The grade 2 class that I conducted this investigation with established linked with pen pals in a grade 2 class at a Spanish-English bilingual school in Bariloche, Argentina earlier in the year. The students have been corresponding via e-mail, sending photos and basic information about one another. This class has a one hour LOTE lesson with me per week.

The focus of my investigation was to encourage students to see themselves within their own linguistic and cultural identity and to gain an insight into how, what they see as familiar can become strange when viewed from a different perspective.

I planned to do this through asking the students to make up a list of questions that they would like to ask their pen pals in Argentina. I hoped that the questions asked by the students would allow comparisons to be made between my students’ and the Argentinian students’ ways of life, culture, likes and dislikes, geography and environment. I planned only to have input into the questions asked by the students to assist with appropriate phrasing of the questions and translation into Spanish, to ensure that the Argentinian students and teacher understood the questions fully.

The Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning practices of Noticing, Comparing and Reflecting and the principles of Making Connections and Reflecting were to be included in my investigation.

I chose this area of investigation because it linked easily with the pen pal correspondence already happening and was a very meaningful area to investigate with this group of students at this point in time.

When planning units of work for my students, I try wherever possible, to incorporate an element of intercultural language learning. However, while planning for this investigation I was very aware of the practices and principles of Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning that I wanted to include, whereas normally I would not have any particular focus, other than exposing the students to differences in culture between Australia and the Spanish speaking countries.

The students were asked to brainstorm a number of questions that they wanted to ask their pen pals in Argentina. As each question was asked, I recorded it on a sheet of paper.

I had told them at the end of their previous lesson that we would be doing this so many of them had a question ready in their mind to put forward.
I allowed the students to ask their questions in English, as I knew that they didn’t have sufficient vocabulary in Spanish to ask the questions that they would probably want to ask. Normally I would encourage students to speak as much as possible in Spanish during LOTE lessons, but this activity was an exception. I asked them to say whatever words they knew in Spanish but not to worry if they couldn’t do that. Many of them tried to say some words in Spanish when posing their questions.

Once I had recorded the questions, I translated them into Spanish and then e-mailed the English and Spanish versions of the questions to the class teacher in Bariloche.

After receiving the answers, which were all in Spanish, I read them out to my students in Spanish and asked them to try to translate them as best they could into English to ensure that everyone understood the answers. Nothing was recorded it English; this activity was purely verbal as I didn’t want the students to focus on the English answers, but rather on the Spanish.

I then asked the students to look for similarities and differences between their pen pals’ way of life, culture, likes, dislikes, geography and environment and their own.

In the following lesson, I asked the students to choose either one similarity or one difference that they found interesting, illustrate it and make a caption for it in Spanish.

The students then sorted the illustrations and captions into two groups – Parecidos (Similarities) and Diferencias (Differences), and we then pasted them onto large sheets of paper to make posters.

At the end of the lesson, students shared their work with each other, reading out their captions and showing their illustrations.

I then asked the students if they thought that the Argentinian students would be surprised by any of their pictures and captions. A lot of discussion was generated by this question as the students suggested which of the similarities or differences would be most surprising to their pen pals.

I then took photos of the posters and e-mailed them to the teacher in Bariloche to share with her students.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

The students came up with some very interesting questions during the brainstorming session, which showed that they had been thinking about the task prior to the lesson.

They wanted to see and hear their questions translated into Spanish and wanted to know whether their pen pals would understand the English version of the questions or only the Spanish.

There was great excitement when the e-mail arrived with the answers to their questions and all students were extremely interested in the responses. Many exclamations of surprise were heard from students as each answer was read out and discussed. Many made a very good attempt at translating the answers into English and they were very proud of their ability to do this.

Everyone was keen to choose one similarity or difference to illustrate and make a caption for, in the following lesson and the speed with which they made their decisions indicated that they had been thinking about the responses to their questions between lessons.

The students sorted the pictures and captions into the two categories without any difficulty, indicating that they fully understood the task and had used the practices of Noticing, Comparing and Reflecting.

There was a lot of discussion between students about each other’s pictures and captions, with a lot of target language used to praise each other for their work.

No formal forms of recording, other than the students’ work and anecdotal notes about my observations of their responses, both oral and written, were used. Their oral and written responses clearly showed, over the three lessons, that they were using the practices of Noticing, Comparing and Reflecting.

FINDINGS

It was evident that all students were very engaged in all of the tasks as they held real meaning for them in their lives. They were actively engaged in their learning, thinking about what they wanted to say and
do, noticing what was said in the pen pals’ answers, comparing them to aspects of their own lives and reflecting on linguistic and cultural differences, questions of identity and pre-existing assumptions.

The responses made by the students to some of the answers, especially those that showed that something was done very differently by children in Bariloche to how they themselves would do it, indicated that they had gained an insight into how what they see as familiar can become strange when viewed from a different perspective.

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

I was very pleased with the results of my findings as I felt that the students had achieved what I had hoped they would when planning this investigation. The activities carried out over the three lessons were quite simple but very effective in helping students gain the understandings, which were the focus of my planning.

The findings have encouraged me to make a conscious effort to include practices and principles of Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning when planning other units of works and individual lessons.

I was surprised how well the students were able to compare the culture, way of life, likes and dislikes, geography and environment of their pen pals in Bariloche and their own, and state whether a particular aspect was similar or different to something in their lives.

I didn’t imagine, when planning the investigation, that they would be able, at the age of 7 or 8, to reflect so well on the information received and draw conclusions so well.

I expected them all to engage with their learning over the three lessons as they are all very interested in anything to do with their pen pals, but the levels of engagement were higher than I had expected and the understandings set out in the focus of my investigation, were clearly demonstrated by their oral and written responses.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

Attachments:

- Five photos showing the posters made by the students to show the similarities (parecidos) and differences (diferencias) between their own and the Argentinian students’ ways of life, culture, likes and dislikes, geography and environment
- A list of the questions posed by my students (in English and Spanish) and the answers given by their pen pals in Argentina (in Spanish)
- My planning document for the three lessons

EVALUATION

I felt that my investigation went very well. I found it very valuable as a good starting point for thinking about planning and teaching a series of lessons that incorporated some of the ILTLP principles and practices.

I felt that it was also valuable for my students as a way of getting them to develop the practices of Noticing, Comparing and Reflecting in an area of particular interest to them, namely communication with their pen pals in Argentina.

The investigation could have been more in depth, adding other activities to it to develop further the ILTLP principles and practices but, at this time, I felt that it served my needs and the needs of my students well.

I will use what I have learnt through this investigation when planning future units of work, ensuring that the ILTLP principles and practices are included in all units of work.

REFLECTION
I felt overall, this investigation was an interesting and fairly simple way to get me to come to an understanding of the ILTLP principles and practices.

I chose a fairly simple investigation which could be carried out over a short period of time so that the whole process did not become too overwhelming and demand too much of my time and I was pleased with the outcomes.

I enjoyed teaching the lessons very much and observing the responses from my students.

The whole process was very worthwhile and I have enjoyed my involvement in it.

Attachment 1

Questions for our pen pals in Bariloche

1. What types of food do you usually eat for: a) breakfast  
   b) lunch  
   c) dinner

2. Do you have any pets in your classroom?
3. What types of animals do you have for pets at home?
4. What kinds of wild animals live near you?
5. Do you have swimming lessons?
6. What school subjects do you have at your school?
7. What are your favourite school subjects?
8. Does your family have a car?
9. Do you have a bike?
10. How do you travel to school – walk, by car, by bus or ride a bike?
11. What is your favourite colour?
12. Do people in Argentina wear jewellery and makeup?

13. Do you have a big/medium or small house?
14. What is your house made of?
15. Do you have cafes where you live?
16. Is it hilly or flat where you live?
17. Is Argentina a poor country?
18. How many people are in your family?
19. What are their names?
20. What number can you count up to in English?
21. What excursions have you been on with your class/teacher?
22. Where do you go for your holidays?
Preguntas para nuestros pen pals en Bariloche

1. Qué tipos de comida comen ustedes generalmente para:
   a) desayuno  b) almuerzo  c) cena

Nosotros comemos carne, generalmente de vaca, pescados, frutas y verduras. El plato preferido de la mayoría de nosotros es milanesas con papas fritas. Mmm, ¡son riquísimas! Además comemos frutas y verduras, como tomate, lechuga, palta, cebolla, etc. Desayunamos tostadas con mermelada y a la hora del te comemos lo mismo o galletitas dulces o torta. Para tomar con el desayuno o la merienda, nos gusta la chocolatada o el café con leche.

2. ¿Tienen ustedes cualquier animal en su sala de clase?

No, por ahora no tenemos ningún animal, pero queremos tener un pajarito!!!

3. ¿Qué tipos de animales tienen ustedes en sus casas?

En casa generalmente tenemos perros, gatos y hamsters. Algunos de nosotros también tenemos conejos y caballos.

4. ¿Qué tipos de animales salvajes viven cerca de ustedes?

Hay muchas aves diferentes, como las bandurrias, el rayadito y también tenemos el cóndor. Entre los mamíferos hay ciervos, huemules, ovejas, vacas y caballos. También tenemos peces, el más conocido se llama trucha.

5. ¿Tienen ustedes clases de nadar?

No tenemos clases de natación en la escuela, pero casi todos vamos a nadar al club fuera del horario de clases, también practicamos otros deportes como ski, caminatas, andar a caballo, escalada, bicicleta y hockey.

6. ¿Cuáles asignaturas hay en su escuela?

En la escuela aprendemos Ciencias Naturales, Ciencias Sociales, Matemáticas, Lengua, Literatura, Música, Arte y Educación Física. A la tarde tenemos 4 horas de inglés y las asignaturas son: Literature, Social Skills, Maths, Writing and Listening.

7. ¿Cuáles son sus asignaturas favoritas?

Todos tenemos diferentes gustos pero si tenemos que elegir dos asignaturas, votamos por Literatura y Arte

8. ¿Tienen sus familias un auto?

Sí, todas nuestras familias tienen auto, en especial camionetas 4 x 4 porque Bariloche es muy montañoso y necesitan fuerza para trepar.

9. ¿Tienen ustedes un bici?

Sí!!!! Todos tenemos bici y es una de nuestras actividades favoritas. Cada vez que festejamos un cumpleaños en la invitación dice: Trae tu bici. Es infaltable en bariloche.
10. ¿Cómo van ustedes a la escuela - caminar, por auto, por autobús o montar en bici?
Depende de la distancia que debemos recorrer pro la mayoría va en auto.

11. ¿Cuáles son sus colores favoritos?
Todos preferimos colores diferentes. A los varones nos gusta el azul, el rojo y el verde. A las nenas nos gusta el rosa, el celeste, el lila y el violeta.

12. ¿Usa la gente en Argentina joyería y maquillaje?
Las mujeres se maquillan, en especial si trabajan en oficinas, pero en Bariloche no es muy común porque es una ciudad con otros intereses. Aquí la gente disfruta de la naturaleza y no se interesa tanto por el maquillaje ni las joyas.

13. ¿Tienen ustedes casas grandes, medias o pequeñas?
En nuestro grado casi todas las casas son medianas pero tienen parques muuyyyyy grandes!!

14. ¿De cuáles materiales son sus casas?
Aquí las casas son de materiales de Bariloche: madera y piedra pero en la mayor parte del país las casas son de cemento bien duro.

15. ¿Hay cafés donde ustedes viven?
Sí, aquí hay muchos cafés y restaurantes. Bariloche es un lugar turístico y a los argentinos y extranjeros que nos visitan les gusta comer bien. Y les encanta el chocolate, por eso hay muchas chocolaterías.

16. ¿Es montañoso o plano donde ustedes viven?
Bariloche es montañoso. Estamos muy cerca de la Cordillera de los Andes que es el límite que nos separa de Chile, nuestro país vecino.

17. ¿Es Argentina un país pobre?
Sí, lamentablemente nuestra economía no está bien. Muchos de nuestros gobernantes trabajaron mal durante muchísimos años y es muy difícil para nosotros salir adelante. Pero hay mucha gente que desea salir adelante y trabajamos para ello.

18. ¿Cuántas personas hay en sus familias?
La mayoría de nosotros tenemos familias de 4 o 5 personas en total. Mamá, papá y 2 o 3 hermanos. También tenemos abuelos, tíos y primos, generalmente las familias argentinas son numerosas y les encanta estar juntos por lo que es habitual juntarse los fines de semana para comer nuestra especialidad, el asado o pasta.

19. ¿Cuáles son sus nombres?
Las nenas somos: Cami, Cami, Cami (somos 3 Camis!), Juana, Florencia, Vicky y Abril. Los varones somos: Juan Cruz, Uriel, Tomás, Rodrigo, Matías y Tadeo.
20. ¿Hasta cuál número puedan ustedes contar en inglés?
Contamos hasta el 100 pero sabemos escribir con letras hasta el 20!

21. ¿Cuáles excursiones tuvieron ustedes con su maestra?
Nos ganamos un paseo al bosque porque fuimos los estudiantes que más hablamos en inglés entre nosotros y con todas las maestras del colegio y hace dos semanas fuimos a la radio de Bariloche y hablamos en el programa. Estuvo buenísimo!!!

22. ¿Adónde van ustedes en sus vacaciones?
La mayoría de nosotros va a la playa, muchos preferimos Brazil porque aquí hace mucho frío la mayor parte del año y queremos sentir calor!!!!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Vocabulary</th>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | • Brainstorm questions for pen pals                                       | • la pregunta                | • VELS Level 2 – Demonstrate the general characteristics of translating in specific activities | The students had lots of questions that they wanted to ask their pen pals.  
Many attempted to say some words in Spanish. |
|        | • Record on paper and translate into Spanish                              | • la respuesta               |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • ¿Qué….?                                                                 | • ¿Cuál ....?                |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • ¿Cuántos….?                                                             | • ¿Adónde ....?             |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • la comida                                                                | • los animals                |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • las asignaturas                                                          | • el auto                    |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • la bici(cicleta)                                                         | • la casa                    |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • pobre                                                                    | • el parecido                |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • la diferencia                                                            | • la comida                  |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Tienen …….                                                              | • Tenemos                   |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Hay …….                                                                 | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
| 2      | • Read out answers received to questions                                   | • los animals                | • VELS Level 2 – Demonstrate the general characteristics of translating in specific activities | The students were very excited to get the answers to their questions.  
They were able to translate approximately a large part of many of the answers.  
Students were able to compare the lives of their pen pals with their own and generate a list of similarities and differences. They were most surprised that children are invited to take their bikes to birthday parties. This generated much discussion. |
|        | • Students verbally translate them into English                           | • las asignaturas            |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Compare pen pals’ way of life, culture, likes and dislikes, geography and environment with own | • el auto                    |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Reflect on similarities and differences                                   | • la bici(cicleta)           |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Students choose a similarity or difference and illustrate it              | • la casa                    |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Write a caption for picture                                              | • pobre                      |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Sort pictures and captions and glue on to posters, “Parecidos” and “Diferencias” | • el parecido                |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Share work with others                                                   | • la diferencia              |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Discuss which similarities or differences would be most surprising for the pen pals | • la comida                  |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Tienen …….                                                              | • Tenemos                   |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Hay …….                                                                 | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Write words/letters in context and in modelled sentences                 | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Identify two or more places, features, famous buildings, landmarks or cultural practices in another society, and describe some aspect of these in simple sentences in Spanish | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • ILTLP Practice –                                                            | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Noticing –What do your pen pals like/dislike? What can you see/do in Bariloche? | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Comparing – What is different/similar about life in Bariloche and here?  | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
|        | • Reflecting – What differences/similarities surprised you?                | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
| 3      | • Students were all very engaged with the task of illustrating and writing a caption for a similarity or difference that was of particular interest to them. They were keen to show others their work. Some interesting discussion was held about what similarities or differences would be most surprising for their pen pals. | • Hay                       |                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
Diferencias!

Hay condores.

Traen sus lúchis a las fiestas.

Argentina es un país pobre.
Hay ciervos

Hay casas de madera y piedra

Hay zorros indígenas.
¿Cuál es tu chocolate favorito?

Mi mamá hace heladerías y heladitos.

Tienen hamsters en sus casas.