ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER'S NAME</th>
<th>SCHOOL</th>
<th>LANGUAGE</th>
<th>YEAR LEVEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tania Christie</td>
<td>Schools of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE)</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Years 3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PO Box 455</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leederville WA 6903</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ph: (08) 9242 6129</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CONTEXT**

The students are all at SIDE, so they are all learning at a distance. They are usually based at a primary school or a district high school (DHS). My students are at a DHS.

Lessons are conducted twice a week for 30 minutes per lesson. Lessons are delivered via telematics (i.e. over the telephone, rarely now), via Centra (i.e. a live internet link up, common delivery mode for classes of less than 8 students) or via video conference (i.e. video link up, common delivery mode for classes of more than 8 students). Each lesson is delivered by a French teacher at SIDE, and has a supervising teacher at the school with the students.

Students are in their second year of learning French. This typically means year 4, but can range from years 3 to 5. For the data collected for this project, the students were in year 5.

As I work in a team of teachers, this unit of work will also be used by two other SIDE French teachers with their years 3 to 5 classes.

**AREA OF INVESTIGATION**

**What area of teaching, and why?** I chose to plan a unit of work for this investigation. I did so because I was already scheduled to review one of the “booklets” on La Coupe du Monde (the World Cup i.e. Soccer) that we had used for a unit of work in 2006. This unit covered countries, nationalities, flags, passport details and parts of the body. It seemed to me that this unit would lend itself very easily to my investigation, and would also be of benefit to my colleagues.

**What aspect of intercultural language and learning?** I changed the focus of the unit from La Coupe du Monde to La Francophonie (French speaking countries) My general aim for doing so was to make the students aware that there are in fact more than 40 countries in the world where French is used as the main or one of the main languages. I wanted them to realise that there is so much more to “French” than simply “France” or even our usual perceptions of common French stereotypes.

**How did this translate into planning & what changes were made?** In the past, when I have presented the topic of La Francophonie, I have not spent longer than a few lessons on it, and would usually present the list of pays francophones, show them on a world map, and then ask the students to research one of the countries to present on a poster. However, for this investigation, I decided to change the approach slightly to encourage the students to engage on a more personal level with the topic. I also wanted them to engage more in French than in English.

Instead of treating La Francophonie as a discrete topic, I decided to embed it in the whole unit whilst the students also learn about countries, nationalities, passport details, physical descriptions of people.
including body parts) and francophone people as well. We have still spent a few lessons looking at les pays francophones du monde (the French speaking countries of the world), and choosing a country to do a small amount of research into, but it has been done so that we can refer to it throughout the unit of work instead of simply to make a poster.

I also decided to conduct a short pre-test and a post-test in English so that I could see how much they already knew about the topic, and hopefully be able to measure how much they have learned as a result of completing the unit of work. In order to try to bring the topic to a more personal level for the students I have included the question “If you could visit a French speaking country, which one would you visit and why?” In the pre-test, I have asked this question in English. By the end of the unit, I hope to conduct an interview with each of the students, and ask this same question (among others) #1 in French. Of course, I only expect a simple answer at such an early stage of French learning! I anticipate their answer will take the structure: “Je voudrais aller à __________ parce que ____________.”   (I would like to go to __________ because ____________.)

#1 Full list of interview questions is attached at the end of this report.

**CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

**How was it presented in the classroom?** I started the unit in the same way that we start most of the units of work. The new booklets and homework booklets were distributed to the students and we walked through them together to get a feel for the new topic. I usually draw the students’ attention to useful pages in the booklet and allow them time to write their names on the booklets and ask any questions or make any comments they may have regarding the new topic. All this was done in the usual way.

As far as the students were concerned, the procedure was fairly familiar to them. The only difference that the students may have noticed, is that I did spend some time explaining my involvement in this research project, which they did not seem terribly interested in.

**What was changed in order to implement the investigation, and how was it different to usual?** I included a pre-test and post-test in the unit in order to endeavour to make a valid judgment about how much they had learnt as a result of completing the unit of work. This was something quite new for the students. They are accustomed to getting started on the revision tasks at the beginning of the book. There is also usually general open discussion. However, this time, instead of beginning the unit in the usual open discussion manner, I was keen to do the pre-test as soon as possible so as to gain a true indication of their pre-existing knowledge on the unit. I was therefore very keen to get down to work, with very little communication about the topic, without giving them the jitters about a “test”.

**How did the class react?** Initially, the students asked for help with the pre-test, because they wanted to “get the right answers”. I reassured them that I was trying to see what they already knew, and encouraged them to finish the pre-test before we started any discussion on the topic. Once they had finished the pre-test, they were almost bursting to discuss it!

**How will it proceed?** Once the students have spent the initial few sessions researching their chosen pays francophone, we will then move on to the more language based learning for the unit. Along the way, we will be looking at different pays francophones in the target language and using francophones celebres (famous French speaking people) to help learn the language content of the unit. Then at the end of the unit, the students will bring everything they have learned together in an interview in French.
### DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

**What data?** Initially, I used the pre-test and my observations as my baseline data. The post test will be used to measure any progress made. The interview at the end of the unit will be one of the assessments used to measure their progress in the target language.

**Student behaviour?** I used my own written observations as the data collected on the student behaviour.

**What happened when I collected data (from the pre-test)?** The students were surprised that I wanted them to submit their work to me so early in the unit, but they were very cooperative nonetheless. (I think that primary school students are more willing to cooperate and to more readily accept changes to the usual routine than are secondary students.)

**How did I analyse the data?** Prepared a breakdown of each question on the pre-test, so that the results could easily be compared to the post-test.

### FINDINGS

I discovered to my delight, that the students already had a rudimentary awareness of the fact that France was not the only French speaking nation in the world. I also was pleased to see that they were aware of the names of some of the other pays francophones apart from the obvious Canada. I also discovered that their knowledge might not be as precise as it appeared, as some of the students were happy to declare that Italy, England, Germany and China are also pays francophones!

**It was evident** that they had some pre-existing knowledge on the topic, but that there was definite scope for some learning to occur. The students also appeared to be keen to learn more, and to personally interact with the information presented.

**My observations:** The students seemed keen to engage in discussion about what it meant to be a pays francophone. When given the opportunity to discuss it freely in class, they were eager to "interact" with the information, offering suggestions like "We speak French, why can’t Australia be a pays francophone?" This type of general discussion continued to arise over the next few weeks, and included topics like what other languages are spoken in pays francophones and why, as well as what migrants bring to other countries including Australia. I vaguely had suspected and hoped that I might be able to lead the students in this direction, but I was surprised to see that they headed that way with no need for my encouragement.

One observation that brought a smile to my face was the way in which the students picked up on the word francophile. I was comparing myself (as a francophile) to someone who has lived in a pays francophone for a reasonable amount of time and / or speaks French like a native French speaker (a francophone). As soon as they knew what it meant, they spontaneously began to create their own descriptions of themselves. It started with “Je suis chocophile” and went through croissantophile, pommophile, Oranginophile and footophile. I continued the discussion in the office later on and discovered some caféophiles and many vinophiles. Interestingly, I had initially wanted to name the unit “Moi, je suis Francophile!” but I had decided not to as it seemed too open for ridicule by the students as it sounded too close to paedophile. I was prepared for a student to bring it up, but the students did not make the connection at all, so I was happy to leave it.

I also observed that the students easily gained confidence in their use of French. They were happy to refer to "un pays francophone" without the need to translate it into English. Likewise they were happy to refer to the countries by their French names, even if they were saying something in English.

With constant reference to a variety of pays francophones, over the course of the unit, and in the context of other language learning activities, the students seem to be gaining a more in depth and wider breadth of knowledge on the topic, than would have happened if they had simply done it as a "project" for a few lessons.
What did I make of the findings? I have concluded that my students are open, willing and even more motivated to approach their French studies in this way. When given the specific target language, they are happy to use it freely, even if they intermingle it with English. They seem to enjoy not only interacting *in* the target language, but also interacting *with* the target language itself.

Application to my classroom. It seems that I could continue with more teaching and learning activities of this nature. I can see that it will be beneficial to include some well structured opportunities for the students to interact in an intercultural manner in more, if not all of their units of work in their French studies.

I feel that as they seem to be gaining a more in depth knowledge of La Francophonie, there is the possibility that the students will be open to learning on more diverse topics down the track (eg: *l’influence africaine en France, les colonies ou le français dans les autres pays*.)

I expected (or rather had hoped!) the students would gain an understanding of La Francophonie, as well as be able to name a place that they would like to visit, and why, in French. Fortunately, this is happening.

I am surprised to see that the students did not pick up on possible negative connections of the word francophile to paedophile, and ridicule the work. Fortunately, they have turned out to be more mature than I gave them credit for. (Or is it possible that they do not know the word “paedophile”!)

I am also surprised that the students have not complained or balked at the thought of conducting the interview in French at the end of the unit. I was concerned about whether or not they had enough competence, and confidence in the target language to complete a meaningful task on the topic. Fortunately, so far my concerns are not shared by the students.

I did not expect the students to interact so readily with the learning activities. I had thought that I would have to lead them more.

Problems in my investigation design The only problem so far that I have come across in the design is that it took me far too long to create. I felt as if what I was asking the students was too vague, and so I kept working to bring it to something specific for them to learn, without simplifying the content to the extent that it was worthless as an intercultural learning activity. So, I kept modifying and refining until I was happy. I am hoping that in future I will be able to go through the design process much faster, otherwise the effort will be unsustainable.

Data collection I did collect the data that I intended, however as the students are still working on the unit, I have not actually finished collecting the data. Given the point that we are at in the unit, I have collected all the data that I had intended. Once again, I think it has gone according to plan due to the fact that I spent a great deal of time in refining the tasks to a simple “doable” state.

I have found this investigation extremely valuable in relation to intercultural language teaching and learning as it has been my starting point. I had heard of intercultural language teaching and learning and was very interested in it, but did not know where to start. As a result of this investigation, I have made a start and my students have benefited. In addition to that, my colleagues have also had some exposure to what I have done, so I am able to spread the knowledge.
DATA and exemplars

#1: The interview questions are attached at the end of the report.
#2: The Pre & Post-test paper is attached at the end of the report.
#3: A current Francophonie list is attached at the end of the report.

Data collected for Pre test: “Qu’est-ce que c’est la Francophonie”?
Year 5, 9 students

Question 1: What does « Francophonie » mean?
Model answer: “A country whose main language or one of its main languages is French.”
Correct answers = 4
Incorrect answers = 5 (of which 1 mentioned “country” and 1 mentioned “French”).
Interesting answer: “Something to do with a phone.”

Question 2: What does << Francophile>> mean?
Model answer: “A person who likes to speak French, or likes anything to do with French (ie. language, culture, countries).
Correct answers = 0
Incorrect answers = 9 (of which 2 stated that it was a “French speaking person”.)
Interesting answer: A French festival.

Question 3: Circle the countries below where French is the, or one of the, main languages that is spoken.
Model answer: La France, l’Italie, la Belgique, l’Angleterre, le Niger, la Nouvelle Zélande, l’Allemagne, le Maroc, la Chine, le Japon, l’Australie, l’Amérique
Correct answers = 2
Partly correct answers = 7

Breakdown:
la France = 9 (Hooray!)
la Belgique = 4
le Niger = 6
le Maroc = 6
l’Italie = 1
l’Angleterre (England) = 5
la Nouvelle Zélande = 0
l’Allemagne (Germany) = 2
la Chine = 1

Note: The countries were listed in French. So if the students did not understand what they were in English, I told them.
le Japon = 0
l'Australie = 0
l'Amérique = 0

**Question 4:** Name some other countries that you know of, where French is widely spoken.

Model Answer: See attached Francophonie list.

Number of students with 5 correct answers = 1
Number of students with 2 correct answers = 5
Number of students with 1 correct answer = 2 (of which I accepted 1 that stated “Africa”)
Number of students with no correct answers = 1

Correct answers supplied: Canada, Morocco, Madagascar, Vietnam, Egypt, Mauritius & Africa.
Incorrect answers supplied: nil.

**Question 5:** If you could visit a French speaking country, which one would you visit and why?

- “France, Egypt, Morocco, Madagascar.”
- “Canada because it has snow and lots of different animals like moose and stuff.”
- “France to see all the landmarks.”
- “France because we are already going there next year.”
- “Madagascar, I think it would be a nice place to visit.”
- “France, it has the Eiffel Tower.”
- “Le Maroc, because it sounds interesting.”
- “I don’t know.” X 2

In this question I was looking to try to engage the students, to sow the seed of a thought of actually visiting a **Pays Francophone**.

**Question 6:** What does a French person look like?

- “I think they look kind.”
- “I think they have lots of hair.”
- “They might be black or white, or wear a hat or not. You can’t tell sometimes.”
- “Anything”
- “No different to us.”
- “A normal person.”
- “The same as us, mostly.”
- “Don’t know” X 1 plus 1 X no answer

In this question I was looking to “debunk” any preconceived notions of what a stereo type “French speaking” person might look like, and to begin to open their thoughts to the possibility that they could look like anything given that there are more than 50 **Pays francophones**.
EVALUATION

Progress and value of the investigation. I feel happy with how the investigation unfolded. I was initially quite worried because in the beginning I felt as if I was grappling with vague ideas that seemed difficult to pin down and materialise.

Initially I had aspired to formally cover issues like migration to pays francophones and to Australia. But I eventually decided to simplify my expectations of the students quite significantly. Consequently, I feel that the students were very clear about what I was asking them to do, and as it was in bite-sized pieces, they coped well. I am very glad I approached it this way, yet also glad to have visited the other more complex ideas informally as the students asked about them.

From this point of view I have learned that a seemingly complex topic can be successfully covered even in a primary school class. The students have also benefited from having exposure to more enriching learning content.

Modifications or further development to the investigation. I am very much looking forward to my colleagues also teaching this unit in their classes. There will not be any major modifications made to the unit until we have all had the opportunity to run with it in our classrooms and then evaluate it together. We always find it productive to evaluate our units together before we prepare for the units to follow.

At this point, I cannot foresee how I would change the unit for future use, apart from changing the factual material in the unit to remain up to date. (e.g. the current state of la Francophonie, and participating countries, francophones célèbres.)

REFLECTION

I have been pleasantly surprised at my students’ responses to this investigation. I find it encouraging, and I am inspired to continue to embed intercultural aspects in all units of work that I prepare. I am also inspired to encourage my colleagues to do the same and feel fairly confident to offer them support to do so.

Throughout the whole investigation during the year, I keep returning to the same thought of the “quality of the end product”. Although I am currently teaching students from years pre-primary to 10 (with the bulk of them in years 4 to 7), each year I am involved in the TEE examination process at the end of the school year. Over the years of my involvement in the TEE examinations I have noticed that the students who achieve well in the exams are the ones who are highly competent the French language, of course, but who are also able to offer more in depth and personal responses to the questions asked of them. The successful students are able to draw comparisons between and evaluate their way of life and the “French” way(s) of life. In short, the successful candidates are also the interculturally competent candidates. So from this perspective, I have come to the conclusion that in order to provide our students with the maximum opportunities for success, we are obliged to be teach via an intercultural approach.
Attachment #1: Interview questions.

Tu es comment?

Qui sont tes amis?

Tu voudrais aller dans quel pays francophone (et pourquoi?)

Comment tu t'appelles?

Quel âge as-tu?

Quand es-tu né?

Où es-tu né?

Quelle est ta nationalité?

Quelle est ta profession?
Qu’est-ce que c’est “La Francophonie”?

1. What does « Francophonie » mean?

2. What does « Francophile » mean?

3. Circle the countries below where French is the, or one of the, main languages that is spoken.
   - la France
   - l’Italie
   - la Belgique
   - l’Angleterre
   - le Niger
   - la Nouvelle Zélande
   - l’Allemagne
   - le Maroc
   - la Chine
   - le Japon
   - l’Australie
   - l’Amérique

4. Name some other countries that you know of where French is widely spoken.

5. If you could visit a French speaking country, which one would you visit and why?

6. What does a French speaking person look like?

Nom: ____________________  École: ____________________
Pays Francophones: source: Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie


**Membres**

L’Organisation internationale de la Francophonie regroupe 55 États et gouvernements membres et 13 observateurs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Albanie</th>
<th>Croatie **</th>
<th>Maurice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andorre</td>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>Mauritanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arménie **</td>
<td>Dominique</td>
<td>Moldavie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autriche **</td>
<td>Egypte</td>
<td>Monaco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgique</td>
<td>Ex-République yougoslave de Macédoine</td>
<td>Mozambique **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bénin</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Niger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgarie</td>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Pologne **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Géorgie **</td>
<td>République Tchèque **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Ghana *</td>
<td>Roumanie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodge</td>
<td>Grèce</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroun</td>
<td>Guinée</td>
<td>Sainte-Lucie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Guinée Bissau</td>
<td>Sao Tomé et Principe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Nouveau-Brunswick</td>
<td>Guinée équatoriale</td>
<td>Sénégal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Québec</td>
<td>Haïti</td>
<td>Serbie **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cap-Vert</td>
<td>Hongrie **</td>
<td>Seychelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centrafricaine</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Slovaquie **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chypre *</td>
<td>Liban</td>
<td>Slovénie **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communauté française de Belgique</td>
<td>Lituanie **</td>
<td>Suisse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comores</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>Tchad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Togo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo RD</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>Tunisie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Côte d’Ivoire</td>
<td>Maroc</td>
<td>Ukraine **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Membres associés.
** Observateurs.