

ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVEL
Nick Hale	St Kevin's College Heyington Campus (Yrs. 7 & 8 + Yrs 10 - 12) a Catholic Christian Brothers school for boys from ELC to Yr.12 Toorak, Victoria	French	Year 7

CONTEXT

- **29 students** in a classroom originally designed to hold a maximum of 25 and with a bank of 30 lockers lining one wall
- all except two students were born in Australia (and most were born here in Melbourne) but their family cultural backgrounds reflect the very multicultural mix of the whole School's population; this particular class includes the following family backgrounds: Italian, Irish, Ukrainian, Maltese, Scottish, Welsh, French, Chinese, Sri Lankan, Croatia, Philippine, and German
- only five students reported that they encounter a language other than English in regular usage at home
- the languages they studied during their primary years were mainly Japanese and Italian; half the School's intake at Year 7 comes from our Junior School where Japanese is taught to a modest degree to all pupils at each year level from Prep to Grade 6
- the period allocation for French is **3 x 45 minute lessons per week** in a timetable common to all Year 7 students that also includes the same number of lessons of Japanese per week
- a well-developed examination culture in the School requires all staff teaching the same subject to follow closely a common program of work each semester which culminates in a one hour common examination at the conclusion of each semester
- This class is one of two Year 7 French classes that I teach this year. In 2007, I also have two Year 8 French classes, a Year 10 French class and a Year 12 French class. My other major responsibilities at SKC include duties associated with my additional roles as Head of the Languages Department, Assistant Head of House and Sports Coach

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

I wanted to experiment with **the application of the five principles of ILTL in everyday classroom situations** with a view to gaining a better grasp of their effectiveness in encouraging students to engage actively with the teacher, with the set course work and with each other during their first year of study of

French language and culture.

I planned to make audio-recordings of a number of lessons during which I would try to incorporate the five principles of ILTL into my teaching approach, especially **the key steps of noticing, comparing, reflecting and interacting**. I would then listen carefully to each recording, summarising pertinent information and observations in notes to be analysed and reflected upon later.

The main changes I made to my regular practice involved me making **more overtly conscious attempts to ask different sorts of questions** in order to elicit responses from the students that I hoped would reveal something of their emerging linguistic and cultural understandings and appreciation of difference.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Working within the confines of the set course material (*Ça Alors!* published by CIS Heinemann Languages), I followed my usual eclectic approach to teaching units of work, ensuring that the traditional macro communication skills and key grammatical constructions were being developed but **supplementing my questioning techniques by consciously incorporating the sorts of questions recommended in the ILTLP material**. I tried to formulate these questions in such a way as to prompt the students to think more deeply about the linguistic and cultural detail of the language they were learning to use in class.

The questions were also directed towards encouraging students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how languages operate as a system and to more readily recognise language patterns. Students were also asked to try to make connections with their knowledge of other languages and cultures they may have encountered or experienced previously.

Most of the students demonstrated a keen interest in discussing these things, frequently taking the discussion on interesting and very worthwhile tangents. They showed a real willingness to engage with different linguistic and cultural aspects relevant to the topics under consideration and to practise using their growing insights about the language in appropriate communicative contexts. They were prepared to take risks in front of their peers by posing thoughtful questions about the way the language functions and how it appears to impact on the culture.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

I was able to record (on audiocassette) **ten complete lessons** from late July until mid September. As I played back each recording, I took note of the sorts of questions I actually used during the course of each lesson. I also noted any significant questions and responses made by the students which offered some insight into the degree to which they had engaged with the material and/or discussion, especially in response to requests for them to **notice, compare, and reflect on various aspects of the language and culture and on what others had to say**. It was interesting to hear the way students interacted with each other, particularly as one question or response would tend to prompt another student to contribute as well.

The students were very much at ease with knowing that the lessons were being recorded. Even when I was roaming the room on occasions, helping individual students to complete a task, the conversation of those who happened to be seated nearest to the microphone revealed that they were usually engrossed with the task at hand, each seeking clarification from the other regarding the meaning of a word for example.

FINDINGS

- students appeared to enjoy the challenge posed by the sorts of questions with an ILTL focus
- they developed a good appreciation of the usefulness of pattern recognition in language learning
- they were keen to pose their own questions and to show that they could use the language appropriately when required
- they learned to listen more closely to each other in class

- they became more adept at spotting significant linguistic and cultural details
- their powers of concentration and willingness to participate in class developed significantly
- they demonstrated a real interest in France and the French way of life and how it differs from Australia and the Australian way of life
- they were comfortable to take a few risks with the production of language and with seeking help to understand better
- their linguistic skills and cultural knowledge improved steadily in both French and English
- they were able to make connections with prior linguistic and cultural knowledge pertaining to languages *other* than French and English
- they were able to generate their own creative methods of learning and memorising language
- they have gained greater insight into the workings of their native tongue
- they showed curiosity about different languages and cultures

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

These findings highlight the usefulness and effectiveness of the teaching approach used. Student responses and interactions demonstrated the sort of engagement I was looking for. I was hoping to use a wider range of specially formulated questions but frequently found myself sidetracked by student-generated questions that took us off on other tangents. The data was difficult and time-consuming to collate and analyse. I would like to have been able to record more lessons.

Given the nature of the findings listed above, there is no doubt in my mind that there is real value in adopting an ILTL approach in class.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

1. a copy of a 'personal profile' pro forma designed to ascertain student family and cultural background
2. some examples of comments and questions posed by the teacher in class
3. some examples of questions and responses made by students
4. facsimiles of two representative students' written reflections on their learning in French completed as a 'Learning Journal' task which students are familiar with because they do them in all their Year 7 subjects

EVALUATION

I think this investigation was worthwhile. I deliberately chose to work with the set course material mainly because of the constraints of a common examination at the end of the semester. I was pleased that there was sufficient material with which the students could interact.

The findings are encouraging. They confirm the value to be gained from my taking the time to carefully formulate questions with an ILTL focus, but I would like to have prepared a wider range of questions for students to tackle.

The students were enthusiastic to be involved in this project and were very cooperative.

I am keen to pursue this approach with all my other classes next year and shall share my new insights with the other members of the School's Languages Department.

REFLECTION

This investigation was very time-consuming but certainly worthwhile. It really helped me to gain a good grasp of the ILTL approach, which, I believe, has great potential to revolutionise language pedagogy in Australian schools. I thought the outcomes of my particular investigation were very positive. I feel that I have a much better understanding of the value of ILTL.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS 1

Personal profile pro forma

MY PERSONAL PROFILE

NAME _____

AGE _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____ PLACE OF BIRTH _____

RELIGION _____

SUBURB where I live _____

FAMILY BACKGROUND _____

NAMES & AGES of BROTHERS & SISTERS

PETS _____

LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN AT HOME & by whom

LANGUAGE(S) STUDIED AT PRIMARY SCHOOL & for how long

LANGUAGE(S) I study outside SKC

OVERSEAS COUNTRIES where I have lived & for how long

OVERSEAS COUNTRIES I have visited & for how long

MY PARTICULAR INTERESTS & PASSIONS (e.g. music, sport, hobby)

MY FAVORITE SUBJECT(S) at school & why _____

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS 2

Examples of comments & questions posed by teacher

- What did you find out that you didn't already know?
- What did you notice about her house?
- What strikes you about this castle?
- What's the implication of what she is saying there?
- How do you know which one we're talking about - let's compare.
- How is the question different?
- It's all about recognising patterns.
- You need to understand the whole context.
- We have changed perspective.
- What was odd about that number?
- Don't ignore the title - it gives you a lot of clues.
- They sound exactly the same.
- Where else have we met this word?
- Look for similarities.
- There are two ways of talking about...
- Notice how he uses *arrive* to mean 'coming'.
- Why did he say *s'il te plaît* rather than *s'il vous plaît*?
- Notice he uses the order form.
- Can you find the verb in that sentence?
- There is a connection between *laver* and *laverie*.
- What do you notice about the way she expresses the address?
- Well spotted!

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS 3

Examples of questions & responses from students

- How would you say...?
- Is there a feminine form?
- Are the lakes in France green?
- If it gets to a 100, does the pattern change?
- What's the *-eur* for?
- It's like a house in Richmond.
- That is a cool BBQ!
- Would it work if you did...?
- How do we know they haven't borrowed it from us?
- Why are the 'o' and the 'e' together? (as in *soeur*)
- How come it's *sa* and not *son*?
- I get it!
- Is there a way to know if you should use *faire* or *jouer*?
- I noticed something quite interesting...
- I like it!
- Is there a past and present tense?
- A thing under the house...a cellar.
- Like with pancakes - land on the cook's head.
- Is it *rue* for everything? (i.e. for all streets)
- Is there a word for 'average'?

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS 4

Two students' written reflections

LEARNING JOURNAL

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

The most interesting things I have learnt about French language and culture so far and the reasons why I have found them so interesting

FROM Student G:

One of the most interesting things I have learnt about French language is how similar it is to English. They both derive from Latin and I find many connections which are the same in both languages. Another thing I found interesting about French is the focus on masculinity and femininity. Almost every noun in the language has a masculine and feminine form. This makes the language even more diverse from English, making it more attractive to learn.

FROM Student J:

I have found learning the French language very interesting so far. The similarities between French, English and other European languages are also interesting because they can aid us in learning languages in the future. I enjoyed learning about the different culture in France such as the everyday life of the people, the geography of the actual land as learned in the research assignment, the history of France briefly, about the food in the form of crêpes, about the important monuments there and also the French play in Term 2. I found these so interesting because I enjoy learning about other cultures and their customs so that I can understand more about fellow humans and thus help ensure more racial unity and mutual kindness.