

languages ICT

Technology for languages

Focus on using the Internet for languages

The Internet, now a prominent feature in daily life, has become very much a part of school life and the modern languages classroom. Pupils and teachers are used to using the Internet to fulfil a wide range of tasks, whether investigative, collaborative or communicative. From research to resource creation, from e-mail to online learning, and from blogs to downloads the Internet plays an increasingly important role in the lives of teachers and learners of languages. This document sets out some of the ways the Internet can be used to advantage for modern languages.

Authentic materials

The numerous websites in the target languages taught in U.K. schools provide an invaluable source of authentic language material, mostly written by native speakers for native speakers. It is also increasingly common to find video or audio material available on the Internet in the target language.

For more advanced learners newspapers, online radio and online TV channels bring up-to-date language related to events of the moment and covering major social, political, economic, sporting and cultural themes. These can be used to research coursework topics, for group project work to be presented perhaps in multimedia format, or for language investigation, identifying and building topic-specific language, prior to completing extended writing or speaking tasks.

For younger learners the authentic materials available on the Internet bring them into contact with up-to-date language on topics such as clothes, music, toys, television programmes and much more. Using images from the Internet younger learners can create attractive presentations, including voice recordings, with a wide range of language not always to be found in traditional text books.

It is not too difficult to find target language sites aimed specifically at teenagers who are native speakers of that language; these sites can be particularly useful for developing insights into the lives, thinking and attitudes of pupils of approximately the same age as pupils in the United Kingdom, not to mention the useful language that can be learnt.

For a list of useful online resources at Key Stage 4, but adaptable for use at other key stages, go to **Key Stage 4 resources** in the Technology for Languages section of **Languages ICT**.

Resource creation

For teachers the Internet is a cornucopia, allowing access to any number of relevant topics, from house and home to social or cultural themes and news reporting of everyday events. Web pages may contain text, images and video clips while online radio channels often provide mp3 recordings of programmes to download.

Web pages or selected text from web pages can be copied and saved for further use in electronic worksheets, presentations for whole class use or for work on the interactive

whiteboard with the whole class. Electronic worksheets may comprise gap-fill activities, text or word reconstruction activities, drop-down menu activities or reading comprehensions. Text copied from web pages and edited for use in electronic worksheets or presentations for whole class teaching may be complemented by images, perhaps digital photos or clip art, or voice recordings made by the teacher and inserted into documents as a clickable icon.

Video clips and radio broadcasts may be available for download and these too can be edited with suitable software and incorporated into presentations for whole class teaching on the interactive whiteboard, or located as an accessible resource for pupils on the school network or VLE.

Where authoring software is available interactive materials may be created by teachers using text, and images from the Internet, and supplemented with appropriate voice recordings. These materials may be placed on the school network or VLE or even uploaded to a specific area of a school website for pupils to access from home, thereby enabling a more flexible and independent learning style to develop.

Resource sharing

Increasingly teachers use the Internet to share resources. These often consist of interactive materials created with common authoring software which a teacher or department wish to make available to colleagues in this country and beyond. For a pdf download specifically dealing with key interactive resources available on the Internet. go to **Key Stage 4 resources** in the Technology for Languages section of **Languages ICT**.

The **Teacher Resource Exchange** offers a wide range of downloadable resources created by teachers and the **Useful ICT Ideas, Effective Language Lessons** section on **Languages ICT** provides a searchable database of useful ideas for use in the teaching and learning of languages. For those involved in vocational languages CILT's **VLRB** (Vocational Languages Resource Bank) is a valuable resource, offering numerous downloadable materials.

Sites such as **TeacherTube** and **YouTube** may also prove valuable in offering resources made by teachers for use by other teachers.

Whole-class teaching

Accessing the Internet from an interactive whiteboard means that authentic materials, interactive online activities, podcasts, blogs and wikis can all be used with the whole class. The annotation feature common on interactive whiteboards can be used to make notes on screen and focus on grammar or topic-specific language. With careful preparation, whole-class work on a specific web page can be linked to electronic worksheets or presentations already prepared and stored on the school network or VLE for whole-class use. If online interactive resources are accessed the class can be split into teams to compete against the clock in completion of the activities. Podcasts can be listened to by the whole class who might practise note-taking before a speaking or writing activity summarising what they have just heard. Wikis and blogs may be used to focus on aspects of grammar: for example, a wiki used by the whole class to develop a story may be accessed online with the interactive whiteboard and used for whole-class discussion on grammar points or errors arising from the contributions of pupils to the creative work on the wiki.

Independent work by pupils

Pupils may be guided to specific web pages to complete independent investigative work, to use online interactive materials or to focus on language and grammar.

Independent investigative work may be in completion of a special project or exam

coursework or to develop background knowledge for a creative task. Teachers can guide pupils to specific sites and set various tasks so that pupils make best use of their time working independently. Some teachers may prefer to download specific pages and direct pupils to the offline versions stored on the school network.

Online interactive materials can be used for reinforcement of grammar or specific topics or for developing reading and listening skills. The advantage of online materials is that they usually give instant feedback and allow pupils to work flexibly, whether from the ICT suite or from home.

Collaborative learning

Social networking sites such as Facebook are familiar to pupils and they are used to its facilities for creating personal pages and sharing messages, and photos with specific groups or individuals. **ThinkQuest** is a social networking site developed for use by schools. It offers all the facilities of sites such as Facebook and is also password protected.

Pupils may be encouraged to develop personal pages and share resources they find or create, such as mp3 recordings or video clips on their mobile phones, with partners from their own class or from a partner school abroad. Collaboration with schools abroad, perhaps in preparation for an exchange trip, can lead to many joint activities and resources, such as presentations, video clips or photos, being placed on the social networking site. Topics may range, for example, from daily life at school or at the weekend in each other's country to shared projects on historical personages or topics to be explored at a more advanced level, such as migration, diversity, and environmental issues.

Communication

Email and messaging are common forms of electronic communication. Email projects can be developed with partner schools abroad. Pupils may use the exchanges to focus on aspects of their daily or school lives, their personal interests, their families and pets, their localities and much more. In addition to using the medium to develop an awareness of how others live, email communications often bring an unexpected bonus of up-to-date language, which pupils can identify and build into a word bank. Language collected this way can also be collated by the teacher and used with the whole class on the interactive whiteboard.

Attachments to emails can carry text, digital photos, mp3 voice recordings and very short video clips. This enables pupils to use email to develop all language skills and also to build a more varied and dynamic relationship with their email partners. For younger children, digital photos of their toys or pets might be accompanied by a brief voice recording saying what they are called and how old they are. Older pupils might send photos of their favourite clothes or their spare-time activities with voice recordings, perhaps wholly or partially in the target language. For more on email see "Focus on email", downloadable from the **Technology for Languages** section of Languages ICT.

Social networking sites such as **ThinkQuest** make communication that much easier as they allow uploads to personal pages of multimedia materials, and provide messaging and chat facilities.

For more on social networking see the ICT section of CILT's **14-19 Reshaping Languages** pages.

For a set of useful downloadable documents covering various aspects of online communication go to the Communicating online section of **Technology for Languages** (Languages ICT).

Podcasts, wikis and blogs

Podcasts are voice recordings posted online for others to listen to and download, usually to mp3 players for personal use. Teachers may make podcasts on grammar topics or to assist with GCSE revision for pupils to use flexibly, when and where they want so long as they have their mp3 player with them. Pupils may make podcasts on various topics: some focus on explaining grammar, thereby deepening their understanding of the rules of language, and some may offer advice on extended writing, focusing, for example, on elements, which make for successful writing such as connectives, or adverbial phrases. Podcasts can be used to develop creativity, pupils working, for example, collaboratively to record dramatic dialogues or tell imaginative stories.

Wikis are a form of web page to which users can contribute and amend what others have written. They can be used to focus on writing skills, grammar, vocabulary, project work and listening skills. Pupils can access them wherever they have an Internet connection. This makes for very flexible learning as pupils contribute to shared creative writing, to discussions on grammar or listen to mp3 recordings placed there by their teacher to assist in exam revision or to develop listening skills. Teachers can leave comments on the work that pupils create on a wiki, thus providing highly focused feedback from which all users of the page can benefit. Teachers may use wikis to share ideas and resources with other colleagues, whether in the same department or across a region or local consortium. All that is needed is an Internet connection and permission to contribute to a wiki for collaborative work to take place.

Blogs are similar to wikis in that users can add comment to what the owner of the blog has written. A blog can be used in many ways to develop language skills and to encourage pupils to develop a more flexible and personalised approach to learning. Pupils can prepare written work or podcasts to be posted to a blog. They can also access podcasts or reading materials posted to the blog. Pupils can give feedback on the contributions of others to a blog, thereby developing critical skills. These uses of a blog are appropriate for all ages and levels of ability and enable pupils to engage more directly and personally with language learning as well as encouraging them to raise their standards as their work or comments are going to be there online for all to see.

Teacher-led blogs are useful for displaying pupils' work and offer Assessment for Learning opportunities: for example, whole-class discussion of pupils' work brought up on the interactive whiteboard from the blog site and identification with pupils of criteria for success and achievable targets for improvement. . If you wish to view blogs demonstrating pupils' work, go to **EI Blog de Asísehace.net**.

Teacher-to-teacher blogs are used to share good practice and build professional relationships with colleagues.

For more on podcasts, blogs and wikis see the ICT section of CILT's **14-19 Reshaping Languages** pages. The May 2008 edition of **ICT Outlook** on Languages ICT carries useful links and comment on blogs, podcasts and social networking. Joe Dale's **Integrating ICT into the MFL Classroom** blog covers podcasting, blogging and many other examples of innovative technology in the languages classroom.

Developing intercultural awareness

The Internet is the gateway to other cultures and abounds with web sites, which offer insights into the lives of others. These range from sites about great writers or composers down to sites showing images of children's toys, video clips of festivals and programme schedules of children's television channels. Do not forget also that many of the Internet features outlined in this document, email, social networking, wikis, blogs and podcasts, can be used as vehicles for the exchange of knowledge about the lives and cultures of pupils in countries where the target language is spoken.

Young learners can use the Internet to see the toys or clothes that their counterparts in target language countries buy or like.

Older learners can find out about popular music or health and lifestyle issues among pupils their own age in other countries while more advanced learners can access comment on many relevant social questions, such as the environment, migration or urbanisation.

In all these cases pupils can make presentations, video clips, photo stories or their own web pages on these themes. In addition, they can use email or a social networking site to exchange their own theme-based digital photos, video clips or voice recordings.

The world of work

Older pupils or those following vocational language courses can use the Internet to locate job adverts which may be used for topic-specific vocabulary building or for a linguistic focus on grammar used in adverts: for example, the Passive Voice as in phrases like “Experienced receptionist is required/needed”. A comparative study of qualifications needed for particular jobs can lead to an investigation of the educational and training systems in different countries. This could be done as a whole-class activity on the interactive whiteboard or as individual research for a presentation, role-plays, or for creative work designing posters and adverts using Desk Top Publishing software.

There are also many websites offering model CVs and advice on how to prepare a CV. These can be used for extended writing, preparation for mock interviews, focusing on grammar such as past tenses as well as effective use of language in order to create positive impressions.

As mentioned above, resources for vocational courses can be downloaded from CILT’s **VLRB** (Vocational Learning Resource Bank). Consult also the **Key Stage 4 Resources** pages of the **Technology for Languages** section of **Languages ICT** for downloadable language-specific pdf documents, some of which point to sites dealing with the world of work.

Where to look

CILT Languages ICT: www.languages-ict.org.uk

CILT Languages ICT Downloads: www.languages-ict.org.uk/download

CILT Languages ICT Key Stage 4 resources: www.languages-ict.org.uk/technology/ks4

CILT Languages ICT Useful ICT Ideas, Effective Language Lessons:

www.languages-ict.org.uk/useful_ideas/LinksDatabase.aspx

CILT Languages ICT Technology for languages: www.languages-ict.org.uk/technology

CILT Vocational Languages Resource Bank (VLRB): www.vlr.org.uk

CILT 14-19 Reshaping Languages ICT: www.cilt.org.uk/14to19/ict

El Blog de Asísehace.net: www.asisehace.net/blog

Integrating ICT into the MFL Classroom (Joe Dale’s blog): joedale.typepad.com

Teacher Resource Exchange: www.tre.ngfl.gov.uk

TeacherTube: www.teachertube.com

ThinkQuest: www.thinkquest.org

YouTube: www.youtube.com