



## Mentoring Investigation Report

### *Collaborating to develop strategies to increase teacher and student use of target language*

<b>Background information</b>  Mentor teacher(s) name: <i>Kathryn Tominaga</i>  Collaborating teachers names: <i>Amy Scarr (Brisbane), Mary Lantman (Cairns), Sarah Fenton (Brisbane), Yolanda Tandy (Cairns), Regan Stevenson (Cairns), Margie Brown (Mackay), Richard Jeffers (Moura)</i>  School: <i>Many across QLD</i>  Language: <i>Japanese (predominantly)</i>  Year level: <i>Upper primary to Year 12</i>
<b>School or class context</b>  This project brought teachers together, physically and virtually, from across the state of Queensland to focus mainly on three of the Professional Standards for Teachers of Languages and Cultures: educational theory and practice; language pedagogy; and professional relationships.  The project group sought to review the current state of target language (TL) use in their classrooms and to collaborate in order to develop means of effectively increasing TL use. Participants in the project were sought via an email to the MLTAQ Japanese Network email list and came from both metropolitan and regional centres across Queensland and from both primary and secondary schools. The broad spectrum of participating teachers ensured a similarly broad range of classroom settings from compulsory schools with class sizes up to the low thirties to small, senior, elective classes of only three students. With each situation, came a different set of issues and challenges to be addressed.
<b>Goals of mentoring program</b>  All participants were seeking to analyse the current state of TL use in their classroom, to share teaching ideas which would foster an increased use of the TL and to develop strategies to overcome obstacles to TL use by teachers and students alike. Following implementation of the new strategies, opportunities were created to provide feedback to the group and reflect on the impact, if any, of the adjustments that had been made. A further, broader goal of the project, not directly related to TL use, was to provide an opportunity for regional and metropolitan teachers to connect and share experiences and to, hopefully, alleviate some of the isolation so often experienced by languages teachers.
<b>Design</b>  Following the initial email contact, a OneNote folder was created and shared with all participants so that relevant pre-reading documents could be shared and stored conveniently for future reference.

The project was designed such that teachers could contribute to the shared online resource as they wished, and would also be involved in a series of face-to-face and videoconferencing meetings throughout the project research period.

### **Implementation and findings**

The first face-to-face meeting was held on 25 June and combined a physical meeting of metropolitan teachers with a virtual meeting via video-conferencing with regional teachers from Mackay and Cairns.

Issues raised at this meeting included the difficulty with very small classes where students became very self-conscious about speaking in the TL, reliance by peers on heritage speakers to interpret TL spoken by the teacher before others had a chance to comprehend and other behaviour management issues which arise when individual students feel they are unable to follow instruction in the TL and 'switch off' from the lesson and turn their energy to distracting others.

Some initial strategies discussed dealt with use of the TL for as much of the day-to-day running of the classroom as possible and the importance of explicitly teaching the required classroom language and then using it consistently (McColl, 2010). Basic greetings, taking the roll, students asking for permission or to borrow items and words of encouragement to students were already administered in the TL by participating teachers but when discussing further opportunities for TL use, one suggestion was that the planned lesson activities could also be shared with the class in the TL and, with practice, this could become the task for a class monitor to explain to the class at the beginning of each lesson.

Labels were created which could be used by the teacher to indicate the different components of the day's lesson. For example, labels (see Appendix 1) were made in the TL of regular activities in the language classroom such as new vocabulary, new grammar, reading practice, writing practice, speaking practice and listening practice. These could then be displayed on the board and used as a prompt by the class monitor, or for the whole class to read through together.

To overcome the shyness of students in a small class of just three students, a laminated bingo-style card (see Appendix 2) was developed with useful phrases for students to use in the classroom. Students would mark off each phrase/expression they used during the lesson, trying to complete as many of the examples on the card as possible.

Commitment not only by the teacher, but also by the students, was also seen as a key factor to successful use of the TL in the languages classroom. In order to achieve this it was proposed that the teacher discussed his/her desires and expectations for improved proficiency of the students and explained, in advance, some of the new strategies that were to be implemented. At the end of the lesson, or following a series of lessons, the students would then be asked to complete a survey (see Appendix 3) where they could share their experience of the increased focus on TL use. None of the teachers participating in the project implemented the survey in their classes and this has been identified by the group as an important activity that should be tried in the new school year.

During the course of ongoing communications it was noted that students from the small class of three senior students had responded well to the new strategies put in place and were gradually overcoming their shyness and making more of an effort to use the TL. The teacher for this group still felt pressured by the heavy workload demanded by the curriculum and further strategies were needed to make it possible to cover the required curriculum and use increased TL.

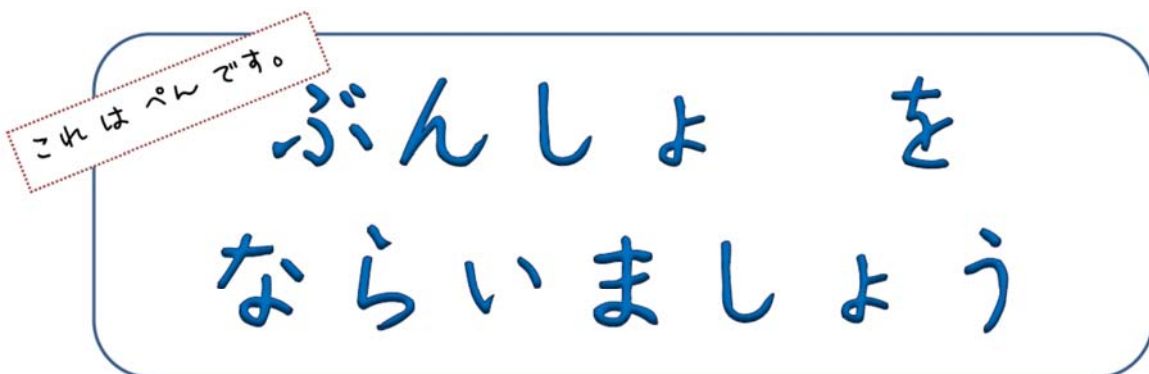
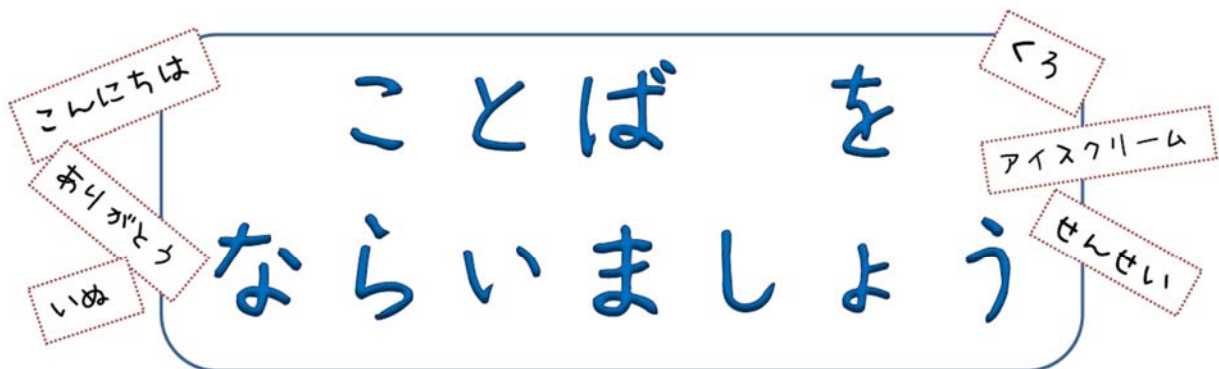
The primary school teachers continued to struggle with some students who would seemingly immediately lose interest and fail to attempt to understand the teacher whenever the TL was used for instruction. Following further discussion via email within the group a new strategy was developed. 'Tsuuyaku Ka-do' (Interpreter Cards) (see Appendix 4) were developed to be printed and laminated. The purpose of these cards was that they be issued to all students (one or two per student). During class, when the teacher was

<p>using the TL, students would be invited to ‘interpret’ for the teacher. After doing so, they would submit their ‘tsuuyaku ka-do’ to ensure that a variety of students had the opportunity to be the ‘interpreter’. This ensured that no student felt that they could not follow the lesson. The strategy was very popular with students. Physically having the cards to hold and having to submit them after interpreting for the teacher encouraged students to be selective about when they raised their hand to interpret. More advanced students would deliberately wait for a more complex sentence so that they would have the opportunity to challenge themselves further. After one to two weeks, using the cards, it was no longer necessary to hand out the cards. Instead the teacher would just call on the students to interpret what had been said, making sure to ask a variety of students.</p>
<p><b>Data gathered</b></p>
<p>See Appendices below.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation and considering future mentoring groups</b></p>
<p>Although the project has officially concluded, a new Professional Learning Network has grown from this collaboration and emails continue to be circled within the group on the topic of TL use in the classroom. In October 2012, an article was published in the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) journal, <i>The Language Educator</i>, addressing use of TL. In the United States, ACTFL recommends ‘that communication in the target language comprises at least 90% of instructional time.’ This provided further food for thought, and, in particular, highlighted the need for comprehensible input and the various kinds of scaffolding that the teacher can provide to students to ensure they do not feel lost in the TL. This new discussion did not arise within the scope and time frame of the project but will now become my personal focus moving forward and I will be hopeful that other participants from the MoRe LEAPS Target Language project will be interested to continue exploring this new direction further.</p>

APPENDICES: DATA GATHERED

APPENDIX 1: TARGET LANGUAGE LABELS FOR REGULAR ACTIVITIES

(LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING, WRITING, etc) in HIRIGANA AND KATAKANA





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かきましょう



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文書 を  
習いましょう

ゲーム をしましょう



会話 を しましょう

書きましょう



聞きましょう



読みましょう



調べましょう





## APPENDIX 2: TARGET LANGUAGE BINGO CARDS

eigo de 英語で in English...	wakarimashita わかりました <b>I understand</b>	gomen nasai ごめんなさい Sorry	onagai shimasu おねがいします <b>Asking a favour</b>	sugoi すごい great!
ありがとう <b>Thank you</b>	toireni i トイレに行 tte mo ii desu ka ってもいいですか <b>May I go to the toilet?</b>	yoku dekimashita よくできました <b>Well done!</b>	hakushu はくしゅ <b>(Applause)</b>	ganbatte がんばって Do your best Good luck
douzo どうぞ Here you go/ Please	きりつ	れい	chakuseki ちゃくせき	mata また raishuu らいしゅう See you next week
yukkuri ゆっくり itte kudasai 言っ下さい <b>Please say it slowly</b>	yatta やった! I/you did it!	ボーナス	ボーナス	ボーナス

sumimasen すみません <b>Excuse me</b>	kaban ni かばんに arimasu あります <b>It's in my bag</b>	nihongo de 日本語で <b>in Japanese..</b>	mada desu まだです <b>Not yet</b>	dekimasen できません <b>I can't do it</b>
enpitsu o えんぴつを motte imasen もっていません <b>I don't have a pencil</b>	dare no ban だれのばん desu ka ですか <b>Who's turn is it?</b>	chotto matte ちょっとまって kudasai 下さい <b>Please wait a bit</b>	keshigomu o けしゴムを kashte kudasai かして下さい <b>Please lend me an eraser</b>	watashi no pa a tona a 私のパートナー ni natte kurenai? になつてくれない? <b>Will you be my partner?</b>
dekimashta できました <b>I'm finished</b>	enpitsu kezuri えんぴつけすり gaarimasu があります <b>I have a pencil sharpener</b>	nanpe e jidesu ka 何ページですか <b>What page is it?</b>	watashino ban 私のばん <b>My turn</b>	isshoni いっしょに shimashou しましょう <b>Let's do it together</b>
setsumei ga せつめいが wakarimasen わかりません <b>I don't understand the explanation</b>	mou ichido もう一ど onagai shimasu おねがいします <b>Once again please</b>	arigatou demo ありがとう。でも ima ikitaku 今、行きたく nai desu ないです。 <b>Thanks but I don't want to go now</b>	yarikata ga やりかたが wakarimasen わかりません <b>I don't understand the instructions</b>	kaban かばん kara totteki からとつて来 te mo ii desu ka てもいいですか <b>May I get it from my bag?</b>

### APPENDIX 3: STUDENT SURVEY ABOUT TARGET LANGUAGE USE

#### *Lesson to introduce new strategies for increased use of TL in classroom*

- Share with students objective for the lesson – to increase use of TL by teacher and students during the lesson in order to provide students with as much opportunity as possible to practise what is being learnt in class
- Discuss the appropriate action to be taken by students when they are unsure of an instruction in the TL – e.g. check posters around the room; check vocab list in books; think about gestures used by the teacher to aid comprehension; think about the timing of the instruction (i.e. if it is the beginning of the lesson, the class usually stands); look at how others in the class have responded to the instruction to see if they will help me understand.
- Employ a variety of strategies to achieve the goal – for example,
  - Display ‘teacher-talk’ and ‘student-talk’ posters around the room
  - Nominate one or two “Assistant Teachers” or monitors to issue stamps to students attempting to use the TL effectively and appropriately
  - Distribute sheets for students to monitor their own use of the TL – both production and comprehension
  - Hand out pegs to students when they use the TL appropriately – take pegs back when English is used at times when TL could have been used
  - Issue students with a list of ‘classroom talk’ to glue into their workbooks for reference purposes
  - Include activities in the lesson that allow all students the opportunity to speak in the TL
  - Display the Lesson Plan on the board in the TL and use it as a reference point at the beginning and end of the lesson and during the lesson as the lesson moves from one activity to the next
- Monitor the class regularly for comprehension
  - Ask students to show ‘thumbs up’ for understanding; ‘thumbs down’ when they do not understand and to wave their thumb from side-to-side if they think they *may* have understood but are not 100% sure
- Provide opportunities for students to feel success in comprehending the TL and in producing the TL; acknowledge that comprehension and ensure students realise their achievement
- It is suggested that lesson content include some revision and then be followed by new work
- Lesson to conclude with a brief survey of students asking:
  - Did you have any difficulty following the teacher’s instructions in the TL during the lesson today? No difficulty Some difficulty Much difficulty
  - When you had difficulty understanding, what strategies did you use to try to understand?
  - Did the strategies put in place for today’s lesson allow you greater opportunities to use the TL during the lesson?
  - What encouraged you the most to use more TL in the lesson?
  - Do you have any further ideas for how we could increase the use of the TL in our lessons?

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## Using Japanese in the Classroom Questionnaire

1) Did you have any difficulty following the teacher's instructions in Japanese during the lesson today?

(Circle one) No difficulty   Some difficulty   Much difficulty

2) If you had difficulty understanding, what strategies did you use to try to understand?

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3) What helped you the most to use more Japanese in the lesson? (For example, posters around the room showing language that could be used or particular games/activities)

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4) Do you have any further ideas for how we could increase the use of Japanese in our lessons?

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APPENDIX 4: INTERPRETER CARDS



### **Reflective summary**

Within the timeframe of the project, some, but not significant, improvement in TL use was observed in classrooms. A foundation has, however, been laid to continue to explore the avenues for making TL an expected and accepted standard in our classrooms. I intend to pursue this topic further and will continue to include my co-collaborators in the conversation and to share any new discoveries and experiences. This project served to bring together teachers from all over Queensland and create a strong network of like-minded teachers committed to improving their classroom practice and student outcomes. I look forward to seeing and experiencing the benefits of this ongoing collaboration into the future.