

"For the LOTE was an EBGerP, you see." - A CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING GERMAN IN SCHOOLS IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA¹

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For the snark was a Boojum, you see.
Lewis Carroll, *The Hunting of the Snark*. (Carroll, 1995, p. 110)

Language education has come a long way in a short time. But which way?

For a country that still has a rather monolingually anglophone mainstream culture, the efforts that Australia in general, and the State of Victoria in particular have made towards a language policy are truly outstanding -- all the more since the interest in a serious language policy at both the federal and the state levels has only been developing quite recently. Milestones of this development are the 1984 *Report on a National Language Policy* by the federal Senate Standing Committee on Education and the Arts, and Joseph Lo Bianco's document, *National Policy on Languages* (Lo Bianco, 1987). Karen Petersen's study *Zur Situation des Deutschen als Fremdsprache im multikulturellen Australien: eine Bestandsaufnahme am Beispiel des Bundesstaates Victoria* (Petersen, 1993) gives an interesting outsider's view on the development that German as a school subject in Victoria had taken at the time the study was undertaken, in the late eighties and the early nineties.² Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne (1994) provide an Australia-wide picture. Comparing these analyses with recent documents on state government policy such as the *Languages Other Than English Strategy Plan* of 1993 and the *Report to the Minister for Education* of 1994, both by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Languages other than English (Ministerial Advisory Council, 1993 and 1994), the most recent available edition of the *Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design* for German (Board of Studies, 1994), the *CSF, the Curriculum and Standards Framework Languages Other Than English* (Board of Studies, 1995) or the advice brochure for teachers how to implement the CSF, *Using the CSF Languages Other Than English (LOTE)* (Board of Studies, 1998), one can easily see how far the administrative framework for teaching and learning languages in school has come in the last decade.

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Background

For those readers who are not familiar with the situation of German in the Victorian education system, and for whom the literature mentioned above is not easily available, a rough outline of this situation might provide some helpful background information.

A large number of particular languages³ are offered in particular Victorian schools or through

the Distance Education Center on all levels from P (Prep[aratory grade], which children enter at the age of five) through to six years of primary school and six years of secondary school up to Year 12 and the VCE.⁴ The ideal of a continuous provision P-12 for all languages is not possible to reach for lack of adequate staff numbers. Nevertheless, the recommendation of the *Strategy Plan* "[t]hat schools be required to provide language programs for all students P-10 and for at least 25 per cent of Years 11-12 students by the year 2000" (Ministerial Advisory Council, 1993, p. 9) was implemented in Department of Education policy: By the year 2000 -- or 2002, since the target date has been somewhat corrected meanwhile in order to make it more likely to meet the set goal --, a language other than the native language of the student will be compulsory for all P-10 students in government schools. German is one of eight "key languages" in mainstream schools, together with other important European, regional and Community languages (Chinese, French, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek and Vietnamese, cf. Ministerial Advisory Council, 1993, p. 4). One or two of those "key languages" are offered in most government schools. Many private schools offer more than two languages, but private schools (which teach a considerable part of Victorian primary and above all, secondary students) do not have to abide by curricular guidelines issued by the Victorian Department of Education. Only the VCE is assessed centrally by a government institution, the Victorian Board of Studies. One should add that even government schools have a very high degree of curricular autonomy. One of the main problems in language teaching, the lack of continuity, has not been solved by Department of Education policy: Many local secondary schools do not offer the same languages that are taught in primary schools of the area; furthermore many students switch repeatedly from language to language once the apparent initial miracle of fast progress in a new language starts wearing off. Since students doing a language as a VCE subject are rewarded with a bonus for their TER,⁵ some students take up a language for VCE only in year 11. German teachers in year 11 might have students with no previous knowledge in that language in their class along with students who have continuously been taught German for 11 years (since Prep).

To give another perspective of the changes that have taken place, the following figures representing the state of matters in the early nineties are quoted from Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne (1994, pp. 8-9):

In 1990 secondary students of German comprised 17.9% of all LOTE enrolments (compared with French 31.7%, Italian 21.2% and Japanese 6.7% [...]) At the primary level, German is the third most frequently taught language, studied by 6.7% of LOTE students (Italian 54%, Japanese 10.7%).

In 1991, there were 3,862 primary and 15,126 secondary students of German in Victorian government schools. In independent schools, the figures for the same year show 2,047 primary and 6,362 secondary students of German. For Catholic schools, there is no number of students available for 1991, but the year before these schools had 24 primary and 1,441 secondary students of German. As far as the tertiary sector is concerned, in 1992 the two Victorian universities offering German as a subject, the University of Melbourne and Monash University, had around 300 students of German each (cf. Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne, 1994, pp. 20-21).⁶

Over the last years, student numbers have risen considerably at all three levels: In 1996, 219,433 primary students at Victorian government primary schools were studying a LOTE (72.8% of the 301,469.1 "equivalent full-time primary students at Victorian government primary schools", cf. Department of Education, 1997, p. 11). 20,686 primary students (9.4% of all primary LOTE students) were enrolled in German classes.⁷ The government institution of the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) reported a total of 35 primary enrolments in German classes (Department of Education, 1997, p. 91). The contact time in primary language learning varies considerably. In 1996,

[c]ontent-based programs, where a significant portion of the curriculum is offered in the LOTE [for German, this is the case in model schools such as Bayswater South Primary in Melbourne, HLK], had the highest average contact time of 683 minutes per week. The overall average contact time was 102 minutes per week (Department of Education, 1997, p. 11).

The number of students studying a LOTE in government secondary colleges was 111,480 in 1996 (53.1% of all students at these colleges). However, the average of 53.1% hides a dramatic decline from Year 7 (where 99.0% of all students studied a LOTE) to Year 12 (where only 6.2% of all students studied a LOTE, cf. Department of Education, 1997, p. 43). In 1996, a LOTE was compulsory in 97% of Victorian government secondary schools at Year 7 level, in 91% at Year 8 level, in 43% at Year 9 level and in 22% at Year 10 level (Department of Education, 1997, p. 92). German, with a total of government secondary schools enrolments of 18,784 (and an additional 435 secondary VSL enrolments) was the fifth most popular language in Victorian government secondary colleges in 1996.⁸ In 1996,

[t]he average weekly contact time for all languages was 137 minutes at year 7, rising to 230 minutes at Year 12. The time allocated to LOTE varied between schools, languages and program types (Department of Education, 1997, p. 14).

The figures for 1997, kindly provided by Ms. Anne Eckstein from the Victorian Department of Education in a telephone conversation, have again improved. In 1997, there were 23,032 students of German in government primary schools and 33 primary students of German at the VSL (out of a total of 302,508.8 "equivalent full-time primary students" in Victorian government primary schools). The figures for government secondary colleges show 18,261 students in 1997, plus 428 students at VSL secondary level (out of a total of 211,194 "equivalent full-time secondary students" in Victorian government secondary colleges). Recent figures for independent schools in Victoria are not available, but Ms. Judy Oaks from the Association of Independent Schools in Victoria was so kind to provide the figures for 1995, when 2,913 primary students and 6,210 secondary students were enrolled in German classes in independent schools in Victoria.⁹

With the high enrolment numbers indicated, the teaching of German in Victorian schools proves to have sufficient numbers to warrant the status of a "key language" and particular attention of curriculum planners. The Association of German Teachers of Victoria is certainly the most active and best-organized German teachers' association in Australia and continues to

give excellent support to the large number of enthusiastic and dedicated German teachers in Victoria, who are the ultimate reason why German is so attractive to a large number of Victorian school students far beyond the German speaking communities. The curriculum planners, however, insist in applying the umbrella-category of "LOTE" for all languages taught in Victoria from Italian to Kurdish, and even for classical languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek, thus completely ignoring the very different and very particular curricular needs of each particular language, as it will be demonstrated below.

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As far as universities are concerned, due to the outstanding efforts of Victorian teachers of German, there is a large reservoir of highly motivated students interested in taking up or continuing German at tertiary level: The University of Melbourne (including the German section at Latrobe University which is administered by the Department of Germanic Studies and Russian of Melbourne University) has around 140 EFTSUs of German students, about the same number as Monash University. Applying the rule of thumb that one EFTSU equals approximately three students, one arrives at an estimated total number of 840 students presently studying German at Victorian universities.¹⁰ This is a rough sketch of the situation of German as a school and university subject in Victoria.

The importance officially assigned to language education seems to have remained unaffected by the recent dramatic decline of federal and state governments interest in education as a publicly funded activity. Fortunate as this may seem, the years of official enthusiasm with language education have so far failed to show impressive results in terms of student achievements, judging from my own Australian experience as a university lecturer and a VCE assessor for German as well as from a great number of discussions with fellow teachers of German at both school and university levels. There seems to be a discrepancy between the input of curricular frameworks and the actual results students show in their secondary school leaving exams. At first glance, and particularly to interested parties, it might seem convenient to blame the teachers for this. Certainly, Lichtenberg's famous aphorism does say that if the collision between a book and a head results in a hollow sound, it is not always the book that is to blame.¹¹ But this does not totally exclude cases where it might be well worth taking a closer look at the book, or in our case, at the official documents of language education policy. In the remaining three sections of this paper, the following arguments will be put forward to discussion:

- that the pseudo-technical term of LOTE, obviously designed to avoid the expression "foreign languages" which might be seen to discriminate against community languages, but at the same time retaining a sharp distinction between English and all the other ("also-ran"-) languages, creates more problems than it might solve;
- secondly, that the curricular framework for German does not seem to take into account the research and discussions that have been going on in the field of German as a Foreign Language for the last 20 years or so.¹² In the former Federal Republic of Germany, the academic discipline of German as a Foreign language (= Deutsch als Fremdsprache, DaF) was officially founded with the inauguration of the first chair of DaF at the

University of Munich in 1978 (founding professor was Harald Weinrich). In the former German Democratic Republic, DaF at that time already had a sound academic track record with the Herder Institute associated with the (then Karl-Marx-) University of Leipzig, employing such distinguished academic researchers and teachers as Annerose and Joachim Busch and Gerhard Helbig. But of course the academic discussion about DaF goes back way beyond the late seventies, and it has been continuing since in what seems to be a vital ongoing process of re-invention of our discipline. In what appears to be one of the symptoms of this process, Harald Weinrich's successor on the Munich chair of DaF, Konrad Ehlich manages to give a clear intertextual signal in the title of his 1994 essay (Ehlich, 1994, p. 3), alluding to the title of Weinrich's programmatic essay published 15 years before (Weinrich, 1979, p. 1) without mentioning his predecessor's name a single time in the whole text.

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Amongst many other topics discussed, the antagonism between what one might call a "communicative-pragmatic" and a "cognitive-systematic" approach to the teaching and learning of German as a Foreign Language (an antagonism which was often enough dramatised for ideological reasons, cf. Helbig, 1997, pp. 84-90 and 95-102) has always been a main theater of war in the -- at times quite entertaining -- polemics within the discipline. For the purpose of this paper, some early texts symptomatic for three related, but different exchanges of arguments about the importance of a cognitive approach to the teaching and learning of second and/or foreign languages might serve as evidence supporting the claim that the discussions actually go back some 20 years: Firstly, in the discussion about language teaching methodology in our discipline, the largely ideologically motivated dichotomy between "grammar", on the one hand, and "communication", on the other, coincided with both the rise of "kommunikative Kompetenz" as developed by the sociologist Jürgen Habermas in the early seventies (cf. Neuner, 1995, p. 186) and the struggle of pragmalinguistics to become the fundamental linguistic theory in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology. The polemical discourse in theoretical linguistics branded what was called "grammar" and "systemic linguistics" as outdated and obsolete, while in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology "communicative" didactics and methodology were presented as the emerging new force that would make all the previous methodologies, above all the "Grammatik-Übersetzungs-Methode", obsolete. While from an historical viewpoint it is perfectly well understandable that new subdisciplines and new methodologies have to make their predecessors and competitors look old-fashioned and obsolete in order to mainstream themselves, a seemingly clear-cut succession of language teaching didactics and methodologies after 1945 from the "Grammatik-Übersetzungs-Methode" via "Direkte Methode", "Audiolinguale Methode", "Vermittelnde Methoden", "Audiovisuelle Methoden" and "Kognitive Methoden", finally reaching the last word in methodology, the "Kommunikative Didaktik und Methodik" as suggested by Gerhard Neuner's historical outline (Neuner, 1995, 182-186), does neither reflect the ideological nature of academic development nor the fact that "older" methodologies are alive and kicking in language classrooms all over the world and well integrated in the day-to-day teaching of every sensible and sensitive language teacher. Of course, this was observed very early in the

discussion by such distinguished representatives of our discipline as Gerhard Helbig (cf. Helbig, 1972) and Harald Weinrich (cf. Weinrich, 1980, p. 36).

Secondly, the development of a theory of language acquisition and its use as a foundation of language teaching didactics and methodology led to two basically opposing assumptions that have been fighting each other since the early eighties so that one or the other would become the one guiding language acquisition hypothesis underlying all language teaching didactics and methodology (for the following, cf. Helbig, 1997, pp. 98-102 and Königs, 1995). On the one hand, the school of research in second language acquisition (*Zweitspracherwerbsforschung*, ZEF) set natural, unguided and unsupervised acquisition of language(s) absolute, considering it the "unmarkierter Fall", as opposed to the "abgeleiteter Fall" of learning in institutions (Klein, 1984, p. 31). According to a "strong claim", the implementation of ZEF in language teaching didactics and methodology means that all assumptions regarding guided learning in teaching institutions must be firmly based in ZEF-findings (cf. Wode, 1985). Guided language learning is even suspected to hinder rather than help the process of language acquisition (Felix, 1982, p. 220). In language teaching and methodology, this of course implies a strict rejection of cognitive approaches. *Sprachlehrforschung* (SLF), on the other hand, tried to build a new, integrated and interdisciplinary theory of guided foreign language learning in opposition to traditional didactics as well as to linguistics. The early to mid-eighties were the time of fierce battles between ZEF and SLF (cf. e.g. Bausch and Königs, 1983; Wode, 1985). In the meantime, a somewhat fragile ceasefire has been reached (cf. Helbig, 1997, pp. 101-102).

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The third theatre of war in the ideological battle between a "cognitive" and a "non-cognitive" approach to language teaching (which only at first glance seem mutually exclusive, cf. Heuer, 1995, p. 488) has been officially opened with the emergence of constructivism as a new underlying philosophy for teaching and learning (cf. Müller, 1996a and Müller, 1996b). Even if explicitly constructivist literature in the field only goes back to the late eighties (cf. Glasersfeld, 1987; Wolff, 1994), they take up the achievements of traditional research in cognition going back to Bartlett's experiments in the thirties and above all to *Gestalt*-psychological (Neisser), linguistic (Kintsch/van Dijk), psycho-linguistic (Hörmann) and frame-, script- and scenario-semantic (Fillmore) models of the seventies, all of which Müller (1996b, p. 72) calls "semikonstruktivistische Ansätze". In the mutual exchange between theoretical and applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, psychology and didactics, cognitive approaches to language teaching have been discussed in a "semi-constructivist" manner since the seventies (cf. List, 1995 and Schönflug, 1995). This might provide some evidence for the claim that the discussions I refer to go back twenty years or so.

- and thirdly, that it is vital for tertiary institutions teaching German in Australia to become more involved in the design of curricular frameworks for German and in the training of German teachers.

The misery of categorization, or: What on earth is a LOTE?

In its 1984 *Report on a National Language Policy*, the federal Senate Standing Committee sensibly distinguishes between the majority language English and what it calls "non-English languages" or "languages other than English", using both expressions in a strictly descriptive and not in a terminological sense throughout the text. This becomes obvious by the alternative use of both expressions as well as by the lower-case initials they are written with. The official documents of the nineties, however, exclusively use the expression "Languages Other Than English" and its acronym LOTE as if they were self-explanatory terms, evident in the consistent use of upper-case initials, the acronym and the lack of any serious definition of the expression (at least in my reading so far). This terminological use seems to imitate the term "Community Languages other than English" and the acronym CLOTE, coined by Michael Clyne in the early eighties. In a context of language ecology in Australia, both Clyne's distinction between English and other Community Languages or CLOTEs, and the terminological use of the expression make perfect sense. Besides that, Clyne gives a serious working definition of the term which he introduces in his book *Multilingual Australia* (Clyne, 1985, p. 2). The pseudo-technical term of LOTE as a basic concept of language education policy, on the other hand, is not defined at all, and it refers to an umbrella-subject meant to cover not only community languages in Australia, but all languages except English, including classical languages such as Latin and Ancient Greek (Board of Studies, 1995, p. 9). At first glance, to divide the roughly four to five thousand different languages on our planet into English and Languages Other Than English -- even for education management purposes -- simply appears a bit silly, as if a zoologist tried to subsume lions, mackerels and dragonflies under the species of "Animals Other Than Kangaroos".

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The obvious nonsense, however, might just be a symptom of a deep-rooted and probably unconscious linguistic attitude which can be found in ill-considered linguistic thought: the impression that the world actually was meant to be expressed in one particular language -- and this tends to be one's own native language. This concept is deeply human and understandable: We do not really blame the ancient Greeks for calling all native speakers of languages other than Greek "barbarians", using the onomatopoeic word *barbaroi* which characterizes foreign languages as gibberish sounding like "brbrbr". Similarly, it is hardly anything but humorous for native speakers of languages other than French when Antoine de Rivarol, in his eighteenth-century essay on the universality of the French language that won him the prize of the Berlin Academy essay competition, maintains that whatever is not clear is not French, and that this absolutely perspicuous language is not only the language of the French but rather the human language *per se* (cf. Kretzenbacher, 1992, pp. 53-54). And even the most passionate native speaker of German should concede that Martin Heidegger's alleged statement that German and Ancient Greek are the only suitable languages for philosophy is equally absurd. In the context of language education, however, such attitudes still have some currency (cf. Kramsch, 1996, p. 6), and they may have two fatal consequences.

Firstly, of course, no language on earth except English has any linguistic feature that could be called "Englishness" or "non-Englishness", so two or more languages that are not English most certainly do not have anything in common simply because of that negative fact. This, however, is exactly what the category of Languages Other Than English, defined *ex negativo*,

seems to imply. Since there is a Victorian Curriculum and Standards Frameworks that applies to all LOTEs, you would expect to find differences taken into account, such as typological features of different languages, different levels of expected achievement for Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages, for languages with character-based vs. such with letter-based writing systems and so on. Unfortunately, few such distinctions are actually made. Comprising a large number of extremely different languages, the phantom category of LOTE generates a rather abstract and yet quite rigid framework that fails to do justice to any particular language.

Secondly, a language that is labelled as a LOTE is easily misconceived as a secondary system of signs as opposed to English as some sort of primary system. Basing the point of view firmly in the English language, the categorization of a language as a LOTE seems to support the reluctance of many learners to take the step from the outside to the inside of a foreign language, especially by reassuring students coming from a mainly monocultural and monolingual background in the subconscious attitude that foreign languages are various kinds of perverted, deficient Englishes. This makes a perception of foreign languages as semiotic systems in their own right much more difficult. A language as closely related to English as German runs a particular risk in this respect: German appears so similar to English in many ways that it is very easy to subconsciously mistake it as a kind of deficient English. I have previously called this the dangerous closeness of two cultures leading to the phenomenon of cultural interference (Kretzenbacher, 1990, pp. 32-33).

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The unfortunately coined acronym "LOTE", used as a pseudo-technical term, causes many more problems than it can possibly solve. It is neither universal (not even within anglophone countries: the American Association of Teachers of German uses "Foreign Languages" (FL) without any problems, cf. Byrnes, 1996), nor even unanimously accepted in Australia (cf. Campbell, 1994; Vale, 1997). The only advantage of the pseudo-technical term seems to be that it was coined for reasons of political correctness. Avoiding the term "Foreign Language" not only eliminates the difference between Foreign Language Learning and Second Language Acquisition (cf. Königs, 1995; Helbig, 1997a, pp. 98-102), it also implies that native speakers of German (or Latin, or Ancient Greek for that matter) are embraced as part of multicultural Victoria and not seen as "foreigners". Not that there is anything wrong with political correctness as long as one does not forget that it is just a post-modern expression for basic human decency.

The implications of the use of LOTE as a pseudo-technical term in Foreign Language Teaching, however, are at least twofold: firstly, the use of LOTE as a pseudo-technical term confuses two not completely unrelated, but still different problems -- the question whether you can have such a thing as a strictly monolingual multiculturalism, on the one hand, and general questions of language teaching, on the other hand. And secondly, nowhere in the documents is there any serious discussion as to what extent LOTE is an acceptable, if inadvertently undefined, term or just a catchphrase. For the ultimate test of this, we have to rely on Lewis Carroll's chief linguist Humpty Dumpty and his sound advice: "When *I* use a word, [...] it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less. [...] The question is,

[...] which is to be the master - that's all." (Carroll 1978, p. 274; for an application to political semantics cf. Kretzenbacher, 1994). If one avoids the terms "alte Leute" or "Gastarbeiter" in German, nothing is achieved if these groups continue to be treated as old, respectively foreign, human trash. The same is true for the seemingly politically correct addressing of non-Anglo-Celtic migrants in Australian goodwill vernacular as persons of "ethnic background" (often casually abbreviated to "ethnics") if they continue to be basically seen as what the Greeks called "barbarians".¹³ Equally, avoiding the term "Foreign Language" would not be more than a cheap illusionist trick if German continued to be treated as a foreign language -- and a very foreign language indeed -- in the very same documents that call it a LOTE. We will have to look and see whether this is so.

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What is a student supposed to learn in the subject "German"?

Rephrasing this question to: "What knowledge and skills in German would a university lecturer wish students of Germanic Studies at university to bring with them from school?", the answer is likely to be: "Apart from basic skills in communication, a cognitive awareness of the basic linguistic structures of German, some background in the cultural patterns that are characteristic of German speaking countries, especially an insight into the cultural value of language as a major factor and symptom of culture, and some experience in the positive culture shock of encountering literature from a different culture as the most complex linguistic expression of that culture". Unfortunately, nothing of all that is given any visible place in the school curriculum of German, apart from its rhetorical invocation in the introductory remarks (cf. Board of Studies 1994, pp. 5-6).

The suspicion that the Victorian curricular framework considers English as the exclusive place for language awareness and linguistic and cultural competence beyond the most basic skills is confirmed by the so-called "strands" into which the major content and processes within each key learning area are arranged (Board of Studies 1995, p. 2). English is organized into four strands: *Texts*, *Contextual understanding*, *Linguistic structures and features*, and *Strategies*. Those are basic factors of linguistic awareness and skills sensibly chosen.¹⁴ The three strands given for LOTE, on the other hand, are *Listening and speaking*, *Reading* and *Writing*. These traditional basic language skills are strands of a totally different quality based on a very simple idea of functioning in a foreign language rather than on a cognitive or an emotive approach to a new language. In terms of reflection of linguistic structures and features, teaching German could provide an excellent opportunity for cooperation with English, introducing grammatical concepts that are extremely relevant in German and other Indo-European languages but mostly irrelevant in English, such as case and syntactic roles.¹⁵ A cognitive approach to grammar, however, does not play any apparent part in the LOTE curricular framework or in the VCE German study design.

The reluctance to include any formal grammar in the teaching and learning of LOTEs disadvantages the cognitive types of learners among the students. This unwillingness may have something to do with the frustrating experience that grammatical tools which work well with English do not necessarily work equally well with other languages. In fact, it is simply a

question of choosing a suitable model of syntactic description for a given language. A model of description such as the analysis of immediate constituents, which was developed by Bloomfield and his school in and primarily for English, a language with a quite strict SVO-structure, is hardly able to cope with the characteristic German feature of syntactic bracketing. The syntactic theory of valence, on the other hand, developed by Lucien Tesnière and his successors, is able to recognize and mark the syntactic roles of lexemes within a sentence independently of their actual position within the sequence of a sentence. Therefore a grammatical model based on something like "Dependenzverbgrammatik" is much more adequate for teaching and learning German syntax in a cognitive way, and it has consequently found its way into textbooks of German as a Foreign Language decades ago.

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Further, the seemingly contradictory opposition between "grammar teaching" and the "communicative approach", heavily fought over in the seventies and still showing in the documents in question by their articulate silence about grammar, has been shown to be a particularly stubborn example of undialectical thinking. After some fifteen years of intensive discussion in the field, recent research tends to see both approaches as complementary elements of language teaching and learning (see Farenkia, 1996; Götze, 1996; Helbig, 1997b).

Certainly, a sentence-based grammatical description is not enough in foreign language learning. Rather, a framework of linguistic description should be chosen that does not take isolated parts of communication but whole communicative units as the basic data of description, be they called texts (such as in text linguistics) or discourses (such as in functional pragmatics). So it seems very encouraging at first glance that the concepts of *text-types* and *discourse forms* have entered the LOTE curriculum. But while in linguistics discourse forms or text-types are established by way of empirical analysis of given texts using a wide range of philological tools from the areas of text linguistics, stylistics and pragmatics, what the VCE study design LOTE German offers under the heading of "discourse forms (text-types)" (Board of Studies, 1994, p. 14) is nothing but a huge list of 95 quite randomly selected types of texts or discourses, including *autobiography*, *cheer/war cry*, *graph*, *horoscope*, *novel*, *receipt*, and *sticker*. Unfortunately, the list does not seem to take into account any specific cultural embedding of those random "discourse forms (text types)", in spite of the research in contrastive textology that has been going on in the last decades (see Pöckl, 1997). The list entry "letter (for example, business, literary, social, to the editor)", for example, simply does not take into account that writing a letter to the editor is a socially acceptable form of communication in anglophone countries, while in German-speaking areas it is often considered a standard form of communication for sociopaths. The additional requirement that "students should have experience of discourse forms (text-types) which [...] are culturally significant" (Board of Studies, 1994, p. 14) hardly offers much help in coping with the list other than reminding teachers that there are a lot of potential pitfalls hidden in it.

Another serious problem of this rather vague concept of text types and discourse forms is the tendency that *literary texts*, especially more complex ones, seem to disappear under this pile of heterogeneous linguistic material. Even if the VCE study design states that "students should have some receptive experience of written and audiovisual extended texts such as a novel,

play or film" (Board of Studies, 1994, p. 14), there seems to be a certain bias against dealing with something intellectually challenging like literature. Rather, the list invites teachers and learners alike to zap through a number of text types or discourse forms instead that seem to offer a low-effort approach such as, "catalogue, for example, *Neckermann, Quelle*", "game, for example *Skat, Krokodil*" or "notice, for example, sign on lawn *Hunde bitte fernhalten*", all three of which are considered to be "of particular cultural interest" in the LOTE German VCE study design (Board of Studies, 1994, p. 15).

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For the purpose of the linguistic description of a language as a set of communicative patterns, it is absolutely justified to renounce any hierarchy of discourse forms or text-types. For the purpose of exposing learners to linguistic elements of another culture, however, a choice of such elements **must** be made according to some hierarchy or other of text-types or discourse forms. By virtue of their linguistic complexity and cultural relevance, literary text-types or discourse forms are natural candidates for the higher ranks of a didactically motivated hierarchy of text-types and discourse forms - being an antidote to the inevitable danger of banality in classroom language use at the same time (cf. Kósa, Mummert and Kretzenbacher, 1994). The use of literature is not an elitist method of teaching a language. It has been clearly demonstrated often enough, for example by Rüdiger Krechel and Dietrich Krusche applying texts of "concrete poetry" (Krusche and Krechel, 1988), that literature has a place in language teaching right from the start, and with Roman Jakobson's adaptation of Karl Bühler's "Organon-Modell" from 1934 for the U.S. market (Jakobson, 1960), naming the poetic function amongst his six basic functions of language, a linguistic argument for the vital role of non-trivial literary texts in teaching a foreign language has indeed been around for quite some time.

The place of literature in foreign language teaching and learning, and particularly the question whether there should be something like a purpose-built literary canon, is still the field of many a brave battle. What the *Beirat Deutsch als Fremdsprache des Goethe-Instituts* (1992, p. 69) has stated for culture in Thesis 8 of their "25 Thesen zur Sprach- und Kulturvermittlung im Ausland" can be applied to literature as well -- if we accept literature as a symptom of culture, that is: "Kultur kann nicht ohne einen verbindlichen Kanon vermittelt werden. Sie darf nicht mit einem starren Kanon vermittelt werden." Anecdotal evidence for this came from reports of colleagues from other parts of the world that showed how students are able to relate to different literary texts according to their own environment and experiences: While re-migrant Turkish students who grew up in Germany seem to be particularly fond of Kafka, in Mali it is the *Nibelungenlied* of all literary texts that the students feel close to, given their own background in oral literature (cf. Kósa, Mummert and Kretzenbacher, 1994, p. 243). Young Australians, growing up in a society that they know is not willing to give many of them decent employment and thus a decent place within it, and learning that suicide is increasingly epidemic in their generation, might find Karl Philipp Moritz's *Anton Reiser* an amazingly contemporary piece of writing, even if it is almost as old as the first white settlement on Australian soil.

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Another chance of a specific approach to German in an Australian context, and a characteristic element of the cultural situation in the German speaking countries is the importance of regional linguistic varieties that make German, just like English, a pluricentric language (cf. Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne, 1994, p. 101). From their daily experience as well as from their media consumption, Australian students know that English does not consist of one standard variety and various deviations from this standard. The fact that the same is true for German demonstrates to the students that in learning German they are dealing with a living, developing, and regionally different language just like their own Australian English, rather than with the plastic surrogate of a language they may find in their textbooks. The Victorian curriculum planners, however, in spite of their knowledge of the pluricentric character of German, explicitly refuse to accept this as an opportunity, but rather adhere to the fiction of a standard variety which no German linguist would ever be able to define seriously. The *LOTE German VCE study design* (Board of Studies 1994, p. 9) states:

VCE German is standard, contemporary *Hochdeutsch*. While the value and place of regional variants of the standard language are recognised, competence in the syntactic and morphological structures of the standard language is expected for the VCE.¹⁶

However, since the supraregional and national groups of regional varieties **are** the standard for the native speakers of the five to ten linguistic mega-landscapes within the German-speaking area, what actually might be expected for the VCE is -- in a worst case scenario -- the regional (if not Australian) variety of the individual VCE German assessor.

The curricular documents for LOTE and LOTE German add some artificial flavour of recent discussions in linguistics and language teaching methodology by way of isolated catchwords such as *text-types* or *discourse forms* or the vague standard formula that "cultural appropriateness" is required in each assessment. Nevertheless, they seem to keep embracing the communicative methodology of the seventies, translating its basic concept of communicative competence into a very narrow understanding of linguistic functioning. This may seem a convenient common denominator for all LOTEs, but it appears hardly satisfactory in the case of any particular language. The teaching methodology of German as a Foreign Language has experienced a cognitive turn, a cultural and intercultural turn and a renaissance of literature in the classroom, all of which have not only been vividly discussed in the field during the eighties and nineties (cf. for example Wilss, 1992; for a more recent overview of linguistic skills taken as objectives of language teacher teaching, cf. Krumm, 1994), but are also reflected in a number of state-of-the-art textbooks such as Klett's *Sichtwechsel neu* or Langenscheidt's *Die Suche*.

The academic discipline of German as a Foreign Language that ideally should be in a symbiotic as well as synergetic relationship with day-to-day language teaching and learning, has been living through a kind of mid-life crisis after some twenty years of existence and a generational change among leading researchers. In many ways, the vigorous discussion that is going on in the field as a symptom of this crisis is not only highly illustrative for the sort of heated argumentation that distinguishes "teutonic" from "saxonic" academic culture (see Galtung, 1983), but it is also a review of the achievements of the discipline over the last two decades. Texts like Arbeitsgruppe Fremdsprachenerwerb Bielefeld (1996), Götze and Suchsland (1996), Henrici (1996), Königs (1996), and Helbig (1997a), if read

comprehensively, could be a veritable quarry for authors of a curricular framework that takes the particular language seriously -- as (if to a lesser degree) could be some recent studies in teaching methodology of German as a native language (cf. Ivo, 1997; Oomen-Welke, 1997).

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What business is it of ours? Or: the school-university interface

Unlike the cases of English and ESL, most philological university departments still seem too little involved in language teaching at the school level. The excellent work Professor Clyne and his team from Monash University have done in the Bayswater South Primary School German Bilingual Program as well as Professor Thomson's contributions as convener of the LOTE Key Learning Area Committee in the Victorian Board of Studies are encouraging steps, as well as the continuing willingness of Germanists to participate in the VCE. I doubt, however, that the situation described here is going to change without stronger efforts of German university departments to clearly and distinctly state their vital interest in German language education in schools.

There are three main reasons why I consider it necessary that university departments of German -- and particularly Victorian university departments, being the centre of Australian Germanistic culture -- should get more involved not only in contact with school teachers of German but also in the development of school curricula for German and in the training of future German teachers outside and beyond the traditional range of undergraduate studies of German.

- Firstly, what the curricular framework as well as the present structure of VCE German demand is definitely not a decent command of a living language, but rather behavioristic responses to very narrow tasks best done in what might best be called an EBGerP, an English Based German Pidgin. While the point system provides hardly any incentive for basic linguistic correctness, any original thought that has not been foreseen by the designers of the assessment tasks runs the risk of being penalized as an irrelevancy. This seems to put German teachers in an embarrassing *Catch 22*-situation: If they teach German as an instrument of expressing thoughts, their students are likely not to deliver the EBGerP required for the VCE German. If they teach EBGerP, however, the shock of actually having to work in German is postponed to Advanced German first-year at university level. Of course, seen from the tertiary side, the picture is quite different: The better prepared our future students pass their high school leaving exams, the more probable it is that we can use the undergraduate language classes to lift their language skills to a level adequate for philological studies. Also, it would greatly improve our seminars if our students arrived with a linguistic entrance level that would prevent them from panicking whenever a first-year seminar at post-VCE-German level -- and that means after at least 2 and up to 12 years of German at school -- threatens to be held in German. (Just imagine a tertiary student of physics refusing to use maths in his or her first year!)
- Secondly, even if the teaching profession is not a very attractive outlook for most of our students at the moment, a certain number of them will invariably end up doing a

Diploma of Education and entering a teaching career. Since the postgraduate diploma studies exclusively take place at the Faculties of Education, where the future teachers receive little enough specific training in the methodology of language teaching, let alone in the methodology of teaching a particular language like German (cf. Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne 1994, p. 49), the knowledge about specific teaching materials and teaching methods of German as a Foreign Language can hardly come from anywhere else but from the university departments of German.

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- And thirdly, a more effective -- and more attractive -- curricular framework for the teaching of German in schools may be a motivation for more students to continue with German up to VCE level and to choose German as a subject at the tertiary level. Considering the atmosphere of fierce competition between departments in universities with shrinking budgets, in the long run an increased supply of students may well help to keep German departments at Australian universities off the list of endangered species.

At all levels of language teaching, there should be an intensive feedback between teachers and researchers in the field. The subcommittee on secondary-tertiary transition of the Association of German Teachers of Victoria is definitely a step in the right direction, as well as the ongoing professional development offerings from the Goethe-Institute and several universities and the fact that the German language consultants are open to cooperation with German university departments. Wide fields of German teaching at school level as well as in teacher education do not use the expertise of tertiary educators of German to the extent that would be desirable.

It would be naive to deny that secondary teachers, tertiary teachers and education bureaucrats have at least partially different agendas. In the field of Intercultural Communication, we are also aware that some cultures (or subcultures) are less prepared to cope with criticism (even with constructive criticism) than others. However, best practice in language education should be the common core interest of all three groups. Judging from my very encouraging experiences in the co-operation with both the AGTV (Association of German Teachers of Victoria) and the Victorian Department of Education (DOE), I sympathize with -- but cannot completely share -- the bleak picture that a colleague of mine paints, commenting on a previous version of this paper in a letter to me:

Concerning the lack of involvement from the tertiary sector, I agree that it is vital if we are to raise the quality of language programmes and ensure that students who exit language programmes have a high competence in the language studied. However, the fact is that the participation of academics in linguistics and language departments is not welcomed by the LOTE administrators in the DOE. Although there is a formal forum in which some discussion takes place amongst representatives from the different educational sectors, critique is stifled and concerns about implementation of LOTE policies largely ignored. It is true that experts are invited to sit on panels; however, this reflects more of a political motivation than an education alone. Academics are involved when the DOE needs their stamp of approval [...]. Any evaluation which does not present a positive view of government policies and initiatives is ignored; in fact, entire

reports have been suppressed. I am not defending your colleagues in Departments of German, or in any other language department, but there are no avenues for genuine collaboration. You are no doubt aware that the secondary-tertiary interface is problematic in all curriculum areas. However, from my experience, the mutual distrust and suspicion of academics and teachers is more deeply ingrained in LOTE, no doubt in part due to the culture established by LOTE administrators.

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As far as I am concerned, I think that the Joint Victorian/German Standing Committee on Educational Cooperation, representing the Victorian Department of Education as well as the AGTV, the Goethe-Institute,¹⁷ the German Consulate General, the Association of German-Speaking Communities¹⁸ is a very good example of trustful cooperation, which will be particularly helpful in the regular discussions on secondary-tertiary transition that this committee will be taking up in the near future.

Last, but not least, university departments of German have to ask themselves how much emphasis they have put on being involved in the teaching of German in schools. Is the research and teaching profile of senior university German departments staff that of skilled mediators of the German language and the culture of the German speaking area as much as that of experts in some seemingly isolated and specialised fields? This is not to say that German studies at Australian universities should have an ancillary function to language teaching. If, however, Leal's (1991, p.139) observation that "to many academics language teaching remains the Cinderella of staff duties" were still valid today, such an attitude could turn out to be detrimental for the very status of German as an academic discipline in Australia. Surely, Australian Germanists could subscribe to less sober maxims than the motto which the Prussian Academy of Sciences chose in the 18th century: *Theoria cum praxi*. If, at the end of the day, our research volumes fail to give a sound repercussion in the heads of those who have to toil in the vineyards of school language teaching, should we not go back to Lichtenberg's crucial question (see note 11)?

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NOTES

1. Thoroughly revised version of a paper given at the 29th Congress of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association, University of Sydney, Feb. 10th - 14th, 1997. The present version is the result of many intensive discussions with a number of colleagues. I was happy to take many a useful advice on board. To avoid any misunderstanding, I would like to make it perfectly clear from the start that the criticism within this paper is directed solely towards the curricular documents allegedly intended to guide and assist teachers of German in Victoria, not towards the teachers themselves, a group of courageous and dedicated colleagues whom I highly respect and whose enthusiasm to teach German I admire. I am content to have learned that my impression of teachers left alone in the classroom with a huge responsibility and hardly anything more than official rhetoric to support them is shared by the Australian Language and Literacy Council, even if my choice of

words seems rather bland compared to theirs (cf. Australian Language and Literacy Council, 1996, pp. 180-181). [Zurück zum Text.](#)

2. More information on the quite sad situation in which German in Australia and particularly in Victoria found itself during the early nineties can be found in Wolf (1991), Clyne (1992) and Bickes (1993). For a more recent, if rather short, account showing some of the dramatic changes for the better, cf. Truckenbrodt, 1997. A more detailed study can be expected from A. Truckenbrodt's forthcoming article in the HSK volume *Handbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache*. [Zurück zum Text.](#)

3. The number of languages offered in government schools or government-controlled after-hours ethnic schools as of 1996: "Nineteen languages were taught in primary schools in 1996, 17 in secondary colleges and 41 through the Victorian School of Languages. The Distance Education section of the Victorian School of Languages provided 7 languages. Fifty-two languages were provided through after-hours ethnic schools." (Department of Education, 1997, p. 3). The Victorian School of Languages is a state government education agency that provides all students in government schools and many students in independent schools with the opportunity to study any of the 41 languages on offer up to Year 12 if their own school does not offer the particular language, either by Saturday classes or by distance education. Ethnic schools have mostly voluntary teachers without any formal qualification. [Zurück zum Text.](#)

4. The VCE (Victorian Certificate of Education) is the secondary school leaving exam in the state of Victoria. It should be noted that the VCE is neither a university entrance exam nor does indirectly indicate the tertiary entrance ranking (this is done by the TER; see note 5). From the viewpoint of a university lecturer, however, the VCE nevertheless looks very much like the pivot between secondary and tertiary education. [Zurück zum Text.](#)

5. Tertiary Entrance Rank, a number calculated from the VCE results and other (e.g. social) factors by a complicated formula and expressed as a percentage. The TER determines the choice of particular faculties at particular Victorian universities that a student has. Very prestigious faculties at prestigious "sandstone universities", say Medicine or Law at Melbourne University, will only accept students with a TER of more than 98 or even 99%, while other faculties at less renowned universities will accept students with a TER of 45%. [Zurück zum Text.](#)

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6. One of the problems with which the study done by Fernandez, Pauwels and Clyne (cf. 1994, p. 19) had to cope was that some universities provided student numbers while others used EFTSUs (Equivalent Full Time Student Units). Since almost all university students do at least two different subjects (within different departments) and since there is a certain percentage of part-time students, as a rule of thumb three EFTSUs equal one student (according to personal communication from professor Tony Stephens, Head of School of Languages, The University of Melbourne). Therefore, the number of around 300 students equals approximately 100 EFTSUs. [Zurück zum Text.](#)

7. The most popular language in Victorian government primary schools in 1996 was Italian with 66,104 students (30.1% of all LOTE students), very likely due at least partially to the large and culturally very active Italian community in Victoria. Asian languages such as Indonesian (57,798 students or 26.3%) and Japanese (48,205 students =22.0%) ranked second and third, reflecting Australia's geographical position and economic dependencies. German came fourth, followed by French (11,278 students = 5.1%). The fourteen other languages offered at Victorian government primary schools had less than 3% of all LOTE enrolments at these schools, from 5,639 students (2.6%) of Chinese (Mandarin) down to 15 students (0.01%) of Somali. These figures are taken from Department of Education, 1997, p. 86.

Zurück zum Text.

8. The most popular language at government secondary colleges in Victoria was French, traditionally a very highly valued foreign language in Victorian secondary education. It showed 26,314 enrolments in 1996. The other languages within the top five groups show no difference from the ranking in primary schools: Italian (25,070 students) came second, followed by Indonesian with 23,838 and Japanese with 20,757 students. Twelve other languages were taught at government secondary colleges; they all had considerably lower enrolments, from the important community languages Chinese (Mandarin) with 3,399 students, Modern Greek (2,154 students) and Vietnamese (1,615 students) down to Russian (21 students) and Auslan (Australian sign language, 16 students). The VSL offered all the languages mentioned above and besides them 22 other languages at secondary level, with enrolments from 578 students (Croatian) to one student (Kurdish). These figures are taken from Department of Education (1997, p. 83). Zurück zum Text.

9. Catholic schools, unlike Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian etc. schools, are not members of the Association of Independent Schools in Victoria. The Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese in Melbourne regretted that figures could not be given over the phone; however, the Reverend Tom Doyle, P.O. Box 3, East Melbourne, Victoria 3002, Australia (Fax +613 94159325) would be happy to provide the figures to seriously interested researchers. I was not able to contact Father Doyle in the short time I had to complete this article, but the number of students of German at Catholic schools is not very large anyway. Zurück zum Text.

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10. The number of around 280 German EFTSUs at Victorian universities in 1998 (equalling about 840 tertiary students) not only shows a considerable increase from the approximately 200 EFTSUs (600 tertiary students) in 1992 (Fernandez, Pauwels, and Clyne, 1994, pp. 20-21), but also compares favorably with the total of 840 German EFTSUs (equalling about 2,520 tertiary students) at all 21 Australian universities teaching German in 1996. This number is cited on page 471 of a very recent article (August, 1998) which carries the quite misleading title "Zur Situation der deutschen Sprache an australischen Hochschulen" (Schmidt, 1998), but actually does not give any more than information on the situation of German at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra. The quite small German program within the Modern Languages section of the ANU can hardly claim to represent "die deutsche Sprache an australischen Hochschulen". Quite clearly and undeniably, Victoria (followed by South Australia) is the center of German education within Australia, and even

more evidently, Melbourne with its two large and excellent German departments at Melbourne and Monash universities is the stronghold of German Studies at tertiary level in Australia, q.e.d. [Zurück zum Text](#).

11. "Wenn ein Buch und ein Kopf zusammenstoßen und es klingt hohl, ist das allemal im Buch?" (Lichtenberg, s. a., p. 291). [Zurück zum Text](#).

12. I have been asked by the editors of *ZIFU* to explain the claim that these discussions actually go back 20 years. This, of course, means that I have to add a somewhat lengthy excursus in the paratextual form of a note, something often considered to be typical for German academic writing, but actually quite frequent in all academic languages influenced by what Johann Galtung (1983) called the "teutonic" intellectual style (cf. Kretzenbacher, 1998, pp. 457-459). [Zurück zum Text](#).

13. The ambiguous quality of the term within the endless struggle for an Australian identity was shown very nicely during the recent debate whether Australia should become a republic and accordingly change its constitution, as reported in the Melbourne newspaper *The Age* from 7 February 1998, p. 6: "Debate was proceeding about whether Australia's multicultural makeup should be acknowledged in the Constitution, prompting deputy chairman [of the Constitutional Convention, HLK] Barry Jones to observe that 'in a sense we all are ethnic'. ATSIIC [Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Commission, HLK] chairman Gatjil Dherrkura was quickly on his feet: 'To your comment that we are all of ethnic origin, I'm not,' he declared." The use of *ethnic* to distinguish between 'us' and 'them' is all the more embarrassing since *ethnici* is the early Christian expression for "heathens", for example in Tertullian's *De resurrectione carnis*, around A.D. 208. Even if Latin has practically been abolished as a school subject in Victoria, someone might eventually find the quotation in John Updike (1986). [Zurück zum Text](#).

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14. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the sound intentions of the curricular framework actually filter through to the day-to-day teaching and learning of English in school. There is anecdotal evidence that students of German at Victorian universities have very little awareness of the linguistic structures and features of English, even if English is their native language. [Zurück zum Text](#).

15. The term "syntactic roles" refers to what Harald Weinrich calls "Handlungsrollen": "Die deutsche Gegenwartssprache kennt drei Handlungsrollen: (1) Subjekt (Kasusmarkierung: Nominativ) (2) Objekt (Kasusmarkierung: Akkusativ, 'Akkusativ-Objekt') (3) Partner (Kasusmarkierung: Dativ, 'Dativ-Objekt')" (Weinrich, 1993, p. 108). [Zurück zum Text](#).

16. The actual expectations of the VCE German in this respect amount to around 15% of the total points that a student can reach so that it is very difficult to fail the VCE on the grounds of lack of "competence in the syntactic and morphological structures of the standard language". [Zurück zum Text](#).

17. The Goethe-Institute Melbourne (covering not only the State of Victoria, but also the vast

area of South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia) has always been a reliable partner for both school and university teachers of German. The most recent development in the Goethe-Institute Melbourne, however, the reduction of the very helpful and often used Goethe-Institute library from around 10,000 volumes to a pitiful 1,000 volumes -- even if obviously commanded by a central bureaucracy in Munich which seems completely out of touch with the reality of a particular Goethe-Institute overseas -- is sending a devastating message of contempt to the centre of German education at school and university levels in the whole Australasian/South Pacific region. Zurück zum Text.

18. South Australia, rather than Victoria, has been the traditional centre of German settlement in Australia from the 19th century on. Nevertheless, the large number of very active German-speaking communities in Victoria (from the German-speaking Catholic and Lutheran parishes to the Austrian and Swiss Clubs) provide a generous and caring support to school and university students of German that can hardly be overestimated and that reaches far beyond the traditional areas of German settlement in the southeastern metropolitan area of Melbourne and in the Wimmera in northwestern Victoria where German immigrants have settled for around 150 years. Their members do definitely not deserve any such both extremely superficial and callously arrogant comment as the flippant paragraph by Gabriele Schmidt (1998, p. 475):

Deutschland 'down under' konfrontiert einen auch mit einem Deutschlandbild, das sehr fremd und unbekannt ist, aber dennoch existiert. Es gibt z. B. in Australien überall die Clubs der Ethnic Communities. Die meisten dieser Clubs sind in den fünfziger Jahren gegründet worden, als sehr viele EinwanderInnen [sic!] nach Australien kamen. Das Deutschlandbild, das dort vorzufinden ist, stammt exakt aus dieser Zeit, und manchmal kommt auch noch nationalsozialistisches Gedankengut durch.

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This is most probably completely wrong for Ms. Schmidt's area of experience, the Australian Capital Territory, which boasts lots of German-speaking diplomats but hardly any large German-speaking communities outside diplomatic circles. In any case it must be repudiated in the strongest possible terms for Victoria: The German or Austrian Clubs may not live up to the personal liking of Ms. Schmidt, but the imputation that they were breeding grounds for National Socialist ideas falls nothing short of calumny. Australia, unlike other overseas countries, has never been a safe haven for old Nazis or given any official or silent encouragement for Neonazis. Making an insensitive wholesale comment like this means not only to insult the highly respected German-speaking communities in Australia (which represent one of the largest non-Anglo-Celtic ethnic groups on this continent), but also the large number of Australians with a Jewish or Central, Eastern or South Eastern European background, many of whom are descendants of Nazi victims but nevertheless are prepared to live peacefully together with German-speaking Australians, and, last but not least, a considerable number of whom have studied or are studying German at Victorian schools or universities, and the German Departments of Monash and Melbourne Universities. Zurück zum Text.

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