



Australian Government

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

Teaching and Learning Languages: A Guide

Practice example

Boys as language learners



Research Centre for
**Languages
and Cultures**

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Disclaimer

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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, 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.

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| Example | Boys as language learners |
| Language | Japanese |
| Level | Primary |
| Teacher | Debbie West (Victoria) A teacher of primary Japanese sets out to engage boys in language learning through drama drawing on her experience that boys learn best through connecting learning and activity. |

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| <p>Teaching and learning</p> <p>Classroom interactions</p> <p>The nature of interactional language</p> <p>Tasks and task-types</p> <p><i>Student engagement</i></p> <p>Recognising the diversity of learners and their life-worlds</p> <p>Technology in language teaching and learning</p> | <p>This example shows how drama was used to engage boys in learning Japanese through connecting learning and physical activity. The learning and performance of the plays became a springboard for intercultural discussion; in the discussions about the cultural content of the plays, the students found some new and different cultural information, and some that they could relate to by thinking about and making comparisons with their own cultural experience.</p> |
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Japanese Grades 2, 3 and 4

I decided to embark upon drama to engage the many active boys I have in my class in performing plays based on Japanese folk tales. Through my learning about boys' education I know that traditional methods of languages teaching i.e. sitting at desks, reading, writing and copying from the board, just doesn't motivate them to learning language. The resource I used was part of the *Ohisama Connect* by Mary Taguchi (Japanese traditional folktales: 8 plays for children, 2005) which contains text in *hiragana* with some narration in English and two CDs. My rationale for doing drama:

- a) Natural language is used.
- b) The children know the story so it is easier to remember.
- c) Students can also be involved in art and craft (making props) which adds to cultural knowledge.
- d) Music is culturally appropriate.
- e) Drama appeals to everyone on some level.

Grade 4 and Momotaroo

The grade 4 children acted out *Momotaroo*, which is the story of a childless old couple who find a baby in a peach and call him 'Peachboy'. He grows up to be very brave and goes off to the Devil's Island to fight the devils (*oni*) and then he brings back the treasure to his village.

I explored the traditional values inherent in this folktale to find whether this could help us understand the psyche of modern Japanese people.

The whole grade had to learn all the words by heart. I started doing it as a reading exercise, but the *hiragana* was challenging for some students, so I typed it up in *romaji* for those students, in language they could read.

The play is full of natural Japanese language, some of which cannot be translated into English. Words such as *doozo*, *itadakimasu*, *tadaima*, *okaerinasa* were all discussed and compared with English. There were three songs to learn, some of them quite long.

The boys and I discussed and designed the costumes, which were then made. Scenery production involved looking at Japanese house interiors and noticing what was there. Then we got some *tatami* mats, and made *shoji* screens out of old holland blinds with stuck-on bamboo. We made a banner with the words *Nippon ichi* (Japan, number 1), written in *kanji*, and made *kibidango* or traditional millet dumplings out of play dough. We also made swords out of foil and eight children went to Japanese martial arts classes to learn how to do 'pretend fighting' so they could stage a fight without anybody being hurt! The boys have particularly enjoyed the hands-on nature of the activities – messing about with paint, glue and wood etc. They had to design a boat, an island and make the ogres' masks.

A culminating activity involved a discussion of their learning during this activity. *Momotaroo* provided stimulus for exploring the historical basis to the code of *Bushido* and the lives led by the *samurai*.

Grade 3 and Nezumi no Yomeiri

The second play, with Grade 3, is called *Nezumi no Yomeiri*, or 'The Marriage of the Mouse'. The whole grade learned the play off by heart, made sets, decided on costumes, music and learned three songs. This play is shorter than the others and not as difficult. We have three children with learning difficulties in this grade and they were assisted with their roles in the play. This play provided a stimulus for discussion about weddings in Australia and in Japan. Our Japanese assistant brought in a video of her wedding, which we then compared in discussion, with the children's experience of weddings in Australia. We discussed arranged marriages.

Grade 2 and *Kasajizoo*

In Year 2, our play was *Kasajizoo*, the bamboo-hatted statues. This is a story about a very poor old man and woman and their battle in winter to have enough food to eat. There is snow everywhere and the old man sees six *jizoo* (stone statues with red bibs on). He feels sorry for them and after exchanging his firewood for bamboo hats at the market, he returns and puts the hats on the *jizoo* to keep them warm. Later that night, the old man and old woman are startled by heavy footsteps. They open the door to find the *jizoo* bearing treasure – food, kimonos and gold.

We explored the significance of *jizoo* or statues which are dotted around the Japanese countryside, leading to discussions about superstitions in Japanese culture. The children learnt the script by heart. Songs, sets, costumes, music and other props were discussed and decided upon. This play is long and involved and took longer to prepare.

Teacher's reflective comments

Putting on plays is an effective way of showing the wider community what the children are doing in Japanese classes.

My educational priority was for the children to learn authentic Japanese and to engage more boys in Japanese through drama, which is an activity I don't normally do. All three grades were very excited when the roles were chosen for the performance. Following the performances we spent the remainder of the term further developing intercultural understanding. I notice that there is more English used in the discussion time, but I have been able to balance that with my normal usage of Japanese. By using more English in discussions, the boys are able to link Japanese to their own language and culture, thereby making important connections.