Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria, Inc.

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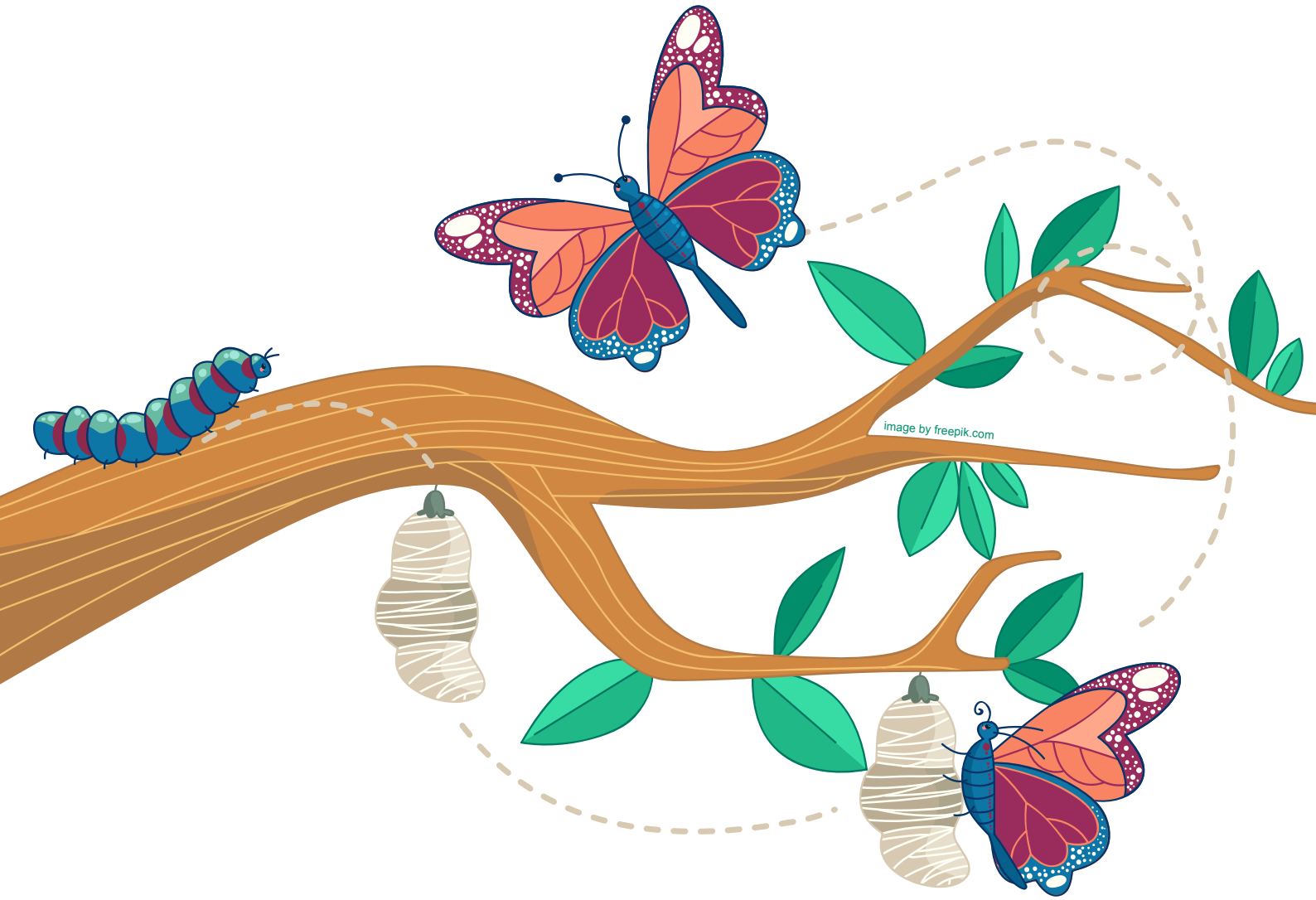

THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGES

LANGUAGES VICTORIA

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021

Andrew Morabito,
MLTAV President

2021 has been my second year in the role of President of the MLTAV. This year has brought about significant changes as we grew and adapted to the challenges before us. There are many members committed to the cause of Languages education that I would like to thank. First and foremost I would like to thank our past Office Manager Kerry O'Connor, for her sustained and unstinting support of the Association. She provided continued support to myself as President and to all members of the MLTAV. Kerry's long service to the Association is duly noted and we wish her every success in her new career.

After some time of discussion and deliberation an Employment sub-committee was created to seek a replacement for the Office Manager/Administrator position. We were very happy to find the talent and expertise of Helenmary Burnside as our Member Services Manager and Cassandra Hilton as our Finance Manager. Both Helenmary and Cassandra have adapted well to attending to the business of the Association and we value their wonderful support.

Reflecting upon 2021, I am very appreciative of the collegiality and teamwork we have achieved as a Professional Teaching Association to advocate for and support the quality teaching of Languages across Victoria.

One of the great achievements of this year has been the launching of our new Website. The feedback received thus far has been very positive. I thank the website sub-committee who has been instrumental in making this project such a success. My gratitude also extends to the Advocacy sub-committee who in the past were responsible for the scoping of our new website.

I wish to express my thanks to Kylie Farmer, MLTAV Vice-President for leading the Website sub-committee and the Professional Learning sub-committee. The PL sub-committee facilitated another highly successful webinar series throughout 2021. All webinars have been well received and teachers have valued the accessibility of the quality professional learning opportunities to support growth in practice within the current climate. We are also looking forward to the Mini Conference which will be held online on 30 November as a culmination to the year's professional learning. Thank you to all on the PL sub-committee, Jade Cleave, Ruth Fielding, Megan McLaughlin, Sean Pratt and Linton Roe for designing and facilitating a comprehensive calendar of quality PL for Victorian Languages teachers.

My thanks and gratitude also extend to Jaclyn Curnow in her capacity as MLTAV Treasurer. This year has seen the implementation of many innovative changes to the management of our finances and streamlining of bookkeeping processes.

My gratitude also extends to Elena Pirovano and Linton Roe who have served in their capacities as Secretary. I have highly appreciated their efficient service in the production of the minutes of meetings and other associated duties.

The Publications Sub-Committee has been a high performing team this year in its production of the quality publications of Languages Victoria. My gratitude extends to Elena Pirovano, Dolly Gerges, Angela Natoli and Felix Siddell for their work in Publications throughout 2021.

My sincere thanks also extend to Andrew Ferguson who, while no longer an MLTAV committee member, has continued to tirelessly administer our social media platforms along with Jade Cleave. I am amazed by the variety of high-quality articles that have been posted in reference to Languages education that are current and are of a great support to Languages teachers.

My sincere gratitude to all members of the 2021 MLTAV Committee, including the representatives from the Single Language Associations, for their time and dedication to the provision of services to members and to the work of the Association.

I wish to also highlight the wonderful work that has been undertaken by the AFMLTA, particularly in its role of leading the national discussion of the National Languages Plan and Strategy. The undertaking to coordinate focus groups, run a National Languages Summit and produce a Discussion Paper to inform concerned parties has been no mean feat. In addition to this, the AFMLTA also hosted its first national virtual conference in July which was outstanding in terms of quality presentations including the provision of international keynote speakers. We also value the support of the AFMLTA consulting with ACARA in the revision of the Australian Curriculum of Languages and its publication of both News in Brief and Babel.

I look forward to continuing to lead the Association in 2022 and thank you for your ongoing support of the MLTAV.

We'll hand you the resources and the inspiration

Lingopont is a new, passionately focused language content company raising the level of support for language education. It's founder Elio Guarnuccio was the creative brain behind CIS Educational publishing Avanti!, Sempre Avanti!, Ci siamo, Ça Bouge, Kimono, Feuerwerk and Ayo!.

This is a whole new world of fully integrated resources.
Videos, apps with voice recognition, games, animations and a textbook allowing teachers to focus on what they do best.

We're developing a modern, exciting way to learn that will bring joy and relief to language teachers everywhere.

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The changing dynamics of languages

Dolly Gerges, Angela Natoli,
Elena Pirovano, Felix Siddell
Publications sub-committee

Welcome to the November issue of Languages Victoria.

We are navigating towards the end of our second year of new territories in Languages education and education in general. Our teachers and our students both have experienced new ways of teaching and learning, new ways of staying in touch and to support each other. Every day brought new challenges but also new ideas and new solutions.

For this reason, in this issue we asked teachers to talk about changes experienced in Languages programs and their ideas and reflections on innovating and creating always new opportunities for learning. In this edition three teachers and a principal shared with us reflections and ideas on different changes occurred in their schools and teaching experience. We hope they will inspire you as much as they have inspired conversations in our team.

In the **People Matters** section, we remember Faye Ennis (1933-2021) and her lifelong commitment to support Languages education.

In the **Review** section we review books, podcasts, blogs, anything that we believe could be of interest to you, our members. For this edition we present you two podcasts with a focus on language education (LanguageChats) and linguistic more in general (Lingthusiasm).

We would like to invite you to visit MLTAV's brand new website and we would like to remind you that it is now time to renew your individual and school membership for 2022.

We would also like to thank all MLTAV Commercial Members for their continued support of the association.

We wish you all a serene conclusion to the school year and a restful holiday season.

In Languages Victoria, MLTAV members can find news, resources and reviews to support their teaching practice. Since 2020, a new journal concept aims to encourage members to become protagonists through contributions that showcase, advocate and champion ideas from their own practice and experience.

Most of the content of LV is written by Languages educators for Languages educators. We hope that LV will become your space, your voice, your journal, now more than ever!

If you would like to contribute an article or a review, please contact us at info@mltav.asn.au. We would love to hear from you!

CO-LEARNING A LANGUAGE WITH YOUR STUDENTS - A CLASSROOM TEACHER'S PERSPECTIVE

by Michelle Polifiore (née Bates)
St. Mary's Primary School, Greensborough

"Life begins at the end of your comfort zone."

For the first seven years of my teaching career I did not consider myself a Languages teacher. I have now come to understand that I have been a Languages teacher when teaching the vocabulary associated with geometry in a mathematics lesson, I have been a Languages teacher when students are exploring the etymology of words in a spelling lesson, I have been a Languages teacher when unpacking the historical context of a Scripture text to help students to make deeper connections. Now I am not only a Languages teacher but a proud co-learner of the Italian language at St Mary's Primary School, Greensborough.

Three years ago when our school began the journey into the Teachers as Co-Learners (TCL) model through professional development with Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) I remember feeling anxious and stating, "but I am not a Languages teacher." It was on one of these professional development days that I saw TCL in action at St Bede's Primary School in Balwyn North where a classroom teacher was what I considered to be proficient in speaking French with his class and giving instructions to the students in French. I asked him how long he had been speaking French, assuming he was about to tell me his whole life. Instead he answered, "the same amount of time as the students, about two to three years." This conversation has stuck with me after all this time as it was the first time I realised the potential of what co-learning a language with your students could do.

I came back to my own Year Four class full of enthusiasm, ready to dive head first into new learning together as I remembered my favourite quote, "Life begins at the end of your comfort zone." Before we began I asked my students to write down everything they already knew how to say in Italian (after four and a half years of going to weekly Italian sessions). They could write down some simple greetings, some colours and not much more. This was by no means a reflection on their language teacher, more of a reflection on the structures in place at our school at the time which did not provide the conditions for quality language learning to occur. Students had one 40 minute Italian lesson a week with a specialist Languages teacher and didn't have the opportunity to engage with or use the language beyond this time.

Along with other classroom teachers at our school, I took on the challenge of introducing 3-5 new words or phrases to my students each week with the support of a video from our Languages teacher. We practiced these words every day using games, choralling and challenges with support from our MACS Languages coach.

Some of the most important aspects to co-learning Italian with my students were:

- ***Frequency*** *- it was important that we practised every day and in a variety of ways through games, songs and challenges;*

- ***Functional language*** *- it was important that the language we were learning could be used throughout the day in a classroom setting so we could practise in context;*

- ***Gestures*** *- hand signals that corresponded with each word. This was vital as when a student forgot a word in a sentence I would gesture it for them and this would help them remember what to say. This was also useful during our practice sessions as I would gesture for the class and they would all choral the language together. How often do you have lessons where only one student gives an answer? Gesturing and choralling allows for all students to speak and practice the language together at the same time which strongly supports vocabulary acquisition, retention and recall (Macfarlane, 2020).*

As the weeks went by and we began learning a variety of verbs, nouns, adjectives and connectives my students were all of a sudden independently constructing sentences... within weeks. When I compared this to what they could do after 4.5 years I knew how powerful this approach was to learning. I also saw a shift in attitude from the students - originally there were many behavioural problems in the Languages specialist class matched with some groans from the students when it was time to go. I think partly this related to the frustration they felt of not making progress in their language learning which is understandable given the challenge of trying to remember new learning when only having the opportunity to use it weekly. Once we commenced the TCL approach when we were learning and using Italian together daily, students were excited to share what they had learnt with their Languages specialist teacher and to grow this.

As a school we are now three years into implementing the Teachers as Co-Learners approach where our students no longer go to a specialist lesson for Italian as instead it is all driven by the classroom teachers. To support the teachers we have a number of important structures in place:

- *Students have a 30-minute Italian workshop co-facilitated by the Italian language assistant and the classroom teacher every week.*

- *Students also have 15 minutes of Italian activities facilitated by their classroom teacher daily. This is based on the language of the week which is provided to all teachers in a film clip created by the language assistant. The assistant models the pronunciation of the language and helps provide teachers with ideas to practise and use the language.*

- *We have a Languages committee which includes teachers from all year levels, our Languages assistant along with leaders including the principal, vice principal (learning and teaching) and literacy leader. This committee meets at least twice a term to look at our Languages Improvement Plan, give feedback on how we are implementing the program and work together to continue to improve and support each other.*

- *We also have a Community Action Team of five Year Six students who meet to support the program. These students help to run competitions in our school and support classes in the use of SpeakUp.*

- *We measure the growth of the students' spoken Italian through Speak Up!, a web application designed by MACS which uses voice-to-text functionality, allowing learners to dictate their responses to a series of picture prompts depicting common classroom scenarios (Macfarlane, 2020). This is a valuable mechanism for gathering data on students' oral language development which is used by students and teachers to guide planning and celebrate improvement.*

I was fortunate enough to participate in the MACS Creative Action-Research Collaborative (CRAC) team in Semester One of 2021 where I took an Action Research approach to addressing a languages-related challenge in my school setting. After completing some interviews and surveys with our students and staff it was clear that the staff needed support with different types of activities to do with the students to practise the language daily. One of the most common statements that I hear is "I don't have time". This is something that I myself have said so I knew not to trivialise it but to think creatively about how to make language learning purposeful. I had previously spent some time with my students unpacking the word type of each Italian word we were learning and found that through this I was teaching grammar to my students in a purposeful way and making connections between English and Italian. When I interviewed my students, I found that they understood grammar in our English lessons better as a result of the time spent explicitly learning grammar through Italian. I then created my Action Research question, "How can we make stronger links with languages and literacy?" It became apparent to me over time that I wasn't teaching reading in English followed by a stand-alone 15 minute Italian session, instead I was teaching literacy, some of this was taught in English, some in Italian and some through other content areas such as Mathematics, Religion and Inquiry.

Through this research project, I created The Oral Language Resource Hub. This is a website filled with resources and activities which support teachers to implement the TCL approach and develop students' literacy skills and strategies through Italian and English. I worked closely with our school's Literacy Leader and Literacy Consultant to ensure the site supported our school's literacy approach which is based on the Big 6 Pillars of Reading Instruction.

The website includes:

- *Weekly videos recorded by our Italian Languages Assistant;*

- *Game ideas for practicing language such as Pacman, Simon says, Follow the leader and 4 corners;*

- *Word flashcards, colour coded according to colourful semantics;*

- *MACS e-books/ picture chats;*

- *Daily language use activities such as 'Last Man Standing', a game where an Italian word of the day is identified and all students receive a peg and can 'steal' another person's peg if that person says the word in English rather than Italian;*

- *MACS Italian Language Mat – a resource with high frequency words which students can use to quickly check a word they may have forgotten or to identify new words they could use to extend their sentences in Italian;*

- *Support for teachers for how to use Speak Up! in both practice and assessment modes.*

This website can be found via the MACS- Languages website: https://languages.cecv.catholic.edu.au/teacher-resources/oral-language-resource-hub

I would highly recommend that all schools explore the teacher as co-learner approach because it has led to a seismic shift for the St. Mary's students learning of Languages.

REFERENCES

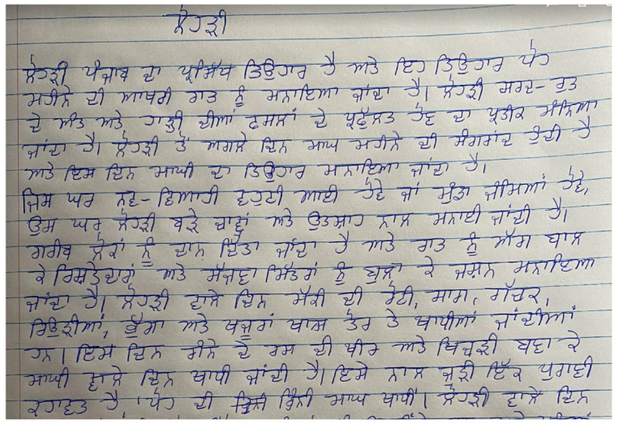
Macfarlane, K. (2020) The Autonomous Languages Learners (ALL) Approach Research Summary. Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools.

More information about the Teachers as Co-learners of Languages approach, including clips about the program at St Mary's Greensborough, St Bede's Balwyn North and St Paul the Apostle Doreen is available on the Melbourne Archdiocese of Catholic Schools Languages website.

Some exemplar clips include:
Supporting transfer of literacy skills across languages.
Using data to inform powerful teaching of language
St Bede's PS Teachers as Co-Learners

PUNJABI LANGUAGE DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

by Lakhvir Singh and Sukhbir Kaur,
VSL West 2 Area, Truganina Centre



Handwritten student task year 11

Language learning has been happening for a long time in Victoria and, in particular, since the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) was founded in 1935. Punjabi was introduced as a language in the Victorian Curriculum in 2001 followed by Punjabi as a VCE Study in 2005.

Most Punjabi classes are being run in VSL centres. Since then, Punjabi has been taught in many centres in Victoria, both on Saturday and, in some schools, during the week. In the Western suburbs, the number of students taking Punjabi has increased significantly over the past few years. There are three VSL centres in the West where more than 900 students attend classes; the VSL Truganina Centre alone has more than 450 students from Prep to VCE. The teaching is mostly face-to-face, but the onset of COVID-19 in 2020 brought a great change to the delivery and learning of the Punjabi language.

Since last year, when COVID-19 forced lockdown and schools were closed, Punjabi language teaching and learning have seen a great change in the form of preparing lessons for online delivery. It has been an enormous challenge for us all. In the beginning all Punjabi teachers went through extensive training to learn about online teaching platforms like Zoom, WebEx and Google Meet, ranging from beginners to advanced levels. Punjabi Language teachers have made a great change in the way they prepare their teaching and learning materials. Lessons and documents are created in Punjabi language in a variety of platforms including PowerPoint presentations, online worksheets and quizzes using Punjabi fonts. All teachers have adapted to using Google classroom to manage their weekly teaching material and send homework to students, including communication during the week. Previously Google classroom had never been used before for Punjabi classes, but due to regular lockdowns, it has been the only way to survive, becoming a routine tool to communicate with students and deliver lessons as well as to receive homework and provide feedback.

As the lockdown, with the inevitable requirement for online teaching, has returned a number of times this year, teaching through Zoom, WebEx or Google meet are now easily managed by teachers. Students too are equally familiar with online learning in Punjabi. Teaching remains focussed on creating even more online learning material using a variety of applications such as Jamboard, Google forms, Socrative, Piglet, Voicethread, Flipsnack, Sway, WordWall, Kahoot and Quiziz. With the shift to online learning, students have started using windows keyboard to type Punjabi and can easily access translation from English to Punjabi using Google Translate. Giving feedback to students, finding the meanings of words and checking spelling in Punjabi is quicker now, as a number of dictionaries are available online and new apps have been developed for Punjabi dictionaries.

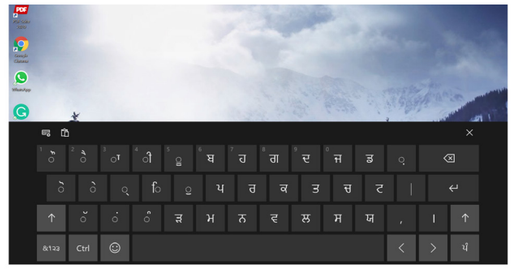
A short survey was conducted to find out more about the changes in Punjabi teaching methods impacted by COVID-19 lockdowns in the VSL West 2 Area. Truganina VSL Centre staff have shown that 70 percent of our Punjabi teachers are using online platform like Zoom confidently and successfully and that they actually enjoy teaching remotely. The survey also collected data about the types of online applications teachers are using to engage Punjabi students. These include Jamboard, Quiziz, Kahoot, YouTube, Sikhville, Google classroom and many more. In other questions about specific changes noticed, answers varied from improved attendance and greater engagement due to the presence of parents, to better catering for different levels, more curriculum content delivery, and an increase in student confidence when handling Punjabi digitally. In general, participation in language activities has increased dramatically, with students adopting a more disciplined approach towards learning, by exploring and trying a greater range of resources in Punjabi. These are only a few of the improvements which have been made.

A similar survey has been conducted for students to find out how they see remote learning as learners of Punjabi. The results of this survey are still being collated.

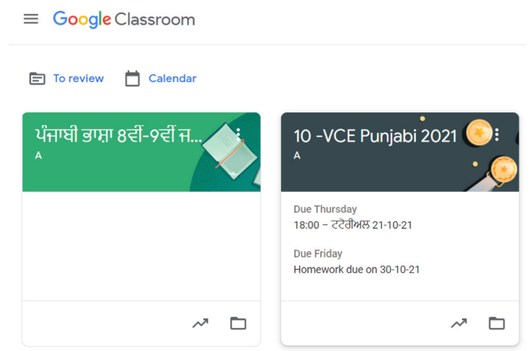
With so many advances in technology there are now several apps available or in the process of development, to facilitate language learning. It has become so much easier to learn Punjabi. With two years of remote learning and teaching, Punjabi teaching and learning has seen a dramatic change in its dynamics. The language instruction model has changed to include Learning Intentions and Success Criteria explicitly.

The use of digital textbooks and resources has further enhanced our programs during this period, by accelerating the learning and teaching process instead of simply adding to the bank of digital resources. Even VCE assessments and competitions are conducted online instead of waiting for face-to-face classes. Overall, this style of teaching and learning has proved to be a highly successful way of motivating and engaging our students of Punjabi.

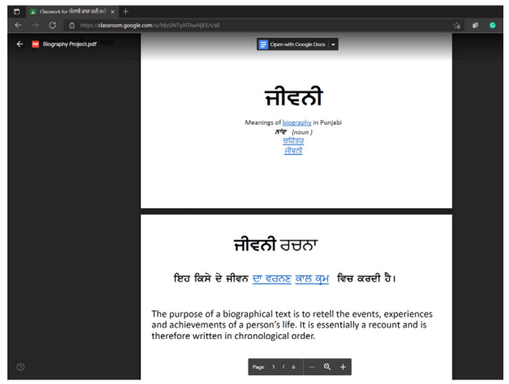
Windows option of selecting Punjabi language



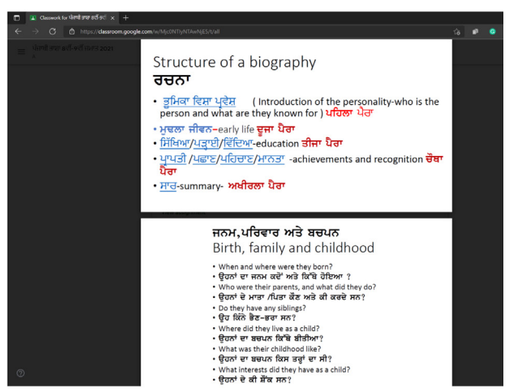
Punjabi Keyboard in windows



Punjabi google classrooms

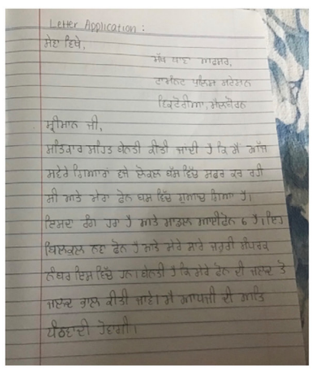


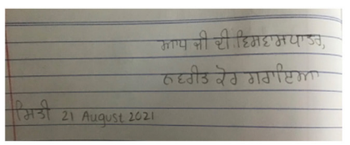
Assessment task instructions 1



Assessment task instructions 2

Student's Digital Punjabi task and teacher's online feedback.





Student's handwriting year 8

REFLECTIONS: 23RD AFMLTA INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES CONFERENCE

by Jaclyn Curnow
German teacher, Viewbank College

I attended my first AFMLTA Conference this year. It was an exciting time for Professional Development as I built my capacity as a teacher, learning from colleagues who shared best practice and research.

Together we explored philosophies and strategies that develop and strengthen our learner's confidence and growth. This is extremely important for student advocacy and their sense of belonging to the classroom. "By targeting the learning process rather than performance itself, students may benefit from both better performance and a greater sense of school belonging." (Guy Claxton: "Learning Mode or Performance Mode.") We collectively and individually reflected upon pedagogy, with strategies and techniques resonating with me and being added to my teaching tool kit. I look forward to the 24th AFMLTA Conference. Here are some of the additions to my repertoire.

Whilst I provide and plan opportunities for students to "Recycle and Reuse Language", it was helpful to consider this in light of the "Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve and Review Cycle". This research identifies that "remembering" is increased from around 20% to 90% when students have three or more opportunities to re-engage with the new knowledge in a week. This research supports planning for frequent opportunities for learners to engage with new language and also supports conversations with students about regular revision. As teachers we have conversations, collaborate and take actions to empower students, whatever their current starting points.

Metacognition and feedback build students' confidence, as it lets them know they have developed and strengthened their skills. I use various graphic organisers and thinking routines to support metacognition, as well as self and peer feedback. "TAG" and "#Selfie" are two new tools that I heard about at the conference and will add to my teaching tool kit. Students can use "TAG feedback" when working with peers to guide the feedback.

TAG feedback

Tell something nice

Ask a question

Give a suggestion

For self reflection, "But first, let me take a #Selfie"

Shared my opinion

Elaborated my response

Lots of different sentence structures

Featured text features

I gave reasons

Eliminated careless errors

EdTech is a software designed to improve student's education outcomes. Some of the benefits of using EdTech is differentiation, being student self-paced and providing timely and targeted feedback for learners. I thank, Marianna Carlino and Stephanie D'Arcangeli for their session "Digital Excellence: Three technological tools for language teaching". Based on this session I have added "Wordwall" to my teaching toolkit. Whilst I have only used this tool in remote learning, I know it will also be effective face-to-face. During remote learning, the students posted screen shots of their completed game, on our Learning Management System. In face-to-face classes, I can circulate around the room and view the screen before the student closes the program.

BENEFITS:

Students can access same content but with different types of questions – These are interactives. Learners receive immediate feedback and the opportunity to address any misconceptions.

TIPS:

There is "no save function" to show participation or achievement. Students need to take a screenshot ("Snipping Tool" or "Print Screen") of their completion to show their level of understanding and task participation. During remote learning, the screenshot can be emailed to the teacher or posted to the Learning Platform. For face-to-face classes, the teacher can view the screen before the student close the screen.

FREE:

Yes = restricted creations (create up to 5 resources.) Upgrades available. Teacher Account/Login required: Yes (can sign in with "Google")

TEACHER ACCOUNT/LOGIN REQUIRED:

Yes (can sign in with "Google")

STUDENT ACCOUNT/LOGIN:

No, Students access "Wordwall" via a URL. There can be also be a link to "Assignment"

EXAMPLE:

This link is a student link to a set assignment https://www.wordwall.net/play/22473/003/709

As a teacher, if you have created an account you can search the community library for "Language Quiz - 7000 Languages and 200 Conlangs" www.wordwall.net resource/22473003 (no account needed) This URL with "resource" can be posted into a browser which gives students access to the interactives.

COMMUNITY LIBRARY OF CONTENT:

Yes "Community" the icon is a magnifying-glass. Teachers can share the game link.

CREATE OWN CONTENT:

Yes, free version has restricted number - 5 (own creations) Screen sharing required: No. Students access via a link. The activities are individual.

SCREEN SHARING REQUIRED:

No. Students access via a link. The activities are individual.

STUDENT PACED:

Yes, students interact with "Wordwall" at their own pace. The "Assignments" (Game) can be set up via a link. Set an assignment if you want learners to play the game and have it completed by a certain time. "Assignment setup" allows you to set up a time for the activity to be completed. A report is generated by the program. You can have anonymous players or name needed at registration. The "Leaderboard" can be activated, also "Start Again" if you want students to have another attempt to build their confidence.

EdTech is a software designed to improve student's education outcomes.

Wordwall: www.wordwall.net

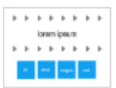
Description: Digital activities – Interactives

Match up
Drag and drop each keyword next to its definition.

Quiz
A series of multiple choice questions. Tap the correct answer to proceed.

Random wheel
Spin the wheel to see which item comes up next.

Group sort
Drag and drop each item into its correct group.



Find the match
Tap the matching answer to eliminate it. Repeat until all answers are gone.

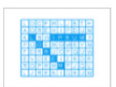
Missing word
A cloze activity where you drag and drop words into blank spaces within a text.

Unjumble
Drag and drop words to rearrange each sentence into its correct order.

Matching pairs
Tap a pair of tiles at a time to reveal if they are a match.

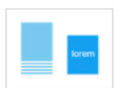
Labelled diagram
Drag and drop the pins to their correct place on the image.

Open the box
Tap each box in turn to open them up and reveal the item inside.



Wordsearch
Words are hidden in a letter grid. Find them as fast as you can.

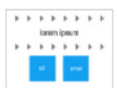
Rank order
Drag and drop the items into their correct order.



Random cards
Deal out cards at random from a shuffled deck.

Anagram
Drag the letters into their correct positions to unscramble the word or phrase.

Gameshow quiz
A multiple choice quiz with time pressure, lifelines and a bonus round.



True or false
Items fly by at speed. See how many you can get right before the time runs out.

Maze chase
Run to the correct answer zone, whilst avoiding the enemies.

Flip tiles
Explore a series of two sided tiles by tapping to zoom and swiping to flip.

FROM A BILINGUAL ‘PROGRAM’ TO A BILINGUAL ‘SCHOOL’

by Stanley Wang
Principal, Abbotsford Primary School

INTRODUCTION

Victoria’s twelve Designated Bilingual Programs (DBPs) have traditionally been quiet achievers in the Languages education sphere. Over the last four decades, schools with a DBP (or two!) have built a reputation for offering some of the most progressive language learning opportunities in the country, and in turn, have naturally attracted, from every part of Melbourne, families who are vision-aligned and committed to language learning.

Despite most DBP schools now having 100% participation in the bilingual program(s) and 50% of the curriculum hours being delivered in the target language, the schools involved have had to continue grappling with an identity crisis of being governed as ‘mainstream’ (non-specialist) schools with an additional ‘program.’ The problematic labelling of bilingual education as a ‘program,’ as comparable to other detachable elements in the school’s offerings, has often blinded DBP schools from opportunities that could transform them into world-class bilingual schools.

Over the last 12 months, Abbotsford Primary School (APS), which hosts the nation’s longest running Chinese/English bilingual program (est. 1984), attempted to break out of this programmatic label and undertook the challenge of transforming itself into a ‘bilingual school.’ The main inspiration for change has been the appointment of the author as the new substantive principal in late 2020. The appointment reflected the school community’s observations that the school was ready to enter a new phase where the school’s bilingual identity would be foregrounded through a new leader with bilingual expertise.

In this article, I will share three positive changes that have come out of school-based initiatives through a plurilingual approach to leadership, namely the equalisation of language visibility between English and Chinese, the normalisation of bilingual proficiency, and global engagement as a bilingual school. I will reflect on the tension between the school’s newfound confidence as a bilingual school and the monolingual approach to policy making typical of the current bureaucracy and argue for the importance of a plurilingual lens to system leadership for the survival and advancement of bilingual education in Victoria.

EQUALISATION OF LANGUAGE VISIBILITY BETWEEN ENGLISH AND CHINESE

When one thinks of a bilingual school in the context of Australia, it is not uncommon to imagine a place where English and the target language would have equal status and be visible and audible everywhere throughout the school. Access to both languages may not necessarily serve a pragmatic purpose for schools like APS where 98%+ of our students come from a non-Chinese-speaking background, but its parallel presence in all our communication can be symbolically powerful for balancing the status of the dominant language in society, English, and the minority language, Chinese. Through simple visual bilingualisation efforts, such as bilingual signage, bilingual logo, bilingual social media posts and a bilingual website we have seen a more positive attitude towards learning Chinese among the students schoolwide.

The visual strengthening has also had a spill-over effect onto the audial presence of Chinese. Over the last 12 months, staff have felt more comfortable speaking in different languages in the staffroom, as the team built a shared understanding that language is the most explicit way for expressing one’s identity and the unique relationship one builds with others. Politeness is strictly upheld by all staff, so that if a topic of discussion was relevant for others present in the room, language would not be used as a means to exclude. Over time, not only has the staff team built greater trust and appreciation for multilingual practices, Mandarin, as well as other languages such as Cantonese, Vietnamese, Turkish and languages spoken by our school community, have all gained a comfortable presence on the school grounds and can be heard frequently.

NORMALISATION OF BILINGUAL PROFICIENCY

Once multilingualism became visible, the next step was to instil a sense of normality for bilingual proficiency and challenge the notion that it is something only relevant and possible for those from a non-English-speaking background. This required a shift in thinking about staffing and exposures to bilingual role models. For staffing, we explored the possibility of having bilingual staff with near native English proficiency to take one whole class for both languages, rather than two half classes and in one language only. This helped highly proficient bilingual staff members to feel less restrained by what may otherwise appear as a dichotomised silo mentality between English vs. Chinese. It also helped to attract new highly proficient bilingual recruits who appreciate an environment that values them as a bilingual whole, rather than only ‘one part of them.’ Similarly, we considered bilingual abilities in non-teaching staff favourably too, as they interacted with our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) families with much greater sensitivity to language needs.

To increase student and community exposure to bilingual role models, we brought in Chinese- speaking, but non-Chinese heritage university students as volunteers who would participate in classes as assistants. Monolingual English-speaking staff were also taught basic greetings and phrases with posters in the staffroom that could help them model basic politeness in Mandarin in front of their students. Translanguaging became a norm for PA announcements and the principal’s address at assembly each week, allowing students to take pride in being able to operate bilingually. The role-modelling effect of the above-mentioned initiatives helped to normalise bilingualism as a ‘given’ and a token of belonging to the APS school community. The message to the students was therefore loud and clear, being bilingual is a norm, not an exception, even if it takes a lifetime to get there.

The last 12 months has been transformational for APS as it attempted to transform from being a school with a bilingual program to a ‘bilingual school.’

GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT AS A BILINGUAL SCHOOL

With the growing visibility of languages and bilingual practices, our confidence as a ‘bilingual school’ also grew. We recognised that with so few Chinese/English bilingual schools in Victoria, we must connect with other bilingual schools around the world in order to stay inspired and engage in global best practice. With international travel out of the question and Sino-Australian politics becoming more hostile by the day, we downplayed the Chinese sister school relationship to a greetings level connection between the school communities during festive seasons. Instead, we began more regular online peer-to-peer projects and exchanges with students from different schools in Taiwan, which we found more effective in developing language fluency and intercultural capability.

For staff, we connected our bilingual teachers with other bilingual teachers from interstate and abroad and conducted shared professional development on topics that were of mutual interest. We also encouraged staff to attend American and European conferences for bilingual educators, many of which had suddenly become accessible online thanks to remote learning and the new COVID normal. Our learnings through these events helped us to develop our own standardised ‘proxy’ assessments for Chinese and a Vietnamese curriculum which we use as the ‘bridge’ for consolidating students’ metalinguistic knowledge.

At a leadership level, we collaborated with like-minded schools to co-invest in inter-school projects, ranging from reviewing the primary-to-secondary transition in our bilingual curricula, designing a school-based language policy for stronger immersion practices, and even coaching bilingual curriculum leaders to better navigate intercultural leadership with monolingual senior managers.

Most importantly, through our comprehensive global engagement strategy, we were able to consolidate our local and global identities, and slowly become a hub for ideas and innovations in Chinese and English bilingual education to flow through.

REFLECTIONS

Despite the notable wins from leading APS as a bilingual school, it has also become evident that the survival and advancement of bilingual education in Victoria require both school leaders and policy makers to adopt a plurilingual lens. By being defined as a mainstream school, DBP schools continue to be constrained by policies that are not fit for purpose in our unique contexts. For example, by being bound to the existing zoning system and enrolment rules, DBP schools are forced to continue prioritising the bilingual resources for students based on their place of residence rather than their commitment to language learning and language maintenance. For school reviews, despite a shared conceptual understanding of the ultimate goal being biliteracy for DBP students, many DBP schools have still struggled to secure a mention of target language literacy in its strategic plan, simply because it is not assessed by NAPLAN.

Even for the topical Tutor Learning Initiative, now in its second iteration, there is still no recognition that what DBP students have needed to ‘catch up’ the most is literacy in the target language, in addition to English. During the extended periods of remote learning, students have undeniably missed out on the immersion environment of DBP schools, and most parents have felt equally as helpless in supporting students in a language they did not necessarily speak.
These examples highlight the unresolved systemic tension between mainstream policies and the plurilingual reality in DBP schools (and our society at large!), as well as the resourcing issues DBP schools continue to face as a result of monolingual policy blind spots.

In summary, the status quo of suppressing the relevance of bilingual education to the programmatic level might seem bureaucratically efficient, but it can also be highly inefficient in terms of holding back the aspirations and the untapped potential of DBP schools. At least for now, it is clear that there is still important work to be done by bilingual school leaders, and I am grateful for the solidarity and collective voice of the leaders in the Bilingual School Network when it comes to bottom-up advocacy for bilingual education.

CONCLUSION

The last 12 months has been transformational for APS as it attempted to transform from being a school with a bilingual program to a ‘bilingual school.’ The article showcased some of the gains that have come from the school’s effort to embrace its new identity, including the equalisation of visibility between English and Chinese, the normalisation of bilingual proficiency, and the adoption of best practice through global engagement. However, without department leadership also reflecting a plurilingual mindset, I argue that bilingual schools will need to continue spending a large amount of effort battling hindering policies and resourcing issues. As much as this article is a celebration and personal reflection of my leadership journey with APS to date, I hope it can also spark a much-needed conversation about the future of bilingual education in Victoria.

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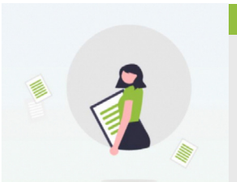

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- join a networking session with colleagues
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REGISTER TO RECEIVE THE ZOOM LINK THEN LOG IN FOR YOUR CHOICE OF SESSIONS.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

3:40 Event launch & Welcome

3:50 Commercial Member Presentations:
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4:15 MLTAV Annual General Meeting

4:35 Keynote: Strengthening Languages Provision in Victorian Government Schools
Mark Fields - Manager, Languages Unit, Department of Education and Training

5:00 Workshop sessions
Choose to join ONE of the following Conference workshop sessions:

5:45 Networking Sessions
Choose to join ONE of the following MLTAV-hosted Networking sessions:
- *Primary Teachers of Languages*
- *Year 7-10 Teachers of Languages*
- *VCE Teachers of Languages*
- *Teachers of Small Candidature Languages*
- *MLTAV Mentoring Network - Graduation of 2021 cohort*

6:15 Conference Concludes

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP TITLES	PRESENTER	SUITABLE FOR TEACHERS OF THE FOLLOWING YEAR LEVELS
Strategies for creating opportunities to use Italian at school daily in order to develop successful and confident language learners	Isabel Fernandez	F-6
CLIL: Supporting engagement and retention of language learners	Kylie Farmer	F-10
Using Blooket (online game) to engage language learners	Jaclyn Curnow	Year 3-10
Embracing innovation in assessment	Amy Collins	Year 3-10
Using the NEW Year 8 Unit of Work & Resource Package available free online for French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese & Spanish	Ellen Moffatt	Year 7-8
How might we design a Year 9 Japanese program so that students have agency, competency and confidence to continue language learning	Louise Hills	Year 7-10
Holistic Assessment using VCAA descriptors	Megan McLaughlin & Tasha Brown	VCE

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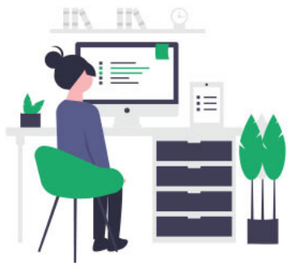

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People Matters

VALE – FAYE ENNIS-HARRIS
MLTAV Life Member

Faye Ennis (1933-2021)

Faye Ennis came to teaching as a mature age student when she undertook a Graduate Diploma in Education at Monash University in 1970, specialising in English and French. She taught full-time at Mount Waverley High School for many years until she was seconded for two days per week to the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne as the part- time lecturer in Methods and Practice of teaching Modern Languages until the end of 1984. In 1985, she took a position as a languages' curriculum advisor in the Curriculum Division of the Department of Education at Hytone House in Carlton.

After retiring from full-time work, Faye started a doctoral thesis at the University of Melbourne in the Department of Linguistics, but unfortunately, was not able to complete this. Faye was an active member of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria, of which she was a life member, and of the Association of French Teachers in Victoria. She was always a willing mentor to her peers and shared her extensive knowledge generously.

The MLTAV would like to acknowledge Faye's considerable contribution to the teaching of French as well as language teaching education in Victoria and offers sincere condolences to her family.

The MLTAV is grateful to the AFTV for sharing this vale written by Gretchen Bennett, Margaret Gearon and Alice Bray.

Faye was a valued and active member of the Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria

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Reviews

by Felix Siddell

Podcasts – a valuable professional development resource for teachers of Languages

Thanks to the meteoric rise of information technology in the 21st Century, teachers nowadays have a plethora of resources to assist them with their professional development and delivery of lessons. A medium which has grown exponentially in availability, quantity and profile over the past years is the podcast. Two podcast series in particular, Language Chats and Lingthusiasm, provide a wealth of stimulating and thought-provoking material for teachers of Languages.

LANGUAGE CHATS

www.languagelovers.com.au/podcast

Language Chats is an appropriate name for a great site which is exactly that, a collection of podcasts where the participants chat about language in their specific context. We all no doubt relate to this as language educators, as so much of our knowledge and professional practice is built up by sharing perspectives with colleagues at school, in professional associations or when attending conferences and other professional development. The advantage of this podcast series is that it expands that range of ideas even further by letting us into conversations that we might never otherwise access, providing new perspectives on all those topics, problems and priorities which are only too familiar to Languages teachers. Without giving away too many spoilers, it is worth reflecting on some specific examples from podcasts in the series. Margaux Josse tells the story of her language teaching experience in Episode 53. Initially drawn to the profession by her love of Linguistics, her reflections in the podcast demolish a few stereotypes. One was that Australians, compared with other nationalities, lack competence in language acquisition. She said that this was not borne out by her own teaching experience and attributed this belief more to learners' own perceptions of their ability. Margaux also provided some interesting insights about the range of effects that the transition to online learning has had on language classes over the past two years. In Episode 55, Stanley Wang spoke about his motivations for making Languages such a focus in his career. His personal story reminded us of the connection between proficiency in Music and a fascination for Languages. He mentioned how his experience of learning English on his arrival in Australia opened his mind to study of different languages. The insights he gained in childhood about learning languages and culture gave him an awareness of what motivates students, eventually translating into empathy for the whole school community, which informed sound leadership decisions to set up and manage a bilingual program. A lot of ground is covered in the other episodes of the series, but what the podcasts of Language Chats have in common is the sharing of personal experiences of language learning, often specifically in a school context.

LINGTHUSIASM

https://lingthusiasm.com/

Lingthusiasm is a site which fosters that mindset of linguistic curiosity that provides a constant source of inspiration and motivation for language teachers. The podcast series is managed by two well researched and highly articulate linguists, Lauren Gawne and Gretchen Mc Culloch. The fact that Lauren is Australian and Gretchen is Canadian adds a level of dynamism to their perspectives because they are not only well versed in the esoteric side of Linguistics but also proficient in what we might regard as mainstream English-speaking culture, a concept they both analyse and critique. The Lingthusiasm site is comprehensive and well organised, with episodes listed by topic and accompanied by transcripts.

On a practical level this makes it really easy to navigate and use for specific research purposes. Yet the appeal of these podcasts goes way beyond the specialist level, as the episodes are so pacy that they can be listened to for entertainment, especially when stuck in traffic on a long commute. The academic background of the presenters means that they are able to provide a vast range of pertinent examples that support their arguments about just how crucial the phenomenon of language is for humanity.

Other than entertainment and research, how might these podcasts be used in our professional setting of language teaching? They can added to our resources and strategies for Language Advocacy because, in the most accessible of ways, they foster that linguistic mindset which puts languages on the radar. The information provided, ranging from familiar to obscure, helps stimulate deep thought about the whole phenomenon of learning, using and promoting languages. These podcasts could be used as great ice breakers on staff professional development days, generators of discussion for senior secondary and university students, even as trivial pursuit activities to power up our knowledge of linguistics. The sound academic foundations also help smash through some of those old stereotypes about language learning, so the podcasts could also supply valuable information for meetings with parents, school councils and principals when setting up or modifying school language programs. In their conversations, Lauren and Gretchen cover a wide range of highly contemporary topics from emojis to gesture and from universal language to regional variation. The presenters are both highly switched-on about the undercurrents of gender, culture and semantic economy which pervade languages and as a result succeed not only in providing a rigorous analysis to satisfy the inquiring mind of the true language devotee but also open up that discussion to the wider community. In this way their site is not just a treasure trove for current linguist enthusiasts, but even more importantly, generates that enthusiasm in the community beyond, which for us means our teaching colleagues, parents, students and school leadership.

These two podcast series offer Languages teachers a wealth of stimulating material in a lively and accessible format. While both sites are concerned with the core business of language study, each site has a distinctive approach. Lingthusiasm focuses on language as a grand phenomenon, rigorous in structure but quirky in application, while Language Chats concerns itself more with the realities of language teaching and learning, whether in class or at the leadership level. Both approaches are essential for our personal growth as language professionals. In this way, the two podcast series successfully address a profound ongoing need in our profession. With such an appealing and convenient format, they can be used in a whole range of settings to raise consciousness, stimulate thought, and provoke discussion about the study and acquisition of languages.

ABOUT MLTAV

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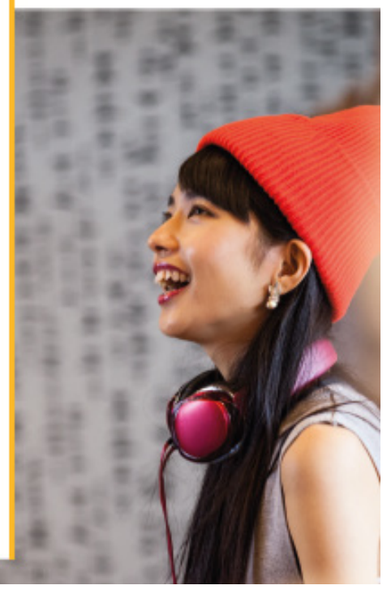

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