Access granted: Modern languages and issues of accessibility at university – a case study from Australia

Abstract: Discussion about how to monitor and increase participation in languages study is gaining relevance in the UK, the US and Australia across various sectors, but particularly in higher education. In recent times levels of enrolment in modern languages at universities around the world have been described in terms of ‘crisis’ or even ‘permanent crisis’. In Australia, however, the introduction of a new course structure at the University of Western Australia, which established a three-year general Bachelor degree followed by professional degrees, has resulted in unprecedented levels of language enrolments. Using data from this university as a case in point, we provide substantial evidence to argue that language enrolments are directly related to overlooked issues of degree structure and flexibility, rather than to other factors.

Keywords: modern languages, degree flexibility, enrolment levels, language advocacy, language policy

1 Introduction

Levels of enrolment in modern languages at universities have been the subject of debate, if not downright concern, in the UK, the US and Australia in recent times. Commentators have been quick to point out that the word ‘crisis’, applying to all three contexts, is not an overstatement (for the UK, Godsland 2010; Coleman 2011; for the US, Levine 2011; for Australia, Martín 2005; Group of Eight 2007). In Australia, the recently established Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU), as well as reports commissioned by the Academy of Humanities of Australia, have sought to address low levels of

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enrolment at universities, and to make enrolment data readily accessible for researchers (Nettelbeck et al. 2007; Nettelbeck 2009). This article provides substantial evidence that levels of language enrolment are in fact linked to hitherto overlooked issues of access and degree structure. As a case in point, we examine the introduction of a new course structure at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 2012, and how this has led to unprecedented levels of enrolment across all languages. We argue that this increase is attributable to issues of access, and that language enrolments are directly related to degree structure and flexibility, rather than to other factors. The changed and changing nature of the student cohort as a result of this reform also means that a new pedagogy must be invented.

Despite worrying trends in language enrolments across Australia, some recent changes to university curricula have opened up access to languages that had previously been difficult to study outside of the traditional Bachelor of Arts. These changes to course structure were implemented in a context of global pressures that prompted a re-evaluation of higher education around the world, particularly in terms of content and delivery of tertiary courses. These new course structures are seen as forming part of the trend identified at universities both internationally and locally. For example, the Bologna Process introduced a three-year general Bachelors degree followed by a two year Masters. In Australia, the first university to align itself with the European model was the University of Melbourne, which introduced the Melbourne Curriculum (previously the “Melbourne Model”) in 2008. A similar reform occurred soon after at UWA, which introduced curriculum changes known as New Courses in 2012.

Although it met with initial criticism by students, academics and unions, one upshot from both the Melbourne and UWA restructuring has been the large increases in students studying a language other than English within their chosen degree. An important change to both degree structures is that students are required to take what are called “broadening units”. Essentially, students must enrol in at least four units over the course of their degree that are from a different Faculty, regardless of which degree they are studying. For example, a student studying a Bachelor of Commerce may take four units from the Faculty of Arts. All degrees at UWA require completion of 144 points, and each unit is usually worth 6 points (apart from large “project” units, which may be weighted more). This means that four broadening units at six points each will constitute roughly 16% of a student’s total degree. Typically, these units are taken in a student’s first or second year of study, which allows for exposure to a broad range of subjects followed by specialisation in later years. One way of satisfying the broadening requirement is to take a language. In contrast to the Melbourne Model, UWA
allows students from the Faculty of Arts to choose a language as a broadening unit, which results in some further flexibility to satisfy the requirement.

UWA is a research-intensive university, located in urban Perth, Western Australia. Established in 1911, it is a “Sandstone” university, and part of the prestigious “Group of Eight” universities in Australia, which comprise Australia’s eight leading universities in research. The university prides itself on both research and teaching excellence. Academic programmes taught at UWA cover a broad range of liberal arts or humanities degrees, as well as a wide offering of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects and professional degrees at postgraduate level. Admission to the university is selective. Domestic students come mainly from Perth metropolitan areas, as well as from rural Western Australia. There is a high proportion of international students, mainly from south-east Asia (China, Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia) but also from Europe (Norway, Sweden) and increasingly from Brazil and Argentina. Student exchange programmes have been set up with many universities around the world, and some overseas study is strongly encouraged to form part of all degree programmes.

The aim of this article, in the first instance, is to critically review the efforts made to document the state of languages, and to show that there are encouraging signs of a resurgence in university language programmes. Much of the discourse surrounding language programmes and enrolment numbers often appears to refer to a context of ‘crisis’, but recent patterns of enrolment show that use of this descriptor may be exaggerated, and that student choices overwhelmingly show a preference for at least some language study as part of their degree. Language study is becoming increasingly popular, which may in part be due to Australia’s role as a trading nation in the dynamic Asia Pacific economic zone. Major industries (mining and tourism) are heavily dependent on trade with Asia. In this regard, Asian languages are particularly attractive for students seeking practical outcomes from their language study, while in the case of European languages, heritage factors are significant in determining students’ language choice, particularly for Italian and Mandarin.

After providing a brief background of enrolment trends at language programmes in Australian universities and attempts by government and universities to both document and reverse these trends, we consider the previous inflexibility in degree programmes at the tertiary level and how this may be linked to language study. Finally, we offer substantial data showing that students prefer studying languages over other subject areas, and that languages are now being studied by a broader cohort and variety of
students. As a case study, we provide data from the increase in enrolments at UWA.

2 Languages in Australian universities: An overview of recent trends

Although a number of studies have examined the state of languages in Australian tertiary education over the past twenty years, “the resultant academic literature is not large” and “much of the descriptive statistical information available about language teaching in higher education has come from research reports [...] most of which have not been more widely published” (Baldauf and White 2010: 41). Accessing the data that are available is not a simple matter, and nor are they stored in a central repository. This section presents an overview of what interventions have been made in recent years by language teachers and government authorities to reverse the so-called “crisis” in Australian languages at the tertiary level.

A first acknowledgement that the tertiary languages sector was in difficulty occurred in 2002, with a report by the Deans of Arts, Social Science and Humanities (DASSH) (for details of this background, see Nettelbeck 2009: 9; for an overview of the state of languages in Australian universities at the start of the millennium, see Pauwels 2002). Particular areas of concern included the continuing erosion of the number of languages being taught in Australian universities and the decreased number of permanent teaching staff. The report revealingly noted the “little encouragement at senior levels in universities or at governmental policy levels for languages education” and that “languages are not doing well across the nation because there is little incentive for educational institutions to take any innovative or new approaches in language offerings” (p. 40). A few years later, White and Baldauf’s 2006 report noted similar problems. Although this report provided a useful overview of the sector, the authors noted that one serious problem was the lack of any overarching infrastructure to collect data about the ecology of language teaching in Australia, and a national effort was needed to galvanise the sector more broadly.

The term “crisis” has long been used to refer to the state of languages and language teaching in Australia. In the UK, it has been used at least since the early 2000s: “At a time when exchange between cultures has never been more desirable or more frequent, native English speakers are becoming more monolingual (and hence monocultural) than ever before, and the teaching of foreign
languages is in crisis” (Bassnett 2002: 106). A similar description has been provided for the US. The 2011 president of the Modern Language Association wrote a short article entitled “The Real Language Crisis” for the American Association of University Professors (Berman 2011). As early as 1996, it had been noted that “crisis is not too strong a word to describe the quality and supply of language teachers in Australia” (Group of Eight 2007: 4).\(^1\)

It is significant that the word also appeared in Martín’s 2005 article “Permanent crisis, tenuous persistence: Foreign languages in Australian universities, which traced the relative scarcity of language teaching in contemporary Australia to decisions made in the 1950s when language entrance requirements to universities were abolished. According to Martín, language professionals had lost “their representation in committees and other power structures in the universities” (2005: 71). In other words, as decisions concerning the operations of language departments in Australian universities were gradually transferred to senior management, a void was left which required an infrastructure to represent language departments and lobby on their behalf. A national framework to underpin the languages sector, at the time characterised by a high degree of segmentation, was provided by the 2007 report Languages in crisis: A rescue plan for Australia commissioned by Australia’s Group of Eight universities. The report made clear the regressive trend of language education in Australia, noting that in 1997 there were 66 languages offered at Australian universities. Ten years later, just 29 survived (Group of Eight 2007: 4). An underlying theme of this report is the acknowledgement that the languages sector, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels, was in a worrisome state.

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1 Other alarmist, if not pessimistic, terms appear throughout the literature, i.e. ‘under siege’ in the title of White, Baldauf & Diller’s (1997) report; ‘death spiral’ (Lane 2013); ‘relaxed, complacent, risible’ in the title of Lindsey’s 2007 article on the decline of Asian studies. Referring to languages in higher education in his 2004 Editorial of volume 3 of Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, Absalom described a “bleak picture” for languages, and noted that “references to decline, crisis, closure and so on appear throughout the various contributions” (2004: 124). In this sense, the position of languages in modern university curricula act as a ‘canary in the mine’ for the broader concern enveloping the humanities (Moss 2004; Lo Bianco 2012), and precede Barnett’s comments that “the humanities have been relegated to being a side show, with society coming to have as part of its self-understanding that the sciences are central to its character, that the meaning of ‘knowledge’ in this society is framed largely by science, that the bulk of state funding for higher education is devoted to areas other than the humanities and that the humanities (in particular philosophy and modern languages) are witnessing a closing of university departments” (2014: 44). On the use of the word ‘crisis’ to refer to the contemporary situation of the humanities (in a US context), see Donoghue (2008: xii-xiii). For a counter-argument to this situation in Australia, see Barnett 2015.
It was in this context, and following recommendations from the *Languages in crisis* report, that a new network for language professionals around Australia was created, the Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities (LCNAU; for further detail on the genesis of this organisation, see Woods et al. [2011] and Hajek et al. [2012]). Formed in 2011, LCNAU is “the emanation of a grass-roots response to a sense of crisis and urgency in the tertiary languages and cultures sector in Australia” (Nettelbeck et al. 2012: 41). It is a network that brings together individuals, language programs, university structures and tertiary institutions. It aims “to strengthen the tertiary languages sector in Australia through advocacy, collaboration, research and support” (http://www.lcnau.org/). This network has been one major way that the languages sector in Australia has sought to address the ‘crisis’.

Leading up to the network’s creation, several major studies were carried out to document a more comprehensive picture of the state of languages and language teaching. In particular, Nettelbeck et al.’s 2007 investigation into beginners’ language courses, as well as a follow-up study of retention strategies in Nettelbeck 2009, were major steps in addressing the issues identified in the *Languages in Crisis* report. Nettelbeck’s 2009 study was followed up by Martín and Jansen (2012), who also looked at the possible causes of high and low retention rates in language and culture programs at the Australian National University. In an increasingly difficult funding environment, Baldauf and White (2010) looked at languages in Australian universities between 2001 and 2005, documenting the types of collaboration that had been tried, and possibilities for future collaboration, particularly for languages with small enrolments. For example, Levy and Steel (2012) document the successful implementation of a “languages alliance” between three universities in Queensland since 2009. Recent studies that investigate language offerings at Australian universities are provided in a series of articles, all with a different focus, by Dunne and Pavlyshyn (2012, 2013, 2014).

Baldauf and White (2010) identified four major proposals to enhance the languages sector in Australia:
1. establish and trial some commonly agreed structures across universities that would facilitate cooperative work;
2. provide encouragement at senior levels in universities or at governmental policy levels for languages education;
3. provide incentives for educational institutions to take new approaches to language offerings;
4. facilitate the collection of consistent and comparable data for analysis and planning.
These proposals led to a period of research focusing on documenting language trends, as well as teaching and learning projects to enhance language pedagogy (see the resulting publications in Hajek et al. [2012] and Travis et al. [2014]).

The most recent data on language enrolments is provided by Hajek (2014: 22) in a brief section entitled “Languages snapshot” in a report of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, which provides a comprehensive understanding of student enrolment trends, as well as teaching and research activity in Australia. Significantly for our purposes, the report makes specific reference to the issue of access and structural factors as impediments to language study in degree programmes. It stresses that positive changes have been adopted and that, from 2002 to 2011, “a number of important structural initiatives have been taken to facilitate language study over this time, such as a Year 12 bonus for university entry, the introduction of the Diploma of Languages as well as the specific tagging or naming of degrees, e.g. BA (Languages)” (Hajek 2014: 22). The Year 12 bonus for university entry commonly consists of an extra percentage added to the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank for students who have studied a language at secondary school level, thereby raising a student’s overall mark for admission to university. These reforms have led to a “significant increase in university enrolments over the period 2002–11” (p. 22), and are a positive indication of rising student interest in languages. These increases are seen best in a graph from the report, showing the student load in languages other than English (Figure 1).

Part of this increase in student load must be due to the removal of the previously restrictive rules governing degrees, which has meant that “enrolments in languages have risen dramatically as a result”. This has been the case “particularly at UWA, which has gone furthest in opening out language study to all students” (p. 22).

The importance of considering the structures within which language programmes are situated is only now receiving the necessary attention. As Spence-Brown (2014: 186) has pointed out for the secondary sector, “the pernicious influence of more general educational policies and structures, while not ignored, has received less concerted attention, perhaps because their effects are more indirect and are out of the control of education leaders”. Previous efforts to increase access to languages have been provided via a range of measures. While the focus of this article is on current access to language study in university degree programmes, it is useful to consider previous ways
3 Issues of access to languages in Australian universities

The need for greater access to language study in degree structures has been recognised for over ten years. Previous solutions have sought to combine language study in a degree programme in various ways. One of these has been to study a language in combination with another study area. This has been the case, for example, for professional areas of study, such as those associated with engineering, business, or medicine and law degrees, which very often have a prescribed curriculum allowing little room for electives. This finding was also reported by Wilkerson (2006: 310) for the United States in her analysis of faculty perceptions about foreign languages, which found that “although faculty
generally agreed that proficiency in another language is important, degree programs in the service professions were viewed as too prescriptive to allow students enough time to learn another language”. In the early 2000s, some universities took specific steps to free up extra space in degree programmes, as Pauwels (2007) highlights – in particular, see the section “Greater flexibility in degree structure” (pp. 119–120). Another solution was the introduction of a Diploma of Languages, allowing students to study a language concurrently with their main degree programme (for a recent assessment of the Diploma of Languages, see Mullan and Seaman [2014]; also Pauwels [2002]). Other ways in which access to language study has been opened up in the past include the study of a combined degree structure in which students undertake a five-year (instead of a three-year) study programme, combining two degrees (e.g. Economics and Arts). Although these courses facilitate the study of a language, they were found to “add substantially to the student’s workload” (Pauwels 2007: 120), and with the introduction of the new degree structures at UWA and Melbourne, they are no longer available since students now have the option to major in a language no matter which degree they are enrolled in.

Certain universities also offer a specific Bachelor of Languages, such as the University of Adelaide, Flinders University, the Australian National University, the University of New England, James Cook University, Griffith University. Others offer “tagged” degrees with a specific focus on language skills, such as the Bachelor of Arts (Languages) at the University of Sydney (see Baldauf and White [2010: 60] for further information on university degrees requiring a language component). These degrees are among the few which require language study at tertiary level, but “tend to be those which will appeal to students who are already committed to language study” (Spence-Brown 2014: 195). One recent initiative facilitating the visibility of language programmes is the creation of the University Languages Portal Australia, a website designed to improve access to languages “by making visible in a single online location all languages taught at all universities”. This initiative will provide a clear way for students and researchers to gain information about which languages are offered at which universities.

The remainder of this article considers the impact of a new course structure on all languages offered at UWA as a case study of the broader issue of access to language programmes. Recent investigations of the impact of the new course structure on enrolments in Italian Studies at UWA (Brown and Caruso 2014; Caruso and Brown 2015) found an overall increase in student numbers, with many students continuing Italian into their second year of study.

3 Further information is available at http://www.ulpa.edu.au/.
4 Increases in enrolment in modern languages: A case study from Australia

4.1 Description of the New Courses restructuring

Introduced in 2012, the new degree structure “ensures [students] have the time and flexibility” to choose their career path and “gain the skills and knowledge to succeed in an international workplace”, meaning no decision has to be made on a narrow field of study straight from school. UWA’s website on New Courses lists the following six features as the main characteristics of this new degree:
1. Broad education, in-depth knowledge
2. More choices, better choices
3. Highly developed communication and research skills
4. Community engagement
5. Opportunities to study abroad
6. Professional degrees at a postgraduate level

From over 150 undergraduate degrees, there are now five offered at UWA. These are the Bachelor of Arts, Commerce, Design, Science and the exclusive Bachelor of Philosophy for students with high entrance scores. A major consists of completing eight semester-long obligatory units in a certain discipline. The other subjects of the degree may come in part from one’s own area of study and from other areas. At the base of this model is the intention to offer students the opportunity of acquiring a broader general knowledge so that they can be better prepared for the workplace. In short, students take a wide range of subjects in first year and specialisation in successive years, as is summarised in the slogan of the degree: “broad education, in-depth knowledge”.

Part of these changes to the degree structure means that students are required to take what are called broadening units. Essentially, students must enrol in at least four units over the course of their degree that are from a different Faculty. For example, a student studying a Bachelor of Commerce may take four units from the Faculty of Arts. One way of satisfying the broadening requirement is to study a language, which is explained for students in the handbook.

Language academics at UWA predicted that languages would be an attractive choice for students, for three reasons. The first was that students would
probably have had some exposure to a language in high school, and so taking an extra course in a language would seem a preferable option to other broadening units. Secondly, for students enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts, enrolling in a language unit can count as their broadening unit even though it is still within their own Faculty. Thirdly, the increase in enrolments for languages had been observed after the introduction of the Melbourne Model in 2008 and it was reasonable to assume that it would happen at UWA as well.

The next sections look at the effects of the restructuring on languages at UWA by considering the increase in enrolments across languages and non-language disciplines.

4.2 Patterns of language enrolment at UWA

Since the introduction of New Courses, all modern languages have experienced large increases in levels of student enrolment. By far the most significant of these was in 2012, that is, the same year as the introduction of the new degree structure, allowing for greater flexibility and requiring students to take a Broadening unit. The levels of enrolment for first-year *ab initio* language units (first semester) from 2011 to 2015 are shown in Figure 2.

Although most languages seem to have experienced increases in 2012, no broad pattern has emerged so far across all languages. Chinese, French and

![Figure 2: Yearly enrolment count, first-year first-semester language units, 2011–2014.](image)
German peaked in 2013, whereas Japanese and Korean did so in 2014. Indonesian has shown no growth since having its numbers boosted after the restructuring, and following this initial increase, plateaued from 2012 to 2014 before dropping in 2015. Yet levels of enrolment have remained high, and much higher than those recorded in 2011 (Korean was offered for the first time at UWA in 2012). By far the winners out of the restructuring have been Japanese, particularly in 2014 (257% increase from 2011 to 2014), and German (249% increase from 2011 to 2014), which recorded successive increases of enrolment. Italian also recorded a large increase in 2012, but has seen steadily decreasing numbers in subsequent years, as has Chinese. On the whole, almost all languages show improved levels of enrolment since 2011, and the overall effect of requiring students to take broadening units has been positive for languages.

Despite the efforts listed in Section 3 above, one cohort of students who had found language study to be previously inaccessible on a large scale are students enrolled outside the BA, for whom degree inflexibility has been a serious impediment. The data presented below shows evidence that, under New Courses, access to language study is not only much easier to obtain for non-BA students, but that languages are in fact preferred over other liberal arts disciplines.

### 4.3 Access granted: Preferences of non-BA students

One major impact of the new course structure has been on the student cohort in languages. The requirement to take subjects from outside one’s own area of study has meant that many students taking languages in the first-year of study are not principally focussed on traditional Arts disciplines for their degree, and may have a significantly different learning style (Wolfson et al. 2015). It was not at all clear, following the introduction of the new structure, which subjects non-Arts students would elect to take to fulfil the broadening requirement. Figure 3 below shows the total percentage change (from 2011 to 2014) in all Arts disciplines for students enrolled in a non-Arts degree, with modern languages highlighted in orange.

When making decisions about broadening units, non-Arts students show a clear preference for languages over other Arts disciplines. As stated at the beginning of this article, a corollary of the recent introduction of the new course structures at UWA and Melbourne has been the dramatic rise in the number of language enrolments. In part, this must be due to the elimination of the previous restrictions to language study inherent in degree structures. One recent study by Spence-Brown
suggests that institutional factors can still be a major impediment to studying a language and that “such structures and policies are still in the minority in Australian tertiary institutions” (Spence-Brown 2014: 195). The results above are further supported by Spence-Brown’s statement that “there is strong evidence that when structures change to allow easier access to language study, numbers increase” (2014: 195). An earlier study of students at a large Australian university showed that lack of space in course structures and other structural factors, such as timetable issues, are major factors in students dropping out of a tertiary Japanese course (Northwood and Kinoshita Thomson 2012). Commenting on the Melbourne experience, Spence-Brown notes that the “breadth” requirement “not only created a clear ‘slot’ in a degree which a language could occupy, it sent the message that students needed broader skills such as languages in addition to the narrow skills in their chosen disciplinary area” (2014: 195). If students see languages as an attractive option to fulfil their broadening requirement (usually in their first two years of study), then half the work has been done. Providing them with the space in their degree to allow at least some language study exposes many of them to a new set of linguistic and cultural skills that can complement their primary area of study, and enhance their student experience in culturally enriching ways.

The challenge for educators is to ensure that broadening units prove sufficiently appealing to make the experience a fruitful one, and ultimately, encourage

**Figure 3:** Total percentage change in Arts disciplines (for students enrolled in non-Arts degrees), 2011–2014.
them to further their study by deciding to major in the language. Gaining access to language study in a (comparatively) inflexible degree model pre-2012 was possible, but proved complicated, time-consuming and rigid, with cross-disciplinary procedures requiring a series of approvals from faculties who more often than not were competing for enrolments and who did not often talk to one another. What has emerged from this experience is that students do indeed want to study languages, and a changed degree structure has facilitated the possibility to do so, more than any other model established in an Australian university so far.

5 Conclusions

Despite the alarmist and alarming terminology used to talk about levels of language enrolment, our impression is that matters are far from being in crisis, and that this and similar terms can be self-defeating. As a matter of fact, the data from the Mapping the Humanities report shows a significant upward trend from 2002 to 2011, especially where Southern European languages (Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish), Eastern Asian languages (Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin), as well as French and Latin are concerned, but also for Northern European languages (Gaelic, Danish, Dutch, German, Norwegian, Swedish). Undoubtedly, participation rates for certain languages are more worrisome than for others, and there are still low rates of second language study at secondary level, particularly when it is no longer a compulsory requirement (Lo Bianco and Slaughter 2009). Nevertheless, the English word “crisis”, and its use throughout the literature, has come to lose its original semantic value of “turning point” or “decision” – but it is precisely a question of decision-making and planning for the future that must be taken into consideration if enrolments in modern languages are to grow. In this sense, the recently formed Languages and Cultures Network for Australian Universities is able to provide the necessary forum for such decisions to be recommended at policy level.

It is clear that broadening units have been successful in terms of the level of student enrolment in languages. But what level of language competence do broadening students typically achieve? If a student completes all four units in the same language, and in the first two years of their three-year degree, he or she typically achieves a level of competency equivalent to A2 or B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. As with all units,

5 The list of the languages mentioned above provides the basis for Figure 1, Section 2, and is available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (http://www.abs.gov.au).
students display a wide range of competencies, according to their abilities and motivations, from those who perform poorly and acquire almost no language skills, to those who excel and gain an impressive level of communicative ability. These competencies are assessed via a range of written and oral assessments (online quizzes, in-class tests, exams and oral interviews), which also cover the cultural and linguistic knowledge of their area of study.

In certain disciplines, some linguistic and grammatical content was removed to introduce new topics that might appeal to a broader cohort of students at first-year level. For example, Italian Studies introduced five lectures during the first-year *ab initio* course devoted solely to cultural content into a curriculum that had previously been designed only for language acquisition. The topics chosen for these lectures varied from Italian-Australian economic relations, to contemporary Italian cinema, to Italy-China contact (see Brown and Caruso 2014 and Caruso and Brown 2014 for further details). Student feedback about these changes has been positive, and it is encouraging to see students showing an interest in the cultural aspects of language studies rather than simply "learning how to order coffee in Italian". In any case, the principal lesson to be learned here is that broadening units have opened up language study to students for whom access to a foreign language has previously been restricted. The fact of increased enrolments and the popularity of languages as broadening units is evidence that students want to incorporate language study as part of their degrees and know about languages and cultures other than their own.

The key finding from this research so far has been the relatively large uptake of languages at university level once students are able to identify ways in which to combine language study with the primary focus of their degree. Increased flexibility in degree structures means that access to language study has now been granted to new cohorts of students where this would have otherwise been denied. Previous methods of opening up such possibilities have focussed on a variety of measures, such as the Diploma of Languages and the tagging of specific degrees, of which some are available at certain universities and others not. Traditionally, these have been the only options for students to either add or combine language study to a degree programme that often consumes much of a student’s resources. The requirement of broadening units for students to take units outside their principal area of focus has made languages an attractive option. This is good news for the sector, not just in Australia but for writers of language policy in all countries. It provides for a successful initiative that should be celebrated, as well as made known in uninhibited and forthright language to administrators and teaching staff alike, whenever the possibility for advocacy of languages and languages education arises.
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