

ILTLP CLASSROOM-BASED INVESTIGATION REPORT

TEACHER'S NAME	SCHOOL	LANGUAGE	YEAR LEVEL
Robert Poole	South Newman P.S Pilbara District 9175 1061	Japanese	6

AREA OF INVESTIGATION

The area I decided to concentrate my investigation on was Japanese Gestures and Body Language.

I chose to investigate this area because I wanted to demonstrate the “non-verbal” aspects of language to my students. I wanted to teach them that if they were to go to Japan, they would be able to communicate with the Japanese people through a non-verbal means. I also selected this area due to the enjoyment the students would experience; the ability to incorporate a *native Japanese speaker* to assist in demonstrating the body gestures into the ILTLP project and I also believed the Japanese body gestures/body language classroom-based investigation would be a fantastic way to enhance a component of the Japanese culture into the students’ learning. We then looked at body gestures and body language used here in Australia and discussed the two cultures as the intercultural component. The students also stated that learning the Japanese body gestures would be a ‘useful means to communicate with Japanese people’ here in Australia who were suffering from communication difficulties. Furthermore not only Japanese people but other nationalities too.

A native Japanese speaker was included into the intercultural language and learning to help maximise the learning outcomes and enhancement of cultural understandings. I even included my practicum student from Curtin University, who assisted in recording some of the videos.

The planning process did not really alter (as compared to normal). I planned as normal: that is, a brief outline was used to assist in the operation of the classroom based investigation.

Basically there were no *major* changes to my regular practice of teaching. Generally speaking, I utilised the researchers’ advice and tried to conceptualise the teachings. I wanted the students to absorb as much information as possible from the investigation. I wanted to change reactions/ ways of thinking/ motivate the students so they themselves became interculturally aware.

CLASSROOM PRACTICE

I devised a program which would suit the learning needs of my students. I developed 10 questions relating to Japanese Body Gestures and Body Language.

1. Why do we use gestures?

2. What kinds of gestures do we have here in Australia?
3. Why do you believe the Japanese do these kinds of gestures?
4. What are some of your favourite gestures?
5. What other cultures use similar gestures?
6. What are some different kinds of other countries'/cultures' gestures?
7. When can you use certain types of gestures?
8. Who uses gestures and when? (Look at different ages/differentiate between male and female behaviours and relating them to your own culture)
9. What is the importance of gestures?
10. What do you think of the Japanese gestures? (to motivate/change reactions?)

I brought in a Japanese native speaker, from the community of Newman, into the learning environment to assist in the classroom teaching and learning which had a huge impact on the students. This also helped the students in their cultural understandings. The students also learned to recognise and pronounce 10 Japanese Kanji (Japanese block characters) relating to the *Viewing, Reading and Responding* and *Listening and Responding and Speaking* strands in the Curriculum Framework.

I used Japanese videos/ DVDs, ICT to strengthen and extend the knowledge of the students' Japanese Body Gestures. We watched old samurai films, contemporary, younger generation films so the students could make a connection to their intercultural learning. The videos included samurais bowing (we looked at the non-verbal communicative meaning of bowing- thank you, excuse me, respect for the husband) and other forms of Japanese gestures and body language. Frankly speaking, the students loved the lessons. As a class we then performed a traditional Japanese calligraphy lesson where the students practiced/ wrote the 10 Kanji (Japanese block characters) which in turn related to the *Writing* strand from the LOTE area in the Curriculum Framework. The lesson was a complete success. Again we, as a class, were privileged enough to have a native Japanese speaker assist in the lesson. The students thoroughly enjoyed the lessons.

My methodology of teaching in itself, did not really need modifying. Basically I went about my daily teaching as normal. The introduction lesson- I sat the class down on the mat, and as a group we discussed the ten questions relating to Japanese Body gestures and body language.

The class responded strongly to the investigation questions. I was really impressed with the responses the students came up with, their enthusiasm and their general approach towards the classroom investigation questions.

Through asking these questions I really tried to conceptualise the way the students thought, rather than the students just giving simple differences and similarities between the cultures, asking questions such as Why do you think? What do you believe? It was satisfying to watch certain students who rarely participate in Japanese as a result of being shy, not disinterested, actually thinking about the questions being asked.

DATA OR INFORMATION GATHERED

During the recording (video) of the lessons, there was a great sense of curiosity amongst the students. The enthusiasm from the students towards the lessons was rewarding, the questions asked were appropriate and well thought out. I recorded the questions as a transcript and on video.

Whilst I was collecting the data, I found that the students were really engaged in the lessons, their

intercultural knowledge was growing and their attitude towards the project was strong. I was even more impressed when I had a group of high risk boys trying to “outdo” each other by seeing who could find the most Japanese gestures on the internet. A remarkable, rewarding experience, especially for a group of students who are usually not so motivated in class.

I analysed the data through constant viewing of the recording (video) with our native Japanese speaker and a practicum student from Curtin University. Together we discussed students’ behaviour in lessons, their attitude towards becoming more interculturally aware and the general operation of the whole investigation. We found the students were becoming more and more interested each lesson. The questions were becoming challenging for us, even for the native speaker. We received positive feedback from parents/ caregivers during the investigation.

FINDINGS

I discovered that the students had a low-knowledge of both Japanese gestures and ‘Australian’ gestures in general at the commencement of the investigation. I discovered that the lessons taught were meaningful to the students and mainly that the students thoroughly enjoyed participating in the lessons. I could clearly see that the students were learning throughout the investigation. This was evident through the enthusiasm I received, the questions I was asked, the desire to know more (example of high risk boys-independent learning).

I also found that the student’s intercultural knowledge has greatly improved. The students thoroughly enjoyed having a native Japanese speaker assist in the investigation.

INTERPRETING THE INFORMATION

I was truly amazed at the findings. Basically the students began the investigation with very little knowledge of Japanese gestures and body language. However, by the end they seemed to be extremely motivated, display intercultural awareness and their general motivation towards learning a second language had improved.

In all honesty I thought this class would not have developed the intercultural skills that they demonstrate now. As a result of the investigation, the students are now more analytical; that is, they are asking more questions in our classes about Japan, its culture, the language and also my experiences there too.

In an isolated, country town like Newman, it is vital that we, as educators, take all educational opportunities that arise for students. Excursions, incursions are regular interruptions that interfere with timetabling for specialist teacher. Attendance of Indigenous students is also a problem I faced. Even though the students and I had a remarkable time participating in the classroom based investigation, I thought the lessons would have ran more smoothly with fewer interruptions than usual. We were faced with school swimming lessons with affected our normal fortnightly two hour block session. I usually receive high student attendance at this specific time, especially from Indigenous students.

Looking back at the investigation, I believe I collected sufficient data to enable me to report back to the

researchers In November and to also write this report.

The main objectives of this investigation were to **enhance the intercultural knowledge** of Japanese body gestures and body language in the students and motivate students in their second- language learning. I truly believe these objectives were met through the programming I devised and the meaningful resources I utilised.

Personal Findings- Extremely rewarding. I strongly believed I would experience a certain level of success with the selected class; however I did not expect to see the enjoyment that the students experienced during the project. Incorporating native speakers, ICT, Japanese videos, DVDs, traditional calligraphy lessons worked well. It was a truly remarkable experience.

MATERIALS AND EXEMPLARS

(Editorial note: Recordings of the lessons and student work were collected. Should you wish to share these, we suggest you contact the writer of the report.)

EVALUATION

In conclusion I felt the classroom-based investigation was a complete success. The main point I would like to make is that the students had so much fun doing this project! From handing the permission notes, to telling the students that we would be filming the lessons. They felt like rock stars! I do not want to label this class a difficult class to teach but there are behavioural problems within this group. Their behaviour was outstanding and mainly there intercultural knowledge of Japan and Australia has greatly improved.

The students really enjoyed the calligraphy lesson. The students thoroughly enjoyed having the authenticity of a native Japanese person in the lessons. I feel it made their learning more valuable, meaningful and relevant. I also believe just having the native speaker in the classroom was an intercultural experience in itself, for the students involved in the project. I live in a small mining town; 1200kms north of Perth, therefore accessing native Japanese people is very rare. It was evident through the student's enthusiasm, their attitude towards the project that the students valued the investigation. I valued the project immensely. I was able to incorporate a native speaker to assist with the project. I had great fun in planning and implementing the project. It was something new, exciting and fun for me as an educator of Languages and also for the students. I really enjoyed teaching the students about Body gestures and body language. The project was meaningful. I received excellent, positive feedback from my peers, principal and parents/ caregivers about the investigation.

I feel I could modify the investigation in great detail, but like anything, in hindsight everything could have been done better, in more detail, etc. Next year I would like to perform the body gestures and body language investigation over a term, implementing more themes, such as sports and schools; and incorporate more native speakers to assist in the project. In one episode of the recordings, a native Japanese person demonstrates a variety of Body gestures. Personally I feel that if I had performed the gestures, it would not have had as deep, strong meaning as it did have with the native speaker. The authenticity of a native speaker is invaluable.

REFLECTION

I truly valued the classroom-based investigation which took place. I value the opportunity I was given to participate in such a remarkable project with Angela, Anne-Marie and Clare and the 39 other Language teachers across Western Australia. The investigation to me was an extremely rewarding experience, mainly due to the intercultural enhancement of a group of students. Their enthusiasm towards the lessons made me more enthusiastic in my teaching and the outcomes I set for the students were accomplished. As a group we had so much fun during the investigation. I look forward to improving and enhancing my findings to create an even more explosive classroom investigation with other classes next year. I also look forward to reading and hearing my colleagues' experiences at the next conference in Perth and on the ILTLP website.

Thank you

Robert Poole