

languages ICT

Languages ICT Action Research

Project summaries 2006–07

The Languages ICT Action Research Project was an initiative from CILT, the National Centre for Languages and the Association for Language Learning (ALL). The Project, which ran from 2004–2007, supported 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 2006–07 phase. For more information on this initiative, please visit the Languages ICT website.

To view the summaries of particular schools, click on the appropriate name from the list below.

All Saints High School

Billingham Campus School

Brinsworth Comprehensive

Clifton College

Gordano School

Holmfirth High School

King Harold School

Lincoln Christ's Hospital School

Saltley School

Shenley Court

Sir Bernard Lovell School

St Aidan's School

St Julie's High School

All Saints RC High School, Sheffield. Ms Carolyn George and Ms Beatrice Jimenez

Using digital audio and common software to improve speaking skills.

Project 1

The Languages Department at All Saints School, Sheffield, wished to explore the potential of ICT to improve pronunciation and develop speaking skills with a group of 16 year 10 pupils who, while enthusiastic learners, lack confidence in speaking in French.

Using a blend of ICT and non-ICT activities, the teacher reviewed the topic of leisure, placing special emphasis on the formation of the Future and Perfect tenses, including common irregular verbs. The simple device of using ICT for colour coding verbs and verb endings proved popular and effective as an aid to learning. As the project developed pupils worked in the ICT suite on a range of interactive materials created with authoring software and generic word processing software. Text, image and audio were incorporated into these activities. Pupils were required to re-arrange pictures in the order of the audio narrative or listen and

fill gaps in text, all of which led to an activity in which pupils created and inserted their own audio into a worksheet to tell a story. Despite various technical problems with voice recording this activity engaged and stretched pupils. Some pupils, notably girls, were reluctant to record their own voices but, nonetheless, persisted with good results.

This activity served as a valuable precursor to the final phase of this project when pupils created their own presentations on the theme of Futuroscope, Eurodisney or the Eiffel Tower. They worked independently, researching the Internet for images which they then incorporated in to their presentations, before adding text captions and recordings of their own voices to match the content.

The results were impressive. Several pupils were able to demonstrate effective and appropriate use of the perfect tense by the end of the project. Overall, pupils responded with enthusiasm throughout and especially when working independently in the final phase of the project. They improved their language skills, specifically speaking, and it was clear that the grammatical objectives had been realised. Both teacher and pupils developed a range of technical skills and the project enabled the teacher to develop a more pupil-centred approach to teaching and learning and to use ICT effectively in this regard.

Project 2

The second ICT Action Research project at All Saints in the academic year 2006–07 was with a year 7 French class of 30 pupils. As in the initial project with year 10 pupils the teachers wished to integrate ICT more fully into teaching and learning and to promote both creativity and independence in pupils. It was further hoped that by working in this way with year 7 pupils these attributes would become deeply embedded in their approach to study over the coming years. The class worked on the topic of 'Ma ville' and the objective was to use audio, and images to produce a presentation advertising their home city.

Pupils were introduced to the project, to which they responded enthusiastically, and some revision of places in town and directions took place. In this phase text book work, presentations on the interactive whiteboard and listening exercises with a tape recorder were used. Subsequent grammar work on the present tense was consolidated with written worksheets and electronic worksheets in which pupils used drop-down forms and also drag-and-drop activities with inserted audio clips. Next, pupils were briefed on the presentation they had to produce with audio and graphics. A supporting presentation was demonstrated in class and lodged also on the network for pupils to access. The presentation explained how to insert images into a slide with speech bubbles and animations, and how to record to a slide. Pupils then worked in teams to produce their presentations. In order to save time, the teachers deposited images of the city on the network for pupils to use. Pupils rose to the challenge, using the available images, downloading animated images and inserting audio to produce attractive presentations, which were then presented to the whole class for peer evaluation using criteria based on linguistic, technical and presentational merits.

Despite delays caused by exams and foreign trips, the project finished on time and was considered by all to be immensely successful. The pupils were very pleased with their work and keen to repeat this model of learning. They took great care to improve their pronunciation and grammatical accuracy, which was certainly one of the aims of the project. For the teachers, the project enabled them to integrate ICT more completely into teaching and learning. There was ample opportunity for pupils to develop language skills, technical skills and work both collaboratively and independently. Pupil confidence in French clearly grew as the project developed. The inclusion of interactive electronic worksheets and the recording of sound files were key factors in engaging pupils while the increased independence and responsibility promoted creativity and commitment. Authoring software has been purchased for future work and similar projects will be embedded into the departmental schemes of work.

Billingham Campus School, Billingham. Mr Richard Henderson

Using CPS (Classroom Performance System) to improve learning and promote self-improvement.

The Action Research project at Billingham Campus School was extended over a period of 7 months and explored the potential of Classroom Performance Systems (CPS), online interactive materials and proprietary interactive whole-class teaching resources for use with the interactive whiteboard to improve vocabulary and grammar recognition skills when reading and to develop reading skills overall. A key priority was to engage pupils in the process of learning and self-improvement and support materials and study logs were used to this effect. The overall aim is to improve exam performance in the area of reading comprehension.

Pupils completed the initial GCSE test, which was to be used as a baseline to evaluate progress at the end of the project. The teacher analysed the exam results for reading skills to identify which question types caused difficulty. Pupils also completed a questionnaire to identify ways of learning which they felt were beneficial in class as a group and at home when working individually. The findings revealed they felt a variety of methods were valuable, including the use of CPS, proprietary interactive whiteboard resources and online learning materials. The teacher then proceeded to plan and adapt interactive whiteboard activities, from the proprietary interactive whiteboard resources already available, which corresponded exactly to the question types at GCSE.

In order to engage pupils more completely and to develop in them a sense of responsibility for their own learning and improvement a Personal Learning Journal was devised. In conjunction with the teacher, pupils identified three learning targets as a focus for self-improvement at home over the remainder of the project. They were to use the Internet to complete online language activities and to record other ways in which they attempted to meet their learning targets. Parents were informed of the project and especially of the Personal Learning Journal. They were asked to sign the journal to confirm that pupils were indeed responding to their personal learning targets.

Pupils worked with enthusiasm and a sense of involvement and were willing to take up the challenge of self-improvement. The interactive resources, online sites and CPS system in class were motivational as they were enjoyable and clearly targeted on language improvement. It was clear that pupils were making progress. The electronic monitoring system allowed teacher and pupils to survey individual progress which acted as a spur. The involvement of parents in the Personal Learning Journal provided valuable support and pupils worked with a sense of purpose.

The full GCSE paper used as an end of year exam provided further proof of progress. In each question type and in overall performance there was a quantifiable improvement. This reflected the improvement noted in the repeated worksheets and other activities.

Pupils appreciate the difference that the project has made and the teacher is extremely satisfied with the outcomes. While acknowledging that not all improvement over an extended period can be attributed solely to the use of ICT, the project has demonstrated the valuable role that ICT can play in enabling both teacher and pupils to target weaknesses and develop strategies for improvement. Pupils too have developed the ability to focus on "learning how to learn" and to devise strategies which they act upon independently.

It is planned to develop this approach to teaching and learning across the Languages department and other departments, notably Maths, are interested in adopting similar approaches.

Brinsworth School, Rotherham. Ms Fiona Hilton

Using ICT to promote creativity and develop the skills necessary for independent learning.

The Action Research project at Brinsworth was extended over a period of 7 months and explored ways of developing in pupils both creativity and the learning skills necessary to work independently. The project aimed at integrating ICT more deeply into the departmental scheme of work over an extended period. Furthermore, a departmental goal is to boost recruitment at Key Stage 4, especially amongst boys, and it was hoped that this project would be of value in this regard. For this reason, a top set year 9 French class of 30 pupils, boys and girls, was chosen for the project which extended over seven months.

The teacher was aware of the ICT needs of the class, and initially only had to show the pupils how to use authoring software and Windows Movie Maker. It was explained to the pupils that they were going to use a range of software as an integral part of their learning and that over the months they were to produce a range of artefacts which would be used, in conjunction with other assessment materials, to evaluate their progress in French. Topics taught during the period of the project included free time, pocket money, homes and housing, and fashion.

In the early stages of the project, pupils demonstrated their understanding of past, present and near future tenses by using authoring software to create interactive activities and games which were then placed on the network and completed by fellow pupils. They also created presentations on the topics studied, homes and houses, using all three target tenses but without audio.

The subsequent, more creative phase of the project saw pupils work with audio and digital photos taken on their mobile phones. They made PowerPoint presentations, into which they inserted voice recordings. They had hoped to use slide show software with their digital photos and to add audio and music but instead opted for creating a short film in Movie Maker with digital stills. Unfortunately, technical difficulties precluded the incorporation of audio into the movie files.

With undiminished enthusiasm the pupils continued to work towards their final goal, the production of a news clip video on the topics covered during the project, including fashion. They used their mobile phones to create audio and video.

The intention was to place all three elements of the project into one package comprising the interactive games and activities, two presentations and the video news clip. This was then to be placed on the school network and also on CD/DVD for pupils to take home. However, continuing technical difficulties at the level of the school meant that this final goal could not be achieved.

Nonetheless, all the aims of the project had been achieved and pupils had demonstrated their linguistic and technical expertise. They had been enthusiastic throughout the project and remained highly motivated despite technical obstacles. Pupils worked collaboratively and independently of the teacher and learnt to work beyond the text book. They had taken ownership of the project and responded wholeheartedly to the responsibility for developing their learning which the project demanded. The teacher was able to take more of a facilitatory role and was also able to run similar projects with other groups. Recruitment to Key Stage improved considerably, notably amongst boys, and the various ICT elements of the project had been integrated seamlessly into the scheme of work.

Future ICT work will involve digital video and podcasting and this project will be disseminated via the branch of the Association of Language Learning nearest to the teacher's new school in the next academic year.

Clifton College, Bristol. Mr Bobby Trivic

Using digital language laboratory software to improve speaking.

The project involved one year 11 class working on the fluency and accuracy of their spoken French using the Digital Language Lab. The teacher wanted to explore the capabilities afforded by the new lab and software in developing speaking skill and self-assessment

Pupils from a year 11 GCSE class recorded and saved spoken answers relevant to routine preparation for the oral examination. They saved them as mp3 files and took them away to consider ways of improving their answers, using teacher and peer feedback as an aid. They then revisited and improved each answer.

In addition to the specialised software for the language lab the teacher used, the interactive whiteboard or a data projector to link with materials created with generic software by the teacher and colleagues in the department. Other non-ICT materials consisted of GCSE oral booklet of typical questions, organised in topics to match the AQA specifications.

The project enabled the class to work as a group, agreeing the criteria for good speaking production, which they encapsulated in the acronym "Snotlad" (Sequences, Negatives, Opinions, Tenses, Linking Words, Adjectives, Detail). Pupils also worked individually, completing the activities in the ICT room or via the network from home and recording their work. The teacher recorded constructive feedback at the end of each pupil's recording,

While boys were enthusiastic about the project, girls remained a little reserved, a difference attributable probably more to a liking for computers than to attainment levels.

The integration of ICT into the preparation of GCSE oral work raised motivation and improved learning of vocabulary, but it may have impaired the spontaneous use of language. Nonetheless, at the end of the project, the pupils' performance in their mock oral examinations was much improved compared to previous work.

The project enabled the teacher to learn to use new software and to resolve some of the technical issues it generated. It also enabled him to review more traditional strategies to prepare examination oral work.

The outcomes of the project will be disseminated to the rest of the department in the school and to colleagues outside the College through the College website.

Gordano School, Portishead. Mr Peter Morris

Wikimania II: using wikis to encourage autonomous, creative and collaborative writing.

Building on the learning points from the Wikimania project (CILT 2005–06), Wikimania II proposed to research the extent to which a wiki provides a medium in which pupils can be motivated to write autonomously, creatively and collaboratively and to correct their own and each other's errors. Two classes were initially involved in a project: a year 7 French group and a year 7 German group. They were invited to contribute to the class wiki, using the work done in class and writing as accurately as possible. Support was provided by, for instance, sentences modelled by the teacher or tips from the teacher. Using a code clear to all, the teacher indicated mistakes that could be corrected independently by pupils, and some pupils did correct mistakes as the histories of the wiki pages show.

Parallel experiments took place with a year 11 German and a year 13 German. The teacher explored wikis as a revision tool for a disaffected year 11 class because his initial work with wikis inspired other possibilities such as embedding interactive exercises within the wiki. The counter incorporated in the site indicates that it is well visited by students who may have been reluctant to engage in revisions through more traditional means. The year 13 work

involved a whole class doing some research on a film they had watched in class and writing their review of the film live to the wiki. Interactive reading and writing were at the heart of the process, taking into accounts what others had written while personal research was on-going. The results of these experiments are already being used to support the year 7 project.

The interactive whiteboard and data projector were linked to the Internet to enable the whole class to work with the wikis in class or to work with materials created using commercial software such as Hot Potatoes and loaded onto the wiki. Using ICT enabled the pupils to practise grammar and vocabulary, to develop reading and writing skills, to complete Internet research and develop investigative skills, to develop cultural awareness, to work collaboratively or independently within a guided framework.

Boys and girls were equally enthusiastic about the project. In terms of language skills, learning skills and language performance, some pupils benefited more than others as some have visited the wikis repeatedly and added content and made corrections while others have been occasional visitors.

The project has enabled both teacher and pupils to develop ICT skills. The use of ICT has enabled interactive collaborative writing from home, in-class interactive collaborative writing using Internet researched stimuli, and interactive GCSE vocabulary revision for the mocks from home.

At the end of this phase of the project, a question is raised as to whether participation may be increased by posting more stimulus material on the wikis when things go quiet. The learning from parallel investigations involving a year 11 and a year 13 German classes working with wikis is already being incorporated into Wikimania II: the year 7 German wiki is providing some interactive exercises to help improve specific points of language.

Further development of the project is two-fold: encourage the use of wikis in the department through joint projects and investigate the possibility of involving pupils from abroad in the wikis.

Holmfirth High School, Holmfirth. Ms Sarah Godbehere

Using ICT, in particular digital audio, to improve pronunciation and develop narrative skills.

Project 1

Holmfirth School Languages Department wished to investigate ways of using ICT to improve pronunciation and narrative skills. Focusing on the topic of Holidays a year 9 mixed ability Spanish group developed their understanding of the Preterite and Imperfect tenses before eventually progressing to work independently on a creative task to be shown to other pupils.

Initial presentation of the theme and target structures using the text book laid the basis for whole class work on screen using activities created with authoring software. These activities proved immensely popular and motivation soared. Further ICT work in the computer suite involved matching exercises (often drag-and-drop), comprised of text and images, created with authoring software and an electronic worksheet devised using a common word processor. Initial plans to incorporate audio had to be abandoned for technical reasons but this did not detract from the attractiveness of the activities for the pupils and their effectiveness to motivate and assist retention.

In the final stage of the project pupils created their own presentation on the theme of a past holiday. Support materials were placed on the network for pupils to use when necessary. Where possible, they used digital photos of their own holidays, or otherwise downloaded suitable images from the Internet. Finally, each project was shown to the class in a peer evaluation session, which all enjoyed.

While some pupils tended to focus more on style than substance in their independent work, the project overall was very motivational and levels of enthusiasm remained high throughout, although some of the weaker pupils were a little cautious initially. Pupils engaged with learning in a different way and the project provided a useful model for deepening the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in the department.

Project 2

For the second ICT Action Research project in the current academic year, year 7 Spanish pupils at Holmfirth School used audio and images to build a presentation on the theme of their home town. Microphones had been purchased following the first project and a key focus of this project was to record and edit audio to be inserted into the presentations.

Initial work on the topic, teaching the necessary vocabulary and grammar for the topic, comprised a mixture of traditional methods and activities devised with authoring software and delivered to the whole class on the interactive whiteboard. Detailed planning of the content of slides took place in class as access to the ICT room was limited. This approach to planning was successful as it helped pupils to focus on the task and prepare in detail with the result that subsequent time spent in the ICT was very productive. To ensure pupils had the requisite technical skills, demonstration material was prepared for the interactive whiteboard explaining how to set up the computer and record with microphones. Pupils were to record and edit using Audacity, a free downloadable sound editor. Recording and editing techniques were demonstrated on the interactive whiteboard and a support file was placed on the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment). Pupils were also shown how to insert a voice recording into PowerPoint and this file, along with a Help sheet, which included page references to the text book, and digital photographs, was placed on the VLE for pupils to access during the project. Time spent in the ICT room was used very well. Pupils worked to their plans and used the support materials placed on the VLE. Finally, the whole class watched the projects over two lessons, and graded each project for content, accuracy, the quality and range of language and visual appeal. The teacher also used this opportunity to award a National Curriculum level to each pupil's work.

Pupils worked with enthusiasm throughout the project and paid great attention to pronunciation and grammatical accuracy. They responded well to the independence the project conferred upon them and adapted well to using support materials on the VLE rather than always resorting to the teacher to resolve questions or difficulties. The way the project was structured enabled the teacher to monitor and supervise progress and ensure that language skills were being developed as well as creative and technical skills. Pupils were highly motivated by this approach to learning and their confidence in Spanish improved as they developed their presentation.

The project will be presented to the Languages Department. The pupils' work is now available on the school intranet and it is planned to use similar projects with each teaching group at least once a year.

King Harold School, Waltham Abbey. Mr Terry Curtis

Making it personal: using an e-portfolio to identify progression.

A focus for the work of this Department was to raise achievement for pupils capable of Higher level work and retain them into Key Stage 4. More pupils are staying on into KS4, although this can still improve. At the same time the school is implementing the e-portfolio, which has enabled Languages teachers to take the lead in introducing the learners to this system and focus at the same time on exploring more complex texts.

The Action Research project was a very helpful stimulus to investigate the development of challenging resources and approaches, specifically in relation to handling longer and more

complex texts in the target language.

The focus was on writing, through an initial reading activity. Pupils were asked to edit the texts they explored, using strategies they were taught, in order to raise their level of complexity, thus gaining insight into what constitutes a more effective (Higher Level) piece of writing. Instead of writing activities being stored / marked in exercise books, they were stored, reviewed, and enhanced in the e-portfolio.

Throughout the project pupils used ICT in creating their storyboards and e-portfolio entries in order to:

- practise grammar and vocabulary;
- develop the four language skills;
- complete Internet research and develop investigative skills and cultural awareness;
- develop creative skills, using, for example, audio, video, digital photos etc;
- work collaboratively;
- work independently, within a guided framework;
- develop memorisation skills;
- improve the use of reference materials, such as online dictionaries, glossaries, and other support materials.

Their ongoing work was assessed during the project to ensure progression. Students of all abilities responded enthusiastically to the task, accepting correction to an e-portfolio more readily than to a hard copy.

All students enjoyed watching each others' presentations and also a montage of the highlights of the group's work to exemplify their very best language.

Other members of the department have already been drawn in to the activity; in future it may be effective to work collaboratively in a cluster on a project, perhaps involving new Comenius partnership school(s) and certainly other departments.

'This sort of Action Research is extremely beneficial for personal and professional development, and for raising the profile of the department too!'

Lincoln Christ's Hospital School, Lincoln. Ms Catherine Ogereau and Ms Catherine Turner

Using authoring software and other ICT to improve language skills and engage pupils.

Project 1

At Lincoln Christ's Hospital School teachers in the Languages Department used authoring software, online exercises and features of interactive whiteboard software to develop vocabulary skills in year 8 pupils who have difficulty in learning French.

Activities, at word, sentence and text level, were designed to help pupils retain new language and improve their concentration. The goal was that each pupil would write a short text on their daily routines.

Working with the whole class on the topic of daily routines, teachers used presentation and authoring software and various features of interactive whiteboard software to present new vocabulary. Pupils completed paper worksheets to consolidate learning in this phase of the project.

Subsequent work in the ICT suite enabled pupils to work alone on interactive activities, comprising text, images and audio, created with authoring software. Motivation and engagement increased greatly at this stage of the project. Pupils found the activities appealing and achievable. Teachers found their role became more facilitatory and less directive which gave them more opportunity for individual support while pupils enjoyed working alone.

In the final phases, pupils worked in groups. They had to find and place appropriate images in a presentation on daily routines and then add relevant text. Although the teachers had modelled a similar presentation the pupils found writing difficult and there was some loss of interest. Nonetheless, the freedom to create their own work did stimulate pupils and led to increased attention to accuracy when inputting text.

Overall, ICT helped teachers create a variety of activities, and enabled them to be used in quick succession both in class and in the ICT suite. The effect was to sustain interest and increase motivation in a class which otherwise finds language learning difficult and unattractive. Pupils developed all their language skills and responded to the creative independent work despite difficulties with writing in French. Above all, pupils' learning skills improved and teachers felt the project has helped deepen the integration of ICT into teaching and learning in the Languages Department and served as an inspiration to colleagues from other subject areas.

Teachers of French and German at Lincoln Christ's Hospital School used ICT with two parallel groups of year 10 pupils of 20 and 12 pupils respectively. One group studies French and the other German. Both groups have great difficulty with languages. Their attention span is weak and very limited and they are not well motivated. As they share the ICT suite in an informal arrangement once a week it was decided to use ICT to stimulate cultural and linguistic awareness in a cross-language project. The objective was to produce a presentation in both German and French on the attractions of Lincoln.

In the initial phase of the project pupils were taught relevant vocabulary and structures separately. Teachers used the interactive whiteboard to present and consolidate language. Authoring software was used to create a range of interactive exercises. Websites were accessed and exploited for language and/or images. Paper worksheets were completed and corrected and pupils prepared their own lists of useful language for the presentation. Pupils next produced a draft brochure about their city using a word processor and images. They worked separately to plan their PowerPoint presentation.

Project 2

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The following collaborative phase involved pupils working with fellow pupils from the

opposing language group in the ICT suite. They had to work with a partner and produce identical language in French and German to match shared images. Their work was to be combined in one bi-lingual presentation. Finally, their work was presented to classmates in both groups who assessed their work against a set of criteria prepared by the teachers.

During the whole project pupils were highly motivated. They demonstrated understanding of language and the framework of working in a new language with someone from another group was stimulating. They worked purposefully and showed an ability to research the Internet to find useful images. They took care in their presentation of language and were mindful of the fact that the presentations will be placed on the school's website, which gave them all a clear sense of purpose and pride.

The teachers felt the project had worked well. Motivation was high, concentration improved as did pupils' understanding and use of language. For the teachers, this has been a very productive project and has enabled them to develop strategies for integrating ICT more fully into teaching and learning, especially with the least able and least motivated.

Saltley School and Specialist Science College, Birmingham. Mr Abdul Majid Afzal

Using interactive whiteboard software to enhance whole-class teaching, in particular text manipulation and colour-coded activities, to complement paper-based activities focused on tense formation in Urdu.

With a high percentage of Pakistani pupils at this medium-sized mixed comprehensive school, the Urdu department has a key role to play alongside the French department. With pupils learning Urdu mainly as a third language (English and Mirpuri usually coming first), focused teaching is required to develop literacy and understanding of grammar in particular. This year 9 project focused on the development of accurate, appropriate and confident use of tense, the key to accessing Level 5 of the National Curriculum, through the integrated use of ICT for whole-class teaching. The teacher used an illustrated PowerPoint presentation to introduce vocabulary written in Urdu script and to promote discussion about weather and seasons in the UK and Pakistan. Using colour-coded text to denote different tenses, the teacher then used interactive whiteboard software to highlight grammar points, leading onto text manipulation activities, such as matching sentence halves and sentence reconstruction. The pupils then worked independently on worksheet-based reading tasks, which required them to understand tense use and to complete sentences in handwritten Urdu. The Reveal and Highlight tools of the interactive whiteboard software then focused pupils during the worksheet self-correction activity. The teacher found that most pupils reacted enthusiastically to the lesson activities and noted a particular improvement in effort by those pupils struggling to move from Level 4 to Level 5. For one gifted and talented girl, the project was the turning point in grasping the differences between past tenses. The teacher commented that pupils responded 'much more confidently and quickly, because they were engaged and supported by the visual elements.' A brief evaluation of the project lessons showed that 90% of pupils could articulate what they had learned without guidance from the teacher. The teacher felt that the ICT had impacted positively on his teaching style and, urged also by the pupils, he aims to integrate use of the whiteboard further into his teaching.

Shenley Court Specialist Arts College, Birmingham. Ms Anne Brookstein

Developing confidence with graduated activities.

The project at Shenley Court comprised a graduated series of ICT activities: whole class teaching using the interactive whiteboard, pair work in a computer room, and, finally, individual work in an ICT room. The aim was to use ICT to develop confidence by retaining

pupils' attention more effectively, making learning easier and more solid and therefore improving learning and self esteem in pupils.

The topic 'Opinions and school subjects' has limited vocabulary with very many possibilities of expression. In order to engage the pupils in creating their own personal bank of statements, pupils were shown examples of adaptation within fixed sentence structures; they then used reservoirs of similar phrases, again in fixed sentence structures, to translate and then create sentences. Finally they created their own personal bank of statements for use in written and oral work.

Despite the late entry into the action research programme and the acute lack of time in planning, this project produced very satisfactory results. The aim "to develop pupil confidence with graduated activities" was fully realised by a final assessment in which all 15 pupils produced, unaided, complex sentences in which they gave their opinions on school subjects. The minimum structure handled by the pupils involved a subordinate clause with *parce que*. The most complex structure involved the pattern '(subject)? *Je + verb ça parce que le prof est + adjective*', where the initial verb could be positive or negative. One pupil stood out by producing sentences such as '(subject)? *Je + verb ça parce que c'est + adjective et le prof est + adjective*'. She also used nine different adjectives in the six sentences she produced.

To achieve such sentences within 4 lessons of being introduced to both vocabulary and the structures is remarkable. The methods used clearly had the effect of making pupils see the myriad possibilities of manipulation and adaptation within the structures on offer. In a post assessment questionnaire all pupils bar one reacted positively to the project and 82% agreed strongly that the ICT had helped improve their work. 64% agreed strongly that the ICT had improved their confidence: another 27% just agreed. The fact that there were no negative responses to the exercise using a reservoir of words, from which to build sentences, speaks for itself; clearly a useful tool – as the pupils themselves pointed out. The further fact that this activity involved asking pupils to translate English sentences should encourage teachers to put translation back into the pantheon of teaching methodologies. Not one pupil in the final assessment showed any inclination to transliterate from their own English thoughts into French: instead they clearly used and reused the same and similar structures in order to express their own opinions.

Sir Bernard Lovell School, Bristol. Ms Ruth Cole and Ms Caroline Saunders

Working with podcasts to enable pupils to take more control of their own learning and to develop error recognition, confidence when speaking and creativity with language.

Project 1

The project 'SBL podcast with audacity' proposed to investigate whether the use of podcasting as an end product would increase pupils' motivation and confidence for speaking and support them in developing accuracy.

Working with ICT in the context of 'SBL podcast with Audacity' enabled pupils to develop their speaking skills and creative skills using audio, recordings and digital photos. They were able to work collaboratively or independently within a guided framework as appropriate for the phase of the project. Non-ICT activities included teacher input, textbook and listening activities, some supported by interactive whiteboard work.

The project was introduced by playing a podcast made in German by students in Edinburgh, setting the standard for pupils to achieve. The language necessary to compare German and English schools was introduced, practised and drilled. Students used Audacity, a free downloadable audio editor, in the ICT suite to record their work in groups or pairs. Lesson by

lesson, they improved and corrected their scripts and their recordings, adding new structures and vocabulary as they were introduced. Students attempted to export sound files to VLE, selected photos to add to their podcasts and used Garageband to create their final products. They had the opportunity to add pre-set jingles.

All pupils were enthusiastic about the project. All commented that they had enjoyed it and that it was fun. Some said they thought that it had been a difficult subject to talk about and that they would prefer to talk about something they found easier. The opportunity for a hi-tech, multimedia end product, gave students the impetus to practise and correct their pronunciation and language normal classroom speaking practice would not have afforded; it was a real motivator.

The project has helped both teachers and other colleagues in the Languages Department embed ICT into teaching and learning. It will be disseminated through the South West Grid for Learning website, the CILT website and the Bristol Hub Wiki. In order to enable other colleagues to develop confidence to initiate similar projects, training has been planned in and out of the department. Other projects are planned with the same class that will involve a further Podcasting project and a Vodcast (video podcast) project. One of the learning points of this phase of "SBL podcast with Audacity" indicates a need for developing simple step-by-step instructions for podcasting.

Project 2

A continuation of 'SBL podcast with Audacity', 'SBL podcast with Audacity mark 2' proposed to investigate the extent to which podcasting can increase student confidence, motivation and accuracy in German when preparing for an oral presentation.

In the context of 'SBL podcast with Audacity mark 2', pupils used ICT to develop their speaking and writing skills and to develop memorisation skills. They worked largely independently, the teacher intervening only when approached. Non-ICT activities included presentation of language, listening activities and language games.

In the initial phase, students were shown examples of podcasting as an introduction. The central phase involved the students writing their own scripts and practising and learning them at home. Finally, they recorded their work on Audacity and then transferred this to Garageband. They listened to their own work and attempted to correct their own.

All pupils were enthusiastic about the project. All, including some weaker students, male and female, were keen and worked well.

The project enabled pupils to establish the need to develop their fluency. They realised how quickly they could do this with practice and thus significantly improved their spoken language performance. The project contributed to the development of pupil independent learning. ICT provided the impetus for the final product and allowed students to assess their work, correct themselves and refine their performance.

The processes and results of 'SBL podcast with Audacity mark 2', have been disseminated in presentations to Australian headteachers, mfl colleagues and across the whole school.

The project has helped embed ICT into teaching and learning, for the teachers and some colleagues in and outside the Languages Department. It will lead to a better integration of ICT into teaching and learning: key ICT projects will be planned into schemes of work for pupils across the MFL Department. Experience has shown that when designing such a project, it is important to plan over a longer period to allow for mistakes and interruptions.

St Aidan's RC School, Sunderland. Mr Arezki Aouane

Whose voice is it anyway? Engaging the imagination in the development of speaking skills, using audio and video editing software.

St Aidan's is a boys' school located in a residential area south of the city centre with a good social mixture. This project built on previous work using Audacity (making raps, recording and editing presentations) and took pupils forward in terms of speaking and writing skills. In line with a whole school objective to encourage independent learning, the department at St. Aidan's wanted to investigate how imaginative engagement with a video clip, alongside established pair work practices of brainstorming and drafting / redrafting could produce more creative writing and speaking in the target language. Pupils would script, record and edit a new soundtrack for the clip.

Students successfully downloaded the video clips from the internet at home with the help of parents and used USB sticks, mobile phones and MP3 players and CDRoms to store them and bring them to school. Their scripts were recorded and edited using Audacity, a free downloadable sound editor.

Problems arose both technical and in the area of classroom management with the year 9 group initially targeted. The plan was adjusted to start again with a year 7 class which is only timetabled once a week, which proved problematic.

Because of delays and the change of class the project is not finished yet. In June 2007 the students are in the process of replacing the original sound in the films, with their own recordings. They are keen to finish the project and their independent work and team-working are clearly enhanced.

Staff learnt that it is necessary to ensure sufficient time for students to prepare and practise, and to have adequate technical support at key points in the process.

It was also felt that the project had encouraged students to carry out a lot of speaking practice, more than normal. It may well be that it would work well as an after-school club activity. It would also be easier to work with smaller groups.

St Julie's High School for Girls, Liverpool. Ms Alex Heap

College de Sallaumines, Lens, France. Mlle Alyne Piazza,

Using a secure social networking site for peer-to-peer communication and developing extended writing skills with a year 7 group.

Project 1

At St Julie's school in Liverpool a year 7 French class used a secure social networking site, **Think.com** to develop extended writing skills and to develop an awareness of the rules of language, both in English and French. Moreover, as they had learnt French in Primary School, it was an opportunity to maintain their enthusiasm for the language.

They used **Think.com** to communicate with pupils of the same age at school in Lens, Northern France, on the topic of school life. Using writing frames as a support, pupils completed two pieces of extended writing over the course of the project.

Each set of pupils wrote in the target language they are learning and each suggested to their counterparts a limited number of areas for improvement in the texts received. The teachers used these suggestions for general class work on the topic, focusing on accuracy, spelling and alternative or new expressions that emerged.

Pupils responded with great enthusiasm throughout to the extent that many continued their correspondence outside of school and through the holiday period. One of the key aims of

the project was to promote spontaneous communication. Additionally, pupils were able to upload digital photographs which personalised the experience even more. The fact that native speakers of their own age were helping them by identifying mistakes and suggesting improvements was very motivational and the process had the desired effect of developing a critical awareness of grammar rules and an ability to self-check for accuracy. As the pupils had learnt such a limited amount of French beforehand the range of language covered in their correspondence was restricted but, nonetheless, the project succeeded in its aims and pupils are keen to continue, hopefully using audio exchanges. It is planned to use this approach with other classes in KS3 and KS4.

Project 2

The second project at St Julie's using **Think.com** focused on the use of audio to develop speaking and memorisation skills in addition to the cultural awareness gained from direct peer-to-peer contact with counterparts in a French secondary school.

For this project the same pupils as in the Phase 1 project, a year 7 French class, worked on the topic of leisure and sport. Initial teaching of the phrases and structures of the topic took place using a mixture of text book and whole-class activities on the interactive whiteboard. For the latter, interactive materials prepared for departmental use were accessed on the school network. To consolidate and prepare for the main part of the project, pupils planned and produced a presentation on the theme of leisure and sport activities. At this point, they could not introduce audio as there was a problem with the microphones. Pupils then set about preparing their work to be posted as audio online for their French peers. As a key aim was to develop speaking skills, especially pronunciation, and memorisation skills pupils were instructed to learn what they wanted to record. It was also hoped that this approach would enable pupils to speak with a more natural flow and intonation than if they were using a printed script. Because of the ongoing problem with microphones, recordings were made in the office of the technical support staff where facilities were present. Having posted their recordings online pupils awaited the audio replies from France. As happened in the earlier project, pupils were encouraged to develop their language awareness by pointing out to their partners up to a maximum of three areas of pronunciation, grammar, or vocabulary where improvements could be made.

The project was successful. Pupils did memorise what they wanted to say and the result was a more natural, flowing French. They focused particularly on pronunciation and used planning time to conduct language research, which led to some excellent examples of extended language that the pupils had been able to produce quite independently. Clearly the online community and the use of audio recording provided a stimulus to which pupils responded positively. Teaching staff believe that the medium of the protected online community is a great motivator in that it allows direct one-to-one contact with French pupils, and provides a safe and personalised medium for developing language, learning skills and cultural awareness.

This year's first ICT Action Research project was shown to the school's governing body and both projects have been showcased to other teachers and schools in the city. The modern languages department at the school intend to continue with this form of project and are examining the possibilities of using webcams for future contact.