese teacher and we send them to schools where they are desperately needed.</i></p>
Jurisdiction C	<p>The minimum requirement is three-year post-secondary major study in the target language (the equivalent of 120 hours per year over three years), or four-year beginners sequence at tertiary level, as well as the completion of a second/foreign language teaching methodology course and 22 hours of supervised experience in schools. Native speakers are required to get a statement of equivalence stating that their language ability is equivalent to third year major at tertiary level.</p> <p>Prior to 1997, secondary language teachers only required a two-year post-Year 12 minor sequence or a three-year beginners tertiary language sequence to enter the profession. Teachers who were deemed to be qualified under this arrangement retain that status.</p> <p>Expressions of interest are also called for from teachers who want to retrain as language teachers and upgrade their language skills. Universities are then invited to provide expressions of interest to undertake the training. There has been a steady increase in the number of people being trained this way.</p> <p>In the case of primary teachers only, a general primary teacher may be deemed eligible to hold a designated language teaching position if their ability to speak, read and write the target language is assessed as “suitable for teaching purposes”. This is done through an interview and competency test administered by an accreditation panel which involves writing 250 words.</p> <p>This jurisdiction recognises that it may at times be necessary to engage in limited contract-based recruitment from overseas, but notes:</p> <p><i>This can be difficult because effective teaching requires not</i></p>

	<p><i>only high-level proficiency in the language being taught, but also appropriate teaching methodology and a clear understanding of Australian culture, educational traditions and student attitudes.</i></p> <p>As such, overseas teachers are required to have a good command of English and appropriate teaching qualifications and are required to attend bridging courses on Australian educational culture and practices.</p>
Jurisdiction D	<p>The minimum requirement to teach second/foreign language at senior secondary level is a full programme major in the target language, or three years post secondary language study or equivalent and the completion of second/foreign language teaching methodology training. The minimum requirement to teach languages at primary and lower secondary level, is two years post-secondary language study or equivalent. Decisions on equivalence are made by the Universities in the case of pre-service training and by the jurisdiction for overseas-trained teacher professionals.</p> <p>Generalist primary teachers or secondary teachers who wish to retrain as language teachers have the option of rating themselves as to their language proficiency or taking part in a language proficiency test administered by language advisors who then rate them to see if their skills are sufficient to be proficient teachers. If they are considered not to be, they are then given the opportunity to complete a series of intensive language courses. They are also required to complete second/foreign language teaching methodology courses run through the Education Department.</p>
Jurisdiction E	<p>Teachers in Community Language Programs undertake a language proficiency test designed by a University Institute of Languages in conjunction with the Education Department. This test is not applied to primary or secondary teachers in generalist language programmes.</p> <p>There is no system of teacher registration in this state. The Department of Education conducts interviews of new graduates, but to our knowledge does not ask questions about either interviewees' language proficiency or their teaching proficiency in the interview.</p> <p>Language proficiency for secondary language teachers is guaranteed through academic qualifications. The minimum requirement is completion of 2/9ths of the degree in a language other than English. There is some confusion with respect to beginner languages, but most Universities require 3/9ths of the degree to be completed in the target language. There is also a methodological component. According to one respondent:</p> <p><i>Applicants have a degree including 2 years post [secondary] level study of a language at a tertiary institution and the other requirement is specialist</i></p>

	<p><i>methodology training. But it is basically determined by academic qualifications.</i></p> <p>The jurisdiction is currently investigating a system of language testing for primary language teachers based on the test used for Community Language Teachers.</p> <p><i>The jurisdiction has recently introduced a category of primary teachers with specialisation in a language. There are a number of pathways – tertiary qualifications, industry experience, overseas experience, experience as a teacher in a non-government sector...We have not yet sewn up how these pathways relate to language proficiency...We are looking at a test of language skills similar to the one used for teachers of community languages.</i></p> <p>According to one respondent:</p> <p><i>There is no money to employ new graduates, so the Department sends a circular around asking people to apply to be retrained as LOTE teachers. The Department then pays their University fees for one year of tertiary study in the target language.</i></p> <p>This indicates that one year's tertiary study of a second/foreign language is the basic language requirement for becoming a language teacher.</p>
Jurisdiction F	<p>Information indicates that for this jurisdiction, proficiency is guaranteed through completion of the first degree before becoming a teacher. Secondary teachers are required to complete methodology units as part of their degree. Primary teachers are not required to do so.</p>
Jurisdiction G	<p>Until the late 1980s potential teachers had to complete a language proficiency test. This system has been discontinued. Currently the system regards three years of tertiary study of the language, or equivalent to be an acceptable level of proficiency:</p> <p><i>Equivalence might be in terms of working or studying in the country of the target language, whether that is in the area of teaching the language or not. Where a teacher is a native speaker and has teaching qualifications in another area of study, the Department sometimes requires these teachers to provide verification of their proficiency. Staff at the language departments of the various universities has (sic) been requested to provide this verification upon administering informal language tests.</i></p> <p>Teachers who have gained their qualifications through overseas studies and examinations in a second or foreign language are required to show proof of their English language proficiency. The required standard is ASLPR level 4 or IELTS level 7.</p> <p>Any teacher who wishes to be employed on a non-permanent basis</p>

	<p>(including language teachers) can apply to a rating panel.</p> <p><i>The rating panel consists of 2 officers. As there is only one officer with language other than English experience currently with the Human Resources unit, it is not always possible for this officer to be on the panel. Not all teachers seeking ratings are interviewed by the panel. As a result of economic rationalism, ratings are made on the basis of qualifications presented to the Human Resources Unit. Where the Unit feels that further information is needed to give a rating, a panel interview is arranged. It is also usual that referees nominated by the applicant are contacted at this time.</i></p>
Jurisdiction H	<p>There is no system of teacher registration in this jurisdiction, nor is there any system of interviews for potential teachers. The teacher applies and is taken on the basis of qualifications. If there is some concern about their proficiency, they are referred to the Senior Curriculum Officer who makes a determination about their level of proficiency.</p>

In some jurisdictions, it appears that the pragmatics of staffing programmes take priority over any form of proficiency assessment.

...it is a very difficult job recruiting language teachers. If we lose two Japanese teachers, that's half our programme gone.

We have to staff programmes - difficult to guarantee. We can't monitor standards (eg: everyone at ASLPR level)...Primary is the tricky one – getting language teachers.

This is particularly so for priority languages. As one respondent succinctly put it,

If the language is mandated, we grab anyone who's warm and upright [to be retrained]. After the course has been completed, we consider them qualified.

4.2.2 Proficiency of Language Teachers Already Employed By State Jurisdictions

Data from the interviews indicates that at present none of the Australian jurisdictions have a formal mechanism in place for monitoring the proficiency of language teachers after they are already in the system. In the words of one respondent:

After registration precious little is done. We don't actually have the right to monitor after that. We can only offer professional development.

Two jurisdictions are currently investigating potential ways of tracking the proficiency of language teachers. One jurisdiction will be developing a database to monitor those language teachers who have taken part in their Graduate Certificate. It is intended that this will *expand to become part of a much bigger database to be able to track teachers' performance and proficiency*. The second has commissioned Ms Angela Scarino, Director of the Language Australia Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education in Schools, to describe standards in both linguistic proficiency and language teaching pedagogy as part of their *Languages other than English Plan 1998 – 2007*. The framework will develop standards in both language proficiency and pedagogy. At this stage it is believed that the framework will describe teacher proficiency in language at three levels: beginning teacher profile, middle teacher profile, advanced skill teacher/coordinator profile. The model is described as a developmental model, not a punitive one, and is designed to give teachers a framework for ongoing improvement. It is anticipated that these standards will be tools of self-identification for teachers of languages and will be available in schools early in 2000. While the standards will be generic it is assumed that they will reflect the particular requirements of individual languages. It is not proposed that this system will link to the registration of teachers.

Seven years ago, a third jurisdiction had instituted a committee to investigate the proficiency of language teachers:

But the meetings ceased abruptly with no further communication on the matter. We were approaching complex and challenging issues. Initially, the committee was set up to look at language proficiency, but that moved to the characteristics of good language teachers. It was OK when they were looking at generic stuff, but hard when they were looking at money and saying "No"... [the Department] was seen to be critical of tertiary institutions levels of achievement. They want ISLPR 3 and they are not getting it at the end of three years' study. It all becomes political.

4.2.2.1 Informal Monitoring Systems

While there are no formal monitoring systems in place, a number of respondents referred to informal means of monitoring the competency of language teachers within the system. According to one:

Informally there are extremely fluid and effective communication channels...Contracts are awarded by [the Department] to train teachers and provide language teaching methodology. Contracts by [the Department] are required to provide detailed commentary on particular performance on

assessment requirements, general pedagogical skills, language proficiency, ability to interact with peers/colleagues.

Comments indicate that in the smaller jurisdictions, informal channels of communication play an important role in monitoring the proficiency of language teachers.

I have a knowledge of the programmes and teachers personally because it is a small state.

Once in the system we monitor better. It is a small system with close contact.

Other informal means of assessing proficiency referred to were self-assessment and peer-assessment.

4.2.2.2 Professional Development

When asked to describe how their jurisdiction monitored language teacher proficiency, a number of respondents referred to the professional development opportunities available to support teachers. According to one respondent:

What we are doing is trying to nurture the teachers. There are lots of opportunities for people to upgrade their skills.

Professional development and in-service is available to language teachers in each of the state jurisdictions to help them to enhance their linguistic skills and to improve their language teaching methodology. The jurisdictions also offer scholarships for language teachers to undertake in-country experience. Based on information gathered from the interviews, the following table provides an indication of professional development opportunities available to teachers in each jurisdiction. It is not intended to be comprehensive.

TABLE 2

Professional Development Opportunities Available to Second/Foreign Language Teachers in Each Australian Jurisdiction

Information in this table was obtained through interviews with jurisdictional representatives and, where supplied, from documentation received from the jurisdictions as a result of these interviews.

Jurisdiction A	Teacher trainers operate through school and district visits. Teleconferences and mailouts are used to highlight new ideas.
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	<p><i>Language specific Advisory Teachers, who are native speakers, are employed by the Education Department or Foreign Embassies to keep teachers up to date in terms of cultural proficiency.</i></p> <p>A comprehensive language teaching library is also available. Teachers work on a voluntary basis to support the library.</p> <p>In addition, comments are made on teachers' employment profile regarding their proficiency (<i>However, generally only if the teacher is really bad</i>).</p>
Jurisdiction B	<p>Study awards are offered for teachers to upgrade their language proficiency. Those who receive awards report back to their peers.</p> <p>Voluntary workshops are offered to address curriculum change in each of the learning areas including languages. Though not compulsory, a high proportion of language teachers attend. There are three layers of workshops with the third layer being language specific and catering for seven languages.</p> <p>Most language teachers in this jurisdiction are in the process of upgrading their skills. Their ability to do this through tertiary study, however, is limited, as not all languages taught in the jurisdiction are available at tertiary level.</p>
Jurisdiction C	<p>This jurisdiction offers in-country experience for teachers wishing to upgrade their language skills. Teachers pay \$750 towards the training and the Education Department pays the rest. University accreditation is available for this training. Fifty per cent of in-country experience offered is in Indonesia.</p>
Jurisdiction D	<p>The Education Department provides opportunities for language upgrading and in-country experience for teachers of Asian and European languages. Professional Development Allowances are also available to teachers to upgrade their skills.</p> <p>The Universities and organisations like the Hyogo foundation offer additional in-country opportunities to teachers of Asian languages. These are available to non-background speakers only.</p>
Jurisdiction E	<p>The Department offers scholarships for in-country experience.</p> <p>In conjunction with the Departmental Advisors, the Goethe Institute and the Alliance Française are increasingly offering intensive language courses and weekend courses which are available to teachers free of charge.</p> <p><i>In French, for example, the Department has funded a week in New Caledonia for the last 15 years and a programme in the Christmas holidays for teachers to go to Paris, Avignon and</i></p>

	<p><i>Mont Pellier. These initiatives are cost-free to the Department.</i></p> <p>The Department runs programmes for Korean. Teachers wishing to teach Korean can apply to become a Korean teacher and receive in-country experience.</p>
Jurisdiction F	<p>This jurisdiction offers a Graduate Certificate to second/foreign language teachers.</p> <p><i>The Certificate is designed for primary LOTE teachers and has been in operation for three years. Prior to that, monitoring of languages was only ad hoc in secondary schools...Activities in the Certificate are skewed towards the classroom so that teachers can practice in the classroom and share what happened.</i></p> <p>The Certificate is offered via video-link to multiple sites in the jurisdiction. <i>There has been a big increase in enrolments, 39 in 1996, 69 in 1997 and 120 in 1998.</i></p> <p>The Certificate comprises three modules. The first two modules emphasise methodology and the application of language in the teaching situation.</p> <p><i>The third module, which doesn't have a methodological component, has been a concern. Teachers don't think the module is relevant.</i></p> <p>The jurisdiction also offers seminars for classroom teachers which focus on the link between languages and literacy. The aim is to enable classroom teachers to <i>support LOTE [in the classroom] in the same way they support literacy.</i></p>
Jurisdiction G	<p>As part of the implementation of the <i>Languages Other Than English Plan 1998 – 2007</i>, this jurisdiction is currently developing standards in both language proficiency and pedagogy for teachers of language.</p> <p>Information was not provided about professional development opportunities.</p>
Jurisdiction H	<p>This jurisdiction offers language up-grading seminars in all languages - <i>seven major and three singles (pilots)</i>. Teachers have input into professional development. Language networks have been established for each language.</p> <p>This jurisdiction identifies three levels of language proficiency:</p> <p><i>Beginner - mainstream teachers taking on language or LOTE teaching responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>Intermediate - 1 year test – doing a LOTE and then maintained skills</i></p> <p><i>Advanced – High order language skills, considerable in-country experience.</i></p>

	Scholarships are available for teachers considered to be at Beginner level.
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Professional development is not mandatory in any of the states. Opportunities are available for teachers to take up if they so desire.

There is no real monitoring. If anything we are relying on teachers to be self-monitoring. If they feel they have to privately pay for after-hours language classes, they may do that. We are asking them as professionals to do something about it. A lot do.

This has certain implications. Some language teachers may not see the need to refresh their language, or upgrade their methodological knowledge. According to one respondent, *possibly those who want us are the ones who least need us*. Another responded similarly: *there is no way of catching people who need a shot in the arm for language or pedagogical skills*. A third respondent noted that personal and family commitments often prevent teachers from taking advantage of these opportunities, particularly as most in-service courses and in-country programmes must be taken in the teachers' own time.

Some teachers take their language study very seriously and spend their holidays in the target country and, if they are gifted, do very well. But the system is not giving adequate time off for the amount of study you'd think would be needed. I have a lot of respect for language teachers who are trying to develop their skills while teaching full time.

4.2.2.3 The Role of Schools

The lack of systems level monitoring of language teacher proficiency raises questions about the role of individual schools in terms of the performance management and appraisal of second/foreign language teachers.

Two of the respondents interviewed referred to performance appraisal as the sole means of monitoring the competency of language teachers in their jurisdiction.

There is no real inspectorial system. Principals are really responsible and most would not know – performance appraisal is between the principal and the teacher.

We don't have a mechanism to monitor proficiency. We probably leave it up to the performance appraisal of principals as part of performance management.

Are they using language to maximum effect? Are they outcomes based? If not, or if the principal phones and says what do I look for, then we hope the teacher might take advantage of courses we have to offer or in country experience.

Three main issues emerge from this. The first relates to the potential lack of linguistic knowledge on the part of the principal and the impact that this may have on the principal's assessment of the teacher's language proficiency. According to one respondent:

We are objecting to school principals saying that the person has terrific language skills when the principal may have no language skills themselves.

The second issue concerns principals' lack of understanding of language pedagogy who provide negative reports because, for example, *the LOTE classroom is too noisy*. The third, addresses the reluctance of principals to use performance appraisal as a means of ensuring that teachers with low levels of proficiency are either required to improve their proficiency or 'phased out' of the system:

There is no mechanism for phasing people out - only through performance appraisal. Principals very rarely use it in anything, but especially for language. This is about the 'mystique' of languages. We say, 'Sit in the classroom and get a feeling for what's happening. Are the kids motivated?...Check the desks for graffiti' - it's almost never written in the LOTE. At least if it was I would think the students were learning something!

A Senior Curriculum Officer contended that the major barrier to the effectiveness of performance appraisal as a means of assessing language teacher competency was the 'mystique' associated with language teaching. Principals who have not had second/foreign language experience themselves may feel unqualified to assess their language teacher or they may be unaware of what to look for when conducting the appraisal. She noted that in her jurisdiction, Central Office did provide advice about performance appraisal of language teachers to principals who inquired, but pointed out that very few principals do ring for advice - *they are either unaware of, don't want to venture into or are not that bothered. They are only bothered if there is a behaviour problem.*

4.2.2.4 Industrial Issues

The fact that there is no formal method in place in any of the jurisdictions for assessing the proficiency of language teachers does not make languages unique among the learning areas. According to one respondent, *there is no formal assessment...but then again we don't do this*

in any subject. I could be the worst science teacher, but no one will test me and tell me. This raises the question of whether it is equitable to introduce a system for monitoring the proficiency of language teachers without having a similar system introduced for other learning areas:

If we are looking at language teacher proficiency why aren't we looking at the musical proficiency of music teachers or the artistic proficiency of art teachers. I can see reasons why, but there is justification in saying if you have an art teacher or music teacher, don't we want to see that they can produce something artistic, or play the violin.

One jurisdiction had previously had a system for testing the linguistic proficiency of language teachers. In the late 1980s, however, the decision was made to discontinue testing. As well as being perceived to be *time consuming*, the testing process was seen to have *created an inequitable situation for teachers of languages. Teachers in no other areas of study had their knowledge tested.*

A number of people interviewed identified potential industrial difficulties associated with the assessment of language teacher proficiency. As one respondent remarked:

They say that if we were to do this [monitor proficiency] for language teachers we would have to do it for all teachers and we would have an industrial issue.

Yet another stated:

Anything that would happen would probably happen in assessment of teachers' skills across the board, not just for language teachers. [Confining assessment to language teachers] is industrially problematic.

4.3 CONCLUSION

At present only one Australian educational jurisdictions has a system in place for assessing the proficiency of potential second/foreign language teachers prior to their employment in that capacity. The other jurisdictions make determinations about language teacher proficiency on the basis of University qualifications and experience. There is no consistency across jurisdictions regarding the number of years of post-secondary language study required of trainee language teachers. Moreover, there is some indication that one year's language study is considered an acceptable standard for teaching language in at least one jurisdiction. Only three jurisdictions require both primary and secondary language teachers to have completed a language teaching methodology component in their initial teacher education. In a fourth

jurisdiction only secondary language teachers are required to complete methodology units as part of their degree.

There are no systems in place in any of the state jurisdictions for monitoring the proficiency of second/foreign language teachers once they are teaching. Two jurisdictions are currently investigating potential mechanisms for tracking the proficiency of their language teachers. There are, however, industrial issues that may make the introduction of such systems problematic. At present, each of the jurisdictions offers voluntary professional development opportunities, both in language and methodology, for language teachers to take advantage of. Scholarships for in-country experience are also offered in some states. It appears that jurisdictions rely predominantly on informal channels of communication to monitor the proficiency of teachers in conjunction with school level performance management systems. There is a sense that for performance appraisal to be utilised more effectively as a means of monitoring language teacher proficiency, principals require more information about what is expected of them in this regard. The noted reluctance of principals to seek information regarding the performance appraisal of language teachers suggests that a more proactive approach may be required on the part of each of the state jurisdictions.

CHAPTER 5: PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter draws together the information gathered from interviews with Senior Curriculum Officers from each of the Australian state educational jurisdictions and academics from around Australia. It explores the different understandings of language teacher proficiency expressed by respondents and the impact of programme type on these understandings.

5.2 LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFICIENCY IN GENERAL

Three broad components of language teacher proficiency were identified in the interviews. These are what we have chosen to call ‘linguistic knowledge’, ‘cultural knowledge’ and ‘pedagogical knowledge’. The emphasis respondents placed on these elements varied greatly, reflecting a continuum from those who placed heavy emphasis on either pedagogical knowledge or linguistic knowledge. For example, several of the respondents argued that a good teacher can be very successful in the classroom and help learners achieve learning outcomes with good pedagogy and lesser language ability. According to one:

[Linguistic proficiency] is only one component. Teachers need to know what to do with those language skills...Almost invariably those who use the target language least effectively in the LOTE classroom are native speakers. Fluency is a skill. You have to know how to use the skill.

And similarly,

There are a number of elements [of language teacher proficiency]. Some factors may negate the strengths of another aspect. For example, if a teacher is very fluent but has no pedagogical skills, the lack of methodology will negate their fluency.

By contrast, another respondent saw language teacher proficiency as primarily linguistic proficiency. They did, however, acknowledge that *the ability to impart knowledge to others was starting to creep into the definition of proficiency*. It is interesting to note that less than half the respondents referred to cultural knowledge as an element of proficiency.

5.2.1 Linguistic Knowledge

Respondents talked about linguistic knowledge in three different ways. One approach defined linguistic knowledge in terms of the teachers’ competency in the four macro-skills, reading, writing, speaking and listening. Implicit in this approach is the ability to test language proficiency against a standardised rating system. For example,

I agree with Elaine Wiley and David Ingram's professional statements in English as a Second Language (sic. Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings - ASLPR)...They talk about the four macro-skills – reading, writing, speaking, listening – and the ability to go through certain standards or teacher certificate levels equivalent to the purpose that you want to use it for.

The second approach, expressed by one respondent, evinced a much more complex understanding of the interrelated aspects of language proficiency:

[Proficiency incorporates] capability for use which includes the socio-linguistic element, the strategic element as described by Bachman, the context, role, relationship, purpose, pragmatics and how the language is used - strong linguistic awareness in the technical sense.

The third, and most common, approach to linguistic proficiency emphasised the need for teachers to be able to communicate successfully in the classroom environment.

Proficiency is about performance – It is about being able to perform in the language as the situation demands in the classroom - to conduct lessons in the target language, especially as we move to a more embedded approach...So instead of talking about bus tickets, we are asking teachers to explain the life cycle of guinea pigs.

Their ability to conduct a lesson in the target language. Their ability to communicate with colleagues in the target language, their ability to access the internet in the target language.

Communicating effectively in the classroom requires that the teacher use appropriate language for the age group and skill level of the students they are teaching, and that they are able to apply the language to the practical situation of being in a classroom. As one respondent commented: *when I first started teaching I could hold an in-depth discussion on Indonesian politics, but I couldn't say, 'Don't throw the duster at me!'*. Another respondent indicated that the ability to communicate effectively with parents who are background speakers should be included in the definition of proficiency.

In this regard, a number of respondents indicated that the ability to *conduct a class in that language from beginning to end using [the target language] for all commands* was an essential element of language teacher proficiency - *if they are not able to, then it is not adequate knowledge to teach LOTE*. One respondent contended that a vital aspect of this was the ability to manipulate language to deal with *whatever*:

A measure of proficiency is to be able to use the language confidently and competently in unpredictable situations. Having the skill and language to get through. For example, 'I understand what you're saying, but I can't explain myself any better'.

This is not to suggest that native speaker proficiency is necessary to conduct a class well.

What was seen to be necessary was the teacher's confidence in using the language:

Teachers need to be comfortable and confident with language speaking at the particular level that they are teaching it.

And further:

By adequate I mean a level that they feel confident and competent to teach the language in. People don't necessarily need native speaker proficiency to ...operate well in a classroom. But it would be a great help!

From this perspective, proficiency is not seen as something that can be measured in a test format, rather it is about seeing *the competence in use in the classroom*.

Linguistic proficiency was also seen to relate the English language proficiency of teachers of languages other than English as well as their proficiency in the target language. In one jurisdiction this was seen to be particularly pertinent in relation to teachers of Asian languages, a large proportion of whom had overseas qualifications.

5.2.2 Cultural Knowledge

The elements of cultural knowledge to emerge from the interviews were socio-linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge. Socio-linguistic knowledge was seen as the appropriate use of language which included, for example, gesture, body language, register and text type.

Simplistic examples: when they introduce in Japanese they bow; when they point in Indonesian they use their thumb, not their forefinger. This knowledge is under-valued, underestimated, under-looked at. If language use is not appropriate it will offend people.

One respondent identified knowledge of register as a necessary component of teaching students communicative language. One aspect of this involves teaching students colloquial language. It was her contention that students did not want to learn *High German, High Bahasa*. Rather they wanted to *speak the way kids in the target languages speak*. Register was also considered important for *teaching people the authentic LOTE...how genuine*

communication takes place within the value systems of different societies. For example, one respondent described a professional development course in which they had organised peer assessment as part of the course:

The non-background Spanish teachers came to me in confidence to say that they couldn't give the background speakers any negative feedback about their work because it wasn't done. The non-background German speakers were having the opposite problem. The background speakers were only giving them negative feedback about their work. If this wasn't happening in my LOTE I would be worried.

In a second example, Japanese and Italian guest presenters had been asked to talk to Japanese and Italian teachers at a professional development course:

The Japanese teachers sat in one corner nodding deferentially to the expert, while the Italian teachers sat in another talking volubly and waving their arms around.

The same respondent also regarded awareness of genre theory/text type as an essential element in conveying to students an understanding of how language operates in different cultures.

Teachers of LOTE don't understand genre theory. They need to. There is a situation now where English/Australian genre or text type is being taught, not the text types of different nations. For example, you can tell who the Italians are that died because their death notices are very different. Not sufficient attention is paid to this. Different types of text are constructed differently in different languages – [teachers] need sufficient language knowledge to understand this - but [it is] being taught for first language acquisition. Teachers need to understand and teach the construction of text types that they want learners to use and to recognise genre and text types and teach genre text type so that it is authentic.

The use of viewing text was seen to be a particularly important tool for teaching about culture because of its capacity to *present culture in a non-stereotypical and natural way*. Viewing text was also seen as a way of *hooking into the needs and wants of kids* and engaging them in the learning of the language.

Socio-cultural knowledge was regarded as important in terms of conveying to students the context in which language is used.

You have got to understand the philosophical principles on which societies are built, worldviews are constructed and values develop. This is absolutely crucial.

One respondent argued that in order to elicit understandings about culture from students there was a need to embed such understandings into the fabric of the programme - *don't just have them as an add-on*. Another respondent saw the value of incorporating culture into second/foreign language classes as a means of engaging students and maintaining their interest in the language:

Kids get off on society and culture. They want to understand why societies operate, why people think the way they do.

According to one respondent, *in terms of teacher proficiency...cultural proficiency has been dramatically underplayed in the past*. This view was reflected in the interviews as only a handful of respondents referred to cultural knowledge as an area of competency for language teachers and only three dealt with the issue in any depth. Those who did, tended to emphasise its relative neglect in the past. One respondent voiced concern about the lack of cultural knowledge among Australian language teachers:

It worries me what is happening in Australia. People are crammed with language and then go off to teach, but have no understanding of the culture.

5.2.3 Pedagogical Knowledge

Proficient language teachers need more than just linguistic knowledge to help students to achieve language outcomes. They also need the pedagogical knowledge to deploy that language to best effect in the classroom. This relates to their skills as a teacher, rather than their language skills.

Firstly, there is a need for teachers to have a good understanding of the general processes of teaching and learning, and knowledge of how to go about providing programmes for students. As one respondent put it, *what we understand about good teaching, processes of learning in general, as opposed to LOTE stuff*. This encompassed the planning of programmes, knowledge of how to go about implementing programmes and reporting on student outcomes. Another respondent noted, that when planning language programmes,

there is a broader range of things to consider than there are in other subjects. For example, background speakers in the classroom and a whole range of student variables. You need to be able to plan for multi-age and multi-level classrooms.

Respondents also identified the teacher's ability to work with students as a strategic competence.

Teachers really need to be competent in working with students. They need people skills generally, working with teams and with individuals.

In the Australian context this entailed *cross-cultural sensitivities* as well as the ability to work with students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. A proficient language teacher was described as one who could *work with students in a way to achieve outcomes where students are engaged and motivated*. In the words of one respondent:

The most important thing is motivation, commitment, make kids enthusiastic, make kids feel as though they are achieving something.

Proficiency, in this regard, involved the capacity to create student centred learning contexts in the classroom as opposed to traditional teacher centred context. This was seen to be important in being able to engage students in the language learning process. An understanding of collaborative learning techniques was regarded as important in this regard:

Acquisition of a language in a classroom context needs opportunities for students to use language in different contexts. [With general teacher-centred approaches] students can't engage in the learning acquisition process.

As was the capacity to cater to the needs of individual students,

If the language teacher is to be viable, teachers must be able to deal with the needs of individual students. eg: let's work it out together in the target language.

Three respondents also referred to the importance of second language acquisition theory.

Teachers also need second language acquisition theory. Few have this. [It is] crucial – how do kids acquire a language? what mental processes do they use? If the teacher has no knowledge of second language acquisition theory, they can't understand the processes. This is an area which is sadly unaddressed. It is particularly important for background speakers of LOTE because they can't remember the practical experience of the acquisition process.

Integral to this was an understanding of metacognition (*teaching kids how to learn*) and metalinguistic awareness (*teaching kids how to learn about a language through reflecting on their own language use*). In other words, being able to talk to students about the language and the learning process. One respondent described this as giving teachers *a language for how they teach language*.

The capacity for teachers to be reflective about their classroom practice was also considered to be an essential part of language teacher proficiency:

Part of this is teacher's need to be reflective; monitor their own performance, monitor what happens in the classroom context and monitor the language acquisition of learners, then implement curriculum changes as a response to reflection. Many teachers don't do this. They teach the syllabus and test the kids.

Given that reflective/reflexive practice is a basic principle of general pre- and in-service teacher education, it is surprising that only two respondents highlighted this as an element of language teacher proficiency.

5.2.4 Multiple Knowledges

A small number of respondents described language teacher proficiency not just as linguistic or pedagogical knowledge, but rather, as the interrelation of multiple knowledges. According to one respondent:

People confuse proficiency of language teachers with the language ability of teachers. This is why I don't like the term. 'Language teacher proficiency' has allowed a hijacking of debate – people focus on language proficiency as opposed to the ability of teachers to facilitate learning. It is not the same thing. I prefer the term 'teacher knowledge for teachers of LOTE'.

For her, teacher knowledge for teachers of languages encompassed:

Language ability...second language acquisition theory...a good understanding of the generalist processes of teaching and learning...understanding of collaborative learning...Beyond this there is the socio-cultural, socio-linguistic knowledge...genre theory.

Two other respondents took a similar view:

There are a number of factors...Teachers need to be comfortable and confident with language...Methodology...The cross-cultural element...Professional knowledge. Ethical issues...Then there is the nitty gritty of implementing programmes. Knowledge of second language acquisition, learning, planning.

[Proficiency is the] ability to demonstrate not only skills, but macro-skills, socio-cultural knowledge. Demonstrable competency in the methodology...Communicating with students in macro-skills, talk about language, syntactical etc (meta-linguistic awareness), socio-cultural knowledge...These are indicators they are thinking about how they are teaching. Constantly evaluating and re-evaluating to get them as good as they can offer.

The ‘multiple knowledges’ approach offers a rich and complex understanding of language teacher proficiency. It does, however, make the task of assessing language teacher proficiency more difficult as it implies that proficiency is both person-specific and context-specific, not something that can be determined in a standardised test format.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF PROGRAMME TYPE FOR LANGUAGE TEACHER PROFICIENCY

The question of whether proficiency varied between different programme types elicited some considerable debate. At a theoretical level, interviewees considered that the principles underlying proficiency stayed the same irrespective of programme type:

Each level should have strategic competencies and an underlying awareness of how the primary language is learned and an understanding of what it means to be learning a second language.

In practice, however, most agreed that there is a difference in teacher proficiency levels in different learning environments, particularly in relation to teachers’ language knowledge. Teachers of immersion programmes were generally seen to have higher levels of language knowledge than teachers of secondary language programmes, who in turn, were perceived as having better language skills than primary teachers. Comments from respondents reflect the fact that this probably is not the ideal situation:

Yes, there is a difference, but it would be nice if there wasn't.

There is a difference realistically – but there shouldn't be.

Responses also indicate that the present variation in the proficiency of language teachers may be due to the relative newness of second/foreign languages as a key learning area. The implication is that languages need to be made accessible to students by placing language teachers in schools first, and only then can issues of teacher proficiency be addressed.

As more people become multilingual this will change. At certain stages however, we must be pragmatic and help people to improve their language level. I hope to get to the ideal of top qualifications for all teachers.

It will happen, but we have to get through the plan first. Don't change the goal posts.

This has led to a very pragmatic response on the part of jurisdictions.

You can have a crash hot early childhood teacher who is just learning the language and is very committed to the language. We would not dissuade her from teaching the language if the quality of the programme and the language skills are suitable for early childhood level. We need to look at the outcomes for that level and see whether the skills are appropriate.

5.3.1 Primary and Secondary Programmes

Two opposing views emerged about the level of language proficiency required for teachers of primary language programmes and teachers of secondary programmes. Some respondents argued that primary teachers required slightly lower levels of linguistic proficiency:

Proficiency does vary at these levels. Battle at implementation level. When LOTE was first brought into primary schools, teachers were being told they needed a degree in languages to teach LOTE. Need to change the view that you don't need to be native teacher to teach at primary school. You don't need a degree in maths to teach primary maths, so why do you for LOTE?

The majority disagreed. There was a strong sense that for primary languages to be taught effectively, teachers required a strong linguistic background.

The greatest fallacy is that you can teach primary languages as long as you've got a bit of the language. If children are not exposed to excellent language teaching at primary level the chance of them electing a language at secondary level is minimal... If they haven't been inspired, we've lost.

I believe teachers at a primary level should be at least as fluent as their secondary counterparts. You can explain to secondary students why your proficiency level is as it is and all work together to improve fluency, but when a primary child wants a word for shoelace, it is difficult for them to understand why the teacher doesn't know.

Reasons given for this view relate to the demands of primary programmes which require primary teachers to be able to change activities readily in order to retain students' attention and motivation. It was also perceived that the current trend for primary teachers to teach in a cross-curricular way implied a higher level of language knowledge than their secondary counterparts who were teaching language-object programmes.

Nonetheless, there was a general perception that at this stage, the language ability of primary teachers was of a slightly lesser standard overall than that of secondary teachers. One respondent argued that while, theoretically, there should be no difference in the competency of primary and secondary teachers, in practice it may be that the linguistic ability of primary language teachers is of a slightly lesser standard than their secondary counterparts. In her

view, however, this was often counterbalanced by better pedagogy (*student-centred, cater to the individual*) at the primary level.

At the upper secondary level, it was seen to be *unfair to the students* if teachers did not have adequate language knowledge. It was generally felt that teachers at this level should be experienced in teaching at the Year 12 examination level. One respondent felt that teaching to exams required *different strategic competencies* on the part of the teacher than other forms of language teaching, but did not elaborate on what these competencies might be.

5.3.2 Immersion Programmes

All respondents argued that a high level of linguistic proficiency was necessary to teach language immersion programmes. This entailed an up-to-date knowledge of specialist vocabulary and jargon specific to the content area, as well as an in-depth knowledge of the structure of the language. As well as an academic knowledge of the language, a high level of social language proficiency was also seen to be necessary, to ensure that students are exposed to natural language usage. Teachers also had to be able to source appropriate resources for the programme and be capable of translating and developing resources.

However, linguistic knowledge alone was not seen to be sufficient. There was also an expectation that immersion teachers should have a thorough knowledge of the content area they are teaching, *unless they are team teaching and you can have two teachers who are fluent in the language and one who has knowledge of the discipline*. The issue of appropriate pedagogy was also raised:

Immersion needs teachers with high levels of language proficiency, but they need two other things as well. They need proficiency in the genre/text types of the target culture and...a very very good understanding of the principles associated with collaborative learning, metacognition (teaching kids how to learn) and metalanguage (teaching kids how to learn about a language through reflecting on their own language use). There are classic examples in Australia of immersion programmes using background speakers of LOTE with no question of language proficiency, but there is a question of how they can facilitate learning.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The term ‘language teacher proficiency’ of itself suggests an emphasis on linguistic knowledge as opposed to pedagogical or cultural knowledge. It is clear, however, that

effective language teaching involves more than linguistic competence. The ‘multiple knowledges’ approach provides a more complete picture of the interrelated components of language teacher proficiency. Adopting such an approach has certain implications for monitoring language teacher proficiency, for while it may be possible to test linguistic knowledge through a standardised rating system, it is more difficult to assess other forms of knowledge in this way. It is arguable that a more holistic approach to the assessment of language teacher proficiency needs to be adopted.

When asked about the relationship between programme type and language teacher proficiency, most respondents focused on what the base level linguistic requirements might be for teachers in different programmes. In assessing proficiency, it may be more useful to look at the demands of the specific programmes and the teaching strategies that will be most effective with that particular age group and skill level. As one respondent stated: *We need to look at the outcomes for that level and see whether the skills are appropriate.* There is clearly a lot of debate about the proficiency levels required for second/foreign language teachers teaching in specific programme types and at different phases of schooling. This is an area that needs further investigation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As the Australian Language and Literacy Council stated in their 1996 report *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy. The Supply and Quality of Teachers of Languages Other Than English*:

The Council considers that it is foolish and futile to adopt policies that require large numbers of students to sit in school language classes unless they are engaged in meaningful learning of the language. The quality of learning depends largely on the quality of the teacher who is the principal (often the only) source of language experience available to the students in the school. (p 147)

While recognising that the quality and supply of proficient language teachers is vital to the success of second/foreign language as a learning area, there does, however, remain some considerable ambiguity about how to define proficiency, let alone how to monitor it.

This scan has identified a number of different approaches to the understanding of language teacher proficiency. Much of the debate in Australia has focused on the development of a pragmatic framework for monitoring language teacher proficiency. Focusing on linguistic knowledge appears to neglect the need for teachers to be able to impart that knowledge to students and trivialises the teaching knowledge needed to do so. A more holistic understanding conceptualises language teacher proficiency in terms of multiple knowledges, in other words, the qualities, skills and knowledges needed for teachers to teach languages effectively. These knowledges include not only linguistic knowledge, but also a sound understanding of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic knowledge and understanding of appropriate pedagogy including the ability to represent complex linguistic concepts, the flexibility to meet the needs of individual students and the contingencies of the second/foreign language classroom and the capacity for reflection and self-evaluation. Moreover, it appears that the competencies and knowledges required of language teachers may vary according to the role they are in, the stage of their career, and the particular programme type that they are teaching.

In Australia, much of the thinking surrounding the monitoring of language teacher proficiency is limited to the assessment of teacher's linguistic capability. At present, however, there is only one educational jurisdiction that has a system for measuring the language proficiency of prospective language teachers, although another jurisdiction is contemplating the introduction

of a similar system. Once language teachers have been employed, there are no formal mechanisms for monitoring their proficiency in any of the states. Two jurisdictions, however, are researching potential monitoring frameworks. There are informal mechanisms that the various jurisdictions use to track teacher proficiency. These include informal channels of communication, peer-assessment, self-assessment, professional development and school level performance management.

Standardised testing systems may be useful for the testing of teachers' linguistic proficiency. Although this form of testing has been extended to incorporate elements of cultural knowledge and second/foreign language teaching methodology, it is difficult to see how such a system could fully incorporate a concept as broad and dynamic as teacher knowledge. The other difficulty that arises from the use of standardised tests that they can only give an indication of theoretical knowledge. It can not provide an indication of the practical application of knowledges in the classroom. As one respondent warned:

There are some excellent teachers producing excellent outcomes. We must retain these, even if they don't meet the canons of proficiency.

There are also industrial difficulties associated with the implementation of systems for monitoring language teacher proficiency. While the offering of professional development opportunities provides some way around this, such a system is reliant on teachers assuming responsibility for their professional growth. The use of performance management systems to monitor the proficiency of language teachers also holds promise. However, it would appear that there is a need for principals to receive greater information and assistance in using the process effectively.

In trying to develop a framework for monitoring language teacher proficiency, the researchers believe that there is a need to take a more holistic view than has been taken in the past. By conceptualising language teacher proficiency as the intersection of multiple knowledges, the next stage is to investigate further ways for documenting and describing language teacher competencies. This may involve identifying 'good' second/foreign language teachers and shadowing them in the classroom environment in order to explain what they do. The use of teacher narrative may also be useful in terms of engaging teachers in the process of trying to describe what they do and the processes they use to elicit appropriate outcomes from students.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK FOR SENIOR CURRICULUM OFFICERS

We are conducting research on language teacher proficiency for NALSAS, with a focus on Asian languages. As part of the process we are interviewing “experts” in the area. We are undertaking a literature review and a netsearch and interviewing strategic people in each state jurisdiction and in Universities across Australia. We want to ask you several questions. We guarantee confidentiality of all responses

1. What do you understand by the term “language teacher proficiency”. As a guideline, what do you think the elements of language teacher proficiency might be?
2. How does your system monitor language teacher proficiency?
At the point of registration?
After registration?
3. Is there a difference between what constitutes language teacher proficiency for teachers at primary schools, secondary schools, TEE level and teachers of immersion courses?
4. To the best of your knowledge, does the monitoring system in your state reflect this?
5. Do you have any documentation relating to the monitoring of language teacher proficiency in your state?
6. Is your jurisdiction currently looking at any changes to the monitoring system?
7. Are you aware of any other initiatives in Asian languages in terms of assessing language teacher proficiency?
8. Are you aware of any other models, programmes, research or websites in Australia or overseas that might be useful to our research?

INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK FOR PEOPLE INVOLVED WITH TEACHER EDUCATION

We are conducting research on language teacher proficiency for NALSAS, with a focus on Asian languages. As part of the process we are interviewing “experts” in the area. We are undertaking a literature review and a netsearch and interviewing strategic people in each state jurisdiction and in Universities across Australia. We want to ask you several questions. We guarantee confidentiality of all responses

1. What do you understand by the term “language teacher proficiency”. As a guideline, what do you think the elements of language teacher proficiency might be?
2. Are you aware of how your system monitors language teacher proficiency?
At the point of registration?
After registration?
3. Is there a difference between what constitutes language teacher proficiency for teachers at primary schools, secondary schools, TEE level and teachers of immersion courses?
4. To the best of your knowledge, does the monitoring system in your state reflect this?
5. Do you have any documentation relating to the monitoring of language teacher proficiency in your state?
6. Do you know if your jurisdiction currently looking at any changes to the monitoring system?
7. Are you aware of any other initiatives in Asian languages in terms of assessing language teacher proficiency?
8. Are you aware of any other models, programmes, research or websites in Australia or overseas that might be useful to our research?

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