



# The MLTAQ Journal

A journal of professional current practice and research for language teachers

Journal of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland Inc.  
Affiliated with the Australian and International Federations of  
Modern Language Teachers' Associations (AFMLTA & FIPLV)



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# CONTENTS

<b>Editorial .....</b>	<b>02</b>
<b>MLTAQ Matters .....</b>	<b>03</b>
Message from the President .....	03
Executive Committee 2020 .....	04
<b>MLTAQ Volunteers.....</b>	<b>05</b>
Profile: Dr Florence Boulard.....	05
<b>Focal Point: MLTAQ Branches and Networks.....</b>	<b>07</b>
Gold Coast Branch.....	07
Sunshine Coast Branch.....	09
Darling Downs Branch.....	13
Peninsula Branch.....	15
Japanese Network.....	19
CLIL Network.....	21
<b>MLTAQ Sponsored Activities.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Report on the Language Teachers' Forum 22 October 2020.....	23
<b>Languages Matters.....</b>	<b>27</b>
The Way of the Dragon: The I Method – <i>Paul Rackemann</i> .....	27

# EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Summer edition for 2021.

What a year 2020 was! Still, despite the recent 'long weekend' lockdown we are lucky to live in Queensland which has done better with COVID-19 than most places on the planet. The 2020 Annual General Meeting on 19 March was the first Executive meeting of the year, and we didn't meet again face-to-face until the final meeting of the year on 19 November. Those able to be in Brisbane for the meeting adjourned for our usual end-of-year celebration, this time a dinner cruise on the Kookaburra Queen where we farewelled Marcel from the Executive, thanking him for his many years of volunteering, particularly as President and Vice President. Although most school and some university classes have gone back to face-to-face teaching, let's hope 2021 is a more normal year.

The COVID cloud had a few silver linings for the MLTAQ, though. While Brisbane had been the centre for MLTAQ activities in the past, having meetings and events online in 2020 has allowed more members in other parts of the state to be involved. It spawned the Professional Sharing Sessions run online by Jo Aaron of the Central Queensland Network, and the EP MLTAQ Online Speech Contest, an initiative of the Gold Coast Branch, which had 1620 entries in nine languages from over 400 schools in the state. The Online Language Teachers' Forum on 27 August with Sellina McCluskey on 'Senior Language Students and the External Exam' attracted a record 92 teachers, although this record was smashed with 120 attending Vice President's Dr Florence Boulard's 22 October forum on 'Year 12 2020 – How was your Journey?'

With so much activity happening across the state, the editors decided to make the association's Branches and Networks the special focus of this Journal. You will find features of all Branches that came into being before the turn of the millennium, as well as two of the many networks. In the refereed section, Mandarin Chinese teacher Paul Rackemann explains the common ground between teaching a language ... and martial arts.

The current editorial team have enjoyed bringing you the last four editions of the Journal, but with Marcel retiring from the Executive Team and Leigh devoting more time to other MLTAQ endeavours, this will be the last one from us. We look forward to the 2021 Winter Edition with a new editor.

**Dr Leigh Kirwan**, Griffith University

**Dr Marcel Noest**, Institute of Modern Languages, The University of Queensland

*End of Year celebrations on the Brisbane River,  
19 November 2020.*



# MLTAQ MATTERS

## Message from the President

**Happy new year to you**, whether you are early-career, experienced, or ... of my vintage.  
What can we make of 2021? What might a 'new normal' be?

### Inspiration?

- 26-27 March: German conference, organised by our German Branch.
- 17-18 April: French national conference, a FATFA event hosted/organised by our French Branch.
  - Keynote speakers **Gianfranco Conti** and **Joe Dale** will be of interest to all language teachers (details to come).
- 1-2 May: Japanese conference, organised by our Japanese network.
- 4-6 July: International AFMLTA virtual conference.

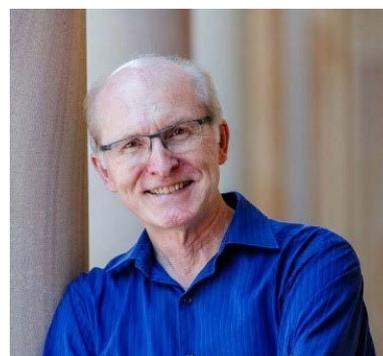
### Action?

- Consolidation of innovations developed during the 'desperation' of 2020?
- An increased focus on getting students talking about relevant and engaging topics?
- Sharing with colleagues through short online presentations, or articles, via MLTAQ?
- Considered and detailed feedback to QCAA on the effect on students and teachers of the new syllabus and the external examination?
  - It is vitally important that as many teachers as possible provide feedback – numbers make the difference – use email, as well as responding to the official QCAA online review, as it becomes available.

### Wellbeing?

- I wish you all a good year; good
  - health and morale;
  - classes and colleagues;
  - professional satisfaction;
  - networking;
  - learning and teaching.

Lester Ford



## Executive Committee 2020

Executive Position	Name
President and AFMLTA Liaison Officer	Lester Ford
Vice President	Dr Florence Boulard
Treasurer	Jackie Mikami (to 30/11)
Treasurer	Georgiana Poulter (from 01/12)
Secretary	Nathan Williams
Gold Coast Branch President; Journal Editor	Dr Leigh Kirwan
Journal Editor; Executive Member	Dr Marcel Noest
Membership Registrar	Helen Best
Webmaster	Helen Best
Professional Development Officer	Sherryl Saunders
LinQ Editor	Helen Gray
CCLT Network Convenor	Beau Pett
Darling Downs Branch President	Cecily Bisshop
Sunshine Coast Branch President	Alison Law
Peninsula Branch President	Lucy Fedrizzi
Central Qld Network President	Jo Aaron
Townsville Network Convenor	Mark Ivory
French Branch President	Erin Peters
German Branch President	Paula Hay
Indonesian Network Convenor	Colleen Kelly
Japanese Network Co-Convenor	Nathan Williams
Japanese Network Co-Convenor	Cathryn Very
Spanish Network Convenor	Beatriz Gil
Chinese Network Convenor	Jialing Li
Italian Network Convenor	Connie Lammertsma
Korean Network Convenor	Andrea Blakely
Executive Member	Amanda Pentti
Executive Member	Kerstin Liebchen
Executive Member	Cynthia Dodd
Executive Member	Georgiana Poulter

# MLTAQ VOLUNTEERS

## Profile: Dr Florence Boulard

### Role in the MLTAQ

I first heard of, and subsequently decided to join, the MLTAQ in 2007 when I was in my final year of studies at the University of Queensland. At the time, Lester Ford was one of my lecturers for a fourth-year language curriculum subject and he introduced my peers (also future language teachers) and me to the MLTAQ. Fast forward to 2020 and after teaching languages in Queensland for over a decade, I decided that it was time to give back. I put my hand up to take on a more official role in supporting language education, teachers and students across the state. On this note, I would like to take the opportunity to thank Judy Williams, Jackie Mikami and Dr Leigh Kirwan for their support in encouraging me to take the position of vice-president. In my short time on the executive board, I have come to realise that the MLTAQ is much more than a dedicated group of language educators, it is a bit like a family: caring, compassionate and ready to help you at any stage of your career and irrespective of the language you teach or the part of Queensland you are living in. The MLTAQ is a support network for all language educators and I am proud to be one of its many volunteers.

### Describe your language teaching experience

I grew up in New Caledonia, a multilingual and multicultural island located to the east of Australia. For many people of my generation, options to complete tertiary study on this Pacific island were limited. As a result, young people who wanted to pursue certain careers had to go overseas, usually to mainland France. However, I was very fortunate that my grandparents (who are of Chinese and Vietnamese origins) became Australians in the 1980s and therefore the possibility for me to stay closer to home to pursue my university degrees became a reality. I started tutoring French at UQ while I was in my final year at university and also gave private lessons which helped to treat myself to the occasional Sizzler buffet at Toowong (a real treat when you are a uni student!). However, to be honest, it was not until I did my practicum at All Hallows' school in Brisbane that I really fell in love with teaching. I was blessed to have weeks of working alongside supportive and inspiring language teachers. I do not know if they will remember me, but I have certainly not forgotten them: Mrs Anne-Marie Ward, Mrs Helen Crew, Mrs Luise Florer, Ms Rosa Parella and Mrs Anne Wilkie. In 2008, I moved to Townsville and worked at Kirwan State High School. While working full time as a language teacher (French and ESL), I decided to do a Master of Education and started tutoring after hours for James Cook University and the University of New England. During this time, I learnt so much about teaching but also about myself. I transitioned to tertiary teaching fulltime in 2012 and connected deeply with the JCU's Tropical agenda, which is closely aligned to the focus of my PhD, which I

completed in 2018. When people ask me what it is that I do, I still reply “I am a language teacher”.

### **Personal Hobbies/Interests/What people may not know about me**

Something that people may not know about me? As I write these words for you to read, I am staring at my beautiful three-week-old daughter and I smile. Her name is Éveline. She has definitely brightened our year! In a “normal” year, both my work and my hobbies would take me on a range of great adventures in Australia and overseas. Since 2018, I have had the privilege to be a “cruising” academic and have enjoyed giving a range of “Pacific-French” lectures on board P&O cruises. This year, with travels being cut down, I have enjoyed much cherished time at home with my 8-year-old son Nicholas and my loving husband Stephen. As a family, we love the ocean and await patiently for a day with little to no wind to go on the boat to explore the many islands located in Tropical North Queensland.

### **Career Highlights**

I know that I am privileged to have a job that I love. There are too many highlights for me to easily list. However, the annual Young Language Ambassador conferences that I convene each year, which over the last five years have brought together thousands of students and their teachers from across Queensland, are something that I particularly look forward to. Additionally, the opportunity to have taught some of the next generation of language teachers has been a privilege and I hope to be able to see many more graduating in the future. I think you will agree with me that the highlights of any career are not in the job itself, but rather are formed through the people we get to meet, the relationships that we develop and in the lives that we can impact on and transform. To all who are reading these words, I wish you the very best for the remainder of your career. I look forward to continuing to work with you as together, we help to create an internationally-minded generation of young Queenslanders.



# FOCAL POINT: MLTAQ BRANCHES AND NETWORKS

## Gold Coast Branch

Dr Leigh Kirwan (Branch President 2020)

The Gold Coast Branch of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Queensland is now into its 43<sup>rd</sup> year. At the end of 2019 it had as many as 106 financial members, although this understandably reduced to only 70 in 2020. The Branch runs monthly meetings offering Professional Development for teachers of all languages offered in Gold Coast schools and universities and operates annual language competitions including the massive Gold Coast Languages Speech Contest and the Print and Multimedia Contest. Its success can be measured by the fact that it has operated monthly meetings over a long period usually attracting 20 to 25 languages teachers and other community members each time.

The Gold Coast Branch was not originally a part of the MLTAQ. In 1978, a group of interested languages teachers met at The Southport School (TSS) to discuss the possibility of setting up a network. They included Sergio Maresca-Tew, then a French teacher at The Southport School; Roslyn Fischer, then a French, German and Japanese teacher and Languages Subject Master at Miami State High School; John Barker, then German teacher at Southport State High School, Debra Barker, then German teacher at Merrimac State High School, and Leigh Kirwan, then a French and Japanese teacher and Languages Subject Master at Palm Beach-Currumbin State High School. There were no primary languages taught in those days.

Meetings commenced on a regular basis, on the third Thursday of each month, with each school taking its turn to host. By the following year, following overtures from the MLTAQ in Brisbane, we agreed to become the first geographical Branch of MLTAQ Inc.

In addition to the moral and practical support which our network provides, it is the student-focussed activities which keep teachers coming along each month. Particularly for those teaching in the primary sector, often without other languages colleagues, the camaraderie and networking is so important. Many languages teachers are so passionate about their teaching and juggle such busy lives that they would probably not make the time to come if it was just for their own needs.

In the late-seventies through to the 1990s we ran concerts and speech contests. There were annual French and Japanese concerts at the Miami Great Hall and German concerts at the German Club of the Gold Coast. Months of planning went into coordinating the many details, such as who would run the quizzes and competitions, which schools would put on plays and entertainment and who would organise the lunches featuring food from the target countries etc. There were also separate annual French, German and Japanese speech contests run on a rotating basis, usually in schools in school time. Massive planning was also required for these, too, of course. As these grew larger, it was decided that there was too much involved for the host school; in 1991, an opportunity presented itself for running the first Combined Annual Gold Coast Speech Contest at Griffith University's Gold Coast Campus which continued until COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the 2020 event.



*Gold Coast Branch meeting at St Hilda's School, July 2020*

## **The Gold Coast Languages Speech Contest**

The contest is usually held in August. There are twenty-two convenors who take on various roles including the six languages targeted, entertainment, PR, medals, refreshments etc. It is a large annual event attracting over 5000 people including parents, teachers, principals and dignitaries, including over 1,250 contestants each year from primary, secondary and tertiary students competing in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish divisions. Students are judged by both native speaker community members and language teachers and a variety of culturally-based entertainment keeps students and their families busy before and after their speeches. In addition to students from 115 schools in the Gold Coast region, for many years, students had been coming from Brisbane, the Sunshine Coast and as far away as Bundaberg, Rockhampton and Cairns. However, the success of the Gold Coast competition spawned MLTAQ Speech Contests on the Sunshine Coast in 2008 and later in Townsville and Cairns. A new Primary Japanese Speech Contest was held at the Nathan Campus of Griffith University for Brisbane students in 2017, and secondary students joined in in 2018 and 2019, hosted by Cathy Hegarty. The Gold Coast contest incorporates the Queensland Japanese Speech Contest and the first and second prize winners from the other Queensland competitions can come to compete on the Gold Coast. Winners are flown to and accommodated in Sydney for the National Japanese Speech Contest.

### **Further PD opportunities**

A lot of effort is put into providing experiences for languages students, and there is always a PD item to attract teachers at each meeting, but from time to time, as we believe that because we are a teachers' association, we should spend some of our funds on us, the teachers, we plan evening or weekend PD outside meeting times, usually paying for the presenter and for meals or refreshments.

### **2020**

We started 2020 fairly normally with the usual monthly meetings at Griffith University in February and March, but with the onset of COVID-19, meetings were run online using Griffith's Collaborate Ultra platform for the four months from April to July. With the situation improving in Queensland, we reverted to face-to-face meetings at St. Hilda's School for the final four meeting months of the year.

With all Speech Contests put on hold, an initiative of the Gold Coast Branch was to run an online speech contest for the entire State. With the assistance of Education Perfect in Auckland, facilitated by Vice-President Cathryn Very, the committee consisting of Cathryn, Jackie Mikami and Dr Leigh Kirwan worked with all the MLTAQ Language Convenors in the State to run the very successful EP MLTAQ Online Speech Contest. More than 450 schools and 1,600 students participated in the competition.

The Print & Multimedia Competition run by Catherine Galligan was also able to go ahead as usual, with a large number of entries received and judging was undertaken at Benowa SS on Saturday, 31 October.



### **Plans for 2021 and the Future**

COVID-19 permitting, we hope to recommence running face-to-face monthly meetings back at Griffith University, with Zoom also available. Although it is hoped that the situation will allow for the Gold Coast Languages Speech Contest to go ahead normally, it may also be possible to continue the EP MLTAQ Online Speech Contest, particularly as it catered for many student competitors who live in towns and cities remote from the coastal cities operating face-to-face speech contests. We should also be able to attract even more schools the second time around.

# Sunshine Coast Branch

## Foreword

Alison Law (Branch President 2020)

Having been involved with the Sunshine Coast Branch of the MLTAQ over a number of years I was aware of the commitment of other members to the support of each other, and to the promotion of quality Languages programs. However, it was not until I became the President in this unparalleled year of COVID19 and a new senior syllabus that I began to truly appreciate the ties that hold us all together.

At the end of this very challenging year and with another decade passing, I thought it was fitting that we share highlights of our Branch activity since inception in order to showcase the many achievements of our dedicated members and executive. Thank you to Oj Rugins for researching, collating and writing the rich history of our Branch for this article.

What impressed me in reading this history was that there were so many names, so many individuals, who gave freely of their time and talents. I wondered about people's motivation for doing these things as I read – knowing that even without pandemics and new syllabi, each of these individuals faced their own personal and professional challenges in complex workplaces every year. I then realised that our Branch is only a small part of our wider State and National bodies and so our stories and our lists of names grow exponentially - how wonderful!

I cannot imagine each person's motivation, but I certainly feel that overwhelmingly they are altruistic in nature. At each juncture we say, "It's all about the kids" as we wipe each other's tears and then celebrate each other's successes, all the while problem-solving and planning. That's what makes us strong and makes us great. Thank you to all our members for your valuable contributions, I feel so privileged to walk with you.

## Time Line 1992 – 2020

Collated by Oj Rugins (MLTAQ Life Member)

1992	Steering committee formed with a view to establishing a Sunshine Coast Branch: President – Tony Martin, Secretary – Alain Menanteau, Treasurer – Lesley Micheletti. Early branch correspondence shows that the State body constitution was 'not designed to accommodate branches' (MLTAQ Executive Committee meeting of 20-4-94) so the constitution was amended.
1993	First AGM, 29 <sup>th</sup> April at Maroochydore SHS, under the chairmanship of Alain Menanteau. Officers elected: President - Tony Martin, Secretary – Alison Adams, Treasurer – Oj Rugins. Other business – July dates set for individual Language nights, a precursor to a series of well-attended, lively Languages Trivia/Fun nights which became the annual highlight of branch activity until 2000.
1994/ 1997	President – Eunice Paulett, Secretary – Carolyn Broere, Treasurer – Oj Rugins 1995 - small scale Speech Contest held for students of Japanese
1998/ 1999	President – Eunice Paulett, Secretaries – Wendy Chandler/Shea Heard, Treasurer – Oj Rugins Trivia Nights continue – balance of attendees changing. Initial majority consisting of Secondary students swinging in favour of Primary students. Notable highlights, the finales – <i>The Lion Sleeps Tonight</i> sung in all the languages represented. This was reprised and hilariously performed by members at the State Conference Dinner, Mooloolaba, 2018.

2000	<p>President – Alain Menanteau, Secretary – Eunice Paulett, Treasurer – Oj Rugins</p> <p>Annual Reports and State body minutes repeatedly refer to low numbers at Sunshine Coast meetings.</p>
2001	<p>Branch nearly folded at AGM due to lack of support and little or no renewal of office bearers. Resolved to address this at a better publicised subsequent meeting in May. President - Phil Mahnken, Secretary – Wendy Jonas, Treasurer – Oj Rugins. First of a series of annual Multicultural Fetes at University of the Sunshine Coast, signalling strong ties with USC.</p>
2002 - 2007	<p>Same executive except the President was Margaret Norris from 2006, and Michael Modini became Secretary in 2004. Education Department District Office representative Bill Klupfel regarded as <i>Guardian Angel of Languages</i> for his work in helping establish the annual <i>Multicultural Extravaganza</i> successfully combining/merging with <i>Festuri</i> in 2003.</p>
2008	<p>President – Oj Rugins, Secretary – Michael Modini, Treasurer – Oj Rugins, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>A turning point for the branch with ‘new blood’ from the Gold Coast, specifically Elizabeth Blair suggesting an inaugural Speech Contest, supported by Sue Walduck. Initially intended to celebrate the UN International Year of Languages, the contest became an annual event and effectively resurrected the branch. Combining with <i>Festuri</i> who allowed only 20 minutes ‘Main Stage’ time to present 100 medallions, a process of simultaneous presentations at 10 stations was carried out, in Languages waves, by a dozen dignitaries, including Senator Claire Moore, representing the Hon. Kevin Rudd. VIPs and our volunteers enjoyed refreshments and an AIM-based drama presentation by school students after the presentation ceremony. Huge and ongoing appreciation to the Gold Coast Branch for modelling and sharing Rules and Procedures.</p>
2009	<p>President – Oj Rugins, Secretary – Michael Modini, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Same format for Speech Contest (retained after success of inaugural one), entrant numbers up by 10% from 275 and a few changes to the list of dignitaries. VIPs and volunteers again shared refreshments after the presentation ceremony, musical accompaniment by Trinidadian Lennox Jordon (Melbourne Ska Orchestra) on steelpan. Poster Competition established, with winning and highly commended posters on display at Speech Contest. Seeking sponsorship for medallions and student prizes (in the form of participation certificates and a showbag for every entrant) became an essential and onerous task. The initial and tremendous support of Embassies, Consulates and Cultural Associations provided very substantial and appealing showbags, but all this waned in the wake of the global financial crisis. Grant applications became a burdensome, behind-the-scenes add-on to our everyday tasks, and the related efforts on the part of so many volunteers should be acknowledged. Japan Foundation a major and consistent sponsor.</p> <p>MLTAQ 50th Anniversary Awards for an outstanding contribution to Languages Education – Sunshine Coast recipients: Heather Baumgartner, Elizabeth Blair, Phil Mahnken, Shannon Mason, Oj Rugins</p>
2010	<p>President – Oj Rugins, Secretary – Sue Walduck, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Tweaked format for Speech Contest, now a standalone event after <i>Festuri</i> sought to combine with the Caloundra Music Festival later in the year.</p>

	<p>Process of rolling medallion presentations established. Our main 'sponsor' being the University of the Sunshine Coast by providing the facilities and certificates, the list of other sponsors over the years is long and varied – early bodies being the Sunshine Coast Regional Council and the Association of State School Organisations.</p>
2011	<p>President – Oj Rugins, Secretary – Kristi Rooney, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>A Writing Competition along the lines of the annual Poster Competition initiated. Significant branch activity - much discussion and a number of submissions regarding the ACARA Shape Paper. Respective Languages Speech Contest convenors confirmed at AGMs, strengthen the volunteer core of the branch.</p>
2012	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Angela Champney, Treasurer – Oj Rugins, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Education Department District Office representative Dr David Rolls attended meetings, promoting PD and getting us financial support for our Speech Contest enduring on and off for several years.</p> <p>Language Perfect came on board to support our Speech Contest with ongoing funding, prizes and an online Sunshine Coast competition.</p>
2013	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Michael Modini, Treasurer – Oj Rugins, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Poster and Writing competitions continued to receive healthy numbers of entries – Michael Modini and Audra Stepanas were central organisers.</p> <p>MLTAQ Awards for Exemplary Practice - Primary Practice: Oj Rugins, Alex Huxley. Special visitor from Ottawa, Canada, at November Branch meeting – inspirational AIM presenter Richard Smith.</p>
2014	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Romana Hough, Treasurer – Oj Rugins, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Professor Joanne Scott, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Business, USC, emerged as a stalwart for supporting and attending the Speech Contest to award medallions. The branch succeeded in obtaining Nambour RSL community grants (for two years) and Italian Language Centre funding (ongoing, credit to Irene Van Rooyen).</p> <p>MLTAQ Awards for Exemplary Practice – Secondary: Shannon Mason</p>
2015	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Geraldine Pettit, Treasurer – Oj Rugins, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Speech Contest highlight – 'a few words from our sponsor' Craig Smith, founder and CEO of Language Perfect visiting from New Zealand. October branch featured Skype call with Leanne Gennat, chief writer of the first AIM kit for Japanese.</p>
2016	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Adriana Lidden/Geraldine Pettit, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Elizabeth Blair</p> <p>Series of public forums on Languages, first run at USC by Peter Grainger in 2014, featuring Attorney General Jarrod Blijie on <i>Global Schools</i>, was reprised as a joint event with the branch in 2016. Guest speakers included Associate Professor Michael Nagel. Peter also organised an 'army of students' to assist with Speech Contest – 'ran like a well-oiled machine'.</p>

2017	<p>President – Louise Vale, Secretary – Adriana Lidden/Geraldine Pettit, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Courtney Smith</p> <p>Local TV newscaster and reporter Rosanna Natoli, attending as a parent, made an impromptu Speech Contest video report, including an interview with Louise Vale and a couple of students.</p>
2018	<p>President – Courtney Smith, Secretary – Adriana Lidden/Geraldine Pettit, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Courtney Smith</p> <p>Branch hosted the State Conference for the first time. Return of USC Associate Professor Michael Nagel presenting on <i>The Adolescent Brain</i> a veritable highlight.</p>
2019	<p>President &amp; Secretary – Courtney Smith, Treasurer – Irene Van Rooyen, Speech Contest Convenor – Courtney Smith</p> <p>Students in Year 3 competed for the first time at the Speech Contest, resulting in a spike in the number of entrants. Amanda Miller initiated our first Christmas Card competition.</p>
2020	<p>President – Alison Law, Secretary – Peter Grainger, Treasurer – Emi Obara, Speech Contest Convenor – Courtney Smith</p> <p>2020 saw experimentation with Zoom Branch meetings and competitions with emailed entries accepted for the first time.</p>



# Darling Downs Branch

Cecily Bisshop (Branch President 2020)

MLTAQ DD Branch was inaugurated in 1994, the first executive team being: Associate Professor Francis Manghubai (President), Carol James (Treasurer), and Majella Costello (Secretary). In 2019, we celebrated our 25th year Silver Jubilee anniversary. This marked a long history of Languages teachers' collaboration and growth in this area during the ups and downs of political and cultural change affecting Languages learning in Queensland and nationally.

In that time, we have hosted a variety of initiatives endeavouring to raise the profile of Languages learning in our schools and district. We know that many Languages teachers often feel isolated in their schools, so the moral support of colleagues, and the professional growth that often ensues from the contact initiatives is highly valuable and wide-reaching. In years past, most of our active members resided in or close to this region's largest city, Toowoomba. However, during COVID times it is now possible for a much wider group of teachers in our region to be involved due to the increase of virtual communication technology up-skilling happening this year for many.

Our activities over the years catering to many Languages teachers and hundreds of thousands of students have been many and varied, with members working tirelessly to organise and host such events as:

- Regular teacher professional development sessions covering curriculum and pedagogy, behaviour management for us as specialists with discrete needs
- Meetings with guest speakers on pertinent and contemporary topics
- Career nights for students seeking a languages pathway at school and into post-secondary professions
- Student Free Day programs for Languages teachers
- Founding, along with the Toowoomba International Multicultural Society (TIMS), the Toowoomba Languages and Cultures (TLC) Festival; see more below
- Supporting initiatives from MLTAQ and AFMLTA such as Professional Standards for Languages teachers
- Languages competitions at USQ and TLC
- Days of Excellence hosting hundreds of students
- Meet & Greet at USQ, bringing together international students and Languages teachers to strengthen communities, increase language proficiency and ultimately enhance the language skills of our students.

2006 marked an impressive milestone for the Branch, when we collaborated with the Toowoomba Multicultural Society. TIMS had gained a grant to create a festival and were seeking ways to bring it about. MLTAQ became a founding member along with TIMS, marking the start of a dynamic Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival. From modest beginnings the most recent festival in 2019 had attendance of upwards of 20,000, quite impressive at around 16% of the local population. Over the years this festival has provided MLTAQ DD Branch with numerous opportunities to showcase the language learning of our students in singing, music and dance performances, language mini-lessons and a speaking competition. We have provided a range of enthralling activities and cultural displays for families and were successful for many years in raising funds for our Branch by selling drinks.

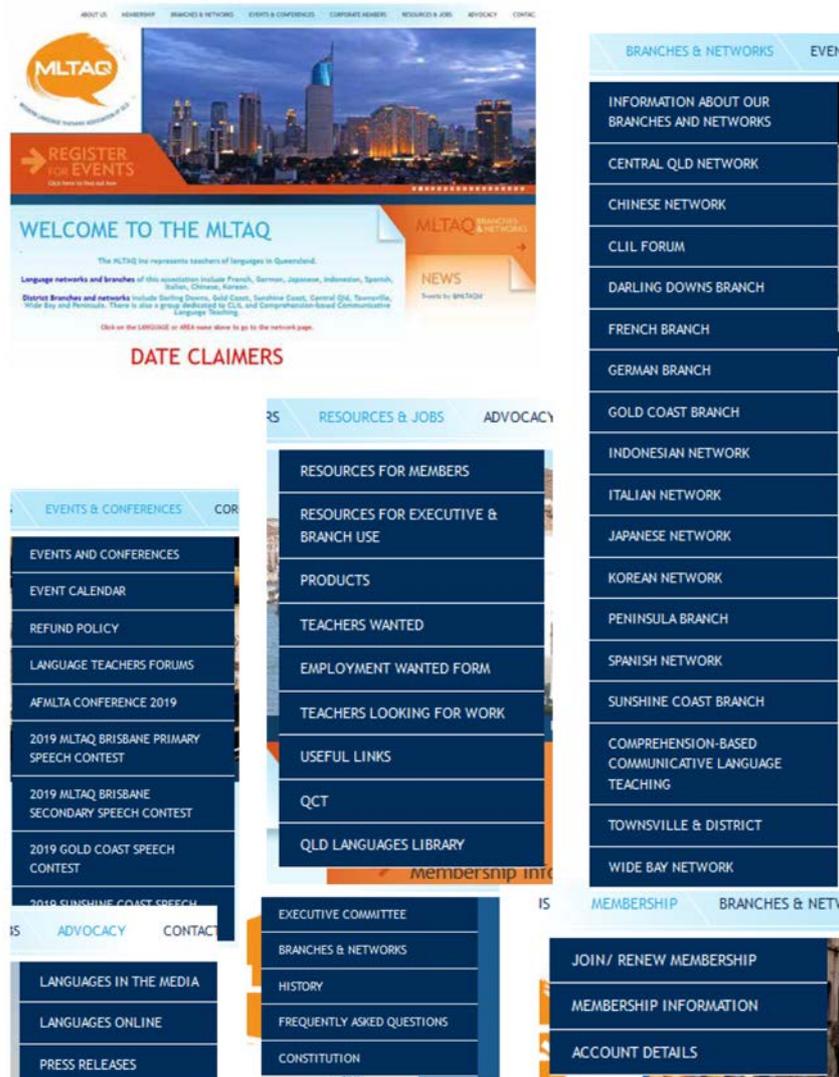
Prominent members over the years have been Associate Professor Francis Manghubai, Carol James, Majella Costello, Associate Professor Ann Dashwood, Peter Thomas, Kath

Symmons, George Goodsell, Yvonne Kitley, Cecily Bisshop, Val Newell, Anna Macgregor, Val Newell and Bell Boothby, along with many other hard workers, all of whom have made ongoing and valuable contributions to maintaining the relevance of the group and efficacy in supporting our teacher members and raising the profile of Languages learning in our region.

Meetings have generally been held monthly but in 2020, due to COVID and illness of some executive members, meetings were fewer. The last meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> September at the Pupil-Free Day PD, with the added advantage of offering the workshop to some members via Zoom. This year, understandably, there has been a hiatus of activity, with no TLC or any other gatherings, so teachers developed their own initiatives within their schools and other networks. Next year we are looking forward to taking advantage of virtual platforms and increasing member participation.

Looking ahead to 2021 our activities will continue to be affected by the varying COVID status of our region, however we very much hope to reinstate some of our more successful activities. Even though our Branch membership numbers on the books look healthy at around 40, many members are not involved locally in MLTAQ activities understandably, as so much is expected of them at school with increasing workloads bringing with it exhaustion and health issues. Hopefully next year we will find members well rested and willing to commit time and energy to initiatives of our major professional organisation, MLTAQ.

Find out more about MLTAQ at [mltaq.asn.au/](http://mltaq.asn.au/)



## Peninsula Branch

Lucy Fedrizzi (Branch President 2020)

*Learning another language is not only learning different words for the same things, but learning another way to think about things. – Flora Lewis*

Back in 1992, then President of the MLTAQ, Marcel Noest, wrote in his report to the AFMLTA:

*A number of people from various areas of Queensland have shown interest in forming branches. It is hoped that such Branches will eventuate, as they will help expand the communication network for LOTE Teachers throughout Queensland, organise activities or functions in the non-metropolitan areas and help establish informal contacts with colleagues elsewhere in the State. It is, therefore, important that LOTE teachers throughout Queensland are encouraged to create MLTAQ Inc branches and, in turn, to encourage others to become members.*

The MLTAQ Peninsula Branch was established in 1993 in order to provide professional development workshops, opportunities to connect with other teachers of languages and support for languages teachers. With an MLTAQ membership of over 500 languages teachers across the state, the time had come to create a branch with a focus on the needs of languages teachers in this region. This came at a time when the Queensland government had committed a significant amount of money to the teaching of languages across the state.

After a lapse of a few years, the Peninsula Branch was kick started again in 2003 by languages teacher Jenni Le Comte who remembers that *'there were monthly meetings. Initially it was a small group of languages teachers from different schools and sectors in the Cairns region.'* Jenni went on to be President of the Peninsula Branch for a number of years.

Many languages teachers find themselves not only geographically isolated, but often also isolated within their own school environment as the only language teacher, when they take up a new position in the far north. Languages teachers often work across two or more schools and some even work between the state and private sectors. Often dealing with high numbers of students and short contact times, the job can be very demanding and stressful. Connecting with other language teachers for support and professional advice can be a professional lifesaver!

From the early 2000s, the Peninsula Branch committee introduced an annual get together of Language Teachers in the far north region for professional development. The Committee all helped to ensure a successful outcome. These Workshops were held once a year, on the student free day in July, at the Cairns School of Distance Education, from 2005 through to 2012.

Over the years, topics included:

- Using technology in LOTE
- Voice protection and teaching Target Language sounds
- Networking and resource sharing
- EQ International Travel application for language teachers; tax considerations for overseas language study
- Essential skills for classroom management
- Literacy in the LOTE classroom and intercultural literacy
- Reports from Endeavour Language Teaching fellowships

Many familiar names and faces have provided important and inspirational Professional Development opportunities to teachers in the far north region. One of my personal favourite workshops was held in 2011 at what was then the new Science and Languages centre at

Trinity Bay State High School. The workshop title was 'Creative Writing – putting pen to paper' and I still use many of the ideas and activities presented that day in my Languages classroom today.

Since its establishment in the early 1990s, the Peninsula branch has seen a steady increase in membership numbers. The annual Speaking Competition has also evolved and grown to over 600 participants over two days in 2019. Participation in professional development activities is strong and a dedicated group of volunteers have kept the committee chugging along over its almost 20 years' history. Past Peninsula Branch Presidents include Craig Larson, Jenni Le Comte, Mary Lantman, Masumi Morimoto (joint president 2017).



*The 2018 Committee squinting in the Cairns sun.  
L to R: Anthony Fara, Mary Lantman, Yolanda Tandy,  
Lucy Fedrizzi, Corey Edwards, Miki Saiki-Greene,*

During 2020, the MLTAQ PB supported two small local speaking competitions but did not run the annual inter-school competition due to COVID restrictions. Special mention goes to the Cairns School of Distance Education, which has been a loyal supporter of the speaking competition and has hosted the event for the past 9 years. Last year, Edge Hill State School and the Tablelands ran small but very successful competitions for students of Japanese in 2020, supported by the MLTAQ Peninsula Branch.

MLTAQ Peninsula Branch goals were recently updated to:

1. Support teachers of languages in FNQ and foster links with the languages teaching and learning community
2. To facilitate the dissemination of knowledge of current practice and research into the teaching and learning of languages
3. To support and promote a range of student-centred activities which enhance the learning of languages in Far North Queensland

Social activities have generally taken place at the beginning and the end of the school year. We have made an effort to connect with new languages teachers in the region. To end what was a challenging and certainly different 2020, the committee organised a social activity which included an origami masterclass with Mr Uchida followed by drinks and dinner at Hemingway's Brewery. We farewelled 2020 and look forward to seeing you in 2021.

MLTAQ Peninsula Branch Committee 2020:

- President: Lucy Fedrizzi
- Secretary: Lyza Welsh
- Treasurer: Itin Hadijah
- Committee members: Miki Saiki-Greene, Yolanda Tandy, Masumi Morimoto, Jennifer Fukushima

As I reflect on the history of the Peninsula Branch, I realise that it was not so long ago that information between the Brisbane main branch and the Far North was faxed and the cost of sending cheques back and forth was discussed. Face to face meetings between the regions and Brisbane were rare. In 2020 our State Assembly was held via Zoom. Branch presidents and language convenors from across the state connected to discuss the direction of the MLTAQ in the coming year. These days, we correspond regularly by email, share files on Google Drive, meet monthly on GoToMeeting, connect on social media and meet in person each year (apart from 2020). The Far North no longer feels quite so remote.

# Cultural Day 2020 at the Cairns School of Distance Education

Lucy Fedrizzi and Itin Hadijah (Cairns School of Distance Education)

Online learning is what we do best at the Cairns SDE but when it comes to the Annual Camp Week in Term 2, that is strictly a face to face affair. Well, it was until May 2020.

Annual Camp week is the highlight of the school year for many students and teachers here at the school, as it is a chance to meet each other face to face. The usual format involves three days of camping at different local venues followed by everyone's favourite day - Cultural and Wellbeing Day - which is traditionally held on the Thursday. The week then wraps up with a fun sports day on the Friday.

As Term 1 drew to a close, it became apparent that the much-anticipated camp week could not go ahead in its usual format this year. The forces were called in. The P&C was consulted for some ideas and the teachers got to work planning and organising a week-long online camp which still included a Cultural and Wellbeing Day.

## Cultural Day

Cairns SDE offers seven languages: French, Italian, German, Spanish, Indonesian, Japanese and Chinese. If Cultural Day could not go ahead in its traditional format, it was decided that it would take place in the students' own homes. Cultural Day 2020 was not only a day of informative and hands-on cultural activities led by the language teachers; this year centred on the cooking activities. Each language offered one or two recipes for the students to choose from and the afternoon took the form of a *My Kitchen Rules*-type challenge. There was a range of recipes suitable for students of all ages. A recipe book was created, along with rules and regulations for the challenge. These were uploaded to the school's website and online courses so that ingredients could be purchased in a timely fashion. It is not always easy finding multicultural ingredients in some outback locations and it can be quite the challenge whipping up an unfamiliar dish when your family lives on a boat!

Here are some student experiences from what was an interesting and fun day all around!

Sohalia: Today I chose to cook the French olive and bacon slice because my family really wanted to try. The slice ended up rising well and tasted amazing according to my Mum and Nana. It was easy to make, I enjoyed cooking it and I will maybe cook it again sometime soon.



Mason: Chocolate Caliente-Spain

*El chocolate caliente era muy delicioso!*



The hot chocolate was so good! I made most of it by myself and this is the first time I have made something using the stove by myself. I used dark chocolate cocoa powder so I had to add extra sugar to make it a bit sweeter. I also made a double batch. It took a long time to reduce because I had it on a low heat. This is because I was worried that it would burn on the bottom. I am going to make some for my brother's birthday today. However, he is dairy free so I'll have to replace the milk with almond milk.

Kaylee: The first dish I made for the cooking challenge was okonomiyaki, inspired by Japan. While it was great fun and interesting while I was baking, I realised I had put the wrong amount of eggs into the mixture, causing it to be runny. I was halving the recipe since we did not have the required amount of ingredients, but forgot to change the amount of eggs! 😊 Luckily, this did not affect the taste of the finished product at all and was still delicious.



Gemma: Vanilla Panna Cotta - Italy

My vanilla panna cotta is creamy and delicious. This creamy masterpiece is decorated with strawberries, gold glitter and mint, fresh from my garden. My whole family loved the vanilla panna cotta because of the wobble, flavour and the fresh fruit it was served with. I will definitely put this Italian recipe in my recipe book because of the taste. I have never tasted anything that was as good as these panna cottas. My little brother scoffed it down so fast it was crazy.

Hannah: Satay ayam dengan saus kacang – (chicken satay) - Indonesia

I love cooking. It was really fun cooking the chicken satay. When I first made the marinade, I thought that there was not going to be enough, but thank you language teachers, it was the perfect amount. I cooked the chicken on the stove and did not end up putting the skewers in water, but they did not need to be wet anyway, none of the skewers burned. I made the peanut sauce next; it was weird. I thought it would taste different. This dish was really easy, but the peanut sauce kept on splitting.



The dish tasted amazing! The chicken was crispy, and the sauce tasted a lot like peanut butter. I added some rice and cucumber on the side of the dish because I had it for lunch with the rest of my family.

Harry: Spring rolls - China

Spring roll wrappers are a bit hard to come by on the station, but Harry was not going to be deterred. He and his home tutor used flour, water and salt to make their own! Once they fried them up, the result was just as good, if not better, than bought ones.



One of the best things about Camp Week 2020 was that students who live far away from Cairns and normally would not participate in camp activities were able to join in everything on offer including Cultural and Wellbeing Day 2020. It was such a success, online activities will most likely be included in all future camps. Like our students, we need to be flexible and prepared for just about anything. Who knows what next year will bring?



Mary: Apfelkuchen – Germany  
How delicious does this cake look!

# Japanese Network

Nathan Williams and Cathryn Very  
(Co-Convenors Japanese Network 2020)

先生方へ、

The year 'twenty-twenty' is certainly a year our professional community will never forget. This year, teachers were challenged in new ways to hone and refine their skills, and to explore new pedagogy to respond to the growing needs of our community; to find new and creative ways to engage students in the learning of a second language, whilst trying to meet multiple demands in their own schools, families and personal lives. As Japanese Convenors, we say, 'Thank-you'. Thank-you for continuing to maintain the dream of giving every child a quality education, thank-you for giving students a vibrant and charismatic adult to breathe life into the dream of learning a second language and opening doors to new cultures and communities, and thank-you for keeping the dream alive for children around Queensland to fulfil their true potential, and realise that learning a language is a meaningful pathway.

The Japanese Network has a rich history in the MLTAQ, and this year further cemented its place in the association as the predominant second language with a majority of members. As Japanese Co-Convenors we follow in the footsteps of preeminent leaders in our Languages community such as Sherryl Saunders and Kathryn Tominaga. The purpose of our network is to be a voice for Japanese teachers and provide a means for collaborating, sharing, networking, and building a body of knowledge, resources, pedagogy, opportunities, activities (both for the learning of language, and intercultural exposure) and advocacy. We would also like to thank Ann Christensen for her support up until the 2020 AGM

## Activities of the Network:

Each year the network provides the following benefits to members, including, but not limited to:

- Relief Teacher List
- Japan Foundation relationship to facilitate PD in different geographical regions
- Advocacy
- Japanese Network Conference
- Japanese Network Curriculum Planning/Resource Sharing
- Networking Dinner
- JNTO Japanese Educational Leaders' trip to Japan – judging/providing recommendations to JNTO
- Department of Education International – providing feedback about entries/recommendations
- Sharing 'all-things-Japanese' to our members to facilitate opportunities for students in schools
- Sharing employment opportunities from regional recruitment officers

*Lunch after 2021 Japanese  
Conference venue inspection day,  
December 2020*



## Notable Achievements of the Network:

2019 - First Japanese Network Conference at Griffith University Southbank Campus

### 2020

- February - Dr Leigh Kirwan and Nathan attended a meeting of the Japan Foundation Sakura Network membership renewal (2021-2024) in February. It was at this time that it became abundantly clear, the national lockdown strategy would soon be implemented. We spent two days networking and collaborating on how to strengthen networks among states and territories, and brief conversations about strategising in relation to the pressures that were about to come with lockdowns and online learning.
- August – Mark Ivory (Townsville Network Convenor) assisted as the Japanese Convenor of the EP and MLTAQ Speech Contest and facilitated our network's involvement in the Speech Contest which was undertaken online this year thanks to the stellar work of Cathryn Very, Jackie Mikami and Dr Leigh Kirwan. An overwhelming number of entries were received. Thank-you Mark.
- August to November – direct involvement in the Australian Olympic Committee Pilot Project collaborating with schools in Japan, alongside other states and territories, ahead of a program rollout in 2021.
- November – Preparations have commenced for a major 2-day Japanese Network Conference again on 1-2 May 2021, with the assistance of UQ Interns

## Where is the Japanese Network Going in 2021?

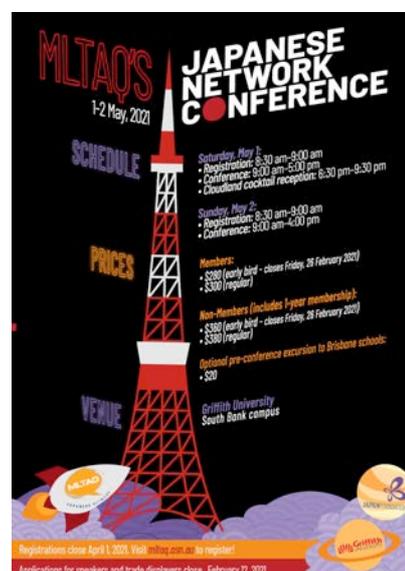
Prepare for major change to strengthen the Japanese Network even further in 2021 and provide greater assistance to members:

- Strengthening and broadening our Relief Teacher List
- Strengthening connections to industry ahead of the national international border reopening
- Major 2-Day Japanese Conference
- Exploring the possibility of a TEDx Event in North Queensland
- Commencing an MLTAQ Japanese Speech Contest to grow and strengthen the presence of Japanese in Wide Bay Burnett (e.g. Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Gympie, Goomeri, Nanango)

### Contact:

If you have any queries about the network, want to be involved in our 2021 Conference, or would like to assist, please contact us at [MLTAQConvenorJapanese@gmail.com](mailto:MLTAQConvenorJapanese@gmail.com).

気を付けて下さい。



# CLIL Network

Dr Simone Smala (Network Convenor 2020)

## **Purpose of the network**

The MLTAQ CLIL Network was created to provide a hub for all teachers teaching in an immersion or bilingual setting in Queensland (e.g. the secondary school language immersion programs in at least 11 schools across Queensland, and the growing bilingual primary programs), as well as all teachers in any setting (e.g. mainstream, Saturday schools, distance education) who are interested in Content and Language Integrated Learning, or CLIL, as a pedagogy in language learning.

## **Origin/History of the network**

CLIL has become one of the foremost language teaching pedagogies worldwide and has been used in many settings in Australia for the past 10 years. Some states, like Victoria, have very specific requirements for bilingual programs in primary schools and have invested in upskilling teachers working in these schools with CLIL degrees from The University of Melbourne. Bilingual and language immersion education in mainstream schools is now available in most Australian states and has been a prominent feature of Queensland secondary schooling options since 1985. Since 2014, several primary bilingual programs have been added to the bilingual schooling landscape in Queensland.

## **Membership; notable members**

The network's main terms of reference are the administration and distribution of information from different schools, being a point of connection for CLIL, bilingual education programs in different languages and the language immersion programs in Queensland secondary schools, with an MLTAQ email group and connections to further CLIL initiatives in Australia and overseas. I am the current network coordinator:

Dr. Simone Smala, School of Education, The University of Queensland. Email: [s.smala@uq.edu.au](mailto:s.smala@uq.edu.au)

As part of my work as CLIL Network Convenor, I host a page on Facebook, called *CLIL Support Dr. Simone Smala UQ*, which anybody can 'like': <https://www.facebook.com/CLIL-Support-Dr-Simone-Smala-UQ-370551669720610>. This page now has 1,799 followers and aims to provide information about CLIL teaching and teaching methods worldwide, as well as information about Languages, Language Education, Bilingual Education, immersion, dual language (2Way), and other bilingual education approaches.

## **Activities of the network**

The MLTAQ CLIL Network has been in existence since 2013 and saw several highlights during its existence. Notably, in 2014 Brisbane hosted the biggest Applied Linguistics Congress in the world, AILA 2014, from August 10-14 at the Brisbane Convention Centre, with approximately 3000 participants from all over the world. There was an Invited Symposium on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) as a catalyst for research cooperation in Europe and beyond, which brought the best known names in CLIL teaching methodology to Brisbane: Christiane Dalton-Puffer, Tarja Nikula, Ana Llinares, Do Coyle, Tom Morton, Teppo Jakonen, Emma Dafouz, Ute Smit, Kristiina Skinari, Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe, Stephan Breidbach, José Medina Suárez, Roy Lyster, Angel Lin, and Diane Tedick. As the representative of CLIL Research in Queensland, I (Simone Smala) was invited to contribute to the symposium.

Our own MLTAQ conference in October 2014 included a CLIL stream, and many local CLIL practitioners shared their knowledge. In 2018, The CLIL Network hosted the final Language Teachers' Forum for the year with guest presenter Dr. Kim Bower from the University of Sheffield Hallam, with a record attendance of over 60 teachers. In 2019, The University of

Queensland hosted a CLIL Workshop that attracted 55 teachers, many of whom were members of the MLTAQ CLIL Network.

### **Notable achievements of the network**

The network is language-independent and serves as a meeting point across school sectors, year levels, schooling types and languages for all teachers working in bilingual or language immersion education or interested in applying principles of bilingual education and CLIL in their classrooms. As such, it is the only overarching organisational unit for bilingual education in Queensland. It has attracted new members to the MLTAQ who teach subject areas such as science in a medium other than English in mainstream schools in Queensland, and who recognised the value of being a member of a language teaching organisation as part of their integrated content and language teaching mandate.

### **How and how often network members meet**

Network members meet during specific CLIL workshops, MLTAQ conference streams and special events.

### **The network's plans for 2021**

The network plans to revitalise meetings and events in 2021 after the rather unexpected events of 2020, including Zoom meetings to make it easier for network members to come together.



*CLIL MLTAQ Language Teachers' Forum in December 2018*

# MLTAQ SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

Dr Florence Boulard, MLTAQ Vice-President



## (ONLINE) LANGUAGE TEACHERS' FORUM

### YEAR 12 2020 – HOW WAS YOUR JOURNEY?

Forum moderator: Dr Florence Boulard (Vice-President, MLTAQ)

4:30pm Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2020

Note: The opinions and ideas below have been summarised to best reflect those of the participants and are not those of the moderator/author.

#### **Context**

Language Teacher's Forums are an opportunity for MLTAQ members to come together and discuss hot topics. These forums have been running for many years now and are organised by the MLTAQ with the support of Griffith University's School of Humanities, Languages and Social Science. Traditionally, teachers attend the forum in person, or online. This year, the online participation has been excellent, reaching out to many more language teachers in rural and remote locations.

On October 22nd, teachers had the opportunity to reflect and share their experiences of implementing the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority's 2019 senior secondary languages syllabuses with their Year 12 students.

, moderated the discussion as teachers generously shared their observations and ideas with the view of continuing to positively influence students' learning into the future. The duration of the forum was about one hour. Below is a summary of the discussion points and some key comments that arose from the forum. However, for anyone who is interested, the full forum has also been recorded and can be viewed here:

<https://au-iti.bbcollab.com/recording/11b3bf5429f24c74bdc30e67dc84ede0>

## **Items discussed during the Forum:**

### **1) What support/guidance were you given by your colleagues/school/QCAA?**

One of the strengths in Queensland schools as teachers have transitioned to the New QCE was the strong and positive collegiality that developed between teachers within subject areas. The participants in this forum reported similar high levels of collaboration occurring between language teachers:

- *“Colleagues shared resources with me as I was new to senior.”*
- *“The collaboration that has emerged, both within schools and across schools, is the best thing that has come out of the new system. It is lovely to have such collegiality.”*
- *“Our school created a ‘SATE’ committee and we had weekly meetings for languages.”*

On repeated occasions, Facebook groups were described as valuable by teachers who were able to use this platform to organise regular meetings outside school hours to exchange ideas and resources with colleagues who were coming from a range of schools.

- *“I was able to share experiences and insights with senior teachers of other languages in the staffroom, as well as online forums – MLTAQ mailing list, Facebook groups – both Queensland specific and international”.*

Opportunities to communicate with the QCAA were also discussed. The QCAA provided a range of information to teachers. Overall, there were mixed views on the benefits of the webinars and support organised by QCAA.

- *“With regards to QCAA, I thought the training (as an endorser) was very useful, and I think it would be good if the endorser, confirmer, assessor etc. training could be available to all teachers.”*
- *“When asking for specific information, it was hard to get a straight answer [...] it was really hard to get answers to questions.”*

Teachers made it clear they would welcome additional support from the QCAA. In particular, it was noted that there was a strong desire for further training in the system and that it be made available and accessible to all teachers.

### **2) What support/advice was most useful?**

The most useful support and advice according to participants of the forum were the professional discussions they have had with other language teachers, both at their school and outside their school. These opportunities to meet and engage with a range of colleagues, either face to face or online via Facebook or emails, provided teachers with a chance to seek clarification, compare questions for IAs and critique assessment questions. Some participants reported that these opportunities, which were mostly teacher led, formed a type of ‘pre-endorsement’ and built self-confidence as they navigated through the new system together.

### **3) What support is still required and what aspects of the new assessment system do you still need clarified?**

A range of support would be welcomed by teachers as many reported feeling some additional pressure as they tried to work with the new system. During the forum, it was reported that additional training for teachers would be beneficial:

- *“Compulsory training for teachers who come in to the new system at any time so they don’t have go looking for information which takes the most time.”*

- *“There is huge gap between the Y10 Australian Curriculum and the Year 11/12 Senior Syllabus so this could use some reworking or PD for teachers on how to best support Year 10s going into Senior.”*
- *“Clarification on the assessments and the criteria sheets.”*

There was a sense that channels of communication within QCAA needed to be opened up, and that the information provided by the QCAA should be made available to all teachers:

- *“QCAA gives a lot of very specific information to endorsers and confirmers and this should be shared with all teachers in a timely manner (i.e. not after we have submitted assessments)”*

Across all of this professional learning, some teachers indicated that they were overwhelmed by the amount of new learning. Some participants suggested that additional time was required for teachers to complete the QCAA modules:

- *“Schools have not given enough PD time for teachers to complete the QCAA modules.”*

#### **4) What has been your experience of ‘covering’ the content of the syllabus, and preparing students for assessment this year?**

Participants reported that it was challenging to cover the content of the new syllabus. In particular, there was a sense from participants that a lot of the teaching time was spent on analysing text and teaching grammar rules. As a result of the strong emphasis on PACT, limited opportunities remained for students to work on their communication skills.

#### **5) Has the new syllabus and anything/everything related to it somehow affected: your pedagogy; your use of resources; enrolments/class sizes/schools that have small enrolments in senior; student well-being / success/outlook/experience of language learning; teacher workload?**

According to the participants, the new system has certainly brought a range of additional challenges for both students and teachers. Specifically, some participants reported the following:

- *“All of my students are disappointed we had to focus on analysing texts and not learning to communicate in the language.”*
- *“Never taught so much about HOW to answer exam questions.”*
- *“Massive workload for teachers.”*
- *“We feel like we have not enjoyed teaching the new system, nor the students have enjoyed learning as much.”*
- *“The joy has certainly been sucked out.”*

Overall, the unexpected impact of the health pandemic created by COVID-19 coupled with the increased expectations of the New QCE, created significant challenges for most teachers. Despite these challenges, participants reported that students were supportive and very tolerant of their teacher’s efforts. It is also clear that the participants have tried their very best to deliver the expectations of the new system, but would also welcome opportunities to review and discuss possible changes within the syllabus. A common theme of this review is the desire that the syllabus should be *“focusing more on communication skills and less on literature analysis”*.

## **6. What advice would you give teachers about to teach senior for the first-time next year?**

2020 was a year of significant learning, and teachers are in a better place for 2021 because of this learning. In reflecting on this learning, teachers offered a range of recommendations for teachers who will have seniors for the first time next year, including:

- *“Plan your attack of the curriculum thoroughly but don’t put in too much content.”*
- *“Support your students and take care of yourself!”*
- *“Complete the QCAA modules.”*
- *“Join one of our language Facebook groups.”*
- *“Don’t be afraid to talk directly to QCAA; they are busy but will give you time if you ask.”*

### **Where to next:**

Change is often difficult, messy and rarely perfect, particularly when viewed from the middle of the change process. This is certainly the perspective of many language teachers as the new QCE sees the first Year 12 students graduating. In the midst of this change, it is important that language teachers recognise the growth in themselves and the system, as well as providing constructive feedback for improvement.

Thanks to the participants of this forum, the MLTAQ is now in a position to articulate constructive feedback to the QCAA. Overall, it is fantastic to see that networking and collaboration was possible, even prioritised, during 2020. It is the strong collegiality amongst QLD language teachers that has helped them support one another. Many of the participants in this forum emphasised the benefits of networking with colleagues during these challenging times.

The year 2020 has been a big year for everyone, both in our professional and personal lives. While living in this ‘new normal,’ teachers have learnt to adapt their practice as educators and students have had to learn a range of new skills in order to engage in this digital learning environment. The experiences we have provided to our students have changed education, and will no doubt continue to change it as we move into the future. This context has enhanced the challenge associated with implementing a new system of Senior Education. In this context too, the support of colleagues has been critical.

The MLTAQ is well placed to help anyone who might not have been able to access networking opportunities similar to those described above. We encourage anyone who feels isolated to reach out to the MLTAQ if they need support in connecting with other colleagues. Together, we are best able to effectively embed the syllabuses of the new QCE, develop our own and each other’s capacity and advocate for change where we think it is needed.

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

### THE WAY OF THE DRAGON: Second Language Learning through the I Method

Paul Rackemann

*Paul Rackemann is a teacher at The University of Queensland's Institute of Modern Languages. He has been teaching Mandarin in Australia for over 10 years. He lived in Taiwan for over 6 years. During this time he learnt to speak Mandarin, igniting his interest in the field of linguistics. His research interests include second language acquisition, and evolutionary biology. In addition, Paul has worked as a professional sports coach training some of Australia's elite level athletes. He also teaches mix martial arts, boxing and self-defence.*



#### Summary

In this two-part article, I intend to discuss, first of all, the role of a language instinct as proposed by Steven Pinker (1994) and argue that its very existence supports the notion that, regardless of one's first language or one's cultural background, we all acquire a language in much the same way. Furthermore, I propose that because of the existence of this language instinct, demonstrated by the innate ability to acquire our first language, a second – or additional – language instruction program should duplicate this process.

In the second part of this paper I will outline a new method of second language instruction that is based on existing immersion language programs and techniques which target the innateness of language acquisition. This new method, which I call *The I Method*, draws from not only the field of linguistics, but also from my many years working as a professional sports performance coach.

#### Part 1 - The Why

##### Human evolution and language

The most important specialisation of the human brain that sets us apart from other species is our capacity for language. From an evolutionary perspective, human language is a novelty. This could suggest that the human brain developed new structures to support its language capabilities. Yet there is too much evidence to the contrary. Rather, it can be argued that human language stems from our original biological make-up, because evolution is a process of small cumulative steps of change resulting from natural selection. Evolution works not by creation out of nothing, instead it builds on top of existing structures (Dawkins, 2006).

Human language, through this process of natural selection, has recruited structures that already existed in our brain but performed other tasks in our earlier ancestors. In other words, to a large extent the social world in which our ancestors' brains and anatomy changed and adapted pre-dates the emergence of human language. Therefore, the linguistic circuitry in the modern human brain evolved through descent, modifying ancestral networks that supported other cognitive tasks (Fisher & Marcus, 2006).

It is based on this premise that I advocate for a language instinct, arguing that humans are born with an innate capacity for language and that we all acquire language in the same way. Let's look at the case for this language instinct.



Figure 1: Paul Rackemann appearing on a live show in Taiwan demonstrating self-defence techniques

### **Anatomical structures of the speech organs and the evolution of language**

Human language is not only the result of genetically transmitted neural patterns but also anatomical mechanisms that evolved to enhance our ability to use spoken language. One such anatomical adaptation is the formation of our vocal tools. For example, the anatomical structure of the larynx, which provides the source of acoustic energy for vowels and other phonations, is unique to humans (Lieberman, 2007).

The human supralaryngeal (the airway above the larynx and mouth cavity) differs from that of any other adult mammal. For example, the high position of the larynx and tongue in chimpanzees allows these animals to breathe freely without the risk of choking on liquid or food contained in their mouth. In contrast, the lower position of the larynx in humans and the fact that more than half of the human tongue is located under the mouth cavity means we are more likely than any other land animal to choke when eating. Yet, these deficiencies in the human mouth for eating and drinking are offset by an increased phonetic range. For example, the more rounded human tongue can generate the formant frequency that define the vowels *i*, *u*, *a*, and consonants such as *k* and *l*. The shortcomings of the human supralaryngeal air tract must have outweighed the adaptive value of this greater range of acoustic sounds (Jones *et al.*, 1997). [Isn't it the other way around?]

The above example illustrates that physical anatomical structures in modern humans have been modified through natural selection from earlier structures in our non-linguistic ancestors. The hominid fossil records suggest that evolution of the human vocal tract probably started in early African populations of *Homo erectus*, (meaning 'upright man'), an archaic human appearing about 1.8 million years ago (Jones *et al.*, 1997). I think it is important to highlight this point: If our vocal tract began its evolution toward linguistic capabilities at least 2 million years ago, then it is plausible to suggest that the linguistic neurological adaptations in the human brain also reach back that far into our primordial past.

Such anatomical adaptations offer concrete examples that can provide a better understanding of the more abstract concepts behind the evolution of a language instinct. If we accept there have been physical adaptations in our speech organs, then this would allow us to also understand the evolution of our genetic and neural structures. Seen this way, the evolutionary journey from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* saw not only adaptations occurring in our vocal tract but also many subtle adaptations in the human genome, cumulating in the specialisation of human language.

## **Human genes**

The evolution of language capabilities in the human species depended on the retuning of genetic pathways that were present in our non-verbal ancestors. An example of such is the first language related gene discovered by accident in a British family known as the KE family. The gene FOXP2 was discovered to be associated with speech and language development. It has since been demonstrated that the FOXP2 proteins, located in a region on Chromosome 7, appear to be essential for the normal development of speech and language (Tecumseh Finch, 2010). Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that the FOXP2 gene has been co-opted in aspects of vocal communication in several other species, such as birds. The gene seems to have evolved to support language in humans, whilst strongly reflecting its ancestral function (Lieberman, 2007). This further illustrates the ancestral link of modern human language to our ancestral past. This is not to say that the FOXP2 gene is the main driver of the evolution of language in humans; it is part of a larger chain of biological adaptations that brought about the emergence of human language.

## **Brain reorganisation**

Just as anatomical structures in early hominids adapted to facilitate language in modern humans, this evolutionary process can also be seen to occur in the human brain. Language is not the result of a new structure in the brain, because no singular neurological structure controls language. Rather, language functions by engaging various networks of independent cortical areas, of which each contribute to a particular function. These neurological structures associated with human language all have their counterparts in the brains of other primates incapable of language. This is evidence that the basic organisation of human language areas in our brain has been borrowed from our primate ancestors; however, the language areas are much larger in the human brain than in that of our primate cousins. Syntax and grammar presented the brain with complex and demanding calculations. This demand changed the relative size of these areas in the human brain and also changed their function by altering connections between them. The human brain has been shaped by natural selection, borrowing existing structures and evolving to enhance the capabilities needed for language (Jones & Martin, 1997).

## **Human language and the brain**

The human capacity for language, whilst unique in the animal kingdom, is not an entirely new construct; instead, it resides deep within our ancestral biology. Human language is a relatively recent phenomenon in our evolutionary timeline. Therefore it cannot be considered to play a very central role in our mental functions, or even in determining our thoughts. Rather, language and associated functions form layers on top of pre-existing concepts in the brain that existed before the emergence of language. Human language zeroes in on aspects of reality, reflecting the environment in which our ancestors evolved.

In essence, language is a reflection of our brain's conceptual scaffolding of the world around us. It is a manifestation of the neurological retuning in our brains that was originally used to organise our ancestors' world into space, time, substance and causality. Language is layered onto our ancient biology. We can see this in the basic parts of speech, substance in nouns, space in prepositions, and causality in verbs. In addition, causality, an event, not only occurs in space but also in time, reflected in the world's languages through markers for tense and aspect (Pinker, 2007).

## Thoughts about substances and space

The human brain has several systems for keeping track of the three dimensional world in which we live. There is a complex network of sensorimotor areas that includes the cerebellum, the basal ganglia and several circuits residing in the central tissue of the brain that code location. In addition, the human brain is wired with two visual pathways contained within the visual cortex, the dorsal ('where') and the ventral ('what') pathway. The 'what' system registers faces and objects and the 'where' system allows the brain to keep track of the location of objects.

It can be no coincidence that the two major divisions of the primate visual cortex are reflected in the world's languages through interrogative pronouns. It was our visual cortex that evolved first to keep track of things and locations of things, the later evolution of language is simply a reflection of these concepts mirrored in the vocabulary of the world's languages. Languages contain a large class of words to name objects and shapes, and a smaller class of words that specify paths and places that depict a multitude of spatial relationships. (Pinker, 2007).

## Thoughts on causality and time

Causality is deeply entrenched in our language. It is a result of our intuitions of cause and effect, intertwined with the nature of the universe in which our human brain evolved (and in which it still exists today). Humans ponder and associate events with causes, e.g. what caused an earthquake or what caused the solar system to form. This intuitive sense of cause and effect is reflected in our vocabulary of verbs. When witnessing a delicate object such as a wine glass drop onto a hard surface and see it break, we attribute the falling of glass and landing on the hard surface as the cause of it breaking up into many smaller pieces. Just as when someone enters a room of a house from the adjoining garden outside, we understand, in terms of space, that something has changed location. In this case, a person moving from outside a substance to inside a substance. We know this because the verb *enter* contains the spatial and movement concept of an object moving from outside to inside. Using this same example of a person entering a room, we do not know if the person entered the room, is waiting to enter the room or will never enter the room, until we perceive how this event is embedded in time. The event of entering a room takes place in a three-dimensional space, but it must also take place in a fourth dimension, which is the dimension of time.

The concept of time is imbedded into the neural circuitry of our human brain. For example, events that we have experienced are turned into memories by the hippocampus. The hippocampus makes up part of the limbic system, also known as the paleo-mammalian cortex, an ancient part of the primate brain. The hippocampus is one location that is responsible for laying down new memory and involved in retrieving most types of memory (Carter, 2009). It is this part of the brain (the limbic system) that is activated when we recall memories of our last holiday overseas, or whether we have seen the latest Spiderman movie or not.

The notion of time is encoded in our language by how it depicts the location of an event along a timeline. English does this by using tenses, e.g. *he drinks coffee*, *he drank coffee* and *he will drink coffee*. Other functions of verbs shape an event in time, e.g. the difference between *swat a fly*, an instantaneous event, as opposed to *run around* which is open ended. Another way language depicts an event in relation to time is viewpoint. We can view an event from the inside as *I was eating a pizza* or from the outside as *I ate a pizza* (Pinker, 2007). This is called aspect, not to be confused with tense; they are both best depicted along a timeline as demonstrated below.

Human languages break up the stream of time into the present, the future unto eternity, and the history of the universe prior to the moment of speaking. Language can also break up the

past and future into recent and remote intervals and so on. It is not that a particular tribe of humans perceive time differently to another group of humans, rather the world's many languages are simply a reflection of the multitude of ways humans have developed for talking about it. It is possible to witness this phenomenon in formal language classes, where the teaching of the various rules of tense and aspect can lead to much confusion and frustration. To help a language learner analyse the language of time, it is best to depict it in two-dimensional space, along a time line.

Up until now I have not illustrated how these conceptual frameworks of the world around us are expressed in a particular language. Here, however, for the concept of time I think it is important to delve a little deeper and offer examples.

Let's view the following event along a timeline:

*This morning I drank a cup of coffee.*

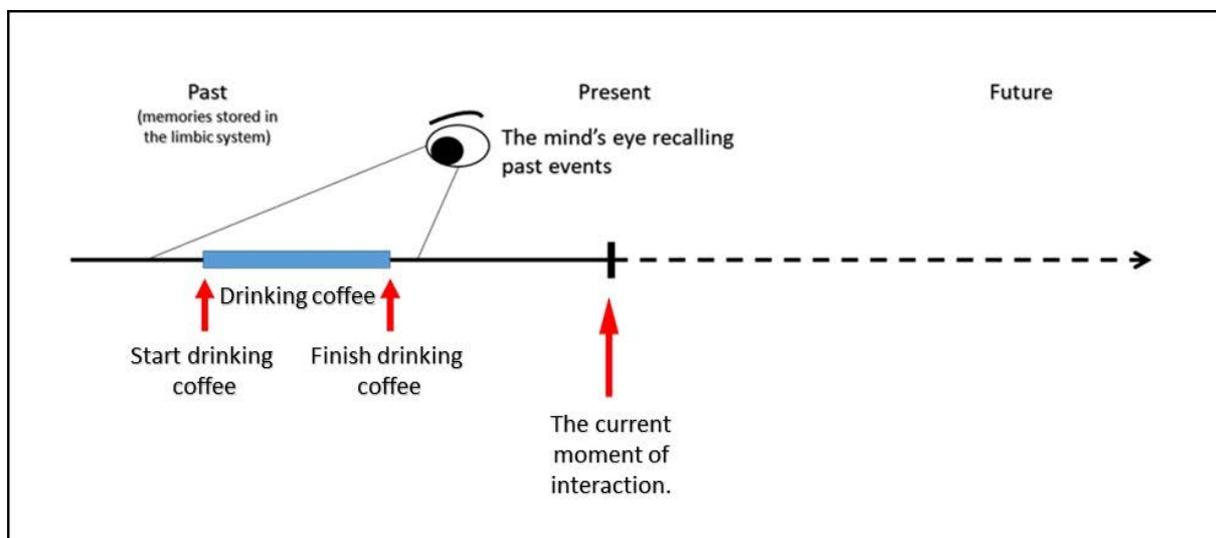


Figure 2: Timeline

The event has taken place in the past. We know this because the adverbial phrase *this morning* locates the event along the time line and the English verb *to drink* takes the form of *drank*, simple past tense. Both tell us the event has already occurred at the time of speaking. In addition, the verb form *drank* also indicates how we view the event in our mind's eye. We view the event from the outside, taking in the event as whole (Fig. 1). The same event can be described using the Chinese language of Mandarin.

Mandarin does not use tense, which is often confusing for beginner learners of this language, so to understand how Mandarin communicates the above mentioned scenario without tense it is best viewed along a timeline.

今天早上我喝了一杯咖啡。(Pinyin: *jīntiān zǎoshàng wǒ hē le yī bēi kāfēi.* )

In English, the verb *to drink* changes form to indicate not only past tense but also viewpoint; Mandarin speakers use a different approach to accomplish the same task. Firstly, to embed the event along the time line, the adverbial time phrase *this morning* (今天早上; *jīntiān zǎoshàng*) is used, informing all those involved in this communication the event of drinking coffee occurred before the present moment. How Mandarin speakers view the event in time is accomplished by using the modal particle 了 (*le*). When this modal particle 了 (*le*) is used after a verb, it indicates the action is complete. In this example the verb *to drink* 喝 *hē* is followed with the modal particle 了 (*le*) telling us to view the event from the outside, taking in

the event as whole. Just as it is the function of the English verb form *drank* in the timeline in Figure 1.

I have chosen to illustrate the modal particle 了 (*le*) because it is often a confusing structure to learn for non-native speakers. It is listed as one of the most difficult grammatical structures to both teach and learn by the many Chinese teachers who research teaching methods for instructing foreign students (Zhong, 1996). However, by modelling how we perceive an event in our mind's eye along a timeline, I intended to demonstrate that tenses, aspects and verbs are just the tools of a language, tools layered on top of the much more ancient conceptual frameworks of causality and time. When seen from this perspective, something that may originally appear complicated in a formal grammar lesson, becomes simple and direct, and from an evolutionary perspective very efficient.

### **The evolution of culture**

Another aspect of the human species that separates us from other animals is culture. Not culture in the sense of high society, fine wine and classical art, but in the scientific sense: bodies of knowledge that are transmitted from person to person, generation to generation. Cultural transmission is not unique to humans but it could be said they do it better than any other species. Cultural transmission of fashions in dress and diet, the teaching of mathematics, the rules of football and religious customs are akin to inheritance, the transmission of genes to an organism's offspring. Culture transmission works in a similar fashion to genes leaping from body to body via sperm and egg. Chunks of knowledge leap from brain to brain via such modes as books, TV, radio, YouTube, and conversation.

Genes are replicators: they copy themselves from generation to generation; however, this process is not perfect and there are occasional mutations. If these random genetic mutations turn out to be beneficial in coping with the environmental stresses, they help those members of the species to survive. This process, over many thousands of years, yields variation among species (Dawkins, 2007). It is possible to draw an analogy between genetic evolution and the transmission of culture. This analogy was best pointed out by Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, in his book *The Selfish Gene* (Dawkins, 1989). Dawkins coined the term *Meme* which I will also use in this paper. A meme is a chunk of knowledge passed from brain to brain. However, being just a gene, a meme doesn't always replicate itself perfectly, and thus yields variation among cultures. There is no greater example of how cultural evolution works than that of language.

The ancestor of modern English can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon dialects brought to Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD by Anglo-Saxon migrants from what is now northwest Germany (Ross, 2010). Once these migrants settled in Britain, they were separated by not only geographical barriers but also time. These conditions permitted the early Anglic languages to evolve into modern English. Modern English mutated from its early forms, just as its sister language Modern German did. Even though English and German share a common linguistic ancestor (a common linguistic meme), each language is unintelligible to speakers of the other. There are, of course, many other cases of language memes, which are, for whatever reason, separated by geography and sufficient time for it to slowly evolve to form a new language meme. This new linguistic meme is unintelligible to its ancestral linguistic meme or to the other variations of languages this early linguistic meme spawned. It is this process that eventually led to many thousands of languages to come into existence - and also to the extinction of many languages.

While it may be claimed that cultural transmission is analogous to genetic transmission, biological evolution requires thousands and thousands of years to produce variation among species, whereas the evolution of a language meme is much faster. Using the example of English and German, being overly cautious with my estimation, at the very most required

only one thousand years to create sufficient variation so that these two languages are no longer the same, regardless if they share the same ancestral language meme.

My approach to language instruction is designed to zero in on the innate language structures in the human brain and overlay them with a new linguistic meme. In what follows I propose a method synthesised from two very different disciplines and will illustrate how this task can be accomplished.

## Part 2 - The How

### Language teacher meets sport coach

The strength of a language learning method can be measured by its ability to achieve desired outcomes. This is equally true for professional sport. Whether it is professional football, or the Olympic Games, athletes are systemically trained for their specific competitive goal. The level of success is measured by the outcome.

Working as a sports coach I have trained both professional and amateur athletes, including rugby league and union players, boxers, mixed martial arts (MMA) fighters, swimmers and cricketers. In many cases the stakes were very high, such as the safety of my athlete entering the MMA cage or the amount of money that was at stake based on the outcome of the athletic competition. The common thread among these various training programs was their goal-specific nature, and the effectiveness of the training methods as judged by the athlete's performance on the day. It is this experience as a sports coach that has moulded my thoughts and ideas on L2 instruction.



*Figure 3: Paul Rackemann's student entering the cage, about to compete in a mixed martial arts tournament in Brisbane.*

The I Method is a system of language instruction born from scientific findings coupled with accumulated practical experiences. My method is built around three key principles:

1. The existence of a language instinct is acknowledged.
2. Language instinct determines the structure and approach of the I Method.
3. The effectiveness of the I Method must be validated, and fine-tuned through practical usage in the classroom.

### Purpose of the I Method

The I Method is designed to promote L2 acquisition by providing an environment that duplicates real world language encounters. The purpose of my overall language training program is to develop the language capabilities needed to perform, under stress, communicative tasks in the L2. Communication goals can be defined by situations and functions. For example, ordering food at a restaurant. Therefore, performance in the L2 can be measured by the success of whether or not food appears on the table. The situation: the restaurant; the function: ordering food; the goal: obtaining food. Success is measured by the obtaining (or not) of food. In essence, these real-world communicative tasks for a L2 learner are akin to the performance of an athlete on competition day. The performance on game day

hinges on how well the training prepared the athlete. The I Method is therefore designed to prepare the language students to perform outside of the classroom on their “linguistic game day”.

At this point it is useful to outline some principles of training taken from the field of professional sport and how they are applied to language instruction. It is also worth highlighting the difference between teaching and coaching, as it applies to language learning. I view my students as athletes, athletes of language learning; therefore, I am coaching them to perform at their best during real linguistic encounters with speakers of the target language (in my case Chinese Mandarin). With this in mind, throughout this paper, rather than using the terms teaching or teacher, I will use the terms training and coach.

## **The 7 I Method Principles of Language Training**

### **1. F.I.T.T.**

Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type. These terms describe the basic parameters of a language training program. The frequency of training per week, the intensity of training, how long the training program is to be implemented and the type of training must all be clearly outlined before the language course begins. Failure to adhere to these can result in a non-specific, ineffective training program that neither the students nor the language coach will be able to follow or find purposeful.

### **2. Specificity**

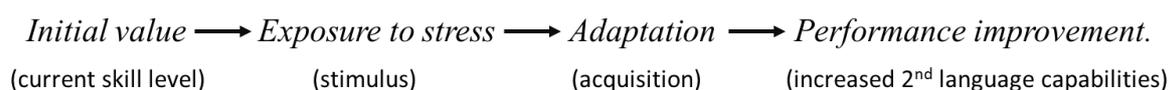
The principle of specificity implies/states that a training program must be specific in its purpose and its overall goal, i.e. specific modes of training will produce specific results that have little to no transfer to other unrelated goals. Therefore, first a specific goal must be established; then the training program is designed with the outcome in mind. The training conducted in the language classroom will develop a specific type of skill. Subsequently, the type of training implemented in class has a direct effect on the student’s ability to perform in the L2 beyond the classroom. Failure to adhere to the principle of specificity will result in failure to reach the desired language goal.

### **3. Initial Values**

“Initial values” refers to the ability of a novice or veteran language learner commencing a new course. These values represent the initial state of skill and provide a marker for increases (or decreases) in performance. Testing for initial values must relate to the specific goal of the training program. Students’ knowledge of grammar rules may not necessarily reflect their ability to apply those rules during L2 conversation. Therefore, if the goal of the language program is focused on oral communication, then the initial testing must reflect this. Moreover, initial values serve as a starting point for a student to be placed under additional linguistics demands as discussed below.

### **4. Adaptation**

In my approach, language training is an organised process whereby the students are constantly exposed to stresses of varied amount and intensity. The ability of the students to adapt to these stresses results in language acquisition. A high level of language acquisition developed in the classroom is the result of a well-planned, methodical and challenging language training program. During training the students adapt to the requirements demanded of them in class. The greater the adaptation, the greater the amount of language acquired. The more language that the students acquire leads to greater levels of performance. Therefore, the object of any well-organised language training plan is to induce adaptations (language acquisition) that improve performance. Improvement is therefore possible by observing the following sequence:



### 5. Progressive overload.

Stephen Krashen asserts that comprehensible input - i.e. when meaning conveyed in the L2 is understood - is the crucial and necessary ingredient for the acquisition of language. The principle of progressive overload is in accordance with Krashen's Comprehensible Input  $i + 1$  hypothesis. When a learner is exposed to L2 input that is slightly more advanced than their current level then acquisition can occur. If a learner is at a stage 'i', then further acquisition takes place when they are exposed to comprehensible input that is just beyond their current capabilities (+1). Critics of this hypothesis point out the difficulty in determining the linguistic level of the student (i) and the level immediately above it (+1). The athletic training principle of progressive overload, however, can help to clear up any misconceptions regarding the practical application of Krashen's hypothesis in a language class.

Progressively and systematically increasing the training stress leads to adaptation and therefore increased performance. In athletic terms, stress equates to the physical demand placed on the athlete's physiology during bouts of exercise. In my language program, stress equates to the language demand that is placed on the student's neural linguistic circuitry. Adaptation is therefore defined as language acquisition brought about by systematically repeating bouts of language training in the classroom. Acquisition of the L2 is only possible as long as it is overloading the linguistic circuitry in the learner's brain in such a way that adaptation is stimulated. In practical terms, the comprehensible input is organised in a way that the learner is constantly exposed to stresses of varied volume and intensity just above their current level of skill. However, if the stimulus (comprehensible input) does not induce a sufficient physiological adaptation in the neural linguistic circuitry, then no increase in adaptation will occur. On the other hand, if the training load presented to the students is too high (*incomprehensible input*), this can result in frustration and a significant decrease in performance.

As the students adapt to the new stresses placed on them in the language classroom, their language capabilities increase. This leads to greater levels of tolerance in the training load and therefore increases their overall performance. Training load in the context of a language classroom equates to roughly three types of comprehensible input: stimulating, retaining, or detraining.

A *stimulating* training load is comprehensible input that is just above the students' current capabilities. Conversely, a *detraining* load is substantially lower than what students are accustomed to. A detraining load ultimately results in a loss of L2 capabilities. In between these two categories is the *retaining* training load. The retaining training load of language input allows students to solidly review and recuperate after high intensity training bouts of stimulating training loads. Constant exposure to stimulating bouts of comprehensible input can lead to linguistics fatigue and lead to "overtraining". Continual monitoring of the student's energy levels is required.

### 6. Individualisation

The ability of a student to adapt to a training load, (the language training in class) depends on individual factors. While language acquisition occurs in much the same way for each student, there are several underlying issues that may affect the speed of language acquisition from individual to individual, e.g. previous language learning experiences, life stresses, age, and personality. For a group class setting, it is important to monitor the performance of each student. This requires detailed observation of each student's abilities, strengths and weaknesses. Ideally, a group of students who are roughly around the same skill level would require little individualised training. However, constant monitoring by the

language coach is required so as to assess a particular student's capabilities against the group.

### 7. Periodisation and Language Training Programs

Periodisation provides the foundation of the language training program. It is based on the first principle, F.I.T.T. (Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type). A periodisation language plan divides the training plan into smaller training periods, making it easier to plan and manage. A language periodisation training program should be designed, of course, with the goal in mind.

Periodisation training ensures the systematic progression of the student's language capabilities, while avoiding staleness, boredom and/or frustration. A periodisation program is divided up into three training cycles:

- Macrocycle (long term plan, usually a semester and/or year plan)
- Mesocycle (short term cycles, 2-3 weeks)
- Microcycle (weekly classes)

The various periods of the language training program are structured to stimulate and lead to language acquisition. They are sequenced to progressively develop specific components of the student's language capabilities. Subdividing the language training program allows the student to focus on and develop specific language skills that improve overall performance.

Below is an example of the basic structure of a language periodisation training program.

Macrocycle													Long term Plan (semester/year)												
Training Phase	Preparatory (silent phase)			Engagement (speech emergence phase)			Transition			Preparatory (silent phase)			Engagement (speech emergence phase)			Transition			Test						
Mesocycle																									
Microcycle																									

Figure 4: Basic structure of a language periodisation training program

The Macrocycle refers to the overall planned period of time. It may be a year program, a semester, or even a short-term course of four weeks. The overall timing of the program is reflected in the macrocycle. In addition, the macrocycle is divided up into several subcategories, the training phases. The training phases may differ depending on the requirements of the language program, however, generally I break them up into four phases.

In the preparatory or silent phase students begin to soak up the new comprehensible input presented to them in class. In this phase comprehension precedes production. A student must first be given time to acquire the new language. The engagement, or speech emergence phase, is when students have acquired the new language and have also developed the confidence to engage in class. Individual students will pass through these two phases at various rates. Making allowances for these training phases provides sufficient time for a smoother transition from comprehension to production than if students were required to use the new language from the beginning.

The transition phase is the tapering-off of the intensity and volume of the comprehensible input in class. This is when students are presented with retaining training loads, to

consolidate and review the language learned previously. The transition phases allow the students to relax, recuperate and prepare for the next stimulating training load. The cycle then begins again until testing time. Testing, based on the initial values taken prior to commencement of language training, determines if there has been an increase in performance.

Mesocycles are divided along communication goals. Each mesocycle focuses on a particular topic, such as classroom commands, holiday activities, weather, family, hobbies, modes of transport, clothing etc. Mesocycles are ordered to build upon the previous one. The correct sequential approach of the mesocycle is essential for the development of the student's language capabilities. The careful scaffolding of the mesocycles, particularly in a beginner to intermediate training program, is based on L1 acquisition studies by Krashen and Terrell (1983). Correct sequential ordering of the mesocycles will also be structured on the intensity of the training loads. It is essential to follow the principle of progressive overload when designing a periodisation language program.

The microcycle is the weekly lesson plan, the design and implementation of each class. It is at this level of the periodisation training plan that the three-part coaching process of *introduce, isolate and integrate* of the I- Method is implemented.

### **The importance of comprehensible input**

Before discussing these three stages of the I Method, it is essential to fully understand comprehensible input, because the success or failure of this method hinges on it. The I Method is a language *immersion* program. In language teaching, immersion means using L2 for (almost) the entire class time. For an immersion program like the I Method to be successful, the language coach cannot just provide any type of L2 input. Rather it must be comprehensible input.

How does this happen? How do students, in their L2, comprehend new language to which they have never been exposed before? The answer lies in the context and extra linguistic information. Just as children learn their first language through context, the language coach creates a similar environment. In practical terms, comprehensible input can be achieved by using such methods as body language and training aids. These tactics create context for the students. Discussing, in depth, the multitude of ways of providing comprehensible input is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet is vitally important to understand what it is.

Comprehensible input provides the stimulus to language acquisition. It directly accesses our brain's conceptual scaffolding of the world around us, by tapping into not only our linguistic circuitry, but also those parts of the brain that are much more ancient. Continual bouts of exposure to comprehensible input allows us to layer the new language (L2) onto our neural linguistic circuitry. In essence, we learn an L2 when we understand meaning. The essential role of the language coach, therefore, is to create meaning.

### **Training with 'aliveness'**

Equally important to the success or failure of the I Method is how it is practised. Comprehensible input must be trained using aliveness. The concept of aliveness is the most abstract concept discussed in this paper. It is a concept of training used in Chinese martial arts; its essence can be transferred to the language classroom. Aliveness as it applies to language training contains three elements, namely (1) Timing, (2) Movement, and (3) Randomness.

All comprehensible input is trained with timing. It must contain the natural timing and rhythm of real speech that occurs between native speakers. This doesn't equate to speed of speech, but rather the natural rhythm and flow of conversation, which is constructed of such

actions as taking turns and interjections between speakers. Robotic speech from a language coach or the artificial speech of pre-arranged roleplays are devoid of natural timing and do little to prepare the students for real interactions in the L2.

Movement in conversation allows both the language coach and the students the freedom to take the language interaction in any direction. There are no limits placed on the students by pre-set language drills constricting the students to set patterns. As students develop their language capabilities, they are encouraged to communicate in the L2 and no restrictions should be placed on their willingness to engage.

Randomness is best described by what it is not, i.e. set patterns. When providing comprehensible input to my Chinese Mandarin class, I always ensure that it is non-patterned. I am constantly changing the content of the interaction which requires students to react to the L2 engagement rather than follow a pre-arranged sequence. Language routines, pre-arranged speeches and rote learning patterns fail to prepare the students for the realities of language use. Non-patterned comprehensible input creates aliveness in class, it reflects the sort of conditions that students will face outside of the classroom.

It is this concept of aliveness that sits at the core of my language training technique. It is difficult to put into words, instead it is best to experience first hand. It has its roots in my training in the Chinese martial art Wing Chun. My *Sifu* (instructor) Master Lo said, 要練活功夫必須放棄死招式. ("If you want to practise alive kung fu, then abandon dead martial arts patterns".) As it is with language learning, if you want to practise the aliveness of language then it is important to abandon the teaching of dead patterns. Language interactions are alive, and it is therefore imperative the language coach trains the students with aliveness.

### **The first stage: Introduction**

In the introduction stage I present the new topic and the associated new language such as vocabulary or grammar structures to the class. This is the learning segment of the lesson, best described as technical training. Here, the students are taught the technical knowledge of the new language that will be presented later in the lesson. Depending on the level of the students' language capabilities this portion of the lesson can be conducted in their first language. At higher levels the L2 should be used.

The new language structure or skill is laid out logically to the students, absent of any stresses that can occur when new language is being used naturally in real time. Once the students are able to understand the new content, it is time to move to the next stage, and training begins.

The introduction period should be no longer than 10 to 15 minutes. If it takes longer for students to grasp this new material, then it is most likely too advanced for their current level of understanding, and adjustments would need to be made.

### **The second stage - Isolation**

Once the new language presented in the introduction stage of the lesson is understood then it is time for the language coach to provide the L2 comprehensible input. The content and training load presented will depend on the mesocycle and the training phase the students are in; yet the key to this stage is to focus on one specific topic, such as last weekend's events. Of course, the vocabulary will vary for each student; however, the specific purpose is to isolate one particular language function (in this case, discussing past events). In English, the goal would be to develop the skill of using simple past tense. As I mentioned earlier, for a Chinese language class it would be to develop effective use of expressing completed actions with 了 *le*, in the context of past events. All class activities are designed to develop this one unique skill.

### **The third stage - Integration**

The length of time may vary depending on how well the students adapt; yet, generally after one or two lessons of focusing on a particular skill (goal), the new language is acquired and integrated into the whole. For example, for learners of Chinese, the 了 *le* structure is integrated into the students' set of L2 capabilities and can be called upon for future use. Each successive process of *introduce* and *isolate* further builds the students' L2 capabilities and therefore enhance overall performance. This process of *introduce*, *isolate* and *integrate* can be implemented at any level. It is just as easily applied to advanced learners as it is to beginning learners. It is very effective at targeting difficult learning issues for a specific L2 and can also be tailored to a particular learner who is struggling with a particular grammar structure. As long as there is comprehensible input combined with activities that contain aliveness, it is possible to achieve any communicative language goal.

### **Further considerations**

The main purpose of this paper is to illustrate how a language periodisation program, based on the training principles, used in conjunction with the I Method, are tools to maximizing L2 performance.

There are many other topics left to discuss, such as the role of grammar, tactics that can be employed outside of class time to enhance in-lesson learning, and how this method's strategies can develop reading and writing skills.

While the majority of the concepts covered here lay outside of the field of applied linguistics and are more likely to be found in the textbooks of a professional sporting coach, I hope they prove useful to language teachers.

The training methods discussed are applicable to the teaching of any L2, be it teaching foreign languages in Australia or learning a L2 abroad as I did in Taiwan. In addition, the approach can be used across different delivery modes of language instruction. This year has shown that this method can be effectively implemented not only in the physical setting of a language classroom but also in an online learning environment, as long as the principles of training, comprehensible input and aliveness are respected.

### **Final comments**

Whereas my sporting background provided the backbone of my method of language instruction, it was Krashen's Natural Approach that energised me to pursue a career in language teaching. The Natural Approach, a method of language teaching developed by Krashen and Terrell in the early 1980s, focuses on naturalistic language acquisition in a classroom setting. As a learner of L2s, I encountered many failures before my experience as a student of Spanish with the Natural Approach. While other methods failed, the Natural Approach worked. This provided me with the foundations of the "how". Likewise, it was Darwin's theory of evolution, and in particular how it applied to language evolution as illustrated through the work of Stephen Pinker, which provided the basis for the "why". The *why* determines the *how*, and the *how* determines the effectiveness. Effectiveness, finally, determines the outcome. The success or failure of the I Method is determined by its ability to train students to perform communicative tasks in their L2. Therefore, the effectiveness of the I Method can only be measured by the outcome.

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