

ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

| TEACHER'S NAME | SCHOOL (and contact details) | LANGUAGE | YEAR LEVEL |
|-------------------------|---|----------|---------------|
| Dr Evelyn Swinnerton | The Pittwater House Schools Ph 02 9981 4400 | French | Year 9 |

CONTEXT

School Context

The school is on the Northern Beaches in Sydney. It is a K-12 Christian non-denominational, independent school with single-sex classes K-10, although some smaller or enrichment classes may be co-educational. The school is 40 years old and was founded by a teacher who saw the need to provide a superior education for boys on the Northern Beaches. 8 years later it opened its doors to girls.

The school mostly draws its students from the Northern Beaches area but it also encourages enrolment of foreign students on a long- or short-term basis. The student population is approximately 800. There are 2 French teachers, 1 part-time and the other full-time. There is also a Chinese teacher for Background speakers. All 3 teachers are relatively new to the school, having been there for 4 - 5 years. Most teachers on the staff have been staff members for 15 – 20 years. After being under-resourced for many years, the French department is gaining more modern materials and facilities with the assistance of AIS and Parents' Association funding. As a result it is enhancing its profile among students and staff members. There is a general view in the school that languages are not important, particularly French. This is being slowly eroded due to the enthusiasm and fun activities offered by the French teachers. Nevertheless we struggle to draw more than 9 or 10 elective students to French.

School's Language Programme

In 2007 students in Years 3 - 6 have 1 x 40 minutes period of French per week; Year 7 have 2 x 40 minutes; Year 8 have 4 x 40 minutes. French is compulsory in Years 7 and 8, as it is in Years 3 – 6. After that it becomes an elective choice. The classes in the Junior School are mostly activity based, rather than teaching grammar. The difficulty is staffing for French in this area. Years 3 and 4 boys are combined for French and Years 4 and 5 girls. This has been due to a decision made in the Senior School to allocate me for 6 periods only in the Junior School. The boys class comprises an eclectic group which is difficult to settle and lessons may be varied on the spot depending on how I find them.

Students and Teachers

Students: The Year 9 elective class who participated in this investigation comprise 2 girls and 5 boys. Ilya is Russian born; Ravi, Arthur, Jesse and Sacha respectively have Indian, English, New Zealand and Canadian parents. Emily and Edward are of Anglo-Australian background.

Teacher:

Evelyn Swinnerton is of Scottish descent. She studied French and German in her undergraduate degree and subsequently taught those languages in a variety of schools in Australia and abroad. She later completed a Diploma in Social Science, a Masters in Philosophy and a PhD at the ANU on Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray, returning to schools to continue teaching French. Evelyn is married to an Anglo-Australian, speaks French with her colleague and school parents, and together with her colleague has led 2 school tours to France twice in the last 3 years.

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

I planned to design a task for my students which would develop intercultural interaction. I intended to observe how I set it up and how my students engaged with it. I was keen to learn how the intercultural is understood in my class and to formulate a mode by which I could develop intercultural language teaching and learning.

The question I chose to ask my students was centred on the French motto of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité. My class comprises seven highly intelligent students, two females and 5 males, all of whom come from diverse cultural backgrounds: Indian, French Canadian, English, New Zealander and Russian. They're all quite entertaining in their own right with strong views and I was interested to see them draw comparisons between these familial backgrounds, the French situation which was their area of study and their own Australian milieu.

I chose this particular area of investigation for three reasons: firstly, I wanted to formalise the process of introducing intercultural learning into my teaching practice (something I had done on an ad hoc basis for some years); secondly, I wanted to engage my students in higher order critical thinking skills which would also serve to help them reflect on their own learning; and lastly, I wanted my students to apply their language skills outside their normal, and possibly too comfortable, class practice.

This required additional planning as I didn't want to stray too far from the year's programme, which would require adjustment of the Scope and Sequence already distributed to students, their families and the Head. So the area of investigation had to be incorporated into a formattable mode of which the vehicle would be my task. This required a number of preliminary steps to set the stage for the task without the latter appearing to be a random one. This point comes back to my earlier comment about formalising a process I already engaged in.

In the first instance I had to explain to my students what the ILTLP project was and my interest and level of involvement. They asked if they could be the class I chose to participate in my investigation. I then had to explain that we were embarking on a slightly different journey and I needed their assistance and honesty. I see this class three times a week and my colleague takes them for a fourth lesson in the week. I felt

that I would have to maximise my time with the class. Rather than following up on an area where the students may have needed further assistance, my colleague and I ensured that we didn't cross paths on our class lessons.

I realised that I would have to deviate from my normal practice with this class where I often devote at least one lesson to explanation and practice of grammatical issues, eg we had been working on past tenses for some time. In addition I wanted to encourage them to use the target language beyond artificial and predictable questions about their activities on the weekend or yesterday. I realised that I would have to be careful about not being too ambitious, as this was only Year 9 with limited exposure to the French language. Nevertheless I wanted to provide material and ideas which were more challenging and potentially more interesting, to spend less time on actual grammar study and to incorporate into the task more of the work they had done in terms of grammar acquisition.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Having explained the background of the ILTLP project, I told my students, whom I had also taught in Years 7 and 8, that the preliminary steps to the task were bound to be changeable initially as this process was a bit experimental. We began with the obvious discussion of stereotypes. The process was quite entertaining as the students mimicked the mannerisms and accents of every national stereotype, including French and Australian, which they deemed worthy of comical attention. The discussion then moved on to include questions about whether stereotypes could be a positive force or are they always negative. Should we avoid stereotypes in all instances? Could stereotypes in fact be the first insight into how we view others and how we view ourselves in a way which piques our interest to delve further and learn more about other people and other cultures.

The next step was for the students to reflect on scenarios in which people might not be free and equal. They also wrote questions which touched on the ethical issues involved in such situations, eg did criminals have any rights, how would that contrast with the plight of political prisoners, illegal immigrants or refugees denied access to other countries and forced to return home to an uncertain future.

Then we looked at the 'devise' or motto of France itself. What does the motto mean? What do the words mean to them living in Australia? On the Northern Beaches? Within their circle of friends? In their opinion, what would these French revolutionary ideals mean to other young people in the world? I asked them to reflect on the Australian concept of mateship, of the ANZAC tradition and comradeship. How does this compare with the notion of 'brotherhood'? Did they, as a co-educational class, think that the idea of a brotherhood was inclusive of females? If so, did they see themselves, within their age grouping of 14-16, as a different 'tribe'? Reflecting on their own existence and within their own family experience, did they see themselves as having more freedom and rights at school than at home? This led to a discussion on cultures within the school. Being in a 'cool' group seemed to be more liberating in some ways. 'Uncool' also meant you weren't as equal.

Having set the stage at a basic level and inviting much classroom discussion and personal reflection, I moved to some fairly passive activities. I presented a CD-ROM in English on the interactive white board. The programme documented the reasons behind the French Revolution. This took two periods, and a further period for a Question and Answer forum in a mix of French and English. At a later stage I sang and then translated La Marseillaise, the French national anthem. We contrasted it against a number of other national anthems which they knew. To demonstrate the passion with which the French

sing their anthem, I showed a clip of the French national rugby team at the 2003 Rugby World Cup singing La Marseillaise. Again we contrasted how zealously a country might regard their freedom as evidenced through a national anthem and how these revolutionary ideals could be so embedded in the psyche of a nation such as France. How did this sit with the influx of immigrants into France, particularly those of the Muslim faith? Could they draw any comparisons with the issues behind the Cronulla riots in Sydney recently.

The penultimate exercise, albeit a fairly passive but essential one, was the viewing of the film 'Danton' with Gérard Depardieu. This film depicts how the conjunction of friendship and the search for freedom from oppression can have disastrous consequences when there is no balance of power. The conclusion of the film suggests that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. This film, in French with English subtitles, provided another platform for discussion which attempted to tie in all the ideas arising from previous discussions on freedom, equality and brotherhood.

In providing more passive exercises which were designed to encourage discussion and reflection in the long term, I changed my normal mode of lesson delivery. Usually it is far more teacher directed and more task oriented. The tasks and other lesson content are perhaps more conventional in simplicity of material, directed towards them, their families, school, activities and everyday life. In these steps towards a task as yet not articulated, I sensed a certain amount of indolence mixed with a little apprehension as to where all this was leading. There were a lot more questions from me probing into their thoughts and feelings and I think that sometimes they were a little confused as to how this actually related to French. They seemed to feel more comfortable if I asked them to read a short story and I corrected pronunciation, or if they did a reading comprehension task. They were also more aware that my questions were purposeful to the extent that I was either recording or transcribing their responses.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

Throughout my investigation I was more concerned with observing the behaviour of my students and their reactions to the change in class practice and the reflections I was requiring them to make. Some of their responses or answers were written but most exchanges were verbal. Their final task was of course a transcription of their interview with a family member. My own observations of their behaviour and language were in writing.

The language and behaviour I observed was at times quite sceptical in nature. I believe the students thought at times I had taken leave of my senses and were hopeful I'd get back to normal soon. Regrettably I did not audio record all discussions but one exchange was video recorded. On that occasion the students were not as vocal or as articulate as they normally are and I believe this was due to the fact they were aware they were being recorded. Although they and their parents had consented to the recording, they seemed concerned about who would see the material. Their concern seemed to be restricted to whether the recording would be viewed by students at the school.

I analysed the data through my own reflections on the students' responses and reactions to stimuli. 2 of the students in this group had been on a recent trip to France with my colleague and me. They were more comfortable with my approach. Their language had improved since the trip and we were able to draw on some of their experiences as exchanges evolved. I tried to involve them in this process as much as possible to hook the others. What had they noticed when they were in France? How had

the waiter reacted when I wasn't ready to order? Was he rude or was I just taking up his time so he became annoyed? I found I was constantly trying to personalise the issues to engage the students with the intercultural. Because the department had been in such a parlous state before my colleague and I began, and because the students had no enthusiasm for French as a result of this, we are really ripe for change. I also believe strongly in the need to look at learning from a student point of view and encourage them to shoulder some responsibility for their learning, a practice which is not prevalent at the school.

FINDINGS

I was not surprised to find that it was quite hard to shift my students into so much discussion and reflection on a theme such as this. I found that although there was some reluctance to reveal too much of themselves in their responses, they often lost this when the element of discussion became more absorbing. The students had indicated to me that they wanted to learn more about France and the French and yet until the discussion came back to familiar grounds, they seemed initially sceptical of the direction. I think this is in part due to the way I set up the investigation. When I asked the students to begin a learning log and asked them to record their reflections or thoughts after a lengthy preliminary discussion on stereotypes, the students seemed somewhat confused about what was required. I could only conclude that their conservative approach to language learning was so entrenched that a lot of work was required to 'dig' them out. Eventually they did write a few sentences in English, some wrote a mix of French and English, and I asked if they'd like to share those thoughts. Again only a few volunteered before the bell rang and they rose to leave, somewhat relieved.

After some more sessions in this vein, students seemed less reluctant to give their views or feelings but still didn't push the discussions despite the amount of stimuli. I concluded that this was the type of questions being asked by me, particularly in relation to analysis of what was asked, viewed or discussed.

In the end task I believe there was a genesis of critical thinking emerging which had been my objective. But throughout the investigation there had been a certain amount of lethargy as was particularly evidenced when I viewed the video recording.

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

The behaviour of my students in relation to my questioning technique or perhaps the questions asked forced me to consider after each session how I could adapt or modify the material in order to engage the students more. I think this was fruitful in the end as I not only received the predictable in terms of their responses but some of their responses had not even occurred to me. Some responses revealed a school culture which had not been obvious to me, eg there are more playing areas available to males than females, forcing the girls to sit around and chat or watch the boys play, as opposed to being active themselves. This question tied in with a discussion about what French school playgrounds looked like, the behaviour of French students and their lunchtime or leisure activities. These discussions at this level were most revealing and enjoyable for the students in contrast to what they perceived as more ephemeral, eg broader issues of equal pay, gender equality etc. They evinced no interest in the anomaly that French women didn't have to the right to vote until the late 1940s, well behind all other developed countries and in stark contrast to the boast of the French motto.

Clearly these general findings show me that I'll have to build into my programme the groundwork which will lead students to begin to question such issues. I had explained to them in setting up my investigation that French students studied Philosophy at school and that their discourse was as a result more analytical and reflective based on critical thinking. In other words, the French are exposed to this from an early age. However I found that my students' attitude to their language learning is still teacher-centred and teacher-directed. More scaffolding is needed to assist them in the task and to lead them to more reflection on what they are learning and to take more responsibility for that learning.

I was disappointed that the final written task was not done as well as I expected, with the exception of one student who is quite individualistic and a perfectionist. I hadn't expected that the others wouldn't make more of an effort. I had been prepared for a short interview transcription and reflection and this had happened. I hadn't expected that they wouldn't draw more on our discussions in their reflective writing in the final task. One student simply wrote the reasons for the French Revolution, in English. She told me no one was home to interview. She was to send me an interview in the mail but I still haven't received it. The other students had understood the task, which had been given in writing.

As I've already indicated I had trouble in setting up the investigation. I knew what I wanted to do but narrowing the focus to a more coherent one for Year 9 students was difficult to do and I struggled with my questions and stimuli throughout my investigation.

Perhaps a simpler framework to the task would have helped but I believe the path became clearer as the investigation progressed. Rather than showing lengthy films, it might have been more productive if I showed sufficient clips of films and CD-ROMS, written materials etc as a stimulus to discussion and written reflection. A variety of media might have produced a better outcome. I think, however, that the recalcitrance of my students to reflect critically on what they are learning has been somewhat softened.

The value of this investigation was in undergoing a personal journey to rediscover my joy in language teaching. I appreciate that intercultural language teaching and learning is an important tool and mode of delivery. I intend to work at beginning to factor this more into my work in the Junior School, particularly in the hope that it filters through eventually into the Senior School. I refer here to my particular task with Year 9. The value of this teaching and learning is apparent to me as a way of engaging students more in authentic and valuable materials and global thinking.

While I am extremely hopeful that my students will be more open to such discussions in the future, my findings revealed a lack of critical thinking in a more global sense. I had hoped that even reflecting with their parents might have broadened the interview. I think the findings showed that they were either not more amenable to complex thinking/discussion with a family member or did not want to go beyond a simple language framework. The written aspect of language work is always more difficult. If students are asked to write about their holidays, write a letter etc, they say it's boring but to put more complex ideas in simple French seems out of their realm, in their opinion. It would be good to demonstrate how this could be done. I thought I should also model a simple reflection for them but was afraid it might influence them simply to copy. This is what I normally would have done. Breaking out of the old mould is also on my agenda and not just an outcome I want for my students.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

I'll present material here in 2 parts: written questions for the interview which was the final task and a transcription of the video recording I made of the students in discussion with me. The questions for the interview with a family member were designed by the students.

1. Arthur interviewed his father John who was born and lived in England during his school years. He asked 4 questions: Were all races treated equally when you were my age?; Were all age groups treated equally when you were my age?; Did males and females treat each other as equals when you were my age?; Did all races mix together at your school and was your school multicultural?
2. Ilya, who was born in Russia, asked his mother, also Russian born: What does liberty mean for you?; Is it different in Australia compared with Russia?; Was liberty different for you as a student in Russia?; Where do you prefer to enjoy your liberty?
3. Jesse's parents are divorced and he lives in 2 homes. He interviewed his father: What is your definition of liberty?; How do you feel liberty affects you?; What experience do you have with liberty?; Does liberty affect your friends?

I have presented the questions these students asked because although each has only focussed on 1 aspect of the French motto, and the same one at that, each reflected on it differently. Arthur related his questions to a comparison of his father's experiences to himself ('when you were my age') and school; Ilya obviously compared his country of birth with his mother's experiences there and here in Australia; Jesse looked at a more political setting with individual rights as his focus.

As the final task, albeit brief due to time constraints in the end, I was heartened that the students had demonstrated an understanding of the issues sufficiently to conduct an interview on an individual and critical platform.

An earlier work had been the video recording of a class discussion which was a little muted perhaps due to the presence of the video camera. It also covered some material of a previous discussion which had not been recorded. This is a brief and loose transcription of some of the discussion, which will be available on CD on the Reporting Day.

Present on the day of recording: Arthur, Ravi, Ilya, Jesse, Sacha and Emily.

Arthur had just googled the term 'mateship' on the computer and it was screened on the interactive white board. Arthur indicated that it meant friendship or solidarity among men. I asked whether this was inclusive of women. I don't think they truly acknowledged that they thought it didn't include women. I mentioned the film 'Danton' which we had watched. They believed the message of the story was that people should work together. I indicated that while the film showed that strong ideals had been the driving force of the French Revolution, there was also a message that power corrupts. No dramatic response to that from the students. None either to the question of whether they reflected on their own freedom or equality, but when asked if they thought they were a different 'tribe', they became quite animated. They all agreed they were but couldn't specify why apart from the age difference. They clearly saw the need to belong and be accepted as part of a

group, even if it was a general grouping at school. But it emerged that even within the school population there were divisions: Asians, the cool groups and the not cool groups. At school the Asian students tend to sit apart and not mix. The students agreed this was in part due to their desire to speak their own language, but they also acknowledged that the rest of the school students make no effort to help them integrate into the school community. Further discussion revealed that there were specific groupings which bridged the age group. These students mostly didn't fit into their age groups and felt more comfortable with similar students who were also on the outer. The girls also indicated that they felt on the fringe when it came to sport. In Junior School they had all played together but in the Senior School there was social pressure for girls to 'be girls'. The girls were not allowed to be in a certain area which became a hand ball area for the boys and if they were to mix the boys had to come to them to 'hang out'.

As a community on the Northern Beaches, all the students felt that we were more relaxed, calm, laid back, even pampered, due to our beach lifestyle. In terms of defining an image, we were probably all viewed as surfies, in their opinion.

On the question of whether they had more freedom at home than at school, they were quite divided along family lines. Sacha felt that at school there were more rules whereas Jesse said there were more restrictions at home. All agreed the answer depended on individual situations. All agreed also that they probably had more freedom both at home and at school than their parents had. This raised questions of where other people might not be free. The students considered the situation of people fleeing China and its 1 child policy or of escaping from warfare to freedom only to find themselves detained in another country.

As to their perceptions of life in other countries and their parents' or grandparents' lifestyles abroad, we explored the question of another divide. Until now the discourse had revealed a certain naivety on the part of the students. They seemed quite unaware of historical and political situations in other countries. In Canada Sacha claimed that there were no differences between Francophone and English speakers. The only difference she had noted was that in travelling from Ottawa to Quebec the road signs changed to French! No doubt other differences are perceived in conversation with adult English speakers who can be quite antagonistic towards the Francophones. Sacha indicated that the divide between poverty and wealth could create inequality and that her mother had experienced this when she was growing up in Canada. Girls who were from wealthy homes were more popular. Her mother wanted to be invited to those beautiful houses. Emily's grandparents lived in Nigeria at a time when white people were looked up to because they were white. Ravi acknowledged that although he knew of the caste system, there were also different levels of poverty to take into consideration. Having money could be seen as an equaliser. All agreed that money, colour or race can create levels of inequality.

Our annual French Dinner this year will focus on La Francophonie and I asked students to consider, in the light of our discussions and reflections so far, in which francophone country would they like to have a correspondent. Sacha thought that New Caledonia would be good because it was an island, close to Australia and there might be some similarities as well as contrasts. Emily opted for Africa and the Ivory Coast. The others didn't have a preference. The question then moved to the importance of learning French. Some European countries have an obvious need for its residents to learn other languages. In Russia, Ilya had to study French or German. As in the early days of the Sorbonne, students from other countries had the need for a common language for lectures and communication generally,

hence the area where the students lived became known as the Latin Quarter. So the discussion veered towards the question of why we learn French. The French were great colonisers, had an affinity for travel, geography. Through intermarriages at the aristocratic level, French was a courtly and diplomatic language.

EVALUATION

I think that the investigation was personally interesting. Its progress was bumpy in the sense that I was happier when there was more action in the classroom. I wondered if I should have set questions to be answered or written reflections to be made when we watched the CD-ROM or the film, 'Danton'. At the same time I felt that such an exercise might be intrusive and after all the task was not the French Revolution as such, and my investigation was focussed on my students' interaction with the intercultural. Nevertheless, watching films in class is not high on my agenda for language lessons unless there is a written activity attached. This aspect of the exercise made me a little uncomfortable, so I made notes and interrupted occasionally to draw attention to particular poignant or relevant comments in the film.

The whole investigation was valuable because I not only set my students a challenge and took them out of their comfort zone, but did the same for myself in my teaching practice. I recognise that the task I set was quite difficult at this level. I moved from my normal lesson delivery of hands-on work to a much more reflective task which took my students beyond the mere learning of a language, the geography, art, music and literature of France and the French character.

The attitude of the students to the investigation varied. One student said he didn't learn anything from the task, yet his class participation had been quite insightful. The other students' views ranged from pensive 'ok' to a fairly enthusiastic response which indicated that the student had enjoyed the exercise and found it really interesting. I think this variation in response reflects the conservative nature of my students towards language learning. I was trying to put the responsibility for their learning further towards them than I had in the past, and this may have been somewhat confronting.

REFLECTION

I was initially very keen to take part in the programme and quite excited about the prospects of enlivening language learning at school by incorporating intercultural language learning. I was nevertheless apprehensive about setting a meaningful task and how to implement it into my programme. Having chosen a small group to work with I hoped that I could successfully manage to improve their language skills despite the challenging theme. The ILTLP project came at an opportune time when I was beginning to feel stale in my teaching and was contemplating retirement. The Head of the Junior School asked if I was interested in applying to participate. As I went online to find out more about the project, my appetite was certainly whetted. As a woman 'd'un certain âge', I felt I needed a challenge to encourage myself to remain in teaching. Had I done it all?

The opportunity to meet regularly with other language teachers was a real boon. We were a group of women with a sprinkling of men, all experiencing similar flashes of

angst, all looking for innovative ways to stimulate our classes. This was particularly the case with jaded students or teachers. Beyond what we were learning with the project, we were able to help each other with 'new tricks' or advice. Networking in this way was really encouraging because it reminded me that language teachers are a creative lot. Connecting with the same teachers over several sessions has also enabled us to share ideas, try them out with our classes and report back to each other.

To me, the French Revolution was a pivotal period in world history. Beyond discussing it with Year 8 and setting them the task to build their own guillotine, I had not found the opportunity to incorporate it into my teaching programme. At the same time I have always tried to explain the French character to my students to counter negative attitudes regarding their perceived rudeness or arrogance. Hence the question of the French 'devises'. Yes, I had my challenge but I spent most of the time doubting I could actually achieve it with Year 9.

I found that I needed to spend a great deal more time preparing for the lesson. I researched the Revolution and Reign of Terror in terms of finding websites which would be useful. This was fun and interesting for the students, although French sites were more difficult for them and too much time was spent explaining them for student interest to be sustained. A balance was needed. My main problem was trying to refocus a quite large task or investigative area and shrink it to a manageable size for the purposes of this project. I also needed to 'translate' the more challenging aspects of my theme of the French motto into something the students could still deal with intellectually. Because I mainly deal with the younger students and don't engage in broader or more mature discussions in French, I had to ensure that my own usual off-the-cuff vocabulary and expressions would be adequate to engage with the students in a more critical framework and that they would be able to understand and to respond. What was lacking was an appropriate bank of vocabulary for the students to work with and we frequently had to stop the flow of a discussion to explain or find appropriate vocabulary or expressions. Having stated that I wanted to encourage the students to use the target language, I worried that they would become frustrated in the attempt. I encouraged the use of the dictionary, which I found that they were sometimes reluctant to use and was pleased to find in the course of the project that increasingly they would use it of their own volition in adding to their own discourse, either written or verbal. Due to the age of the students and the questions I was asking, I needed to develop scaffolding which would support them. As they are all of similar abilities, individuals didn't need to be singled out for greater scaffolding to support them than the others but if I repeated this task with another class, this may be necessary.

By focussing on the intercultural I noticed that I was really doing things in reverse to my normal process where intercultural reflection would be incidental to a lesson and the reflection my own observation to the class. The intercultural focus necessitated a presentation of stimuli designed to elicit critical responses from my students. It was a process rather like an archaeological dig. Not only did we reveal what was buried but we actually dug ourselves out of the entrenched *modus operandi*. Even though I felt my questioning techniques were still too teacher directed, the students did begin to engage with each other in discussion as they became more animated. Unfortunately the French didn't flow between students. It remained directed at the teacher. They were nonetheless engaging in critical and reflective analysis, which was at least 1 of my planned outcomes. In terms of propelling these students towards a more global view of the world and not their limited familial environs, I think we have made some progress.

My questions still remain about how weaker students would be able to participate in

such a module under similar circumstances, and how they could be supported in a mixed-ability group. What scaffolding would they require to participate fully and how could the teacher be fully engaged with the group while supporting weaker students? The other dilemma was one of explicit language teaching. Does the provision of a bank of vocabulary, expressions and contextual learning for a specific purpose add or detract from the intercultural focus?

This process of reflection on how I teach has certainly shaken up my thinking and I look forward to rewriting my programmes with the focus on intercultural language learning.