Level 5 LOTE - Inspector Clousseau

PEEL in Practice: 1300 ideas for quality teaching
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Introduction

A chance meeting in the library at PLC has led to the development of a unit of work in French, which attempts to integrate a number of strategies to allow students through their language other than English (LOTE) to develop their research and cognitive skills.

Jennie had heard of the new teacher librarian in the school whose specialty was working with staff on research across the curriculum. Her Year 8 French class was needing a "shot in the arm". This Year 8 group was in their third year of French language studies (having done three terms of French in grade six.) Changes at the start of the year meant that half a dozen students who newly joined the class had been working on a different method. For many students the lessons were not moving fast enough. An activity was needed that would extend the more advanced students and allow all students to move at their own pace. A colleague, Gretchen Bennett, had successfully used role play about famous French people, and Jennie felt this might be an activity she could use with this class. She mentioned that she was "thinking of doing something biographical on famous French people" to Di, et voila!

As teacher librarian, Dianne had just completed working with History staff on Historical Biographies. The work with history classes had uncovered a wealth of material, but how could she make this material accessible to and interesting for Year 8 students in LOTE? The work with history had also highlighted the fact that the girls did not always think about finding resources. Often they were not able to make connections between information they had located and where to look next.

This led to Dianne suggesting to Jennie that they do something "different"- why not play detectives? That is, have the girls identify the famous French people before they chose one to research and present. The girls would identify the people by a scene of clues.

Planning the unit

1. Using biographical dictionaries we identified over 70 significant French personalities.
2. The list was narrowed to 50 on the basis of how easily students could find information on these personalities in our library.
3. Four clues had to be written for each personality - one in French, one in English, one visual, and one cryptic, also in English. (The cryptic turned out to be a source of challenge and great mirth throughout the staff room). We found working together on these was highly productive; it added to the quality of the unit, halved the work and doubled the fun. It also ensured that the unit was founded on information skill development and sound language teaching.
practices. At this point Jennie noticed a remarkable development in Dianne's French; she could even understand some of it!

4. Dianne checked resources to ensure that clues could be tracked by students so as to reveal the names of the personalities they were to find, e.g. the World Book Encyclopedia reference on Tahiti refers to Gauguin's death. The English clue was, therefore "This French painter died in Tahiti." Another example, Bonjour Tristesse was entered in our catalogue, therefore one of the clues was 'Elle habite a' Paris. Elle a 'ecrit Bonjour Tristesse'.

5. Dianne typed up the clues and prepared colourful "Tracing down the suspects" sheets.

6. The 50 personalities were divided into five groups of ten. The four clues for each personality in the group of ten were mixed up and pasted on to the "Tracking Down the Suspects ' sheets. Each bag (see Step 7) contained 10 clues. Sheets provided between five and seven clues each with a letter and number. The letter identified the clue bag and the numbers identified the specific clues. Care was taken to include at least one of each type of clue on each sheet.

7. The "Tracking Down the Suspects" for each group of personalities were placed in plastic envelopes, each of which was clearly labeled A to E.

8. We then prepared "Fiches d'idenite" to be completed by the students for each suspect in the bag .

9. Four "Suspect Files" were created on A3 paper headed as follows: Physical and Personal Achievement, Cultural Life, Public Life and Colourful Characters. As students tracked down all the clues for suspects they were to be entered onto these files for the information of the whole class.

10. The instruction sheet "Inspecteurs Clouseau et Clues-Oh, a Casebook" was prepared. This sheet explained the two major phases of the unit; the investigation and the presentation in French language of the personalities.

**Phase I - Running the Unit**

The introductory lesson, which was videotaped, took place in the library. Dianne led off Phase 1 with an explanation of how to "track down the suspects" using the clue bags and the library resources. This was, incidentally, an eye-opener for Jennie, too, as she didn't really appreciate the wealth of information available through the general resources. She was also convinced that, although some of this research work was to be done in English, the students were acquiring skills which they would use in later studies in both LOTE and other curriculum areas. Lots of exciting possibilities unfolded during this first lesson - the birth of the literature game for Year 12, for example (Since this use Jennie is a born-again library user and passes hours with all her classes in the "Playroom" !)

The detectives were set to work in groups. The girls instantly organised themselves in a purposeful way to complete the task of tracking the suspects as quickly as possible. They first eliminated the simplest clues before tackling the more difficult ones. Where they identified a personality from a single clue they then went back to establish which other clues related to that personality. Within some groups the labour was divided so as to capitalize on the strengths of individuals, others needed assistance with strategies to efficiently complete the task. Jennie was delighted to observe the instrumental motivation the task provided; Year 8 students were scanning long entries
in Petit Larousse Illustre' to identify specific information and translating the French clues that would lead them to a suspect through the Reference Section and the General Collection of the library. Dianne was delighted to hear one girl comment that this was really teaching them how to use the library.

For the next three lessons girls were hard at work in the library before Jennie arrived. We decided to reward the first group of detectives to identify all their suspects. Once all the suspects had been entered onto the "Suspect Files" students were asked to nominate the personality they wished to investigate in detail. In hindsight we felt that a period of consolidation between the completion of the files and the selection of personalities would be a good idea. In that time the suspect files could be displayed in the classroom and the personalities discussed before students "booked" their personality. This would enable all students to be exposed to a wider selection of the 50 personalities. We have discussed a number of strategies to this end, including Twenty Questions, crossword puzzles and jigsaw exchanges of information. Next time we will incorporate some of these.

The detailed investigation required another three lessons in the library. While looking for more detailed information the students completed in French a 'Dossier d'Enquete' to be used as the starting point for a classroom presentation of their personality. Students were asked to transfer their information for the presentation onto small cards. Scripts were given to Jennie for checking and many of these were pre-recorded on audio-cassettes so that they could be practiced at home.

**Phase II - Classroom Presentations in French**

Students were given a choice as to how they presented their personality. Each student was also required to produce a visual representation. Most chose the individual dramatic presentation with costumes and props ranging from a single crown to quite elaborate outfits (including a parachute drop from the teacher's desk). The role play enabled less confident students to share the glare of the video camera which was used to record the whole presentation phase. Based on the principle that we hear what we expect to hear, students have been encouraged to use the format and language of the Dossier d'Enquete to organize their presentations. The students were asked to assess, in pairs, the presentations and the posters or collages using a set of criteria which they developed in collaboration beforehand.

The French posters and collages were displayed in the library and Dianne was asked to assist in judging and presenting Prizes.
What has this unit achieved?

1. From the LOTE teacher's point of view students have:
   - Developed skills required for research in VCE
   - Been introduced to the range of resources in our library that supports French
   - Used their French language as a tool to access new information and ideas
   - Worked effectively in groups to complete a common task
   - Deepened their knowledge of French civilization
   - Strengthened their knowledge of French language
   - Worked in a learning environment which is not totally teacher-centered
   - Been able to work at their own level and pace
   - Been actively involved in establishing assessment criteria for their own and each other's work
   - Used a range of different text types (discourse forms)
   - Given a two-minute performance in French.

2. From the Teacher-Librarian's point of view students have:
   - Been able to use the library collection for developing research skills in a subject area which is not a heavy user of library resources
   - Used a range of thinking skills to complete a task
   - Used research as an integrated part of a unit of work
   - Developed the skills of extracting specific information from a range of sources. This required skimming and scanning techniques
   - Had the benefit of the combined expertise of Teacher-Librarian and a LOTE teacher preparing and implementing a unit of work ('The whole is greater than the sum of the parts').
   - Been given a real purpose for undertaking research
   - Had fun in their learning