

# Chairman's Report

**Duncan Byrne**

Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School

I was delighted to see so many ISMLA members at the Annual Conference on 2nd February at University College School, Hampstead. ISMLA is very grateful to the Headmaster, Mr Kenneth Durham for lending us the school's facilities for the day and to Thomas Underwood, editor of this newsletter, for his skilful coordination of the conference. We are also indebted to our speakers, who give up their time for no financial reward to address us on their areas of expertise. The newsletter contains reviews of the conference sessions both as a reminder of the ideas presented but also in the hope that it will persuade readers who have not previously attended an ISMLA conference to consider doing so next year.

I am therefore pleased to announce that next year's conference will take place at Cheltenham Ladies' College. The ISMLA committee made a decision some years ago to look outside the confines of London and the South-East for our conference once in every three years. It is particularly appropriate that we will be going next January to a Girls' School for the first time in

several years and also to the West of England, where a number of schools who have been staunchly supportive of ISMLA are situated. I do hope nevertheless that our members in the South-East will put the conference into their diaries, even though they will be faced with a longer train or car journey than in recent times. The proposed date is currently Saturday 24th January 2009 and I will be in a position to confirm this in the September edition of the newsletter.

I wrote in the previous newsletter that the period of chance for languages teachers was far from over, with new GCSE specifications soon to arrive in our pigeon-holes. There has been a great deal of press coverage recently of GCSE language issues, culminating in some misleading reporting signalling the death of the GCSE oral examination. To put this into context, I should explain that there have been significant concerns in the maintained sector for some time that the stress of the oral examination not only contributes to widespread pupil under-performance but is also a negative factor affecting GCSE take-up now that modern languages are optional in KS4. The Association of Language Learning therefore, during the consultation period over the

new GCSE subject criteria, advocated the idea that oral achievement could be assessed, at least partially, through continuous assessment by the class teacher.

While ISMLA understands these concerns - there can be no doubt that many of our pupils find their oral the most stressful of all the GCSE examinations they sit - our perspective is different: speaking a foreign language in situ is inherently stressful at first and all those who seek to use a foreign language have to overcome the fear of error to enable communication to take place. We therefore argued strongly in the QCA consultation that an oral examination should be retained. We cited the possibility of combining internal and external assessment - the IB Diploma programme already uses this model with the recorded external element being used to moderate the teacher's internal assessment. The recent DCSF announcement on the oral refers only to the introduction of continuous internal assessment which still contain a terminal element. Although awarding bodies will be left to interpret the new subject guidelines in their own way, the DCSF is saying privately that the mixed economy described above is what they anticipate will come into effect.

At the same time as making its ruling on future GCSE oral examinations, the DCSF officially rejected the evidence of severe grading at GCSE presented by ALL and the Specialist Schools' and Academies' Trust (SSAT). This evidence had previously been accepted by the Dearing Review in 2007, and Lord Dearing had recommended that an adjustment be made to GCSE grading to take account of the fact that pupils achieve consistently lower grades in modern languages than those achieved in other subjects. I have been happy for ISMLA to throw its weight behind this campaign not only out of solidarity with our colleagues in the maintained sector, but also because members tell us of the same phenomenon at A Level, which affects post-16 take-up in many of our schools. It is therefore extremely disappointing that the DCSF has refused to accept the Dearing recommendation which would help to counter the recent dramatic reductions in GCSE language entries. Instead, it concludes that the demands of a modern language GCSE are similar to those of other subjects and that greater focus needs to be put on the quality of teaching and learning in MFL lessons for grades to rise in line with the cross-subject average.

Since Christmas, I have been contacted by several ISMLA colleagues with concerns about the reduced period this year for scheduling oral examinations. The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) announced before Christmas that the period during which oral examinations could be scheduled would be considerably reduced and this has caused consternation particularly among schools that use external examiners; the concern is that, since examinations must now be finished a fortnight earlier, external examiners will have to offer dates before the Easter holiday to some schools, which has significant ramifications for the preparation of candidates. ISMLA and ALL wrote a letter to JCQ before Christmas complaining about the lack of consultation prior to this change and have been reassured that no decision has yet been made for 2009. Therefore, if you have been inconvenienced by the decision, please put your concerns in writing to JCQ and let ISMLA know so that we can represent the views of as many members as possible.

I'd like to conclude by repeating the invitation to contribute to this newsletter that was made at the UCS conference in February. Thomas Underwood, Newsletter Editor, is always

grateful to receive contributions, particularly concerning curriculum innovation and imaginative cultural events. With this and in all other matters relevant to modern languages teaching, I encourage you to communicate with ISMLA via the addresses given elsewhere in this newsletter.

## **ISMLA**

welcomes any articles,  
reports and other  
contributions that  
would be of interest to  
members.

Please contact  
**Thomas Underwood**  
for further details  
(See inside cover for  
contact information).

**Articles for the  
Autumn Edition of  
the Newsletter  
should be with the  
editor by  
Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup>  
August 2008.**

## The environment in Latin America: an asset for the world.

On Thursday 13th March 2008, Mr Zac Goldsmith, Director of The Ecologist presented the prizes for the Canning House Essay Competition for excellence in Spanish and Portuguese. This year's subject title was 'the environment in Latin America: An asset for the rest of the world?' and two of the four finalists were awarded the superb prize of return flights to the Latin American country of their choice, generously donated by Iberia and a cheque of £250.

The four finalists from schools in Durham, Cheshire, London and Swindon wrote about a broad breadth of environmental issues from the importance of the Amazonian rainforest, the debate on energy and biofuels to discussions on ethnobotany and even medicine, poetry and art. Mr Zac Goldsmith congratulated all students who entered the competition and added that "the essay competition has promoted not only language skills, research and analysis to some of the most pivotal themes on the environment, but has also encouraged the students to discover how complex issues related to the environment

are", and further added "I say from having read the synopsis of some of the essays that there was no limit to the scope of the environmental themes mentioned".

Within this same thread of thought, Professor Tim Connell, who chaired the Assessment Panel, commented on the overall high quality of the essays presented. He said, "we hear so much bad news about languages in schools that it is refreshing to see the standard of work that was sent in, from every part of the country and every kind of school. This is so important for the future health of Spanish. It would be good if we could see a new emphasise on Portuguese, not least because it is also a major world language".

The prize-giving ceremony was hosted by Baroness Hooper OBE, Vice-President of Canning House, who is keen to establish the essay competition as a core initiative in the educational work of Canning House as a means of encouraging students to learn more about the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds and also as a means of stimulating critical analysis and research on core global issues such as climate change and the environment.

Larissa Litchfield, Head of Culture and Education at Canning House gave a heart felt speech congratulating all the finalists and emphasised how she hoped that the students who participated in this year's competition discovered for themselves how rich and complex the environment in Latin America really is. She said "with its strikingly beautiful land and home to more plant diversity than any other continent, the environment in Latin America is a real asset to the rest of the world".

Canning House is the home of the Hispanic and Luso Brazilian Council, a non-political, non-profit making organisation that was founded in 1943 to stimulate understanding between Britain, Spain, Portugal and Latin America.

### Further Information

Please contact Larissa Litchfield at  
Canning House  
llitchfield@canninghouse.com  
020 7235 2303 ext. 226

---

---

## National Arabic Declamation Contest

**Haroon Shirwani**  
Eton College

Entrants came from across the country to take part in this event, held at Eton College on 24 February 2008. There were representatives from Eton, King's Canterbury, Lord William's School in Thame, Millfield, Oundle and Wycombe Abbey. The competitors ranged from beginners who have studied the language for merely a few months to native speakers, and thus the performances were diverse but all shared the same enthusiasm and vigour for the occasion.

To get up and declaim a passage of Arabic is certainly no easy feat and the principal adjudicators - Jane Wightwick (author and publisher of many of the Arabic textbooks that the students use) and Samia Earle (Languages Coordinator at the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust) - were most impressed by the confident manner in which the majority of competitors went about this. The pieces declaimed included simple free verse, sophisticated odes, social commentary, and extracts from the Bible and the Qur'an. One competitor even recited a poem of his own.

After sampling a delicious Lebanese feast, we began the declamation. There were a number of very strong performances, and thus the adjudicators' decision was far from an easy one. However, William De Renzy-Martin (Eton) stood out with his bold and eloquent delivery of Nizar Qabbani's A Letter from Under Water. His performance was energetic and a real joy to listen to. There was a separate category for students of an Arabic-speaking background, in which the first prize went to Timothy Khoury (Eton), who declaimed a text by Khalil Gibran on 'The Future of the Arabic Language' with great attention to correct pronunciation and a clear grasp of the meaning. Other participants considered worthy of special mention included Scott Prior (Millfield) for his spirited delivery of a poem welcoming the arrival of Spring, and a group from Lord William's School in Thame (Zeinah Gaafar, Ahmed Nafi and Safa Nafi) for a dramatic rendition of Samih Al-Qasim's The Clock on the Wall.

It was fantastic to see so many students from such a range of schools taking part in the competition, and all of them clearly benefited from the experience. As more and more schools begin to appreciate the

importance of teaching Arabic, it is heartening to see that a tight network between schools already appears to be developing thanks to events such as this. Inshallah, the National Arabic Declamation Contest will continue to be a regular fixture in the Modern Languages calendar. It is hoped that even more schools will participate next year. For further information, please contact Haroon Shirwani, Head of Arabic at Eton College.



**SPANISH  
Sub-editor required!**

To write one article on recent Spanish cultural, social or political developments for each edition of the ISMLA newsletter.

If you are interested please contact

**Thomas Underwood**  
(See inside cover for contact information)

# Les Jôutes Oratoires

Pierre Pillet  
Sevenoaks School

The Debating Competition in French supported by ISMLA took place across the academic year for the Sixth Form in three areas: London in November, North of England in December and South early March. The London event organised at Highgate School was won by a superb team from North London Collegiate. UCS came second. In December, Cheadle Hulme School organised the debating competition in French and German for the North and the home team won the French contest while the South competition was a joint win by Tonbridge and Sevenoaks schools.

The National Final saw the winners of each area competing on Thursday 13th March over three titles:

- La Présidence de Nicolas Sarkozy n'est qu'un mirage.
- L'organisation des JO par la Chine est un scandale du point de vue des droits de l'homme.
- On doit supprimer les voitures afin de sauver la planète.

Judges and audience alike were simply amazed by the debating

skills and linguistic flair of the competitors with some outstanding individual performances (in the Cheadle Hulme and Sevenoaks pairs notably) mixing at will, solid rhetoric backed by thorough research punctuated with humorous anecdotes. The final saw Tonbridge and Sevenoaks schools debating an unprepared title over the necessity to abolish private schools (we enjoyed the irony!). It was a close contest in which both sides showed some superb French and debating techniques. Convincing historical references and an instinctive "sens de la formule" gave the Sevenoaks pair a slight advantage and final victory. ISMLA offered a £200 prize to the winning pair and £100 to the runner up. Across the country all participants (including teachers!) thoroughly enjoyed taking part and students certainly feel suitably prepared for their looming oral examination.

I would like to thank Francoise Lucas from Cheadle Hulme School, Simon Brian from Highgate School and Jessica Seth from North London Collegiate as well as Duncan Byrne for their continuous support throughout the various stages of the competition this year.

Next year, we would like more schools to take part and open the competition, where possible, to other languages. Regional heats will take place in the Michaelmas term and the National Final is in March.

If you are interested in finding out more about the competition please contact me at:  
[pxp@sevenoaksschool.org](mailto:pxp@sevenoaksschool.org)

---

---

## Assessing Japanese, an extra-curricular option, at Hereford Cathedral School

Two types of assessment - external and internal - offered by Asset Languages are being used to monitor the progress of learners of Japanese at Hereford Cathedral School (HCS).

Japanese is one of six languages taught at the school. French, Spanish, Latin, and Ancient Greek are timetabled. Chinese is offered as a taster course as part of the sixth-form General Studies programme.

Japanese has been offered for over 15 years. Despite being delivered as an extra-curricular option, the language is highly valued by the school. Tim Lutley, Head of Languages at

Hereford Cathedral School, lived and worked for a year in Japan and is keen to encourage the teaching of oriental languages. HCS students have won prizes in Japanese speaking competitions such as the Nihongo Cup. There is a well-established link with Seikyo Gakuen High School in Kawachinagano City whose pupils try to visit every two years. For the duration of their visit, Seikyo students are immersed into life at HCS to the benefit of all. Both schools have strong musical traditions and the students from Japan usually contribute to assemblies in the cathedral. Email contact is frequently maintained between HCS and Seikyo Gakuen pupils after the visit. Some HCS pupils opt to continue Japanese as part of their university degree. A number are now working in South East Asia.

Japanese has been taught at HCS by Mrs Masayo Long since 2000. Classes take place at lunch-times or after-school for pupils from Year 8 up to Year 13. In Year 8, students attend an introductory lesson lasting 30 minutes each week covering language and culture. From their second year of studying Japanese, this increases to one hour.

Masayo believes that Japanese is a more accessible language than people think. "Using

Hiragana, our beginners make good progress. I think Japanese is easier to learn than Chinese. Hiragana has very simplified characters, with far fewer strokes than Chinese characters for instance. There are so many Chinese letters to start with."

Taking GCSE Japanese, Masayo feels, is an increasingly daunting step for students with limited time. It is not until they reach the sixth form that HCS pupils are entered for it.

Masayo has been aware of Asset Languages since it was launched in 2005 and regards it as a good way to motivate pupils making progress in small steps. Last year, Masayo entered a group for Asset's externally assessed listening, reading and writing tests at the first stage on the Languages Ladder (Breakthrough) in March, followed by the speaking tests at the same level in May. A Year 11 group took the Asset listening test at the second proficiency level, Preliminary, equivalent in standard to a lower level GCSE. "Asset Languages exams are ideal to fill the gap and give confidence through certificates. The flexibility of being able to enter candidates at different times of the year and at different ages suits me. The results were as I had anticipated although I would say that the reading paper seemed harder than the other skills."

As well as entering candidates for external assessments this summer, Masayo is using Asset's Teacher Assessment material, currently available in Breakthrough and Preliminary, in the classroom. Specifications covering both external and teacher assessment can be found on the website. The specifications cover language purpose and function, grammar and linguistic structures, as well as some vocabulary topics, allowing teachers to fit Asset around current classroom activity.

Masayo continued. "Although the cost of the Pack is initially quite expensive compared to a single textbook, I have found the material very adaptable for using in lessons and so it has worked out to be good value. It is great practice for the external assessments so I am planning to use the Packs in the run up to the exams again, like a mock. Listening will be the first one. I'm sure this internal test will work well to give students confidence and they will know what they have to achieve before they do the external test."

For teachers and learners of Japanese, Asset Languages offers external assessment in the first three stages of the DCSF Languages Ladder; Breakthrough, Preliminary and

Intermediate, covering beginners' level up to a standard equivalent to a higher grade GCSE. External tests at Advanced Stage - broadly equivalent to AS/A level - will be available from June 2008. Asset Languages tests are taken in individual skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking. Candidates can take tests in any of the four skills during the five exam windows each year. Asset's Teacher Assessment Packs (TAPs) contain adaptable tasks to be used by the teacher enabling informal testing in the classroom. For students of Japanese, TAPS are currently available at Breakthrough and Preliminary Stage. TAPS can be used independently or in conjunction with externally assessed tests.

Asset Languages is a qualification from OCR exam board, which has the broadest range of language qualifications of the main awarding bodies. For more information about Asset Languages, visit the website at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk), or ring OCR's customer contact centre on 01223 553998.

---

---

Geoffrey Plow, as ISMLA Awarding Bodies Liaison Officer, is happy to act as a focus for communication for schools if they feel they have experienced difficulties over public exams at GCSE, AS or A2.

*If a school has made an official comment to a Standing Joint Committee, he would be especially grateful to receive a copy of the form sent, so that correlation of any trends across the whole ISMLA membership may be made easier.*

*Geoffrey is happy to respond at any time to any comment made by an ISMLA member school in relation to public exam matters.*

*Please keep in touch with Geoffrey at*

*gaplow@hotmail.com, or via:*

*Dr Geoffrey Plow  
University College School  
Frognaal  
London NW3 6XH*

*[020 7433 2302]*

## Soccerlingua website launch!

The Soccerlingua project has launched its brand new website: [www.soccerlingua.net](http://www.soccerlingua.net). This site is now a fully interactive platform to promote and teach languages through the theme of football. As an EU-funded project this web resource is free-of-charge. The target languages are English, French, Swedish, Portuguese and Turkish.

The main feature of the new website is a range of interactive games and language activities for kids and teenagers. The games are all vocabulary based (no grammar) and can be played in each of the five target languages. These activities are designed to offer a variety of language content to appeal across different abilities, ages (and attention spans!). As with the original Soccerlingua book and DVD the website is aimed primarily at motivation and fun. However, the entertainment value is provided within a strong educational context.

The cutting-edge interactivity and web animation will appeal to the younger generation and is ideal for use in class with an interactive whiteboard. While the games were designed with 8-12 year olds in mind, testing

has shown that the site also appeals to older teenage learners. It seems the universal language of football helps cut across any age barriers.

Here is a brief summary of each of the games (which are fully translated in each target language):

### Keepy-Uppy

A simple yet addictive game to keep the ball up as many times as possible, and count and learn the numbers. Set up exciting competitions in the classroom with everyone counting. Who will be the class champion? The numbers go up to 100... but that requires lots of practice! This is a great game to start with and win over the kids to the Soccerlingua concept.

### Penalty!

Score penalties by matching the words to the multiple choice pictures in each corner of the goal. Watch out for the pesky goalkeeper saving all wrong answers!

### Football Face-Off

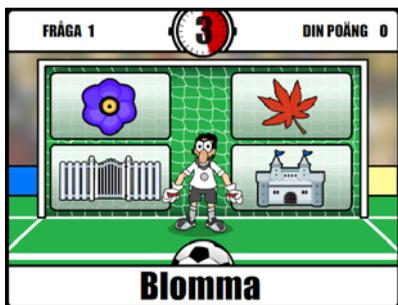
Rooney, Torres, Ronaldo, Henry, Totti... they all appear in this online card game to compare the qualities of the world's most famous players: goal power, speed, height,

market value and even who speaks the most foreign languages!



### Match the kit

Teaching vocabulary for colours and clothes by matching the kit of animated cartoon characters. Watch out for the manager's crazy dress sense on Level 4!



### My favourite player is...

An activity to design a fully personalised poster about your favourite player. The posters can be saved and printed in full colour and put up on the classroom wall. With so many

options to choose from every pupil's poster will be different (even if they all choose the same player!)

In addition to these games there is a Teachers Zone with downloadable support material and free Soccerlingua posters. The site also has a feedback facility for teachers to contribute to the ongoing development of the site by making suggestions: What could be improved? What could the site offer more of? What features worked best with pupils? The Soccerlingua website belongs to teachers and pupils and this feedback is highly valued.

The site is continuing its expansion and is currently working on an exciting interactive graphic novel about a young footballer who dreams of playing for his favourite team...

Coming soon...  
The Amazing Football Adventures of Josh Jones

[www.soccerlingua.net](http://www.soccerlingua.net)  
For more information contact:  
[info@soccerlingua.net](mailto:info@soccerlingua.net)

# Introducing the Bac

Jenny Davey

St. Anne's Windermere

Just over a year ago we took the decision to go 100% IB in our Sixth Form - We are a small school (around 270 students in our senior school), located in the Lake District and I think that most people involved in the independent sector will appreciate just how difficult that decision was for us - and the perceived level of risk.

The school is a member of the Round Square organisation and had in fact been considering the IB for over twenty years but had never bitten the bullet, even though there is a shared ethos and vision of education.

So why did we do it?

Primarily because we believed that students should keep their options open and that what they wanted at 16 was not perhaps what they would need at 26, 36 or 46. We felt very strongly that students should not give up a language or Maths when employers are looking for a range of skills and that allowing young people to specialise was not in their interests in the long run. We are also a school which values internationalism and felt that the IB is widely recognised as the gold standard

in education worldwide. We contacted universities across Britain and internationally and were amazed at the positive response - 'send us more IB students' was a recurring theme.

The decision did have some challenging consequences - particularly for me as a language teacher and the person charged with ensuring that the introduction of the IB was successful. Just how do you persuade 55 16 year olds that they want to continue a language after suffering the spiral curriculum since Year 7 and endless questioning on hobbies, homework, holidays etc? We found that we had to offer ab initio languages in addition to French, German and Spanish - we chose Italian and Japanese - both of which proved extremely popular. There were other culture shocks too - our French, German and Spanish teachers had to come to terms with no subject specific syllabus - we could design the course we wanted. Dizzily liberating one level but also somewhat daunting as well without the 'security blanket' of a list of topics and grammar points that we could simply tick.

How did staff feel?

I think it is fair to say that my colleagues were both hesitant

and sceptical at the start but the turning point came after the first training session for teachers in Athens. I can think of one, highly sceptical member of staff who came back messianic about the IB having spent a week with other teachers of her subject from all over the world. As a result she asked to speak to all our year 11 to enthuse about what the IB offered to students. I firmly believe that if you understand where your staff are coming from, why they feel anxiety about change and work with them, the IB can transform the curriculum as staff are engaged and revitalised.

Recently a teacher walked into my office to simply say that they had been doing oral presentations in English and if the effect the IB had on students, then it was the best decision the school had ever made. We are in our first year so only time will tell and we do face challenges as we look ahead. My only regret? That the school didn't introduce IB twenty years ago!

---

---

## Adidas und Puma - eine bayrische Kleinstadt zerfällt in zwei Lager

Stefanie Schmiedel  
Northwood College

Die drei Streifen und der Puma sind wohl zwei der weltberühmtesten Logos unserer Zeit. Obwohl beide Firmen als Sponsoren von Fußballweltmeisterschaften und Olympiaden, als Auftraggeber von Modekollektionen berühmter Sportler und als Erfinder von Sportkleidung mit Kultstatus weltweiten Ruhm erlangten, wissen nur wenige, dass hinter den Firmennamen Adidas und Puma zwei Brüder aus Bayern stehen, die einen der bittersten Familienkriege der deutschen Geschichte führten.

In den Zwanziger Jahren fertigten die Brüder Adolf und Rudolf Dassler in der Waschküche ihrer Mutter im bayrischen Herzogenaurach Sportschuhe an, die sich mit großem Erfolg verkauften. Adi war der Tüftler, der zum Beispiel die abschraubbaren Noppen für Fußballschuhe erfand, mit denen die deutsche Fußballnationalmannschaft in Bern 1954 Weltmeister wurde, und Rudolf war ein erstklassiger Verkäufer. Während des Zweiten Weltkriegs begannen

erste Auseinandersetzungen zwischen den Brüdern, die darin endeten, dass Adi die Firma Adidas (von Adi Dassler) gründete und Rudolf die Firma Ruda (von Rudolf Dassler), die er später in Puma umbaute. Anekdoten zufolge spaltete sich das bayrische Dorf mit dem alten Marktplatz bald in zwei Lager - man arbeitete entweder bei Puma oder Adidas und vermeidete es sogar möglichst, jemanden aus dem anderen Lager zu heiraten.

Im Laufe der Jahrzehnte konzentrierten sich beide Firmen nicht nur auf die Herstellung von Sportschuhen, sondern auch von Sportkleidung und -ausrüstung. Sportler wurden entweder zu Adidas- oder Pumasportlern und als im Finale der Fußball-WM 2006 Italien und Frankreich aufeinander trafen, traten auch ihre Sponsoren Puma und Adidas gegeneinander an.

Anfang der Achtziger Jahre verlegten beide Betriebe ihre Produktion nach Asien, behielten jedoch ihre Hauptquartiere in Herzogenaurach. Nachdem bei Adidas und Puma etliche Skandale über die inhumanen Zustände der Arbeiter in Asien zu Tage traten, schicken beide Unternehmen jetzt regelmäßige Inspektoren aus Europa in die asiatischen Produktionsstätten. Beide Firmen gewähren uns auf

ihren Webseiten zudem Einblick in ihre Umweltschutzmaßnahmen.

Aus beiden Familienunternehmen in Herzogenaurach sind seit dem Ende der Vierziger Jahre längst zwei der erfolgreichsten Unternehmen der Welt geworden, die schon seit Jahrzehnten nicht mehr von Mitgliedern der Familie Dassler geführt werden, sich aber am Börsenmarkt und auf der internationalen Sportbühne mit großem Erfolg behaupten. Die beiden Brüder und ihre Familien haben sich bis zum heutigen Tage nicht versöhnt.

## Potential Reviewers!

Are you keen to review any new material that we receive from publishers (reviewers may keep the resource for the department)?

If the answer is "yes", please contact the Patrick Le Berre, Reviews Editor or Thomas Underwood, Newsletter Editor.

# Reviews

## Aspekte deutscher Gegenwart: Text und Übungen (Band 1)

Advance Materials  
Alan Jones, Gudrun Lawlor, John Hill, Oranna Speicher  
ISBN 978-0954769574

This is a new edition of *Aspekte deutscher Gegenwart*, with the original having been published in 1999. There are eight chapters, covering typical A' level topics such as *Bildungswesen* and *Flüchtlingskinder*. Each chapter also revises a different grammatical point. The book is photocopyable.

The premise of the book is to provide extra reading practice for A' level students and to compliment work covered in class. Each of the chapters is free-standing, although the first three are more accessible in terms of vocabulary, and they can be used in any order. There is also a useful student's information page, with advice on how to approach the various texts and tasks, with strategies for reading German. A list of instructions in German and English is also presented, e.g. 'im Kasten', 'merken Sie sich..' and I like the fact that the book emphasises linking phrases to

add structure to a students vocabulary.

Each chapter begins with a few sentences introducing the topic and then the main text. These vary from newspaper articles, to excerpts from brochures, to an interview taken from a website. There follows a range of comprehension questions and exercises to highlight vocabulary, such as finding definitions and synonyms or an 'exam style' *Wortsuche*. The pages and formatting are very clear and the reader is never overloaded with too much information to digest. Each chapter also contains a short grammar section, explaining a common point from the text. There are also suggestions for extending written tasks (with model answers) and for class discussions. I particularly liked the '*Fürs Notizbuch*' section, which highlights key vocabulary, structures and idiomatic phrases to be used elsewhere. At the end of each chapter there is also a '*Lösungen und Erläuterungen*' section with explanations, not just answers.

If I were to find fault in the book, I could argue that the topics felt 'too safe' and not particularly appealing for sixth formers, especially if the aim is to practice reading and to acquire vocabulary, rather than

assist in the teaching of a particular A-level topic. The sources on page three highlight the fact that some of the texts are over ten years old - have the facts about the *Obdachlose* been updated since? Nevertheless, *Aspekte deutscher Gegenwart* is a valuable and accessible resource and would make an excellent self-study pack for sixth formers

Thomas Underwood  
University College School

## Ánimo Spanish AS

Oxford University Press  
Isabel Alonso De Sudea, Vincent  
Everett, Isabel Isern Vivancos  
ISBN 978-019 915330-5

If we take into account all three methods from OUP for the new AS Levels, *Ánimo* strikes me as another remarkably thought-out textbook alongside *Élan* and *Einsicht*. They are all excellent for the clarity of their layout, the relevance of the topics and themes developed and, last but not least, the clever use of graphics and colours for language learning purposes.

The *Ánimo* student book starts with 'Puente', a useful 'bridging the gap' section which concentrates on major grammar reminders from GCSE and geographical and historical facts

about Spain without overdoing it. The following chapters address many excellent topics related to Spanish culture such as modern media, *Flamenco*, *La Barraca* and *García Lorca*, Spanish cinema, the emergence of minor celebrities in popular culture which should motivate teenagers and help them enjoy their languages. The final pages offer a clear revise-all section followed by a grammar section. The topics are adapted to all exam boards as they can be supplemented by home grown material, should a teacher decide to develop a theme in more depth. My only criticism would be an absence of Latin American material at the exception of a few passing references, the whole textbook has a very Ibero-centric feel to it. However, the use of colour coded sections is very useful: green for *Gramática*, blue for *Técnica*, purple for *Frases Clave* orange for pronunciation and light green for *Recuerda*. If we add clear objectives at the beginning of each paragraph and 'An Escoger' at the end, we have a very user-friendly teaching method which will promote good language learning practice and the use of formative assessment.

The grammar workbook is, as usual, very well presented and crammed with excellent exercises whilst the teacher

book strikes me as very clear and easy to use. The main problem is, as with the other languages, with the Self-Study Guides aimed at particular exam boards. In my opinion, these would need to have much more salient information rather than being a mixture of grammar points, key phrases and odd practise for a particular skill.

Patrick Le Berre  
Highgate School

## Élan For AS level

Oxford University Press  
Daniele Bourdais, Gill Maynard  
ISBN 978-0-19-915338-1

The new version of *Élan* is the natural continuation of the old format which has proven to be so successful in preparing countless students for the former A Levels. This brand new version is primarily but not exclusively devised for schools which enter their students for the new A Level with AQA but there are individual study booklets aimed at candidates entering for the other three major boards, ie: Edexcel, OCR and WJEC.

The main student book has a particularly attractive and clear layout with a mixture of text, picture and reading or writing

activities as well as colour coded boxes for grammar, phonetics, key expressions and vocabulary. The activities are varied and allow the students to progress naturally from GCSE along the different areas of experience. The cultural element, sports and schools feature prominently which should ensure this textbook is a success with students who wish to continue to study French after AS level. The selection of articles is particularly up to date with French culture whilst clear grammar and communicative exercises ensure progression. The grammar section at the back is very clear and useful. The listening exercises seemed to be at appropriate speed and to reflect the demands of the new A Levels.

The Grammar Workbook is, as usual with OUP, very clearly laid out and complete with self correction at the back following a verb section. This workbook could really be used by any AS students to brush up on past GCSE points and further their French grammar skills. The teacher book is also very clearly laid out and easy to use

The individual study booklets for individual exam boards are sound but they would need to be expanded past a set of tips and phrases to be used for each

specification. It was also felt that some advice was very similar for Edexcel and WJEC when the examination format can be quite different.

In short, the main student textbook and grammar workbook are very well thought out and could be successfully used in different contexts but the differentiated self study guides are not too convincing.

**Patrick Le Berre**  
Highgate School

## **Magic Verb Cards**

Advance Materials  
Jackie Garratt, Pierrette Macdonald  
ISBN 978-0-9547695-3-6

The Magic Verb Cards consists of a pack of eight cards and a transparent red plastic sheet. The verbs on the cards are written in orange ink. The idea is that when you cover the cards with the red sheet the verb disappears, so that the students have to memorise the verb in order to be able to produce correct sentences.

Each card contains sentences for two verbs, with questions and answers. The verbs represent the most common verbs of regular and irregular verbs.

It is very exciting the first time that you use the cards because

of the curiosity that it causes to see how the verbs disappear under the red sheet. The can be used to do independent revision or for practising the sentences in pairs.

However, I can't help but wonder how much it would be to buy packs for the whole class? Also, what advantages do these cards have that cannot be found in more sustainable resources, such as the smart board or mini white boards, which have at the same time many other applications?

**Eva Sanchez**  
King Alfred School

## **En avant avec les temps**

Advance Materials  
Jackie Garratt, Pierrette Macdonald, Jenny Ollerenshaw, Rosie Taylor and Sue Ollerenshaw  
ISBN 095476952X

This new resource is presented as a set of cards designed to practice and use the most commonly used verbs, both regular and irregular. The cards are topic base and cover 16 different subjects, from weather to preferences; from illness to house chores.

The idea is quite innovative: each topic consists of two cards, one of which has cut-out

windows to hide/select/ check the verbs. The card on which the verbs were written out in red, in particular, won praise from pupils as hiding the answers with a special red card added a "magical touch" enjoyed by all.

Despite those positive aspects, the general consensus over the quality of this material was not very satisfactory.

First of all, pupils were very put off by the very babyish (and badly drawn) pictures of frogs to illustrate the situations.

The design, as for it, was felt rather impractical. Having to fiddle with A4 cards implies working on tables, which, to pupils, defeated the purpose of a "fun speaking activity".

Finally, the actual practicality of using this material in a class felt difficult: to make the most of it, each child would require a set of cards, which would prove totally unrealistic in financial terms.

The resource was therefore not felt a good one to invest in, in a time when fun, motivating and high quality digital interactive verb revision materials can be found for free on the web.

**Pauline Moloney**

## LCP French Grammar Posters

This new range of grammar posters by LCP has three major advantages as the posters can be used for grammar teaching, for classroom decoration as they are attractive and as a permanent reminder for pupils. At a time when many educationalists wonder whether some classroom walls could be covered with too much information, LCP grammar posters have the advantage of being clear and concise using colour to reinforce the grammar point and photographs for decoration. Twelve topics are available: the present tense, the perfect tense with avoir, the perfect tense with être, the imperfect tense, the future tenses, avoir, être and aller, adjectives, object pronouns, the negative, the partitive article, à and de, and finally modal verbs. This wealth of grammar topics means that you can use the posters in rotation for the same class if you wish to teach a particular grammar point this term whilst using other posters simultaneously with different sets and year groups.

The CD Rom is also a very useful tool, as it enables you to teach grammar from your desktop, laptop, an interactive

whiteboard or printed worksheets and you can still use the relevant poster for reinforcement later on. The contents are relatively gimmick free which does not distract the pupils from what you want to teach: the grammar point. However, there are also new caricatures of pirates to teach the perfect tense I found particularly amusing.

At £ 49.95 + VAT for the posters and 14.95 + VAT for the CD Rom, I find them an excellent buy. The CD-Rom is also available in Spanish.

**Patrick Le Berre**  
Highgate School

## **Adelante 3 Azul**

LCP  
Miriam Regan and Kathryn Silvestre  
ISBN 1-904178-78-2

Adelante 3 azul is a photocopiable resource for Students in Year 9. It has been created as a source of homework activities, but the materials can also be used for cover lessons and end-of-lesson fillers.

Adelante 3 Azul provides materials for NC levels 3-7, and the very comprehensive contents page provides the teacher with the grammar

studied in each worksheet, as well as the levels and objectives covered. Teacher's notes, answers and extension suggestions are also provided.

The materials look attractive and are accessible. The activities are very clearly set out and are user-friendly. The instructions of the exercises are in English, which makes them appropriate for use when the teacher is not present, and some of the higher level activities provided a fair amount of realistic reading materials. Some more complex items of grammar, such as the difference between imperfect and preterite are perhaps a bit ambitious for Y9, but would suit the most capable students, and would be suitable for lower ability GCSE students. There is only one token worksheet which makes reference to Latin America, and perhaps more would have been welcome.

Adelante 3 Azul is a useful pool of materials which can be used at different levels, and that can help consolidate and expand on some of the most important grammatical aspects, as well as providing cultural information.

**Helena Gonzalez**  
Mount St. Mary's College

# ISMLA Conference 2008



# Dr Amanda Barton

## Gender Differences in Language Learning

Dr Barton, who lectures at the School of Education at the University of Manchester, got our conference off to a dynamic start with an informative and entertaining talk on gender differences. Gender differences start emerging as early as KS2. In 2002 of those pupils achieving Level 5 at KS3 39% were boys and 55% were girls. In 2006 only 45% of boys attempted a GCSE in a foreign language compared with 57% of girls. In 2007 the gender gap was 12% at GCSE (grades A\* to C).

Boys do not see Modern Foreign Languages as a cool subject and do not have many role models. "Work is more for girls" is the third most frequently cited pupil view of MFL. GCSE topics are seen as girls' topics.

Pupils tend to think that one is either good or bad at languages but in fact, it is about learning.

Dr Barton told us that boys need to know why they should learn a foreign language and need to be exposed to a range of strategies on how to learn. She came armed with a plethora of practical ideas to switch boys on:

- Set up activities as games but present them as challenges. Start the lesson saying: "I am not sure you will be able to do this activity".

- Organise a task challenge: the *prof* against the pupils.
- Set a purpose to listening tasks, such as spot the lie in a narrated holiday.

- In the early years of language learning, concentrate on distinguishing between sounds. Use a ball you drop or throw with different sounds, get pupils to point at sound cards or ask them to count the number of times they hear a sound.

- Get pupils to predict answers before they listen to a text.

- Incorporate drama to encourage speaking. Get pupils to use a silly hat, give them a different identity or ask them to practise a dialogue as if in a thriller, a music hall or a western.

- Encourage creativity and ask them to describe the room of a celebrity, to write acrostic or emblem poems, to enter poetry competitions.

- Make reading interactive using a running dictation.

- Find an audience for their written work; it could be

another school or another class in the same school.

- Train their reading skills through recognition of text types.

Explore the emotional content of languages and ask them to convince their partner using only two words, for example no and please or hello and good bye.

Evelyne Maynard

## John Dunston

**ISI inspections and MFL: everything you always wanted to know but never dared asked**

ISMLA was delighted to welcome to the conference Mr John Dunston, Headmaster of Leighton Park School and an ISI Reporting inspector. Two years into the second cycle of ISI inspections, his topic was how MFL departments should prepare for their week-long ordeal.

Mr Dunston began by restating that the purpose of inspection is to help schools improve and that inspectors need to keep pupils' best interests in mind at all times. Teachers should also be aware that the inspectors themselves are being inspected

and therefore, all inspections should be thorough, open and accountable. It is already well known that the second cycle of ISI inspections no longer include specific subject reports, and Mr Dunston proceeded to detail the evidence which inspectors now use to make their judgements:

- Reduced lesson observation: no longer will all teachers be observed;
- Formal and informal consultation with pupils;
- Work scrutiny;
- Discussion with some but not all teachers and governors;
- Written contributions from parents and pupils;
- School self-evaluation: all departments should expect to have some input;
- What has happened since the last inspection report.

In some respects, Heads of Departments may feel less 'in the firing line' during the inspection week, as the primary focus will be on what the school is trying to do across departments. However, in preparation for inspection, leadership teams are likely to impose a more uniform approach to ensure that departmental policies and handbooks reflect the broader aims of the school.

Cycle two inspections have a much smaller inspecting team

and departments therefore cannot expect a subject specialist. However, Maths, English and Modern Languages will usually have a specialist, albeit one who will be inspecting a much broader range of subjects than previously. Mr Dunston was at pains to stress that much more thorough training has been organised for ISI inspectors to ensure that they are confident to evaluate learning outside their subject specialism. Lesson observations will be recorded on a pro forma 'Evaluation Form', onto which inspectors add + or - symbols to different criteria (these documents can be downloaded from [www.isi.net](http://www.isi.net)) with some written comments as evidence. Although there is no requirement for observed teachers to produce a lesson plan for an inspector, they are very helpful and may assist the inspector in locating suitable evidence of good practice. For example, if pupils with LDD (Learning difficulties and disabilities) are identified and their needs explicitly referred to in a plan, the inspector will be able to identify suitable provision. Lessons are graded on a four-point scale (1-Outstanding; 2-Good; 3-Satisfactory; 4-Unsatisfactory).

Judgements on the quality of teaching will be closely linked to the quality of assessment

seen through the work scrutiny. This has two parts: firstly the work of a small sample of pupils in different year groups will be scrutinised across the curriculum to determine the success of whole-school procedures; secondly, the work of pupils in key years (e.g. 9, 11 and/or 6th form) will be chosen, reflecting the specialism of the individual inspectors. Schools are often criticised for not applying assessment policies consistently, but those that have achieved the successful integration of the principles of Assessment for Learning (particularly assessment informing planning) fare very positively.

The final difference of cycle two inspections concerns interviews. Not all Heads of Department will be interviewed. If he or she is interviewed, judgements will not be made on the quality of the curriculum provision, activities or events per se, but on how they contribute to furthering the aims of the school in general.

ISMLA is very grateful to John Dunston for agreeing to address the conference on the subject of the ISI inspections and for the clarity with which he explained how the inspection focus for ML departments is now how the department interacts

with the school's aims rather than its own strengths and weaknesses.

Duncan Byrne

## Rachel Hawkes

### Using song, rhythm, music and movement to accelerate language acquisition

If there had been some lads loitering outside the UCS lecture theatre on Saturday morning they might have been surprised to hear a group of languages teachers listening to music as diverse as Chemical Brothers, Avril Lavigne and the Black Adder theme tune during the talk given by Rachel Hawkes.

Rachel Hawkes teaches at Comberton Village College, not far from Cambridge, and her roles are varied indeed: Assistant Principal, Director of the Language College and Staff Learning, Head of MFL, Advanced Skills teacher and SSAT Lead Practitioner. Her keen interest in using music, song, rhythm and movement in language learning points to her firm belief that these are adjuncts to one's teaching style which can pay dividends in making language learning fun, relevant and full of street

credibility. Indeed, in a climate where many pupils opt out of languages at KS4, there has been a huge take-up in languages at Comberton. For Rachel, music is a basic human activity, fundamental to our well-being. The recent appointment of Howard Goodall as this country's singing ambassador is an indicator of the importance that is now being placed on the exposure of our youth to music, and more importantly, singing.

Delegates were reassured that a talent for singing was not a prerequisite for using some of her ideas: there were plenty of examples she used where audio files could be used to provide a melody. However, if teachers ask pupils to put themselves out in language learning (which we most surely do) then we should ourselves be prepared to do the same thing. She was also clear that she did not believe that if language learning were to be reduced to a mere song and dance routine then all would be well: her methods are a way of helping to make both the language and the learning experience memorable. She was of the opinion that just one such input once a week would be enough.

A particular focus in learning a language is the importance of pronunciation as there are huge

gains in comprehension when pupils know what a word looks like based on how it is said. Pupils need to be shown the correlation between what they read and what they say. The first lesson pupils have in German, for example, is one where they are introduced to the different sounds/spellings by means of a variety of words - Jojo, Wildwasser - and animated clips which help to put the sounds into the long term memory as well as adding humour. Rachel also recommended using names as guide to pronunciation.

Another very important area is that of subject pronouns which are taught, in all languages, with various movements (pointing to oneself for first person, saluting for polite form of you etc.). Key verbs such as avoir can be learned to the Pink Panther theme tune (and its low register is appealing to boys): être can be recited to the theme of Black Adder and the paradigm of wohnen to the Conga! Vocabulary which is basic, such as days of the week, can be enlivened when set to music (this is where Chemical Brothers came in!). Using gestures, punching to to the paradigm of Spanish verbs are also valid ways of putting language into the memory (and what is learning a language about if not memorising?)

One does not need to be a mad extrovert or a flashy user of all things technical in order to introduce these ideas. It is a question of being comfortable with your own material. Teachers can adapt well-known tunes and reset them to other words in order to make learning basic, high frequency structures memorable and fun. Those of the delegates who attended Rachel's lively and informative talk were in no doubt as to the benefits of using her ideas. I went away to my classes and immediately copied the gestures for subject pronouns and I can simply say that this idea works.

(Readers of this article might be aware of the following publication which gives other ideas on how to incorporate drama and music into their own teaching. Inspiring performance (CPF3)- Focus on drama and song Judith Hamilton, Anne McLeod & Steven Fawkes published by CILT).

**Julia Whyte**



# Dr Sheila Watts

## The decline and fall of the German language

When we were considering what to call Dr Sheila Watts' talk on modern German at this year's ISMLA conference, we came up with something like 'the decline and fall of the German language'. In the event, Dr Watts had plenty to say about the way German has changed very recently - possibly, some would say, for the worse - but the dark pessimism of our prototype title ended up unjustified.

Dr Watts' lively account, liberally spiced with examples from current journalism and academic discourse, sought to establish a nuanced balance between concern at the real issues behind the decline in use of German and a generous understanding of the fact that all languages changes and grow. The principal cause for concern identified in the talk was the fact that in some commercial, political and academic quarters German was being squeezed out. Examples from business included the executives at Siemens who might be expected to conduct daily activity in English, with the result that secretarial support would be expected to have very good

knowledge of English too. In similar vein, the growth of courses in German universities conducted in the English language gave rise to Dr Watts' conjecture that this could have a backwash effect: if it was deemed appropriate to teach Physics in English in a German university, why, ultimately, bother to teach the subject in German at school level?

But Dr Watts brought breadth and perspective to her consideration of other forms of language 'dilution' in German. She examined the twists and turns of the *Rechtschreibreform* with wit and subtlety, and was able to give us examples of support and dissent that were right up to date. The apparently comical development whereby the website

[www.aktionlebendigesdeutsch.de](http://www.aktionlebendigesdeutsch.de) suggested to its users that they invented words to replace English borrowings (*Denkrunde* for 'brainstorming', anyone?) was unmasked as, actually, a successor to earlier inventions of German neologisms. It had never occurred to me that *Augenblick* and *Bahnsteig* (for example) had been called into existence in the nineteenth century as part of an attempt to repel other, alien words.

Questions after the talk helped us become aware that there is a

bigger gap between spoken and written German than in other languages and that the question of the language items German borrows from English impacts rather less than we think. Or rather: we can happily allow our pupils to go on talking about their tendency to *chatten*, *zappen* and *surfen* - but may have to fight shy of allowing the same expression of such sentiments on paper.

This talk allowed us, in a remarkably short time, to appreciate that you have to work hard to arrive at a judgment of the state and status of German, and that there are no easy answers. It was, however, upbeat enough and sharply enough observed to give us plenty of reasons to be cheerful - both about the image of German we can convey to young people and about worldwide prospects for the language.

Geoffrey Plow

## Sebastián Bianchi

### Rediscovering Spanish America in the classroom

With his usual light and warm style of delivery, Sebastián started his talk with the question: Why should we refer to Latin America when teaching

Spanish? The response came loud and clear: there are 300 million Spanish speakers in Latin America (and that does not include the “hispanos” in the USA, about 40 million). It is a very rich universe, with 19 different countries and cultures to explore, and thanks to advances such as the internet, it is more accessible than ever before.

Sebastián continued by pointing out one of the main difficulties encountered by most of the teachers: the fear that the differences between the dialects and cultures is too great and too confusing to be able to tackle it in lessons. However, these differences can in themselves be a starting point in Spanish lessons. They can be used to challenge students, and to encourage thinking and discussions outside the sometimes very constricting limits of A level examinations. Latin America has for many years been relegated to a “cultural note”, a token reference in textbooks, and it is time we started exploring the enormous wealth in terms of geography, linguistics and history. Sebastián suggested using materials such as films (Apocalipto and The mission among others) to study the ancient civilisations and the effect that the Spanish conquistadors had on them.

Sebastián suggested the Conserjería library as an amazing pool of materials which can be borrowed and used in lessons.

Sebastián went on to give a very brief outline of the history of Latin America, and how this history provides an explanation for the inhabitants' attitude and personality. Gabriel García Márquez, especially his novel "El General en su laberinto", was mentioned as an example of a starting point to study the independence movements and some of its greatest heroes. There have been many famous and controversial personalities throughout the history of Latin America, such as Carlos Fuentes, Che Guevara, Evita, Hugo Chávez... The suggestion was made that it is best to choose a controversial character as a starting point, which will get dialogue started, as it will provoke different reactions. It is however very important to investigate history not only with a degree of patience, but also with an even greater degree of respect. Another example of this is the use of stereotypes in Spanish lessons. What is the first think that comes into students' brains when they think of Mexicans? Or Argentinians? Or Peruvians? Stereotyping can annihilate

human and national complexity, but they can also provide a starting point that will eventually get us to the reality of the different cultures and nationalities. It is essential that we learn to distinguish between Latin America (which would include Brazil) and the Spanish speaking world. It is also important that we distinguish differences at national, and even at regional level, and up to what point Latin Americans feel part of the same culture and heritage. The film "Diarios de Motocicleta" was another suggestion to study the cultural and political reality in the world of a young Che Guevara.

Media is another very rich area for study. Latin American films have become very well known in the last few years, thanks to the work of directors such as Guillermo del Toro and others belonging to what has become known as the Tequila Gang.

Sebastián's talk was an opportunity to spend some time in the very rich and colourful world of Latin American culture and history, and a chance to rethink different ways to enthuse our lessons with a different point of view.

**Helena Gonzalez**

# ISMLA Committee

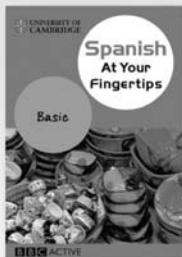
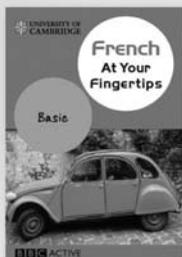


Some of the ISMLA committee members at the annual conference at  
University College School  
2 February 2008

A. Hunt, P. Ansell, T. Underwood, J. Whyte, G. Plow, D. Bryne, A.  
McAuliffe, E. Maynard, P. Langdale, D. Cragg-James, L. Hughes, P. Le  
Berre, A. Gonzalez

**BBC ACTIVE**

# A whole world of resources ... at your fingertips!



Make the most of your contact time by using *Languages At Your Fingertips* for supported self study or as an interactive classroom resource. This series contains over 100 minutes of video and audio resources to motivate students and enable them to focus on key skills, and over 400 different activities for comprehension, language manipulation, vocabulary extension and production of language.

**New for July 2008!**



## Also from BBC Active

Our best-selling *Talk* course is currently available in eight languages. You can also take your students to the next level with *Talk French 2*, *Talk Spanish 2* and *Talk Italian 2*.

Email [susanna.jones@pearson.com](mailto:susanna.jones@pearson.com) to

- Evaluate BBC Active languages courses.
- Request the latest BBC Active Language Tutors' Catalogue.
- Receive the free BBC Active Language Tutors' Newsletter.

[www.bbcactive.com/languages](http://www.bbcactive.com/languages)