

Rationale

Through learning languages, students acquire:

- communication skills in the language being learnt
- an intercultural capability, and an understanding of the role of language and culture in communication
- a capability for reflection on language use and language learning.

Language learning provides the opportunity for students to engage with the linguistic and cultural diversity of the world and its peoples, to reflect on their understanding of experience in various aspects of social life, and on their own participation and ways of being in the world.

Learning languages broadens students' horizons in relation to the personal, social, cultural and employment opportunities that an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world presents. The interdependence of countries and communities means people in all spheres of life are required to negotiate experiences and meanings across languages and cultures.

Despite its status as a world language, a capability in English only is no longer sufficient. A bilingual or plurilingual capability is the norm in most parts of the world.

Learning languages:

- extends the capability to communicate and extends literacy repertoires
- strengthens understanding of the nature of language, of culture, and of the processes of communication
- develops intercultural capability
- develops understanding of and respect for diversity and difference, and an openness to different experiences and perspectives
- develops understanding of how culture shapes worldviews and extends learners' understanding of themselves, their own heritage, values, culture and identity
- strengthens intellectual, analytical and reflective capabilities, and enhances creative and critical thinking.

Learning languages also contributes to strengthening the community's social, economic and international development capabilities. Language capabilities represent linguistic and cultural resources through which the community can engage socially, culturally and economically, in domains which include business, trade, science, law, education, tourism, diplomacy, international relations, health and communications.

Learning Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages meets the needs and rights of young people to learn their own languages and recognises their significance in the language ecology of Australia. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, learning their own languages is crucial to overall learning and achievements, to developing a sense of identity and recognition and understanding of language, culture, Country and Place. For all students, learning Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages provides a distinctive means of understanding the country in which they live, including the relationship between land, the environment and people. The ongoing and necessary reclamation and revitalisation of these languages also contribute to reconciliation.

Aims

The Australian Curriculum: Languages aims to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to ensure students:

- communicate in the target language
- understand language, culture, and learning and their relationship, and thereby develop an intercultural capability in communication
- understand themselves as communicators.

These three aims are interrelated and provide the basis for the two organising strands: Communicating and Understanding. The three aims are common to all languages.

Key Ideas

Language and culture

The interrelationship of language, culture and learning provides the foundation for the Australian Curriculum: Languages.

In the languages learning area the focus is on both language and culture, as students learn to communicate meaningfully across linguistic and cultural systems, and different contexts. This process involves reflection and analysis, as students move between the new language being learnt and their own existing language(s). It is a reciprocal and dynamic process which develops language use within intercultural dimensions of learning experiences. It is not a 'one plus one' relationship between two languages and cultures, where each language and culture stay separate and self-contained. Comparison and referencing between (at least) two languages and cultures build understanding of how languages 'work', how they relate to each other and how language and culture shape and reflect experience; that is, the experience of language using and language learning. The experience of being in two worlds at once involves noticing, questioning and developing awareness of how language and culture shape identity.

Structure

Learner background and time-on-task are two major variables that influence language learning and they provide the basis for the structure of the Australian Curriculum: Languages. These variables are addressed through the specification of content and the description of achievement standards according to pathways and learning sequences respectively.

Pathways

In the Australian Curriculum: Languages, pathways for second language learners, background language learners and first language learners have been developed as appropriate to cater for the dominant group(s) of students learning each specific language within the current Australian context. For the majority of languages, one curriculum pathway has been developed for Years F–10, catering for the dominant cohort of learners for that language in the current Australian context. For Chinese, pathways have been developed for three learner groups: first language learners, background language learners and second language learners.

The Framework for Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages includes three learner pathways:

- first language learner pathway
- revival language learner pathway
- second language learner pathway.

Sequences of learning

The design of the Australian Curriculum: Languages takes account of different entry points into language learning across Foundation – Year 10, which reflects current practice in languages.

For the second language learner pathway and the background language learner pathway, there are two learning sequences:

- Foundation–Year 10 sequence
- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

For the first language learner pathway, there is one learning sequence:

- Years 7–10 (Year 7 Entry) sequence.

Content and achievement standards are described initially in a three-year band for Foundation–Year 2 followed by two-year bands of learning: Years 3–4; Years 5–6, Years 7–8 and Years 9–10.

The Framework for Aboriginal Languages and Torres Strait Islander Languages is written in the bands Foundation – Year 2, Years 3–6 and Years 7–10. In the absence of pedagogical evidence across the country for all these languages, the broader band distinctions provide maximum local flexibility in curriculum development.

Foundation to Year 2 Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 2, students use spoken Chinese to initiate interactions in a range of familiar contexts. They obtain and convey information and experiences relating to their personal world in simple exchanges. They use learned vocabulary, sounds, characters and culturally specific actions and gestures to convey meaning. They exchange greetings, introduce themselves and each other, and express thanks and apologies, for example, 我的中文名字叫小强, 你叫什么? They interact with and create simple predictable imaginative and informative texts such as 我的狗很大, 它的尾巴很长, using familiar characters and sounds. They use images, actions and gesture to show that they understand the meaning of words when speaking, listening, reading, viewing and writing.

Students identify the four Chinese tones and their function. They know that there is a metalanguage to describe the distinct writing and speech systems in Chinese. They compare English and Chinese consonant and vowel sounds. They copy and trace characters and identify key components in familiar characters. They identify how their Chinese identity influences some of their language choices when interacting with familiar adults and peers.

Foundation to Year 2 Band Description

The nature of the learners

Students will have some exposure to Chinese language and culture in the context of their family and community life. They are likely to have high oracy skills but low literacy skills in Chinese. In the school environment they begin to understand how they use more than one language in their daily lives.

Chinese language learning and use

For background language learners the focus is on making connections between their oracy and literacy. Students use Chinese for most class activities and group responses, participating in active listening and action-related talk, games and play. They will be immersed in the sounds and sights of Chinese. They read short texts, share ideas about daily life and adapt the language they know to different contexts. Classroom interactions are mediated by teacher questioning and interactive talk in Chinese.

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Contexts of interaction

Students are exposed to Chinese in the classroom and in their home and local community environments. Classroom experiences are likely to be structured compared to other contexts. Students communicate with peers, teachers and known adults. They begin to engage with Chinese culture through participating in community- and school-based celebrations, song and dance. Contexts are focused mostly on the here and now.

Texts and resources

Background language learners are exposed to a range of texts, including traditional oral texts, picture books, stories, rhyming verse, songs, poetry, multimodal texts and dramatic performances. Learners engage with Chinese language and culture through participating in celebrations.

Features of Chinese language use

Students recognise tones as an important element of Chinese speech and learn how the sounds of Chinese can be encoded in Pinyin, using Roman letters that often convey different sounds than students are accustomed to in English. Students view samples of characters as captions to images and as text in storybooks often defined in Pinyin. They learn to recognise basic character forms that represent familiar objects and ideas and convey significant cultural meanings.

Level of support

Chinese language use is scaffolded, prompted and modelled by the teacher.

The role of English

English is used where appropriate to allow for explanation, reflection and substantive discussion.

Foundation to Year 2 Content Descriptions

Communicating		Understanding
Socialising Initiate interactions, make requests and establish relationships with teachers and peers. [Key concepts: belonging, home, family, friendship; Key processes: requesting, greeting, thanking, introducing] Collaborate with others in group activities and contribute to learning activities. [Key concepts: self, family, home; Key processes: interpreting, locating]	Creating Participate in and respond to performances and shared reading of children's stories, songs and rhymes with a focus on rhythm, gesture and stress. [Key concept: imagination; Key processes: participating, responding] Create own representations of imagined people or events using illustrations and actions. [Key concept: imagination; Key processes: sharing, experimenting, reading, viewing]	Systems of Language Recognise the four tones and their function in Chinese, and compare consonant and vowel sounds in Chinese and English. Recognise that characters are the written representation of spoken Chinese and the morphological nature of Chinese words. Recognise parts of speech and understand basic rules of word order in simple sentences. Recognise features of various familiar text types in Chinese.
Informing Locate information about people and objects from a range of sources, and sequence events. [Key concepts: same, different; Key processes: identifying, sharing] Convey simple information to peers using illustrations and gestures to support meaning, and respond to questions from others. [Key concepts: family, home, routines; Key processes: greeting, thanking, imitating]	Translating Explain the English meanings of Chinese words and simple phrases heard or seen in everyday social contexts. [Key concept: belonging; Key processes: translating, moving between] Create simple bilingual vocabulary lists identifying and comparing vowel and consonant sounds in Chinese and English. [Key concepts: bilingualism, vocabulary; Key processes: translating, interpreting]	Language variation and change Recognise diversity in expressions and gestures used in everyday social interaction across cultures. Recognise Chinese as a major community language in Australia and around the world, and understand that language use varies according to cultural background.
	Reflecting Reflect on aspects of their Chinese identity and personal relationships with others. [Key concepts: belonging, place; Key processes: reflecting, observing, noticing]	Role of language and culture Recognise differences and similarities in communication across cultures, such as greetings, names and gestures.