

## ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVEL
Hiroko Mori	Research PS	Japanese	Grade 3 and 4

### AREA OF INVESTIGATION

I have been wondering if it is worthwhile for students to learn Japanese language, when it often amounts to some Japanese words and phrases that they may forget or may not use in the future. I presume there is rather more value in learning Japanese culture, especially, that which is hidden or embedded in the language as ILTLP suggests. Therefore, I focused on two different ways of addressing and referring to parents in Japanese. Why do Japanese people have different words for parents? What about in Australian English? Are there any differences between 'dad' and 'father'? Most of all, are there any differences between Japanese families and Australian families? I let students explore "families".

### CLASSROOM PRACTICE

I chose the topic "family" because of the Father's Day in Australia and the Respect for the Aged Day in Japan in Term 3.

I gave students fewer vocabulary items and less practice time than usual but I gave more "why" questions and many small discussion times. This meant that there was more focus on cultural understanding. Every lesson the students had a sub topic to discuss.

- Week 1 Families in Japan and Australia, "What is family?"
- Week 2 Family names
- Week 3 What do you call Mum and Dad in Japanese and in English?
- Week 4 Introduce my family; role play
- Week 5 Family celebration; Father's Day and Respect for the Aged Day Origami shirt card
- Week 6 Family in Kanji
- Week 7 What is Uchi and Soto?
- Week 8 Why are you an 'elder' or 'younger' sister?
- Week 9 Japanese family animation; Sazae-san
- Week 10 Imaginary Japanese host family

### DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

This is an example of data I gathered. The discussion topic was 'your family member'. I asked students to write down their own family. I had also asked a Grade 5 class in Japan to do the same thing. The Australian students compared the Australia family members to Japanese ones. They made a Venn diagram and discussed the similarities and differences. The following are comments the Australian students made after discussion. The additional information is added in bracket to make sense.

'We wrote the family's names (like Josh or Emily) because we respect them and love them.'

'I think that Australians chose pets, nana, uncle, auntie and cousins because we see them.'

'(Japanese students didn't choose pets, nana, uncle, auntie and cousins because) they might think that they are not as important as the other members.'

'They didn't choose fish and birds because they didn't have any or they don't want to include them as family.'

'We think that only Australian students chose pets because we include pets as a family. And maybe Japanese people think differently.'

(Japanese students wrote 'the first son and the second son' instead of 'elder brother and younger brother'.) 'I think that only Japanese people chose son because we are children.'

'They (Japanese students) include first and second son because they think it is important.'

We think that the Japanese only call the boys 'brother' if they are both boys. (They may call boys differently if there are any girls in the family.)

### **FINDINGS**

What we learned is that teaching is not only the way the students learn. Discussion is a good way to learn as well. Through discussion, they learned by themselves and understood the differences and similarities between Japanese and Australia. They discussed the reasons why Japanese people do and say things in a certain way. I'm quite sure the students gained a deeper understanding than by just being told.

### **INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION**

The students participated in learning more than when they are just being told words and sentences. They engaged more with their learning.

I also learned from the students' comments what I had not expected and I have never thought of. This implies that there is something more happening in language learning than I know: in addition, there is something coming from the students, something that the students can contribute towards their own learning.

### **MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS**

I have supplied:

- a Japanese family form in Hiragana on which all the students filled in the composition and family names of the Japanese families;
- a similar whole class sheet on which every student wrote his family composition giving the names by which he/she calls the family members;
- a Venn diagram used by students to fill in what family members are called in Australia, in Japan and which family names are common to both.

Editor: These could not be shown here.

### **EVALUATION**

The investigation I undertook as part of the project started well. The students seemed to participate well in the discussions which gave them an opportunity to show their knowledge of Japanese and to think, reflect and give their opinions. This project has been a good experiment because it gives me a new direction. It has also been valuable for the students because in the opportunity for more active

participation they displayed more interest and involvement than before.

In the future, I'll introduce and focus more on difference and similarities between Japan and Australia, and diversity within Australia. My new investigation explores diversity and that there is no right or wrong, but just difference and we must recognize and enjoy the difference.

### **REFLECTION**

I found that I myself was the one who had got bored teaching Japanese with lots of vocabularies, repeating, practices, and cultural activities like Origami. I needed more links between language teaching and learning about culture. In this investigation, I enjoyed teaching, in other words, I enjoyed observing students' discussions, knowing their ideas, interacting with students and teaching them the words they wanted to know.