

Rationale

The overall rationale for learning Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages in Australian schools is that they are the original languages of this country. Through learning them, all students gain access to knowledge and understanding of Australia that can only come from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander perspective. The languages by their nature embed this perspective. Learning to use these unique languages can play an important part in the development of a strong sense of identity, pride and self-esteem for all Australian students.

Each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language is unique to the Country/Place on which it arose. It gives voice to the landscapes, thoughts and ways of seeing and interpreting the world. When the language of the land is spoken, it brings together all of the elements of the landscape and its people. It encompasses the relationships of these people with one another and with the landscape, past, present and future. The learning of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language incorporates the realities of its people and facilitates students' deep engagement with knowledge, ways of being and ways of knowing. It develops in students an understanding of historical, current and ongoing connection to Country/Place and culture.

Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages are fundamental to the identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and this is recognised throughout the Framework. It is also the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to have access to education in and about their own languages, as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Education systems can play a vital role in facilitating access to language learning and supporting community language revival and maintenance and revitalisation of these languages also contribute to reconciliation.

Learning Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages meets the needs and rights of young people to learn their own languages and recognises the significance of these languages in the language ecology of Australia. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, learning their own language is crucial to their overall learning and achievements. It enables them to develop a wider recognition and understanding of their language, culture, Country and Place, land, water, sea and sky, and this contributes to their wellbeing. For all students, learning Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages provides a distinctive means of understanding the Country/Place in which they live, including the relationship between land, the environment and people. The ongoing and necessary revival, maintenance and development of these languages also contribute to reconciliation.

Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages are complex and diverse. Engaging with the study of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language will develop communication skills in the language studied and will also contribute to the intellectual enrichment of students. For non-Indigenous students, the study of an Aboriginal language or Torres Strait Islander language will provide intellectual challenge and development while also giving them insight into and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures and knowledge. In some cases it will provide these students with the opportunity to communicate with Indigenous Australians in their own language. In other cases, in addition to communication skills, it will give insight into language change and language revival within its historical context.

The government report 'Our Land Our Languages: Language Learning in Indigenous Communities' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia, September 2012), found that there is an ongoing and close relationship between the work of communities to maintain and revive their languages and that of schools as vehicles for language instruction. The study 'Indigenous Languages Programs in Australian Schools: A Way Forward' (Purdie et al., 2008,) found that over 16 000 Indigenous students and 13 000 non-Indigenous students located in 260 Australian schools were involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages programs.

The opportunity to learn an Aboriginal language and/or a Torres Strait Islander language is becoming available in an increasing number of Australian schools, and an aim of this Framework is to make that option available for all students. In this way, all students will have the opportunity to benefit from the social and intellectual development that results from this learning.

Foundation to Year 2 Achievement Standard

The achievement standards for the Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages Second Language Learner Pathway are generalised in order to cater for the range of languages that may be learnt as an L2 in the school context. The achievement standards will need to be adapted for specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

By the end of Year 2, students interact with the teaching team, visiting Elders and community members to talk about themselves, family, friends and immediate environment using familiar language supported by gestures. When interacting with Elders and community speakers, they use appropriate forms of address and terms of respect. They use movement, gestures and rehearsed language to participate in guided group activities, such as adapting and performing action songs. They interact in familiar classroom routines by responding to requests, following instructions and using routine classroom language, for example, to request classroom objects. Students listen to, read, view and comprehend texts that are short, clearly structured and supported by visuals and paralinguistic elements, for example, tone of voice, facial expression, gesture and repetition and recycling of structures and vocabulary. They demonstrate their understanding of the target language region, for example, by making simple statements and giving descriptions of animals, food and artefacts, labelling and sorting these into categories, or by pointing to key topographical features on a map or at pictures of food sources, plants and animals in response to questions. They respond to texts such as stories, songs, dance and visual art through singing, miming, play-acting, drawing, action and movement. They demonstrate understanding by naming key characters, significant places, landscapes or topographical features and by identifying key messages. Students use familiar words, patterns and support materials to create and present shared stories, songs and performances. They translate and explain in English the meaning of target language words, simple phrases and gestures used in everyday contexts and situations. They create simple bilingual texts for the classroom environment, such as captions, labels and wall charts. They identify markers of their own identity, such as family, school/class and language/s, and compare these to the importance of language, place and family in the formation of identity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Students identify similarities and differences in the ways they interact when communicating in English and the target language.

Students distinguish between the sounds of the target language and English and link sounds to written symbols and conventions. They use simple metalanguage to describe elemental structures of the target language, such as word order and word types. They identify how messages in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages can be communicated in a number of ways, such as Elders' story-telling or through song, dance and visual design. Students identify kinship terms used for immediate family members and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have their own personal relationships with place, natural species and phenomena. They identify which stories belong to which natural features, including animals and natural species. They know that different forms of address and kinship terms are used and depend on relationship and context. They identify some words in the language that have been borrowed from other languages. They identify regions, places and communities where the target language is spoken and recognise that there are many different languages spoken in their class, their local community and in Australia. They recognise that language speakers are the most important primary source of language knowledge and that language use reflects where and how people live and what is important to them.

Aims

The Australian Curriculum: Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to ensure that students:

- communicate in the language
- understand language, culture, and learning and their relationship, and thereby develop an intercultural capability in communication
- understand themselves as communicators
- understand the process of language building as a means to extend the potential of the language (in vocabulary, expression and discourse) and to develop knowledge of linguistic techniques (such as, collecting, describing and recording language), including processes of language revival.

These four aims are interrelated and provide the basis for the two organising strands: Communicating and Understanding.

Structure

Pathways

To cater for differences between the ecologies of languages and the communities who are owners and custodians of those languages, and to cater for students who come from a variety of learner backgrounds, the Framework has three pathways:

- First Language Learner Pathway (L1)
- Second Language Learner Pathway (L2)
- Language Revival Learner Pathway (LR).

This approach recognises that the two key variables are 'the learner' and 'the nature of the language'.

The Framework is designed to be flexible in use for developing language-specific curricula and programs. Aspects of the content and achievement standards from the various learner pathways can be selected, adapted and modified in ways that best suit a particular language, to ensure that the curriculum and subsequent programs are appropriately pitched and to recognise the nature of the language, the nature of the learners and the context of learning.

First Language Learner Pathway (L1)

Languages studied in the First Language Learner Pathway (L1) are typically used in spoken form as the language of everyday communication by whole communities across all generations.

Typically, but not exclusively, L1 programs will occur on Country/Place and will have constant involvement from a variety of speakers from the community. A key expectation in the L1 pathway is that of students having opportunities to interact with Elders and particular places on Country/Place.

Learners are typically Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who have learnt the language from their families as a first language and continue to use it naturally at home and play. Students may have varying skills in other languages, including varieties of English.

The First Language Learner Pathway provides students with an opportunity to study a first language at school. For these students, having the opportunity to learn their own language at school supports their cognitive development and signals recognition of the value and status of their language and ways of using and understanding language. Learning and using one's own language at school also meets a widely held community aim to strengthen students' identity and their connection between their families, community and Country/Place. Students develop language skills to expand the domains of use in the language. This includes developing skills in registers and genres not normally encountered in their family and home community; in effect, this may involve the students in the creative development of new registers/genres, vocabulary and expressions in the language. As well as continuing to develop, extend and strengthen oracy, a key feature of the First Language Learner pathway is the development of written literacy.

The curriculum content and achievement standards in the First Language Learner Pathway are generalised in order to cater for the range of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages that may be learnt as a first language. The curriculum content and achievement standards will need to be adapted when developing language-specific curricula, and will need to be modified if the program occurs off-Country.

Second Language Learner Pathway (L2)

Languages studied in the Second Language Learner Pathway (L2) are typically languages used in spoken form as the language of everyday communication by whole communities across all generations.

The second language learner pathway has been written on the assumption that learning will occur off-Country, involving students who are typically not from the language community and having little or no experience of the language and culture. They are introduced to learning the language at school as an additional, new language.

The language chosen for curriculum development should have a sizeable set of resources in a variety of media, such as local documentaries, bilingual narrative and descriptive texts, and educational materials in print and digital form. Learning is enriched and authenticated by interaction with visiting Elders and community speakers, and where possible visits to Country/Place. Information and communications technologies provide additional resources to support a range of language and culture experiences.

The Second Language Learning Pathway provides students with an opportunity to study a language that is structurally very different from English and one from a culture quite distant from the English-speaking mainstream. This develops a deeper appreciation of the nature and diversity of languages and cultures, and supports the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to learn and understand an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language and its cultural context. For students who are from the language community but who did not grow up speaking the language, it is an opportunity to reaffirm their cultural identity through learning the language of their community.

The curriculum content and achievement standards in the Second Language Learner Pathway are generalised in order to cater for the range of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages that may be learnt as a second language. The content descriptions, content elaborations and achievement standards for the Second Language Learner Pathway will need to be adapted for use with the particular language being taught and will need to be modified if the program occurs on-Country or if the learners are from the language community.

Language Revival Learner Pathway (LR)

The Language Revival Learner Pathway (LR) provides opportunities for students to study Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages that are being revived by their owners or custodians and are in various stages of revitalisation, renewal and reclamation.

LR covers a much broader range of language types and ecologies than either L1 or L2, and the vast majority of Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages are included in the LR category.

Schools teaching the Language Revival Learner Pathway (LR) will most likely be located broadly within the geographical region of the language and culture, sometimes in towns and cities and other times in rural and remote regions. Classes will likely include students who relate closely to the language and culture as well as students with varying degrees of affiliation with the language and culture, including some with no connections to the language and culture. A key expectation in the LR pathway is that students have opportunities to interact with Elders and particular places on Country/Place.

The Language Revival Learner Pathway draws on the Australian Indigenous Languages Framework (AILF) and takes into account key variables such as: how much is known about and documented for the language; the extent to which languages are used or remembered, ranging from languages no longer spoken (owners often use the term 'sleeping') to those spoken fluently by members of the older generations; and the extent to which languages have been reintroduced into the community of owners and custodians.

These variables give rise to the following broad categories of language revival:

- Language Revitalisation: where there are fluent L1 speakers (typically members of the older generation) but intergenerational transmission of the language has been interrupted. In this case, younger generations may understand some of the language and may use some words and phrases but they do not speak it as their first language. Examples of revitalisation languages include: Walmajarri in the Kimberley, Yindjibarndi in the Pilbara, Meriam in the Torres Strait, Dyirbal in north-eastern Queensland, Wubuy (Nunggubuyu) in Arnhem Land, and Adnyamathanha (Yura Ngawarla) in the Flinders Ranges. .
- Language Renewal: where there are a number of adult speakers who use the language to varying degrees in the community, but not 'right through', and where other language resources are drawn upon. Examples of languages being renewed include: Noongar in south-west Western Australia, Gumbaynggirr on the north coast of New South Wales, Ngarindjeri on the Lower Murray Lakes in South Australia, Djabugay in the Atherton Tablelands in northern Queensland and Yugambah in southern Queensland. .
- Language Reclamation: where language revival by necessity relies primarily on historical documentation of the language in the absence of active community knowledge of it. Examples of reclamation languages include: Kaurna from Adelaide, Narungga from the Yorke Peninsula, Dharuk or Eora (Iyora) from Sydney, Yuwibara from central Queensland, Wemba-Wemba and Woiwurrung from Victoria, and Awabakal from the Newcastle area in New South Wales.

Foundation to Year 2 Level Description

The nature of the learner, the pathway and particular language

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The second language learner pathway has been written on the assumption that learning will occur off-Country involving students who are typically not from the language community and have little or no experience of the language and culture. They are introduced to learning the language at school as an additional, new language.

The language chosen for curriculum development should have a sizeable set of resources in a variety of media, such as local documentaries, bilingual narrative and descriptive texts, and educational materials in print and digital form. Learning is enriched and authenticated by interaction with visiting Elders and community speakers, and where possible visits to Country/Place. Information and communications technologies provide additional resources to support a range of language and culture experiences.

The curriculum content and achievement standards in the Second Language Learner Pathway are generalised in order to cater for the range of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages that may be learnt as a second language. The content descriptions, content elaborations and achievement standards for the Second Language Learner pathway will need to be adapted for use with the particular language being taught and will need to be modified if the program occurs on-Country or if the learners are from the language community.

Children enter the early years of schooling with established communication skills in one or more languages and varying degrees of early literacy acquisition. For young students at this level, learning typically focuses on the immediate world of their family, home, school, friends and local environment. They are learning how to socialise with new people, share with others, and participate in structured routines and activities at school.

Language learning and use

The language is learnt in parallel with English language and literacy development. Learning in the two languages progresses at very different levels but each supports and enriches the other.

The language is used in classroom interactions, routines and activities and is supported by the use of visual and concrete materials, gestures and body language. At this stage, there is a focus on play and imaginative activities, games, music, movement and familiar routines, which provide scaffolding and context for language development.

Oral language is developed through listening to the sounds, shapes and patterns of the language, through activities such as rhymes, songs, clapping and action games and through imitating and repeating sounds in aural texts as modelled by the teaching team, visiting Elders and community speakers.

Learners experiment with simple formulaic expressions and with one- or two-word responses and single-idea phrases to prompts and cues. As they progress to using language for interactions such as greetings, asking for help, talking about self, friends and family, or asking and answering questions, they notice that the language behaves differently in different situations and that speakers communicate in some ways that are different from their own. Creative play provides opportunities for exploring these differences and for using language for purposeful interaction.

Students learn about Country/Place and community by interacting with visiting Elders and community speakers when possible, and by engaging with stories and songs and other texts such as videos, maps and pictures. They learn about the concepts of kin and social groupings, and how these are symbolised in the natural environment.

Students learn to use appropriate respect terms and to demonstrate respectful and appropriate behaviour when interacting with Elders, community speakers and community texts.

Learners will recognise the same alphabet they are learning for writing English. They write by tracing and copying, forming letters legibly. They learn to read and write words and sentences independently using modelled language, for example, matching pictures with single words, labels and captions. The use of repetition and recycling in instruction helps children to identify high-frequency words and simple phrases and to recognise the purpose and intention of simple texts.

They begin to understand how the language works, to compare it with English and to understand its place in relation to regional and national language diversity.

Contexts of interaction

Across Foundation to Year 2, learning occurs largely through interaction with peers and the teaching team, supplemented by some access to visiting Elders and community speakers. Information and communications technologies (ICT) resources provide additional access to language and culture experience.

Texts and resources

Children engage with a variety of spoken, visual, written and digital texts, which are short, clearly structured and supported by visuals and paralinguistic devices, for example, tone of voice, facial expression, gesture, with much repetition and recycling of structures and vocabulary. They listen and respond to teacher talk, share ideas and join in with song, dance, story and rap, and various forms of play, performance, conversational exchanges and activities mediated by language. Print and digital texts include stories, shared Big Books, songs, visual designs, photos, videos, environmental maps and wall charts and teacher-generated materials such as games, flashcards and items from both the local community and the target language community.

Level of support

Learning is supported through the provision of experiences that are challenging but achievable with appropriate scaffolding and support. This involves modelling, monitoring and moderating by the teacher; provision of multiple and varied sources of input; opportunities for revisiting, recycling and reviewing learned language, and continuous cueing, feedback, response and encouragement.

The role of languages

Learners are encouraged to use the language being learnt whenever possible in class interactions and daily routines with the teaching team, visiting Elders and community speakers. Using English for explanation and discussion allows learners to talk about differences and similarities they notice between the language and their first language(s) and culture(s), to ask questions about language and culture, to consider how they feel when they hear or use the language and to talk about how they view different languages and the people who speak them. This introduction to the 'meta' dimension of intercultural learning develops the ability to consider different perspectives and ways of being as mediated by language.

Foundation to Year 2 Content Descriptions

Communicating

Socialising

Interact with each other, the teaching team and visiting Elders/community speakers using simple language and gestures for greeting and farewelling, talking about self and family.

[Key concepts: self, family, relationships; Key processes: interacting, sharing, listening]

Participate in guided group activities such as games, songs and simple tasks, using movement and gestures to support understanding and to convey meaning.

[Key concepts: cooperation, play; Key processes: turn-taking, matching, choosing, cooperating, following instructions]

Interact in classroom routines and respond to teacher instructions.

[Key concepts: routine, instruction; Key processes: participating, responding, following instructions]

Informing

Locate specific words and familiar phrases in texts such as charts, lists, photos, maps, and use information to complete guided oral and written tasks.

[Key concepts: natural and built environment, community life, Indigenous knowledge; Key processes: identifying, selecting, sorting, matching, labelling, mapping Country/Place]

Give factual information using simple statements and descriptions, gestures, and captions.

[Key concepts: Country/Place, community life; Key processes: labelling, describing, presenting, recounting]

Creating

Participate in shared listening to, viewing and reading of texts and respond through singing, reciting, miming, play-acting, drawing, action and movement.

[Key concepts: storytelling, response; Key processes: responding, performing, sharing, expressing; Key text types: songs, raps, dances, traditional and contemporary stories, paintings and visual design, video clips (IndigiTUBE)]

Create and present shared stories, songs and performances using familiar words and patterns and support materials.

[Key concepts: story, performance; Key processes: retelling, singing, re-enacting, dancing, drawing, performing; Key text types: songs, dance, stories, paintings and visual design, performances]

Translating

Translate frequently used words and phrases using visual cues and resources such as word lists.

[Key concepts: translation, similarity, difference, meaning; Key processes: noticing, identifying, translating]

Create simple oral, print or multimodal bilingual texts for the classroom environment, such as captions, labels and wall charts.

[Key concepts: meaning, bilingualism; Key processes: labelling, captioning, displaying, matching]

Identity

Describe aspects of self, such as family, school/class and language/s spoken, noticing how these different elements contribute to one's identity.

[Key concepts: identity, self, family, belonging; Key processes: describing, explaining, identifying]

Reflecting

Notice what is similar or different to their own language and cultural expression when interacting with songs, stories, games, pictures and artistic expression from the target language and culture.

[Key concepts: language, culture, similarity, difference, respect; Key processes: noticing, comparing, responding, reflecting]

Understanding

Systems of Language

Notice and imitate characteristic sounds, intonation patterns and rhythms of the target language(s) and how these relate to the written language.

[Key concepts: pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, writing; Key processes: imitating, noticing, distinguishing, reading aloud]

Notice types of words in the target language and understand and use some elements of the target language structure.

[Key concepts: word function, word order, variation, patterns, rules; Key processes: identifying, recognising, noticing]

Recognise there are many ways of communicating messages in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

[Key concepts: communication, narrative; Key processes: recognising, identifying]

Identify elements of the kinship system and its role in linking story and natural species and phenomena

[Key concepts: kinship, totemic relationships, place, cultural practices; Key processes: identifying, recognising]

Language variation and change

Recognise that different words and language forms are used to address and communicate with people according to relationship and context.

[Key concepts: kinship, context, relationship; Key processes: noticing, recognising]

Recognise that languages borrow words from each other.

[Key concepts: relatedness, word borrowing; Key processes: identifying, recognising, comparing]

Language Awareness

Identify the region of the target language and notice how it is part of the broader regional and national language diversity. [Key concepts: linguistic diversity, language revival; Key processes: identifying, recognising]

Understand that language belongs to communities and that language learning requires the application of respectful and appropriate behaviour [Key concepts: ownership, belonging, respect; Key processes: demonstrating, applying]

Role of language and culture

Notice that people use language in ways that reflect their culture, such as where and how they live and what is important to them.

[Key concepts: Country/Place, Language, Culture, symbol; Key processes: noticing, recognising, questioning, making connections]

Role of language building

Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are transmitted from generation to generation.

[Key concept: oral transmission; Key processes: noticing, recognising, considering, valuing]