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Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education – Yearbook

2020–2021



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About SICLE

Message from the Director

This is the fourth year that Sydney Institute for Community Languages Education (SICLE) has been operating. We began in 2017 with a \$7.6 million grant from the New South Wales government with the aim of supporting the teaching and learning of community languages by working with teachers to benefit students and building capacity in schools. Our work has three components:

1. Conducting research to inform policy and enable evidence-based approaches to teaching languages
2. Establishing professional learning pathways for teachers in NSW Community Languages schools
3. Developing curriculum materials, resources and assessment to support student learning and to build school capacity in community languages.

Community Languages schools are not-for-profit schools run on weekends and weekdays outside school hours. They began in Australia in the 1850s with immigrants teaching German to their children. There are now over 150,000 learners studying one of 64 languages across Australia. The 7,000 plus teachers are community members and parents who give their time freely. In the Australian context, community languages are defined as immigrant languages spoken in the local community. The main community languages in NSW are Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Korean and Vietnamese, but there are emerging communities of Dinka, Samoan, Tibetan and Tongan and Uyghur speakers.

Community language systems of schooling now exist in most countries around the world and are key providers of languages education. They are called 'complementary schools' in the United Kingdom and Europe, and 'heritage language' schools in North America where they have been running for over 400 years. There is limited research into the schools and their work goes largely unrecognised. Australia is one of the few countries that provides government support and funding for the schools.

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sydney has a long history in languages education, while its School of Education and Social Work was the first university school in Australia to provide pre-service teacher education for years K-6 Community Languages teachers. Through the Language Centre at the university, SICLE was also one



of the first organisations to provide professional learning for the volunteer teachers in Community Languages schools, and we hope to continue this tradition.

SICLE aims to continue and extend the work we do. We have a small full-time staff of Director, Project Manager and two administration officers, but our team comprises over 50 part-time lecturers, researchers, project managers, project officers, careers advisors and others. We have already delivered on 63 of the 67 required outcomes in our agreement with the NSW government. This report gives a brief overview of our work in languages and some of the Institute's key achievements.

In 2020 all 510 schools, covering some 62 languages, were closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SICLE provided training in online teaching for 859 teachers through 120 workshops. These workshops were delivered in 13 different languages (as well as English) and were key to the successful shift to online teaching during the lockdown. Many schools have since adopted blended learning strategies. The success of this program is described in detail in the yearbook.

Another key achievement has been our research projects. Building on the comprehensive study of teachers in NSW Community Languages schools (*The Skills in Question*, 2018) we completed a study of the teaching in, organisation of and role of the schools. This study, *Parallel Lines: Growing Languages and Building Communities*, is the first comprehensive study of Community Languages schools since 1982.



The third key outcome was the establishment of education pathways for the volunteer teachers in the Community Languages schools to gain accreditation as teachers in Australia. Our first group of 58 teachers upgrading their qualifications will graduate as accredited teachers in NSW in 2021/2022.

The final achievement I want to highlight is our online resource, portal <http://openlanguage.org.au/>. This site now has over 1,300 teaching materials, and units of work in over 31 languages have been accessed by teachers across Australia. A substantial number of downloads have also been from North American, European and Asian countries.

We were honoured this year when SICLE was selected for inclusion in the 2021 NSW Waratah Research Impact Showcase, representing the University of Sydney.



It has been a privilege for us to work with colleagues in the NSW Department of Education, languages professionals across all systems and with researchers in tertiary institutions. I am in constant awe of the volunteer teachers and school leaders in the Community Languages schools who have given their time over the past three years. It is because of their efforts that language and cultural knowledge are being developed and passed on to new generations.

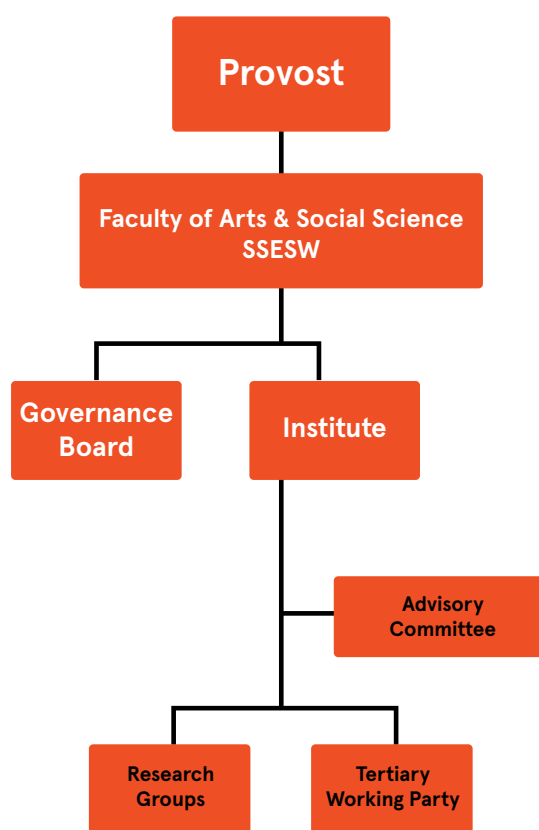
SICLE structure

SICLE is a Level 2 Research Centre hosted by the School of Education and Social Work for the University of Sydney's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. We operate with a full-time staff of four, The Director*, Professor Ken Cruickshank is supported by Merryl Wahlin, Project Manager, Progressions, Passport and Conference, and Dr Emily Bai, Administration Manager, Resources and Research. Dr Karen Garlan is part-time Administration Manager, Professional Learning. The team is assisted by a Governance Board, an Advisory Committee and a Tertiary Working Party. In addition, there are 24 part-time project officers, 18 lecturers, three careers advisors and four research assistants. See page 39 for a full list.

The Director's position was granted a chair named in honour of Professor Eben Gowrie Waterhouse OBE CMG (1881–1977) who was the key languages educator and researcher in Australia during his career. Starting out as an innovative teacher of languages, and then a lecturer at Sydney Teachers College (1912), he was Head of Department and Professor of German until his retirement in 1945.

Advisory Committee

An Advisory committee of key stakeholders has played a key role in the development of SICLE initiatives and research. Under the guidance of Professor Joseph Lo Bianco the committee members identified key issues in languages provision and uptake in NSW and discussed and developed a working policy. The participation of stakeholders from across education jurisdictions, from those involved in teaching, research and administration and those working in early childhood, primary and tertiary education all led to a comprehensive and consensual approach to educational issues. The committee has met on ten occasions. Its final meeting for 2021 will link to the International Community / Heritage Language Education Conference.



SICLE achievements 2020/2021

- 1,200 Community Languages teachers successfully completed 60-hour professional learning programs
- Open access portal launched with over 1,500 resources in 13 languages
- Two major research reports completed, forming the basis for SICLE initiatives
- Support of shift to online teaching during COVID-19; 120 language workshops attended by 859 teachers
- Production of 48 units of work and resources to support new and revised NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) K-10 language syllabuses
- English prototype of milestones completed for languages progressions and passport
- Successful trial of Gen. 2 School Language Support Officers – 87 SLSOs placed in schools
- Accreditation pathways developed for Community Languages schools teachers; agreements signed with Western Sydney University (WSU) and the Australian Catholic University (ACU), Strathfield
- Careers Advisors program provided assistance for over 170 teachers
- 75 Community Languages teachers provided with scholarships for NESA English language tests
- Fifty-one teachers accredited through Community Language Teacher Test (CLTT) developed by SICLE in one of 13 languages; now eligible for permanent positions in NSW government schools.
- Forty pre-service teachers and existing teachers accredited through Verification of Language Proficiency Test (VLPT) gain equivalence of undergraduate languages study
- 180 Community Languages teachers provided with classes in advanced writing, speaking and tertiary preparation
- SICLE selected as the University of Sydney representative for the NSW Waratah Research Impact Showcase



Meet some of our people



Maya Cranitch

Maya Cranitch (AM) is a fluent Hungarian speaker with many years of teaching experience at the ACU and the University of Sydney, lecturing in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), literacy and Community Languages education. Together with Dr Tina Sharpe, Maya has written the Foundation and Leadership and Management courses for SICLE and participated in SICLE's Quality Teaching project. She is also involved in the Master of Teaching Pathways program as academic advisor and is a lecturer in the Preparation program.

Together with Dr Jennifer Hammond from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), she has collaborated with the NSW Department of Education on research projects aimed at producing professional development resources for refugee education. The latest, the *Classrooms of Possibilities* research, has resulted in eight videos of classroom best practice with accompanying notes.

Maya also has significant international experience. She has been involved with the ACU refugee program on the Thai/Burma Border as a lecturer and Program Coordinator, and from 2009 to 2016 was on the academic staff in the University of Geneva Summer School in Higher Education in Emergencies 2015–17. She is currently an advisor to the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Global Education team, has produced English language teaching materials for refugee camp schools and conducted teacher training for JRS in Indonesia and Malawi. She is a Board Member of the Refugee Council of Australia and in 2018 was made a Member in the Order of Australia for services to refugee education and social justice.



Sabine Hauth

Sabine Hauth joined the pre-service teacher education for Community Languages teachers in 2011, lecturing the Community Languages teaching programs Foundation and Leadership and Management via face-to-face teaching, distance learning and Zoom.

In her position as Department of Education Officer in the Community Languages schools program, Sabine has 10 years of intensive experience with Community Languages schools, focusing on developing language teaching programs and teaching resources. She has twice taken part in the Chinese School Principal exchange program, observing and visiting schools in China. She was also a Principal of a German Community Language school for many years.

Prior to this, Sabine was a Department of Education High School German and Spanish language teacher and an English as Second Language (ESL) teacher for 15 years, being involved in the settlement of newly arrived refugee and migrant children into NSW regional government schools.

Sabine holds a degree with majors in Linguistics and German Literature and has a Graduate Diploma in Education of Modern Languages and TESOL. She grew up in Germany, bilingual in German and Frisian.

Sabine was also a German interpreter with Centrelink and a website reviewer for *Scan*, the magazine of the NSW Department of Education Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate. She wrote the German textbook series *Katzensprung*, and was on the board of the Illawarra Multicultural Communities Council for over 10 years and involved in the Rotary International Student Exchange program.



Valerie Hoogstad

Valerie Hoogstad has lectured with SICLE for 12 years, especially in leadership studies. Currently she is heavily involved in the not-for-profit sector and participates on several Boards. She is the Chair of the Centre for Volunteering NSW and a board member of Odyssey House, Together for Humanity and Gateway College.

She is the author of 16 textbooks relating to communication studies. Major publishers of her work include Macmillan, Jacaranda Press and Methuen. In 1976 Valerie was appointed lecturer in English and Communication studies at UTS. She later joined ACU to work in the same field. In 1989, Valerie was appointed Director of the ACUcom unit at ACU, set up to focus on building relationships between the university and the corporate sector and to provide training in communication. Clients included some of the major banks and law firms in Australia.

In 2000, Valerie was appointed founding director of International Education at ACU where she remained for many years, gaining invaluable experience relating to all facets of this discipline. She was invited to lecture in International Education at universities in Shanghai, Paris, Madrid and London, and was invited to give guest lectures at several international conferences. In 1989 Valerie lectured in the Masters of Education program at New York University for a semester.



Dr Tina Sharpe

Dr. Tina Sharpe has extensive experience as a classroom teacher, education consultant, university lecturer, researcher and curriculum developer. She has lectured in TESOL at undergraduate levels and post graduate levels for over thirty years. Her recent teaching at Sydney University is in TESOL, curriculum literacies and Community Languages education. Together with Maya Cranitch, Tina has written the *Foundation and Leadership and Management* courses in Community languages; she has also written the *Advanced* course for community languages and participated in the Quality Teaching project.

She has worked as an academic researcher on many school-based literacy initiatives over the years including the joint Department of Education/University of Technology, Sydney projects: *New Perspectives in ESL Pedagogy: Putting Scaffolding to Work in Language and Literacy Education and Challenging Pedagogies*. Her current research is part of the joint Sydney/WSU project, *Pathways to becoming a teacher in Australia for graduates with overseas qualifications* which explores the structural supports and impediments for teachers undertaking pathways for upgrading qualifications to become teachers in NSW schools.

Tina has co-authored a number of literacy-based professional development courses for the both primary and secondary schools in New South Wales, developed teacher training courses for EFL in China and wrote and assisted with the implementation of a curriculum for a middle school in Vietnam. She has also published a number of book chapters and journal articles, the latest of which is included in an edited book on *Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics in EFL contexts; Raqaiya Hasan Memorial Papers (2019)*.

Initial research

Parallel Lines

Community Languages schools are a hidden secret. They have been a key provider of languages education in Australia for over 160 years but there has been little research exploring their role.

In 2018 SICLE undertook a major study of Community Languages schools in NSW. Our report, *Parallel Lines: Community Languages Schools and their Role in Growing Languages and Building Communities*, addresses four key questions:

- How have the changes in student enrolments impacted on schools?
- What roles do Community Languages schools play in communities and the broader society?
- What is the nature of the curriculums, teaching and learning in Community Languages schools?
- What are the organisational strengths, capacities and needs of Community Languages schools?

Data consisted of an online survey of teachers and principals (n=423), interviews (n=28) and school case studies (n=7), existing state and national Community Languages schools, and 2016 census data.

The report had four key findings:

Students

Student enrolments in Community Languages schools have doubled since the 1980s and increased by 20 per cent since 2010. This has been because of the growth of second, third and fourth generation Australian students learning their family's first language. We also found that schools have expanded their scope beyond catering only for primary school aged students.

Increasing numbers of schools offer classes for under-fives (24%), secondary school aged learners (26%) and adults (7%). This is because Community Languages schools are no longer the major or sole provider of education in over 40 languages.

Schools

Community Languages schools play a key role in making and building communities, especially for refugee groups. The schools act as cultural centres for their communities, bringing families together, organising cultural events, providing language classes and supporting dance, music and other group activities. School principals and leaders play a broad role with little support as administrators, community liaison officers, curriculum developers and Human Resources (HR) managers. Schools see their role as part of a pathway of language provision from early childhood to tertiary level, but there is little or no alignment between this sector and other language providers.

Teaching and curriculum

Most schools teach language through a range of areas such as cultural learning, music, art, dance and other activities. Curriculum and teaching range from up-to-date pedagogical approaches using NSW government curriculums to poorly resourced, more traditional learning. The majority of schools rely on textbooks; most schools also develop their own resources since relevant materials for second-language learners in the Australian context are scarce. Many schools are using IT and language learning applications (apps) even though most schools have little access to the internet. Teachers report there is a need for further resources and professional learning and development. Ways to assess and credit student learning in the schools are also needed.





Organisational strengths and needs

In the schools, 20 languages have fewer than 60 students and one quarter of the schools consist of only one class. Small schools and lower socio-economic languages struggle to survive, finding it hard to locate volunteer teachers and to secure adequate funding for teaching materials. On the other hand, large schools for the major languages are well organised and generally have strong community support and committee structures. There is a need for targeted support for different languages and types of schools.

The title of the report, *Parallel Lines: Community Languages Schools and their Role in Growing Languages and Building Communities*, refers to the sector's co-existence for more than 170 years with other providers of languages education in Australia – including early childhood programs, government and non-government schools, community colleges, universities and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges – and to the lack of alignment and collaboration between the sectors in terms of policy, planning and provision. Despite the grassroots success of the Community Languages schools program in Australia, it remains an untapped resource.

The key recommendations from our study are that:

- Community Languages schools be recognised as key providers of languages education in NSW and be aligned more with other sectors. Representatives should be included in policy and program planning, especially in the areas of early childhood, primary, secondary and adult education.

- Community Languages schools, especially smaller schools in lower socio-economic communities, need much more proactive support from government.

The Skills in Question

The Skills in Question is a study of the professional learning strengths and needs of the 3,000 teachers in NSW Community Languages schools. Based on interviews (n=47) and an online survey of 30 per cent of teachers (n=856), the specific objectives of the study were:

- To develop a detailed profile of teachers in NSW Community Languages schools, that is of their diversity, skills, backgrounds and professional learning needs
- To gain insight into the teachers' educational experiences teaching in Community Languages schools and how these could be improved
- To explore the teachers' roles in the schools, including what factors keep them teaching and why they leave
- To understand the careers and further study goals of the teachers and how these can be supported.

The profile of the volunteer teachers challenged our preconceptions about grandparents – yayias – teaching small groups of children in traditional ways. We found that 87 per cent of these teachers have tertiary qualifications, and 55 per cent have teaching experience and qualifications from overseas. There was also a spread of ages among the teachers: 33.1 per cent are under 40. A majority, 87 per cent, have been in Australia for more than 10 years, with 59.5 per cent returning to work or further study after raising families.

What these teachers had in common was a high level of commitment to their language teaching.

“I love teaching and I like children. I really like all processes of teaching, from classroom training to evaluation. ... I’m excited to make a lesson plan about what I teach to the students and how I teach them. Even though I can’t exactly guess the student response, I’m happy to prepare the lessons, but most of all what I like the best about teaching is communicating with the students.”

Jihye, Korean teacher

Teacher attrition is low: 42 per cent have been in the schools for more than five years. Nearly all teachers had taken on professional learning provided by SICLE, the NSW Department of Education or by their own

schools. Of the teachers, 80 per cent want to become accredited teachers in Australia, but only four per cent have managed to do so. There were many barriers to this: teachers found it difficult to get careers advice and accurate information about getting their existing qualifications assessed. It was often difficult with family and work commitments to upgrade their qualifications and for many to improve their English to the level required to gain accreditation.

The provision of pathways for these teachers must therefore be a priority, especially with the reported shortage of language teachers looming. This group of teachers represents a valued resource. The potential wastage of their skills and the absence of this group of teachers from mainstream schools has ramifications for the education of all students.

We have to keep up with the times

Lily has been teaching in her Chinese language school for five years. She graduated as a teacher in China but works in a travel agency in Sydney. She teaches to kindergarten children, high school students and a class of adults on Saturdays each week. She explained how her teaching has to be different in the Chinese school.

“In China we were probably the same as you [the ‘older’ interviewer]. Children would just sit there and the teachers did all the chalk and they just answer questions given by teacher. I think activity-based learning or activity is better for them. The best way is to put all teaching methods together: this time use this, next time others. If you use the same teaching method forever students feel bored.”

Lily explained that student enrolments had changed in the 30 years the school had been running. From mainly overseas-born Cantonese students, the majority were now Australian-born Chinese (ABC), with 20 per cent overseas-born and another 10 per cent non-Chinese background Australians learning a Chinese language. Chinese is a second language for all these students. The school had shifted from teaching Cantonese to 50/50 Mandarin/Cantonese. There were no textbooks, but materials were developed by the school and the teachers.

“I drew some cartoon books for my entry-level class. Kids’ thinking has changed and we can’t be restricted by the teaching materials. We teach them some nursery rhymes; I collected these songs from YouTube. There is a foreigner teacher on YouTube teaching Chinese language. It is the era of computers so we have to keep pace with the times. This has been a breakthrough for my older students. I let students use their computers to finish their Chinese homework. They do have an app like a dictionary on their mobile. They can look up the dictionary when they have words that they don’t know or they don’t remember how to write it. They use computers better than me. The principal is an IT expert. We give students a topic. They search information, make discussion, conversations and presentations. I have to download my materials.”

A theme in the interviews with Lily was the need to be flexible. The school teaches Chinese through painting, calligraphy, dance and music so the older beginner students can keep up their interest. Lily said that she stayed in the school because of the students and the other teachers. For her it was not just weekend voluntary work but her ‘second job’.



The study identified that the teachers had gained a range of skills through informal learning in the Community Languages schools, including flexibility, how to teach mixed level groups and teaching through subject areas. The role of informal learning emerged as central for those coming into teaching from non-teaching backgrounds.

The findings from the study have also informed the development of professional learning programs. We focus on issues such as using technology in the classroom, behaviour management, developing resources, differentiated teaching, engaging students and working with students with special needs. All teachers in our study had undergone professional learning in the previous year; over 60 per cent have also now completed our 60-hour introduction to teaching in Australia program—Community Languages teaching program (Foundation).



Professional learning courses for Community Languages teachers

Community Languages teaching program (Foundation)

Walking into a class of 30 children and teenagers for a two-hour class when you have no teacher training or experience can be overwhelming. This is the reality for many parents and community members who take on teaching in Community Languages schools.

Since 2006 SICLE has run 60-hour professional learning programs for more than 3,500 language teachers. The programs are designed to introduce parents and community members to teaching languages in the Australian context. The participants range from those with teaching qualifications and many years' experience overseas to parents with no experience of teaching and who also may have had little access to education themselves. The aim of the programs is to provide up-to-date professional learning for language teachers, focusing on the latest research-based language learning theories and language teaching methodologies. All three programs have gained NESA accreditation towards proficient teacher level.

The key program is the Community Languages teaching (Foundation) which is an introduction to language teaching in Australia and to teaching students who are part of the Australian education system. Volunteer teachers range in age from 18 to 70, and from having no previous teaching experience to being

qualified teachers overseas, and from having no access to secondary education to those with doctorates.

Classes are run at times and in venues to suit teachers – across Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle, and online. In 2020 there were 11 programs (four on Thursday evenings, three on Sundays and three 'distance', a blended version of Zoom/Moodle and an intensive program run face to face during school holidays). In total, 225 teachers participated, representing 33 different community language groups and 111 different Community Language schools.

“Most of the teachers are volunteers and fluent in their own language. Each class consists of about 30 students and a wide variety of cultures. It is a privilege to be a lecturer in a class with maybe 12 different cultures, e.g. Greek, Russian, Italian, Tamil, Serbian, Maltese, Chinese, Hong Kong, Vietnamese, Lebanese, Iraqi, Israeli, Croat, Japanese, Samoan. Many students have never met people from certain cultures and are interested to learn about their background. Students are encouraged to speak English only and not to sit with students from their own language background. Strong friendships have developed. Students visit each other from their different schools and observe an experienced language teacher from at least one school. They always find this a valuable experience.”

Lecturer report





This course has taught me what to expect in the community language school and how to solve the issues when they occur. It also helps me to create our own teaching materials and be creative about the way we teach, that we should focus on speaking, listening, reading and writing simultaneously. Strategies for behaviour management were also a critical part of this course. Whilst we were given strategies, we also learned that motivating the students by using stimulating materials was the most effective way to manage a classroom.

Participating teacher response

The Foundation language teaching course has changed our old ways to contemporary teaching styles and approaches in our school. In the way we think, act and speak, our teaching philosophies have transitioned from too old school concepts to modernised teaching and learning environment.

Participating teacher response (also School Principal)

The program is intended to give teachers confidence, and develop knowledge and skills in teaching second, third and fourth generation Australian students. The students they teach range from pre-school age to adults, and from beginners to students who are totally fluent. The volunteer teachers spend time in mainstream schools, observing classes; many also have language-specific classes in teaching Arabic, Chinese, Korean or Tamil. They learn how to plan lessons and develop resources and teaching strategies that will really engage the students. They also learn from each other. Because of their family and work commitments,

they often cannot give much time to their teaching, but in this program they share their ideas and concerns and develop a sense of pride and value in what they are doing.

More than 3,000 teachers have now successfully completed this program. Its success can be attributed to the constant evaluation and updating of the course. Each year adaptations have been made, new video clips added and resources refined according to requests from both participants and lecturers.

Community Languages teaching program (Advanced)

There has long been a demand for an advanced program to train curriculum developers in language schools and teachers who could mentor others. The Advanced Program was trialled in 2017 and ran with four groups in 2020. It was designed for experienced volunteer teachers in the NSW Community Languages Schools Program who had completed the Foundation program or who had teacher training and teaching experience in Australia.

In 2020, 87 teachers shared their experiences and studied topics such as differentiating learning, digital storytelling, reflective teaching, planning and assessment, and intercultural learning. The key focus was on teachers taking on leadership and mentoring roles in their own schools.

As part of this, teachers were asked to design and conduct a mini research project to analyse the strengths and needs of their own and their school's curriculum. This involved the collection and analysis of data and the preparation of a report on their research. All participants then presented their findings in a series of workshops. They also submitted a written report using PowerPoint. Many of the resources developed during this program have been uploaded on to the *OpenLanguage* portal and are available to all Community Language teachers.

"Thank you very much for your feedback. Honestly, I have finished many courses, but this course really made a difference in my understanding of teaching strategies and preparation."

Participant response

"In general, I have learned how teaching can and should be applied in Community Language schools. Various discussions and sharing of experiences provided me with valuable ideas that I am going to apply in my teaching. A number of important areas of teaching are thoroughly covered by the topics in this course, and the provided slides and resources were developed and designed professionally and comprehensively while making our learning interesting and meaningful."

Participant response

Each year, more than 90 per cent of the evaluations agree or strongly agree on the value of this program and the Foundation course, and on the skills and knowledge participants gain from the lecturers.

Leadership and management in Community Languages schools

The principals of the 410 Community Languages schools in NSW are all volunteers but take on enormous workloads. They manage schools with enrolments of between 20 and 1,000 students. Some of these principals have backgrounds in education and some are parents who were given the role by community members; others have some training in administration or business.

School principals are also responsible for finding, training and supporting teachers to develop, implement and assess curriculum. They generally undertake all the administration and financial management of the school, organise fundraising, and work closely with the community, parents, day schools and other organisations.

“We are volunteer secretaries too, doing all the photocopying and preparation for each week.”

Language school principal

In 2019 and 2020 SICLE developed and ran a 60-hour professional learning program for over 120 school leaders. The Community Languages schools Leadership and Management Program is the first of its kind run anywhere in the world. Principals and school leaders studied three program strands: Current Research into Teaching and Learning, Academic Leadership, and School Management and Finances.

School principals were mentored by a group of experienced leaders who advised these principals on completing their major project, a school audit. Using the Victorian Quality Assurance Framework (Erebus, 2002), the principals analysed the strengths and needs of all aspects of the organisation and the curriculum of their school. They then developed a plan of action to address identified needs and in workshops presented this plan to other principals.

“The course has enabled me to work with the teachers closely to strategically plan the approaches that they take to teaching and learning, particularly in terms of drawing a connection between how they design lessons and select teaching resources to support this, to the overall picture of how we as a school deliver value to the broader community through the Hindi language.”





Understanding bilingualism and the tenets of multicultural Australia means that as a Hindi language school, we are able to design a curriculum that underpins weekly lessons more effectively. Through completing the course, I also gained a clearer understanding of behaviour management. For example, many principals in our class did not appreciate noise coming from classrooms but now understand that this can be healthy as it means students are engaged. We also learned how best to monitor academic performance.

As we have been establishing a new community language school, the understanding of the legal and financial requirements that I gained through completing the course has been invaluable, helping me to ensure that we not only meet these but that we have procedures and policies in place to ensure that we are working towards the highest standards we can.”

Language school principal

“Completion of the Community Languages School Leadership and Management Program course has, perhaps most valuable, allowed me to engage with a network of other community language school principals across NSW. Our cohort has established a regular six-weekly Zoom catch-up, through which we are able to catch up on how our schools are going as well as support each other through any challenges or issues we are having. Through this, we share ideas, provide resources and forge friendships. This has potentially been one of the most valuable aspects of the course, as the multicultural networking has become an extremely useful part of us working together and supporting each other.”

Language school principal

Teaching in Community Languages schools during COVID-19

In response to the shift to home learning in NSW schools as a result of COVID-19, SICLE saw a need to provide support and training so that Community Languages schools could continue their important work.

During the first two weeks of April 2020, we hosted a series of workshops attended by 24 SICLE Project Officers and some NSW Department of Education staff. The first workshop introduced participants to Zoom as a web conferencing tool and demonstrated how it could be used in the virtual community languages classroom. Aside from Zoom itself, we also explored how to use other apps such as Padlet while on Zoom.

After these initial sessions, the Project Officers then promoted and ran multiple Zoom trainings for teachers in their respective community languages. One Project Officer reported training 130 teachers! Overall, some 859 teachers participated in more than 120 workshops.

In the first two weeks of May we held another four workshops for the volunteer teachers to debrief about their experiences of facilitating these Zoom trainings. They were able to share their successes and challenges, and learn from each other's practice. There was a sense of excitement that teachers with varying levels of experience with technology were generally very open to experimenting with Zoom and various apps, and were grateful for the training provided by the Project Officers.

The Project Officers were also buoyed by the connections that were forged among the teachers, sometimes from a mix of schools teaching the same community language, by virtue of attending these Zoom training sessions. They also noticed the training increased confidence as well as the willingness to share practical experience of and resources for teaching online.

“I learned a lot from Zoom. Before the training, my online teaching techniques were zero, as I’ve never worked with them. I was excited, was eager to learn. My computer techniques now are not excellent, but acceptable. I also access Google Docs and other

software with sharing functions. It’s a great harvest for me. There were some parents being confident in me, believing that I could attract the students well by tools and games. My class usually has more than twenty students. I have a way of evaluating their work. Normally, I assign some in-class quizzes or exercises, requiring the students to write something down. Once the class is over, I ask the parents to take pictures of their children’s work. There I find some students didn’t complete the in-class exercise. It’s a good indicator to reveal who’s hard-working and who’s not. The biggest challenge of mine was how to attract and keep the interest and attention of all levels of children remotely.”

Chinese language teacher

An interesting outcome of the online learning was that parents became much more involved in their children’s learning. They did not have to take their children to classes on Saturdays, could see what the children were learning and were able to help them with their work. One parent commented, ‘I had no idea! Those teachers are angels.’

By the end of the course, teachers who were definitely not digital natives had gained confidence and skills in teaching online. In 2021 many schools continued with blended learning. This has also enabled schools with dispersed communities to connect and continue learning.

At present SICLE is conducting a research study of the project and its outcomes.



Resource development for Community Languages teachers

Quality Teaching project

Teaching in Community Languages schools is not easy. There is little or no access to Information Technology (IT). Teachers have to take their resources to each class because they have no allocated storage space. Few resources have been developed for students who are learning their language as a second or heritage language. In languages such as Arabic, Assyrian, Dari, Filipino, Uyghur or Vietnamese it is impossible to find appropriate books or teaching materials. Some 80 per cent of schools use textbooks that have mostly been written in Australia, or by teachers in the school itself to ensure they have resources which reflect the lives and interests of their students.

In 2019, we developed the Quality Teaching program with the aim of developing high quality programs for community languages teaching in mainstream NSW Department of Education schools. For Stages 1 to 4, this was by drawing on the NESA K-6 Languages Framework and K-10 Languages Syllabuses.

The project also aimed to provide support from accredited Department of Education teachers to volunteer teachers in the Community Languages schools. A group of 24 experienced Community Languages teachers attended two half-day workshops

where they were given a background to the principles of Quality Teaching and were introduced to 'rich tasks'. Rich tasks focus on real life outcomes that engage and are relevant to students. They involve the learners working towards and demonstrating what they know. Some examples are:

- Students interviewing their grandparents and parents and then writing up and presenting a video or powerpoint on their family backgrounds
- Selecting their favourite meals/dishes, interviewing family members and researching the internet, and, in groups, developing a video demonstrating how to make them (as in *My Kitchen Rules*)
- Choosing three sites of interest in their family's country/ies of origin, researching these and preparing tourist brochures and tour guides.

The experienced teachers were given specifications for two units of work which they were to write and trial in their classrooms in one of 11 languages. Units were developed for Arabic, Assyrian, Chinese, Greek, Hindi, Korean, Macedonian, Persian/ Dari, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese.

Each teacher was supported with visits from one of the Quality Teaching team of academics from SICLE who



guided them in reviewing and evaluating their units of work during the writing period. Each of the teachers then presented the unit of work they trialled and the findings from their study. They then completed the second unit of work and at the end of the year both units were uploaded on to the online *OpenLanguage* portal. These units of work are available to all teachers on the SICLE website [nesa-syllabuses.pdf \(sydney.edu.au\)](https://www.sydney.edu.au/nesa-syllabuses.pdf).

The units of work developed through the Quality Teaching project are also used as models for the major assessment task in the Community Languages teaching program (Advanced) where participants are asked to develop and teach a unit of work for their language class. They may use or adapt existing Quality Teaching units, or they can design their own, but their units must be according to the standard planning proformas used during the Quality Teaching program.

“The units of work which have been created over the last 18 months are of exceptionally high quality and provide a valuable resource for practising community language teachers in NSW. In the past community language teachers rarely had access to support for quality resources in their respective community language.”

Project manager response

The Quality Teaching project also provided a useful platform for collaboration. For example, K–6 Macedonian teachers in government schools now meet once a term with Community Languages school teachers for their professional learning.

“Links with schools has perhaps been one of the most valuable outcomes of the Quality Teaching project so far because schools are now more involved in sharing resources and sending out messages to the community. The community school principals really like the workshops and appreciate the value of teacher-centred approaches.

Arabic project officer

Digital storytelling

Developing skills in using IT in the language classroom is the main request we get from teachers in the Community Languages schools. In mainstream schools and their daily lives, the students are exposed to all forms of technology. Teachers gaining skills in technology to engage students is, therefore, the priority for language schools.



In 2020 our professional learning programs were rewritten to include modules on technology and language teaching. All lecturers and SICLE staff then undertook in-service training in digital storytelling and using a range of different apps and platforms. This training was conducted by Dr Kirsty McGeoch.

Although many Community Languages schools do not have access to internet in their classrooms, we explored different ways to address this. We also advised the NSW Department of Education on their technology grants to Community Languages schools.

We undertook a video/digital storytelling project in the Bonnyrigg Khmer school. Khmer is a smaller and lower-SES community with students who are second and third generation. Mixed marriages are common and many students come from homes where English is the dominant language. Project manager Dr Kirsty McGeoch trained teachers in digital storytelling and then supported them as they worked with students on a range of projects.

Each student chose a topic and researched information in English and Khmer. Teachers helped them translate and compose in Khmer. Students and teachers had invented what they called ‘pinyin’, a Romanised script for Khmer which acted as a mediating tool to help children read and understand Khmer. The final versions of the digital stories were completed in pairs or groups. Filmmaker Anna Breckon documented the process and also interviewed students on their final product. Her interviews can be found on YouTube.



In groups, older students researched and made video clips with subtitles, demonstrating how to make traditional Khmer dishes. These can be viewed on YouTube.

Younger students, working in pairs, researched, wrote (in English), translated (into Khmer) and recorded a short presentation about either their favourite food or animal. An edited selection of the mini-videos that resulted, can be viewed on YouTube. The control that students had in this project was important: they are bicultural and so their favourite foods could have been Japanese cheesecake or sushi; their views are not necessarily traditional ones of Khmer 'culture'.

The students presented their work in a final school/ community film festival, and the project became a model for our work in other schools. Digital storytelling proved valuable not only because of the high levels of student engagement but also because of the ways in which, for the students, it integrated speaking, listening, reading and writing in Khmer.

Open Language: a portal for Community Languages teachers



<http://openlanguage.org.au/>

Finding suitable resources for teaching community languages is the most common problem for Community Languages schools. If resources exist they are generally for background speakers of the language, not second or heritage language learners. And there are few resources that reflect the lives of young children growing up in Australia. Even when schools develop their own resources they have very few ways to share them with other language schools.

The development of an open access online portal to language teaching resources therefore became a key SICLE project. The portal site brings together a range of resources which have been developed and/or shared by teachers in Community Languages schools and is open to the public.

The portal resources include units of work, worksheets, links to online stories, games and quizzes, and much more. All these resources are linked to topics, are categorised at Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced language levels, and have been developed and/or shared by teachers with the support of 24 Project Officers.

My role as the Project Officer is to collect and collate resources from various Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi teachers and submit them to the portal. The Open Languages Portal project is ... receiving very positive feedback. It has been well accepted by teachers all over and it's the top-most search result when the search string 'open languages' is given in the browser.

Hindi project officer

... no educational body has set up a repository like this one containing not only the resources that have been produced by the formal educational institutions but also the resources created by individual teachers.

Greek project officer

Currently there are over 1,300 resources on the site, supporting the teaching of 17 community languages: Arabic, Assyrian/Chaldean, Chinese, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, Malayalam, Mandaean, Marathi, Persian/Dari, Punjabi, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese. Ongoing development of the site will see resources for additional smaller languages uploaded.



Indicative of the widespread impact of the site, in February 2020, the *OpenLanguage* portal received the following hits:

- 1,185 people accessed the site (59% new visitors, 41% returning visitors)

- People spent around four minutes on the site each session
- The top countries accessing the site are:
 - Australia – 956 hits
 - China – 55 hits
 - USA – 49 hits
 - UK – 26 hits
 - Canada – 13 hits
 - Saudi Arabia – 10 hits

From June to November 2020, SICLE's focus has been on workshops to support the development and use of the Open Language Portal. There were 34 language-specific workshops for over 980 teachers as follows: Arabic (7), Chinese (6), Greek (7), Hindi/Gujarati (3), Japanese (2), Persian/Dari (2), Punjabi (2), Turkish (2) and Vietnamese (3). These workshops were attended by teachers of community languages from NSW and other states, by mainstream language teachers, and by teachers in North America, Europe and Asia. Evaluations were extremely positive.

The portal has quickly become a valuable part of teaching preparation for teachers in Community Languages and mainstream schools. It has also provided support for language schools across Australia.

Language progressions and passport

We have at present no way of knowing what levels of language any student in any classroom in Australia has gained.

NESA curriculum review

This recent statement highlights the significance of SICLE's development of student languages progressions and the online student passport. To date, teachers in Community Languages schools have not had access to a classroom-based assessment tool that could describe the continuum of language learning for their community language.

Although the syllabuses in NSW show outcomes for each stage of language learning, they cannot provide sufficient detail for teachers about individual students' competencies in each of the four macro skills, regardless of age and year of schooling. Teachers, therefore, have no clear way of identifying what level of fluency or communicative competence students achieve from any program at any stage of schooling. This affects the development of milestones and elaborations for students to progress from early childhood to higher levels of language learning, leading to tertiary study – milestones which can be documented in students' 'passports for languages'.



Our researchers have developed an English language prototype with milestones in speaking, listening, reading and writing, accompanied by sample elaborations for each milestone. This prototype is based on existing research into second language development and aligns with national and international scales and syllabuses. The milestones have been reviewed by language experts across universities to support the development of language-specific milestones in the proposed languages. A steering committee of research partners and universities will monitor and direct the work.

Teachers will be able to use this framework to assess and support student learning, and to ensure students continue to progress in their language learning journey. With the development of a consistent framework and a single 'passport' that recognises student language learning, there is now transferability and continuity of student language learning across schools and systems.

This framework will also support teacher planning and program development across early childhood education as well as at primary and high school levels. The framework will, therefore, enhance the quality of community languages programs and, by recognising its role in the school sector, enhance the status of community language education.

Towards these ends, SICLE's deliverables will be:

- Learning milestones for key community languages, supported by validity and reliability studies
- Training modules and programs for classroom teachers to be accredited as language testers
- Student language passports which are portable across ages/stages and sites of learning, and which provide evidence of learner proficiency in speaking, listening reading and writing.

The project is of international significance, being the first time that a classroom-based assessment tool with supporting evidence for reliability and validity has been developed for community languages.

Increasing Community Languages teacher supply

Careers advice for Community Languages teachers

The lady told me my qualifications didn't count in Australia. So, I went home and put them in a drawer and they have stayed there for fifteen years.

Polish Community Languages school teacher

The typical profile of community language teachers is women returning to work and further study after raising families. Even though most have been in Australia for over 10 years, they all express the need for information and advice. The problem is that there is no 'one-stop shop': much information is online; it is hard to access counsellors whose role is often just for one specific institution. We found that teachers often rely on friends in the community for advice, and sometimes they are given the wrong advice and directed into courses which do not meet their needs.

SICLE has four Careers Advisors whose role is to help teachers decide on learning and career pathways, and develop plans for the future. The Careers Advisors are professional members of the Careers Advisors Association of NSW and the ACT (CAA). They attend the Professional Learning programs which offer free advice sessions and have held single and multiple sessions with over 450 teachers. In the past year these have mainly been via Zoom. Sometimes teachers report that they have little idea what to do; others have very specific career goals in mind and want information. Many want help in gaining recognition for their overseas qualifications and navigating Australia's higher education system.

The second role of the Careers Advisors is helping Community Languages schools teachers who want to gain accreditation as teachers in NSW schools. Many secondary teachers from overseas have undergraduate degrees and years of experience, but they have insufficient teacher education to meet Australian standards. Primary teachers often began their teacher training at Year 11 level and so in Australia are only recognised as two-year (not four-year) trained. Teachers of refugee background sometimes have inadequate documentation or incomplete studies. There is also a large group of teachers from different career backgrounds – engineers, administrators, journalists, doctors – who decide to become teachers because of their experience as volunteers in the Community Languages schools!

The Careers Advisors have several sessions with those teachers interested in upgrading their qualifications. English levels are assessed and the teachers are directed to programs that meet their language needs. Advice is given about getting transcripts, translations and original documents together; information is given on the differences in the Australian system, and what grades and subjects to teach.

The Careers Advisors report that all cases are different: some teachers can apply directly to NESAS, the accreditation authority; others need to upgrade; some need to spend time improving their English proficiency. The general comment, however, is that teachers need time to decide on possible pathways. They generally have work and family commitments, so making the decision to undertake further study can be a difficult one.

In the beginning Community Languages schools were worried that if their teachers were given advice on pathways to employment and further study, they would stop their volunteer work. We are finding the opposite outcome: having a career pathway makes the teachers value their role and gain satisfaction in the Community Languages schools more.



Master of Teaching pathways project

At the same time of there being a growing teacher shortage in primary and secondary schools, there exists a large pool of highly qualified volunteer teachers in community languages schools who cannot gain accreditation. The absence of these bilingual and bicultural teachers from mainstream schools is a loss for the teaching profession in NSW. In Australia, as in many other OECD countries, the teaching profession lacks cultural and linguistic diversity.

The following account reports on the upgrading of programs we have established for teachers in NSW Community Languages schools. Most of the information comes from SBS television news reports on the program.

At the moment, it is harder to become a teacher than a doctor in Australia if you have overseas qualifications ... So many highly qualified teachers with years of teaching experience overseas get lost in the system ... it is so hard to get information and find a pathway and they are often directed to the wrong courses ... We need teachers in NSW, and this is such a waste of skills. It is a much bigger problem than people think.

Professor Ken Cruickshank, Director, SICLE

The 2018 SICLE research study into Community Languages teachers in NSW, *The Skills in Question*, showed that 87 per cent of volunteer teachers have overseas university qualifications and 79 per cent would like to become accredited teachers in mainstream schools, but few have gained Australian accreditation (Cruickshank, Ellsmore & Brownlee, 2018). The reasons for this anomaly are currently being explored through a research study into the structural supports and impediments for teachers undertaking pathways for upgrading their overseas qualifications.

Anecdotal evidence overwhelmingly suggests a number of contributing factors. The most common include lack of access to information about course offerings at universities and insufficient support to navigate admission procedures, as well as the difficulties in managing work and family commitments.

A key obstacle is the level of English language competence needed to gain entry into teaching; for pre-service teaching programs the prerequisite is a high level of academic English competency: 7.5 on the International English Language Test (IELTS) or Level 4 on the International Second Language Proficiency Rating (ISLPR). This makes it very difficult for teachers in NSW Community Languages schools who are wanting to return to study. They may not have been involved in tertiary study for many years; writing essays and understanding research articles in English as their second or third language are a challenge.

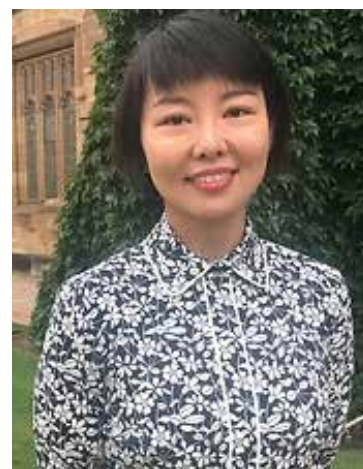
Yongfei Li – Master of Teaching student at WSU

For Chinese language teacher Yongfei Li (now a Master of Teaching student at WSU), education is her lifelong passion. When she migrated to Australia, getting professionally accredited as a teacher was paramount.

'[I had been] teaching for over 15 years. It's become part of my life. It's a habit,' she told SBS News.

But even with years of teaching experience, transferring her qualifications from China to Australia was complicated, and much of her study was not accepted.

'Few of the units can be transferred because the system is absolutely different. Western and Eastern style, and also with the language difference and the pedagogies [teaching methods].'



Case Studies

Jun has been in Australia for three years and is a permanent resident. She completed a Bachelor of Arts majoring in English in a university in Shanghai. She was an English tutor at a Beijing university for five years. Since coming to Australia, she has completed a Master of Education in TESOL, not realising that this qualification would not result in the NESA accreditation required to teach in NSW schools.

Jun is teaching Mandarin in a Chinese Community Languages school in Epping in suburban Sydney, and has completed the SICLE Foundation course in Community Language Teaching. She is unsure whether to apply for a Master of Teaching, either primary or secondary. She is worried about the discipline issues she has heard about in secondary schools.

Maryam is from Lebanon and is an Australian citizen. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from a university in Beirut. She studied Arabic literature and French language. She has completed some units in educational pedagogy, but not enough to apply for provisional NESA accreditation.

Maryam feels frustrated because she sees other Arabic speakers in educational jobs in non-government schools who have not studied Arabic language and literature at the same level. She would like to be a secondary school teacher of Arabic and French. However, she has three children, a full-time job and teaches at an Arabic Community Languages school. She is worried about how she would find time for study and the 30 days of professional practice she would need to do. In addition, she needs to pass the ISLPR English proficiency test and despite two attempts has failed to pass the writing section with the required score.

In order to address some of these obstacles, SICLE introduced a program to provide targeted support for teachers wishing to access the Master of Teaching programs. This program is the only one of its kind internationally for overseas-trained teachers.

During 2019, discussions with WSU and ACU resulted in partnership agreements to create special cohorts of teachers of community languages who would be supported by SICLE to study Master of Teaching programs. Partnership arrangements include a specialised calendar and timetable to suit part-time study, as well as ongoing support from an academic mentor appointed by the relevant university but funded by SICLE. In 2020 and 2021, 70 volunteer teachers enrolled in programs.

The following case studies are of typical applicants for the Master of Teaching pathways program. The vast majority of applicants for this program are women with children and who are already teachers in Community Languages schools. (Note: These case studies are fictional composites created to de-identify individuals and to demonstrate some of the key issues revealed during interviews.)

The Master of Teaching pathways program includes an information and screening process.

Where relevant, SICLE arranges classes in test preparation, writing and pronunciation. Before the first semester begins, SICLE offers a 25-hour Master of Teaching preparation program to develop the skills required for study at a postgraduate level in Australia: in critical reading and writing complex texts in the discipline area of Education; concepts of academic integrity; citation; and completing assessment tasks using digital texts.

"I actually enjoyed and was looking forward to every single class. It's been ten years since I completed my last degree and this was a great refresher course on critical reading, referencing, summarising, paraphrasing, etc. Thank you for the glossary and for choosing articles from our weekly readings – super, super useful."

Student evaluation

Many Master of Teaching students will graduate as teachers in Mathematics, Science and Technology, areas of great need. Many will also have qualifications to teach their community language in both primary and secondary schools, another area of future demand.

English and preparation for study support

To gain entry into teaching and pre-service teaching programs, high levels of academic English are required. This makes things very difficult for overseas-trained teachers in NSW Community Languages schools who



would like to return to study. Although most of these teachers have been in Australia for an average of 10 years, they may not have been involved in any tertiary study for many years. Hence, writing essays and understanding academic research articles in English, if it is their second or third language, can present an enormous challenge.

SICLE has been offering free English and other preparation classes for such teachers. In 2020 Glenice Aiken and Marina Pearce, experts in speaking and pronunciation, ran three programs for 60 teachers, especially those who were ‘stabilised’ in their pronunciation. Participants were videoed and then, with the lecturers, they assessed their pronunciation and worked out a plan for improvement. This innovative approach to involving participants in assessing and working on the aspects of prosody and pronunciation has proved extremely successful with many of the students who have completed this program.

Sally George has run five programs for 82 teachers, addressing their academic writing needs. The program covers not only writing essays but also preparing group work presentations, writing PowerPoint scripts and preparing for writing proficiency tests. The main needs of the students have been sentence level grammar but also higher order writing skills in English, such as structuring reports and organising arguments.

As well as funding these classes, SICLE also provided part-scholarships for teachers sitting for the English language proficiency tests required by NESA. These programs have proved extremely valuable as there are few programs to help teachers improve at high levels

of English proficiency and there are none which are free to participants.

To complement these classes, in 2020, Dr Tina Sharpe and Maya Cranitch developed and taught a university preparation program. This focused on the knowledge and skills required for success in the Master of Teaching Pathways course, including critical reading and writing for academic purposes as well as using a variety of digital tools.

The students, mostly unfamiliar with the expectations of tertiary study in Australia, were given group tasks and practised strategies for citation and paraphrasing from sources to reinforce concepts of academic honesty. The content for this course was drawn from the readings and types of assignment tasks set for the first two subjects the students would undertake. Hence they were able to develop relevant vocabulary and become familiar with the discourse structures of specific disciplines.

“I feel the overall design and the topics of this course are very helpful. Specifically, I learnt a lot in the areas of reading skills, referencing, digital technology and final presentation.”

Student feedback

“I actually enjoyed and was looking forward to every single class. It’s been ten years since I completed my last degree and this was a great refresher course on critical reading, referencing, summarising, paraphrasing, etc. Thank you.”

Student feedback

School Language Support Officers (SLSOs)

A major problem for Community Languages schools is sustainability: 96 per cent of teachers are first generation Australians born overseas. In many schools, the average age of these teachers is over 50 or 60. The majority of learners are now second, third and fourth generation Australians, but only 4 per cent of volunteer teachers are Australian-born.

There is little succession planning in the schools and few pathways for students to become teachers. Many drop out of Community Languages schools when they reach high school age, and few study languages for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) or at university. How can these students gain sufficient language proficiency?

In 2018 and 2019 a trial program was run by SICLE involving the training and appointment of students aged 18–25 as SLSOs. The program was advertised in all Community Languages schools in NSW and invited expressions of interest. We then advertised through universities, TAFE colleges, Community Languages schools and mainstream secondary schools for former Community Languages school students who were interested in becoming SLSOs.

The role of the SLSO would be to provide general classroom support, to prepare resources for the class teacher, to help with IT, and to work with individuals or groups in the classroom. Each SLSO was to have an experienced mentor teacher. The aim was for SLSOs to not only gain skills and experience in teaching under supervision but also improve their community language proficiency.

From over 150 applications, we selected 98 SLSOs (30 in 2018 and 68 in 2019), covering 32 languages. The SLSOs, school principals and school mentor teachers signed agreements relating to their role. Each SLSO was given a \$700 stipend for 70 hours' classroom support over the year.

SICLE provided three days of training for the SLSOs, addressing such areas as IT, classroom management, resource development, programs, policies and research in community languages. There was a particular focus on the importance of language maintenance and development for cognitive, social and identity reasons. SICLE staff maintained contact with SLSOs and mentor teachers, providing further professional learning during the year. The program was evaluated highly by the SLSOs.

“Being a CLSO has definitely been rewarding for both me and the students. Since most of the students already know me as I have recently been a students at the school, they feel free to talk to me about their concerns. For example, if they don’t understand something or have too much mainstream school or else issues. In this way, the classroom environment has been changed according to student feedback of concerns.”

SLSO

The main aim of the program was to overcome resistance by former students from continuing at the school. We tried to select students who were studying at the Saturday School of Community Languages or who were studying at TAFE or university. We also wanted to overcome resistance from those schools that were worried about the lack of language proficiency of former students. The response from teachers, parents and principals was positive.

“The project is helpful as it trains young teachers by providing them with the opportunity to gain real life experience under the wing of an experienced teacher. We noticed that when young teachers have the chance to engage in learning activities, they are innovative in motivating students to participate and perform their personal best. The students enjoyed the help and attention from the teacher’s aide, which also results in better learning experience.”

Community Languages school principal

Unfortunately, the program was suspended when schools were closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are presently seeking other sources of funding to continue this project.



Developing proficient Community Languages teachers

Community Languages Teacher Test (CLTT)

In 2020, SICLE was contracted by the NSW Department of Education to develop the Community Languages Teacher Test in up to 30 languages to assess the vocational proficiency of teachers in the NSW K-6 Primary Community Languages program. This program began in 1981 with the appointment of 30 teachers to NSW government primary schools, but increasing demand has seen this program increase to 243 full-time-equivalent positions in 143 schools teaching 30 different languages.

Originally established to cater for background speakers, the program also encourages the inclusion of non-background speakers, thereby fostering and celebrating harmony and diversity. The main languages taught are Arabic, Chinese, Greek, Italian, Korean and Vietnamese, but there are also many new and emerging languages such as Bengali, Dari, Nepali and Samoan. Students generally receive two or more hours of language teaching each week.

The first tests were introduced in 1981. Teachers were assessed in speaking, listening, reading and writing by Department of Education officers. In 1996 the test was tendered to universities.

Our task in 2020 involved assembling a group of highly skilled and qualified languages experts to develop the tests and assess teachers. We worked with the examiners in locating and writing test items, preparing them for the tests and moderating marking. We have now test materials and assessment criteria for Arabic, Chinese, French, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Samoan, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish and Vietnamese.

We also organised two rounds of the CLTT face to face (socially distanced), as well as via online testing of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Candidates undertook a range of work-related tasks, including role plays, writing letters and emails, and reading and explaining current educational texts. Fifty-one teachers successfully passed all test components and can now gain permanent positions in NSW government schools.

Verification of Language Proficiency Test (VLPT)

Until 2018 pre-service language teacher applicants need evidence of two or three years' study of their language at tertiary level. This ruling excluded many applicants who were native speakers of the language and had tertiary study *through* the language. Under new NESA guidelines, native speakers are now eligible to teach if they have verification from an Australian university indicating they have the required level of competency.

At the request of the University of Sydney School of Education and Social Work, SICLE developed the VLPT to accredit applicants to enter the Master of Teaching program. Dr Nerida Jarkey gathered a team of languages specialists and coordinated the writing and conducting of tests in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean and Spanish.

The process took many months to complete as there were no existing models of tests for the level of proficiency expected of second or third year undergraduate students. The COVID-19 lockdown also meant that in many instances tests were conducted online. Some 44 applicants were tested in 2020 and all successfully attained the standard required.

Two developments led to expanding the scope of the test. First, there were many requests from other universities and the test is now being promoted to all universities in NSW and Victoria. Second, practising



teachers began requesting to do the test so that they could gain accreditation to teach languages. Secondary Mathematics teachers, for example, who are native Vietnamese speakers, wanted to be accredited in this language; and primary generalist teachers requested accreditation in Modern Greek. As a result, SICLE is developing professional learning programs and practicums for these teachers. We planning to deliver this initiative in 2022.

Together these tests represent a significant step in increasing languages teacher supply and accrediting the existing skills of languages teachers. Research relating to these tests is described in the sections following.

Developing highly accomplished Community Languages teachers

Professional learning pathways for language teachers in primary and secondary schools have traditionally been problematic. Languages teachers generally want to develop and maintain their language proficiency and so undertake courses in their language/s in Australia or overseas. The pathway to gaining promotions in schools, however, is often through Master of Education degrees which do not contain any language education-specific units. Many teachers feel, therefore, that they have to leave their teaching area in order to develop their career as teachers. Hence there is a lack of languages teachers as principals and in leadership positions in NSW Community Languages schools and very few undertake higher degree research.

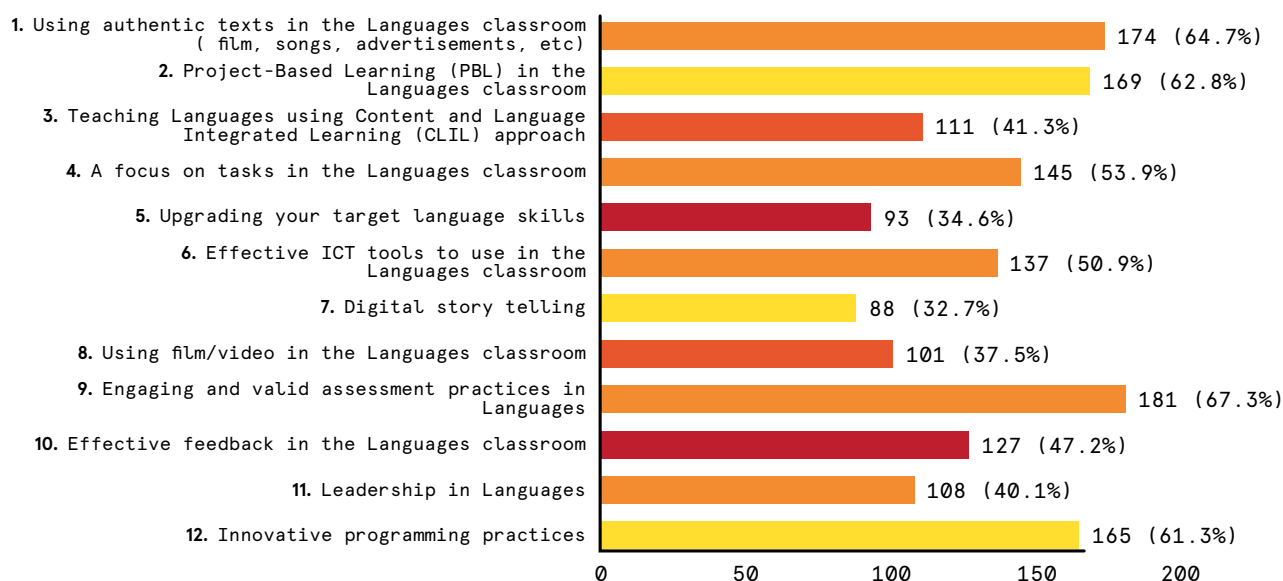
In 2018 we developed a Master of Education (Languages) program at the request of NESA as a pathway for existing languages teachers in NSW schools to gain accreditation as highly accomplished or lead teachers. The program combines languages study and research with educational leadership and management units for an estimated 7,000 languages teachers in NSW. The new degree strand and six new units of study were approved by the University of Sydney.

As part of the process, we also undertook an online survey of languages teachers in NSW. The respondents (n=282) confirmed the need for a postgraduate qualification which combined education and language research. The responses on professional learning indicated the main needs were workshops on assessment, using authentic texts, teaching through content areas and leadership in languages education.

In 2021 SICLE developed a series of workshops addressing these areas. Over 80 teachers have enrolled. The aim of these workshops is to foster the importance of professional learning which combines language development (workshops are run in the target language) and educational leadership and research.

The start of the Master of Education program for 2022 has been delayed because of financial concerns.

What type of professional learning do you need? Tick all that are relevant to you.



Response from online survey of NSW language teachers on professional learning needs

Capacity building in language communities

Capacity building in larger schools and language communities

This section of the yearbook explores the work of SICLE in building school capacity.

In 2020, our work has been underpinned by three research findings:

- The needs of lower-SES schools and less commonly taught languages. These language schools find it hardest to survive; fees are low and it is often hard to get teachers. Communities are sometimes dispersed and even getting to the Community Languages school is difficult for many parents. These schools need the most support.
- Language groups differ greatly in their migration histories and social issues in Australia. Different approaches must be taken with different languages and these approaches must be based on needs identified by the communities.
- Professional learning is most effective when it is conducted in the teachers' community language. One reason for this is that the levels of English among teachers vary considerably. Script, tone, grammar and student needs also vary greatly from language to language. However, this is not to deny the value of teachers working together across languages, as happens in our major professional language programs.

The following examples are organised according to language groups.

Chinese

Chinese is the main language taught in NSW Community Languages schools. It is also the main language, after English, spoken by students in NSW schools (DoE, 2019).

Overall numbers in Chinese Community Languages schools have increased by 16.5 per cent since 2004. The newer wave of migration is Mandarin speakers, half of whom are Australian-born; the older migration is Cantonese speakers from Hong Kong, with 73 per cent being Australian-born (ABS, 2016).

In 2020 SICLE organised four meetings where school leaders identified and discussed issues of concern to their schools. As a result, the leadership group of key school leaders is setting up a principal mentoring program, with experienced principals taking on a mentoring role with new and less experienced school leaders.

Smaller and regional Chinese language schools were identified as particularly needing support. A plan of action addressing these issues was agreed on and schools have been working together to provide this.

Running parallel with this has been professional development for Chinese language teachers. In 2020 Project Officer, Cathy Qiao, ran numerous Zoom workshops in Chinese, supporting the shift to online teaching. A wealth of resources in Chinese has since been uploaded on the *OpenLanguage* portal, and mid-year workshops, in which teachers present teaching strategies and ideas for their peers, are being organised for June 2021.

Chinese language workshops have attracted teachers from all education systems and from all Australian states as well as overseas. A Chinese language strand is planned for the 2021 International Heritage Languages Education Conference to be held at the University of Sydney.

Although there are regional and dialect differences in the Chinese-speaking community, schools and teachers have been working hard to establish continuing teaching and learning structures.

Arabic

Arabic is the second language, other than English, most spoken in NSW by five- to 18-year-olds. Numbers of Arabic speakers in government schools have increased by 53.9 per cent since 2004. In Community Languages schools, however, the number of enrolments has only increased by 19 per cent during that same period.

Arabic language schools are generally affiliated with organisations that are religious and/or regionally based, although school enrolments are becoming much broader. Most schools would agree that there have been few avenues in the past for schools to work together. In 2020, however, there were four meetings of Arabic language school leaders/principals. Again, the strengths and needs of the schools were explored and principals identified key goals and strategies.

Project Officers Enaam Darido and Nada Awad have worked hard to gain the trust and support of the teachers and schools. The main focus has been on professional development for teachers across schools, and there were many workshops where teachers presented and discussed resources. As a result, teachers gradually began sharing and uploading resources onto the *OpenLanguage* portal.



The breakthrough was the Zoom workshops that were run during the COVID-19 lockdown. Through these, teachers shared their experiences, ideas and strategies. The Project Officers then organised and ran a series of workshops about using the resources on the portal which included looking at how to use additional resources which could complement teaching from textbooks. Teachers reported greater student engagement as a result of these workshops.

The breakthrough from the zoom workshops then led to two key online workshops in 2021 where Professor Mahmoud Al Batal (American University of Beirut) presented to over 200 school leaders and teachers.

An Arabic language competition, *Arabic and Me* – arabicandme.org.au – was also organised in 2021. K-2 students were asked to produce a drawing, 3-6 and 7-10 students, PowerPoint presentations or video clips around the topic of 'Why learn Arabic?'. Some 170 entries, all of a high standard, were submitted and an awards ceremony took place in June 2021 with over 400 teachers, students, parents and community representatives.

As a spin off from these activities, Principals have formed working networks and organisations. However, the most striking outcome has been the engagement and involvement of Arabic language teachers across Australia.

Project Officers have been organising a series of mid-year Zoom workshops for teachers as well as an Arabic language strand at the 2021 International Conference.

Vietnamese

Vietnamese is a language 'at risk' in Community Languages schools. It is the third main language, after

English, spoken by students in NSW and numbers of speakers have increased in government schools by 41.8 per cent since 2004. Enrolments in Vietnamese Community Languages schools, however, have fallen by 32.3 per cent.

There has been some collaboration but no sharing of resources between schools; each school tends to have its own textbook. Building on a DoE-organised teacher workshop in 2017, SICLE organised workshops for school leaders/principals in 2018 and 2019. The main focus for the Project Officer, Mai Denny, was on the development and sharing of resources and supporting the shift to online teaching during the COVID-19 crisis.

Vietnamese language teachers are, on average, over 50 and expressed the need for greater knowledge of IT. To meet this need, Mai ran 20 Zoom workshops with 141 teachers attending. Teachers also attended workshops to develop and share resources.

Evaluations of Vietnamese language schools since indicate a successful shift to online and blended learning. A further outcome has been the development of networks of teachers across schools and a marked increase in sharing of resources for the *OpenLanguage* portal.

Current plans include workshops on digital storytelling and other strategies for student engagement.

Greek

The maintenance of Greek is strong across five- to 18-year-olds, with a 91 per cent retention rate (ABS, 2016) in language schools, although numbers are falling in classes in mainstream schools.

As the Greek-speaking community becomes dispersed geographically, there has been a shift from second to

third generation Australian students. Initially schools and teachers were sceptical about ‘another’ project to develop resources as this had happened many times in the past. However, through the efforts of Project Officers, Katerina Vetsikas and Paraskevi Triantafyllopoulou, the trust and respect of teachers and school leaders was gained and the process made possible.

In meetings, principals/school leaders identified key areas of focus. One issue was that there were many resources but no single place where they were accessible. The development of the *OpenLanguage* portal made available resources of various types (e.g. textbooks, units of work, performance scenarios, games etc.) and from a range of sources (e.g. individual teachers or formal educational institutions).

During the COVID-19 crisis, a spirit of sharing and mutual support among teachers developed. Now Greek language schools from all over Australia (and the USA) have joined this newly established network.

Korean

Korean is the fifth largest language group after English in NSW (ABS, 2016) and a fast-growing language in this state. However, the language is at a crucial stage of retention.

The increase in enrolments in Korean language schools of 11.5 per cent compares with a increase of Korean speakers in the population of 54 per cent.

A key issue identified by Project Officers, Dr Sungbae Ko and Deborah Kyoungna Kim, was the lower levels of English of the teachers and thus their lack of access to professional learning. To address this, in 2020 Deborah Kim organised and ran a version of the Community Language Teaching program (Foundation) in Korean for a group of 25 teachers.

Indian languages

Collectively, Indian languages account for 20.2 per cent of all LBOTE Language Background other than English (LBOTE) students in NSW government schools (CESE, 2020).

Of the 24 Indian languages reported, Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil and Urdu each represented the backgrounds of more than 5,000 students. There were six other Indian languages with more than 1,000 students: Gujarati, Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Sinhalese and Telugu. All of these languages have growing numbers of students in Community Languages schools.

Project Officers Varsha Daithankar and Swati Doshi (for Gujarati, Hindi and Marathi), Branavie Rajasingam

(for Tamil) and Amanpreet Kamal (for Punjabi) ran over 30 workshops during the COVID-19 lockdown to train teachers in online classes. They used interactive methods of teaching as well as other strategies like Kahoot, Mentimetre and Quizlet.

Evaluations showed that parents in these and other Indian languages schools became much more interested and involved in their children’s language learning. Project Officers are now contacting schools around Australia and overseas to extend teacher networks. They are also supporting the growing numbers of Indian language teachers who are undertaking upgrading programs so they can become accredited teachers in Australia.

Japanese

Japanese ranks seventh in the number of students in Community Languages schools. The school populations are diverse and schools have traditionally tended to operate separately.

Project Officer Yoshiyuki Oguro has focused on encouraging teachers across schools to participate in workshops on the development and sharing of resources and teaching strategies. She also supported the move to online teaching with 27 Japanese language teachers across eight schools.

The key developments have been teachers seeing themselves as part of a larger professional community of Japanese teachers in Community Languages schools and increased interest in professional learning. Further workshops with parents and community members will focus on how parents in mixed marriages can support their children’s language learning.

Building capacity in smaller schools for less commonly taught languages

One third of the 64 language communities in NSW have fewer than 50 students enrolled in Community Languages schools, and 25 per cent of those schools consist of only one class.

SICLE’s work with smaller and emerging communities was focused on developing capacity through specific initiatives. Larger communities, in forming networks of schools and teacher groups, could build sustainable support structures for their schools. Smaller and emerging language communities, especially those catering for less affluent communities, lack resources to achieve this. The goal, therefore, was to design and build initiatives which were appropriate to the specific strengths and needs of each set of language schools. In some cases this involved two or three schools working together on grant submissions; in other cases it was schools developing resources together or working on promoting their schools to the community.

The following examples describe some of these efforts.

Turkish

Turkish speakers are a small and not very visible language community in NSW, with Turkish ranking 15th in the number of speakers aged 5 to 18 years old. The Turkish-speaking community is also becoming increasingly dispersed as settlement patterns change: the children are now second and third generation Australians.

Teachers of Turkish reported that previously there had been little interaction between schools. With the help of Project Officers Selin Erey and Nazmiye Iyidilli, the teachers from eight different schools participated in workshops and shared teaching ideas, strategies and resources. These connections have continued, and teachers in Victorian Turkish schools have also been brought into this group.

Nazmiye Iyidilli and other teachers developed units of work around 'rich tasks', for example a teaching and learning unit called 'Amazing Turkey Travel Expo' for Year 6/Stage 3. This unit focused on students developing a promotional pamphlet to be presented as a travel package at the 'travel expo'.

They also ran workshops in Turkish on teaching scope and sequence, using online resources including Zoom, and on differentiation (catering for different levels in the one class) and formative/ ongoing assessment. Teachers of Turkish from mainstream schools also attended.

A key initiative has been the development of four promotional video clips targeting parents, younger and older children, and the general Turkish-speaking community which aim to increase attendance at the Turkish schools. Project Officers Asli Alca, Selin Erey and Nazmiye Iyidilli worked with filmmaker Anna Breckon developing these videos.

Persian/Dari

Persian/Dari speakers comprise the 10th largest group of students in NSW Community Languages schools. In a meeting organised for school leaders and principals, the key focus was identified as the development and collection of teaching and learning resources. Project Officer Maryam Jabbari has collected over 300 resources and conducted over nine workshops with teachers around developing and using these.

Assyrian and Chaldean

Assyrian and Chaldean language schools represent a small but growing community. Many of these speakers are of refugee background and have come from contexts where their language was suppressed. Hence, many young people and adults have had little or no access to the formal written form of their language.



Project Officers Alice George and Atra Mirza have run 25 workshops for the four Assyrian and Chaldean schools on how to use Zoom and other IT platforms, as well how to access resources via computer technology. The teachers have worked together across these schools, developing teaching resources. Their aim in 2021 is to continue to work collaboratively and create units of work that will cover all stages of language learning so that all Assyrian/Chaldean language schools use the same teaching materials.

SICLE acknowledges the work of Lindy Cassidy, Tric Kenny and Elizabeth Makris in building capacity in these Community Languages schools. As Project Managers, they got the curriculum projects established and working. Merryl Wahlin oversaw the *OpenLanguage* portal from conception to fruition.

“I believe that the various SICLE’s projects for supporting the education of community languages are contributing significantly not only to the future of community languages in Australia but also to ensuring and enhancing the multiculturalism and pluralism of this country.”

Para, SICLE Project Officer

The feedback we’ve received from participants in this initiative reflects the optimism of all who have worked on these projects. Funding for the curriculum projects and their officers has finished, but we hope that the networks that have been established will continue and the usefulness of the *OpenLanguage* portal will grow.

Other research

Building a research evidence base for Community Languages education

A key mission of SICLE has been the development of a research base to inform policy and programs for Community Languages schools.

Our team has developed a strong network of researchers across tertiary institutions and educational sectors in NSW. The Tertiary Working Party has met seven times with 20 to 30 researchers, postgraduate students and policy makers. Participants have presented and shared their research interests, and the meetings have resulted in collaborative research projects between universities.

SICLE has also made links nationally and internationally. We represent NSW at the Community Languages Australia national forum; we have also presented our research at national conferences and developed two collaborative Australian Research Council (ARC) submissions with colleagues from Canberra University, the University of Melbourne and the University of Queensland.

The research field in Community Languages schools has grown dramatically in the past 20 years, with more than 300 research reports, studies, journal articles, books and book chapters internationally.

SICLE is conducting a meta-analysis of this research. An emerging finding is the lack of connection among the work going on in the United Kingdom, Europe, North America, New Zealand and Australia: the systems and the research in these operate largely in isolation, with some notable exceptions (Cruickshank, Nordstrom & Bai, *in prep*).

The development of international networks is, thus, one of SICLE's goals. We have presented at key Community Languages schools conferences in the United States of America and Canada. We have also involved key researchers from North America in Community Languages schools conferences here in Australia. In particular, the 2021 International Community/Heritage Language Education Conference to be held at the University of Sydney in November 2021 will feature keynote addresses and workshops from internationally recognised researchers as well as nationally acclaimed researchers in the field of Community/Heritage language learning.

Work with European research networks has focused on collaboration in terms of teachers of migrant and refugee backgrounds. We have participated in conferences and research publications with the Requal group and in broader educational research conferences.



In the United Kingdom we have developed links with key researchers working in the area of technology and language teaching and also Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Several key researchers in this field are presenting at our 2021 conference. SICLE has also been fortunate to work with Professor Mahmoud Al-Batal (American University of Beirut) who has been a key instigator in the communicative teaching of Arabic. Our research program has been guided by two adjunct professors, Professor Mike Baynham (Leeds University) and Professor Joseph Lo Bianco (Melbourne University).

We have thus managed to foster a strong network of researchers in the field of languages education research within Australia and have also developed continuing international collaborations.

Internationally educated teachers (IETs)

SICLE's main research program relates to our study of teacher mobility – of teachers with overseas training gaining re-accreditation in Australia.

Our first study, of teachers in their first professional learning programs in NSW Community Languages schools asks the research question: *What are the perceptions and understandings and information needs of overseas-trained teachers wanting to re-enter the profession in Australia?*

The second study takes a dual approach and looks at the structure of pre-service teacher education and the extent to which it meets teachers' needs and draws on their skills and knowledge. The key question is: *What are the strengths and needs of staff and a culturally diverse student cohort undertaking upgrading teacher education in Australia?*

The third study focuses on teacher decisions and the factors influencing these decisions prior to and just after re-entering the teaching profession. The main research question is: *What contributes to teachers' decisions to re-enter or leave their teaching careers in Australia?*

The project is a joint one with researchers at ACU and WSU, and we expect the results of our research will make a significant contribution to this emerging field of international research. Researchers have been tracking and interviewing teachers in the community who are deciding on whether or not to requalify as teachers.

We have also been tracking teachers in their tertiary programs at WSU and ACU, using interviews and surveys. This has also involved interviewing lecturers in the program on their perceptions of the teachers and the adjustments they have made in their courses for inclusion.

SICLE is one of several international networks of researchers in this area. With researchers in North America we participated in a special issue of the *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* (Cruickshank, 2015). We presented our findings at the International Re/qual Conference, Paths of Transition in Education – Requalification of (Recently) Immigrated and Refugee Teachers in Europe and Beyond (March 2021). We are also part of a special upcoming issue of the *European Journal of Educational Research*.

Australian research into internationally educated teachers goes back to the 1980s. Although most educational jurisdictions have policies and online information for these teachers, there remain many barriers such as lack of accessible information, absence of support in English language development, and financial/work and family issues. The research being conducted by SICLE will be of significance particularly in the European context where teacher migration is much more recent.

Assessing language proficiency

Australia is one of the world's most multilingual countries.

There are over 400 languages spoken in the community and 18 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home (ABS, 2017). Language study forms a key part of the school curriculum and yet there is no way of knowing what language proficiency any learner in any languages classroom has achieved. There is also no consistent and coherent way for teachers to accredit students' language proficiency. This compares with the requirements for the teachers' English language proficiency accreditation and also with the range of assessments for student English language proficiency.

SICLE has taken on assessment as its second key goal. We have a program of research around the development of the Languages Progression and Passport, as outlined in previous sections (see pages XX). The research design combines quantitative and qualitative methods through a combination of evaluative and language case studies, in line with major educational assessment research.

This mixed method approach was chosen to address two key questions:

- To what extent can evidence-based language learning progressions reflect the diversity in Australian learners, curriculum, learning contexts and pathways?

- Can such progressions provide consistent and coherent data for the monitoring and evaluation of language learning, curriculum and policy implementation?

We are collecting evidence at every stage of our project to support claims for validity and reliability of this model of classroom-based assessment.

SICLE is taking a different approach with the accreditation of teacher language proficiency. We were contracted and asked to develop two assessments, the CLTT and the VLPT to assess language proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing in up to 30 languages. We worked with existing instruments to develop these tests, and are undertaking research into aspects of validity and reliability of the CLTT and VLPT.

This work considers two research questions:

- Is there sufficient evidence for alignment of the CLTT and VLPT tests with the International Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ISLPR) Level 3 and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) Level C1.2, considered as minimum vocational proficiency?
- Is there sufficient evidence to support the intended interpretations and uses of the CLTT and VLPT assessments?

Tests are being aligned with international instruments such as the CEFR and the ISLPR. The research assistant/s would undertake standard procedures in test alignment developed for CEFR. An expert panel of tertiary academics/researchers from each of the main languages tested – Arabic, Chinese, French (VLPT only), Greek (CLTT only), Hindi, Japanese and Korean – is being appointed.

Two experts for each language will assess content, construct and face validity of each test. The 2020/2021 tests for these languages would be double marked by examiners who had been thoroughly briefed in the tests, and the results analysed.

The 2021 candidates (both successful and unsuccessful) would also be interviewed in depth to explore the appropriateness of the level required in the test for classroom teaching, and their views of the benefits and issues of the test. This would be done in light of their teaching experience. Experienced community languages teachers would be asked the same questions. Both studies provide ways to address the gap in language assessment in Australia.

Learning management system

The administration staff in Community Languages schools are generally volunteer teachers or principals. They deal with the enrolments and attendance of more than 37,000 students. Their record keeping and reports are important for NSW Department of Education funding as well as for the weekly operation of the schools.

In 2018 SICLE undertook a scoping study and trial of a learning management system (attendance and enrolment program) for NSW Community Languages schools at the request of the NSW Department of Education. The aim was to simplify and streamline the administrative burden on schools and bring them into a coherent and consistent online platform.

After conducting the scoping study, we tendered for a commercial supplier for the trial in 10 Community Languages schools. Sentral Education was the successful tenderer.

A representative sample of languages, and of small and large schools, participated in this trial. Teachers were provided with training in the platform and were given regular support and workshops by SICLE and Sentral who had a dedicated staff member attached to schools. There were also training modules and videos.

The aim of the platform was to facilitate attendance and enrolment procedures for the schools with online apps that could be accessed by teachers' phones and administrative staff. Several features were added to the platform during the trial. Program evaluation data were collected in mid- and post-trial surveys through interviews with teachers in each school and by analysis of online data, emails and other documents. Many benefits were identified in the trial.

- The platform and resources provided by Sentral Education were generally rated highly by schools.
- Teachers liked the training modules and support.
- Larger schools found the system easy to use and there were benefits for schools with several campuses. These schools also found that reporting to government was made simple and that administration became easier.

The implementation was difficult in smaller schools and schools where teachers had little access to the internet and less facility with IT.

- Most teachers in smaller schools did not use the platform because they were not confident in English.
- Smaller schools preferred their own system and even pen and paper record keeping.



- Teacher turnover in some schools meant that there was often only one teacher in the school capable of using the system and there was little time to train others.
- Certain aspects such as SMS to parents were difficult; schools were concerned about the continuing cost of the program and also the shorter-term costs of using SMS.
- Some schools were concerned at the use of their data by others who had access to it.

The conclusion was that for larger and well organised schools the online attendance and enrolment system would be useful given continuing government support for the platform and government approval of the platform selected. Overall, however, we recommended against the online attendance and enrolment system for several reasons:

- The platform required knowledge and technology skills that many teachers lacked.
- The levels of language required stopped many teachers from participating.
- Smaller schools and those with existing online systems were reticent to participate.
- Schools were concerned about the continuing costs, possible breaches of information privacy and the need for system level approval for the choice of platform.

Science and language

In 2018 SICLE conducted an intervention/research project in eight low-SES secondary schools in Sydney and Wollongong. Funded by the NSW Department of Education, it involved school teams comprising the Science Head Teacher, a class teacher and an English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) teacher plus one other teacher developing units of work for Year 8 classes with high numbers of EALD students.

This project, 'Investigating EALD education in Secondary Science', looked at school-based professional learning and explored the integration of language and literacy support in Science. Units were developed around 'rich tasks' which involved students researching and presenting their findings to challenging and engaging real-world problems in Science. Schools were supported with professional learning workshops, teacher relief for in-school planning and visits by university mentors.

The main research questions were:

- How do the knowledge and pedagogical practices of secondary Science and EALD teachers develop from their participation in a targeted, subject-specific EALD intervention program including professional learning and a school-based collaborative action inquiry informed by the professional learning?
- What evidence is there to support or challenge the claim that teachers' participation in this program leads to improvement in student Science, and language and literacy practices, understandings and outcomes?
- What are the critical success factors for this type of EALD intervention program to realise long-term benefits?

Data collection included teacher focus groups and individual interviews before, during and after the intervention – which were video and audio recorded – as well as participant surveys, researcher notes, and document collection of teaching and other relevant resources.



The key finding was that teacher professional knowledge and skills in Science, language and literacy, and meeting the needs of EALD students, developed markedly as a result of the intervention project. In addition, schools reported key growth in student engagement and understanding of Science and accompanying language and literacy skills, although the length of the project was too short to gauge improvement in student Science language and literacy practices.

The study identified critical success factors as:

- Working from understandings of student Science and language/literacy strengths and needs by continuing analysis of work samples, thus providing the basis of shared understanding and goals between teachers
- School-based professional learning for teachers involving in-school time to plan units of work collaboratively and reflect on teaching
- Using rich tasks to frame units of work
- Identifying essential learning and devising skills and conceptual outcomes
- Contingent scaffolding of language and literacy support embedded in high challenge teaching
- Having tertiary support and workshops to support teachers in the development of collaborative team teaching.

The study identified the need to conceptualise the inter-relationships between Science and language/literacy teaching and learning to reflect what was developed at school level. This model has four key features:

- Identification of shared conceptual tools and alignments between the subject discipline and language/literacy education

- Shared focus on EALD and all student strengths and needs in disciplinary, language/literacy learning and on contingent scaffolding to address these
- Use of rich tasks to frame the teaching design, delivery, assessment and outcomes
- Greater emphasis on longer-term learning through skills development (disciplinary and language/practices) rather than pre-determined content or pedagogy.

This model requires a shift to characterising Science and EALD education as disciplinary and language/literacy practices rather than pre-determined static bodies of knowledge or teaching strategies. Such an approach is foregrounded in federal and state K-10 Science curriculums which highlight the need to work from everyday knowledge to conceptual understanding and the application of skills and knowledge to real-life concerns.

EALD education is not a set of pre-determined language or learning strategies. Recent research in this field emphasises the need to meet student strengths and needs with high challenge, high support subject and language learning in mainstream classrooms.

The findings from the study of EALD education in secondary Science support the process of school-based professional learning with relief and support from outside mentors. The project also supports the development of disciplinary-specific ways to align literacy and subject learning in secondary schools.

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