



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

# **Teaching and Learning Languages: A Guide**

**Program example**

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**German senior years**



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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**

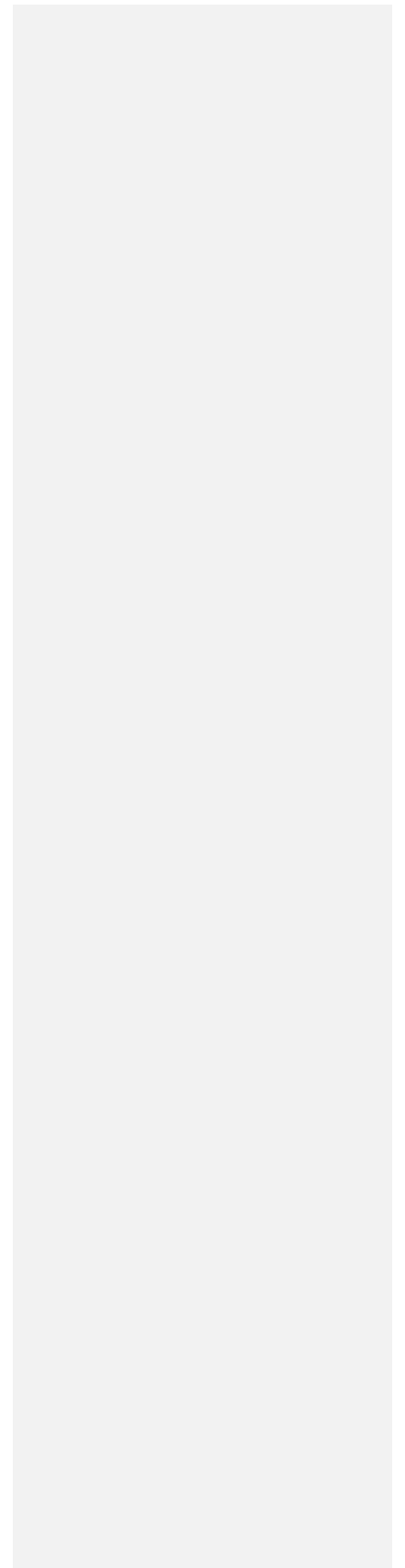
This is a selection of programs and parts of programs, plans for classroom teaching, planned assessment tasks, descriptions of the teaching and learning contexts, investigations and evaluations of practice, and reflections on current practices. It shows teachers engaged in professional thinking, planning,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

**PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

<b>Language</b>	German
<b>Level</b>	Year 12
<b>Example</b>	The individual and cultural changes Long-term program
<b>Annotations</b>	In text End of text



## GERMAN YEAR 12 SEMESTER PROGRAM

*This is a program written by the teacher participating in the Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice (ILTLP) project. The program and teacher's reflection were part of her project investigation. The text of the program is written in the first person.*

### CONTEXT

The first unit of the program was written as part of an investigation for the *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice* (ILTLP) project and taught to a combined Year 11/12 German class made up of 10 students. The school in which it was taught is an established private girls' school that caters for girls from Pre-school to Year 12 and has a significant number of boarders, mostly from rural areas or international students.

**Comment [A1]:** The school is situated in South Australia and the program is therefore based on SACE Board of SA requirements.

One student in the class was an exchange student from Germany. Three students were Year 12 students. The remaining six were Year 11 students. Three girls are boarders and come from the country.

Most students had been taught German from Year 7 onwards. All Australian students had been instructed in German by me since I took over the class in 2006. One Year 12 girl was from South Africa and migrated to Australia seven years ago. One girl was from a Serbian background. Her grandparents migrated after World War I to Australia. Another was of Polish and Hungarian background.

At the end of 2007, most of the students went to Germany on an exchange program. Many of the students had previously hosted a German exchange student for eight weeks during 2007.

**Comment [A2]:** Context is important. As this is a highly specialised group of students (all girls in a small class, with one of the group a native speaker exchange student the program relates to these particular girls in a unique and highly personal way. It is tailored especially to work in this context, for these particular students. The same program would not work in quite the same way elsewhere.

The semester program described here is for 2008. It is divided into four interrelated and interconnected units, addressing an overall theme of 'The Individual and Cultural Changes'. The first unit, 'Kitchen Table Narratives', has been developed from the program taught in 2007. The success of this unit in opening up conversation and personal connections for the students inspired the extension of the program into a year-long Year 12 program. The first unit is elaborated in detail below, and outlines for the subsequent units are provided.

**Comment [A3]:** A highly personalised conceptual approach allows students to develop their own understandings about themselves by exploring (a) the languages and cultures that they bring to and use in the classroom and (b) how these impact on their understandings and interpretations of issues in German and English cultural and linguistic contexts.

**Comment [A4]:** Making connections for students to build on prior learning and understandings will promote greater engagement with learning that is meaningful for students.

## SEMESTER PROGRAM TERMS I AND II: THE INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

### Key Ideas

- Observing that languages do not translate directly and that languages operate in culturally specific ways to create meaning and to 'position' social groups
- Analysing cultural identity in association with concepts of heritage, ethnicity, community, nationhood, geographic, identities. Students recognise and appreciate diversity within and across cultures and subcultures (recognise that Germany is made up of people of diverse languages and backgrounds as much as is their own nation).

**Comment [A5]:** A clearly identified aim shows what it is that the teacher wants students to learn about language and culture and their interrelationship in this unit

**Comment [A6]:** The overarching organising scheme for this teacher is the key ideas and essential learning she wants learners to take away. Focusing on what she wants students to learn and understand is a way of clarifying thoughts for lesson and program content. When these ideas are at the forefront, what follows can then be constantly referenced to these aims.

### Essential Learnings

- Interdependence  
Students develop knowledge of the contemporary concepts and identifications of current German citizens of their generation. The aim is that students form opinions from a wide range of sources and consider these from different perspectives. They think about how they perceive concepts and how others perceive them, and are encouraged to appreciate what is common and what is unique to diverse groups and peoples.
- Interconnectedness  
Students consider how and why changes occur, and examine the influence of changes from different viewpoints to understand the effects on the identity and feelings of people today. Students learn to appreciate the interconnectedness of cultural change and meaning-making of terms and concepts, and their influence on the fluidity of language use.

**Comment [A7]:** Interdependence and interconnectedness are investigative concepts that promote intercultural learning, through exploration of a range of perspectives, including the students' own perspectives, in relation to ideas and views from both German and Australian contexts.

### Conceptual Units

1. Personal identity: Kitchen table narratives.
2. The German concept *Heimat* ('homeland').
3. Identification of young Germans with Europe.
4. 'Jalla'. *Kinder von Fremdarbeitern*. Children of migrants: *Muhabbet Singer*.

**Comment [A8]:** We can see the breakdown of the semester sequence here in interrelated units that progressively develop ideas and opportunities for student comparisons and reflections. The units are 'conceptually' conceived, based around ideas to explore, rather than 'topics' to be 'covered'.

## UNIT 1

### Personal Identity: Kitchen Table Narratives

(history > family stories > cultural identity > personal identity)

#### Identity formation and kitchen table talk

The unit investigates the interaction of cultural narratives with the formation of students' identities from a macro and micro-perspective. It explores how deeply students are able to understand the interconnectedness of family narratives and historical events within their own cultural heritage and language; and the language and cultural heritage of Germany.

Key questions include:

- How do family narratives influence personal identity?
- How do historical events impact on family narratives and personal cultural practices?

The concept of identity is explored, using a German literary text as a stimulus. The entry to the unit is the reading of the short story: *Das Brot* by famous German post-war author Wolfgang Borchert.

Anticipated key intercultural understandings for the unit include:

- That the place and time one is born into this world, particularly the family history and cultural practices one is born into, will inform one's own concept and formation of identity.
- That the meaning-making about one's place in a society and cultural group is partially influenced by the stories we listen to. These narratives usually pop up at the kitchen or dinner table during family gatherings such as weddings, funerals and other cultural functions.
- Behaviours and cultural practices frequently resemble coping mechanisms. Hence they arise from the interaction of individuals with historical and personal events.
- Cultural practices are fluid and diverse, particularly in countries such as Germany and Australia where there is a long standing and ongoing history of migration from diverse cultural and social groups from different countries. Many aspects to this dynamic are narratives of reciprocal influence, adaptation, assimilation and the reinvention of cultural practices and identity.
- Cultural practices of various peoples are informed by historical events that have influenced individuals and families who came from all over the world at varying points in time and history. Therefore Australia and Australian society, as much as Germany and German society, are intimately linked with the cultural narratives of other countries and cultures.
- There is no homogenous cultural identity, in either Australia or Germany. Many subcultures and variations of family narratives spring from the matrix and tapestry of historical events and movements of individuals and people.

I am interested in the ability of the students to explore shameful events in national histories and the impact of such shameful events on their sense of belonging to that nation. Moreover, I am interested in the impact shameful narratives have on positioning the individual in regard to those events; and on the impact the shameful narrative has on the students' positioning in relation to the generations before them. Additionally, I am keen to see whether it is possible for students to comprehend the sensitivity of those events in both their own and the target language's culture.

**Comment [A9]:** Including a range of perspectives, from the personal and micro to broader, societal perspectives, and linking language and culture connections in both, will provide students with insights into both their own identities and 'national' identities and allow for the connections between language and culture to be made.

**Comment [A10]:** Posing key reflective questions for investigation will allow students to explore different perspectives and to go beyond 'display' answers, thinking more deeply about the issues involved as they relate to themselves.

**Comment [A11]:** This authentic literary text, highly regarded within both German national contexts and for learners of German language, provides rich learning opportunities as it locates language in culture and culture in language and shows students that language choices, and intended audiences for texts, influence inclusions and exclusions.

**Comment [A12]:** Additional, identified intercultural understandings might also focus on language and culture in text analyses, such as the process of analysis of literature. The interrelationship of language and culture is a crucial aspect of intercultural understanding.

**Comment [A13]:** Intercultural exploration may touch on sensitive areas, but these areas are highly revealing about cultures, societies and national identity. The language involved in expression of shameful or sensitive events or issues will be crucial to understanding the feelings of shame, why there is sensitivity and how it is expressed (or avoided).

**Comment [A14]:** The teacher is inviting students to take an intercultural perspective informed by their wider understandings of their own and the target culture.

The unit is designed to be non directive and open to the students to identify 'shameful' issues in contemporary Australia. It is likewise left to the students to determine what they identify as sensitive issues in their personal family narratives, how they might view these and their effect on their identity.

**Comment [A15]:** The active construction by students of their own learning is given the highest priority by the teacher. Though she uses the term 'non-directive', this should not be misunderstood as meaning 'managed' by students. Once students have identified what events may be considered shameful to them the teacher can reassume 'direction' and teaching to explore these issues.

It is of interest to see whether the students comprehend that Australians are a population of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. It is possible that students' parents and grandparents have German cultural and historical backgrounds as they might have lived in Europe or might have been affected by the history of the world wars, as victims, perpetrators or silent witnesses. It is also possible that family narratives make no connection with backgrounds related to Europe, even when, historically, the family has these connections. In other instances, there may be no connection to European backgrounds.

**Comment [A16]:** How would the teacher use the background speaker to provide further insights on these issues?

The initial focus in the unit is on naming and exploring the formation of one's understanding of family stories and their context of origin in relation to the time and place in which they are embedded, plus the influence of those stories on the identity formation of students. The aim is to explore students' own linguistic and cultural identity, and to investigate how identity is formed, and/or by what identity is informed.

Kitchen table narratives are about the formation of cultural knowledge and its transformation from generation to generation. The intergenerational aspect plays a part in how kitchen table talks are translated and passed on to the next generation. Another aspect of kitchen table narratives is how this information and knowledge transfer can be disrupted.

**Comment [A17]:** The teacher is exploring the idea of genre as cultural input, that is, particular forms of language being central to and impacting on cultural identity and construction.

This unit forms part of the topic of identity and may take only a few lessons, depending on the students' engagement with the topic. It may be extended to include discussion of similar and related ideas flowing from the initial conversations on family narratives and their influence on identity.

**Comment [A18]:** Exploration of links to the text itself would be useful in exemplifying these points.

A strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that students put themselves in the shoes of cultural carriers of the target language; and that they then 'back flip' to reflect on how their experiences of the target culture are present in our own cultural context. I want students to see to what degree this occurs for each of them, personally.

**Comment [A19]:** The teacher is inviting students to consider German language and German culture understood from a native speaker perspective, before considering it from their own, non-native speaker perspective.

The text used and all discussion is in German, unless students need to use English to explain something for which they have insufficient German. Year 12s' responses and reflections are written in German, Year 11s may use English for their personal reflections.

**Comment [A20]:** The target language is used throughout for this exploration. With such intensive use of target language, opportunities for exploration of language and culture connections should be significant. It would be useful to see some examples of how this might occur, indicating how learners are coming to understand the culture through the language and the language through the culture.

## Classroom interactions

### Setting the context: 'Das Brot' – a German short story

Borchert's short story, 'Das Brot', is given as a reading text and students undertake a text analysis. The text relates to the odd behaviour of an elderly man who is caught at night by his wife in the kitchen. The man was slicing bread as he cannot cope with his hunger. Caught by his wife, he and she are not even able to talk about this situation. Both pretend that a rain pipe is clattering in the wind and that this particular noise woke each of them up and caused them to go to the kitchen.

**Comment [A21]:** The teacher recognises that students' deep views and understandings may not be able to be expressed in the target language, and that English is part of these students' identities and can be accessed where necessary or appropriate.



The subtext has many layers but is mainly about the woman allowing her husband to save face, protect his dignity and subsequently save her relationship with him. She understands his despair and, without commenting on the events in the kitchen or ever referring to them explicitly, she takes action. To ensure that her husband does not go hungry she sacrifices a slice of bread from her ration at the dinner table the next day. Therefore he will not need to get up at night and 'steal' bread. She pretends that she cannot digest her whole ration of bread at dinner time and introduces the habit that he will have one extra slice of bread each night for dinner from then onwards.

### Text analysis

The text analysis is not scaffolded in terms of providing such things as vocabulary lists. Instead, the text is **read and discussed in class, together**.

Key points:

- Reading aloud, and discussion and working through any unfamiliar or new language or grammar structures.
- Realisation that the story is set in post-war Germany and conveys realistic events that easily could have taken place.
- Discussion of the odd behaviour of the couple, including both characters' actions and motivations.
- Sharing of stories about students' experiences of any odd behaviours of grandparents and parents about food or other domestic issues.
- Students lead the ensuing discussion, picking up on points and issues relevant and connected to their own lives, family histories and experiences.
- Number of lessons dedicated to the discussion will vary depending on student interest in emerging issues and concepts. These are likely to include, as they did with the class I taught this with before, issues surrounding forgiveness, migration, immigration, shame, dignity, interconnectedness, history, cultural carriers and the construction and deconstruction of **culture**, and the interculturality of the text. My experience of teaching this unit shows me that I can expect students to be **immediately engaged** and interested, make insightful comments during the lessons and become deeply and personally involved in discussing the issues. I found that weeks after this unit was finished students were still commenting on it and reflecting on the issues, with reference to their own personal heritages and **experiences**.

### Text responses

Reflection/response questions/issues are not provided before the **lessons**, because I want the discussions to be student-directed and therefore cannot predict what will emerge during the **lesson**.

After the discussion I prepare a set of discussion and reflection questions or issues. After the discussion with the last class I taught this to, I asked the students to discuss the following as homework in relation to the text analysis and classroom discussion:

- a) Reflect on your own situation/position in relation to your personal heritage/family history, in the context of history.
- b) Discuss your perception of the situation/position of a German in relation to German history.
- c) Discuss your perception of the treatment of Australian Aborigines (this issue had arisen in the discussion of historical issues related to national shame).

**Comment [A22]:** Group understandings and the clarification of (mis)understandings are dealt with collectively. 'Scaffolding' will be provided in the way(s) in which the teacher participates in advancing the learning for students through directing this discussion process. This type of scaffolding cannot all be planned in advance, but it is central to teaching and learning.

**Comment [A23]:** Though the text analysis is not specifically scaffolded, the teacher is indicating her thinking in what the analysis should reveal, ensuring that these points are not missed.

**Comment [A24]:** A deep level of engagement will facilitate student learning.

**Comment [A25]:** The longer term is being considered here, in planning considerations and in making meaningful connections for students.

**Comment [A26]:** The teacher leaves ample space for student responses, reactions and interactions.

**Comment [A27]:** Note, however, that the teacher remains clear about the direction, aims and substance of the discussions.

d) What are your thoughts on Australian heritage and identity?

Questions for the German exchange student were:

- a) What family narratives do you think influenced your sense of self?
- b) Do you feel shame or guilt that you are a German in relation to World War II events and especially the eradication of Jewish people during the Holocaust?

I also recorded anecdotal notes on personal observations after the discussions, and later asked students to write a reflection on their experience of this unit (in German for Year 12s and in English for Year 11s).

### Assessment

The collected responses to the above questions can be used as assessment items for both oral and written components of the assessment requirements. Students can be involved in setting appropriate criteria for marking and can also be involved in a formative assessment process of providing feedback to others.

**Comment [A28]:** Questions arise from the discussion, with maximum student involvement in asking and answering. The questions are, however, very general. Some specific questions on the text itself, on its substance, form and language, could precede these questions.

**Comment [A29]:** Recognition and acknowledgment of the variable student cohort and the different learning needs.

**Comment [A30]:** Anecdotal notes can be used for assessment purposes, in relation to intercultural outcomes, and to inform future planning.

**Comment [A31]:** The teacher has been able to provide formative feedback throughout the unit, to advance student learning. Note that the combination of responses, in both written and oral form is used for overall assessment, rather than a single summative task. The students are also involved themselves in the assessment process, as well as in a peer review process, providing further perspectives to students on their achievements. As this is Year 12 work, in South Australia, it is also guided by SACE Board of SA requirements

## UNIT 2

### The German Concept *Heimat* (Homeland)

#### Unit Purpose

To recognise how cultures have developed particular concepts that are captured or enshrined in words whose meaning cannot be translated smoothly into another language or cannot be translated at all. In the unit, learners explore the German concept of homeland: *Die Heimat*.

**Comment [A32]:** The focus is on both conceptual and cultural understanding and how this occurs through language, both being considered at the same time.

#### Resources

*Katzensprung III*, see pp. 86, 87; also refer to p. 93 *Fühlst du dich deutsch?*

**Comment [A33]:** Textbooks are used to support the learning focus.

Magenau Jörg (2003) *Inventur der Gefühle. Deutschland*, no. 4, pp. 48-51 ([www.magazine-deutschland.de](http://www.magazine-deutschland.de)).

**Comment [A34]:** Use of contemporary ICT resources to support the learning focus/unit purpose.

This text looks at the writing of the author Judith Hermann, whose book *Sommerhaus* focuses on the portrait of the younger generation and its relationship to the concept *Heimat* in Germany. Her book was translated into 15 languages and seems to have hit a nerve with contemporary readers. Her second book *Nichts als Gespenster* (2003) can be used to exemplify the feelings and expression of the younger generation, as it contains short stories.

#### Anticipated Intercultural Understandings

- Understanding that some terms in German cannot be translated completely/accurately as they are culturally derived and are built into and part of the specific language 'canon' due to a longstanding tradition.
- Exploring similar terms in the mother tongue (i.e. concept of 'going bush') and understanding why they are also not translatable.
- Understanding how difficult it is to comprehend and understand culturally specifically derived terms in another language.
- Understanding the role of language as a time capsule that preserves culturally derived concepts.

**Comment [A35]:** Again the teacher reveals her thinking in what she wants students to learn and understand, and indicates the language development that she is anticipating by emphasising the language/culture links and how these are different in German and English.

**Comment [A36]:** The ever-present connections between language and culture are shown through specific examples, and therefore what gives some language its 'German-ness' or 'English-ness', as it is deeply rooted in the cultural experience of those using the language.

**Comment [A37]:** It would be interesting to see the connection between these and the actual text analysis. That level of detail is not given here, but is, as the teacher states, developed further for teaching.

• **UNIT 3**

**Identification of Young Germans with Europe**

*Unit Purpose*

To recognise changes in understanding of cultural concepts through changes in cultural practice, and implications for the meaning of terms for different generations.

*Resources*

Concept Europa (Hinderer, P (2007). Getting involved in Europe. *Deutschland*, no. 3, pp. 6-11.)

This article describes the shift of young Germans envisioning themselves as Europeans rather than as nationalistic Germans. To engage students' intercultural awareness of similar ideas in Australia, explore as a concept of Australian identification including:

- the shift from envisioning the 'mother country' as England to Australia as a Commonwealth country and its citizens as Australians;
- the debate over the establishment of Australia as a Republic; and
- the shift to understanding and conceptualising Australia's place in the Asia-Pacific Region.

*Anticipated Intercultural Understandings and Outcomes*

- Compares how concepts are expressed in different languages.
- Understanding that Concepts can be altered when the cultural practice cannot be kept alive in the lived culture of the language, either losing their meaning and understanding or shifting to take on a new meaning. For example, the concept of 'homeland' is undergoing changes in the new generation of young Germans who are growing to identify themselves as Europeans, thus their concept of *Heimat* shifts from a territorially defined place within Germany to the wider community of the EU. In addition, what constitutes Europe is changing as the EU expands.
- The understanding that concepts are constructions of a lived cultural reality or a cultural aspiration.

**Comment [A38]:** There is a conceptual, developmental step taken with this topic, drawing on the understandings developed in the last two. The teacher has moved from personal, family-based narratives and their relationship to wider German and English cultural and language considerations, to national (and nationalist) conceptions and how the language of nationalism impacts on the culture of nationalism. Culture, language and identity are considered within the wider frame of the continent of Europe, and how this represents a generational shift in German society. This provides connections for students and opportunities for deep and personal engagement and comparison with their own lives and national/international identities, and asks them to consider the role of language and culture in shaping these identities.

**Comment [A39]:** European questions of identity are related to Australian questions of identity as students consider the different contexts and their own responses to these, in both language and cultural dimensions.

**Comment [A40]:** Connecting languages and cultures and noting differences in languages and the cultural contexts in which these operate.

**Comment [A41]:** It would also be useful to see the actual textual work that provides the basis for this broader understanding.

**Comment [A42]:** Exploring the idea that culture and language are dynamic and not static and relate to the people who use it/live it.

## UNIT 4

### 'Jalla'. *Kinder von Fremdarbeitern*. Children of migrants: *Muhabbet Singer*

#### Purpose

German Turkish superstar singer Jalla combines popular Turkish music with soul and rhythm 'n' blues. The melodies sound Oriental, but the lyrics are exclusively in German. He mixes the traditions of his parents with the language of his second homeland, and appeals to his fans: 'Learn German, go to school and make something of your life'.

**Comment [A43]:** The intercultural experience is extended to further contexts for consideration, in this case highlighting the intercultural as lived experience.

The unit investigates hybrid existence, what this means for individuals and what happens to the use of language. It is also a good idea to look at *Denglish* (German-English) in the context of the unit. Depending on the students, their interests and their input during lessons, concepts such as assimilation and multiculturalism, would be of interest in this context.

**Comment [A44]:** This is a topic with relevance for students of this age group, and the group of learners identified, in particular. It also extends understandings of identity into the fields of migration and intercultural lived experience. How this occurs and is shaped by language and culture and their interrelationships is explored.

#### Resources

Hintereder, P (2006). Building Bridges. *Deutschland*, no. 3, pp. 47–53

Jalla... Türkisch-German? (There are great German–Turkish texts available on the Internet).

**Comment [A45]:** This unit works at breaking down stereotypical views of what it is to be German or Australian or any other nationality. It develops an understanding that both language and culture are entwined in the forging of identities, and 'new identities' often arise from migration, war, refugee issues, etc. It brings the whole long-term program to an interesting conclusion, as it moves from a narrow view of German-ness, located historically, to current notions of German-ness and the linguistic, cultural and social aspects that affect this. Students are asked to consider these different perspectives from their own points of view, and in the language and cultural practice they observe. They move between the perspectives in informing and determining their own positioning on questions of identity. Some detail of how this occurs in the classroom would assist others in understanding the program. Key questions, processes of analysis, and starting points for discussions would begin to show how the work would be undertaken in the classroom.

#### Anticipated Intercultural Understandings and Outcomes

- Understanding the fluidity of language and language use, the impact of foreign language groups and the interaction of their cultural carriers on the target language.
- Reflection on how language is used and altered.

**Comment [A46]:** The unit refocuses on the role of language in considering these questions, issues and concepts, although the detail is not developed in this outline.

## TEACHER REFLECTION

The following is the teacher's evaluation and reflection on teaching the first unit of this program. The teacher's full report can be found at [www.iltip.unisa.edu.au](http://www.iltip.unisa.edu.au), under Teacher Examples.

### EVALUATION

This unit of work allowed for a lot of insights into how to work within an intercultural language learning orientation. It highlighted how the process of eliciting greater intercultural awareness can be fostered and what must be part of this process.

In my opinion it is most important to allow students to immerse themselves in the cultural context of a topic that is relevant to them, in either the target language or their mother tongue. Thereafter it is vital to allow the students to explore how what they have learned applies to 'the other' cultural context. I like to call this technique a 'flip-back move'.

I applied this in the presented unit when students started looking at their relatives' odd behaviours of in relation to food, or when the class explored whether or not there were topics in the Australian historical context that might carry shame or embarrassment and are 'touchy' to talk about.

I found the investigation helpful as it highlighted that it is easy to underestimate the critical thinking abilities students possess. I also enjoyed the fact that a highly regarded German literature text could be used in this investigation. It allowed for a maximum of language input combined with knowledge dissemination of historically and culturally relevant facts and insights about what constitutes the latter (e.g. that ordinary people and their everyday life experiences are culturally relevant, that culture is a living matter, that the destruction and annihilation of an ethnic group and their place may destroy the whole culture)

This insight and many more are powerful as they build compassion and an understanding of what connects all people in whichever culture, namely the contextualised reality of human existence. Other powerful and empowering insights are that individuals must negotiate their own response to historical and personal events, that there are limits to individual freedom, and finally, that realities are constructed by a fabric of beliefs, behaviours and narratives, and their interpretations.

What emerged in this investigation fits perfectly some of the aims of intercultural language teaching as outlined by Scarino and Crichton (2007):

*There is a focus on the lived reality of interaction among people. It is made obvious how culture informs the way people understand themselves and others.*

I, as the teacher, inevitably mediate the knowledge and the contexts for use and application to my students and so does G with her contribution as a carrier of contemporary German culture. It should be noted that language is always subject to variable interpretation by participants in interaction, as the text, *Das Brot*, demonstrates so well.

Overall the presented unit comprises language learning that not only lets students recognise the need to acquire new knowledge but also makes them participate in

**Comment [A47]:** The teacher recognises her own role in mediating learning in the classroom, within a sociocultural learning context.

**Comment [A48]:** Recognition of variability, and allowing for programs to develop around this, are essential for engaged student learning and for meaningful outcomes for students.

the community of users (teacher and G) of that knowledge. The findings clearly show that all learners, Australians and Germans alike, are would-be interpreters. I am planning to use this investigation to rewrite the long-term curriculum for Year 12 in 2008.

**Comment [A49]:** It will be valuable to see some the key questions she develops, and some discussion of just how she mediates these through and in German.

## REFLECTION

The text used is part of the literature canon in Germany. Wolfgang Borchert is one of the most well-known post-war German authors. His story offers rich language and a tapestry for an exquisite text analysis. The text exposes students to understanding how German history has impacted on the eating habits of ordinary Germans. It allows the students to look at eating habits in their families and builds links to what they observe in their own families. The focus is on the underlying reasons for certain eating habits or attitudes to food in their own families.

Particular bizarre habits of family members could then easily be related to family narratives and historical events, such as experiences of the Great Depression, fleeing European countries during World War II and/or the Nazi regime, and the migration history of families to Australia at various times. Students examined where they acquired their knowledge about their families' histories and how those multifaceted family narratives impacted on their personal identity formation.

In reflecting on cultural identity, the class was able to explore that a stereotypical cultural identity surely does not reflect this multifaceted reality of family and personal narratives. Hence the understanding emerged that intercultural differences exist between the German-speaking and Australian communities, but to varying degrees. In whatever culture humans might be born into, they are exposed to family narratives that are intrinsically interconnected with historical events; thus history impacts on all individuals.

From a psychological point of view, students' ability to name and verbalise an understanding of what connects all humans in whichever culture they live, is an invaluable insight. All humans are constantly in the process of negotiating their identity in interaction with the cultural and personal narratives surrounding them. Further, the insight that powerful realities leave an imprint on people helps to build compassion. That thought encourages an understanding of the contextualised reality of human existence, as well as the comprehension that it is up to the individual to then negotiate his/her response to historical or personal events. This latter idea fosters the awareness of how limited freedom for individuals might be.

In all of this, cultural meaning-making is exposed as a context of beliefs, behaviours and narratives that are constructed by realities and their interpretations.

This investigation also highlights the vulnerability of humans to the whim of historical circumstances and their effect on future generations. It also alerts students to the thought that family histories, family cultures, cultural practices and cultural histories are all interlinked. Therefore the effect of stories and maybe the importance of telling and creating narratives are also highlighted.

The Australian students came to see how one's Australian identity was linked to the family narrative of how long the family had lived in this country, where the family came from originally and whether or not their forebears were convicts. In a powerful way this unit of work made visible the link between the history of the places students' parents, grandparents or they themselves were coming from and their identity and heritage. Students in whose family a narrative of persecution is told made clear their appreciation of being allowed to be part of Australia. Further, it became visible that there is a mixture of pride and shame in family stories that are told, and at times there are quirky and funny elements. Many students remembered the excitement of listening to

**Comment [A50]:** The cultural construction of identity within one language and culture is given great emphasis. Developing this into intercultural understandings, where the construction of identity is considered across languages, will add to this program, as both cultural and intercultural understandings are needed.



family narratives and could name how and what meaning they drew from those stories. Students clearly understood the influence of historical and personal family narratives on their own positioning in their current stance of self.

There is evidence that students were able to come to the insight that otherness is only another, different way of coping with being human in a different historical and cultural context. It was incredible how many threads I could have picked to follow from these two lessons.

<p><b>Language, culture and learning</b>          What is language?          What is culture?          Understanding learning          Understanding language learning          Intercultural language learning</p>	<p>The social construction of language and its interrelationship with culture(s) is at the centre of this program. Beginning with a text from the recognised 'literary canon' of German writing, students consider how language shapes meaning and conveys emotions, subtext and culture within German language and culture. Students then consider the issues and concepts arising from this text, and interpret and expand these ideas in relation to their own experiences, using both English and German to convey cultural meanings. The program could usefully be extended to include more consideration of language and culture and their interrelationship <i>across</i> languages and cultures, rather than just <i>within</i> German and Australian English. This would develop greater intercultural understandings.</p> <p>After the initial unit exploring a German text, the program considers language in different contexts and concepts such as 'homeland', showing migration and identity to be shaped by contexts, lived experiences and interactions. The constant interplay of language and culture in the program shows a sophisticated understanding of their interrelationship and the importance of exploring this interrelationship with students studying a second language. These developing understandings would be scaffolded by the teacher within the class through various analyses of texts and contexts, culture and language, although the detail of these interactions and the ways in which this is explored are not elaborated in this outline. These interactions provide the bridge between the texts and concepts or wider themes being explored.</p> <p>The teacher's view of language as being deeply rooted in cultural contexts is evident, and her emphasis on students defining their own learning parameters, exploring their personal views and on meaning-making for themselves indicates an engagement with learning theories that emphasises lived experience and sociocultural contexts. This emphasis allows for highly personalised intra and interpersonal learning opportunities for students.</p> <p>Most of the classroom interactions occur in the target</p>
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	<p>language and students use English when they do not have the German necessary to express complex or highly personal ideas. This supports a view of language that, although focused on target language outcomes, understands that deeper understandings will become available through use of all the language and cultural resources available to the students and teacher. More detail of how the German and English language interactions occur would add to readers' understanding of this program, as it is in these that the real teaching lies.</p>
<p><b>Teaching and learning</b>  Classroom interactions  The nature of interactional language  Tasks and task-types  Student engagement  Recognising the diversity of learners and their life-worlds  Technology in language teaching and learning</p>	<p>Student learning is emphasised in this program. Question and assessment processes are generated from discussions with students, and students choose concepts to explore in classroom discussions. As a senior secondary program, it is also framed within SACE Board requirements. Conducted mostly in German, there is evidence of extensive engagement in collaborative interactions based on questions that seek to identify students' personal views and multiple and diverse perspectives.</p> <p>The unit is highly experiential. The material used in the program is inherently challenging and interesting, and there is opportunity for plenty of dialogue between teacher and students, which is highly valuable in achieving the aims described by the teacher. There is a focus on considering what people do with language, how it is culturally defined, how cultural definitions are constantly changing, and asking students to respond to these ideas.</p> <p>The teacher's personal reflection indicates all students engaged with the unit of work. At every point the program is directed towards considering how this matters for people in the contexts described, and for students themselves.</p> <p>Target questions, where they are described, are varied for students with different backgrounds. The interactive, student-driven nature of the program shows that learner differences are considered at all times in this classroom.</p> <p>Use of the Internet for relevant contemporary resources that focus on current language use adds significantly to the program and students' engagement with contemporary materials and current views on the languages and cultures being considered.</p>
<p><b>Resourcing and materials</b>  Selecting resources</p>	<p>Resources are selected carefully and thoughtfully, each building on the experiences conducted in the previous unit. The program moves from an historical text to</p>

<p>The purposes of resources Adapting resources Using resources critically Relating resources to each other Contemporary resources Learners as resources Developing a resource bank</p>	<p>contemporary texts. The learning process flows effectively from the stimulus texts while not impeding shifts in focus that might occur during lessons with the particular group of learners.</p>
<p><b>Assessing</b> Assessment and learning The assessment cycle Eliciting evidence of students' language learning Judging: considering criteria Validation</p>	<p>Assessment is 'authentic' and accumulative, using all aspects of the learning process to provide data for the teacher to judge within an overall assessment of learning. Oral, written and collaborative tasks are all included, and address learner differences. Dialogue between teacher and student and between student and peers is included in the overall process. The assessment scheme is weighted towards formative processes, addressing a 'for learning' approach.</p>
<p><b>Programming and planning</b> Planning language programs Long-term and short-term planning Planning for conceptual learning The place of context in planning programs Scoping and sequencing of learning Planning interactions Personalising learning experience</p>	<p>The smaller units build on each other to support a wider understanding of the concept of identity. The movement from unit to long-term program is integrated and developmental, allowing students to build and connect understandings as they proceed through the program. We see this conceptually, and assume the language components and the classroom interactions that support these concepts would extend the connections, building and developing language skills as well as conceptual understandings.</p> <p>The planning is focused on language use and cultural contexts of language, and builds in intrapersonal and interpersonal views of students as they emerge.</p>
<p><b>Evaluating language programs</b> Evaluation as an ongoing process Evaluation in context Purpose and scope of evaluation Evaluation as inquiry</p>	<p>The teacher evidently views her program as an exercise in inquiry (for herself). Her evaluation suggests thoughtful, ongoing reflection on the value and purpose of the program, which would change with different groups of students to suit their particular interests and needs. Students' involvement in their own learning is included in this evaluative process.</p>