



# Mentoring Investigation Report

## *Mentoring early career teachers of Japanese*

<b>Background information</b>	
Mentor teacher(s) name: <i>Naomi Sullivan</i>	
Mentee teacher(s) name: <i>Samantha Grech (retraining teacher- Burwood Girls High School)</i> <i>Butterfly Die Hu (student teacher- The University of Sydney)</i>	
School: <i>Penrith High School, NSW</i>	
Language: <i>Japanese</i>	
Year level: <i>Stages 4, 5 and 6 Beginners (Years 7-12)</i>	
<b>School or class context</b>	<b>Process</b>
Supporting/mentoring new non-native Japanese teachers	I observed the mentees' lessons, lesson plans and programming in order to identify their immediate needs. I then discussed with them the support they needed in their teaching of Japanese.
<b>Goals of mentoring program</b>	
The goal of the mentoring program was to support new non-native Japanese teachers to:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve their Japanese language proficiency</li> <li>• extend their understanding of Japanese culture</li> </ul>	
<b>Design</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go through the mentees practicum reports to identify strengths and weaknesses and starting points for mentoring.</li> <li>2. Using the document <i>Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures: language-specific annotation: Japanese (AFMLTA 2008)</i> to guide the mentoring process.</li> </ol>	

# Professional standards for accomplished teaching of languages and cultures

## Language specific annotations: Japanese

3. Invite the mentees to complete the tables from the Japanese annotation (provided as handouts to them) with regards to the above goals and processes:

1. Classroom language use:

### Classroom language use

Handout 2

Language feature	How consistently I use this	Examples from my practice	How I feel about my capabilities	Possible ways to address gaps

2. Language use outside the classroom

### Language use outside the classroom

Handout 3

Language feature	How consistently I use this	Opportunities I have to do this	How I feel about my capabilities	Possible ways to address gaps

3. Explicit knowledge of linguistic system

**Explicit knowledge of the linguistic system**

**Handout 4**

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps

4. Explicit knowledge of language use

**Explicit knowledge of language use**

**Handout 5**

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps

5. Attitudes, values, cultural and linguistic practices

**Attitudes, values, cultural and linguistic practices**

**Handout 6**

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps

**Implementation**

- I identified their needs through discussions with the mentees
- I set up telephone and e-mail communication to support their needs (see email communications in the appendices)
- Looking towards the future i.e. (Skype, video conferencing, etc) to maintain support network.

We considered using Skype, video conferencing and other media to communicate with each other, but eventually chose to work with email and telephone communication for the period of the investigation.

**Data gathered (see Appendices)**

- Observed mentees' lessons
  - Samantha – DEC/NSW Mentoring Asian Language Trainee Program
  - Butterfly – Student Teacher
- Asked my mentees to complete the tables from the Japanese annotation of the Standard (see Appendix

2 for excerpts of their responses):

- Conducted further discussions on the needs of the mentees (see Appendix 3)

### **Outcomes and evaluation**

New non-native language teachers acknowledge that they need to improve their language proficiency and cultural knowledge as these increase their confidence in teaching. We used e-mail (mostly) to communicate and I tried to respond as soon as possible. In most cases, my mentees asked questions or asked me to check their work. Using this system I was able to develop a good relationship with my mentees, Samantha and Butterfly. It is very important to have a good relationship between mentor and mentee and this can be maintained with ongoing support. I am considering using different media for future communication such as SKYPE & TV conferencing.

Comment from Samantha:

*I mostly contacted Naomi through the use of e-mails. If something arose during a lesson which I was unsure of, I would e-mail her a quick question. As Naomi mentioned, she was very prompt at replying and gave great explanations to my questions. We had a few phone conversations and also discussed the possibility of using a connected classroom to share lessons with our Japanese classes or for us to work on my confidence in speaking skills. We are yet to do this but I think it would be a great experience for both of us.*

*I had the opportunity to visit Naomi in her school setting and she was able to guide me through the process of programming a whole program for a Stage 5 course which I had not previously taught. Having a mentor gave me greater confidence knowing I had the support of someone there to help me. It can be a very daunting experience having to do this with no experience, not knowing if you are on the right track. I found having Naomi as a mentor a wonderful tool to help with my teaching and she has become a good friend.*

### **Interpreting the data**

New non-native language teachers need ongoing support to increase their language proficiency and knowledge of the culture. The support should be available all the time (or as much as possible), easily accessed and with prompt responses.

This support can be provided by having access to:

- Experienced language teachers in their school
- Experienced language teachers from other schools
- Native speaker friends/ family member/ community
- Educational organisations
- Web sites
- Mentoring program

## APPENDICES: selected data

### Appendix 1: Email communication examples

#### 1. Email communication with Samantha

RE: hello

[Sullivan, Naomi](#)

Sent: Monday, 23 July 2012 2:26 PM

To: [Grech, Samantha](#)

Hi Samantha,

Many thanks for filling in the documents.

よてい is talking about intentions/plans/schedules. plain verbs +よてい

帰るよてい means planning to go home/back

明日、日本に行くよていです。means I am planning to go to Japan tomorrow.

ひこうきは10時にしゅっぱつするよていです。means The airplane is scheduled to depart at 10.00.

Talk to you soon.

Naomi

---

**From:** Grech, Samantha

**Sent:** Monday, 23 July 2012 1:20 PM

**To:** Sullivan, Naomi

**Subject:** hello

Hi Naomi,

Just wanted to make sure you got my sheets in the mail?

I hope that was what you were after?

I also had a quick question if thats ok.

In one of the readings I have, i think its kookoo seikatsu, they have 帰ります。

What does the 帰 with the verb in plain form mean?

Thanks again!!

[Samantha Grech](#)

*PDHPE & Japanese Teacher*

*Year 9 Year Advisor*

[Burwood Girls High School](#) · [Queen Street Croydon 2132](#) · *Ph: 9747 3355 Fax: 9744 2797* ·

RE: Directions

[Sullivan, Naomi](#)

Sent: Tuesday, 7 August 2012 2:21 PM

To: [Grech, Samantha](#)

Hi Samantha,

To say "end of the street" is つきあたり。

Examples

つきあたりをみぎにまがります。 or つきあたりをひだりにまがってください。

Naomi

---

**From:** Grech, Samantha  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 7 August 2012 11:55 AM  
**To:** Sullivan, Naomi  
**Subject:** Directions

Hello Naomi,

Can you tell me how to say "end of the street" as that's the place we have to turn?  
I'm not sure which end word to use.

Thank you very much,

[Samantha Grech](#)

*PDHPE & Japanese Teacher*

*Year 9 Year Advisor*

## 2. Email communication with Butterfly

RE: Butterfly

[Sullivan, Naomi](#)

Sent: Tuesday, 17 July 2012 3:42 PM

Attachments:  [Butterfly 1.docx \(11 KB\)](#) [[Open as Web Page](#)]

バタフライ、アンケートに答えてくれて、どうもありがとう。

バタフライのメールの中の間違いを直したのをアタッチしました。また、日本語でメール下さいね。

なおみ

---

Sent: Friday, 13 July 2012 12:49 AM

To: Sullivan, Naomi

Subject: 答复: Butterfly

せんせい、

げんきですか？

フォームをアタッチします。そんな遅い返信するの、すみませんでした。

今、毎日アルバイトをしますから、ずっといそがいしです。あまりやすみをできません。

いろいろなことをかきたいですけど、時間がありません。もっとながいメールをすぐかくつもりです。

そのまで、このメールの中この誤りを 教えてください。

お疲れ様でした。

バターフライ

---

发送时间 2012年6月22日 2:50

主题 RE: Butterfly

Hi Butterfly,

元気ですか？日本語からないことがあったらメールしてください。

フォームをアタッチします。

なおみ

## APPENDIX 2: Excerpts from table completions by mentees

### 1. Sample tables from Butterfly

#### Classroom Language Use

Language Feature	How consistently I use this	Examples from my practise	How I feel about my capabilities	Possible ways to address gaps
1. Using Japanese in a principled way(...)	Not very consistent.  Used when being told or when specifically reminded.	Classroom instructions  e.g. すわってください、みてください。 ください。	I feel confident about simple classroom instructions or communications. Especially when students are doing particular topics and I've been preparing material on that topic.	Be more consistent with using Japanese in the classroom. Ask students to also practise the same to create the Japanese learning atmosphere.
2. Knowing the language and culture of topics for relevant age groups	Fairly consistent.	In year 8 topics are often very school-based and interest-centred, anime-related; for year 12, more realistic issues are discussed, e.g. life after school etc.	I feel fairly confident in my capability to relate to my students' lives. I try to engage them with topics such as anime, technology and etc.	There are a lot of areas for improvement. The best way to begin is by asking students what they are interested in and how they perceive the world from their perspectives.  Engage more with technology and social-media and do not be afraid to use them in the classroom.



Explicit knowledge of language use

Language Feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address the gap
Differences between levels of formality and significance for Japanese Interpersonal relationships	Formality represents the respect, status of the person speaking and speaking to	More real-life specific knowledge	Visit Japan Watch dramas Read about Japanese culture
Regional dialects	I know a little about the Kansai dialect	More about different dialects and how they are different from standard Japanese	Research about them
Awareness of the significance of <i>sonkeigo</i> and <i>kenjougo</i>	<i>sonkeigo</i> demonstrates respect towards the person we are speaking to who is superior to us  <i>kenjougo</i> highlights the humility and puts the speaker in a lower position relative to the audience/listener	More fluent usage of these two types of language features	
Structures of written texts	Yes, diary, letter and email I am aware of how to construct them		

Attitudes, values, cultural and linguistic practices

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps
Intertwining of traditional and modern perspectives and how this affects Japanese society	The Japanese language system itself reflects an intertwining of traditional and contemporary	I am aware of the traditional politeness of Japan, but not very aware of the contemporary society	Values and social identities are often reflected from popular cultures, can look into that
Shinto and Buddhism in Japanese daily life	That there are festivals celebrating these two religions	More of how these are embedded into the Japanese society	
Expected gender roles of men and women and how they effect language use	There are differences in usage of language by men and women	How? On a deeper level, language is affected by gender roles	

2. Sample tables from Samantha

Samantha Grech

Module 4(a) Handout 2

**Classroom language use**

Language feature	How consistently I use this	Examples from my practice	How I feel about my capabilities	Possible ways to address gaps
* Greetings	all lessons	みんなさん おはようございます いませ	confident	n/a
* Directions	most lessons	見てください かたもいいですか	ok. Still not very confident about giving all directions in Japanese.	
* Reading	all lessons	Reading from the text and worksheets	very confident	n/a
* Writing	all lessons	Kanji } on board Vocab } Sentence / language structures	ok.	practice? not sure!
		<u>WISH LIST</u>		
		* A great mentor like Naomi who can answer all my questions		
		* A sister school arrangement to regularly exchange with and visit, host visitors		
		* Frequent trips to Japan to update knowledge		

Samantha Grech

Module 4(a)

Explicit knowledge of language use / Linguistic system

Handout 5

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps
(*) Kanji	Some stroke order compounds	radicals おん & 2 <h & 2	- Research? - mentors help - Text books
(*) Honorifics	why they are used	why some are used to some " "	- mentors help?
(*) Gender differences in language	males use 俺 differences in plain speech	commonly used examples	- plain speech - conversation - mentors ideas

Samantha Grech

Module 4(a)

Attitudes, values, cultural and linguistic practices

Handout 6

Language feature	What I know about it	What I need to learn about it	Possible ways to address gaps
(*) Engaging with contemporary media	- Internet - magazines - manga - music	what is popular at the present times?	- contacts in Japan - exchanges - In country experience
(*) Instances of Japanese language & culture	general practices of Japanese conversations	set phrases or patterns in different contexts	- conversations with native speakers.
(*) Cultural days & celebrations	- Golden week - Coming of age ceremonies	Other important dates and how they are celebrated	cultural lessons
(*) Japanese Shinto & Buddhism	identity } Buddhism }	issues in daily life	

### APPENDIX 3: Additional needs of the mentees (developed from discussions)

Possible ways to become an accomplished teacher of the Japanese language and culture

- Plan on living in Japan to strengthen language ability
- Increase communication with Japanese speaking people
- Increase language absorption through watching Japanese dramas and TV
- Make Japanese friends
- Continue to communicate with supervising teacher/mentor
- Arrange sister school relationship with Japanese high school
- Participate in language workshops
- Frequent trips to Japan to update language and cultural knowledge
- Self-study
- Research

#### Reflective summary

Through this project with my mentees, I realised which grammatical concepts are difficult to understand and what cultural knowledge is necessary to comprehend the Japanese way of thinking for English speaking people. This valuable observation has caused me to re-consider my lesson plans and programs with the aim of improving my teaching and to enhance my students' learning.

I also firmly believe that the support required by all new language teachers is significant. Due to my experience with Samantha I feel the DEC/NSW *Re-train Asian Language Teachers Mentoring Program* is excellent and strongly recommend establishing a similar program for all new language teachers.