

ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVEL
Claire Higgs	Moyhu Primary School 2399 Wangaratta Whitfield Rd. Moyhu 3732	French	Prep-Grade 6

CONTEXT

Moyhu is a small, insular, rural community that has undergone a lot of hardship in the last few years – drought, killer frosts and bushfires. The school has 67 students, many of whom have had limited experiences outside of their immediate environment. The children and parents have enthusiastically embraced the French Program and to extend the children's horizons in any way and to make this "more real to them", can only benefit them, their learning and their understanding of another culture.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

I wanted the children to begin to understand that not everyone is like them and not everyone does things the same way. However, there are similarities and people are basically still the same inside. I also wanted the children to realise that it is easier to communicate if they know some of their language and understand at least a little where they (our overseas friends) are "coming from" with regards to culture.

The children would compare similarities and differences between what they know of their own rural culture and what they experience with the visitors from French Polynesia. I was hopeful the children would see that even though there are differences, there are also similarities and that they should accept both.

I wanted the children to speak their (albeit limited) French to their visitors even if it was only the odd word in an otherwise English sentence. This, I know, takes a lot of courage, and is a major hurdle to try and overcome.

My husband and I were team liaison officers for New Caledonia and French Polynesia respectively, at the Pacific School Games in Melbourne and through friendships formed there, I invited friends and a school group to stay and come to visit my school.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

We prepared for the visits by working on basic vocabulary and researching the culture and history of French Polynesia. The children also discussed what they wanted to know and ask, how to greet our visitors, and what "Australianisms" they would like to share.

Arnaud and Mae visited each room, taught songs to the younger children and discussed in slowly spoken French the way of life in Tahiti. Arnaud has a Polynesian tattoo and the children were fascinated by the story behind it.

The Year 8 Polynesian students gave the school a traditional welcome, dancing and singing, and the children responded by singing Australian songs. Presents were exchanged and then different activities were undertaken. The Polynesian girls and boys taught traditional dances to the children. A number of AFL skill activities were set up and the Australian children had much delight in teaching our much older visitors some basics. The children were then free to mix in any way and they had a great time playing

board games, computer games or just talking without any adult supervision.

Naturally, after the visits, there was much discussion about the activities, about the similarities and differences, and about how important it was to be able to communicate. Many children chose to write about their experiences (see following) and many an interesting verbal comment was made.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

The children were amazed to notice the different nationalities within the group – French, Tahitian, and Japanese. They noticed that they many wore “surf brands” like us, although they did wear traditional clothing for the dances. They found the French songs a bit quirky – having weird and “naughty components”. Many of the children were amazed at how much they understood when Arnaud spoke to them, and were so proud of their own attempts to communicate.

FINDINGS

How innocent and unworldly many of the children are! The joy of seeing Prep children walk around with their older friends proudly speaking French, “voici the wall” “voici the footy ...

Comments: “Mae speaks good French” – Mae is French (I must have them bluffed)

“They were really nice” – different can be good.

“They didn’t know the rules but they really played hard and were really physical”

“Mae really liked giving us cuddles”

The children were very accepting of any differences e.g. They were very impressed by (and some of the older boys were secretly jealous of) one of our students saying thank you with kisses on both cheeks.

Some of the children who are not always the most enthused at school (in class) loved the whole “hands on” intercultural experience and said, “I now know why it is worth learning another language. That was great”.

Many were overwhelmed by the amount of French they understood when Arnaud spoke to them and were astounded by how many words are similar/the same but pronounced differently.

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

It is vital that I build on these experiences and expose the children to even more.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

Some examples of the students’ work are attached below.

EVALUATION

Obviously, I need to continually expose this isolated school to more and more real experiences and add more “depth to the activities” as their understanding grows. We have applied to have a native speaker stay with us and work in the school – here’s hoping! Staff, parents and children still continually reminisce about the experience and mention how they would like to be involved in another similar experience. The children now take particular note of anything French Polynesian and French and act as though they have “ownership” while imparting to others the new information.

REFLECTION

It made me realise how important and vital these type of experiences are and how many of these country people have had very limited opportunities to relate to and be exposed to different cultures.

FRENCH POLYNESIA

PEOPLE CAME FROM FRENCH POLYNESIA
CAME TO OUR SCHOOL. SOME OF THE
GIRLS TAUGHT US HOW TO DO THEIR
DANCE AND WE TAUGHT THEM HOW TO
PLAY AUSSIE RULES IT WAS FUN. AT THE
END OF THE DAY WE GAVE THEM A
KOALA AND THEY GAVE US SOME
GIFTS. ALL THE GIRLS DID A DANCE AND
THE BOYS DID A SPECIAL TYPE OF
DANCE.

THEY WERE COOL. I HAD A GOOD DAY.

Arnaud & Mai

Arnaud and Mai came from Tahiti.
Arnaud showed us his tattoo it
was really cool. The men in Tahiti
have a tattoo because it is in
there culture so it is normal for
them. Arnaud and Mai spoke
French to us and we could
understand every word they said.

Top Stuff

— understanding



Arnaud and Mai



When Arnaud and Mai came from Tahiti, we all sat on the floor and Arnaud told us about him, Mai, Tahiti and his tattoo. On the tattoo there was the sun, the earth, the sea and the two other parts stood for Mai (his wife) and his son. Arnaud told us all about life in Tahiti, in French we were all amazed how much French we understood! ✕



Top stuff

Newsletter

TAHITIAN VISITORS

We had a great day last Friday. Our Polynesian friends enjoyed some Australian Rules Football skills and taught some of our children how to do Polynesian dances. They also performed a welcome dance.

The school was then presented with a terrific reference book on French Polynesia. This was a great cultural experience. Thanks to Mr. Carmody for organising the football skills and Madame for the whole day.

French Day at Moyhu Primary School

We had some visitor's from Tahiti. They spoke French. When they arrived we started playing soccer with them. When we started the French Polynesians showed us a dance from their country. Mahunna showed us another dance. Did you know that Tahitian people's dance moves *— more understand.* mean something. When they finished we went into our groups and we asked them in French how are you? (ca va?) And Quel age a tu? (How old are you?) At the end of the day we said our goodbyes, gave them some Australian toys and wine that we made last year.