

# languages ICT



## Languages ICT Action Research

### Project summaries 2004-05

The Languages ICT Action Research project is an initiative from CLT, the National Centre for Languages and the Association for Language Learning (ALL). The Project aims to support secondary classroom teachers in reflecting on their use of ICT and understanding its impact on pupils' learning. This paper details the findings of classroom-based projects undertaken during the 2004-05 phase. For more information on this initiative, please visit the Languages ICT website.

#### **Adeyfield School, Hemel Hempstead. Mr Yann Le Coguc**

Working autonomously with ICT on a "real-life" task in order to improve language skills, especially writing and speaking.

The Modern Languages teachers at Adeyfield School wanted to use ICT to improve written and spoken skills and also to promote greater autonomy in learning. In line with the school's status as a Specialist Business and Enterprise College, Year 9 pupils were given a "real life" task of marketing their school to a French audience. They were to use the Internet to find suitable images and a set of reference notes to check on grammar and appropriate vocabulary. Their work was to be presented using PowerPoint. They were to deliver a commentary in French on their presentations, which originally were to include sound recordings. The teacher was to adopt the role of mentor, offering guidance on preparation and general direction. While the pupils responded eagerly to the task, it soon became apparent that they needed more direction and support than this model of learning allowed. They were failing to make ground and the teacher resumed a more traditional role, after which it was difficult to re-engage the pupils in the original spirit of the project. However, despite setbacks there were gains: pupils did use their knowledge to achieve a practical goal, they did investigate independently on the Internet, and they did develop collaborative and spoken skills. Some pupils performed very well but the overall results were not as intended. Staff concluded that they would in future need to prepare pupils more gradually for such a change in the way they work and learn. However, the teachers are not discouraged and, in fact, are more prepared than previously to "let go of the reins" and understand better how they must change their preparation, presentation and support if they are to develop independence, confidence and greater linguistic competence in their pupils.

#### **Bournemouth School for Girls, Bournemouth. Mr Jean-Christophe Sorin**

Using web page creation to promote accuracy and independent learning skills.

Teachers at Bournemouth School for Girls used web page authoring software and the theme of school life to set Year 9 pupils the task of creating a series of web pages in French of a standard suitable for eventual publication on the Internet. The web pages were to be placed in the first instance on the school intranet and later online for use with a partner school in France. Older pupils created web page templates into which the Year 9 pupils were to place their completed text and images. A technician took photographs for the pupils to use.

A key aim of the project was to develop independent learning skills and to use the task to motivate pupils to produce high quality work, in the accuracy of the language used, the relevance of the content and the appearance of the final product.

Pupils responded enthusiastically to the challenge but had some initial difficulty working independently. They did not use early planning time or dictionaries and grammar reference materials very efficiently. Concentrated whole-class work on these matters produced results and pupils worked efficiently, creating and re-drafting their texts and selecting appropriate images to place on their pages. In some cases, the language produced was excellent.

Overall, the project demonstrated that this approach did motivate pupils to re-draft in order to produce a quality product. There was a clear sense of ownership which stimulated efforts and the real-life nature of the task focused minds on the questions of accuracy, relevance and presentation.

Technically, the project was not demanding and pupils found it easy to work with the software. Teachers feel that this approach has yielded very good results and they have learnt a great deal from it, especially with regard to the ability of pupils to work independently, efficiently and effectively. They plan to extend this project in future.



**Icknield High School, Luton. Ms Anne Skennerton**

Using ICT to promote independent and effective use of the target language.

The project at Icknield High School aimed to explore the best ways of preparing pupils to use ICT effectively and to ensure that they are able to work independently to complete a creative loosely structured task. Pupils were aware of the nature of the project and the fact that they were going to work independently in the ICT suite for the final week of the project, producing 9-10 PowerPoint slides on their school subjects, their teachers and their opinions. They were to use text, images, sound recordings and the Notes feature of the software to write more extensively. Unfortunately, it was not possible to use either sound or Notes. Taking the theme of free time, a Year 9 German class 9 (set 1 of 2) completed a review test of material they had covered on the theme in Years 7 and 8. They then worked for two 55-minute lessons per week with the teacher on new material over a period of three weeks. They compiled plentiful notes and key vocabulary during the whole-class teaching phase and used this as support material during the ICT phase. This took place over two lessons in the final week of the project. Pupils responded very enthusiastically, drafting, re-drafting and consulting notes and dictionaries. Most completed their projects. They repeated the initial test and it was seen that all had improved significantly, even dramatically in some cases. The presentations also indicated improved understanding of the language and grammar of the topic. Most of the pupils were certainly able to work effectively and creatively. It was clear that they valued the detailed preparation, the familiar nature of the theme, and the freedom to decide upon content, and appearance of their work. The project was a success and valuable lessons were learnt regarding the time and support needed to develop independence in pupils.

**Pilton Community College, Barnstaple. Ms Sally Blackmore and Ms Val Dixon**

The use of CPS (Classroom Performance Systems) to improve motivation at KS3

Teachers of modern languages at Pilton Community College wanted to assess the effect of CPS (Classroom Performance System) on weaker disaffected pupils at Key Stage 3 and to determine the role and value of CPS in enabling teachers to identify pupils requiring support and areas of language in need of further teaching. The target group was a small number of Year 8 pupils for whom a series of exercises were created, some of which used CPS, including electronic voting. It was hoped that pupils would engage more positively and that the CPS would give teachers immediate feedback on individual performance, thus enabling rapid remedial action. Despite initial technical problems and interruptions to the normal school timetable, the project worked well and gave encouraging results. While aware that such a short period of action research gave no more than a snapshot of the potential of CPS to produce the desired outcomes, teachers felt they had achieved the outcomes they had intended. They were able to note the following:

- The target group of pupils improved their performance compared to previous activities without CPS activities.
- Pupils who would normally not participate became fully engaged.
- Pupils responded with great enthusiasm, especially to activities involving electronic voting.
- Teachers received a truer picture of pupil achievement.
- Teachers were able to quickly and easily identify both pupils in need of further support and areas of language in need of reinforcement.

A positive lesson was learnt regarding the value of CPS and work has already begun to introduce other teachers to the technology and to prepare suitable materials for use across all classes. A future project is to develop CPS materials for the assessment of KS2 pupils as they make the transition to Key Stage 3.