

**Pre-service teachers' beliefs about the role of
Languages in the Tasmanian primary school curriculum.**

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Abstract:

Within the Tasmanian primary school context, the profile of Languages teaching and learning has fluctuated. In the 1990's, support from the National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) initiative enabled primary schools to establish Languages programs from Year 3 to Year 6, if they so chose. The funding facilitated a Languages program for primary schools with an intention of embedding the program within the school's curriculum framework. Many programs ceased once funding ceased, however several schools continued to support Languages programs in various ways with limited funding and support.

This paper highlights pre-service teachers' beliefs about the place of Languages within the primary curriculum. It explores the extent of their investment in teaching Languages to ultimately determine if our next generation of teachers sees Languages teaching as a relevant and important consideration in Tasmanian primary schools.

Pre-service teachers' understandings of languages teaching is identified and analysed using a range of formal, practice-orientated and experiential measures designed to ascertain pedagogical understandings, the role of Languages in a primary curriculum and the requirements for successful languages teaching. As the paper is situated within the Tasmanian context, it provides some contextual information and recommendations that have the capacity to be translated into and beyond the local learning environment.

The study uses both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The main data collection method was the questionnaire. The pre-service participants for this study were first year and third year undergraduate pre-service teachers from the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Tasmania in Launceston. A total of 185 students participated in the study. The majority of students were from throughout Tasmania and fell within a wide age range, with the majority between the ages of 18 -25 years.

Several matters of significance emerged from the study that highlight the central role that knowledge plays in the construction of pre-service teacher identity and the significance of belief systems for supporting adaptive and pedagogically responsible teaching practice. Of particular interest to the researcher was pre-service teachers beliefs about the importance of Languages as part of the primary school curriculum.

Background

Historically, in Tasmanian primary schools, the teaching of a second language has had limited levels of success. In April 1966, reporting on a trial French program, it was noted that the problems of teaching a second language at Grade 5 and 6 were "certainly different from those encountered in High School classes and, although we have not always found solutions to these problems, we are slowly coming to the recognition of what the problems are"(Brooker, 1966, p.12). Brooker's article supported the notion of languages teaching in primary schools because the trial assisted in the "acceleration, on the average, of at least one year's achievement by the first class to enter high school from the experimental groups with still more acceleration expected from succeeding classes."(Brooker, 1966, p.12). The program failed, however, to offer an appropriate curriculum that

could support primary second language learning and, without widespread support from within the school context, was not sustainable..

These problems, associated with younger learners, were reported by Brooker (1966) and it was decided to trial a special language course curriculum that the Nuffield Foundation in England was trialling specifically for primary aged children. The course eliminated many of the more traditional aspects of language learning – grammatical rules, in particular – were removed in the early stages. The ‘chalk and talk’ model, relying heavily on textbooks and blackboard work, was replaced by games, acting, cartoons, flannel graphs and tape recordings of songs, and conversations made in French schools. The course involved daily lessons of half hour duration, involved speaking and reading and the learning of cultural information and institutions. There was no evidence of the results of this trial, so it is difficult to determine its success or otherwise within the Tasmanian context.

It appears that very little happened for the next 20 years. An Australia wide survey in 1987 indicated only 10% of primary schools taught a language other than English (Lo Bianco, 1987, p.26). The Tasmanian draft languages policy of 1987 referred only to secondary schools and those primary schools that ran a languages program in most cases failed because “the program failed to live up to the high expectations held, due mainly to the lack of adequate consultation with principals involved before the scheme was introduced, to the fact that it was necessary to use itinerant teachers and to the poor liaison between the primary and receiving high schools.” (Lo Bianco, 1987, p.244).

It was the *National Asian Language and Studies in Australian Schools* (NALSAS) strategy (1994 – 2002) that provided a rationale for including languages in the curriculum. It was based on a different rationale than had historically been perceived. Language learners were expected to make comparisons, recognise patterns, and view their first language from a different viewpoint. Learners had an opportunity to develop metalinguistic awareness, which had the capacity to enhance cognitive development and literacy. Languages learning had a national focus and, along with that focus, support for implementation.

As a consequence, there was the capacity for Languages education to flourish in the state in all state school contexts and incorporate a range of languages. *The National Statement and Plan for Languages Education in Australian Schools 2005–2008* (MCEETYA, 2005) heralded a new era of support and commitment to languages learning. This document reflected international thinking and there was a capacity for languages teaching to support transdisciplinary learning. In the Tasmanian

context, these new perceptions and pedagogical understandings shaped languages education to assist in the delivery of learning opportunities that were in synergy with curriculum developments – in particular, literacy learning. At its peak, approximately 80% of primary schools ran a languages program at some level. Commonwealth support, through NALSAS provided the initial funding, but the state government also provided some maintenance support to programs. At all times, though, languages learning was optional and, given the lack of a large multicultural community in Tasmania, community support was dependant upon the local school context and their capacity to support and justify a languages program.

Location of Languages within the present Tasmanian curriculum

According to the *Tasmanian Curriculum – K–10 syllabus and support materials* (2007), Languages is “recommended for its contribution to the overall development of children” (p.5) but the recent shift towards an emphasis on literacy and numeracy has impacted upon Languages to hold its place as a Key Learning Area (KLA) with its own unique and inherent capacity to contribute to student learning.

From its initial exclusion from the new curriculum, Languages is now located under the English-literacy umbrella. On the positive side, this reflects and reinforces the strong link between languages learning and literacy learning, but on the negative side it takes away the capacity for languages to have its own unique ‘place’ as a key learning area.

Within this framework, the possibilities for a strong Languages program is certainly possible because, as Clyne (2006) suggests “by focussing on the structure of words and sentences, recognising sound patterns, making inferences and guessing the meaning of words from context” (p.2) will assist in the learning English as well as learning languages so therefore it is a “fallacy that English literacy can only be taught in English” (Clyne, 2006, p.2). If Literacy is the “flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communication technologies via spoken language, print, and multimedia (Luke, Freebody & Land 2000, cited in Murdoch University) then languages learning via a multi modal and multi textual approach will also be possible.

It could also be presumed that any literacy based teaching has, as a central tenet, the crucial aim of developing communicative ability in the language. Thus “practices associated with a literacy approach to language learning give learners an opportunity to work collaboratively, to interpret, to understand conventions, to be involved in problem solving, to use language and reflect on language use, and to develop cultural knowledge through language use” (Murdoch University, n.d.).

Consequently communication is informed by a “metacommunicative awareness of how discourse is derived from relations between language use, contexts of interaction, and larger sociocultural contexts” (Kern, 2000 cited in Murdoch University).

By incorporating languages learning as an integral part of the school literacy approach, learners are able to compare structures and usage between the languages. Learners can “develop a heightened awareness of language and metalanguage. As a result, they could become more self-directed and confident in their language learning, both in the target language and in English” (Browett & Spencer, 2006, p.14). More specifically, learning a second language is claimed to enhance English literacy by:

- allowing learners to compare the features of their first language with those of another language. This gives learners the capacity to better understand the structure and workings of English
- further developing skills of decoding and making meaning from words
- developing a flexibility and competence in dealing with language
- providing an opportunity for success in languages learning for those who may struggle with English (adapted from Department of Education & Skills, 2002).

It must be recognised that incorporating languages within a literacy framework may not provide for the full range of learnings available to languages learners. The skills of communication, as previously discussed, are being developed in second language acquisition; communication through reading, writing, viewing, listening and speaking and using authentic experiences to enhance and encourage language usage should be providing the basis from which experiences are developed. Understanding language as a system can also be systematically developed alongside the development of understandings in first language. It does not necessarily provide an opportunity to reflect upon the culture in which the language is spoken, nor does it allow for the learner to be aware of the intricate relationship that exists between learning the language and understanding the culture associated with the language.

Languages learning, within this framework, fails to recognise intercultural language learning (IcLL) as a position for languages teaching. IcLL involves learners “understanding their own language and culture in relation to an additional language and culture. It is a dialogue that allows for reaching a common ground for negotiation to take place, and where variable points of view are recognised, mediated and accepted.” (Scarino & Liddicoat, 2009, p.33). Through IcLL interactions, learners integrate their developing communicative competencies and their cultural awareness in a seamless, integrated and ongoing manner.

Unfortunately, however, no matter how articulate and well informed languages teachers are, its placement under the literacy umbrella and in the shadow of literacy learning does not permit languages to present itself as a discipline with specific capacities and unique features to learners as outlined above. Moreover languages, in this context, is seen as something extra that supports and extends literacy knowledge rather than guiding and informing learners through its own particular pedagogies.

The study

It is within this context, that this paper is framed. The researcher was keen to investigate how and where pre-service teachers saw Languages learning within the primary school context. The paper investigates the beliefs about languages and languages teaching and learning from a group of undergraduate pre-service teachers undertaking a generalist primary degree.

This cohort was selected as they are all generalist primary pre-service teachers and will have the opportunity to integrate Languages into the curriculum. It is a time when beliefs about teaching and about themselves as professionals are being questioned, formulated and perhaps altered.

Kagan (1992) argues that pre-service teachers enter programs of teacher education with “personal beliefs about teaching, images of good teachers, images of self as teacher and memories of themselves as pupils in the classroom” (p.142). These personal images and beliefs generally remain unchanged by a pre-service program and follow candidates into the classroom. For professional growth to occur Kagan suggested, “prior beliefs and images must be modified and reconstructed” (p.142). It can be concluded therefore that part of the researcher’s role in working with pre-service teachers was to listen to their stories surrounding their Languages learning. This will help to inform and perhaps guide in the construction of tasks and learning sequences that will assist in developing and reshaping beliefs because, as clearly articulated by Bryan (2003) “prospective and novice teachers’ beliefs may be amenable to change as a result of instruction and experience” (p.836).

Pajares (1992) indicates that the earlier a belief is integrated into a structure the more difficult it is to alter. Newly acquired beliefs are most open to change. Thus with pre-service teachers their beliefs regarding Languages learning stem from their experiences as Languages learners, mainly from school. They have listened and observed their teachers and through this ‘apprenticeship of

observation' (Lortie, as cited in Buchmann, n.d., p.152) have internalised a belief system around the teaching of languages as well as beliefs about teaching. This system can strongly influence perceptions, behaviour and the pre-service teacher's capacity to make adjustments to their beliefs. Continuing research in this vein, Bailey (1996, cited in Borg, 2003) suggested that the teacher factor in general was more important to learners than were the materials or methodology used.

A case study approach was used to frame the research incorporating appropriate methods and tools to collect data that provided responses to the research objectives. Qualitative data were derived from interviews, text analysis and an open-ended statement and quantitative data were collected by the administration of a questionnaire.

Whilst the quantitative approach allowed a numerical perspective to data collection, the qualitative approach allowed a greater capacity to use the context in which people work and the views of those people within that context to be acknowledged.

A 30 item questionnaire was administered to 156 pre-service teachers. As indicated, the questionnaire was administered to a cohort of first year and third year Bachelor of Education students from the University of Tasmania. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to complete and was completed by all 156 pre-service teachers – 75 were in their first year of the four year undergraduate B.Ed course and 81 were in the third year of their undergraduate study.

The survey document was divided into three parts. Part 1 required demographic information, Part 2 was the questionnaire and Part 3 consisted of an open-ended statement to which participants were invited to respond.

The questionnaire had previously been piloted and, as a result of feedback, minor adjustments were made to the wording of statements to ensure pre-service teachers had maximum opportunity to respond accurately.

Pre-service teachers were also invited to comment upon their past languages learning experiences. This invitation was extended in Part 3 by an open-ended statement to which pre-service teachers could respond. Pre-service teachers were under no obligation to respond to the statement but the responses enabled the researcher to gain some deeper understandings about languages learning and a glimpse into the variety of variables upon their languages learning. It gave pre-service teachers an opportunity to add any further comments that they were unable to do as part of the questionnaire process. Of the 156 respondents, 23 or 14.7% chose not to respond to this section.

The remainder, 85.3%, responded to the request and provided data that have been included as small vignettes of pre-service teachers' voices regarding their languages learning experiences.

Participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personal information about the individual participants was recorded. Part 1 of the survey asked for the age, gender and year of study. Part 2 was the 30 Likert statement response section followed by Part 3, the open-ended statement so personal identification of the participant was not possible. Pre-service teachers were given the option to participate and a colleague of the researcher was present during the completion by the pre-service teachers of the questionnaire and the open-ended statement.

Themes

There were five identified organising themes with statements related to each of the themes randomly located throughout the questionnaire. The five organising themes were:

- Languages as part of the primary school curriculum
- Core content of a Languages program
- Languages as a learning area
- Rationale for learning Languages
- Participant as a Languages learner.

Table 1.1 below categorises the statements according to the five themes.

Table 1.1 *Organising themes*

Themes	Statements (<i>As outlined in Table 1.2</i>)
Languages as part of the primary school curriculum	1, 6, 11, 12, 17, 21, 26, 30
Core content of a Languages program	2, 7, 13, 18, 22, 27
Languages as a learning area	3, 8, 14, 19, 23, 24, 28
Rationale for learning Languages	4, 9, 15, 20, 29
Participant as a Languages learner	5, 10, 16, 25

(a) Analysis of Results

These theme areas formed the basis of analysis using SPSS to input and code data. This enabled the researcher to focus on descriptive statistics when looking at each of the themes – frequency, comparisons, and independent/dependent variables. This allowed the researcher to explore the particular theme through the responses to the statements.

Table 1.2 provides a general reference point for the results of the data from the questionnaire. This table provides a broad picture of the results as an overview of the 156 pre-service teacher responses to statements and will be referred to throughout this chapter to remind, reinforce and question particular phenomena. The overview also enabled the researcher to gain some initial sense of the results that are interrogated throughout this chapter by way of the five organising themes.

Results that were submitted as ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ have been aggregated under the single heading ‘agree’ and those submitted as ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ have been aggregated under the heading ‘disagree’ for ease of initial impressions. In the following discussion, however, these have been re-divided into the two headings to clearly examine responses. The neutral results in the table represent the same number as represented in the data. In some cases, no response was given to a statement; hence some slight discrepancies with the totals of percentages in some statements may occur.

Table 1.2 *Reference point for data results*

	Statements	Agree	Disagree	Neutral
S1	LOTE is an important part of primary school children’s learning.	69.2%	4.5%	26.3%

S2	Learning vocabulary is the most important part of learning a LOTE.	47.4%%	16.6%	35.2%
S3	Learning a LOTE is very difficult for primary aged children.	21.1%	52.5%	25.6%
S4	Learning a LOTE offers many future opportunities for children.	90.3%	8.3%	5.1%
S5	Given the opportunity, I would like to learn a LOTE.	82.1%	3.8%	14.1%
S6	LOTE needs to be part of an integral part of the primary school curriculum.	69.2%	4.4%	26.2%
S7	Learning grammar is an important part of learning a LOTE.	59.7%	36.5%	3.8%
S8	To be good at LOTE students need to be academically very capable.	18.5%	66.6%	14.1%
S9	Learning a LOTE will enable children to learn about the culture of the country in which the LOTE is spoken.	83.9%	3.2%	12.8%
S10	I would find it easy to learn a LOTE.	27.5%	31.4%	40.3%
S11	In today's world it is not important to have a LOTE.	21.1%	62.9%	16%
S12	It is important to be able to communicate in another language.	54.4%	12.1%	33.3%
S13	As children learn a LOTE, they use skills that they may also use in other learning areas.	84.6%	2.6%	12.8%
S14	All primary school children should have access to learning a LOTE.	86.5%	2.5%	10.8%
S15	It is important for Tasmanian primary school children to be able to select a LOTE that they can study.	64.7%	5.7%	29.4%
S16	I would like to learn a LOTE so as I can teach it in the primary classroom.	82.1%	6.4%	11.5%
S17	It is important to be able to understand another language.	66.1%	5.1%	25.8%
S18	Learning about the culture in which the	86.1%	10.8%	3.1%

	LOTE is spoken is an integral part of learning the language.			
S19	Teachers need to have a high level of competency in the LOTE before they can teach it.	53.8%	23%	23%
S20	Learning a LOTE enables children to better understand other peoples and culture.	83.3%	1.9%	14.7%
S21	I would feel comfortable teaching a LOTE.	42.9%	24.3%	32.1%
S22	Learning a LOTE is mainly about speaking the language.	19.8%	44.8%	35.2%
S23	LOTE is a difficult subject to teach.	31.4%	23.1%	45.5%
S24	All children are capable of learning a LOTE.	85.9%	3.2%	10.8%
S25	My LOTE learning has greatly influenced my beliefs about LOTE learning.	58.3%	7.1%	32.6%
S26	I would be able to support a LOTE program in the classroom.	61.5%	9.6%	28.2%
S27	Learning a LOTE is mainly about translating from the LOTE to English and vice versa.	23.8%	38.4%	37.8%
S28	Having learnt one LOTE, it would be easy for children to learn another.	11.6%	12.1%	35.9%
S29	Learning a LOTE would help learners learn in other curriculum areas.	84.6%	2.5%	12.8%
S30	I would be willing to assist a LOTE teacher in delivering a LOTE program in my classroom.	82%	3.2%	14.1%

Languages as part of the Primary School Curriculum

For the purposes of this paper the theme to be considered is that of Languages as part of the primary school curriculum.

The earlier review of languages teaching in Tasmania clearly showed that until the mid 1990s languages learning was a random inclusion in the primary school curriculum, mainly determined by

a particular interests and capacities of dedicated teachers. This haphazard and incidental occurrence did not allow for any consistent, ongoing planned development, thus languages was not seen as part of nor indeed relevant, to a primary school curriculum. Curriculum directions were unclear and unsupported. The last two decades have seen a shift in understandings about languages learning and practices have been impacted upon by changing pedagogies based upon a wider research base as well as a wider support base. Both policy renewals and curriculum supports have added weight to the argument for including languages within the primary curriculum.

The questionnaire required students to respond to eight statements related to this theme. The statements, placed randomly throughout the questionnaire, were:

- LOTE is an important part of primary school student's learning.
- LOTE needs to be an integral part of the primary school curriculum.
- In today's world it is not important to have learnt a LOTE.
- It is important to be able to communicate in another language.
- It is important to be able to understand another language.
- I would feel comfortable to teach a LOTE.
- I would be able to support a LOTE program in the classroom.
- I would be willing to assist a LOTE teacher in delivering a LOTE program in my classroom.

It was the purpose of this organising theme to examine the pre-service teacher's present beliefs regarding the place of languages in the curriculum and their possible role in the delivery of programs. These elements are inextricably linked with languages pedagogies, as will be seen throughout the analysis of the following data.

In response to the invitation to comment upon their languages learning and the part it plays in the primary school curriculum, pre-service teachers noted:

– LOTE is a useful tool to have in our globalised world as it enables us to better communicate with people from other places. Learning a language should be part of what is done in schools to help this understanding.

– It is really important in our multicultural nation that we understand others and learning a language is one way to do that.

– I have found with my own children that as they are practising their LOTE, they are practising their English. This sounds a bit weird, but learning the LOTE is making them more aware of how English is constructed.

However in relation to their learning, for those pre-service teachers that were taught languages in isolation from the rest of the curriculum it:

- ...seemed irrelevant as it wasn't backed up by cross curricular studies.
- ... seemed unnecessary. Living in a small country town it didn't seem part of what I did and wasn't part of the 'normal' class work.
- We had a LOTE teacher that came into the classroom once a week. It was a bit hard to remember what had happened the week before so I never learnt much.

These statements suggest that pre-service teachers saw languages, during their school learning, as an unimportant part of the curriculum because it was taught in isolation to everything else and seemed to have little or no relevance to them.

The data collected within the questionnaire supported this idea. Pre-service teachers saw the relevance and indeed the importance of languages learning, as indicated by the following table even if their initial learning had not been seen to be as relevant:

Table 1.3 *In today's world it is not important to have learnt a LOTE*

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid SD	42	26.9	26.9	26.9
D	56	35.9	35.9	62.8
N	25	16.0	16.0	78.8
A	27	17.3	17.3	96.2
SA	6	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

Support for languages learning is evidenced by 62.8% of students identifying languages learning as relevant within the primary school curriculum. As this question was framed in the negative, the researcher was concerned with the validity and reliability of the responses. However, this concern was validated by the responses to other statements within this questionnaire that were framed to gather similar information. Part 3 of the survey also provided information that supported the above response.

Whilst this global perspective provides useful information, it was necessary to determine how this perception was translated to the classroom and the role that languages play in the curriculum as

well as how its success as part of the curriculum could be achieved. The following figure begins to represent pre-service teachers' views:

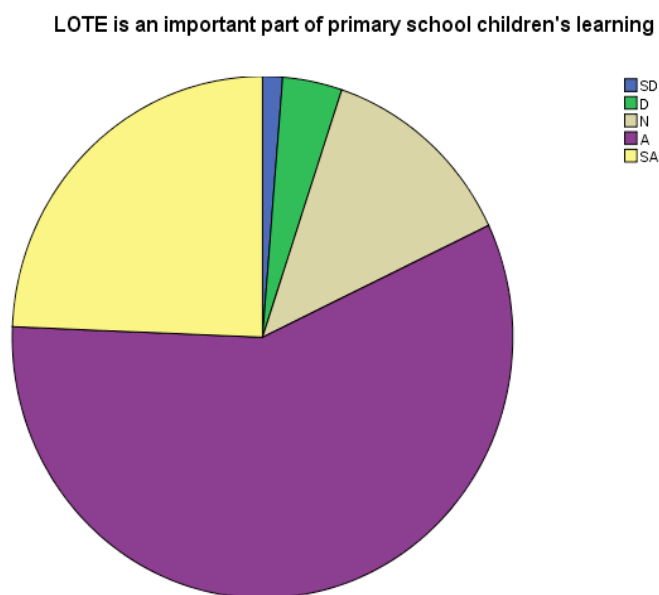


Figure 1.1

The data in Figure 1.1 demonstrates that 82.1% of pre-service teachers agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. From the historical perspective as presented previously, this reflects a major shift in the perception of the positioning of languages within the primary school curriculum and indicated to the researcher that while previous experiences may not have been positive, pre-service teachers had the capacity to view the experience from a wider perspective and thus see the benefits.

How does languages become “an important part of children’s learning?” This was investigated through the following statement, suggesting the concept of integration as supported within the *Tasmanian Curriculum* (2007):

Table 1.4 *LOTE needs to be an integral part of the primary school curriculum*

	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Valid SD	2	1.3	1.3	1.3
D	5	3.2	3.2	4.5
N	41	26.3	26.3	30.8

A	71	45.5	45.5	76.3
SA	37	23.7	23.7	100.0
Total	156	100.0	100.0	

69.2% of all pre-service teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that languages needs to be an integral part of the curriculum. This begins to introduce the idea of a balanced curriculum and how languages may be part of that balance. A pedagogical stance is supported here as curriculum documents refer to “transdisciplinary learning” (Browett & Spencer, 2006, p.10) whereby learners can gain “deeper understandings in more than one learning area and ... increase their capacity to make connections across the curriculum and between disciplines” (Browett & Spencer, 2006, p.10).

From the outset therefore, it can be gauged that the majority of pre-service teachers saw the importance of languages as part of the school curriculum, with the transdisciplinary nature of learning being a relevant consideration for success of the program. But what of their involvement and how do they believe they can contribute to languages learning? How willing and/or capable are they to contribute to the learning program? Figure 1.2 provides a response:

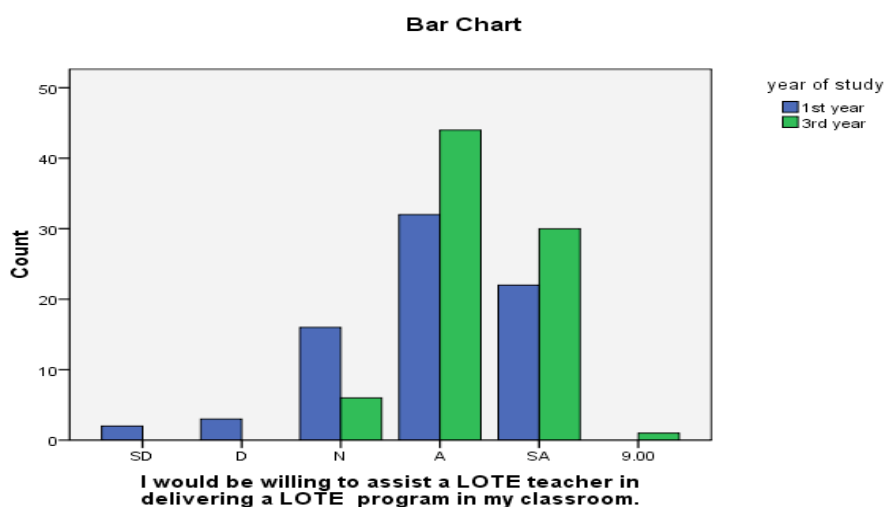


Figure 1.2

Information represented in Figure 1.2 strongly supports the notion that pre-service teachers are willing to assist in the delivery of languages programs. This analysis does not make available the level of assistance that they would be willing to provide but indicates a confidence to participate and shows support of the importance of the learning area. This confidence by the teacher is vital in any successful program and thus raises the question as to how this confidence can be maintained and strengthened? This issue will be considered at a later point.

Of particular interest, was the change of response between the first and third year participants, with 68% of first year pre-service teachers agreeing (A) or strongly agreeing (SA) and 95% of third year pre-service teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing to the above statement.

There is an observation that could be made from this information. The third year students having just completed, as part of their core curriculum studies, input through a curriculum unit focussing on languages learning. Bryan (2003) clearly states that “prospective and novice teachers’ beliefs may be amenable to change as a result of instruction and experience” (p.836). This being the case, an observation could be made. Pre-service teachers’ beliefs (3rd year cohort) were influenced through input and positive experiences during their pre-service years. An implication of this is the necessity for ongoing support and encouragement to be available for the pre-service teacher during their preparation time as well as when they enter the workforce.

The notion may further be supported by policy documents and decisions that have been advanced for languages education. The *Tasmanian Curriculum* (2007) firmly places Languages within the English framework. As stated: Languages are part of the English-literacy curriculum area because they strongly support the development of literacy, language and communication skills. When studying languages, students make comparisons, recognise patterns and view their first language from a different perspective (Tasmanian Curriculum, 2007, p.7).

Our pre-service teachers, having access to such documents, have the capacity to be influenced by such policy developments. Nationally, policies and discourses surrounding languages also suggest a strong link to first language learning.

For professional growth to occur Kagan suggested, “prior beliefs and images must be modified and reconstructed” (p.142), while Nespor (1987, p.320) suggested that “critical episodes or experiences gained in early teaching careers were important to present practices.” It could be generalised from the data that the teaching and learning experiences have re-shaped beliefs of pre-service teachers. It could be further suggested that there is a responsibility for those working with pre-service teachers to ensure the professional experiences and learnings of pre-service teachers are positive and meaningful so as to directly challenge and impact upon held beliefs and perceptions.

A surprising finding was the number of students who indicated that they would be comfortable teaching a language; 43% indicated that they would be comfortable as outlined in the following table:

Table 1.5 *I would feel comfortable teaching a LOTE*

Year	SD	D	N	A	SA	NR*	Total
1	10	13	27	9	0	1	75
3	1	14	23	8	0	0	81
Total	11	27	50	17	0	1	156

*NR= no response

The results indicate that 32% of first year pre-service teachers would be comfortable teaching a language compared to 53% of third year pre-service teachers. The researcher is heartened by the response and reflects upon the place of this practical application of knowledge. It suggests a capacity and a willingness and strongly supports the literature when looking at practical knowledge and the implications of using that knowledge for, practical knowledge, says Borg (2003) is shaped by background experiences.

Linked to this idea is a response to the following statement which provides an interesting dilemma. Whilst pre-service teachers may feel comfortable to teach a language, the concern must be raised about the competency of the pre-service teacher in terms of their linguistic knowledge.

Table 1.6 *Teachers need to have a high level of competency in the LOTE before they can teach it*

Year	SD	D	N	A	SA	NR	Total
1	1	6	12	36	20	0	75
3	0	29	24	22	6	0	81
Total	1	35	36	58	26	0	156

It is the researcher's conclusion that pre-service teachers view their practical knowledge as adequate to contribute in a valuable way to languages programs. Connelly and Clandinin (1999) see teacher's practical knowledge as being placed in "the teacher's past experience, in the teacher's present mind and body, and in the future plans and actions" (p.1).

Once again an observation could be made from this information that has an impact on teaching preparation programs. The representative group of 3rd year pre-service teachers suggested that their pre-service experiences had impacted upon their beliefs and consequent understandings of and attitudes towards languages teaching and learning.

Responses to this theme indicate that pre-service teachers strongly support the inclusion of languages within the primary school curriculum and see its purpose within the curriculum. There is also strong evidence to suggest that pre-service teachers would be willing to support and in many cases lead a languages program. This study was not able to fully determine pre-service teachers' total background of languages learning and the level attained. Of the total number who completed the open-ended statement, only six pre-service teachers indicated that they had studied languages at University level and, as University level study is a pre-requisite to teach languages, ongoing, post initial preparation and support would need to be given to pre-service teachers wishing to pursue this option.

Conclusion

The researcher anticipated that pre-service teachers' responses would be characterised by a degree of apathy towards languages teaching and learning, and a reticence about becoming involved either as a teacher or as a supporter. This viewpoint was reached as a result of general community apathy towards languages, within the Tasmanian context, as expressed through the falling percentages of primary schools offering languages, low retention rates throughout secondary schooling and low numbers in pre-tertiary classes. Fortunately this was not the case, with results showing nearly 70% of the student cohort seeing it as an important part of the primary school curriculum with 82% being willing to assist/support such a program in their classroom.

Thus, these findings suggest that it would be advantageous to investigate ways to further enhance experiences in pre-service teacher preparation that may continue to support this positive response. The challenge will be to provide opportunities and support for pre-service teachers to develop their understandings so that languages can play a more important role in the curriculum of our primary school learners.

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