

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.

Year 3 and 4 Achievement Standard

By the end of Year 4, students use spoken and written Chinese in simple personal interactions with familiar participants about self, family, people, places, routine, school life, and their own interests and preferences, for example, 你叫什么名字？你上几年级？你有狗吗？你喜欢什么运动？ They use appropriate pronunciation, tone, gesture and movement and some formulaic expressions. They use modelled questions to develop responses, for example, 你的哥哥几岁？，他是谁？，你住在哪里？，这是什么？ They respond to and create simple informative and imaginative texts for familiar audiences (for example, 狼与小孩) by selecting learnt words and characters. Sentences are short and follow the basic subject–verb–object structure with occasional use of adjective predicates, for example, 这是红色的苹果.. Learners use familiar words in Pinyin, or presented in characters in texts. Numbers are used in relation to age and family members, and to quantify objects with measure words such as 一个男生，两个姐姐，三只狗.

Students explain why Chinese is a globally important language. They understand that Pinyin provides access to the sounds of the spoken language. They identify features of the Chinese writing system, including the range of strokes and their sequences in character writing, and explain how component knowledge can assist in learning characters. They are aware that each character is a meaningful unit (morpheme) that is used to make up words. They recognise familiar word order in Chinese sentences. They notice similarities and differences between the patterns of the Chinese language and those of English and other familiar languages. They recognise that languages change with time and due to influences such as globalisation and technology. Students recognise that diversity of context and participants influence how meaning is communicated, and apply this knowledge to their own communication. They notice how cultural differences may affect understanding between people.

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.

Content structure

The content of the Australian Curriculum: Languages is organised through two interrelated strands which realise the three aims. The two strands are:

- Communicating: using language for communicative purposes in interpreting, creating and exchanging meaning
- Understanding: analysing language and culture as a resource for interpreting and creating meaning.

The strands reflect three important aspects of language learning:

- 1) communication
- 2) analysis of aspects of language and culture
- 3) reflection that involves
 - reflection on the experience of communicating
 - reflection on comparative dimensions of the languages available in students' repertoires (for example, the first language in relation to second language and self in relation to others).

Year 3 and 4 Level Description

The nature of the learners

At this level children are developing awareness of their social world and memberships of various groups, including of the Chinese class. They benefit from varied, activity-based learning which builds on their interests and capabilities and makes connections with other areas of learning.

Chinese language learning and use

The systems of writing and speaking in Chinese are distinct. Because of the role of character learning and its impact on reading and writing, learners can accomplish a higher active use of spoken language than written language. As a result, engagement with Chinese language is primarily through speaking and listening. Learners practise using Chinese through participating in action-related talk, and completing tasks while relying on teacher modelling, prompts and repetition. Students respond non-verbally to spoken Chinese in the classroom, and their understanding of Chinese is dependent on context, and on teacher intonation, gestures and facial expressions. They repeat speech and sounds from frequent and consistent teacher modelling and produce texts using familiar words or phrases.

Contexts of interaction

Likely contexts of interaction focus on everyday educational experiences and students' personal, family and social environments. These familiar contexts are represented in the classroom in structured and scaffolded situations.

Texts and resources

Key text types and contexts include short predictable texts, photo biographies, correspondence, and structured and scaffolded situations. Students engage with a variety of Chinese language texts, including short audiovisual texts, plays, fables, rhymes, songs and dance, extending their use and comprehension of Chinese language and culture. Students also produce simple oral and written texts. They are exposed to a wide range of Chinese voices and settings through the use of multimedia texts, simulations and performances.

Features of Chinese language use

Students discover the distinctive features of the spoken language and begin to use Pinyin and tone marks to practise syllables and tones they encounter in new words. They recognise that letters in Pinyin and English produce different sounds using different spelling conventions. Printed texts used in the classroom are mainly presented in Pinyin but may be glossed with characters. Students use Pinyin to write, knowing that characters represent the real form of writing in Chinese. They use a variety of communication modes, including oral communication in English and Chinese as well as mime and gesture.

Level of support

Chinese language use is scaffolded and prompted by the teacher, and teacher modelling of correct language use is the main source of oral and written language acquisition.

The role of English

English is used where it supports comprehension of and participation in Chinese interactions, and when discussing issues of comparison and contrast between languages and cultures.

Year 3 and 4 Content Descriptions

Communicating

Socialising

Interact with teachers and peers in social and class activities, exchanging ideas and opinions, using correct tones.

[Key concepts: friendship, play, relationships; Key processes: participating, noticing, recognising, listening]

Exchange simple correspondence with teachers and peers to contribute suggestions and arrange activities.

[Key concepts: family, friendship, exchange; Key processes: participating, noticing, recognising, responding, listening]

Informing

Obtain and process information about significant people, places and events from spoken and visual sources, and convey this information using learnt phrases and key words.

[Key concepts: significance, self, family, neighbourhood, environment; Key processes: participating, noticing, recognising, responding, listening]

Locate factual information from sources and report this information to a known audience using learnt characters.

[Key concepts: information, topic; Key processes: obtaining, processing, interpreting]

Creating

Respond to and create simple imaginative texts using voice, rhythm, and appropriate gesture and action.

[Key concept: imagination; Key processes: feeling, participating, noticing, recognising, responding, listening]

Create short written imaginative texts using simple characters and short sentences.

[Key concepts: characters, events, plot; Key processes: participating, noticing, recognising, responding, listening]

Translating

Translate the meanings of important everyday words using contextual cues.

[Key concepts: context, celebration; Key processes: participating, recognising, responding, listening]

Find English equivalents of common expressions in Chinese and vice versa.

[Key concept: equivalence; Key processes: translating, explaining]

Reflecting

Reflect on how aspects of personal identity are expressed in Australian and Chinese contexts.

[Key concepts: self, belonging; Key process: reflecting]

Understanding

Systems of Language

Recognise the tone-syllable nature of spoken language, and compare Chinese and English sounds.

Reproduce key Chinese characters from familiar contexts using stroke types and sequences, and component forms and their arrangement.

Use nouns, adjectives and simple sentences to record observations.

Identify similarities and differences in the organisation of simple familiar texts.

Language variation and change

Recognise that Chinese is spoken by communities in many countries.

Identify the likely contexts and features of informal and formal conversations involving known participants of different ages, genders and social positions.

Role of language and culture

Identify how terms are used to indicate relationships and express aspects of culture that may be different from their own.