



Australian Government

**Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations**

Teaching and Learning Languages: A Guide

Practice example

Language and culture connections



Research Centre for
**Languages
and Cultures**

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

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Introduction to examples

Collected here are examples of teachers' work. These are drawn from teacher practice and are included here to exemplify aspects of teaching, learning and assessing languages, as discussed in the *Guide*. Teachers were invited to share their planning and programming documents and members of the project team worked with them to further develop aspects of their work.

Programs

The collection of programs includes primary, middle and senior secondary long and short-term programs. These contain annotations designed to point out specific points of interest for you to consider in your reading of them. At the end of each program you will find a commentary that describes how the program exemplifies selected sections of the *Guide*.

A selection of teachers' work

This is a selection of programs and parts of programs, plans for classroom teaching, planned assessment tasks, descriptions of the teaching and learning contexts, investigations and evaluations of practice, and reflections on current practices. It shows teachers engaged in professional thinking, planning, reassessing, and evaluating what they teach, how they teach and who they teach.

About the examples

- These examples of teachers' planning, practice and reflection are provided for you to examine, consider and perhaps use in expanding your own understanding of language teaching and learning. We know that teachers learn best from other teachers and so we encourage you to look across the set of examples in all languages rather than just the language(s) you teach.
- The examples of teachers' work included here belong to individual teachers and are taught in a particular context, which means that you will not find models that you can instantly adopt and teach. Rather, you will find ideas about teaching and learning that you can use by adapting and reworking them to produce programs and classroom teaching, learning and assessment practices that you can use in your own context.
- The examples of teachers' work are not included here because they constitute 'best practice' or are exemplars of definitive programs for languages teaching and learning. You will find some outstanding approaches to planning and teaching that advance our understanding of how to make languages teaching and learning a rich and effective learning experience for students. You will also find teachers' honest reflections and evaluations of their pedagogies, questioning what they do and rethinking what they will do.
- The examples of teachers' work may include some pedagogies of which you may be critical. However, you will also find professional educators striving to make sense of their work with students, language teaching, and language learning.

Example	Language and culture connections
Language	French
Level	Primary
Teacher	Judith Bainbridge (Victoria) This example shows a teacher's understanding of her students' diverse language and cultural background; their <i>intraculture</i> , and how they can be activated to increase the depth of the connections made between the students' own language and cultural experiences and knowledge when learning French.

<p>Language, culture and learning What is language? What is culture? Understanding learning Understanding language learning Intercultural language learning</p>	<p>This series of lessons and the teacher's reflections are based on the idea that language is more than switching between codes and involves social practices of interpreting and making meaning. The teacher reflected that the students' own understanding of language and culture involves an understanding of context. The learners are given opportunities to discuss and interpret text and engage with unfamiliar aspects of what for many of the students is a third language. This enables them to make connections between languages and cultures and create meaningful interpretations. The learners are positioned as active explorers rather than as passive recipients of knowledge. This emphasises the interrelatedness of language and culture and the importance of context in communication.</p>
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French Years 5/6

In this school 94% of the students have English as an additional language. The other 6% have English as a first language. None of the students have French as a first language. The focus of the investigation was to investigate the connections made between the student's own language/cultural experiences and knowledge when learning French. It investigated how this assists them in their understanding of the new language and culture.

A unit of work on 'The Family' was planned with the Grade 5/6 class. This unit investigated ways in which gender is indicated in the language. It explored the lives of two French families: one residing in the French countryside and the other in a French city to learn about the similarities or differences in values, and way of life between these families and then compared with the children's own families. The language focus was on names of family members, aunt, uncle, cousin etc. and explored similarities to and differences from their own first language.

Lesson 1

Purpose

- To familiarise the students with aspects of French culture and way of life and two different environments in which French families live; city and country. This would give them some understanding of the context in which French was spoken.
1. We looked at a video *Families of France* from the series *Families of the World*. ISBN 1-888194-40-5.

Questions:

- What is the same/different in the video compared to our own families or school?
- Are there similarities/differences between France and Australia? (Climate, festivals, etc.)

The children were observed and any comments they made to each other about the video were written down. Particular notice was taken of any comparisons or observations made about the language itself.

2. Discussion about the similarities/differences was recorded.
3. Written work. The children answer the true/false questions. 'Some things we've learned about France.' *Families of France: Teacher's Guide*, PAGE 12.

Teacher's comments on Lesson 1

Questionnaire (Lesson 1): The children were confused by the statement 'Very few French use technology.' I suspect this is because the verbal statement in the video: 'France is a very technologically advanced country' was not supported by visual information. (The families in the video didn't watch TV or play computer or video games, and did their homework without the use of technology.) This indicated to me that the use of visual material to support language is very important if meaning is to be understood.

Lesson 4

Purpose

- To revise the names of members of the family.
 - To explore gender indicators with other words in French.
 - Discuss how the French are very particular about using the language correctly. How is this related to French culture?
1. Read the story '*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge*'.

2. Written activity. List the names of the characters, looking at whether each is *Le* or *La*. Also list the names in English and any other language you know.
3. Is there any gender indication in these languages? Are there any similarities with French? Why do you think these similarities happen?
4. Talk about the confusion that occurred when the children first saw the video when they could not work out whether the child was a boy or a girl. What information influenced your decision? Would this problem occur in other cultures?

Teacher's Comments on Lesson 4

The teacher wrote notes after the lesson as a reminder of what was said during the class discussion.

Question by a student: 'Why is it *Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* when Little Red Riding Hood is a girl?'

The Spanish and Italian-speaking children realised that their languages had similar gender markers and came to the conclusion that it was because France, Spain and Italy were close to each other geographically. The Vietnamese children said, 'Vietnamese has little marks above the letters too, just like French, but they indicate something different.'

The children commented on how some words are similar to English, Spanish and Italian words and so are easier to guess, but they realised that words in Chinese or Vietnamese did not have the same similarities. There was a lot of discussion as to why this was so.

Lesson 5

Purpose

- To revise the names of family members and the relationships between them.
 - To be able to use these names in written sentences.
 - Discuss any new gender indicators (*M* and *Mme*). Are male and female roles more defined in some countries than in others?
1. Look at the drawings in the family tree 'La Famille.', *S'il Vous Plait*. Prim-Ed Publishing page 24. Identify each family member and how they are related to the other family members.
 2. Written work.
 3. Read your sentences to the person next to you. Translate the sentences into English. Work out how gender is indicated in English. Is it different in your home language?
 4. Discuss the findings as a class.

Teacher's Comments on Lesson 5

The discussion in this lesson was very interesting.

One student asked, 'How do we know who is the son and daughter, and who is the son-in-law and daughter-in-law?'

'Oh, that's easy!' says another student. 'The son has the same surname as the parents.'

'No! Not necessarily,' chorused the Chinese students, 'We don't do that.'

'Which way is it done in France?'

The discussion became a look at how traditions and ways of doing things can influence language, and how not knowing the cultural rules can cause confusion in meaning. We recalled the confusion the students experienced when watching the video and not knowing whether the child was a boy or a girl. What caused this? Answers included, not knowing whether a name was a girl's or boy's name

because it is not used in our language. Dress, hair length and games played were other indicators. Knowing the role a boy/girl was supposed to play in that culture was important too.

Teacher's Findings

Because these children come from a wide variety of different cultures, they were less likely to accept generalisations about culture. They realised that the families in the video (Lesson 1) were only an example of that particular kind of family and that other country and city families in France may have different lifestyles, just as families in their own neighbourhood have different lifestyles and cultural backgrounds.

Questionnaire (Lesson 1): The children were confused by the statement 'Very few French use technology'. I suspect this is because the verbal statement in the video: 'France is a very technologically advanced country' was not supported by visual information. (The families in the video didn't watch TV or play computer or video games and did their homework without the use of technology.) This indicated to me that language, supported by visual material is very important if meaning is to be understood.

When an intercultural orientation is used, children who already have two languages tend to make comparisons when trying to comprehend a third language. They try to apply the rules they know are correct in their own language(s) to the new language. They find the cultural context important as a clue to understanding meaning.