



Mentoring Investigation Report

Working collaboratively with early career teachers of Japanese to develop engaging units of work

<p>Background information</p> <p>Mentor teacher(s) name: <i>Janelle Mahoney</i></p> <p>Mentee teacher(s) names: <i>Emily Hills (Campbell High: Yr 7/8)</i> <i>Greg Tozer (Wanniassa school: Yr 7/8)</i> <i>Kara O'Rourke (Kaleen High: Yr 7)</i></p> <p>School(s)/site: <i>Dickson College, ACT</i></p> <p>Language(s) (if applicable): <i>Japanese</i></p> <p>Year level: <i>7/8</i></p>	
<p>School or class context</p> <p>All three early career educators identified that the needs of their learners centred on the utilisation of highly visual, age appropriate realia that would engage and motivate them to continue Japanese into the elective years and to value the subject, which would lessen the need for behaviour management.</p> <p>The program needs were identified in two parts: the lack of established resource banks and the disconnection between generic templates at the school level and what was required for subject specific success and cohesion of planning, resourcing and delivery of the subject.</p> <p>The teacher learning needs were, predictably, for collaborative support to build their agency within their school so that they felt more confident facing the everyday challenges of new educators.</p> <p>The challenges were spread across many teaching areas and included the plethora of responsibilities they faced as new, enthusiastic teachers. Teachers in these positions are often</p>	<p>Record of process</p> <p>My initial plan involved four Japanese teachers. However, due to family reasons, one teacher did not complete the project.</p> <p>Teachers voiced their opinions about the benefit of simply being able to share their successes and frustrations in a group in their subject specific area where they were understood. I built on this shared opinion and provided opportunities for professional dialogue in group meetings and facilitated one-on-one discussions during school visits and via email.</p> <p>Perhaps coincidentally, one of the contract teachers was given permanency during the project, her work recognised and her subject load reduced so that she was more able to focus on Japanese programming and continuity which</p>

<p>employed on a contract basis and therefore are not receiving the professional development allowance or a reduced load of classes that other early career teachers are receiving. There is stress involved with constantly ‘reinventing the wheel’, and not knowing who to ask for support and advocacy. In addition, their programs are not covered when relief is required, so teachers are less willing to participate in professional learning or take leave when they need to. There are also timetabling challenges, with language programs often being underrepresented in the Year 7/8 timetable, their programs are often interrupted by other internal/external programs outside the teachers’ control, and frequently these changes occur without notice.</p>	<p>boosted her confidence and agency.</p> <p>I found Principals were keen to find out what we were doing as well. I believe this project functioned to build agency for the individual teachers by informing the Principals of the challenges faced by new language educators.</p>
<p>Goals of mentoring program</p>	
<p>In this mentoring project I aimed to engage four early career educators (teachers of Japanese) to work collaboratively on short units of work to improve student learning outcomes. The short project was intended to build capacity and agency in our new educators and to assist them with future unit planning and delivery, to allow greater student engagement via the infusion of an intercultural approach to languages through greater use of technology (less textbook focussed) and to build leadership within the network of Japanese teachers who are often isolated in their field.</p> <p>The project aimed to create a reduced workload, through encouraging sharing and a collaborative approach to resource bank development. The project encouraged a praxis orientation (pedagogy with active reflection) to build lasting professional relationships within the Japanese language teaching community across Canberra.</p> <p>I chose, from the AFMLTA Standards, <i>Professional Relationships</i> as the focus of my mentoring project. My goal was to establish pathways to support and mentor early career languages and cultures teachers. Using Brian Lynch’s Context Adaptive Model, my aim was to mentor young teachers without a languages-specific mentor and support them in a common inquiry project within their unique contexts. Our common inquiry was to investigate how collaborative praxis (on units of work) affects student outcomes and develops teacher agency, specifically in the mandated Years 3-8 program in the ACT, to support retention of students and continuation of languages programs.</p> <p>The project began with discussion to build an understanding of individual environments, obstacles and requirements for success in this project and beyond, and about how we might</p>	<p>Initially my ideas were to investigate options for how our cluster could use mentoring to improve student outcomes in pathways and retention for post compulsory languages education.</p> <p>My second idea was to investigate the viability of a network support group, similar to the one in Victoria that uses mentoring to build capacity for early career educators. Whilst these ideas had merit, we were encouraged to aim for qualitative, not quantitative data given the scope of the project and the short timeframe. For these reasons, I decided the best use of this time would be to focus on a small, but effective mentoring group project that may be used as a network model in the future.</p> <p>I wanted to make the most impact possible and I distinctly remember wishing I had a small group that I could bounce ideas around with, share resources and discuss issues with, during my first five years of teaching, so I decided on the professional relationships focus to support this focus for the teachers chosen to participate.</p>

<p>increase capacity building and agency to continue the work beyond the life of the project.</p> <p>The project culminated in a group reflection on the collaborative design, individual delivery and evidenced value of a unit of work during a five week period.</p> <p>Data collection included pre and post surveys for staff and students in all three schools, as well as generic documents that had been modified during the project to make them subject specific, for example unit outlines, unit plans, and unit design templates, as well as samples of student work and anecdotal evidence collected during the five week project.</p>	
<p>Design</p>	
<p>The mentoring activities I undertook were teacher focussed and reflected the needs of each individual. Our unit generation, collaboration and reflection occurred within the timeframe and working model outlined below.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First meeting, to provide context, 13 June 2012 • Working meeting, to build units of work, 5 July 2012 • Implementation, with an ongoing journal , Weeks 1-5 Term 3 • Reflection, evidence collection and collation, 30 August 2012 • Project showcase, 27 September 2012 	<p>All participants, including me, had unexpected interruptions of varying degrees over the course of the project. Therefore I adapted my program accordingly. Firstly, I flexibly delivered my meetings when participants were unable to attend.</p> <p>I tailored the project in terms of time when participants voiced the view that a five week unit was more helpful than the initially planned four week unit. The change allowed for greater progress in assessment tasks and measurable student learning outcomes.</p> <p>The biggest change I made was contact time. Teachers requested (and my own school was extremely generous in allowing me to conduct) numerous school visits for mentee support on the ground. I participated in one-to-one meetings and planning workshops, discussed individual situations and strategies for agency, the development of resources and full units of work using the conceptual framework and questioning approaches, and provided lesson feedback and strategies for working with native speaker assistants more effectively.</p>

Implementation	
<p>The agenda of the initial meeting was designed to ensure maximum input from mentees about the process we were to undertake. Discussion and surveys allowed me to ascertain a clear picture of their unique teaching environments. The presentation I delivered was to ground the project in current methodologies such as the <i>Quality Teacher Model</i>, <i>intercultural teaching and learning</i> and the policies of the <i>Teacher Quality Institute</i>. I also aimed to provide mentees with contextual information about the project by introducing them to the learning I had engaged with during our mentor workshop in Adelaide. It also allowed me to obtain information about how much professional learning they had already participated in and completed. The meeting enabled simple but meaningful incidental learning to occur, such as demystifying the prolific acronyms used in education. We workshopped unit planning templates and appropriated the generic school issued format into a language specific format reflective of each teacher's individual styles. We employed the services of a teacher at my school adept in the generation of surveys. The teacher worked with us to identify the aims of the project and we then built a student pre and post survey that would enable clear evidence of changes in student engagement and achievement.</p> <p>The second meeting was a working meeting to build the unit of work using the template the mentees had each created, for which I had provided individual feedback via email. We mapped units and developed collaborative resources, discussed useful websites and shared strategies.</p> <p>I engaged in lesson observations and provided subject specific feedback where it was requested. For some teachers, this was the first real feedback they had received since they began their careers. I also sought out each school's online promotion of their languages program and then discussed with individual teachers whether their units, lessons and assessments were reflecting this focus and which needed updating or revising. Many teachers had been left to run with existing skeletons of programs that did not really suit their personal teaching style, but they had not had time to redevelop the 'nuts and bolts' of templates and lesson plan designs.</p> <p>Teachers conducted the surveys, delivered the units and then conducted the post surveys for students before completing my teacher survey.</p>	<p>I had realised early in the project that no one size fits all and I really wanted to capture each teacher's reality so I developed a survey to provide me with information about the teacher.</p> <p>I wanted to assist each teacher to increase their agency as teachers in their schools and to grow a space for professional collaborative reflection, so, as much as possible, I organised discussion in person and online. I wanted the networking to help teachers to navigate curriculum flexibly and to build the capacity in each of them (and me!) to act reflectively.</p> <p>It was apparent early in the workshop meeting that some mentees were unsure of the difference between a student unit outline and a teacher unit of work, and that they had been given limited subject specific guidance on how to sequence their teaching. For this reason I spent extra time with them and looked at the different functions of a plan and the resulting sequence and what a unit outline might look like for the unit that teacher was preparing or teaching.</p> <p>I encouraged mentees to have a creative relationship with the curriculum- a mindset that I see as particularly important in this historical moment in Australian education. One cannot act autonomously if one believes that they are 'subjected' to the curriculum.</p> <p>I felt my role as mentor was to encourage an ongoing process of inquiry to facilitate reflective practice.</p> <p>A day for this planning was clearly inadequate and so I negotiated to visit each school at least once, in some cases up to four times, to support the mentee.</p> <p>I found the surveys a great way for teachers to communicate their fears,</p>

<p>We shared an important half day meeting at the conclusion of the five weeks and reflected on challenges and successes. We discussed what would be done differently in the future in terms of how we might continue a focus on praxis.</p>	<p>aspirations and gratitude for the experiences they had learned from, during the collaborative project.</p> <p>Teachers agreed the templates and frameworks we developed and workshopped together had given them confidence to develop units of work in the future. They also noted the benefit of a new network of teachers they could rely upon for support and ideas.</p> <p>Teachers were pleased with what their students' survey results revealed to them and used them as tools for reflection. We developed the surveys to include a diagnostic test of sorts and included similar questions in the second survey to gauge student learning of concepts and language.</p> <p>A common observation by the teachers was the insufficient amount of Japanese used in mentee classrooms. I collaborated with a teaching assistant who prepared and generously shared a Power Point presentation teaching resource that doubled as character revision for students that taught mentees and students useful phrases for the classroom, to allow for increased use of Japanese in lessons.</p>
<p>Data gathered</p>	
<p>I chose to present the bulk of the data I have collected in the form of the PowerPoint presentation (PPT) that I generated for my summative key contact and key stakeholder presentation. There are two reasons for this: firstly, it succinctly summarises the process we followed and outlines (in a summarised version) the presentation I gave my mentees; and secondly, my project was less about gathering student work samples, and more about gathering evidence in the form of survey results, observations and teacher/student comment and vignettes on the overall effect and value of reflective practice in a collaborative environment.</p> <p>I have included some examples of before and after versions of the unit outlines which were workshopped to make more subject-specific.</p>	<p>Teachers acknowledged how helpful the conceptual unit plan became during unanticipated interruptions, absences or stressful periods, as it provided an overview and direction for where they were heading in the unit.</p> <p>Mentees also reported that the conceptual questioning was integral to engaging students more broadly and allowing for differentiation. The 'big understandings' students gained from these questions were not only more meaningful and connected to their experiences, but they also served to engage them better in learning Japanese.</p>

<p>One example of a unit of work centred on ‘identity’ which was a suitable conceptual topic for Year 7 students and allowed great scope in terms of language functions and cultural understandings. Another example is the ‘wellness’ unit which is detailed in the power point. The concept based units allow narrative and connections with the classroom and includes embedded questions to cater for differentiation and cross-curricula connections. I wanted these to feature in my portfolio as one of the most successful strategies.</p>	<p>The conceptual focus married realia use and language functions in a way that teachers had not experimented with before. Student consensus was that the unit was far more interesting and real for them as a result of the engaging realia and challenging questions.</p> <p>Students surveys results indicated high levels of agreement with the following statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The activities in this unit made it easier for me to learn • I felt comfortable asking questions and participating • I enjoyed the cultural resources in this unit • The activities we did helped me complete assessment
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Outcomes

The MoRe LEAPS Project is, without doubt, one of the best professional development activities I have been fortunate to be involved with. It has been of immeasurable value to both my own pedagogy and planning and also my leadership development in the field of languages education.

The education program that this project is based upon was intellectually stimulating and the evidence current. The project gave me the time and space to do something I had always wanted to do within our network- to support early career languages and cultures teachers.

The data collected in the surveys specifically highlight to me the importance of this subject specific support for new educators in terms of their wellbeing and early career development, and also in terms of student engagement and enjoyment of the subject. Face to face interaction in a collaborative space allowed the mentees to benefit from pedagogical skill development and strategies for realia inclusion. I learned that teachers having ownership over their program allows for greater agency. To an extent this process was begun by gathering the generic and seemingly unrelated school documents and rebranding them to create a cohesive program that was subject specific and accessible. The process was fundamental in the shift towards feeling in control of their program and building a confidence in the delivery but also promotion of the subject.

<p>Interpreting the information/data</p>
<p>The increased engagement is clear from anecdotal student comments as detailed in the PPT to key stakeholders, the greater application and participation in class, which I witnessed during classroom visits, and the changed opinions and understandings in the surveys before and after the project.</p> <p>Increased teacher confidence is also evident in the survey responses, and the teachers’ willingness to discuss language education issues with their executive teams. Regular reflection to continually improve their practice was evident in our discussions and teacher survey results and the focus on praxis has enabled individual mentees to challenge prevailing assumptions about teaching Japanese and its place in the school timetable.</p>
<p>Portfolio</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. PowerPoint presentation from key contact/stakeholder presentation (including slide notes) and embedded ‘wellness’ unit which was completed in response to unit plan feedback 2. Examples of before (generic school) and after (subject appropriated) unit plan templates and completed unit plans 3. Feedback provided by mentor 4. Examples of school specific student pre and post survey 5. Sample of teacher pre and post survey template
<p>Final Reflective Summary</p>
<p>In developing the confidence, reflective capability, agency and leadership in my mentees, I feel I have also benefited in these areas as a mentor. The collaborative process has allowed me tremendous insight into the needs of early career educators and has instilled in me a desire to lead and support others.</p> <p>I am passionate about the retention of language students into the elective years and understand the vital connection between strong class numbers and good teachers. Languages and cultures teachers need sound, subject specific mentoring early in their career. It builds confidence, agency and an invaluable network which serves as the foundation for the professional dialogue required for praxis in teaching.</p> <p>These benefits go a long way in preventing burnout and rates of teacher attrition and allow even the most isolated teachers to collaboratively build engaging units of work and employ realia to generate dynamic cultural understandings and help students to make connections with their world. I set out to investigate how having regular contact with an experienced language teacher would affect practice and student outcomes. I am pleased with the plethora of evidence that demonstrates the benefits of this mentoring project.</p> <p>The project itself ends here, however the benefits are ongoing. As a growing team, we have already planned future collaborations via a cluster model to support stronger pathways, embed ongoing reflection into our practice, build teaching capacity and increase the excitement about learning languages and cultures in our schools amongst teachers, executive teams and, of course, with the students.</p>

APPENDIX: PORTFOLIO MATERIALS

BEFORE AND AFTER PLANNING DOCUMENTS

Before

Unit title:		Year level:
KLA:		Time frame:
		Unit designer:
Essential learning achievements:		
Unit overview (from ELA documents- markers of progress and overview)		
Deep understandings (from ELAs)	Essential questions (based on content)	
Learning outcomes (apply content to ELAs)		
Knowledge	Skills	
Assessment tasks: Other evidence (class activities that consolidate understanding): For example: Sequenced learning activities/strategy/content :	Resources:	

After (including unit plan)

Title: Irasshaimase!		Year: 7
Overarching question for students to be able to answer: What makes a shopping experience different between one culture and another using Japan and Australia as a case study?		Key Resource: You tube videos of sales-customer interactions in Japan. Japanese currency. Japanese products (e.g. juice cans etc.)
Intercultural overview of unit (what are students going to learn about themselves and their own culture?): Students will develop an appreciation for how we can analyse a particular situation and compare it across cultures. They will learn that all cultures differ in specific ways and perhaps develop some awareness of how their own taken-for-granted way of doing things is just a variation of any other way.		
Knowledge outcomes Students will know:	Learning activities	Evidence of learning
That there are three positions we can take when talking about how to understand culture	Students watch videos showing cross-cultural conflict as stimulus for class discussion	Students engage and participate in discussion successfully
That Japanese and Australian shopper-customer interactions differ in definable ways including verbal and non-verbal ways	Students watch videos of Japanese shopping interactions and discuss them using the framework of notice, compare and reflect Students are introduced to specific phrases, vocabulary and grammar points Students write and perform a shopping skit	Students engage and participate in discussion successfully Students produce phrases in structured practice tasks such as information gap Students perform skits and successfully apply their learning around Japanese shopping culture
The characteristics of Japanese currency and its relationship to other currencies	View Japanese money and its denominations Participate in a game to estimate the value of various products in dollars/yen	Students attempt to estimate values and convert yen to dollars

Before

**High School
Curriculum Unit Plan**

Unit title:		
Modular titles and links:		
KLA:	Level:	Band:
Unit description:		
Outcomes (what do you want the students to learn?) These are the outcomes that are in the unit outline and are used in the reporting database		
Why does the learning matter?		
General capabilities from the Australian curriculum		
Assessment (what are you going to get the students to do or produce?)		
Assessment strategies	Assessment tools	
Assessment for students on modified programs	Assessment for extension students	
Unit evaluation		
Date:	Evaluation (comments)	

After (including unit plan)

UNIT PLANNER

Outcomes	Key Questions	Realia and Resources	Strategies	Evidence of Learning	Reflective Practice
<p>Students will learn to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce themselves and their friends or family - Use correct greetings in appropriate situations - Understand how the Japanese writing system works - Recognise and write Hiragana characters - Recognise and write some Katakana and Kanji characters - Recognise and use numbers 1-20 in various contexts - Understand and describe cultural similarities and differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does where I come from reflect and shape who I am? - How does geography shape who we are? - How is identity shaped by the need to belong? - What can change identity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - YouTube – alphabet song - YouTube – introductions - GenkiJapan.net – Videos and worksheets - Tofugu (blog) - Flash cards - Charts - Kabuta - Bingo - Images - Teacher made worksheets - Text books - Sentence structure cards - Anime cartoon board - Websites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role plays - Research tasks - PowerPoints - Constant use of language in context - Tangents (link to prior knowledge) 	<p>Formative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation - Book work - Homework - Classwork - Conversation tasks - Discussion <p>Summative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PowerPoint on Language and Cultural Differences - Hiragana Tests - Writing task on culture (to accompany PowerPoint: a rationale) - Role play 	

FEEDBACK EXAMPLE

MoRe LEAPS | Informed Teaching Survey

This sounds like an interesting and realia filled unit that I'm sure your students will enjoy. Thanks for all the effort you made during the holidays to incorporate the concepts we discussed at our meeting on 5th July. Let me know if any of the suggestions are unclear. I particularly like the separation of knowledge outcomes and skill outcomes and your adoption of the trajectory across the page where all 3 are linked; skills – activities – evidence.

I am interested to hear what you think about the pre and post surveys. Page 1 is for students to complete asap and Page 2 is for you to give to students when they receive feedback from their final assessment for the unit (eg. after the unit is completely finished).

Thanks also for scanning your survey which has provided further insight in how I can support you in this project. I am available 11.30am-1pm Wednesdays and Thursdays for school visits/meetings if you are interested.

Happy teaching!

Nelle

Specific suggestions

- Spelling error at bottom of page 1 in unit planner yen to dollars (not yen ton dollars)
- Timeframe needs a mention at the top
- What are the 3 positions when talking about how to understand culture? Conflict?? Unsure what this section refers to
- Consider writing more specifically about realia/resources or even separating the 'learning activities' into 2 columns – one for strategies and one for the supporting resources
- Consider including structures for language so that it reads like a unit plan rather than a sequence for teaching (the unit plan is the overall snapshot) but feel free to also send me a sequence if you want any further feedback on strategies 😊

General suggestions

- Could you include more questioning to drive higher order thinking and enable differentiation?

Eg.

STRUCTURED (for those needing extra scaffolding): What does a Japanese transaction look like?

CORE: How does the shopping experience differ from the Australian context?

EXTENSION: How do the cultural rituals associated with transactions communicate cultural values?

TEACHER SURVEY

PRE SURVEY (students)

MoRE LEAPS | Informed Teaching Survey

Quality Learning Environment (please circle)

I learn best when I work alone	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
I learn best when I work in small groups	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
I prefer to make my own notes while learning	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
I prefer to listen/do and then be given a summary	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
I work well when there is lots of discussion	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree
I work well when there is quiet	strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree

Significance (please rank in order of importance to you, starting with 1 – most important)

I am most engaged in my learning:

- I understand how it connects with me and my life
- The activities are fun and interesting
- I am able to share my experiences during discussion
- The learning is meaningful
- What we are learning makes me think deeply

Intellectual Quality

Answer the following questions to the best of your ability. They will help guide the teacher to make decisions about how to teach you.

1. What is the currency of Japan? _____
2. Write 3 words that sum up your ideas about customer service in Japan

3. Could you confidently purchase items in a Japanese shop or restaurant? Yes No Perhaps
4. What are 3 examples of products that may not be readily available in Japan that are available in Australia?

5. How is the Japanese shopping experience different to Australia?

MoRe LEAPS | Informed Teaching Survey

Quality Learning Environment (Methodology) (please circle)

The activities in this unit made it easy for me to learn strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

I enjoyed the cultural resources used in this unit strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

The activities we did helped me complete assessment strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

What would you do differently if you were the teacher?

Significance (Engagement)

I felt comfortable asking questions and participating strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree

What did you like best about this unit and why?

What did you like least about this unit and why?

Intellectual Quality (Production/Outcomes)

1. What is the currency of Japan? _____
2. Write 3 words that sum up your ideas about customer service in Japan

3. Could you confidently purchase items in a Japanese shop or restaurant? Yes No Perhaps
4. What are 3 examples of products that may not be readily available in Japan that are available in Australia?

5. How is the Japanese shopping experience different to Australia?

TEACHER SURVEY

Note to participant: Please include as much, or as little as you like in each of the comment boxes.

Name:

School:

Were there changes in your teaching load/balance since you began the project?

What did you set out to achieve?

Stated in generic terms, what obstacles did you face during the project?

Please UNDERLINE your response:

I feel I achieved success in this project: highly successful somewhat successful unsuccessful

I felt this project was meaningful to my practice: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I feel confident planning future units: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I felt supported in my project: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I knew what was expected of me: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I understand the interrelationship of the methodology related to my project (eg. Intercultural understanding, Quality Teaching Model etc.): strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I believe this style of mentoring is beneficial: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

I would recommend this project to others: strongly agree agree disagree strongly disagree

Comment on the overall impact of the unit in your classes; What did you notice? How can you compare? What can be reflected upon? How has it changed interaction?

What went well?

What would you do differently next time?

Is this project valuable for your professional pathways? Explain why/why not.

Did this project meet your expectations? If yes, how? If no, why not?

What was most useful in this project?

What would you do differently if you were leading the project?

What is your message to those considering this model in the future?

Thank you for your honesty and trust in this reciprocal relationship.