

## ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVEL
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### CONTEXT

Brentwood Secondary College (over 1,200 students and growing) is a large secondary college in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.

Students are mainly Anglo, Indian and Chinese in ethnicity, but the cultural mix is increasing, especially as there are more paying Asian students joining the school community. The parent population is mainly middle/aspirational class, but with a growing number of single-parent families.

The two languages offered to VCE level are German and Japanese. Most of the Asian students choose Japanese.

Of the students who choose German, most are from white/Anglo monolingual families.

### AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The following unit of work is designed to be used at the Junior level (preferably year 7) in High school.

Although the following questions are based specifically on the video series 'Hallo aus Berlin' (available from the Goethe Institute), similar questions could be used with any video which introduces students to the cultural values, way of life and thinking in German speaking countries.

Initially students will be exploring what makes up their *personal world*. This discussion would have already been broached in the English course, but this will now be explored from a different point of view during German classes.

It would be advantageous to introduce this material during semester 2, so that students already have some basic knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure, in order to answer some basic questions related to the material in German.

The following key questions could be raised before the video series to direct students' thinking. They have to learn to notice, to compare, to respect and after experiencing differences also to reflect on what they have learned.

Key questions: ***What is your ethnic background? What other languages are spoken in your extended family? Who make up your family? Which suburb do you live in? What traditions/customs are important to your family? What ethnic groups are represented in your school/class?***

Since the aim of this unit of work is for students to reflect on and make comparisons with the German culture, they will be asked to answer the following question, BEFORE viewing any material:

***What do you expect German teenagers to be like?  
Do you think they will be different to you? In what way? Why?***

It is important for this intercultural learning to be in the students' first language, for them to really think deeply about their views and make important comparisons with their personal world, as there is no other specific forum for this knowledge acquisition in their school programme.

The German questions based on each episode would be much simpler and would be based on cultural rather than intercultural information, due to language limitations at this level.

I chose this area of investigation because of a single incident at the beginning of 2007. We were covering the topic of German greetings in class and I was demonstrating the German art of handshaking, when a student called out "That is just crazy!"

I suggested that it was maybe "different" to what he was used to, rather than "crazy". With this project, I wanted to simply demonstrate that "different" can sometimes be very interesting, even fascinating, rather than "crazy".

### CLASSROOM PRACTICE

1. We had an initial pre-video discussion about our ethnic backgrounds, the type of families we belong to, the suburbs in which we live, the traditions/customs which are important to us (ranging from Christmas, birthdays, Name Days to Grand Final celebrations).
2. Video No.1 was shown and then we had another discussion about what we had seen, before writing our own responses.
3. The oral work in German (cultural information from the video) was covered in a separate lesson.
4. There was a short introduction about "Food", before video No.2 was shown, then a class discussion, after which the students wrote their responses.
5. The oral work in German was again covered in a separate lesson.

### DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

1. The only data used was in the form of two written responses, although we did have discussions before video no.1 and after video no.2.
2. In hindsight, these discussions should have been recorded, because there were things that were not expressed verbally, that the students felt they could express in the written form.
3. I analysed the data by reading through the responses and sorting them into categories of opinion.

### FINDINGS

1. The pre-video class discussion was hesitant at first, but students warmed to the topic quickly when they realised there were no "right/wrong" answers. Their subsequent responses to the following questions were mostly very thoughtful: **What do you expect German teenagers to be like? Do you think they will be different to you? In what way? Why?**
  - 1/17 students (5.9%) wrote that "Everything in Germany is different."
  - 12/17 students (70.6%) mentioned a combination from the following list: Different traditions/holidays, weather, food or sports.
  - 2/17 students (11.8%) thought German teenagers "might be the same or might be different".
  - 2/17 students (11.8%) felt German teenagers "will be the same" as us.
2. After the first video about 5 teenagers living in Berlin, students answered the question: **In what way do young people in the video have a way of life that is similar to yours?**
  - 2/17 students (11.8%) felt that there were no similarities whatsoever.

13/17 students (76.5%) listed activities that they had in common with the German teenagers e.g. shopping, having pets, doing homework, going on a bike ride, having fun, doing “the same activities as us”

1/17 students (5.9%) thought “their life is exactly like ours.”

1/17 students (5.9%) felt they couldn’t make a comparison because “it was merely a children’s show.”

3. Students had trouble with the question: **How has your view of German people changed? If so, then in what way?**

13/17 students (76.5 %) felt that their view hadn’t changed, although their answers showed me that they had indeed noticed many similarities between the German teenagers and themselves, both in their written responses and in the class discussion following the video, which they had not considered previously.

1/17 students (5.9%) felt Germans “were a bit weird, “but no further explanation was given.

1/17 students (5.9%) stated “I thought they were aggressive, but they’re not aggressive.”

4. The series of questions about food and drink, weren’t so “confronting”, in fact some students found the questions a bit mundane and hence the rather ordinary answers. More people were willing to take part in this class discussion. Was the topic somehow more “safe”? Some students tried to tell me where I should go for good coffee and cake, since I don’t know the area so well.

### INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

1. In the initial discussion about our ethnic backgrounds, I was most surprised to discover that it was generally assumed that as a German teacher, I must be German myself, although they knew that my native language was Russian. They had somehow missed the connection.

2. After viewing the first video, it was too early to ask students the question: **How has your view of German people changed? If so, then in what way?**

This type of question would be more suited to the end of a series of videos, when the students have been exposed to a whole spectrum of cultural information, from which deductions could be made. I would delete this question next time the topic is covered. The above question also seemed to cause some confusion in their minds, as their responses seemed to clash with the previous question: **Is this what you expected? Why?** The responses to these two questions were conflicting.

3. I felt that the class discussions were very positive. Most students were interested in other points of view. The most academic students were the ones who were initially most vocal about their opinions. Students from a non-Australian background at first were reluctant to join in the initial discussion and mention their background, language spoken at home etc. but by the second discussion, this group had become more confident and vocal.

4. I was able to hear what the students had to say about aspects of the German way of life, but they often wrote down what they didn’t want to or couldn’t say in front of their peers.

### MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

The two question sheets used by the students are attached to this document.

## EVALUATION

1. My questions need further refining, but overall I am happy with the initial responses.
2. Due to a variety of factors, I was unable to complete all the videos and responses within the time-frame, but hope to do so before the end of the term.
3. Students were very interested in the videos, although they are somewhat dated.
4. They treated the videos seriously and not as “fill in lessons”, because I had explained to them that the discussions and their written responses were an important part of the language course.
5. I had used these videos in previous years and there had been discussions about the material as well, but comparing one’s own experiences with the cultural material presented added an extra dimension to the students’ learning.
6. I felt that I really “taught” the class something valuable about themselves, which I hadn’t felt before. Previously I had felt I was teaching them only about the German language and way of life.
7. To be totally honest, I was somewhat sceptical about the intrinsic value of inter-cultural learning until I had to think about it deeply and prepare the teaching material. The penny finally dropped when I had to teach in this mode.
8. My students asked questions which I had never before heard in my class such as: What is tradition really? What does “custom” mean?
9. For Year 8, I would now like to continue a program of inter-cultural discussion with the remaining videos.
10. I can now clearly see how the Year 8 cultural assignment could be converted into an inter-cultural assignment and would like to approach other faculty members about this.

## REFLECTION

1. I honestly felt that my investigation was one of the very simplest topics covered in comparison to that of my colleagues, but I was amazed at how excited I became about the material, which I had previously taught and “knew so well.”
2. The class responded positively when told that we were trialling something “new.”
3. I now feel that certain vocabulary topics, such as food, (which we cover in Year 8) could be ‘introduced’ much earlier into the course, because students **find it so interesting**. We are bound too much by what textbook writers “tell” us to do.
4. After the positive response I got from the second video I will be showing a series of food photos on my laptop and covering some of that vocabulary with this class. I am doing it because it is what the students themselves really want to learn.
5. This experience has given me the confidence to try out new things with the Year 7 class in particular, as there is less pressure this time of the year at junior level.
6. This experience has also given me more confidence in speaking to my colleagues, as I had to address the faculty about the project.

**Attachments**

## Hallo aus Berlin - Video Series

### What do you think?

Name.....

*What is your ethnic background? What other languages are spoken in your extended family? Who make up your family? Which suburb do you live in? What traditions/customs are important to your family? What ethnic groups are represented in your school/class?*

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*What do you expect German teenagers to be like? Do you think they will be different to you? In what way? Why?*

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Folge 1 - Wir

1. *In what way do young people in the video have a way of life that is similar to yours?*

.....  
.....

2. *Is this what you expected? Why?.....*

.....

3. *How has your view of German people changed? If so, then in what way?.....*

.....  
.....

Oral work in German

1. *Wo wohnst du: in einem Dorf, in einer Kleinstadt oder in einer Großstadt?.....*

.....

2. *Wohnst du in einem Haus oder in einer Wohnung?.....*

.....

3. *Wie heißt deine Schule?.....*

4. *Welche Sprache sprichst du zu Hause?.....*

5. *Was machst du in deiner Freizeit?.....*

Folge 5 - Essen und Trinken

1. *Where do Miriam and Jessica eat sometimes and is that where you would meet up with family or friends? Why?.....*

.....

2a. *Thomas and his aunty go out to have coffee and cake at a café. Is this something you would do with your family? .....*

2b. *If so, where could you do this in Melbourne?.....*

3. *What do you think of this custom and why?.....*

.....

4. *People from many different backgrounds live in Germany. What country does Jala's family come from?.....*

5. *How is that similar to life in Australia? From which backgrounds are some of your friends at school? People in your suburb?.....*

.....

.....



## Folge 6 – In der Schule

1. *Are all Australian schools like yours? Do you know of any differences here in Victoria, or in other states?*
2. *What times does school start and finish in Germany?*
3. *Compare this to your school day. What are the advantages and disadvantages of our system compared to the German?*
4. *What is your view of smoking being allowed at the age of 16 in school, as in Germany? Should it be allowed here in Australia? Why?/Why not?*
  - 5a. *Was the punishment Arno received for smoking severe enough? Why?*
  - 5b. *What would have happened to him in your school?*
  - 5c. *Which system do you think is fairer? Give reasons for your view.*
5. *What do you think German students would like about school in Australia? What wouldn't they like?*

## Oral work in German

1. *Wann beginnt der Schultag in Deutschland?*
2. *Wann endet der Schultag in Deutschland?*
3. *Ist das eine gute Idee? Warum?*
4. *Ab 16 darf man in deutschen Schulen rauchen. Ist das eine gute Idee für Schulen in Australien?*
5. *Ist eine Schuluniform*
  - a. *praktisch*
  - b. *eine altmodische Tradition*
  - c. *zu teuer*

## Folge 9 – Ferien und Feste

1. *Which holidays and festivals are important to your and your family?*
2. *Describe Elvan's festival Beiram. Who participate in this event? What do children receive?*
- 3a. *Describe Jessica's confirmation.*
- 3b. *Which religion does she belong to?*
- 3c. *What happens after the ceremony?*
4. *How do these two festivals compare with holidays and festivals that are important to you?*

Evidence of Learning.

*Evidence will be gathered from participation in class discussions and also from written responses.*

*Self-assessment should be included, as this recognises learning as a personal process.*