

Future activities

The framework of the research project provides a model of language and intergenerational learning that could be implemented in other languages across different educational sectors. A KIT and a Detailed Study template (see below) assist teachers and schools in the setting up and running of a similar project.

Get involved now!

Project website

The website is a rich source of information about the research project. Visual, aural and written feedback from participants brings their exciting experiences to life. The website provides research outcomes and offers resources for teachers, schools and communities in an interactive way.

www.arts.monash.edu.au/intergenerational

KIT

A KIT is available on the website along with resources for how to plan and implement an 'Intergenerational and Intercultural Language Encounters Project' for students.

www.arts.monash.edu.au/intergenerational/schools/index.php

Detailed Study template

A detailed study template is available on the website for how to design an 'Intergenerational and Intercultural Language Encounters Project' for VCE students and how to prepare them for their oral examination. Please contact Renate Just (Renate.Just@caulfieldgs.vic.edu.au) for more information.

www.arts.monash.edu.au/intergenerational/schools/index.php

Contact details

Main chief investigator and coordination of the Spanish program

Dr Marisa Cordella
Marisa.Cordella@monash.edu

Chief investigator, Healthy Ageing

Professor Colette Browning
Colette.Browning@monash.edu

Chief investigator and coordination of the Chinese program

Dr Hui Huang
Hui.Huang@monash.edu

Project coordination and coordination of the German program

Ms Ramona Baumgartner
Ramona.Baumgartner@monash.edu

Contact the research team

arts-il@monash.edu

Faculty of Arts research showcase website

<http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/research-showcase/2011/11/15/connecting-second-language-learners>

This project was initiated by the late Professor Michael Clyne (1939 – 2010). His legacy as a pioneer and tireless advocate of multilingualism in multicultural societies will be forever present.

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Pictures: All pictures were taken as part of the ARC Linkage Project LP100100258. They are published with participants' consent.

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Connecting languages, cultures and generations



www.arts.monash.edu.au/intergenerational



Connecting younger language learners and older bilinguals: Intergenerational, intercultural encounters and language development

The research project

Background and collaborations

This innovative research project brings together upper secondary students of Chinese, German or Spanish with older speakers of the same language. It promotes mutually beneficial encounters and strengthens solidarity between young and old in a multicultural society.

The 3 year project (Feb 2010-2013) is being funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) in conjunction with four partner organisations who are also supporting the research activities: Council on the Ageing, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Multicultural Affairs and Citizenship and Independent Schools Victoria.

This study successfully exemplifies a collaborative approach to research across faculties. Dr Marisa Cordella leads a team of experts in linguistics, second language acquisition and healthy ageing. The research team from the Faculty of Arts (Dr Hui Huang) and the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences (Professor Colette Browning) uses different disciplines to provide a better understanding of intercultural and intergenerational interactions.

Participants of this project are older Chinese, German and Spanish speaking volunteers and students of these languages. Together, senior and student pairs bridge language and stereotype barriers developing partnerships through intergenerational dialogues.

School principals and language teachers across three different schools (Caulfield Grammar School, Wheelers Hill; Glen Waverley Secondary College and Wantirna College), two different school sectors (government and independent) and three different language groups have provided a framework for the development and implementation of the project and its outcomes. Teachers have collaboratively developed a detailed study component for the oral exam of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE):

www.arts.monash.edu.au/intergenerational/schools/index.php



Students of Chinese and Chinese seniors.

“Since I have immigrated to Australia two years ago, this experience has been very important for me to understand both the Australian culture and healthy ageing in Australia.”

A Chinese senior

Mutual gains

Benefits for language students and older migrants

Students engage in natural conversations in the language they are learning.

Regular meetings offer students real life experience and purposeful language practice with older native language speakers. The research team has found evidence that these interactions enhance students’ language proficiency. They have a positive impact on their conversational competence, their attitude towards language learning as well as their intercultural understanding. Furthermore, students develop a positive view of ageing in a multicultural society.

Seniors engage in natural conversations facilitating active ageing.

The research team has found evidence of significant improvements of senior citizens’ quality of life, health and well-being. Increased social activities result in an enhanced feeling of being valued.

“Throughout the project you get to know your partner well and develop a good relationship with them.”

A student of Spanish

Benefits for communities and societies

This study has shown that connecting community members from different generations and different language and cultural backgrounds has a positive impact on the social fabric of Australian society. This initiative fills a gap in recent tendencies that show a decline in voluntary work and an erosion of individual connectedness in Australia. This project fosters community engagement and social cohesion in a more inclusive society. It shapes future attitudes and interactions across multicultural and ageing communities.

Benefits for teachers and schools

Connecting younger language learners and older bilinguals is an innovative approach to language teaching and learning. It is an interactive experience that results in strong outcomes for language students, teachers and school communities. It increases students’ exposure time to authentic language use, assisting their acquisition of conversational skills, thus complementing formal learning. Schools create partnerships with the local multicultural community by opening their doors to older migrants.



A German senior and a student of German.

“Not only do your language and conversation skills improve from the real life practice but you learn about your partner and their experiences in Germany and Australia.”

A student of German