



Australian Government

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

Teaching and Learning Languages: A Guide

Practice example

Evaluating a textbook



UniSA

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.

Example	Evaluating a resource: a textbook
Language	Indonesian
Level	Middle school
Teacher	Vicki Fischmann (Victoria) A teacher's evaluation of a middle school textbook by analysing the linguistic, cultural and intercultural learning it makes available to the students.

Resourcing and materials Selecting resources The purposes of resources Adapting resources <i>Using resources critically</i> Relating resources to each other Contemporary resources Learners as resources Developing a resource bank	Every language textbook is constrained by the limitations of the developer(s) own views and objectives. This teacher has engaged with this subjectivity and found that this textbook does not fit with her own views on language, culture and intercultural learning. Particular limitations she has noted involve the treatment of culture as 'difference' and the text's lack of intercultural focus. A critical analysis of any textbook is a useful way of a) determining its usefulness in the context of a teacher's own program and b) addressing any shortcomings or omissions in the book and supplementing them with other resources.
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Indonesian: Prep - Grade 12

The Indonesian language text, *Bagus Sekali*, is used in a mixed-grade secondary group I teach. I wish to examine it with the aim of identifying intercultural language teaching and learning opportunities within the text, and, in the absence of these opportunities, suggesting appropriate activities that could enhance the intercultural language learning aspects of the text.

I have explored the text chapter by chapter, aiming to focus on the linguistic, cultural and intercultural learning available to students. The second focus has been to suggest possibilities to address the lack of intercultural language learning activities.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

Chapter	Linguistic	Cultural	Suggested Intercultural focus
1	Introductions, cognates	Cultural information presented in an email as facts	Use words for different times of day to explore how day is divided for Australia Exploration of cognates and how they change slightly in different languages Photo of McDonald's menu and of students at McDonald's – explore differences and similarities What do you notice about the menu? Why do you think rice is a feature of a McDonald's meal in Indonesia?
2	Notion of two words meaning 'us/we', one inclusive, one exclusive	Nicknames – Indonesians use the last part of the name Discussion about Indonesian snack foods	Explore how nicknames are created in our culture Photos of snack food packets – bigger photos would allow more exploration Pictures of interiors of houses – discussion?
3			Advertisement for Waterbom Park. Some words in English – why might this be so?
4	Cognates – names of subjects	Cultural information regarding body language Notion of rubber time explained	Students are pictured at school. The colour of their uniforms gives information about them. What is it? Body language – what does our body language tell others?
5	Telling the time Cognates - months	Cultural information regarding <i>Purnama</i> ceremony given as factual	The extended school week is mentioned in the cultural notes. Ask students how they might feel about having to go

			<p>to school on Saturday.</p> <p>A sign outside the school is written in two languages and two scripts.</p> <p>What might this mean? Perhaps students learn more than two languages. Do we ever see such signs here (in Tasmania)?</p> <p>The <i>Purnama</i> ceremony was celebrated at school. Do such occasions occur here in our schools? Can you suggest a celebration that might be initiated in our schools?</p> <p>There are some signs that use the 24-hour clock which can be explored. In what context is the 24-hour clock used in our culture?</p>
6	Vocabulary for family members – notion that siblings are identified as being either younger or older	Advertisements for popular tourist highlights in Bali	<p>Several families are represented – single parent families, extended families, nuclear families. How do these families compare with those that students know?</p> <p>Some of the tours promoted in the cultural information are outside the experience of students e.g. one is a cremation ceremony. How might students feel attending such an event? Why would a family wait so long sometimes to commemorate the death of a loved one in such a public manner?</p> <p>The tours represent the cultural icons of Bali. What are comparable cultural icons in Australia?</p>
7		Advertisements for dance and shadow puppetry	<p>There is an advertisement for a pizza business with a menu. There is a mixture of English and Indonesian words in the menu. Why might this be?</p>
8		Brief description of two diverse ethnic groups and some facts about a special meal	<p>A picture of the entry of one of the character's homes provides a point of difference for student discussion.</p>

			<p>The photo and description of the meal raises questions – what are the other dishes? Why is it set out the way it is? What special meals do we cook and how do we eat them?</p>
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DISCUSSION

The text is centred on a series of photo stories and set specifically in Bali. The students are from upper middle-class families. Cultural information is presented in a section which, initially, is in the form of emails sent by an Australian student who is living in Bali for a year. I would suggest that questions with an intercultural focus could be added to the end of this section.

The text was first published in 2000, somewhat before intercultural language learning was a widespread focus, so, in fairness, one could not have expected that it would be inclusive of intercultural language learning practice. However, intercultural language learning opportunities can be identified throughout the text. I aimed to use a critical questioning approach to any suggested activities that could enhance student thinking about Indonesian culture and language.

It has become clear to me that using realia, photographs (advertisements, video) and personal accounts is likely to be the most effective means of engaging students in an intercultural way, especially if they are unable or unlikely, to visit the country. For this reason, it is important for teachers to maintain currency with target language and culture through visits or close contact with the country.

Another important strategy is to develop effective questioning techniques. Asking the right questions at the right time can elicit thoughtful answers from students.

Indonesian provides many opportunities to explore the intercultural, not only through the exotic but also concepts such as time, food and eating, etiquette.

REFLECTION

The difficulty with intercultural language learning is in finding the balance between the integrity of actual language learning and the increase in student understanding of the interaction between cultures and their own identity.

In *Bagus Sekali*, there is a tension between breaking down barriers to show that students of a similar age have the same interests, and in illustrating the exotic nature of the culture (the cultural icons).

The setting for the text does not provide any glimpses of other than urban culture – there are no representations of village life to provide a balance. Exploration of the notion of *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) could be explored through examples of life experiences in a village.

Texts should emphasise for students that ‘meaning-making’ is of prime importance, rather than direct translation, in learning how to operate in another language.

The text provides many examples of real advertising but does not take full advantage of this. Larger representations, provided as addenda, would enhance the chances of students being able to interpret and reflect on the information.

There are also opportunities to gain extra mileage from some of the grammar points; for example, cognates appear throughout. Additional teacher tips could emphasise the intercultural language learning aspect.

There is often an emphasis on *difference* when teaching Indonesian, whereas this text focuses much more on *sameness* with mention of culture in a factual manner. The student does not have to do any thinking about how he/she might react in encountering the culture. Teachers and writers of language texts face the difficulty of balancing the familiar with the exotic and providing the right amount of input for students to work out how they might make meaning of what they see and hear. The thinking

component of learning a language is more likely to have an impact on students' learning, rather than students learning a plethora of facts.

Reference:

Newnham, J. and Wackett, E. (2000). *Bagus Sekali! 1 Textbook*. Reed International Books: Australia.