

languages ICT

Languages in non-Roman scripts

Teaching and learning

ICT for teaching and learning

ICT is a standard tool in most mainstream school classrooms, not least because of its statutory place in teacher training standards and the languages curriculum. The **new secondary curriculum**, for example, regards the use of ICT by pupils as a functional skill and 'fundamental to learning across the curriculum'; as such it is embedded in the programme of study for modern foreign languages.

Teachers report that ICT motivates many learners, because of its high status in, and relevance to, their everyday lives. Certainly ICT will be part of their future and professional life. It has significant power to bring the outside world into the classroom, through the use of websites, emails, video footage, DVD movies, audio clips or digital photographs. There is also a growing awareness of the appeal ICT offers to a wider range of learning styles, enabling the teacher to combine elements together for more efficient and effective delivery and manipulation of knowledge and concepts. These elements include:

- text;
- manipulation of text;
- images and photographs;
- colour;
- animation and movement;
- random or controlled delivery;
- voice files and sound effects;
- graphic representation and symbols;
- video images;
- immediate feedback and score-keeping;
- quick links to support materials.

ICT can enhance significantly whole-class teaching, whether through helping pupils to focus, stimulating the senses or visual/aural support; or perhaps a little of all these. The constant exposure and visual support when working with non-Roman scripts is arguably particularly important.

Schools should also aim to give pupils access to word-processing in the language they are studying, both in lesson time and outside of lessons. Word-processing enables them to develop language through drafting on-screen and amending and refining their work to enhance its quality and accuracy. When pupils are drafting written work on a computer, they are perhaps more likely to try out complex language than if they were working on paper. Word-processed text can, of course, be used in other programs such as PowerPoint, email

and web publishing, contributing to many aspects of the languages curriculum and facilitating creative work.

Giving pupils opportunities to work on interactive exercises which offer feedback, such as on a CD ROM, enables them to work at their own pace and manage their learning. Such multimedia exercises will also allow pupils to practise listening at the same time as reading, for example. There are still few examples of web-based interactive exercises in non-Roman script languages, but this may well change over the next few years.

See the **Resources** and **Facilities** downloadable sheets in the Non-Roman scripts area of the Languages ICT website for further information. For ideas to adapt for your own language across the full range of technology available in schools, look at the **Technology for languages** and **Useful ICT ideas, effective language lessons** sections.

Early writing skills in non-Roman scripts

Handwriting in a different script takes a long time to master and pupils may be able to say much more than they can write. This is particularly so in languages such as Chinese and Arabic, with complex pictograms or characters which change as they link together to form words. This often means that pupils are held back in developing their writing skills, limiting their work to sentence or short paragraph level. If pupils write using word-processing, however, they can create longer pieces of writing more quickly, as the computer does the work of writing characters or linking symbols. This can be important for pupil motivation, as well as the development of a more sophisticated writing ability.

Furthermore, this process can serve both as revision and familiarisation with as yet unknown language. For example, if a pupil types a word phonetically in Japanese, he is then required to find the correct character in the list of options given and also sees some new characters which have the same sound reading. If a pupil types the Arabic word for play (ل ع ب), the word processor will convert it to (ل ع ب). It can be seen that two of the characters (ل ع) were modified and the third (ب) remained the same because of their positions in the word, consolidating understanding of shape changes.

Keyboard and romanisation issues

Before introducing pupils to word-processing, it is important to consider how they will input the non-Roman script language and which keyboard layout they will use. See the downloadable sheet on **Facilities** for more information on keyboard options. They will need to be introduced to the keyboard layout and be set some activities to practise using it before moving onto more challenging language activities. They will need to be taught any typing conventions in your language, such as the use of Caps Lock to switch from hiragana to katakana script in Japanese.

With some languages, such as Chinese, Japanese and others, a romanisation system can be efficiently used, whereby the sounds of the language are typed using English letters. There are arguments against introducing pupils to a romanised system too early in the learning of a language, however, as they may never 'unlearn' it and use the foreign script naturally. To avoid this, you could confine on-screen work to drag and drop, multiple-choice or copy and paste activities in the early stages, such as matching, gap-fill, re-ordering and highlighting activities.

Simple ICT activities to develop reading and writing skills

All the following examples are taken from the **Setting up your computer** guides published by CILT and ALL and relate to pupils working on a word-processed worksheet on a computer. The aim is to exploit the ICT facilities so that pupils work in a different way, or more efficiently,

than if they were working on paper.

- i) Pupils can sort words or phrases by dragging them into different columns of a table. For example, words can be sorted according to their meaning, e.g. negative or positive concepts, food or drink items. Such an activity provides a useful alternative approach to vocabulary revision, as well as helping pupils to make connections between words and improve their understanding of how a language works.
- ii) Pupils' transition from the spoken to the written word can be supported through online exercises. Pupils can re-order the jumbled-up sentences of a dialogue, where recognition of every character is not necessary. Each sentence can also be hyperlinked to a sound recording of the utterance, which pupils can click to hear if they need support. Sound files can be created using simple-to-use software such as Sound Recorder (part of Microsoft Windows).
- iii) Pupils can re-order the lines (not the sentences) of a text, using the copy and paste function. As sentences are broken at random points, pupils need to focus on the grammar of the sentence to complete the activity, rather than the meaning of individual words. The problem-solving nature of the activity makes it particularly appropriate for pupils working in pairs.
- iv) Pupils can develop confidence in working with longer pieces of text by completing gap-fill exercises, where they have to delete incorrect options to create a coherent and accurate text. As a follow-on task focusing on grammar rather than meaning, pupils could be asked to change the subject or verb tense of the text. Such text level work can be a stimulating alternative to traditional grammar practice exercises.
- v) You can support pupils to make links between sounds and the written word, by displaying a story written in script on their computer screens which you then read aloud for them to follow. However, you change words as you read, such as verbs, adjectives or the subject. When pupils hear a word that is different from what is written, they have to highlight the relevant script in colour. As a follow-up task for more able pupils, you can ask them to change the highlighted words into those you actually said, using context to help them.
- vi) Pupils can be daunted by a writing task as it requires them to think up what to write, manipulate vocabulary and grammar and write in a different script. You can support their initial attempts at writing by using electronic writing frames. For example, they can personalise a text on the favourite sports of a young native speaker, editing key facts to make the content true for themselves. Another way of supporting pupils is to use pictures or symbols to prompt what pupils should write, which also means that pupils are not given the answer through multiple choice questions, nor exposed to too much English.
- vii) Pupil work can be stored on your school network and redrafted at different stages of pupils' learning. Initially, pupils may simply increase the length of their work as they cover new topic areas, but you can encourage more sophisticated drafting as time goes on. Pupils can improve the quality of their work by expanding the text from within by adding adjectives and descriptive clauses, for example, or by introducing more complex verb structures. These skills are very important in achieving the higher grades at GCSE and beyond.
- viii) To develop focused writing skills, manipulation of grammar and awareness of different audiences, pupils can be given a text to reduce to its core information. Pupils edit the text, deleting any superfluous detail and reconstructing its grammatical structure to produce a coherent, tightly worded and accurate summary.
- ix) Pupils can edit a text to make it suitable for a different purpose. For example, an account of a holiday could be developed into a letter to a pen-friend, with pupils inserting the questions and personal comments necessary for good letter-writing.

Where to look

New Secondary Curriculum: <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/>

Languages ICT – Non-Roman scripts: www.languages-ict.org.uk/non_roman/resources.htm

Languages ICT – Non-Roman scripts: www.languages-ict.org.uk/non_roman/facilities.htm

Languages ICT – Technology: www.languages-ict.org.uk/technology/technology.htm

Languages ICT – Database: www.languages-ict.org.uk/useful_ideas/LinksDatabase.aspx

Languages ICT – Non-Roman scripts: www.languages-ict.org.uk/non_roman/setting.htm

Links were correct at time of publication in June 2008.

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