Lesley HARBON, Ruth FIELDING, Robyn MOLONEY, Michelle KOHLER, Ann DASHWOOD, Margaret GEARON and Andrew SCRIMGEOUR

The University of Sydney, Macquarie University, University of South Australia, Flinders University, University of Southern Queensland, Monash University

Longtime passing: language teacher educators’ concerns in language teacher education

Abstract

As we are reminded by Stracke, Houston, Maclean and Scott (2011), a long time has passed since the first appearance of the many reviews and reports on language teacher education in Australia. The image of language teachers standing at a ‘crossroads’ as per the 1993 report (Nicholas et al. 1993) is still a valid one, as is the ‘pivot of policy’ image of language teachers set down in the 1996 report by the Australian Language and Literacy Council (ALLC 1996). This historical narrative over the past 15 years has suggested that the field of language teacher education is fragile and in need of much government attention if the upcoming Australian Curriculum: Languages is to achieve its ambitious goals for student language learning in Australian schools. This contribution represents the work of language teacher educators from four Australian states and is a discussion of the key issues these scholars perceive to be impacting the design and implementation of language teacher education for all Australian contexts.
Introduction

In the last twenty years in the Australian context there has been a steady decline in the number of teachers qualified to teach languages in schools. The trend is a reflection of the community’s value of language learning in addition to reduced curriculum time allocated to language learning in public schools and an imbalance in continuity and sequenced study across the years (Lo Bianco 2009). The number of students continuing to Year 12 nationally is in decline. In Queensland, for example, whereas 13% studied an additional language nationally at Year 12 in 2005 (Lo Bianco 2009: 38), less than 10% finish high school with an additional language.

Today’s language teachers have had to develop a range of skills that are immediately adaptable to the needs of their learners. Teaching the macro-skills using twenty-first century western pedagogy with interaction and communication technologies (ICTs) aims to enhance social and intercultural communicative competence. There are expectations for them to manage the online environment, to develop international partnerships, and to display globalized integrity as local host to international visitors. The roles for a language teacher are many and varied. The language teacher also has to act as a model of the target language and culture and as an intercultural mediator in the classroom. The teacher has to be culturally connected to the needs of classroom learners, and socially connected to the wider community.

Freeman and Johnson (1998: 401) claim that “teachers’ beliefs and past experiences as (language) learners tend to create ways of thinking about teaching that often conflict with the images of teaching that we advocate in our teacher education programs”. They advocate moving away from the current process-product approach since “learning to teach is a long-term, complex, developmental process that operates through participation in the social practices and contexts associated with learning and teaching” (Freeman and Johnson 1998: 402). The question ultimately becomes one of how best to prepare language teachers in limited circumstances. The discussions of the key issues are found below.

This contribution outlines what we consider are some of the key issues facing language teacher education, including: (i) the increasing policy and regulations impacting our program design; (ii) developing an holistic knowledge base of beginning language teachers; (iii) the crowded language teacher education curriculum; (iv) preparing native speakers for the Australian classroom; (v) the importance of the in-country experience for pre-service language teachers; (vi) demands on pre-service teachers regarding proficiency levels and pedagogical understandings; and (vii) the special considerations in preparing teachers for community languages schools.
Increase in policy and regulations impacting language teacher education

In recent years an increasing range of regulations have guided and shaped language teacher education. Possibly the most important document to impact on language teacher education in the past decade is the Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers’ Associations’ [AFMLTA] Professional Standards for Accomplished Teachers of Languages and Cultures (AFMLTA 2005). This document has provided a framework that pre-service and in-service language teachers have used for self-reflection and growth. The Professional Standards framework is developed around eight elements: educational theory and practice; language and culture; language pedagogy; ethics and responsibility; professional relationships; awareness of wider context; advocacy; and personal characteristics. Language teacher educators are using this document to assist them to design pre-service language teacher curriculum nationally that aligns with the aspirations for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures.

Up to the point of writing this contribution and prior to developments with the emergence of the new Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), there have existed, specifically for languages (in addition to the AFMLTA’s standards), teaching standards documents in many states and territories. From the New South Wales context, the NSW Institute of Teachers has developed Professional Teaching Standards. These include a set of standards to accredit teachers, and a set of standards to frame the courses and programs run by the teacher education institutions. All units of study within the NSW teacher education institutions, for example, are subjected to rigorous critique for approval to obtain accreditation. There are Mandatory Areas of study to be integrated into all areas of teacher education: Literacy education, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, NESB (Non-English Speaking Background) education, Special Education, Classroom Management and ICT. All curriculum areas in teacher education programs must demonstrate how these relate to the teaching of subject areas. In addition there are Subject Content Requirements — for languages these involve: Knowledge of subject content (for undergraduate programs), Knowledge of pedagogy and Knowledge of NSW curriculum requirements.

Other states and territories have their own professional bodies that have developed their own documents and requirements for language teacher training (see for example: Queensland College of Teachers, Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Teacher Quality Institute, Teachers Registrations Board of Tasmania, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Western Australian College of Teaching, Teacher Registration Board (Northern Territory), and the Teachers Registration Board of South Australia).

AITSL’s National Professional Standards (2011), the framework for evaluating teacher education courses, includes a number of standards that must be addressed. These are that teachers will know students and how they learn, know the content and how to teach it, plan for and implement effective teaching and learning, create
and maintain supportive and safe learning environments, assess, provide feedback and report on student learning, engage in professional learning, and engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community.

The reality of language teacher education in NSW is that the increasing number of regulations provides challenges for the design of curriculum. In the context of the University of Sydney, the crowded curriculum is an ongoing challenge for languages curriculum classes: there is a total of 108 hours of classes over 3 semesters (excluding school experience practicum placements). It is a continual juggling act to include all of the desired content alongside the requirements set by a growing number of policies and documents.

Nevertheless evaluation data from the unit of study evaluations taken over the various semesters indicate that the pre-service teachers see languages pedagogy classes as the most relevant, practical and useful element of their teacher education course. For example, one student commented in relation to this:

I have found the course to be a good combination of understanding the theory and also gaining practical skills that will help in a classroom. I would have liked to spend more hours a week studying languages and my other method rather than doing the [general education] classes. The skills gained in the languages classes have been much more useful.

Language teacher education curriculum is also challenged by the issue of an integrated knowledge base and what this comprises.

Teacher education courses are notoriously challenging in terms of sufficient curriculum time to address the various knowledge demands necessary to prepare a beginning teacher. In the case of languages education, this tension is exacerbated by a separation of the curriculum specialist area, i.e. study of the target language and culture, from language education courses. This structural separation presents a challenge of how to best support the development of an integrated knowledge base necessary for becoming a beginning language teacher.

**Developing an holistic knowledge base**

The degree program at Flinders University and the University of South Australia are examples of how the area sits both in applied linguistics and social sciences. These two contexts foreground the issue of the knowledge demands on students who undertake initial teacher education with a languages specialisation. What is highlighted is the separation, both physically and conceptually, of knowledge that at some point must be synthesised in order to represent a coherent basis for language teaching.

The ‘languages gap’ (Kleinhenz, Wilkinson, Gearon, Fernandez and Ingvarson 2007) has a number of characteristics. Typically, undergraduate students undertake their major in the first and second year of their education degree in areas outside
the School of Education, and enter the Languages Education specialization in third year where they complete both course work, usually offered intensively due to professional placement requirements, and professional placement (one area of specialization in each placement period). Thus, students may experience as little as 28 hours of coursework and one four-week school placement as their entire specialist language teacher preparation.

Furthermore, in addition to the limited time, language education courses need to assume that students, many of whom have only completed two years of language study, have sufficient knowledge and capacity in the target language ready to teach. Language teacher educators also rely on teaching materials and resources, many of which are limited in particular languages, to support students’ understanding of the curriculum for their particular language. The mandatory curriculum frameworks provide a basis for dialogue among language teachers, however give little guidance in language specific terms. Curriculum frameworks are generalised across languages and year levels, hence provide a long-term perspective on teaching and learning, somewhat remote from short term and weekly programs of importance to beginning teachers. Student teachers therefore rely on mentor teachers in schools and on textbooks that may be quite idiosyncratic. Thus a number of factors represent obstacles to the effective holistic preparation of language teachers.

Being an accomplished teacher of languages involves developing a stance (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999) comprised of multiple dimensions of knowledge and capabilities (AFMLTA 2005; Kleinhenz et al. 2007; Scarino 2001; Scarino et al. 2008). Pre-service language teacher education needs to focus on laying the foundations for this kind of stance to develop over time. Beginning language teachers require pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman 1987) that includes proficiency in the target language and culture, knowledge of pedagogy and learning theories, knowledge of language pedagogy and theories of language learning, and theoretical, formal knowledge as well as experiential, practical knowledge. While a beginning teacher is inevitably responsible for constructing their own knowledge for teaching, this process can be supported through a number of mechanisms during their initial teacher education courses.

Firstly, there is a need for greater integration and alignment between language studies and language education courses. Collaborative endeavours such as curriculum planning across faculties could create synergies such as a common discourse about language teaching and learning, and curriculum that reflects current language learning theories and contemporary language use. Reciprocal guest lectures could foster greater connections between students’ language specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, and increase students’ exposure to other areas of interest in teaching and research.

Secondly, collaboration could extend to the development of language specific pedagogy courses (Kleinhenz et al. 2007). Specialist knowledge such as character learning and understanding the target language and culture for teaching and
learning, is necessary for adequate teacher preparation. In addition, there is a need for courses tailored to specific cohorts of trainee teachers such as overseas trained teachers or post-graduate entry students from overseas (Orton 2008; Scrimgeour 2010).

While no substitute for language specific courses, it is possible within language education courses to provide language specific materials that exemplify aspects of curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment. These materials vary in scope and quality depending on the specific language and selection depends on the language teacher educator who is not a specialist in all languages. There is potential through the *Australian Curriculum: Languages* (Scarino 2011) development that quality language specific materials become available that will give greater guidance to teachers, especially beginning teachers. In sum, the field needs to explore more opportunities for collaboration and developing synergies that will assist coherence of knowledge required to become a beginning language teacher.

**Crowded language teacher education curriculum**

Within the limited time available, pre-service language teachers are keen to acquire the skills and understanding of language pedagogy and to understand their role in their new profession. At Macquarie University in NSW, Languages Methodology is taught within the School of Education, in weekly three hour workshops across one 13 week semester to students for whom a language is a ‘minor’ teaching subject, and across two semesters for those for whom it is a ‘major’. Workshop learning is integrated with school practicum experience one day per week, and there is an exchange across both contexts. It is a challenge to cover the broad range of essential knowledge, skills and understandings which students need. The class comprises students who will teach many different languages (European, Asian, Arabic, Hebrew, Latin), but the generic methodology course is conducted for the most part in English. Learning activities are conducted within individual language groups as much as possible.

Methodology workshops integrate content which answers four conceptual questions, informed by research-based evidence: Who will I be, as a languages teacher? What will I teach? How will I teach it? Why do we teach it that way? An explanation of how these themes play out in the design of the complex and busy language teacher education curriculum at Macquarie University follows.

The *Professional Standards for Accomplished Teaching of Languages and Cultures* (AFMLTA 2005) offers new teachers a valuable set of professional values and learning goals. The document provides enquiry questions for interrogating practice and goals, and many strategic questions as to the often marginalised situation of languages in schools. Pre-service teachers use the document to investigate their individual linguistic and cultural background, and make visible the value and role of their intercultural abilities. They are encouraged to join and contribute to their
professional language communities, for the support of their new identity and development.

The ‘what’ question is answered with study of the local syllabuses, in the case of New South Wales, a K-10 syllabus and a variety of Stage 6 (Years 11 and 12) syllabuses (BOS NSW 2003). These offer conceptual understanding of how language learning works, objectives and outcomes, suggested content, the integration of intercultural enquiry learning through language, and assessment practice. Study of the Board of Studies (BOS) syllabuses must be positioned within understanding of school student motivation, interests, learning styles, and understanding of the differentiated levels which exist in language classes. Understandably the classes focusing on this important part of the course are intense and busy.

Through peer teaching and assessments, students engage with ‘how’, in practice of the sequencing and variety necessary within a lesson, a unit, or even a year. Students learn how to develop and use resources, and a vast repertoire of game-type activities for language practice and fun. A myriad of online materials, and the extensive use of ICTs and Web 2.0 tools creates many new opportunities with authentic materials and access to native speakers. The Quality Teaching Framework (DET 2003) of Content / Significance/ Environment is a simple but effective signpost of what we teach / why it needs to be relevant / positive classroom community. Pre-service teachers must understand the need also for reflective practice, how to critique their practice, to build their own learning. All of this takes time.

Today’s pedagogic choices are more meaningful when placed within a timeline of theoretical developments in language pedagogy (Larsen-Freeman 1986), and within connections to learning theory across the curriculum. This is the ‘why’ part of the curriculum. From language pedagogy’s roots in grammar translation, developments in the understanding of language and culture have shaped a number of changes in teaching methods. Today an intercultural approach to language learning, built on the need for both linguistic and sociocultural competence, asks students to construct their own interpretations and connections with the language and culture studied. New teacher skills in facilitating classroom enquiry and dialogue represent a shift in the language teacher role, and may challenge teachers from different cultural backgrounds. It is recognized that this learning is still in development, internationally, in both pre-service and experienced teachers (Sercu 2006).

Beginning teachers can be a facilitator of change in a school student’s life and worldview, building a rigorous level of competence in a language and culture. It is a privilege to offer them the complex tools with which they can start to achieve this, but also a challenge to complete it all in the context of the crowded curriculum of language teacher education.
Preparing native speakers for the Australian classroom

While the issue of declining participation rates in languages programs in schools is well documented, the provision of opportunities to study Chinese language in schools has continued to increase from a relatively low position of sixth most studied language in schools in 2005 (DEEWR 2007). At the same time an increase in international students from China completing graduate entry courses in education with a languages specialisation has seen a shift in the demographic of teachers engaged in Chinese language education in our schools. The typical linguistic, cultural and educational background of teachers engaged in teaching Chinese in schools has changed as more of these overseas raised and educated native speakers, recently graduated from Australian graduate programs are employed. Such overseas-educated native speakers face a number of issues or challenges in the Australian language classroom. Their own experience of language learning and use, of teacher education and practice in their home country, and consequent assumptions about the teaching-learning process and the role of teachers and learners in the Australian language classroom are brought into stark contrast.

The issues raised in this article in relation to the limited time available for learning area specific theoretical and practical training in teacher education programs, and almost complete absence of language specific teacher education courses are further exacerbated by the fact few teacher education programs recognise or address the particular needs of overseas raised native speakers wishing to teach their native language to students via the medium of their own second language – English. While there has been much research into Chinese ‘cultures of learning’ and their experience with western language teaching methodology (Jin and Cortazzi 2006; Watkins and Biggs 2001), research on the lived experience of Chinese native speakers as they adapt to the conditions of the Australian language classroom is particularly limited.

A study of the experience of one group of native Chinese trainee teachers experience (Scrimgeour 2010) identified how these teachers were forced to rethink their role, their practices, their relationships with learners and with the two languages and cultures that interact in the Australian languages classroom. They came to recognise that their prior experience overseas and teacher education in Australia had not adequately prepared them for their new context (and learning culture), the challenges of teaching their native language through the medium of their second language, and the task of engaging students in the study of a language they assumed would be extremely popular in this age of ‘China fever’. Their experience highlights these ongoing issues in the provision of generic courses in languages education and absence of attention to language-specific issues and approaches in contemporary language teacher education programs. It also draws attention to the need for changes in the approach to in-service professional learning opportunities for such teachers whose formation as professionals in this new culture and contexts is particularly challenging.
Pre-service training for such teachers needs to be supported by ongoing reflective introspection on their classroom interactions with learners, to help them understand their process of adaption and change to a complex and demanding learning culture that is language education in Australian schools. For those involved in language teacher education, a deeper exploration of the personal experiences and responses of native speaker teachers is essential. With a better understanding of their processes of adaption, of how best to utilise the knowledge and skills they bring, and adapt them effectively to the English-medium, Western culture, Australian context of the Chinese language classroom in order to meet the learning needs of non-Chinese background learners, this process of adaption could be addressed in a more efficient and timely manner.

**Importance of in-country experiences for pre-service language teachers**

Added to these points related to the preparation of language teachers, is the demand to include an in-country experience in the pre-service period. The literature on language teacher education variously acknowledges the importance of short-term international experiences (if not longer-term study abroad) for language teachers. Accomplished teachers of languages and cultures “are both users and teachers of linguistic and cultural knowledge” (AFMLTA 2005: 3). Teacher educators consider that there is nowhere better to maintain and develop such linguistic and cultural knowledge than “in-country” through a short-term (or longer term) international experience.

Australia’s language teachers have for many decades taken time for short term or semester-long international experiences. Table 1 shows an overview of options for language teachers’ short-term international experiences.
Table 1: Frame of types of international experiences open to language teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-funded / private programs</th>
<th>Within degree/ semester abroad programs</th>
<th>Extra program on top of degree requirements</th>
<th>Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowship programs (govt)</th>
<th>Other funded programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pre-service and in-service</td>
<td>pre-service and in-service</td>
<td>pre-service and in-service</td>
<td>pre-service and in-service</td>
<td>pre-service and in-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>holidays and teacher self-funded enrolment in intensive language schools</td>
<td>within undergraduate or post-graduate degree structure, a semester abroad</td>
<td>short-term international experiences, some including a teaching experience</td>
<td>in-service teacher participation since 2004, pre-service teachers since 2005</td>
<td>through, for example, National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program-funded projects, eg. ILTI to Indonesia, and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pre-service can be added to HECS</td>
<td>sometimes external funding, eg. Australia Korea Foundation</td>
<td>for 2012, China, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam</td>
<td>other opportunities for teachers of European languages, eg. programs through Alliance Française</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Research by Harbon (2006, 2007), Harbon and Atmazaki (2002) and Olmedo and Harbon (2010) on the perceived benefits of the short term international experience on language teacher development followed on from other Australian research generally about the perceived benefit of an overseas experience in a teacher’s pre-service period (some data were language-specific). Other similar research has been in evidence (Barkhuizen and Feryok 2006; Bodycott and Crew 2000, McGill and Harbon 2006). Findings from such studies are agreed about the benefits and positive results of language and cultural immersion during the pre-service period, including opportunities for pre-service teachers to step outside their comfort zones to reflect on language, culture and pedagogy per se.

In the prelude to a research project in 2006, questionnaires were sent to 38 faculties/schools of education in Australia’s higher education institutions concerning their offering of short term international experiences to pre-service teacher groups. Thirty-five of 38 questionnaires were completed and returned. Findings were that there were a number of these short-term international experience programs that allowed pre-service language teachers to participate as is detailed in Table 2.
Table 2: Short-term international experience programs for pre-service language teachers in Australian schools of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Sydney</th>
<th>Edith Cowan University</th>
<th>Flinders University</th>
<th>Monash University</th>
<th>University of New England</th>
<th>University of Western Australia</th>
<th>University of Melbourne</th>
<th>Central Queensland University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indonesia (for Indonesian), China and South Korea (for ESL)</td>
<td>Mauritius (for ESL)</td>
<td>France and New Caledonia (for French)</td>
<td>South Korea (for Korean and ESL)</td>
<td>China and Hong Kong (for TESOL)</td>
<td>Japan (for TESOL)</td>
<td>China (for TESOL) Japan (for Japanese)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most importantly, apart from finding which faculties/schools of education enabled an international experience to their pre-service language teachers, this research raised important questions challenging the notion of quality experiences for language teacher education curriculum, including how language teacher educators can work productively together to plan that the semesters abroad can be factored into a beneficial period for pre-service teachers; how to assist those involved in language teacher education to choose the most suitable providers of intensive language programs for the teachers when in-country; and the question of lobbying government funding for a central clearinghouse for information and standards on such in-country experiences.

Demands regarding proficiency levels and pedagogical understandings

In the face of declining numbers in the secondary classroom, today’s language teachers are challenged to meet higher demands to attract students into the language curriculum units of study.

The process to qualify to teach a language in the State’s public sector schools may also be a disincentive for teacher graduates. To gain employment with Education Queensland, a graduating teacher requires firstly a command of pedagogy rated at least as ‘adequate’, a ranking of 4 on a scale 1-4 (DET 2012). In addition, the applicant has to locate a school in the region that is seeking a language teacher for the specific target language before being eligible to request the opportunity to take the LOTE proficiency test and attain the requisite score on all macroskills to gain an adequate proficiency rating.
Research tracking the development of theories and practices within pre-service language teacher education is all-important. An earlier examination of language teachers’ practical theories (Mangubhai et al. 2007) of teachers with many years in the classroom found that the guiding principles of language learning and teaching was not focussed on communicative language teaching per se but on a passion for sharing a desire to engage learners with the target language.

Research in progress with younger language teachers has indicated that five years on from their pre-service experience, engagement with their students’ learning is the most indicative trait of their beliefs in practice. They report to incorporate iconic and target culture daily life into their students’ learning experiences.

Beliefs about language teaching have broadened from past conceptions of language teaching as subject discipline expertise, to current preferences for prioritising development of lifelong learner competencies and pastoral care, nurturing the whole child. Administrative demands on competent teachers can remove their focus from classroom language teaching skills, towards managing students’ generic learning skills, hoping that students become ambassadors for the school itself. Five years on from pre-service training, one teacher of Chinese language was observed to have maintained the mantra of wanting to keep her students engaged with the language, as she aimed for a balance between the passions she continued from her pre-service teacher days and the (sometimes raw) realities of the classroom.

Special considerations in preparing teachers for community language schools

A further issue impacting language teacher education is related to the area of community languages. In Australia’s states and territories, how to develop these community languages teachers’ pedagogical practices becomes an issue, as they traditionally do not enter teaching through mainstream pathways. In Victoria, teachers of community languages must undertake a minimum 30-hour professional learning program in basic second language teaching methodology. Monash University offers a preparation program at two levels: a basic course which targets teachers for the Early Years (K to Year 4) and a set of options at a Phase 2 level. The curriculum focuses on teachers working on assessment and reporting, intercultural language learning, and curriculum development.

The study reported here was conducted between 2007 and 2009 and aimed to explore the influence of community languages teachers’ beliefs about the teaching and learning of their own language on their Australian born students and on the development of their pedagogical practices.

In order to ascertain what role the personal and social contexts of language teaching and learning play for community languages teachers, and what conceptual and perceptual knowledge was needed, it was decided to survey a number of
teachers from a range of languages, who had no pedagogical training in languages, but who self-reported to be committed to the maintenance of first language and culture education for children in Australia. The majority were second language learners of English, having learned English at secondary school in their home country or after their arrival in Australia.

Vélez-Rendón (2002: 457) claims that “...very little attention has been paid to how second language teachers learn to teach, how they develop teaching skills, how they link theory and practice, and how their previous experiences inform their belief systems.” Because of the short time for each of the courses described above, it was decided to address these points by asking volunteer participants to complete a questionnaire containing five questions. The first question addressed Vélez-Rendón’s view of the need for “a critical evaluation of prior experiences as language learners and beliefs, assumptions, attitudes” (2002: 463): with the questions Does the way you were taught your language influence how you teach? Give two or three examples.

Of the sixty-four participants teaching a range of languages in Early Years courses, thirty-three acknowledged the influence of their prior language learning experiences. One of the teachers wrote: “I use the way of learning reading & writing form I was taught in primary school in Thailand. I also use dictation/spelling vocab in the prep class” (Teacher X, 2009). Another teacher wrote: “My primary school teacher will stay always a role model for me in her manners as well as her way of teaching. I still prefer the old way of spelling and connecting letters to make a word and making sence (sic) of what we are reading” (Teacher Y, 2008).

Some participants noted that their previous experiences ensured that they would not teach young children in the same way as they had been treated. One participant stated: “I was taught in a monotone-constant repetition approach. In my class I have gone the opposite and try to give my students the hands-on experience to learning.” Another from the same group wrote: “When I was at school, my first teacher at grade 1 was very strict and hardly ever gave us compliment. So I always try to make children happy and comfortable with lots of compliments” (Teacher Z, 2007).

The responses provided by the teachers in this study attest to this statement from Johnson (1996: 766-767): “… what teachers know about teaching... is largely experiential and socially constructed out of the experiences and classrooms from which teachers have come.” It is clear from this small-scale study that more data from teachers in community languages schools is needed in order to inform the delivery of relevant and optimal teacher education programs for these teachers.
Conclusion

The issues included in the sections above include: (i) the increasing policy and regulations impacting our program design; (ii) developing an holistic knowledge base of beginning language teachers, (iii) the crowded curriculum; (iv) preparing native speakers for the Australian classroom, (v) the importance of the in-country experience; (vi) demands on pre-service teachers regarding proficiency levels and pedagogical understandings; and (vii) the special considerations in preparing teachers for community languages schools. These issues are but the tip-of-the-iceberg as regards what are the crucial considerations for taking this field further.

The political agenda for the current context for languages education in Australia has been backgrounded by documents and policies including The National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools: National Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008 (MCEETYA 2005), the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP) 2008–2012, The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008), the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Languages (2011), the National Professional Standards for Teaching (2011) and an expectation that graduates will be in sufficient supply and of quality to manage the new mandate of languages in schools through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA) in each State.

The growing requirements that need to be met by different organisations and agencies add another layer of requirements that, while ensuring an essential professional element to new teachers’ education, and providing a valuable checklist for quality language teacher education, provides a huge challenge in terms of allocating sufficient time to language teaching methodology.

The current separation between language specific knowledge and languages pedagogical knowledge is a challenge that can be tackled through collaboration and greater attention to the integration of students’ knowledge. Preparing high quality language teachers in schools into the future is a collective responsibility of language educators and language teacher educators in partnership with students and requires efforts from all to achieve the desired outcome.

Our concern is how best we can overcome the barriers to focus on foundational knowledge with a developmental view of initial teacher education in languages, which we believe may have particular differences to initial teacher education for other curriculum areas, purely because of the nature of the languages area itself. Initial teacher education is part of a developmental pathway, not just a quick-fix, one-off experience for teacher development. A more holistic, developmental, long-term perspective is needed to prepare teachers for the demands of the twenty-first century. The crowded curriculum and silo (separation of subject areas) mentality evident in schools is also evident in teacher education. Pre-service language teachers need to be equipped with a sound knowledge base and skills to develop as ‘accomplished’ teachers. What continues to challenge us is the need to create a culture of further professional learning over time — both experiential and theoretical.
References


