

# Languages literature review

Senior syllabus redevelopment

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# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Overview of methodology and findings .....	1
Summary of recommendations .....	3
<b>1 Subject group: Significant emerging trends</b> .....	<b>4</b>
1.1 Assessment .....	4
1.2 Pedagogical approaches .....	5
1.3 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses .....	9
1.4 Recommendations .....	16
<b>2 Subjects in the group: Overview, comparison and connections</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Comparable syllabus documents from selected Australian and international jurisdictions .....	19
2.2 Recommendations .....	20
2.3 Connections with the Australian Curriculum .....	21
2.4 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses .....	22
2.5 Recommendations .....	24
<b>3 Learning expectations</b> .....	<b>25</b>
3.1 Scope of learning across Australian and international jurisdictions .....	25
3.2 Recommendations .....	28
<b>4 Future focus: 21st century skills</b> .....	<b>31</b>
4.1 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses .....	32
4.2 Recommendations .....	32
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>34</b>

# Executive summary

## Syllabuses comprising the Languages subject group

<b>Authority syllabuses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chinese 2008</li><li>• Chinese Extension 2011</li><li>• French 2008</li><li>• French Extension 2009</li><li>• German 2008</li><li>• German Extension 2009</li><li>• Indonesian 2008</li><li>• Indonesian Extension 2009</li><li>• Italian 2008</li><li>• Japanese 2008</li><li>• Korean 2008</li><li>• Modern Greek 2008</li><li>• Spanish 2008</li><li>• Vietnamese 2008</li></ul>
<b>Authority-registered syllabuses</b>	N/A
<b>VET qualifications</b>	N/A (Individual units of competency only — no qualifications)

## Overview of methodology and findings

### Syllabuses selection

The Australian Languages' syllabus documents selected for this review included those of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. International syllabus documents included New Zealand, Scotland and British Columbia (Canada). Apart from more geographically local languages such as Indonesian or Tongan, the range of languages taught in the Scottish and the Canadian examples are similar to those in New South Wales and Victoria.

New Zealand was chosen on the basis of it sharing a similar culture to Australia and the fact that English is the de facto official language and is used widely. Hence, the New Zealand Ministry of Education (*Te Tahuhu o te Matauranga*) Curriculum was selected as well as Level 8 extensions.

The Scottish syllabus documents were selected because these serve as a national curriculum in the upper secondary levels. This is unlike the United Kingdom's national curriculum (covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland) which does not include Languages and where these are taught at the discretion of schools. Materials from Education Scotland's resource *Languages: Assessing progress and achievement in significant aspects of learning* were selected as examples.

Canada does not have a national curriculum, although several states under the auspices of the Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education have joined in developing a

*Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages*. Examples of Integrated Resource Packages for selected languages taught in British Columbia have, therefore, been selected.

## Data extraction

Data extraction focused on assessment, and teaching and learning practices. In most cases, the information in syllabus documents for individual languages was identical except for different topics and dissimilar writing systems. A detailed review of syllabus documents was conducted for Chinese, French, German and Indonesian (or Japanese if Indonesian was not offered). The French and Chinese syllabus documents have been addressed in detail while similarities and differences with other syllabus documents have been noted. In general, differences occurred at the point of subtopic expansion and grammatical examples.

Syllabus documents also varied according to year level and prior language knowledge. In this case, the highest stage within the schooling system was selected with examples of ‘second language continuing’ and ‘extension studies’ being reviewed — because this combination would most likely match Queensland senior secondary needs. In addition, the Queensland senior secondary syllabuses and Years 1–9 curriculum (i.e. *Essential Learnings*) as well as the F–10 Australian Curriculum were reviewed.

## Data synthesis

The syllabus documents differed from each other in various ways with each showing a trend or trends that could be considered in the redevelopment of the Queensland model.

Four major trends were identified for assessment procedures and twelve related to teaching and learning. From these, thirteen recommendations were extracted. A further two recommendations were provided from the comparison of the Queensland and reviewed syllabus documents, although some overlap is evident. A further three recommendations were provided outlining the implications for structuring of the redeveloped syllabuses as well as three recommendations for the scope of learning. Four recommendations were made for 21st century skills.

Note that the review did not concern script versus non-script or European versus non-European languages. Given the widespread standardisation of the syllabuses and associated documents within each jurisdiction (which often contained identical components<sup>\*</sup>) there was not sufficient evidence of different approaches to teaching and learning to warrant such contrasts.

Where considered appropriate, references are provided for those constructing the new Queensland syllabus to further investigate the identified trends. A reference list is provided at the end of the document.

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<sup>\*</sup> With the exception of study topics and assessment requirements about learnt characters etc.

## Summary of recommendations

Three Australian state jurisdictions and three international jurisdictions have been reviewed to provide a total of 26 recommendations in this literature review. Specifically, they address trends in assessment, and learning and teaching practice; and differences in the scope, structure and sequencing of syllabus documents; as well as identifying contrasts with the Australian Curriculum.

- Recommendations 12, 14, 22 and 26 refer to assessment.
- Recommendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 23, 24 and 25 refer to teaching and learning.
- Recommendations 1, 2, 7, 11, 15, 17, 18, 20, and 21 refer to syllabus design, scope, structure and balance.

# 1 Subject group: Significant emerging trends

## 1.1 Assessment

The major trends evident in the review of the three Australian (New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia) and three international (New Zealand, Scotland and British Columbia) syllabus documents include:

- constructive alignment
- moving between languages
- assessment for learning
- independent learning
- assessing depth of textual understanding
- language learning strategies.

### Constructive alignment

A major trend in the reviewed syllabus documents was the alignment of assessment tasks and criteria with student learning and teaching practice. Based on Biggs' (2003) model, constructive alignment requires clear connection between three points: the intended learning outcomes, what students learn, and how they are assessed. As Biggs (1996) explains 'the curriculum or unit objectives are clearly stated in terms of content specific levels of understanding that imply appropriate performances, the teaching methods require students to be placed in contexts that will likely elicit those performances, and the assessment tasks address those same performances' (Biggs 1996, p. 361). The learning outcomes are established before teaching begins and explicit links back to them from both the learning and assessment experience are required. This was particularly evident in the New South Wales Languages syllabus documents and implicit in several other models where each prescribed outcome was accompanied by both suggested instructional strategies and suggested assessment strategies.

### Moving between the target language and English

Several syllabus documents included assessing the skill of moving confidently between English and the target language. In terms of assessment, this includes responses to English stimuli (generally questions) in the target language, and responses to the target language stimuli in English.

### Assessment is for learning

An important trend evident in the Scottish context was ongoing or formative assessment — it is entitled *Assessment is for Learning* (AiFL) and is underpinned by research by Black and William

(1998) and Senge and Scharmer (2001). The assessment model has two focuses: 'the learner's perception of a gap between the present position and a desired learning goal and what the learner does to close this gap ... So it's the learner, not the teacher who is at the centre of the process ...' (Young 2005, p. 7). In this model, therefore, students are actively encouraged to engage with their learning at a metacognitive level.

## **Independent learning**

Independent research, active learning or inquiry was frequently used as a learning activity whereby students could learn about the target language country, culture and society with a subsequent written and/or oral presentation of their findings. This trend towards independent learning was evident in the students' own preparation of their conversation assessment stimuli (e.g. a diagram, photograph, poster, article, advertisement, brochure) which bears a relationship with the topics covered in their unit. Further evidence of this trend is in the development of portfolios. These contain examples of recorded interactions and writing completed over the course of study.

## **Holistic approaches**

Most syllabus documents contained aims, objectives, outcomes and/or key competencies, which focused on an overall understanding of language as a system for communicating opinions, ideas and experiences in a range of contexts. Additionally, students were generally expected to critically examine and evaluate target language texts on subjects that were most relevant to them, e.g. youth issues, leaving home, personal attitudes. Specific mention of basic macroskills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were generally subordinate to these higher level cognitive abilities.

# **1.2 Pedagogical approaches**

Emerging trends in pedagogical approaches include the following:

- constructive alignment
- using ICT in the classroom
- personalising the curriculum
- moving between the first/home language and the target language
- focus on text types and textual functions
- focus in performance
- numeracy
- critical and creative thinking



- learning strategies
- links to other learning areas
- research-based teaching approaches
- higher order thinking
- global citizenship.

## Constructive alignment

As mentioned in Section 1.1. Assessment — [Constructive alignment](#), the strict constructive alignment evident in the New South Wales Languages syllabus documents (and implied in other syllabus documents) results in pedagogical approaches which align with the learning outcomes and the teaching focus so that specific learning outcomes are linked to the learning and teaching activities.

## Syllabus organisation, structure and focuses

None of the reviewed syllabus documents were divided in terms of the major macroskills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). These were generally grouped under receptive/responsive skills and literacy. Frequently, the linguistic focus of the syllabus document would be directed to text analysis (context, purpose, audience) or language functions (such as recognising and producing persuasive, creative and discursive texts) or critically examining the prescribed texts, whether audio, visual or print based. In the New Zealand Chinese syllabus documents, it is noted that with a communicative approach, all forms of discourse will ‘reinforce the other’ and that importance should be placed on conversation and listening skills with the introduction of ‘appropriate grammar as needed’. In the Scottish Higher Chinese syllabus documents, these macroskills occur under the category of ‘Literacy skills’. Other skills are ‘Citizenship’ and ‘Thinking skills’, placing the focus of specific macroskills even lower in the hierarchy of focuses. Moreover, Scottish Higher and Advanced Higher language courses place receptive and responsive macroskills in different units: *Understanding Language* and *Using Language*.

However, when prescribed language examples are listed, the pattern and nomenclature reflects the teaching of specific macroskills. Also, in spite of this more holistic approach to language instruction, assessment regimes for all jurisdictions still seek to assess macroskills, along with language functions and ability by way of specific oral or written texts.

## Using ICT in the classroom

Throughout the researched syllabus documents, a strong trend was the use of ICT in the classroom. This is recommended and sometimes prescribed with specific activities. The use of ICT is seen as providing an opportunity to access authentic material and to respond to today’s

students' learning preferences. It includes online research and projects requiring PowerPoint and/or desktop publishing. ICT is also seen as bringing the learning 'to life' and 'extending the boundaries of the classroom' (Government of Western Australia 2014, p. 7).

## **Personalising the curriculum**

A further major trend in the reviewed sites was the personalisation of the syllabus documents. The overarching theme of 'the individual' provides opportunities for students to describe in the target language, their own educational aspirations, aspects of their personal world, values, opinions, ideas and relationships with others. This can create a stronger connection with the target language than the learning of vicarious or imagined experiences. The Canadian syllabus documents, in particular, enable students to have opportunities for personalisation and choice in the curriculum.

## **Moving between the first/home language and the target language**

A strong trend in the reviewed documents was the need for students to move comfortably and confidently between their first/home language and the target language. This was described in the Western Australia syllabus document as being a part of developing intercultural understanding.

## **Focus on text types and textual functions**

In the syllabus documents conforming to a functional grammar model (Butt et al 2000), target language texts — in productive and receptive learning modes — were approached with the aim of developing skills in text analysis; that is, an understanding of context, purpose and audience. Students also experience the functions of language in writing; that is, personal, imaginative, persuasive, informative and evaluative.

## **Focus on performance**

The Canadian syllabus documents, in particular, exemplify a trend towards the promotion of oral skills over written skills. This is endorsed by the principle that 'the goal of language learning is performance with language rather than knowledge about the language' (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2001, p.1). This is further reinforced in the following, 'Grammar instruction plays a supportive role only — to provide some useful strategies to facilitate communication and comprehension' (ibid, p. 1). Hence, students are challenged to speak only the target language in class and encouraged to find opportunities to speak it outside the class. Assessment tasks include roleplays, dramatisations, presentations, and participation in panel discussions. The focus on oral performance is further stressed with regard to written communication whereby 'students' participation is the most important aspect and often more formal assessment is not required' (British Columbia Ministry of Education 2001, p. 69). In the context of performance in the target language, in both the Canadian and New Zealand syllabus documents, students are encouraged to take risks in their language use.

## Numeracy

In the Western Australia syllabus documents, numeracy is stipulated as a general capability. In this second language learning context, numeracy includes understanding and using ‘patterns, order and relationships (number, time and space) in different cultural/linguistic systems’ (Government of Western Australia 2014, p. 7).

## Critical and creative thinking

Further in the Western Australia language learning context, critical and creative thinking is included as a general capability which should enable the students to explore and critically reflect on the target language and culture by noticing, connecting, comparing and analysing what they experience in their learning. Throughout the syllabus documents of other jurisdictions, instruction addresses the development of analytical skills. For example, Objective 2 of the New South Wales Chinese extension syllabus document includes outcomes which require evaluation and critical response. The Chinese syllabus documents in Victoria also require critical responses to spoken and written texts while Scotland’s requires students to ‘construct and maintain lines of argument’. Similarly, whether expressed as skills, objectives or outcomes, the ability to critically analyse and evaluate occurs frequently in the reviewed syllabus documents.

## Learning strategies

An important trend in the teaching of languages in the reviewed syllabus documents, is the development of language learning strategies. However, rather than these strategies referring to ways to learn a language, as accords with earlier Applied Linguistic research (e.g. Oxford 1990) they address ways to cope in unfamiliar situations. They enable the student to communicate in the target language in contexts, which are both expected and unexpected and introduce the students to unpredictable language. Such strategies include using an alternative word or phrase to enhance understanding.

## Links to other learning areas

The relationship between learning a language and learning in other content areas was identified in several syllabus documents. Whether described as ‘explicit connections to cross-curricula learning’ or ‘explicitly connecting the teaching and learning of languages with other learning areas’, or developing interdisciplinary projects, this provided a further trend. The Western Australia syllabus document specifically identifies subject areas called ‘cross-curricula priorities’ (i.e. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia; and Sustainability*) which follows the Australian Curriculum and the Scottish model suggests clear links with learning areas such as enterprise, international education, employability, citizenship and sustainability.

## Research-based teaching approaches

In addition to implementing components from functional grammar, other research also informed the syllabus documents. In the New Zealand context, *Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching* (iCLT) (see Newton et al 2010, see also Rivers n.d.) are introduced to guide teachers, and Ellis' (2005) *Ten principles for instructed second-language acquisition* inform the teaching of language programs.

In the Canadian example, a communicative–experiential approach (a variation of the immersion principle) is endorsed. With this approach, students develop their target language by doing things rather than studying how the language works. 'Instead, they find themselves in a situation where they must use the language for a definite purpose, to complete a clearly defined task' (Ministry of Education 1997, Saskatchewan).

The Scottish syllabus documents adhere to the principles of *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) (Education Scotland n.d.) whereby students take responsibility for their own learning, assess their own strengths and weaknesses, and plan the steps required to improve their learning with input from peers and teachers.

## Global citizenship

A final and consistent trend is the development of effective global citizens. This is approached in various ways in the reviewed syllabus documents, such as cultural respect and ethical understanding; respect for different perceptions of the world; intercultural understanding; collaborating respectfully and experiencing the world in different ways; or as responsible citizens with awareness of other societies and the issues facing the people therein.

# 1.3 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

## Constructive alignment

Structurally, the Queensland language syllabuses provide: seven key competencies; three overarching objectives; four perspectives on teaching and learning; notes on macroskills, language functions and features, and text types, learning strategies, learning experiences, continuous assessment; and exit assessment tasks and criteria.

Noticeably absent is any constructive alignment which overtly links a set of specific learning outcomes with subsequent teaching and assessments activities. Moreover, the key competencies which inform the senior syllabus are general in nature and bear little reference to language learning. The overarching objectives are referred to variously as Comprehension and/or Receptive communication and Conveying meaning and/or Productive communication. The third

objective, Attitudes and values, does not feature strongly in the following instruction, possibly leaving educators to their own resources to fulfil this category.

The redeveloped syllabuses for all Languages need to include explicit constructive alignment linking intended outcomes with teaching and learning activities and continuous and exit assessment.

## **Holistic approaches to language learning**

Throughout the reviewed syllabus documents, specific macroskills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were embedded within more holistic teaching approaches which focused on communication, cultural and social awareness, understanding and sensitivity, global citizenship, text analysis and critical thinking.

A frequent teaching approach requires students to research their choice of topics within a specific area (e.g. creative works). Teaching as ‘inquiry’ was noted in both the Queensland and the New Zealand syllabus documents while in the Scottish Higher and Advanced Higher models, researching (rather than receiving information) using open-ended tasks, internet and media resources and wide-ranging independent reading is advocated.

Nonetheless, assessment regimes in all jurisdictions continue to seek evidence of macroskills whether under the auspices of general communication skills or receptive, responsive or productive skills. Efforts are therefore required to align assessment criteria with the more holistic approaches to language teaching and learning.

## **Using ICT in the classroom**

Using technology is listed as a key competency in the Queensland syllabus and is specifically included in the learning experiences. As to be expected, the introduction of ICT into the classroom features strongly in almost all the reviewed syllabus documents, e.g. using technology is a key competency in the New South Wales syllabus documents. In the Victorian case, specific activities using ICT are prescribed in the learning activities (e.g. accessing specific websites, researching topics, using slide presentation software, completing writing exercises and using desktop publishing). In the Western Australia context, the ATAR syllabus documents stipulate the use of ICT ‘to extend the boundaries of the classroom’ (p. 7). The New Zealand syllabus documents incorporate e-learning because it provides opportunities to increase students’ learning (e.g. enhancing connections, overcoming the impediments of distance and time, enabling the creation of communities of learners); as do the Scottish syllabus documents — while in British Columbia (the Canadian example) technology is recommended as a support for language learning goals, but ‘... should not determine curriculum’ (p. 2).

The redeveloped syllabus for Queensland might contain specified classroom activities for the use of ICT as evident in the Victorian model — and justified using the reasons given in the New

Zealand syllabus documents. In terms of assessment, ICT can be used for the production of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios).

## **Personalising the curriculum**

As the Queensland syllabuses have not adopted the three prescribed themes (the individual, the target language-speaking communities; and the changing world) which have informed the teaching and learning in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, equivalent opportunities are needed for students to connect with the unit content and to personalise their target language use. 'The individual', as a theme, provides for a range of learning activities in which learners can use the target language for their own personal expression. For example, students can use the target language to explore their personal world, aspirations, values, opinions, ideas, and their relationships with others; or to express a greater sense of self in the target language. In the New Zealand syllabus documents, this comes under the heading 'Identity' which enables learners to develop and share personal perspectives.

Educational models such as Marzano's taxonomy (2000) propose that attitudes, beliefs and feelings underlie our willingness to learn and determine our motivation, i.e. opportunities for students to use the target language for expressing their own opinions, emotions, aspirations and values can have a positive impact on learning. The redeveloped Queensland Languages syllabuses should refer specifically to learning activities that draw on self-expression to develop students' skills in the target language.

## **Moving between the first/home language and the target language**

The concept of moving flexibly between languages is not explicitly included in the Queensland syllabus and is only introduced implicitly in the assessment tasks where target language stimuli require written responses in English; however, the purpose of this requirement is not explained. By contrast, the Victorian syllabus documents assess a combination of questioning in English and the target language, which require responses in the target language and combinations thereof. In the Western Australia context, moving between languages and cultures is classified as 'intercultural understanding'.

The redeveloped syllabuses for all Languages need to include the concept of moving confidently between the first/home language and target language given the possibility that many career directions available to language graduates require translation and/or interpretation between languages. It is advised, therefore, that the redeveloped syllabuses follow the example of the Victorian syllabus documents in setting outcomes, learning and teaching activities, and assessment tasks and criteria to address this skill.

## Focus on text types and textual functions

Less detailed information about the study of texts is provided in the Queensland syllabus than in some of the other syllabus documents. Nonetheless, only the Queensland syllabus makes reference to multiliteracies (Cope & Kalantis 2000) by referring to 'what constitutes literacy in today's world' (Queensland Studies Authority 2008, p. 19). An extensive table specifying text types under the headings, 'literary' and 'non-literary texts' guides teachers, while tasks relating to text functions (e.g. negotiation, persuasion) are presented under 'Language functions'.

In contrast, other syllabus documents provide extensive detail, particularly the New South Wales model where all tasks are constructed using five guiding elements: a purpose, a context, an audience, a process, a product. Similar to the Queensland model is the inclusion of a range of text functions (e.g. personal, imaginative, persuasive, informative and evaluative), but the New South Wales model also includes the recognition of tone and register. Further written assessment detail in the Victorian syllabus documents specifies structure and sequence in texts such as appropriate introduction, body and conclusion, and cohesion at the intra- and inter-paragraph level.

Syllabus documents in other jurisdictions do not provide the detailed focus on texts like the above. It is suggested that in the redevelopment of the Queensland Languages syllabuses that some consideration be given to providing more specific guidance to teachers on the analysis of text structure and function.

## Balance

The reviewed syllabus documents vary somewhat in the focus they place on the major macroskills. The Canadian model, in particular, highlights achievement in performance (oral production) in the target language to the detriment of written skills. In other jurisdictions, including Queensland, there is a more balanced focus on the macroskills. The assessment of oral language varies across the jurisdictions, incorporating oral responses to a stimulus (sometimes selected and prepared by the candidate), presentations, responses to questions, discussions and conversations. In the New South Wales context, an extensive range of criteria is included in the assessment of oral language, which constitutes a 10-minute conversation with the examiner. In jurisdictions where portfolios are required, these may contain recorded presentations by the student.

With respect to language learning generally, and no less for oral skills as for other macroskills, in New Zealand, iCLT Principle Six emphasises intercultural communicative competence rather than native-speaker competence, while in the Canadian context, teachers are advised that 'comprehension abilities tend to precede and exceed productive abilities' (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2012, p. 1).



The redeveloped Queensland syllabuses would benefit from a balanced approach to the teaching and learning of macroskills with greater emphasis on how these contribute to students' ability to critically analyse and evaluate oral and written communication in the target language. Attention should also be given to the skills required in the unexpected and unpredictable communicative situations that students will face in external and future activities.

## Numeracy

A trend that has emerged from the Western Australia context is the inclusion of numeracy (introduced also in the Australian Curriculum) where a focus on related language features (number, time and space) are listed separately among the general capabilities.

Again, for the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses, a balanced approach — which responds to the specific needs of the learners and includes considerable target language numeracy skills, both inside the classroom and in external and future activities — is recommended.

## Critical thinking

In general, critical and creative thinking is implicit in the syllabus documents in reference to textual analysis. For example, in the Queensland syllabus, it occurs under the heading of Learning strategies and particularly within the cognitive skills (e.g. deduction/induction, substitution, elaboration, summarisation, translation, transfer, inferencing) within the social/affective skills, and again within the assessment criteria for reading and responding. It is only in the general capabilities of Western Australia syllabus document that 'Critical and creative thinking' are uniquely identified and detailed in terms of students being able to '... explore and reflect critically, as they learn to notice, connect, compare, and analyse aspects of the [target] language and culture' (Government of Western Australia 2014, p7).

The new Queensland syllabus model would benefit from following the example of the Western Australia syllabus documents in specifically addressing critical thinking as a skill that has equivalent importance in learning language as in any other subject/learning area.

## Learning strategies

Two different interpretations of learning strategies can be found in the reviewed syllabuses. In the Queensland context, learning strategies are metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective activities that promote learning. In this sense, the Queensland syllabus accords with early learning strategy research (e.g. O'Malley & Chamot 1990).

Other syllabus documents describe learning strategies specifically as those actions which are applied to overcome communicative difficulty. They include repair strategies, strategies for sustaining verbal communication, for inferring meaning from key words, structures and visual and contextual clues and, in the Western Australia situation, for 'reducing anxiety when trying to comprehend text' (Government of Western Australia 2014, p. 5). In the Canadian syllabus



documents such strategies are expressed more generally, that is, 'to maximize effectiveness of learning and communication' (Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages, p. 8) and similarly in the Scottish model where students learn strategies to apply in unfamiliar situations.

The detailed description of strategies presented in the Western Australia model should be adopted for the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses as such strategies are invaluable for students' coping in the country of their learned second language. More general statements in the other models are also of value.

## Links to other learning areas

Links with other learning areas are not included in the Queensland syllabus, but are stipulated in a number of the other syllabus documents. In the Western Australia context, for example, three cross-curriculum priorities are included (but not necessarily assessed). These are: Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander histories and cultures; Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and Sustainability, while the Scottish document specifies links to enterprise, international education, employability, citizenship, and sustainability. Other syllabus documents include this trend with more general statements about cross-curricular learning.

In the development of a redeveloped Queensland Languages syllabus, consideration of how language learning can be linked to other learning areas should be included.

## Research-based teaching approaches

Apart from cursory mention of multiliteracies (after Cope and Kalantzas 2000), the Queensland syllabus makes few links to the current field of language learning and teaching research, which was evident in most of the other reviewed syllabus documents. For example, the *Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching* (iCLT) (see Newton et al 2009) and Ellis' (2005) *Ten principles for second language acquisition* inform the teaching of language programs in the New Zealand context, and the theory of functional grammar informs both the New South Wales and Victorian models despite not being specifically mentioned.

In the Canadian syllabus documents, a 'communicative–experiential approach' (a variation of the immersion principle) is endorsed whereby students develop their target language through real-life tasks rather than studying how the language works (Ministry of Education, Saskatchewan 1997). The Scottish model adheres to the principles of *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) whereby students take responsibility for their own learning, assess their own strengths and weaknesses and plan steps to improve their learning with input from peers and teachers. While the Queensland syllabuses list continuous assessment as a major operating principle and discuss its value, it provides little instruction or guidance on how continuous assessment can be used to the students' advantage.

It is highly recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses follow the Scottish model of *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) to generate more autonomous, student-centred learning habits among students.

## Global citizenship

While the perspectives on teaching and learning in the Queensland syllabuses include reference to intercultural understanding, such as gaining multiple perspectives on the world by experiencing other languages and cultures (Queensland Studies Authority, 2008, p. 10), the depth of attention to the development of global citizenship is greater in other syllabus documents.

In the Western Australian context, global citizenship is addressed in the *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide — Languages Other Than English* and includes ‘Personal and social capability’, such as collaborating respectfully and experiencing the world in different ways; ‘Ethical understanding’, such as acknowledging and valuing difference in interactions with others and developing respect for diverse ways of perceiving the world; and ‘Intercultural understanding’, such as working with, and moving between languages and cultures. Of particular note, are the multiple references to ‘global perspectives’ in the ‘Cultural understandings’ outcome for ‘Late adolescence’. Under this outcome, students are also taught that ‘texts may be interpreted differently or misinterpreted through not knowing the “cultural schemas” of the target language’, expanding on the ‘Early adolescent’ focus on understanding that ‘cultural identity and diversity within the target language culture and the effects of changes in tradition over time, and stereotypes of the target language culture should be avoided’ (pp. 15–19).

Similar reference to stereotypy is made in the Queensland syllabus. However, in the Western Australian context, the global focus is explicitly linked to students’ engagement with a range of text types. For example, it appears in the Year 12 ATAR syllabus documents’ learning context ‘The changing world’, in which ‘students explore information and communication technologies and the effects of change and current issues in the global community’ (Government of Western Australia, School Curriculum and Standards Authority 2014, p. 9).

The Canadian model offers more general expansion on this learning outcome, that is ‘to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be effective global citizens’ (Ministry of Education, Saskatchewan 1997, p. 61). The related outcome in the Scottish syllabus document is expressed as ‘responsible citizens, who have a growing awareness of life in another society and of the issues facing citizens in the countries where their new language is spoken’ (Scottish Government n.d., p.1) and advocates ‘awareness of social, cultural and geographical aspects of the countries where a particular language is spoken’ (ibid, p 3).

Queensland syllabus redevelopments should pay particular attention to developing culturally sensitive and aware global citizens. The Western Australian example and the relevant outcomes of the other reviewed syllabus documents would make useful references.

## 1.4 Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

It is recommended that an overarching syllabus encompassing teaching and learning in all languages be developed with additional individual documents exemplifying the scope and sequencing of each language/unit to be taught. In this regard, the New Zealand online model is exemplary on the basis of its clarity and ease of use.

### Recommendation 2

It is recommended that all documents relating to the teaching of Languages include explicit constructive alignment linking intended outcomes with subsequent teaching and learning activities and with continuous and exit assessment. Assessment tasks should be clearly related to the course content and vice versa. The link between learning objectives and assessment items should be clearly visible to teachers, learners and their parents. Assessment should be real-world tasks to which students can relate. When particular tasks have been declared to be assessment items, teachers should analyse the task for traits which would be associated with success in the real world, and consider also the language-based skills necessary to achieve the task. These characteristics can then become task criteria with thought given as to their relative weighting. For example, Year 11 students might be asked to write an email of advice to a young French person who is thinking of coming to Brisbane on a working holiday visa. For such an email to be successful, it needs to: engage with the original situation; provide practical and sensible advice; use language appropriate to the participants in the exchange; and deploy structures for giving advice and making suggestions.

### Recommendation 3

It is recommended that the redeveloped syllabus for Queensland contain specified classroom activities that take advantage of the access that ICT provides to the target cultures, their languages and their speakers. The Victorian model provides a good example of this and its justification is provided in the New Zealand syllabus. The production of e-portfolios for assessment purposes can also be implemented.

### Recommendation 4

It is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabus make specific reference to learning activities whereby students can develop their skills in the target language through expression of their own opinions, values and aspirations. This enhances the development of personal connections to the learning experience.

## Recommendation 5

It is recommended that the redeveloped syllabus for Languages include the concept of moving confidently between the first/home language and target language. This is important given the possibility that many career directions available to language graduates require translation and/or interpretation between languages. The redeveloped syllabus might follow the example of the Victorian model in setting outcomes, learning and teaching activities, and assessment tasks and criteria to address this skill.

## Recommendation 6

It is recommended in the redevelopment of the Queensland Languages syllabuses that some consideration is given to providing more specific guidance to teachers on the analysis of text structure and function. Such instruction will assist students in comprehending and interpreting meaning in their target language.

## Recommendation 7

It is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses contain a more holistic approach to teaching languages with a balance of macroskills embedded in outcomes and tasks that are of particular interest to students, and which develop critical thinking and inquiry in the target language. Topics should follow the practice of other syllabus documents which provide opportunities for self-expression (see [Recommendation 4](#)) such as future educational and/or travel aspirations, youth issues, culture, society, creative works, or intergenerational relationships.

However, it should be noted that both internal and external assessment standards are still governed by demonstration of the four macroskills but couched in tasks that may require analysis, evaluation and critical thinking. This suggests that syllabus change also needs to be reflected in assessment standards to prevent a negative effect.

## Recommendation 8

A further recommendation is that numeracy skills in the target language be developed to an equivalent level of fluency as reading and writing. Such skills are frequently required immediately upon entry into the target language culture/country and, as such, address an important future need for language learners. Numeracy is described as a separate general capability in the Western Australian context which provides a model for the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses. A further example of this type of instructional activity is provided in the Canadian syllabus documents for German where students are required to research the economic realities of leaving home and preparing budgets accordingly.

## Recommendation 9

It is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabus follow the example of other syllabus documents in specifically addressing critical thinking explicitly as a skill that has

equivalent importance in learning language as in any other subject/learning area. Critical thinking in second language learning provides the opportunity for deeper cognitive involvement than the surface learning traditions of understanding and translating. Most of the reviewed syllabus documents require research or inquiry into aspects of the target language, its culture and its society. Where syllabus documents are highly text-based, analysis and evaluation of text types is common.

### **Recommendation 10**

It is recommended that the interpretation of strategies presented in the Western Australia model be adopted for the redeveloped Queensland syllabus. Strategies to overcome misunderstandings and miscommunication, in particular, are of fundamental importance to second language learners.

### **Recommendation 11**

It is further recommended that in the redevelopment of a Queensland Languages syllabus, consideration of how language learning can be linked to other learning areas should be considered. This not only provides a broader spectrum for target language use, but can better prepare students for future careers in other areas that may also require the target language.

### **Recommendation 12**

It also recommended that some consideration of current research in language learning and teaching is taken. While several of the reviewed syllabus documents have implemented research-based approaches (Ellis, 2005; Newton et al, 2009), focusing on the preparation of a teaching program in the New Zealand syllabus documents is considered valuable. With regard to assessment, it is highly recommended that the new Queensland syllabus draw on the Scottish learner-centred model of *Assessment is for Learning* (AifL) to generate greater responsibility and autonomy among students.

### **Recommendation 13**

Finally, it is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses pay particular attention to the development of graduates who are culturally sensitive, global citizens and alert to the detrimental effects of stereotyping and racism. The Western Australia model, in particular, leads the way in this respect.

## 2 Subjects in the group: Overview, comparison and connections

### 2.1 Comparable syllabus documents from selected Australian and international jurisdictions

Unlike the Queensland syllabus, the New South Wales syllabus documents are highly structured, reflecting clear constructive alignment with the four learning objectives matched to teaching and learning practices and to assessment tasks and criteria. Six key competencies are identified with three prescribed themes (*The individual*, *The Target language-speaking communities*, and *The changing world*) which reflect those of the Australian Curriculum. The New South Wales syllabus documents have a strong focus on text analysis evident in learning and assessment tasks that require recognition and explanation of the purpose, context, audience, process, and production of a text. This follows a functional grammar approach. Assessment tasks are categorised into *Listening and responding*, *Reading and responding*, *Writing [in Language]* and *Speaking*.

The Victorian syllabus documents adopt the same three themes as New South Wales but provide subtopics for expansion. Two outcomes are prescribed for Year 12 or Unit 4 and reflect a trend towards text analysis similar to the New South Wales model, but focuses more on functions (i.e. personal, imaginative, persuasive, informative and evaluative texts) and structure (i.e. introduction, body and conclusion). Teachers are also provided with a table matching assessment tasks with key competencies and employability skills. Learning activities that explicitly state the inclusion of ICT (such as using websites, online research, PowerPoint, online exercises, and desktop publishing) are specified. Assessment tasks follow the same pattern as the New South Wales model.

Instruction for modern language teachers in Western Australia is provided by three separate documents: the *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide — Languages Other Than English*, the *French Second Language ATAR course*, and the *French Second Language General course*. The ATAR syllabus documents contain course content, general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities (the latter reflecting those of the Australian Curriculum). The Western Australia set of general capabilities also follow those of the Australian Curriculum: *Numeracy in the target language*, *Critical and creative thinking*, *Personal and social capability*, *Ethical understanding* and *Intercultural understanding*. The learning contexts and topics in these syllabus documents are the same as those for New South Wales and Victoria. Assessment tasks and criteria include *Oral communication*, *Listening*, *Viewing and reading*, and *Written*.

The New Zealand syllabus documents have three core strands: *Communication* (core), *Language knowledge* (supporting) and *Cultural knowledge* (supporting). The pedagogy is informed by sets of principles: *The Ten principles for instructed second language acquisition* (after Ellis, 2005) and

the *Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT)* (after Newton et al 2009). Once again, e-learning is also promoted. The New Zealand National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment addresses productive and receptive learning and includes a portfolio-based assessment.

The Canadian (British Columbian) syllabus documents or Canadian Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages contain four 'Curriculum Organizers' — *Communicating, Acquiring information, Experiencing creative works, and Understanding cultural influences*. Teachers are expected to use a communicative–experiential approach which is guided by ten principles. This approach is marked by its bias towards developing 'performance with the language rather than knowledge about the language' (British Columbia: Ministry of Education 2001, p. 1). Written tasks emphasise participation, as formal assessment is not often required. Assessment focuses on *Communicating, Acquiring Information, Experiencing Creative Works* and *Understanding Cultural Influences*.

The Scottish model provides four outcomes and advocates that learning provide experiences in four elements. Formative or continuous assessment is fundamental to the Scottish teaching approach and is presented as *Assessment is for Learning (AiFL)* which demands autonomy and student-centred practice. Students are guided by teachers and peers in raising awareness of their current knowledge and how it needs to be expanded. ICT features as a means for making learning relevant and enjoyable for today's students. The skills assessed include *Listening, Talking, Reading and Writing*.

## 2.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 14

It is recommended that learning experiences specify student-centredness and learner autonomy as evident in the Scottish use of *Assessment is for Learning (AiFL)* (see Black & William 1998).

### Recommendation 15

It is recommended that the principles included in the New Zealand model for program development and intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT) and those embedded in the Canadian model for communicative–experiential approaches be considered in the development of the new Queensland syllabus.

### Recommendation 16

It is recommended that ICT be mandatory in classrooms to engage students by using the types of communication that they use in their day-to-day interactions (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, etc.) to practise and expand their language learning and their understanding of the peoples and cultures where their target language is spoken.



## 2.3 Connections with the Australian Curriculum

Syllabus type	Syllabus	Path	AC subject
Authority syllabuses	• Chinese 2008	Yes	No
	• Chinese Extension 2011	Yes/No	No
	• French 2008	Yes	No
	• French Extension 2009	Yes/No	No
	• German 2008	Yes	No
	• German Extension 2009	Yes/No	No
	• Indonesian 2008	Yes	No
	• Indonesian Extension 2009	Yes/No	No
	• Italian 2008	Yes	No
	• Japanese 2008	Yes	No
	• Korean 2008	Yes	No
	• Modern Greek 2008	Yes	No
	• Spanish 2008	Yes	No
• Vietnamese 2008	Yes	No	
Authority-registered syllabuses	N/A		

The Languages learning area in the Australian Curriculum includes Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese which are offered in three groups: second language learners, background language learners, and first language learners.

**Second language learners** are those who are introduced to learning the target language at school as an additional, new language. The first language used before they start school and/or the language they use at home is not the language being learnt.

**Background language learners** are those who may use the language at home, not necessarily exclusively, and have varying degrees of knowledge of and proficiency in the language being learnt. These learners have a base for literacy development in the language.

**First language learners** are users of the language being learnt who have undertaken at least primary schooling in the target language. They have had their primary socialisation as well as initial literacy development in that language and use the target language at home. For Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages, first language learners are learners whose primary socialisation is in the language being learnt and who may or may not have yet developed initial literacy

(ACARA 2016, [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/introduction](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/introduction)).

Queensland language syllabuses and the *Australian Curriculum: Languages* defer decisions on enrolment in language study to schools. The latter states that: 'Schools will make decisions about which pathway best serves their students' needs, and teachers will use the pathways to cater for all learners by making any appropriate adjustments to differentiate learning experiences for their students' (ACARA 2016, [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/chinese/context-](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/chinese/context-)



statement). This also applies to decision-making about student enrolment in language extension subjects in the Queensland context. In the case of *Chinese Extension (2011)*,

This group may include students who:

- have completed immersion courses in Years 8 to 10
- have participated in exchange schemes
- have formally studied Chinese for a significant period of time
- are background or heritage speakers.

## 2.4 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

The Queensland senior Languages syllabuses provide three overarching objectives — *Comprehension* (receptive communication), *Conveying meaning* (productive communication), and *Attitudes and values*. Examples from *French (2008)* and *French Extension (2009)* are provided here.

Each objective has subsections aligning with each of the macroskills: *Comprehension* includes *Listening* and *Reading*; *Conveying meaning* includes *Speaking* and *Writing*. In *French Extension (2009)*, learning outcomes for *Listening* are ‘know and understand communicative intent’ and ‘critically analyse and respond to spoken texts in French’. Those for *Reading* include ‘know and understand communicative intent’ and ‘critically analyse and respond to written texts in French’. Each outcome is described further.

Learning outcomes for *Speaking* are ‘know and use features of the French language (text structures and linguistic elements)’ and ‘create spoken language to express communicative intent’. For *Writing* they are ‘know and use features of the French language (text structures and linguistic elements)’ and ‘create written language to express communicative intent’ — each with further description.

In *French (2008)*, the need for students to experience and develop the ‘sociocultural contexts’; the ‘linguistics aspects’; ‘communication strategies’ and ‘intercultural understanding’ when learning their LOTE language is noted. Extensive description of lexical and grammatical elements is provided. The *French Extension (2009)* provides less explicit detail on linguistic features with general advice classified as ‘linguistic development’, ‘sociocultural understandings’, ‘intercultural understandings’, ‘themes’, and ‘language in use — literary and non-literary text types’.

Content (texts and activities) are subsequently described as well as conditions and criteria for assessment. Specific reference to Australian Indigenous perspectives is also included in the extension syllabus: ‘To strengthen students’ appreciation and understanding of the first peoples of the land, and by extension ‘opportunity to explore intercultural understanding through related

issues in regard to race, national consciousness and colonisation in France and its former territories' (p. 2).

The Australian Curriculum for Band 5 (Years 9–10) provides detail for *Content descriptions* and *Achievement standards*. A second sequence is also provided for this band: Years 9–10 (Year 7 entry). Initially organised into two strands: *Communicating* and *Understanding*, the strand *Communicating* has the sub-strands of 'Socialising', 'Informing', 'Creating', 'Translating' and 'Reflecting', each with further detail (key concepts and processes) and limited exemplification of specific language examples. *Understanding* has the sub-strands 'Systems of language', 'Language variation and change', and 'The role of language and culture'. Again, each sub-strand contains further detail (key concepts and processes) and limited exemplification. Each sub-set also has links to its relevant general capabilities (i.e. *Literacy, Numeracy, Information and communication technology (ICT) capability, Creative and critical thinking, Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding, and/or Intercultural understanding*). Links are also made with the cross-curriculum priorities.

In contrast to the Queensland model, in the categorisation of learning in the Australian Curriculum, language functions (e.g. 'Socialising', 'Informing') tend to take precedence over the description of specific macroskills. Moreover connections (links) to a broader scope for language learning (e.g. *Numeracy, ICT capability, Ethical understanding and Personal and social capability*) are provided. Overall, the Australian Curriculum takes a more holistic approach to the learning and teaching of Languages.

Of particular interest in the Australian Curriculum is a statement describing the role of English in the Languages classroom for each band — advice that is not included in the Queensland syllabuses. It is acknowledged that in the Years 9–10 band:

English continues to be used for substantive discussion, explanation and analysis. This allows learners to talk in depth and detail about their experience of learning French [or other target language], and about their thoughts on culture, identity and intercultural experience. English is the language of analysis and critique, supporting discussion of concepts such as 'stereotypes', 'difference', 'diversity' and 'values'. It allows for a degree of expression and debate that is beyond learners' communicative capabilities in French [or other target language]

(ACARA 2016, [www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/french/curriculum/f-10](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/languages/french/curriculum/f-10)).

Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland senior syllabuses include the trend towards a more holistic approach to language learning. This can be enhanced with online documents cross-referencing (linking) to broader contexts for language learning.

## 2.5 Recommendations

### Recommendation 17

It is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses be made available online (in HTML) rather than with downloadable PDF files.

### Recommendation 18

It is recommended that the more holistic organisation of the Australian Curriculum be matched in the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses.

### Recommendation 19

It is recommended that a longitudinal study track learners' communicative competency at the end of Year 12 to see if an English-dominant learning environment produces quality learning outcomes in terms of learners' ability to communicate spontaneously. Furthermore, greater inclusion of the target language should be included. This would ease the transition to the immersion-like university language learning environment, and more importantly, real-world in-country experiences.

## 3 Learning expectations

### 3.1 Scope of learning across Australian and international jurisdictions

The Queensland Languages senior syllabuses offer a set of seven key generic competencies and three overarching objectives, the latter relating more closely to language learning. Further guidance for educators is provided by way of four 'Perspectives on language teaching and learning'; a list of 'Macroskills', 'Language functions', 'Language features' and 'Text types'. Next, notes relating to 'Learning strategies', 'Learning experiences', 'Continuous assessment' and 'Underlying principle of exit assessment' are provided. In the current model, the linking and sequencing of these components of the syllabus are not clear.

#### New South Wales

In the New South Wales jurisdiction a separate syllabus document is available for each language taught; however, apart from the specific language instruction, the content of these syllabus documents are identical. For this review then, the syllabus documents for Chinese Extension, and French, German and Indonesian continuers were analysed in detail.

At the senior secondary level, New South Wales offers a Preliminary course and a HSC course. Stage 6 of the New South Wales LOTE syllabus documents applies to candidates for the Higher School Certificate (HSC). The syllabus documents cover assessment and reporting for all Languages offered: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek and Spanish. Courses are offered for 'Beginners', 'Continuers' and 'Extension learners'. A number of other languages are also offered for 'Background speakers'.

In contrast to the Queensland context, the New South Wales syllabus documents are highly structured. They show clear *constructive alignment* whereby the four outcomes are explicitly matched to teaching methods and learning experiences and to assessment tasks and criteria. Six key competencies are identified with three prescribed themes (*The individual*, *Target language-speaking communities*, and *The changing world* — which reflect those of the Australian Curriculum) to be addressed using tasks which contain five elements ('a purpose', 'a context', 'an audience', 'a process', 'a product').

#### Victoria

In the Victorian jurisdiction, a separate syllabus document or *Study Design* is available for each language taught. External assessment detail is provided in the *VCE [Target Language] Second Language Assessment Handbook*. The *Study Design* documents share most of their content except specific language features and topics for conversation stimuli, e.g. in French Unit 4 assessment, the suggested conversation topic is to draw from French history, famous

people or impacts on French culture. By contrast, the Indonesian topics at the same level focus on gender equality.

In Victoria, senior LOTE studies constitute the coursework in units three and four, which are school-assessed and assessed in two end-of-year examinations — one oral and one written. Languages offered are: Arabic, French, German, Greek, Indonesian Second Language, Italian, Japanese Second Language, Korean Second Language, Spanish and Vietnamese.

The Victorian syllabus documents adopt the same three themes as the Australian Curriculum (*The individual, The Target language-speaking communities, and The changing world*) but provide subtopics for expansion. Two outcomes are prescribed by the Year 12 or Unit 4 and reflect a trend towards text analysis similar to the New South Wales model. Teachers are also provided with a table matching assessment tasks with key competencies and employability skills. Learning activities specify the use of ICT.

## Western Australia

The senior syllabus documents for both Years 11 and 12 provide internal and external assessment guidelines, the latter entitled *Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Manual*. Assessment components are categorised into *Oral communication, Listening, Viewing and reading and Writing*. Year 11 covers Units 1 and 2, while Year 12 covers Units 3 and 4 of the program. In Western Australia, LOTE courses are available for 'Background Language' speakers and 'Second Language' learners. This review has focused on second language learners.

Syllabus documents for different languages in the Western Australia jurisdiction share the majority of general content and outcomes but differ on specific language issues with minor differences at the topic level. The French syllabus document has been detailed in this review.

Instruction for Language teachers in Western Australia is provided by three separate documents. The *Curriculum Framework Curriculum Guide — Languages Other Than English*, which covers all Languages, supports the implementation of languages curriculum by providing the overarching framework. The *French Second Language ATAR course* offers four outcomes for the two units of the Year 12 syllabus document. Course content is described, as are a set of general capabilities and the representation of cross-curriculum priorities (the latter reflecting those of the Australian Curriculum). The learning contexts and topics in this syllabus document are the same as those for New South Wales and Victoria. The third document offered in the Western Australia context is the *French Second Language General course for Years 11 and 12* and differs in the topics of the individual units.

## New Zealand

In the New Zealand senior curriculum, there are 12 languages included in the 'Learning languages' learning area. Some languages included are in common with the Queensland

curriculum: Chinese, French, German, Japanese and Spanish. Others are Latin and several Pacific Island languages such as Cook Islands Māori, Gagana Sāmoa, Gagana Tokelau, Tongan, Vagahau, and Niue, which are not present in the Queensland curriculum. Yet, other languages which are present in the Queensland Curriculum, such as Indonesian, Italian, Korean, Modern Greek and Vietnamese, are not included in the New Zealand curriculum. This shows the relative importance of the Pacific Island nations to New Zealand in contrast to the Queensland situation where the importance of other European and Asian community languages is emphasised.

The New Zealand syllabus documents are divided into three core strands: *Communication* (core), *Language knowledge* (supporting) and *Cultural knowledge* (supporting). The pedagogy in this context is informed by three key concepts (*Communication, Identity and Literacy*), *Ten principles for instructed second-language acquisition* and *Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching* (iCLT).

All the content descriptions of these languages are more or less identical following a generic framework. 'Examples of what is expected of students who are achieving at the specified level provided for each language' are provided as 'Context elaborations'. Under the generic statement for 'Context elaborations' for each level, an example of 'text that has been created or generated in response to a particular situation, scenario, or activity' is presented with a detailed guide in terms of 'context and text type', 'observations a student might make' and 'intercultural communicative competence' (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2013, <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Learning-languages/Achievement-objectives/AOs-Level-6/French-L6-Context-elaborations>).

## Canada (British Columbia)

In Canada, at the provincial and national level, exams are only set for *Reading, Mathematics* and *Science*. The underlying aim of the Western Canadian *Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages*, used as an example in this review, is the development of communicative competence, which occurs in four components: *Applications* (functions performed in the language); *Language competence* (knowledge and ability to produce and interpret language in appropriate contexts); *Global citizenship* (aiming to develop intercultural competence especially in the target culture); and *Strategies* (to learn and communicate more effectively and efficiently).

The Canadian (British Columbian) syllabus document or Canadian *Common Curriculum Framework for International Languages* contains four Curriculum Organisers (*Communicating, Acquiring information, Experiencing creative works, and Understanding cultural influences*). Four general outcomes are specified, each with specific learning outcomes. Teachers are expected to use a communicative–experiential approach which is guided by ten principles.

## Scotland

In Scotland, Languages are offered until the end of Broad General Education with the underlying rationale of: communicative competence, the interconnected nature of languages, and active citizenship. Teachers are offered a wide range of approaches for their teaching practice, including: active learning; problem-solving; the use of appropriate contexts and experiences; embedding ICT in all learning and teaching; building on the principles of *Assessment is for Learning* (AiFL); developing understanding of first language acquisition and how this relates to learning a second language.

The Scottish model provides four outcomes and advocates that learning provide experiences in four elements. Formative or continuous assessment is fundamental to the Scottish approach and is presented as *Assessment is for Learning* (AiFL) which demands student autonomy and student-centred practice. The use of ICT is stressed in the syllabus documents.

## 3.2 Recommendations

### Recommendation 20

It is recommended that:

- study sequences of learning activities and assessment are planned to make explicit to students and parents (e.g. through assessment criteria) that later tasks call upon earlier learning
- these sequences provide an explicit alignment with stated learning objectives.

### Recommendation 21

It is recommended that consideration be given to the principle-based New Zealand model in the redevelopment of the Queensland syllabuses. The principles evident in the reviewed model provide basic understandings of how languages are learned and, as such, guide the sequencing and scope of learning (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2012, <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Learning-languages/Pedagogy/Principles-and-actions>).

### Ten principles for instructed second-language acquisition (Ellis 2005)

1. Instruction needs to ensure that learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence.
2. Instruction needs to ensure that learners focus predominantly on meaning.
3. Instruction needs to ensure that learners also focus on form.
4. Instruction needs to be predominantly directed at developing implicit knowledge of the L2 [second/additional language] while not neglecting explicit knowledge.
5. Instruction needs to take into account the learner's 'built-in syllabus'.
6. Successful instructed language learning requires extensive L2 input.



7. Successful instructed language learning also requires opportunities for output.
8. The opportunity to interact in the L2 is central to developing L2 proficiency.
9. Instruction needs to take account of individual differences in learners.
10. In assessing learners' L2 proficiency, it is important to examine free as well as controlled production.

These principles are explained and exemplified in Ellis's *Instructed Second Language Acquisition: A Literature Review* (Ellis 2005).

### Language learning tasks

Ellis's concept of a language learning task is relevant to all teachers of languages. In his discussion of Principle 2, Ellis describes classroom 'tasks' as language learning activities that:

- require the student to focus on meaning
- include a 'gap' that students can close by communicating
- require students to produce their own language structures
- have a clear outcome.

Such tasks can be cross-curricular in nature and can provide students with rich opportunities to develop thinking and problem-solving skills as they engage in genuine social interactions.

The New Zealand model provides practical examples of genuine social interactions (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2011, <http://seniorsecondary.tki.org.nz/Learning-languages/Pedagogy/Social-interactions>).

### Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching

Language learning programs that focus on intercultural competence integrate language and culture from the beginning. In such programs, students build their awareness of language and culture, their language knowledge, their cultural knowledge, and positive attitudes towards themselves and others. Intercultural communicative language teaching (iCLT) encourages students to make comparisons and connections between languages and cultures. It also celebrates the uniqueness of every language and every culture.

The New Zealand Ministry of Education-commissioned report *Intercultural Language Learning: Implications for Effective Teaching and Learning* (Newton, Yates et al. 2010) presents a framework of *Six principles for intercultural communicative language teaching*. For a summary, see [www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/curriculum/76637/introduction](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/curriculum/76637/introduction).



## **The six principles for Intercultural Communicative Language Teaching (iCLT)**

1. iCLT integrates language and culture from the beginning.
2. iCLT engages learners in genuine social interaction.
3. iCLT encourages and develops an exploratory and reflective approach to culture and culture-in-language.
4. iCLT fosters explicit comparisons and connections between languages and cultures.
5. iCLT acknowledges and responds appropriately to diverse learners and learning contexts.
6. iCLT emphasises intercultural communicative competence rather than native-speaker competence.

### **Recommendation 3**

It is recommended that the redeveloped Queensland syllabuses address the development of learner autonomy through student-centred practices as seen in the Scottish use of *Assessment is for Learning* (AiFL). Examples of how this recommendation may be enacted in terms of assessment are:

- assessment tasks where students are responsible for co-creating the assessment criteria
- designing formative assessment tasks such as learning journals or portfolio assessment.

## 4 Future focus: 21st century skills

Through its own initial research, QCAA has determined a set of 21st century skills that reflect current educational trends.

21st century skills	Elements
<b>Critical thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• analytical thinking</li> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• decision making</li> <li>• reasoning</li> <li>• reflecting and evaluating</li> <li>• intellectual flexibility</li> </ul>
<b>Creative thinking</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• innovation</li> <li>• initiative and enterprise</li> <li>• curiosity and imagination</li> <li>• creativity</li> <li>• generating and applying new ideas</li> <li>• identifying alternatives</li> <li>• seeing or making new links</li> </ul>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective oral and written communication</li> <li>• using language symbols and texts</li> <li>• communicating ideas effectively with diverse audiences</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration and teamwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relating to others (interacting with others)</li> <li>• recognising and utilising diverse perspectives</li> <li>• participating and contributing</li> <li>• community connections</li> </ul>
<b>Personal and social skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adaptability/flexibility</li> <li>• management (self, career, time, planning and organising)</li> <li>• character (resilience, mindfulness, open- and fair-mindedness, self-awareness)</li> <li>• leadership</li> <li>• citizenship</li> <li>• cultural awareness</li> <li>• ethical (and moral) understanding</li> </ul>
<b>ICT skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operations and concepts</li> <li>• accessing and analysing information</li> <li>• being productive users of technology</li> <li>• digital citizenship (being safe, positive and responsible online)</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Implications for the redevelopment of Queensland syllabuses

All six 21st century skills are found to be relevant to all language syllabuses currently offered by the QCAA. Communication needs to be considered as both process and product, and understood as a combination of intercultural and linguistic knowledge. The other skills should complement the Communication skill, with ICT to be considered as an additional medium for complementing and enhancing the development of communication

## 4.2 Recommendations

In acknowledgment of the wide-ranging variety of languages included in this report, it is recommended that language-specific approaches be developed to address each language's individual pedagogical needs and planned learning outcomes. With respect to extension programs, the expectation would be that learners have the opportunity to express more sophisticated arguments through the target language, possibly with more spontaneity and less preparation time.

### Recommendation 22

It is recommended that the 21st century skills are conceptualised as both holistic and multi-componential. Each component should be gradually and cumulatively developed and monitored in alignment with the curriculum. Components may be deliberately foregrounded for consciousness-raising or part of a task as a whole.

### Recommendation 23

It is recommended that the development of intercultural skills, as an inherent dimension of intercultural communication across languages, act as a guiding thread in the development of learning and assessment tasks.

### Recommendation 24

The 21st century skills identified by the QCAA are *all suitable* for inclusion in the redeveloped Queensland Languages syllabuses, in which the study of 'language' should be understood as a holistic activity that goes beyond the memorisation of grammar rules and vocabulary lists. As such, the development of such skills may be efficiently undertaken as an interdisciplinary endeavour. For example, learning activities and/or assessment tasks could include:

- multilingual websites, e.g. presenting students' schools (collaboration, ICT, different Language programs)
- posting reviews to websites in the target language (Music, Language, critical thinking)

- designing tourist materials in the target language, e.g. about local monuments or festivals (Language/History/Geography/Religion)
- recording audio guides for tourists (Language/History/Geography/ICT).

### **Recommendation 25**

It is recommended that assessment tasks include processes for authentication, allowing teachers to verify that students' work is their own.

### **Recommendation 26**

It is also recommended that assessment tasks integrate and monitor a wide range of skills. For example, e-portfolios (both collaborative and individual) could provide evidence of the development of collaborative skills as well as ICT skills and micro-language skills. For extension programs, this may be accomplished through projects that involve critical evaluation of online language learning programs or apps (e.g. Duolingo, Verbling), requiring students to develop ICT skills together with critical thinking skills.

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