

Languages at Intermediate Level

from Jeannette Voyce

When I first came to Oruaiti School in 1995, it had two teachers, twenty-six pupils and an uncertain future. On the plus side we had a happy and supportive environment so although there was more than enough to keep us busy, we enjoyed the advantages of working in a pleasant situation.

This is an area where there is large-scale unemployment, exacerbated by no public transport. After a while I realized that nearly all the senior children had no expectations for the future, they were in fact happy with their lot and "knew" they would leave school and go on the dole.

I decided that I needed to show them that there was a big wide world out there and that life in fact offered endless opportunities for an interesting and varied lifestyle. How to do that was the big question.

In 1988 while on the staff of Rotorua Girls High School, I had accompanied Denis Fouhy when he took a group of students to Nouméa for three weeks. The girls were billeted, attended school for two weeks and spent the third week going on day trips in and around Nouméa.

I decided in 1998 that I could take our children to New Caledonia, stay in the Youth Hostel and do day trips too. Jane Anderson was my Principal's Release teacher at the time and fortunately is a fluent speaker of French. She undertook to teach the children some basic conversational French, we raised some money to help pay for the day trips, especially the expensive but wonderful trip to the Amédée Lighthouse, and the families interestingly made a special effort to raise the \$1000 to cover all other costs for their children and off we went.

My agenda was to expose the children to something completely different and raise their expectations for the future. I wanted them to be dissatisfied with their lot and give them the desire to use their skills and ability to change their future.

The children of course had a different agenda, they wanted to enjoy the day trips, the swimming and make their spending money go as far as possible. They quickly learned how to convert Pacific francs back to NZ dollars and decide whether or not an item was a good bargain. No one spent anything at MacDonald's when they were hungry. For one child, the best part of the

whole trip was the plane ride! We repeated this trip in 2000 and hope to do it every two years so that all year 7 & 8 pupils get the opportunity to go.

Time will tell whether or not any real difference has been made. One thing the children did come to understand, was that it is possible to be in a country where they can't speak the language and they won't starve, nor will they get lost if they have a map. I'm sure self-respect and self-confidence has increased in these children although I'm not sure how to measure that.

Subsequently, Gail Spence and Simon Curnow visited our school and convinced us that the level of French the children had attained should be built on and not let slip away. We made a successful application for second language funding in 1999 and another one for 2001. These applications were to support the introduction in our school and four local schools, (Mangonui, Taipa Area, Peria and Kaingaroa), of French or German (depending on which secondary school the children go to) with Jane being our professional support tutor.

We have had wonderful support and encouragement from our school community with our parents being very proud of the language skills the children are developing. The introduction of the Oui and Ja programmes with the ongoing professional development provided by Catherine Hannagan and Wendy Thomson have given us all a boost and new sense of direction. Enjoyment is a major consideration with all our lessons. We do not want to put anyone off from choosing a language in year 9. By opening up new subject choices for our children, we may well be opening up new career options for those who did not expect to ever have a career.

So you can see that what began as a one off activity with a single purpose has had some far reaching implications, none of which we regret.

from Tim Phillips, IPC Student

After coming to International Pacific College, I believe that I have accumulated not only academic value but also I have gained a wide variety of cultural ideas. The real benefit of studying at IPC is that you can become almost fluent in the Japanese language in almost a year. Whether talking to friends or in my Japanese class, I found that in my first year, I spoke Japanese at least 60% to 80% of the time. In my second year, in my holidays I did an internship where I raised over \$10,000 dollars for CCS. This not only gave me an experience in business but it introduced me to many people in the community. Along with this, I started Kendo. This really opened my eyes to Japanese culture and provided me with a sport

which was enjoyable yet challenging.

While I was in Japan, I stayed in a small area called Gifu. Although the locals described the city as small, I found it to be quite big, especially when I come from a small town called Inglewood. Although being quite small in size, I ended up with a variety of experiences. Luckily, while at IPC I studied a subject on "the hospital" in my Japanese class, which was very valuable. Both while studying at IPC and exchanging views with students from Japan, I found myself more accustomed to Japanese society, which meant I didn't really miss New Zealand or get a culture shock. In fact I was able to get on with my holiday and find myself constantly having my keigo and translation skills put to the highest tests.

Now after studying for 4 years, I have written a thesis, I can speak a variety of Japanese dialects as well as other Pacific-rim languages and I have gained friends and contacts from all over the world. Being put into an international environment of learning is so beneficial, not only do you see the traditional views that you have been brought up to accept, you find yourself examining other ways of thinking.

Globally the world is changing and we must change with it. With international barriers being decreased and cross-cultural communication being increased, the ability to understand another culture and to speak another language is a must for anyone who wants to succeed. This is why I stress the importance to encourage young people today, to learn another language, to learn about not only their own culture but another culture and I believe that this will ensure their success for their futures.