**Transcripts of focus group discussions**

**Perceptions and beliefs of LOTE teachers**

Tom (Chinese), Mary (French), Lindy (Japanese), John (Japanese), Beatrice (French)

@Moderator: Okay well I think we probably should start because . . so thank you all very very much for coming. I really do appreciate it, your participation. As you know having been kind enough also to fill in my survey last year I’m interested in teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about the program and what they are doing and the purpose of of of these sessions is really for me to get in your words the sorts of things you think. So what I hope I hope we’ll do . . I’ve got a number of questions I’d like you to discuss among yourselves. Just a a few guidelines. What I would like to do is ask you each . . I’ll ask you a question and then ask each of you perhaps to to comment. I mean you don’t have answer any question if you don’t want to however I’m hoping you will and so if we have a brainstorm where everyone says what they think without comment or questions and then we can have a chance to discuss and say well why did you mean that or or or what. And where it’s appropriate I might ask you to rank the ideas that come up as the most important in your context. There’s no obviously no right and wrong questions because you’re in very different contexts and with different languages and so forth. So I am as interested in the differences of opinion as I am in in the consensus. One of the things that came out of the survey was that there’s a broad range of opinions in LOTE teachers. There’s no such thing as the LOTE teacher who has the same you know the same sets of beliefs as all the other LOTE teachers. Umm I think that is probably all I need to say. If anyone needs to go to the loo, it’s back out the office and across the breezeway.

@X: I know where that is.

@X: We found that.

@Moderator: So yes, I mean please just go but we’ll we’ll go through sort of without a break till 6 o’clock, if that’s all right. And so again, thank you very much for coming. And ah to start off with could we just go round the table and say which years or which levels are compulsory in your school . . for LOTE, where students have to take LOTE. I know some of you’ve had this discussion before but now I’ve got the tape on.

@Mary: Okay. My school starts at Year 5 and LOTE’s compulsory in Years 5, 6, 7 and also in Year 8. And it becomes an elective after Year 8 and we study we study French in Years 5, 6, 7 and at Year 8 we do a semester of French and a semester of Japanese.

@Lindy: Which school’s that, may I ask?

@Mary: It’s at [Catholic independent boys’ school]

@John: Okay, so like is it a combined primary and high school?

@Mary: It is yes.

@John: 5 to 12, isn’t it?

@Mary: 5-12, yes. So that you can teach in both primary and secondary.

@Beatrice: Which is good.

@Mary: Which is good. 1 Names of participants and their schools have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

@Beatrice: Which is what I want to do. . . Well I’m teaching at three primary schools. I have diverse age groups. I’ve got one class of Years 5, 6, 7 together and then I have, at [my first school] I’m teaching Year 4, 5, 6 and 7 plus I’ve got the Year 4 trial. At [incomprehensible name of school] I only have 6 & 7. The headmaster didn’t approve of Year 5. And they all the feeder school which is X High or X North and French is compulsory - I’m doing French - when they go to X North only French is available. That’s compulsory in Year 8 and then they can choose LOTE if they want to in Year 9. And at X High they can do French or German in 8. A language is compulsory in year 8. And mostly those that have done French in the schools in the area will do French at X High but at Y and [incomprehensible name of school] that’s German. They’ll maybe do the German class. At the moment I’m only in the primary school I’m hoping to get back into the high school next year.

@Moderator: So you were at X High?

@Beatrice: I was at Z High for 10 years.

@Moderator: Z High, uhhuh.

@Beatrice: Teaching French, German and Japanese there.

@Moderator: And you’re only teaching French at the moment?

@Beatrice: At the moment I’m only teaching French which I enjoy because I’m French-born but I love the challenge of the Japanese and the German as well. [incomprehensible]

@Tom: I’m teaching at 2 primary schools. One, well the compulsory language is 5, 6, 7. And one school I start with Year 4, 5, 6, & 7. The other one I only teach 6 & 7. Well I find the teaching . . .

@Moderator: But the students do Chinese in 5 as well?

@Tom: Yes, yes, yes. All one language. They only offer one language. I’m teaching at A SS and umm B SS. They only offer that area . . we offer I think my schools only offer one language which is Chinese but there’s another school nearby, B SS, they offer 2 languages which are French and Chinese.

@Moderator: There aren’t many primary schools that have two languages, are there?

@Others: Not many.

@Lindy: C (?) C’s huge and we’ve got German and Japanese and I think C South also has German and Japanese.

@John: It’s funny I was talking to some kids today about this. I think it would be really interesting to have like all these different languages in the LOTE at the same time whereby umm I know this sounds probably a real mess but you might have like the teacher might be able to access three different languages and sort of umm can in some way just open that whole base up so that rather than it be one specific language that that school identifies with especially at schools where you have a huge mix of different cultures in the school that you have like maybe three or four and and remember the teaching is not particularly difficult, I don’t think and just have it in some way woven that kids could access all different languages rather than just the one. The reason I say that is because just at my school one of the schools I want to do like umm a parent night and it would be really just nice to have a couple of more languages there because that would just open it up so much more to the community because I think a lot identify with they they don’t identify with just this one language and I don’t know it’s just yeah.

@Beatrice: I feel a bit frustrated. I think you’re right because I teach where the children go to private schools, they go to XXX College and they don’t offer French there, only Japanese or German.

@John: And I and I

@Beatrice: And I think [incomprehensible] if you had a child who you know they’re going to XXX College or whatever

@Moderator: If they could choose . .

@Beatrice: If they had a choice, they could choose in 6 & 7.

@John: And in a way, like even in a way like in your own teaching it’s not sort of I mean I know it’s easy for me to say this because I haven’t done it but to a certain extent I can’t imagine it being overly difficult if your teaching what’s your name in Japanese throw in the French, throw in the Chinese. I mean you know it’s just two more words and kids are fairly adaptable. They’re not as sort of rigid and narrow minded as adults.

@Beatrice: Did you see at the LOTE Centre they had that thing on, you know, the World Cup Soccer video they had it was in Spanish, French and English. I actually showed my class and they were fascinated by the by the Spanish.

@John: Yeah. Yes they link onto that. Isn’t that isn’t that the point?

@Moderator: Certainly one of them.

@John: Part of the point, yeah.

@Moderator: So what levels are you teaching at?

@John: I’m compulsory at W SS Japanese Year 5, 6 & 7 and at WW it’s compulsory Year 6 & 7 but I also teach Year 5 and it’s half an hour a week and it’s called LOTE and basically I think it’s great. I can do whatever I like and nobody cares. On the other hand it’s sort of a little bit annoying sometimes because it’s like this half an hour of umm I want it to be a real consolidated program which I write myself but it’s also a little bit irritating because it’s not quite there but I’ve already asked the teachers and the principal and they want next year with 5, 6 & 7 there which means I’d drop WW. I’d have to because I could only do one school, it’s a big school.

@Moderator: Which would be good too.

@John: In terms of building up a base or consolidating that base very very much so.

@Beatrice: My joy for next year because there’s a drop in our schools means I could do 5, 6, 7 at D and the person at X High is retiring and do 8, 9 at X High as well, combine the primary and the high school [incomprehensible] ?

@Tom: Yeah, yeah, it’s good.

@Others: It makes a lot of difference.

@Beatrice: Actually I find, I don’t know about you, but I find I go back and visit my children in high school, my students, you know. And the biggest frustration they find is they go to the high school and they start from scratch again.

@Lindy: Start over again, yeah.

@Tom: Yep, yes, yes.

@Beatrice: They’ve had two years of Chinese, Japanese, German, French, whatever. They go to the class and it’s back to What is your name? How old are you? And they’ve lost it. They’d like to do They should have . . . At X North High they’re brilliant. They had one advanced class and one ah beginners’ class. The children who have done French for 2 years go into that one and in the beginners’ class they haven’t done French before. It’s good.

@John: I think . . I think . . Sorry

@Moderator: We’re going to come up to that. I’ve got a question on that whole articulation so we might I might yes stop you there and we can do and we’ll just find out Lindy’s . .

@Lindy: Oh, I’m at umm 2 primary schools, E SS and F SS and LOTE is compulsory in Year 5, 6, & 7.

@Moderator: So how do you feel about LOTE being being extended to from 4 to 10?

@Beatrice: I love it because Year 4 is so quick. I I teach Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 and years 4 & 5 you can survive with them better. Okay, they can’t write a lot but their speaking and listening is much quicker than the grade 7. They come up to me okay and talk to me in French. They’re not at all nervous, no inhibitions at all. They just keep going and have fun.

@Lindy: But there’s problems with continuity from 7 to 8 as you were saying before. And I think that we’re all finding that the 7 to 8 transition is a really big problem with umm especially trying to make it compulsory to year 10 maintaining their interest level if they’re starting from scratch at the beginning of Year 8.

@Moderator: Well one would hope if it’s from 4 they won’t start again in from scratch in Year 8.

@Beatrice: One would hope that.

@Mary: But the hard thing is when you’ve got a school where you’ve got students feeding in from lots of different schools, you’ve just go so many different levels [incomprehensible].

@Lindy: That’s right. It’s terrible.

@Beatrice: But I find you know sometimes you get two classes timetabled at the same time. We’ve got to have one beginners’ and one more advanced one.

@Mary: It would be lovely but unfortunately administration doesn’t seem to work that way. It doesn’t at our place, anyway.

@John: I think also like umm I think that the kinds of teaching strategies and ideas that you use with your younger primary are not the same as the kinds of ideas and strategies that I would use with an early adolescent-type age group and I think that umm a lot of teachers umm maybe make a lot of their teaching strategies too linear across those incredible ranges of attitudes and dynamic things that are happening and I think that umm I truly truly believe that every student can access a language depending on the creativity and the way that it is taught in relation to what they can contact with and I mean really most kids in Year 8, 9 & 10, they’re into music big time music and bands like Regurgitator and things like that who are really big in Japan the CD cover has got heaps of Katakana on it and things like that. Yet I’d say there’re very few high schools well that’s not fair I don’t know but there’s a cert. . . from kids who’ve umm past students who’ve given me feedback I just think sometimes it’s the action of lessons not not the content maybe per se but sometimes it’s the way it’s delivered that could be investigated in order to sort of make that 8 Year 8, 9 and 10 umm year level make those students more willing to stay longer in LOTE sort of program. Because I think that umm the idea behind it is excellent. I just think that it’s you know the year 4 the things that you do with Year 4s and where they are at in their lives is hugely different from a 15 year old in Grade 10. You know, I mean they’re just out of different planets.

@Beatrice: Like the topic of hobbies. You ask Year 6 or 7 their hobbies - it’s mostly tennis, football, swimming and occasionally horseriding. But when you get to high school, the hobbies there’s just such a wide range.

@John: I think also I agree with you but it even comes back to in my mind even the language the word hobby . To me the word hobby is archaic, you know. Who says hobby? I mean I never say What’s your hobbies to anyone and so when I present that to kids I don’t even use the word hobbies. We use what they use What are you into? you know? And therefore they can access some of them access that more readily than you know . . I just find it amazing like how things don’t change to a certain extent yet language is dynamic, you know?

@Moderator: It does change.

@John: But when you bring up that topic later there are a couple of things that I think about that.

@Moderator: About the continuity?

@John: Yeah.

@Mary: So I I would sort have thought there would have been more difficulty about extending languages at the upper end than extending them down to Year 4, the lower end.

@Others: Yes, yes. I agree.

@Mary: Yes and I think you get the difficulty when you do get into adolescence at high school with with with students that do switch off [incomprehensible] and it’s a peer group thing as well. I’m teaching at an all boys’ school and and I think languages tend to be more of a a feminine there more of a feminine thing if you like.

@John: See, I don’t think that they are. I think that I would challenge that greatly. I just think that that’s either people people have gotten used to made that made that urban myth as far as I’m concerned, you know, I could challenge that quite readily.

@Mary: It’s interesting to look at at language teachers and it was a real eye-opener when I went to the LOTE conference back in May and in the hall where they had something like 90 LOTE teachers there were probably only half a dozen men there who were LOTE teachers.

@Beatrice: If you look at the classes the children who pick a LOTE are usually girls.

@Lindy: And also with 9 & 10 too, it takes up another space in the timetable which means that their their choices are much are even more limited because umm they have to choose you know that’s another subject they can’t choose . . .

@Others: Yes, mmm.

@Lindy: . . they have to do it to 10 so . .

@Mary: That’s certainly what our administration is saying: Well if languages become compulsory what other subjects have got to miss out on time so we can extend the time into the timetable to make language another core subject.

@Lindy: That’s right.

@John: I think a lot of that sort of attitude and that sort of switched-offness that students get in 8, 9 & 10 is also towards maths science. You know, some kids are going to go that way, starting they some start Year 7 with that sort of a thing as well and I mean to a certain extent it comes back to maybe a little bit more liaison with liaison between teachers or language teachers accessing language teachers and maths teachers and you know it’s . .

@Beatrice: I I don’t teach at the high school. I actually go and visit the students on a regular basis to show them continuity, to show them that I care. I know the classroom teacher and umm when I ask them how good they are [incomprehensible] and when I go there they say Oh, we’re we’re doing French next year. Don’t feel you have to because of me but do it because you want to but they feel that they’re really pleased because someone is actually keeping in touch with them because a lot of their primary teachers won’t. It’s good-bye Year 7. Have a nice time in high school. But I make a habit of maybe once a month of going to visit them and seeing how they’re going. And they’ll stay back after school that day on Tuesday until 4 o’clock where they can talk to me after school if they want to.

@Lindy: But and it’s also a cultural thing as well because it is so ingrained that we do keep going with our maths and English and even though you hate maths you you’ve got to do that at least to Year 10 and hopefully I mean it’s much better for you you to get a job if you do it to 12 whereas languages have - it shouldn’t be but it still is more or less a new thing isn’t it? and parents feel that it’s being foisted upon their children that they have to do it and if they try to make them go to 10 so that is another problem, I suppose.

@Mary: Mmm. You’re right. A lot of it is a reflection of parental attitudes.

@Others: Mmm. Mmm.

@Mary: Which is interesting.

@Moderator: So if I asked you to make a list of the for and against you know compulsory LOTE being expanded what would you say? For ‘for’, let’s start with ‘for’. Or ‘Against’. Well, you mentioned a couple. The problem of continuity is obviously one.

@Beatrice: [incomprehensible] They’re not They don’t have those inhibitions they don’t have it’s just a new thing and they love it

@Mary: And ‘for’ at the older end is umm just cultural awareness of and Australia’s place in in the world it doesn’t need necessarily be the Asian region but just the way in European countries second language’s just a second nature basically whereas here it hasn’t been.

@John: And part of like that cultural awareness sort of thing is like by extending it to a certain extent it is giving it more body more more substance more depth. In in you know like umm a lot of people associate I suppose the length of time that they do it will be you know the extension of the years as giving it more validity in some way, more sort of substance rather than you know one year only.

@Moderator: Any more ‘fors’ or ‘againsts’?

@John: For those students who umm or for all students as a teacher I think that umm you can can access many more different things if you are extending it to a higher level or you are starting at an earlier level. Maybe teachers themselves would be more willing to maybe extend their own repertoire of skills and the language base that they’re using if they have this foresight of maybe it is going to be extended.

@Moderator: So you think it is more attractive for teachers if if they’re taking students further. Is that what you’re saying?

@John: Maybe I think I mean I don’t know umm maybe some teachers feel like oh they just do Year 6 & 7 and what does it mean and it means nothing or maybe if it’s really extended it might help teachers be more sort of passionate about what they are doing because they might feel more support for what they’re doing or . . .

@Beatrice: I find there is a lot of anti a lot of feeling amongst the primary teachers the classroom teachers. They see us (a) good because we are given half an hour off from face-to-face teaching so that’s so that’s a good idea because they can do their photocopying or whatever they want to do. But then they see us as an intrusion in their classroom. Today [incomprehensible] I had to push open the door. It was my time but I thought if I make a fuss it will be pressure towards the children. I said to them do you mind if we stay a little while at morning tea just to finish it off and the kids said ‘no’. But I thought you know she can’t finish it in my time. How often you come to the classroom they are still they’re working on something.

@John: See I I actually I know you’re not going maybe like this but I actually find that the teachers I deal with are really supportive I I think they are quite happy to support it as much as PE, music, anything like that and we have just a give and take situation.

@Beatrice: In one of my school’s they don’t. In one of my schools it’s fantastic [incomprehensible]

@Moderator: What do you think makes the difference? Is it . .?

@Beatrice: The teachers

@John: In what way is it that one school has more students and more teachers or . .?

@Beatrice: No no it’s not the teachers are really pro it and in one of my schools the headmaster and the teachers are anti it.

@John: But why?

@Beatrice: Well the headmaster’s anti LOTE and it’s filtered through. About of my six classes there I’d say I have two teachers [incomprehensible]. The other four make everything they can do to ensure that LOTE is sabotaged in some way. If you and just because it intrudes in their time. They are not happy because it’s LOTE time [incomprehensible].

@Mary: I think think it’s an attitudes thing. It’s sort of like inbuilt attitudes of of umm staff teaching staff umm administration, students and parents. You get, you get some parents who will actually say I can’t see any advantage in my child learning a LOTE at all they should be learning how to speak English or they should be learning science or maths.

@Beatrice: [incomprehensible] great the the feeling of school was fantastic.

@Tom: I found it very supportive with my both schools. They’re very very supportive. I don’t have any trouble with the teachers at all.

@Mary: No, I’m like you at school because the primary teachers are very support of what we do.

@Tom: Very supportive.

@Moderator: Do you get a sense that that’s changed I mean that LOTE is more accepted now than than it was? All: I think so. Yes. I think so. Mmm.

@John: Everyone wants something you know like every teacher and a lot of no matter what they’re doing really needs Thank you you’re doing a great job and support and all the rest of it and I think sometimes maybe those primary teachers that are a little bit aggrieved or whatever are under a lot of stress and everybody wants you know everybody wants something ’cause we all need it and I think that sometimes some of the teachers who maybe are rude to you or maybe not supportive of LOTE maybe in their own sphere of where they’re at in their work they’re not maybe getting support and you know it’s sort of a little bit of a vicious cycle maybe.

@Beatrice: I try to deal with them. You know I’m very polite to them you know and whatever but they’re just I’m sure that they just don’t care. They I’ve got three schools and two of them you couldn’t I could put one thing down for two of my schools, they’re brilliant. In one school there are two teachers who are wonderful they help out you know make sure that they are finishing off their class when I get there, they’re finishing off or that the LOTE books are out already ready to go. But 4 of my teachers in one of my schools I’m sure are out to sabotage not just me but everything music the whole. They are deliberately trying to sabotage any itinerant program. So . .

@John: It’s harder when you don’t have your own rooms. [Sounds of agreement]

@Beatrice: And it’s scarier. I know I’ve got there’s four of us teaching in this in this area. And one other teacher has had a lot of trouble at one of the schools which is just up the road from where I am and umm two about three schools in the area are very anti-LOTE and let us know they are antiLOTE. They let the teacher know they are anti-LOTE. They let the parents know they are anti-LOTE.

@Lindy: It’s very unfair, isn’t it?

@Beatrice: Yes so they’ve had one the children say My mum said my dad says . . .

@Moderator: So what do you think will happen in those sorts of schools if if QSCO says start in Year 4 and go through to Year 10?

@John: It could swing either way really. For some I’m sure in some schools that if that is the attitude and it might just make that negativity embed further into that community. But then again in Year 4s that gorgeous little sparkle of excitement about a new language might permeate through the school and change things slightly.

@Beatrice: I have teachers in that school too really two you want who are really pro-LOTE. Why can’t they be teaching Grade 5, 6 or 7? But, on the other hand, if my children are on excursions I will go to their rooms and give them half an hour of French. Culturally based or a little song I’ll teach them Frère Jacques whatever and the children love it. And they say to me Isn’t you class away today? and I’ll go No. Oh we aren’t doing French today, are we? But whenever a child one of my children one of the classes are on excursion or doing something I will go to one of the lower classes and try to infiltrate that way. So when they get to Year 6 & 7, 8. [Laughter] Yeah Yeah [incomprehensible] I’m trying to really umm yeah brainwashing young.

@Tom: [incomprehensible]

@Moderator: So would you would you say you know as a group that the ‘for’ is stronger than the ‘against’ or the ‘against’ stronger. Let’s go first with going down to Year 4.

@Lindy: Both my school’s would be ‘for’. [Others agree.]

@Beatrice: For Year 4 I think there’s support.

@Moderator: And what about to Year 10, would the ‘fors’ have it or the ‘againsts’ what do you think from talking to colleagues and?

@John: I think that would be a really interesting situation because Year 8s tend to be fairly feral in some ways in any case sometimes and then maybe it might be their attitude because in Year 8 they’re sort of I’ve taught Year 8 before and they’re not sort of really sure where they’re at and maybe some of them would really entrench that negativity if they knew they had to do two more years of it and they already hated it. You know I kind of think that would be a dicey situation.

@Mary: It would be unpleasant because I’ve had to teach boys in classes whose parents have said You are going to do a LOTE. And they haven’t wanted to. Yeah and . . .

@Others: Yeah.

@Beatrice: But I was teaching sorry I taught in Sydney for 8 years before I came to Queensland. One of my schools in Sydney LOTE was compulsory to Year 9 and in Sydney Year 7 is high school and I had children who obviously hated LOTE in Grade 8 and 9 hated it though what we did instead of doing I actually got permission and actually did tourism LOTE. There was all based on tourists and the kids, it went well.

@Others: Yes.

@Beatrice: It wasn’t a straight LOTE lesson but it was you know including different languages not just French or German Italian we had all different languages in a tourism context. There was language and tourism.

@John: Yeah I think you’d have to . .

@Mary: So it was sort of work related.

@John: I think you’d have to quite radically change your teaching strategies. If that was to be compulsory in Grade 8, 9 & 10 I think it would be really incredibly important for the content and the teaching strategies behind that content to be investigated and to be quite different to a certain extent to that from that being done in the lower primary school area. Especially like I mean Year 8 to a certain extent the fact that they do repeat in the first 6 months often the What is your name? Where do you live? program, I don’t necessarily see that repetition as negative depending on how the teacher presents that.

@Others: Does it. Mmm. Mmm.

@John: And I think that you can quite easily umm specially with our languages with the calligraphy open up the Kanji door a lot more and things like that which might add a different dynamic to it but I do think that it would really have to be quite umm the content and the way it’s taught would really have to be investigated.

@Beatrice: A few years ago I had the privilege of teaching in primary and high school which would be great and I’m hoping to get back to it next year because I’m a high school trained teacher and in Grade 8 we actually pretended we were a pop star or a movie star so instead of saying My name is whatever you could become My name is you know like . .

@John: Pearl jam

@Beatrice: . . whoever Pearl jam. you could be a group and you could be you could do the group work and be a member of a group. And there’d be you know that person so it became more interesting rather than saying My name is John and I’m 10 11 years old and whatever. You could say I’m 21. They could do what ever they wanted. It was revision and we moved on from there and the revision was more fun pretend thing than being stressful. I think [incomprehensible] last year. It was much more . . .

@Moderator: If it goes back down to Year 4 will teachers need to change their methodology? I mean is there a big difference between Year 4 and Years 6 & 7?

@Others: Yes, yes, yes.

@Beatrice: We’ve got the Year 4 program. You’ve seen the Year 4 program?

@Mary: Yes, I have, yes.

@Beatrice: [incomprehensible] It’s all themes. They we’re actually teaching language through the themes. At the moment I’m doing Making Contact, I’m doing the world. We start saying My name is Moderator. I’m 11 year old. I’m from I come from Australia. The capital is Canberra. I live in so and so. We deal with the flag and the colours of the flag as part of the world because that’s what the classroom teacher is doing with the world and everything with the world as my theme. We’re doing numbers next and I’m the age will come into it after that and it’ll be our environment, the area we live in. So it has to be to fit into what the teacher’s doing. That all the . . You’ve seen the Year 4 program haven’t you?

@Tom: No I haven’t seen it.

@Lindy: I haven’t seen the Japanese one yet.

@Tom: Tell me tell me so we all agree that with the primary level we probably teach them through the fun, games but the high school perhaps they have to use different techniques. [Sounds of agreement]

@John: But I think we should use games.

@Others: Yes. Yes.

@Lindy: They still use games at high school.

@Mary: They love games.

@John: Grade 10s still love games it just depends on . . .

@Mary: Grade 12s love games.

@Others: Yeah. Exactly.

@John: And I think they’re a great resource to access and . . I think that . . see I know so I’m not sort of . . It can swing either way with having your program based upon the teacher’s program (i) because sometimes like kids are studying plants or food or whatever they are doing in their English language and the LOTE teacher comes in and says And we’re also . . our topic is also this and it’s like, I don’t necessarily see that as particularly interesting sometimes.

@Beatrice: That’s what the idea is. [incomprehensible] the themes. But the themes for Year 4 I’ll give . . Have you seen the Year 4, Cath? Making contact and the life cycle of an ant. [Ironic] That’s really interesting. And we’ve had eating around the world. When I saw those I was very excited about the Year 4 program and I went to the two day meeting at Bardon and came out feeling totally wrecked. They had given me to work with I cannot use in my classroom it’s just too hard, it’s too abstract. But I’ve actually re-do everything but you can make it interesting. If the per if the if the if the teacher is doing insects you can make it interesting within your own resources. You can touch on that, saying we’ll move on to something a little bit more adventurous but as long as you touch on it. I’ve found with my children that they had done the world but they couldn’t place anything in Europe. They couldn’t do it. I showed them the map of Europe. Okay, where is England? Where’s Ireland? and they looked at me blankly and I thought Mmm. They’re supposed to have done that in English. So we actually they can now do it. They can actually now put umm . . I made up a puzzle of Europe and we put the pieces and they had to had to write the French word the piece was written in French and on the actual board it was English. La France is France L’Angleterre is England. They have to put the puzzle piece [incomprehensible]. And the teacher’s very pleased because I have actually consolidated what she had done.

@Moderator: Which is part of what I think the new syllabus . . .

@Mary: But but but but I mean I I’ve got I’m piloting the Year 9 and I’ve got the importance of water.

@Beatrice: [incomprehensible] good luck.

@Mary: And like yourself, you know, it’s there isn’t you just have to do so much work to make the whole thing viable.

@Beatrice: Yes give them lessons and vocab and everything . .

@Mary: And I think what’s going to happen is I mean it’s fine having something like the life cycle of an ant but many primary teachers don’t do it or many primary tea. . I mean the the amount of vocabulary that you require to be able to teach that in your LOTE. It’s very specialised.

@Others: Mmm. Exactly.

@Others: I don’t completely . . I don’t completely

@Mary: And a lot of people just wouldn’t have it. Other: No

@Mary: And and it means teachers are going to have to put in so much extra work umm . .

@Beatrice: I’ve got 2 equal classes but they’re doing different topics

@Mary: [incomprehensible] Yes.

@Mary: You’ve got to make it so the kids are learning something that they’d like to learn too.

@Beatrice: Like I think by incorporating what the teacher is doing . . .

@Mary: Yes.

@Beatrice: . . but not having it it you know incorporate doing whatever it is if you’re doing insects say Ah, we listen My name’s Mr Ant , etc. Bang. We incorporate the language of the ant and the vocabulary without making a whole program on the ant.

@Others: Mmm. No.

@Beatrice: And in my Grade 4 class they did the ant cycle in Grade 3 so . . .

@Tom: So when we talk about you know making the program interesting but see I’ll teach them not only you know through the games they they like they like the games very much. As soon as I I got I get get into the classroom Sir, today will we play games? I will tell them Okay, look if you’re nice and quiet you do some groundwork first . Once you’ve done that that [incomprehensible] you will be served a game. Apart from that actually I am working on the computer thing. Not just games. We’re going to play the computer games to do with the language because I emphasise on the stroke order when we are teaching Kanji. They don’t have the idea why I have to emphasise on that. I say: Look, in the future you go to high school you do computers . But computers only recognise the characters if you put it in the right con . . er . . stroke order. Now I’m think to work I’m working on a program that will show them. If you don’t put the right stroke order the wrong word is coming up. So we can have a competition on that. You tell me one word okay what word what character you want to write. You write it. If it doesn’t come up with the one you want, you’re the loser. Okay and let someone else try until you get it. And so we have a competition. I’m working on that program. I think that might be very interesting. . .

@Moderator: Sounds good. [Sounds of agreement]

@Moderator: If we come back to this articulation issue umm how how do you in the primary schools prepare students for that articulation to secondary school? Is it is that part of your job? Does it happen?

@John: That comes back to I suppose the continuity as well and whether there’s any sort of discussion with the Year 8 teachers. I don’t actually have any direct liaison with like the high schools that are close to me and I suppose like umm I’ve I’ve used my experience from teaching Japanese in Grade 8 to as part of I suppose thinking ahead to what I know that I the work program that I had to follow at that high school I was at and I also know that most of them repeat the first half but if they go to private schools as well some of them don’t repeat that language until the second semester like in their school. Umm so I don’t have any direct conversation with the high school teachers . .

@Lindy: I used to. I used to umm put send off lists of the names and their ability and where we what topics we’d done and but I just I think I became a bit disillusioned because I’d send it off and they’d just get back to hello good-bye what’s your name? at the beginning and they took no notice.

@Beatrice: I remember we were given at the LOTE meeting one time the list and we I remember studiously putting all the names of the children down and putting what they could do if they were strong in speaking or listening and weak in this or whatever. And umm I went to the high school and umm they hadn’t they hadn’t looked at them. All the hours we spent doing that.

@Others: `Yeah, yeah yeah.

@John: I’ve done that for grammar at ZZZ College because a lot of our students at one school go to the private schools and they send you these forms which you would have done. Write down everything ticked everything that the students have learned, wrote a blurb about their ability and then I’ve had heaps of children come past students come back and say We’re all in the beginners’ class. And these are really advanced students and that’s at all the private schools. Umm because they have a complete . . I don’t know why they even bother asking you to fill out these forms and these students are like: Oh we’re doing everything that we’ve already done and it’s incredibly boring. They’re advanced like, they’re they’re kids that can actually speak, you know? So they’re made . . .

@Moderator: Do you see I mean do you see the primary program as the first the beginning of the secondary program or do you think that it would be better to see it as totally different?

@Tom: The beginning of it because it . . because it well I don’t know I’ll get back to your question okay? If we can go back to when they go to high school. What I do I talk to my Year 7 students a lot about the job employment ah the future. So what I did I just I showed them the local newspaper employment looking for workers with a second language ability also overseas jobs good pay and er if the pay actually the pay you can see that the pay that the salary is in Hong Kong teachers’ salary to be one and a half times that in in Australia so I got a few ads there and said Look, look at this . You are a native speaker. Okay? If you have done education you are a qualified teacher , this is how much you can get. Allowance good salary. And then I get get a few of them with that sort of information. You should go for language. This is good for a great future ahead.

@Beatrice: Yes there were a few ads in the paper two weeks ago in the Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday for teachers who could teach English in Japan. There’s quite a few of them actually.

@Mary: But it’s not just teaching it’s every . .

@Tom: Everything ah not . . teaching’s one part of it.

@Others: Yes. Yes.

@Beatrice: There’s just a few just in the teaching field there’s a few already.

@Lindy: But they say, you know, Oh, I want to be an engineer or something and then I say if you’re going for a job as an engineer and you’ve got you know so many years of Japanese and you’re maybe with a company then they’ll choose you over someone who hasn’t got that.

@Mary: I think we’re actually first with the reality. And the reality is that probably 60% or 70% of the time the language which students learn in primary school is not the language that they may well learn when they go to secondary school. And I think this is the big problem . .

@Moderator: Do you think it’s as high as that? 60% to 70% of the time?

@Mary: Well, I don’t know I mean I’m just that’s just my gut feeling that a lot of students are not going to continue with the same LOTE and I mean we had students into our school from 57 different feeder schools last year and the amount of students who had done different languages from the two that we teach and for many students ah I I just wonder if primary is better kept separate separate from secondary . . . Other: Exactly!

@Mary: . . . because you know a lot of kids aren’t going to continue learning the same LOTE when they move into secondary.

@Beatrice: [incomprehensible] more choice, if you had more choice in the schools then every . .

@John: But I think that they’re different communities, they’re different communities. They have a different feeling and vibe about them. They have a different agenda behind them. They have students that are going through different parts and phases of their lives. I think it is actual umm cultures high school culture and primary school culture are actually different in a lot of respects and I think that often with the LOTE program that that a LOTE program that is umm trying to it’s trying to make everything the same and it’s not.

@Others: Mmm. Mmm.

@John: They’re they’re different communities and because of those differences the type of things that you do and the type of language that you use and the type of resources that you can access and er even the actual physical construction of the school environment in high school as opposed to primary school change how that that program can be viewed. I do think that the beginning phase of a language’s in primary school. I mean that, you’re starting there so it’s obviously a beginning and it depends, I suppose, on your motivation and the school’s motivation for making that LOTE program valid and everything. Whether it is cultural awareness or whether it is to have students being able to be linguistically capable at the end of Year 7 or you know I think there’s a lot of issues involved in that and and and it’s not this simple little black and white answer sometimes which I think sometimes they try and make everything you know the same and it just . . to me I don’t see how that that works, especially see I reckon that the students the kids themselves you know 13, 14, 15 you’re just sooo completely different when you’re 11 or 12! Tom &

@Others: Yep. Mmm. Yes.

@John: You know the way you know your beautiful Year 6s and you see them in Year 7 and it’s like Where are you? Who are? and of course they don’t know. And that that that’s where they’re the people that you’re trying to access you know and I think that a lot of programs are sooo . . they’re words on pieces of paper and everything that aren’t accessing the particular psychology and that age group and what’s happening and how dramatically they change within three months you know [incomprehensible].

@Lindy: It doesn’t happen with other things either though. I mean in maths or or or I suppose English try but they don’t have to sell themselves as a subject from 1 to 12 or 4 -10 that we’re talking about you do that and you don’t have to have this wonderful sort of selling thing and the staff and the teachers have to be really enthusiastic you know about maths and how great it is and how good it will be for you but it seems to me that . .

@Beatrice: And no-one questions they do maths from 1 - 12, they don’t question it.

@Lindy: Yes, exactly.