

languages ICT



Technology for languages • Focus on desktop publishing

Please note that desktop publishing software is intended for the laying out of a publication and its use requires some technical and design skills. You may prefer pupils to develop their target language text in word processing software during class, and to make arrangements for the DTP work to be done outside of lesson time. Remember that you can easily modify the parameters of the activities to suit different language classes and topic contexts.

Banners and posters

The Banner and Poster functions in Publisher allow large image and/or text-based designs to be printed over several sheets of paper. This facility can simply be used for reproducing a good piece of work for display purposes, but is also useful for collaborative tasks. For example, four pupils could each produce lines of a short poem in the target language together with appropriate illustrations, using simple word processing and graphics packages. The text and images can then be copied and pasted into the banner or poster format and enlarged.

Food Labels

When introducing food or shopping vocabulary, the Label function can be used to produce labels for empty jars or tins in order to stock a 'shop' for role-play. Pupils can either design their own labels, using the vocabulary they have learned, or can research actual products from the target language country and create look-alike labels. An alternative to the role-play approach is to use the software to produce a 'screen shot' of a television advert for a product. Pupils could then record the script for the advert and insert it as a clickable audio file.

Origami

Some desktop publishing software comes with an Origami function, where ready-marked sheets can be printed and then folded to make various shapes. You can use these for a practical listening activity, whereby pupils follow simple instructions in the target language, such as fold, turn, on the right, on the left, etc. It could also be used as a small group activity, where members of the group take turns to be the instructor.

Menus

Menus and price lists for restaurants, bars, cafés and snack bars can easily be produced and illustrated with Clip Art. Pupils may wish to research sample menus available on the Internet first and select their favourite items. The completed products can be laminated for use as role-play props.

'WANTED' posters

Use the Flyer or Advertisement functions to produce smaller publications, such as 'WANTED' posters. Pupils can insert an appropriate image and write a text in the target language detailing the criminal, the crime committed and the reward offered. If an appropriate Clip Art image is not available, a hand-drawn image could be scanned in or designed using a graphics program. Alternatively, pupils can use the DTP software to produce web pages containing a "Rogues' Gallery." They can record and insert sound files, describing the wanted persons and their misdeeds.

Tourist brochures

Pupils can produce a brochure for tourists on a resort abroad or local attraction, containing both images and text. Clip Art, digital photos from pupil and teacher holidays and scanned magazine and brochure images can be used, where copyright allows. Some software offers a template for a three-panel folded brochure and the finished products can make a very attractive display. They can also be laminated and recycled as props for role-plays for future years.

Product leaflets

Pupils can examine a range of advertising material from the target language country, before embarking on creating a marketing leaflet for a product of their choice, using the Flyer or Advertisement function. They need to devise a target language slogan, use descriptive language to highlight key reasons for buying the product and exploit headings and illustrations imaginatively to persuade and get their message across to potential buyers.

Group newsletters

This is a scaled-down version of the class newspaper, where pupils work in groups of 4 or 5. Each newsletter should include a variety of article types and writing styles in the target language and require maximum input from every pupil. Examples of features include personal news about group members, such as birthday announcements and reports of family activities; researched articles on the geography or history of the target language country/ies; current news, including celebrity stories; special features on a group member's hobby. Pupils can first research a range of authentic newspapers to identify key vocabulary, such as 'Stop Press' etc. The newsletter could be made available online, which would allow pupils to include any video clips from the activities covered.

Class newspapers and magazines

A class activity to create a newspaper or magazine can be an excellent off-timetable activity, as the newsroom simulation creates a certain urgency and intensity to the work in progress. With a team of pupils assigned to design and layout, you can take advantage of the full range of DTP features, such as banner headlines, columns, photographs, illustrations, tables, graphs, etc. Pupils can write articles, poems, stories, news and sports reports, jokes, recipes, interviews and so forth for compilation into a single publication. A scanner could be used to include original artwork by pupils, such as maps, diagrams and cartoons. Pupils can research their articles by reading target language news websites, by watching satellite TV news broadcasts or by working from prepared photocopied stories. Such an off-timetable activity could also result in the creation of a 'webzine', with images, text, sound and maybe video. Alternatively, the work of the class (or several classes) can be collated into a magazine or webzine over an extended period of time.

Class anthology or book

A collection of short stories by pupils can be published as a short book for other pupils to read. Reading original texts in the target language can help to provide initial ideas and inspiration for imaginative and creative writing, particularly when working with older pupils. A whole-class brainstorming activity can then build up a glossary of useful phrases. The writing phase is best completed using a word processing package, with drafting and re-drafting supported by teacher feedback and input. Where possible, co-operation with the Art department in designing illustrations to support each story can radically enhance both the quality of the final product and the educational value of the activity.

To read about tried and tested ideas for using desktop publishing software, try searching the Useful ICT ideas, effective language lessons database on the Languages ICT website.

Note: Examples are based on Microsoft Publisher, but most ideas will be relevant to other software available in schools. Reference to specific products does not imply endorsement by CILT, the National Centre for Languages nor ALL.