

# Chairman's Report

Duncan Byrne

Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School

I was delighted to see so many ISMLA members at City of London School on Saturday 3rd February for our Annual Conference. The 160 delegates represented a record attendance at an ISMLA event and I sincerely thank you for your support for the committee's endeavours. Thanks must also go to Robin Edmundson, Head of Languages at CLS, for his ruthless efficiency in his organisation of the day. Wonderful weather helped to create an idyllic atmosphere as delegates enjoyed views over the Thames and St Paul's Cathedral, but Robin's attention to detail was key to the conference's success. We have yet to confirm a venue for 2008, but we expect the date to be Saturday 2nd February.

It was a real privilege to hear Professor David Crystal speak to us on how language is turned into literature; despite not strictly dealing with the teaching of modern languages, his speech, and in particular his rendition of Henry Reed's Naming of Parts, will be treasured by all who heard it. Mike Ullmann's talk on the international dimension in education was also much

appreciated by delegates, and I would like to thank all of our speakers for generously giving up their time to speak to the conference: without their goodwill, ISMLA could simply not function. This edition contains reviews of the majority of the sessions, and I would be delighted to hear from any ISMLA member who was interested in addressing the conference next year.

During the conference lunch break, many delegates attended a French debate between Sixth Formers from Whitgift and Highgate Schools to publicise our inaugural Joutes Oratoires competition. The final took place in March, and was won by James Allen's Girls' School, with Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School as runner-up. Not only was the competition excellent practice for the challenging A2 oral examinations, but also some happy Upper Sixth Formers went home with cash prizes. In its inaugural year, regrettably only schools from the Southeast chose to participate and the competition director, Pierre Pillet (Pierre.Pillet@highgateschool.org.uk) is very keen to extend the competition next year. The conference exhibition event created a good deal of interest, but we now need schools to volunteer to act as centres for regional heats, from which winners will proceed to a

national final. Pierre would be delighted to hear from you.

In recent months, ISMLA has spent a considerable amount of time preparing an official response to Lord Dearing's DfES-sponsored Languages Review. Full details of our response can be found on the website, but I would like to refer to a few points here, all of which have received coverage in the media following the publication of Dearing's final report.

Firstly, ISMLA agrees that the current GCSE subject criteria and specifications need a thorough overhaul. QCA has recently launched its subject criteria review, in which ISMLA is involved, and I would encourage you to respond to QCA's consultation when it comes online in the near future. We feel that the current GCSE fails to cater both for the most able and for the average student. The current focus on transactional content is patronising for gifted pupils and increasingly irrelevant for the majority. We argued that the new GCSE specifications should concentrate on skills (like the Asset qualifications), leaving room for teachers to choose their own content according to the abilities and enthusiasms of their students. Maintained schools also find that GCSE is an unattractive option for many KS4 pupils due to its four exam format, which they find

stressful (especially the oral and listening comprehension).

Inevitably, Dearing's conclusions draw heavily on the messages he received from the maintained sector, and speaking and listening at GCSE now have a large question mark placed by them. We, however, would be against removing the formal oral test from GCSE, as the task of speaking a foreign language with native speakers requires a learner to develop the confidence to overcome the fear of mistakes or embarrassment. We would, however, be in favour of an arrangement where speaking is assessed half by teacher assessment and half by a shortened oral test (as used by the IB Diploma).

A second Dearing conclusion concerned the perceived 'severe grading' of MFL GCSE, whereby candidates on average achieve lower grades in their modern language than in their other GCSE subjects. We are sympathetic to this widely-held view in the maintained sector, having studied persuasive evidence presented by the Association for Language Learning. However, we are more concerned about this phenomenon at A Level, where the perceived 'difficulty' of MFL A Level often adversely affects post-16 take-up. The reduction in MFL single honours undergraduate numbers could

be considered a direct consequence of this.

At GCSE, ISMLA is more worried about the unpredictability of grading, which it feels comes from excessively narrow assessment criteria. Candidates are rewarded at GCSE for knowing the unwritten rules of the game or 'ticking all the boxes'. We feel that quality of language should be rewarded above content and pupil enthusiasm.

Listening comprehension in particular is too much a test of examination technique. Questioning in English (as used by Asset) would be a better test of students' competence.

ISMLA's greatest difference of opinion with the final report concerns the optional status of MFL in KS4, where Dearing has resisted a return to pupil compulsion. However, even when languages were 'compulsory', only 78% (in the 'best' year) of a cohort sat a GCSE in MFL (source: CILT Language Trends) as students with EAL or with literacy and/or numeracy special needs were disapplied. ISMLA believes strongly that a return to a mandatory requirement is needed, albeit with the same arrangements for such SEN pupils in place. This belief is based on the argument that a message needs to be clearly given that some competence in a foreign language is a

fundamental expectation of an educated adult, in the same way as functional literacy or numeracy - after all, how many students would give up Maths if given the option? If the government thinks that foreign languages are important, then it should make such a statement.

I will, of course, be delighted to receive your correspondence, particularly if your views are at variance with ISMLA's official response to the Dearing review. I wish you a successful term and a restful summer break.



# ISMLA

## Conference

### 2007

The 2007 Annual Conference at City of London School on Saturday 3rd February was ISMLA's biggest yet and we were pleased to welcome so many of you on a beautiful day which showed off CLS, nestling between the Thames and St Paul's Cathedral, at its very best. The committee is extremely grateful for the indefatigable help of Robin Edmundson, Head of Languages at CLS, whose impeccable planning led to a trouble-free day: some feat with over 200 people on campus. Reviews of the conference sessions follow, but if your school would be interested in hosting the conference next year, we would be delighted to hear from you!

### Mr Mike Ullmann

Teaching Languages for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

ISMLA was delighted to welcome Mr Mike Ullmann, of Hockerill Anglo-European College, as our first speaker. Mike was chosen as 2005 Guardian Teacher of the Year in recognition of the pioneering and inspirational work that he has done over the

last fifteen years as Head of Language College at Hockerill. Having started his project in a low-achieving state boarding environment, Mike's introduction of Bilingual Teaching and cross-curricular foreign projects has been instrumental in raising Hockerill's horizons to the point at which the school led the post-16 league tables in Hertfordshire in 2006.

Hockerill's vision is based on four principles: teaching entirely through the target language; an innovative curriculum that includes delivering History and Geography through French and German; offering a variety of purposeful experiences abroad (cultural, work experience, traditional exchange); and perhaps most importantly, fostering an international ethos and the idea of global responsibility.

Using the target language as the sole medium for communication was all the rage a decade or so ago, but in recent times, this goal has been tempered by pragmatism, and although most of us probably try to use the TL as much as possible, we no longer feel guilty about resorting to English if we feel that the pace of our lesson will benefit from it. Mike Ullmann is nevertheless convinced of the need to insist on TL immersion

if we are to create the same confident communicators that we see emerging from some continental education systems. To achieve this, both pupils and staff need to be trained and the immersion techniques must be implemented by the whole department from year 7 upwards. Staff need to learn how to deliver TL instructions and explanations as clearly as possible by using cognates from English even if this might not be considered totally 'authentic' by a native speaker. For example, a teacher should use 'similaire' rather than 'semblable'. Why can't this be acceptable when we tell our pupils all sorts of half truths that only get fully explained at a more advanced stage? We make pupils learn être verbs and then 'j'ai sorti la poubelle' comes along! However, surely we want pupils to respond to our TL use in kind? Pupils need to be given at an early stage set phrases and responses (mon œil!) so that they can interact spontaneously and gain confidence, but equally Mike refuses to allow English to be spoken in front of the whole class. He will bend the rules by writing English from time to time on the whiteboard, and will whisper a phrase to an individual who is lost and speak to a pupil outside his classroom during break in English, but the TL environment is created by an

insistence on no English to be spoken in public - indeed pupils are very keen to 'grass up' their classmates for speaking English! Mike's ultimate aim is to hear natural student on student TL conversation outside the lesson; something he admits to hearing only sporadically.

The acronym CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is not well known in the independent sector. The CILT/ALL/ISMLA Language Trends survey of Autumn 2006 revealed that only 4% of our schools use it. Hockerill, however, started its Bilingual programme in 1993, whereby about half of its pupils have various combinations of their History, Geography, Maths and Science delivered through the medium of French or German by native speakers (graduates of the subject concerned) in years 9 and 10. Of course, such a programme needs unwavering support from school management as one can imagine how colleagues might not be enamoured with the prospect of losing control of their curriculum. However, the doubling or trebling of TL contact time has clear benefits and pupils are using their language for real learning. Hockerill has also found that results in GCSE History and Geography are at least as good as those of pupils who are not

on the 'Bilingual' programme. With such exposure to the target language, top sets take GCSE in year 9 with the remainder (and remember, this is a non-selective school) sitting it in year 10. The top sets then study AS in year 10 with some continuing to A2 in year 11, before embarking on the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme in the Sixth Form.

The final piece in the Hockerill jigsaw is its international ethos, reflected in its 17 annual exchanges and trips and espousal of the International Baccalaureate. There are two week long exchanges for those in the Bilingual Programme, work experience trips for GCSE pupils and an exchange with Japan. In addition, there are whole-school relationships with schools in Romania and Rwanda, which have a humanitarian perspective with teachers of all subjects and their pupils travelling across the world to give financial or concrete assistance to key projects.

Mike Ullmann's challenge to delegates to engage with some of the ideas brought to fruition at Hockerill was an inspirational start to our Annual Conference, and if you are interested by what you have read, Hockerill has, as a Training School, a commitment to share good

practice and runs regular visits for interested staff. Details can be found on the website [www.hockerill.herts.sch.uk](http://www.hockerill.herts.sch.uk)

*D.Byrne*

## Professor David Crystal Language BLANK Literature

The pre-conference 'rider' was unprepossessing. Professor Crystal requested a glass of water - no Powerpoint, no laptop, no DVD. We soon learned why. David Crystal's talk on Literature Blank Language was a bravura performance, as he demonstrated to us the implications of Robert Graves' dictum that 'every English poet should read the English classics [and] master the rules of grammar before he attempts to bend or break them'. His thesis was that careful analysis of the subtle ways writers break with linguistic rules and conventions uncovers an enormous amount about works of literature (and how literature works).

The first, fairly workaday rule trampled underfoot was that of 'univocality'. In real life, unless we are imitating others, we stick to one voice. In an examination of Henry Reed's

poem Naming of Parts, Professor Crystal made clear that it was impossible to render the sense of the poem satisfactorily through one voice. This one poem and, we were told, so many other works, thrive on a play of voices. The joy of the talk was that we were not just told this might be so, but shown it - via a rendition of the poem that included (among other things) a sergeant-major voice of Windsor Davies proportions.

The second rule - that, in real life, you only ask questions in order to elicit answers - was exploded when Professor Crystal looked at a scene from Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party. There, the posing of impossible questions by one character to his 'victim' became an act of linguistic terrorism, a subversion of a norm with the intention of breaking down the subjugated character for good.

The third understanding - that there can be assumed to be no relationship between the sounds that go to make up a word and the meaning of that word - was fascinatingly challenged with the help of John Kitching's 1981 poem Sunday Words. Kitching's piece consisted of an arrangement of the words which the Sunday Times had found were the most beautiful in the English language according to

readers. We were introduced to the discipline of phonaesthetics - the study of the expressive properties of sound.

David Crystal is not a practitioner of a particular language or professional specialism, but a master of language tout court. He said that he had long struggled to work out quite how to yoke 'language' and 'literature' in a professional discourse of the kind he was giving at the ISMLA conference, especially given some professional academics' reluctance to allow the two categories to be discussed in the same breath, in the same talk. He settled in the end for 'Language@Literature', which he thought summed up the interconnectedness of the two and the fruitfulness of any systematic combined study. We agreed - while marvelling that we had been listening to only one speaker, not the apparent troupe we had heard when Professor Crystal had acted out The Birthday Party all on his own. This was a remarkable event, transcending all the language divisions and varieties on show throughout the day.

*G. Plow*

# Mr Stephen Glynn

## Film in the Language Classroom

Having been particularly well wined and dined, the first session after lunch was brought to us by Mr Stephen Glynn, Head of Modern Languages at Oakham School. Fresh from hosting the conference last year, Stephen contributed enormously to this year's with his appealing talk on Film in the Language Classroom.

He began with a clip of the Simpsons in a variety of languages and highlighted the value of using a short piece of contemporary television to engage pupils' interest. His talk was split into two parts; the first discussing the merits of film in the classroom and the various techniques to make the most of it; secondly he looked in depth at the German classic *Die Ehe der Maria Braun*.

Stephen underlined throughout the benefits of film and the variety it can bring to the classroom. On a general level, films or clips can improve listening skills, expand vocabulary, bring a greater cultural awareness and exposure to a range of different accents. It is also advantageous to have the subtitles in the foreign language, rather than in

English, particularly with older pupils, he argued. This can then be backed up with a list of the mots clés. Stephen pointed out that in his experience, if one can offer good up-to-date clips, displaying current trends, then pupils are likely to respond better. One example of this was the way in which he utilises the quirky beginning of *Amélie Poulain* and asks his A' Level pupils to write about the own likes and dislikes in a similar manner. Furthermore it is always a good idea to study the film's title before viewing, in order to elicit a response and to speculate on the content. Another useful tip was to play a selected scene without the visuals and ask the class to comment, discuss and visualise what is occurring on screen. Other techniques included talking in character for one minute, making a film poster or press release, continuing a scene or sequel and compiling a list of quotes. Stephen also gave us examples of his own pupils work and scenes that they had recorded themselves, all in the foreign language. In addition to this, he pointed out that the video camera is never far away when Oakham pupils travel on trips abroad and this is an easy way to 'sell' the trip to the next year's class.

The second part of the talk was devoted to the Fassbinder film



Die Ehe der Marie Braun. Using this as a case study, Stephen highlighted film as a viable and relieving option away from the syllabus, or even used hand-in-hand with it. As a reflection of society, pupils immediately associate with the medium. All in all this was a colourful and interesting talk and it is testament to Stephen that he kept the audience so focused after such a hearty lunch!

*T. Underwood*

## Mr Thomas Reimann

Quo vadi Deutschland?  
Zwischen Reformen und Exporten - ein Land sucht seinen Weg!

Thomas Reimann delivered an informative as well as entertaining talk on the current situation in Germany. Entitled "Quo vadis Deutschland? Zwischen Reformen und Exporten - Ein Land sucht seinen Weg", the session gave participants an update on the current situation in Germany, providing and analysing up-to-date facts and statistics on a number of topics. These were presented as ten "Thesen", offering an insight into the political situation in Germany, reforms of social systems, the

economy, unemployment, the importance of education, the problem of sinking birth rates, integration, differences between East and West and the impact of the success of the Football World Championship on the Germans' psyche and self-image.

Following a recent boom in the economy with a growth of 2.5% in 2006, unemployment has fallen evenly in both East and West by 1.5% to under 4 million. Nevertheless, the discrepancy between East and West remains - with the Eastern States having more than twice the rate of unemployment. Mr Reimann described education as the most effective weapon in the fight against unemployment and supported this with comparative statistics of unemployment amongst university graduates, people with professional qualifications and those without.

The greatest problem, now and for the future, is that of sinking birth rates in Germany. There are multiple causes for this: the phenomenon of "German Angst" - fear of the future, of too little money or illness in old age, unemployment and terrorism. Secondly, the German education system tends to cause late entry into the professional life and thus a shortened decision phase about whether

to have family, particularly for women. Lastly, the currently predominant zeitgeist can predispose young people against having children. Reforms of the pension and the health systems do little to reassure and discussions about how to support young families continue.

ISMLA is very grateful to Mr Reimann's contribution to the conference which will inform delegate's A Level teaching about contemporary Germany.

*A. McAuliffe*

## **Dr Giuliana Pieri** Italian Post-War Design

Dr Pieri prefaced her talk by explaining that inter-disciplinary courses are an increasingly popular option at universities and that they have proved to be an interesting tool for understanding post-war economic and social changes in Italy. Italian Design is a very popular course at Royal Holloway.

Dr Pieri began by looking at the relevance of Italian Design.

Italy emerged from the second world war with huge economic problems, but in a relatively short period of ten to fifteen years her economy grew considerably and her status was

transformed to the extent that the « Made in Italy » myth of the mid nineteen sixties suggested that Italy was the nadir of elegance and stylish living. Italian design reflects the changes in people's lives during this period.

A slide was shown, for instance, of the super leggera chair, a design based on a rustic peasant's chair, in which the elegance had been retained whilst the weight had been removed. The guiding principle being that people had moved from the country to the town and instead of living in large spaces now lived in far smaller flats where objects had to be more mobile. Next, was a slide of the « Transistor 64 » a radio which was jointly designed with an Englishman where again the miniature nature of the object was intended as a contrast to what would have been the large, conventional valve radios of the time. Dr Pieri underlined the importance of international collaboration as a hallmark of Italian design, something which has since been seized on by other countries and used for instance by German car manufacturers VW who employed Italian designers to re-style their range of cars in the nineteen eighties.

How though did design fit into the economy?

Italy had a structure in place of small and medium-sized

industries which had an understanding or at least an awareness of design. This combined with the creativity of outstanding, individual designers and architects to provide a winning formula. The question is though how or why was this possible? Dr Pieri speculated that the history and culture of Italian cities helped give their people a sense of beauty and form that perhaps other countries do not have. Another thought was that designers and architects train together in Italy, something which does not happen elsewhere. Designers also consider themselves to be on a par with artists. Olivetti was a case in point. Architects and designers were employed by him from the outset of a project and were responsible for the way the product looked. Both he and Agnelli studied mass production in the USA in the nineteen twenties and re-imported their knowledge to Italy. This combination of mass-production techniques combined with a flair for elegance and design gave us such classics as the Fiat 500 in 1939; a small car with flowing lines, or the beautiful, streamlined Lancia Coupé. The undoubted master-piece of Post-War Italian design though has to be the Vespa. It is worth studying just to understand the changes in Italian society that it

embodies. Piaggio had been a military aircraft manufacturer. With the end of the war, there was no call for fighter parts and so the owner of the company decided to switch to producing a small, motorised bicycle to take people to work. The scooter had to be practical, light, easy to handle and drive, whilst protecting the driver from the elements. It was cheap to run and the spare wheel easy to change. All of these requirements made it very attractive to women and young people. The first production was for just two thousand. This sold out immediately as did the second run of ten thousand. From then on Piaggio could not keep up with demand. Right from the start it became a myth. It represented freedom to young people, the chance to escape from parental grip. In some ways it had the idea of the apple, the desire to transgress. It emerged at a time when social control was coming to an end and people began to move towards individual morality. Piaggio though was also a pioneer in marketing and publicity techniques. He used celebrities to promote his products, a novel idea at the time. Audrey Hepburn, the beautiful princess in the film Roman Holiday drove a Vespa. At a stroke she made the product attractive to the

wealthy and women. Seeing her in the film on the scooter made people want to own a Vespa. It embodied the dream of her lifestyle, on your own Vespa, you were Audrey Hepburn, film star and princess. Likewise Piaggio used top fashion models to propel Vespa from an internal success to the international stage. Rarely can an object have taken on the aspirations of so many people as has the Vespa.

*P. Ansell*

## Mr Richard Pelletier

Environnement, qui est responsable?

C'est avec enthousiasme, passion, verve et un excellent sens de l'humour que Richard Pelletier nous a fait réfléchir sur un sujet on ne peut plus d'actualité : l'environnement. En effet, de nos jours, les catastrophes écologiques, que ce soit en termes de pollution, de raréfaction de l'eau douce ou du changement climatique, semblent de plus en plus fréquentes. Même si les rapports scientifiques ou géographiques sont souvent contradictoires en fonction de leurs sources, tout le monde s'accorde à dire que nous détruisons tous rapidement

notre planète. Comment en sommes-nous arrivés là ? Sommes-nous tous responsables de façon individuelle ou collective ? Acceptons-nous nos responsabilités et faisons-nous aujourd'hui, que ce soit au niveau de l'état, des entreprises et du consommateur, suffisamment pour enrayer ce processus de destruction ?

Cette nouvelle responsabilité est résumée par deux nouveaux concepts : le développement durable et la consommation durable. Richard nous a donné une définition de ces deux concepts. Le développement durable répond aux besoins des générations présentes sans compromettre la capacité des générations futures de répondre aux leurs. Le but de la consommation durable, quant à elle, est d'assurer que les besoins premiers de l'ensemble de la communauté mondiale soient satisfaits, les excès réduits et les effets sur l'environnement évités.

L'Etat français, représenté par le Ministère de l'Ecologie et du Développement Durable, a eu à cœur de protéger l'environnement en développant son programme électronucléaire et en incitant les Français à utiliser plus d'énergies renouvelables. La France est aussi le premier pays à avoir incorporé une Charte de l'Environnement dans sa

constitution. Les futures lois devront désormais être conformes aux principes établis dans cette Charte. Les lois existantes pourront être annulées ou modifiées si elles sont contraires à la nouvelle Constitution. De nouveaux éco-labels, signes de la qualité écologique des produits, ont été créés. Une association, Consodurable, a été créée en 2004 afin de gérer un site d'information pour les consommateurs sur les actions des entreprises en faveur du développement durable dans le secteur des produits de grande consommation.

Cependant, malgré toutes ces heureuses initiatives, l'Etat doit faire face à un problème non négligeable : la croissance constante de déchets générés par les Français. Deux fois plus de déchets qu'il y a 40 ans est actuellement produit avec 360 kilos par an et par habitant, soit environ 1kg par jour et par personne. Des campagnes de sensibilisation et d'actions tels que « Réduisons vite nos déchets, ça déborde » ou « Stop pub » sur les boîtes aux lettres ont récemment été mises en place.

Les entreprises aussi se doivent de respecter et d'aider à sauver l'environnement. La notion de RSE (Responsabilité Sociale ou Sociétale des Entreprises) correspond à l'application aux entreprises du concept du

développement durable. Les entreprises doivent prendre en considération les aspects économiques, sociaux et environnementaux de leurs activités. Une manière de respecter ces principes est la prise en compte des considérations des parties prenantes, des clients, des salariés, des fournisseurs, des actionnaires et de la collectivité.

Les consommateurs, c'est-à-dire chacun d'entre nous, jouent bien évidemment un rôle-clé dans cette lutte contre la pollution et la sauvegarde de l'environnement. Le transport, qui est le plus grand consommateur d'énergie, est à l'origine d'un quart de l'émission de gaz à effet de serre et d'autres solutions, pour certaines encore marginales en France, sont envisagées : l'utilisation de l'huile végétale (encore interdite en France), le co-voiturage, l'autopartage, l'utilisation des vélos en ville (des vélos gratuits sont mis à la disposition des habitants de Lyon de puis quelques années maintenant). Aujourd'hui, la grande majorité des Français opèrent le tri sélectif des déchets et le recyclage est ainsi possible. Les Français essaient aussi de plus en plus de réduire leurs déchets en évitant par exemple de servir des sacs plastiques dans les supermarchés. Il existe aussi de

nombreux consommateurs qui ne sont pas conscients des gestes qui permettraient de réduire leurs déchets. Les raisons en sont simples : le manque de réflexe, l'aspect trop contraignant du geste, le prix plus élevé des achats et le manque de connaissance du geste.

Il semblerait donc que les concepts de développement durable et de consommation durable font partie de notre vie de tous les jours même si nous n'avons pas réellement conscience de la limite des ressources naturelles.

Richard se déplace très régulièrement dans les établissements scolaires britanniques pour discuter avec des élèves de tous niveaux des sujets d'actualité en France. Si vous désirez plus d'informations, n'hésitez pas à le contacter : [francaisfacile@toucansurf.com](mailto:francaisfacile@toucansurf.com)

*N.Fayaud*

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## MINUTES OF THE ISMLA AGM HELD ON SATURDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2007 AT CITY OF LONDON BOY'S SCHOOL

### 1. Matters arising from the AGM 2006

- Duncan Byrne welcomed delegates to the meeting. He referred to the Minutes taken at the last AGM at Oakham School on the 4th February 2006 and asked if there were any matters arising. The minutes were proposed by Richard Hoare, Tonbridge School and seconded by Robin Edmundson, City of London Boys' School.

### 2. Chairman's report

- Duncan Byrne reported that ISMLA is in a healthy state and has contributed nationally more and more in the past year, with the press interested in the organisation's opinion.
- He thanked the committee for their hard work in helping to run the organisation.
- He pointed out that all members of the committee, with the exception of David Cragg-James, are full-time teachers.
- ISMLA is keen to recruit new members and to carry on promoting Modern Foreign Languages.

- Duncan stressed the need to engage as well with the maintained sector
- He questioned the reporting of independent schools by the media and the inaccuracy of the Times report on his comments about the Dearing report. The press perhaps consider the typical independent school to be Eton or Harrow.
- Duncan reminded delegates about further details in the newsletter and on the website.
- He thanked Thomas Underwood for all his work in the production of both and encouraged people to check the website regularly.
- He thanked City of London School for Boys and in particular the Head of Modern Languages, Robin Edmundson, for their help in hosting the conference.

### 3. Treasurer's report

- Peter Ansell reported that the financial year is now the 1st August until the 31st July.
- He urged delegates to look at the figures for the financial year, which have been audited and accepted, in the delegate packs or on the website.
- The accounts might seem disjointed at first sight, due to changing the date when membership is due.
- The main overheads last year were the costs of the

conference (£4672.26), the printing and posting of the newsletter (£1864.53) and committee meetings (£728.75).

- Membership proved to be the biggest source of income (1054.86)
- For the current year, the opening balance is £3747.54. Outgoings are £3838.46. Income (on the 2nd February 2007) is £12,090.
- The main costs are committee meetings (approximately £460 per meeting).
- All outstanding bills have been paid.
- Income from membership fees stands at £4855 and from the conference so far £7060, although there is some left to bank.
- Peter then highlighted that many member school pay by BACS and that this normally works well. On occasion the school's name can be removed and he asked members to ensure that their school fills in the part of the membership form that gives the school's bank account details.

### 4. Membership secretary's report

- John Ridge was unfortunately too ill to attend. Duncan Byrne reported on his behalf.

- ISMLA now has a healthy 211 paid members.

- The website ([www.ismla.co.uk](http://www.ismla.co.uk)) has made it easier to obtain membership forms and stay informed. He encouraged delegates to pass on this information to members of their departments who had not attended the conference.

## 5. Election of committee members

- Duncan Byrne stated that ISMLA could have up to 15 committee members and encouraged delegates to consider joining the committee.

- Duncan Byrne was re-elected Chairman of ISMLA, proposed by Kate Frank and seconded by Judith Steinberg.

- Astrid McAuliffe was re-elected Vice-Chairman of ISMLA, proposed by Nick Mair and seconded by Robin Edmundson.

- Liz Hughes was re-elected Secretary of ISMLA, proposed by Andrew Hunt and seconded by Sébastien Laurent.

- Peter Ansell was re-elected Treasurer of ISMLA, proposed by Duncan Byrne and seconded by Peter Langdale.

- Nathalie Fayaud was re-elected Reviews Editor of ISMLA, proposed by Patrick Thom and seconded by Richard Thompson.

- Evelyne Maynard was re-elected Prep School Liaison Officer, proposed by Richard Hoare and seconded by Duncan Byrne.

- Dr Geoffrey Plow was re-elected Awarding Bodies Liaison Officer, proposed by Garry Hudson and seconded by Judith Steinberg.

- Duncan Byrne reported that membership fees for ISMLA are now due in September and this should be more convenient for Heads of Department.

- He called for a proposal for the changes, the motion to effect these changes was proposed by Dr Geoffrey Plow and seconded by Evelyne Maynard.

## 6. AOB

- Duncan Byrne gave a vote of thanks to Peter Ansell for his efficiency as Treasurer of ISMLA.

- He also made an appeal for contributions to the newsletter.

- There was no further business and the meeting closed at 11:41.







Some of the ISMLA committee members at the annual conference at City of London Boy's School  
3 February 2007

P. Ansell, E.Maynard, N.Fayaud, J.Whyte, D.Byrne, A. McAuliffe,  
G.Plou, T.Underwood

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.*

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## Language teaching in the digital age

Peter Langdale  
Merchant Taylors' School,  
Northwood

We have come a long way since trying to find an article relevant to an A level topic involved searching through dusty back numbers of a newspaper or magazine. Today, an internet search will provide us with any number of articles in digital form to be edited, reworked, and turned into exercises. These materials can be stored centrally and shared by a department and indeed made available to pupils via Intranets and servers. The tape recorder in a school such as mine is now virtually redundant as all our audio material is stored digitally on a server and played through computers and loudspeakers installed in the classroom. The black or white board has now in many classrooms been replaced by the interactive board, allowing the use of new presentation tools. The TV and video player has been relegated to a cupboard; DVDs, short video clips and Internet video are now played directly via a digital projector. Increasingly schools are turning to digital language laboratories to enhance and expand the range of activities in language teaching. This continues to

involve significant capital investment. So the question in many people's mind is quite naturally whether such an investment is really justified. Is there any hard evidence that learning of languages is enhanced?

I do not believe that it is possible to answer such a question in the terms demanded by Senior Management Teams these days - enhanced examination results. However there is little doubt that the experience of language learning in such a digital environment is significantly different for the pupil (and indeed the teacher).

To illustrate this, I would like to share some recent examples of the use of digital materials quite inconceivable only a few years ago. My examples are for French.

To begin an A level lesson, it is now quite straightforward to watch the headlines from a recent news bulletin (for instance from <http://jt.france2.fr>). Often editions up to a week old can be watched online. In addition it is possible to capture these editions and edit them so that short video clips can be worked on individually by pupils (comprehension exercises, transcripts, vocabulary searches etc). For instance I recently

captured and edited a clip about the new TGV speed record and created a simple comprehension exercise to go alongside it - now filed centrally for use by others. I would highlight an interesting French resource which for a modest annual subscription provides just such video material (from AFP) with exercises ([www.baccalaureat.co.uk](http://www.baccalaureat.co.uk)). I would also add that some stations (such as TF1 in France) provide pages such as <http://videos.tf1.fr/video/news/newsthemas> which link to individual short clips from news broadcasts on topics of current interest - perhaps pupils can be asked to summarise the content of different clips and share the results. At my school we also ask A level pupils to do such an exercise in their own time and submit a summary each week.

A brief word too about [www.ina.fr](http://www.ina.fr). From this page one can find a huge selection of historical and topical short video clips - in a recent lesson on the abolition of the death penalty in France, pupils were asked to search the site for images of the Patrick Henry trial and then given the task of transcribing an extract for Robert Badinter's speech to the Assemblée Nationale (the original text for them to check their version was easily found through Google).

Much the same can be said of radio materials, though a word of caution is in order. My experience is that on radio the pace of speech is much more frenetic than when accompanying video. However, I have for several years been using the “Ecouter le Dernier Flash” facility on the France Info web site with more able A level classes to encourage gist listening and catching of key words from the headlines. I have also successfully used phone-in programmes such as Le téléphone sonne on France Inter for note taking on topics on individual listening stations. Radio France also provides a site ([www.radiofrance.fr/rf/documentation/sons\\_annee/](http://www.radiofrance.fr/rf/documentation/sons_annee/)) where one can search for audio clips by topic and date. Radio France Internationale ([www.rfi.fr](http://www.rfi.fr)) also provides very useful listening material online with interactive exercises (Le fait du jour) and a more accessible Journal en français facile.

It is important to point out, of course, that these audio and video materials are available both to the teacher and to the pupils, so that pupils can be encouraged to use them in their own time - gone are the days of giving out the long wave

frequency of France Inter; now pupils have every opportunity to listen to live radio online, download or copy to MP3 players at will.

Web sites also provide some interesting opportunities for activities, though in my own experience, lesson times and sporadic access to laboratories limits the extensive use of them. We have had most success with sites which though not designed for language learners provide interactive opportunities. One motivating example is the use of ‘tests gratuits’ provided by driving test sites with multiple choice questions (Should you overtake in this circumstance? / What does this sign mean?). Another is using the Gites de France website to locate a house to rent and then produce a prose description. This area was one of the first to be developed and exemplar material is widely available.

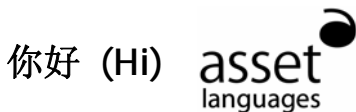
One of the uses of digital technology which I have found to be particularly effective is the use of interactive grammar and vocabulary exercises, either produced in house (in our case using Hot Potatoes software) or freely available material online such as [www.languagesonline.org.uk](http://www.languagesonline.org.uk), the astonishing and very comprehensive but not widely

known site for French put together by Carmen Vera Pérez in Spain (<http://platea.pntic.mec.es/~cvera/hotpot/exos/index.htm>) which also has interactive exercises linked to songs and the clutch of excellent sites written by Thierry Perrot and his team in France ([www.polarfle.com](http://www.polarfle.com), [phonetique.free.fr](http://phonetique.free.fr), [lexiquefle.free.fr](http://lexiquefle.free.fr), [peinturefle.free.fr](http://peinturefle.free.fr)). A fairly comprehensive index is available at [www.lepointdufle.net](http://www.lepointdufle.net). An extremely efficient laboratory activity on a grammatical point can be put together quite simply by writing a web page with links to chosen exercises. I am especially interested in linking interactive exercises to listening (for example cloze tests which give immediate feedback).

A final word about speaking. One of the most productive uses of the language laboratory we have installed at Merchant Taylors' (the Sony Virtuoso/Soloist system) is to encourage speaking among pupils. For instance, the system allows the teacher to ask a set of questions to the class the answers to which are then recorded and can be 'collected' by the teacher for marking, in much the same way as a piece of writing. Not only can a full

class be asked to speak simultaneously, but individual (and private) feedback can be given on the spoken word. In the future I would like to develop here what has been common practice in the US for many years, the use of oral grammatical transformation drills, thereby linking grammar and oral production.

The foregoing is but a partial glimpse of how different the experience and methodology of language teaching can now be. My own experience is that pupils' experience of language learning can now be very different and potentially very exciting, fitting in with the digital world in which they now live - our 6th Form pupils do not remember a world without the Internet!. Not all teachers take easily or willingly to this new digital world and a huge amount of training and exchange of ideas is required to bring out the full potential, nor will the benefits necessarily be reflected in terms of exam results. However, on a personal note, digital technology has made a number of day to day tasks much more efficient, brought a new life and impetus to my own teaching, and I hope given new enthusiasm for languages to my pupils.



How Asset Languages supports the teaching of the world's most popular language, 中文 (Mandarin)

Of the 21 modern languages that can be tested under the Asset Languages assessment scheme, Mandarin Chinese is proving increasingly popular in independent schools. Since 2005, Asset Languages (from awarding body OCR) has provided a flexible system of assessment which tests and rewards proficiency in 4 areas of language skill; listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Approximately 20% of independent schools are teaching Mandarin. Schools are encouraging and responding to an increasing level of interest in learning Chinese, stimulated by an awareness of China's rapidly increasing economic and political power. With the approach of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, Chinese culture is becoming more accessible, particularly online. Mandarin is spoken by more than a billion people - more than any other single language.

According to Eleni Karagianni, the linguist responsible for co-ordinating Chinese assessment

at Asset Languages, Mandarin appeals to a wide range of students, including those brought up speaking Cantonese at home. For many teachers, the fact that most students start from scratch is an advantage. So after developing assessments for French, Spanish and German, Mandarin was a top priority for Asset Languages.

Eleni - who is Greek herself - is learning Mandarin at the same time as expanding the Asset Languages scheme. "I really enjoy my classes and I draw upon them to look at ways of improving assessment". Through Asset Languages, students can be assessed at Breakthrough, Preliminary, and Intermediate levels. Eleni is working on the Advanced stage - equivalent to A level - plus new assessment materials for Cantonese which should be available by Summer 2008. Each of the levels is based on stages of the DfES' Languages Ladder and is designed to be equivalent to other national qualifications. Preliminary Mandarin, for instance, is equivalent to Foundation GCSE. Each level is subdivided into 3 smaller grades.

"In order to help students, we are introducing word lists - available via our website - for the reading and writing tests. They are a helpful introduction

to students who might be daunted by the thousands of Chinese characters. The word lists introduce some basic vocabulary that takes into account the different needs of those taking the tests - for instance there are approximately 100 words at Breakthrough stage on subjects like family, friends and school. The words expand to include a wider range of nouns and verbs as you go up to the next level. For those taking reading and writing tests, they will only be tested by characters from the specified word list”.

She continues, “Personally I find writing the characters more difficult than say speaking and listening. Luckily Asset allows you to assess different skills at different levels. We cannot presume that every candidate will also find writing hard of course so we produce tests for all four skill areas. This is a vital principle behind Asset and we find that it suits the needs of teachers who want to build up pupils’ confidence and reward their individual strengths, especially if they might struggle with GCSE”.

As a tonal language in which meaning varies according to how you say the word, Mandarin is a challenge to students used to studying more phonetic

European languages in which they can pronounce a word even if they don’t know its meaning. However there are one or two familiar words common to many languages as Eleni points out - māma and bàba (妈妈,爸爸).

Simon Kent, Head of Chinese at Oundle School, is enthusiastic about the role of Asset Languages in his language teaching. “We offer a 2 year course in Mandarin beginning in Year 10 and a 1 year option for Year 11s. There’s also a chance for sixth formers to learn the language. It appeals equally to girls and boys. We teach in small classes of 5 or 6. Learning Mandarin is really quite intensive. We use a variety of text books and online sources. There’s a strong emphasis on speaking - including a trip to China - but this is balanced by the focus on learning to read and write the Chinese characters which is probably the hardest element of the language”.

“We certainly appreciate the structure that the Asset Languages scheme provides. It’s a positive and attainable alternative to GCSE Mandarin. With Asset, I can control which pupils take which exams and stagger them if necessary. It motivates pupils during the year and gives them a sense of progress. Breakthrough is a good

starting point, with the aim of reaching Preliminary level by the end of the 2 year course. Our first group of 17 candidates took listening, reading and writing at Breakthrough level in March, with the spoken assessment to follow in the summer. Asset Languages really fits in well with how I want to teach the subject and should provide the foundation of the scheme of work from next year”.

The first step for teachers who would like to use Asset Languages to support the teaching of Mandarin is to register their school as a centre. To find out about registering and about Asset Languages in general, please visit the website at [www.assetlanguages.org.uk](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk) or ring 01223 553998 for further details.

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## Den Deutschen qualmt der Kopf - Das Rauchverbot in Deutschland

Stefanie Schmiedel  
Northwood College

Frankreich hat es schon geschafft. England auch bald. Nur in Deutschland streiten sich die 16 Bundesländer und die Bundesregierung immer noch über die Einführung und die genauen Bestimmungen zur Umsetzung des Rauchverbots.

Bereits 1996 wurde im Bundestag die erste Version eines Nichtrauchergesetzes debattiert. Die Gegner brachten damals das Stichwort "Hexenjagd" ins Spiel, worauf die Befürworter mit dem Argument der fahrlässigen Tötung der Passivraucher konterten. "Politik kann und darf nicht alles regeln" hieß es damals es im Grundsatzprogramm einer der größten deutschen Parteien - aber warum können französische und englische Politiker das Rauchen in öffentlichen Plätzen, Restaurants und Kneipen verbieten und deutsche Politiker nicht?



An manchen Orten in Deutschland ist das Rauchen bereits verboten oder nur stark eingeschränkt möglich, wie zum Beispiel in Bahnhöfen, ICEs und Regionalzügen. Doch dann kommen der Föderalismus und die 16 deutschen Bundesländer inklusive ihrer Landesregierungen ins Spiel und es wird kompliziert. Man nehme das Beispiel Schule. Während das deutsche Jugendschutzgesetz besagt, dass Jugendliche unter 16 Jahren keine Tabakwaren käuflich erwerben können, ist in nicht allen Bundesländern das Rauchverbot an Schulen gesetzlich verankert. SchülerInnen und LehrerInnen in Berlin ist das Rauchen in Schulen generell untersagt ist, wohingegen SchülerInnen und LehrerInnen in Nordrhein-Westfalen per Gesetz einen Raucherplatz auf dem Schulhof einfordern können.

Anfang Dezember 2006 einigte sich die Große Koalition darauf, dass das Rauchverbot auf Gastronomiebetriebe und Diskotheken ausgeweitet werden solle. Ein paar Tage später wurden Politiker darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass das Gaststättengesetz von jedem Bundesland einzeln zu regeln sei und somit muss dem Beschluss der Großen Koalition erst

einmal von der Ministerkonferenz, der Versammlung aller 16 Ministerpräsidenten, zugestimmt werden. Es kann Ihnen also durchaus passieren, dass Sie bei Ihrem nächsten Deutschlandbesuch in einem Bundesland in Restaurants abgetrennte Raucherräume finden und in einem anderen Bundesland vergeblich danach suchen. Die Deutsche Ärztekammer und die Deutsche Krebsgesellschaft werfen der Bundesregierung und den Länderregierungen Versagen und Verantwortungslosigkeit vor.

Das erweiterte Rauchverbot kann frühestens im Juli 2007 und spätestens im Januar 2008 in Kraft treten, je nachdem wie schnell sich die Ministerkonferenz einigen kann. Momentan stellen sich zwei Bundesländer quer: Nordrhein-Westfalen und Niedersachsen beharren darauf, durch Ausnahmeregelung ein generelles Rauchverbot in öffentlichen Gebäuden und in Gastronomiebetrieben „nach Bedarf“ auflockern zu können.



## Mission Europe: An audio journey into French, German and Polish

“Mission Europe” is a European Union funded language project. It is a radio and multimedia co-production from Radio France Internationale, Deutsche Welle and Polskie Radio. The project has produced an innovative “spoken-word” language drama series contained in podcasts which are free-to-download online.

The three exciting radio adventures for young people are called Mission Berlin, Misja Kraków and Mission Paris come in 26 five-minute episodes and offer an original bilingual approach. The heroes of each adventure think in the language of their listeners and discover the language and culture of the country as their adventures unwind. Students can immerse themselves in the sound and discover the French, German and Polish languages.

Do you know how to say “enjoy your lunch” in German? What would you say to a beautiful girl on the streets of Cracow? Could you tell the difference between left and right in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris? These phrases and situations are

covered through the exciting drama series of radio stories. All the adventures are available as podcasts on the project website:

[www.missioneurope.eu](http://www.missioneurope.eu), which also contains the following tools:

- Language explanations and exercises.
- Cultural information on the sights of Berlin, Paris and Poland.
- Practical information on things like food and drink.
- A multilingual glossary.
- Images of top spots in the three places.
- Useful links and a bibliography.

The methodology of the materials is that it:

- uses radio techniques to look at culture and communications, as they are actually practiced in a multi-lingual, cosmopolitan Europe;
- allows you to learn while being entertained: as you follow the hero, you will take your first steps in three languages (French, German and Polish) and you will find the keys to survival in these countries;
- works in a bilingual format which allows listeners to follow a story without feeling that they are learning since the hero thinks aloud in the listeners’ own language;

- develops your linguistic skills along with the plot: Act 1 : First contact with the country, Act 2 : « Situate oneself », Act 3 : « Identifying », Act 4 : « Participating/reacting », Act 5 : « Expressing oneself ».
- bases its linguistic contents on the « Discovery » and “Survival” levels, that is, Level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning.

As a free-to-download resource it is an excellent addition to the materials available for teaching the target languages.

*Mission Europe est financé par le programme Socrates / Lingua 1*



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To write one article on recent French / 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)

## Reviews

### Aspekte deutscher Gegenwart: Texte und Übungen - Band 2

John Hill, Alan Jones, Gudrun Lawlor and Oranna Speicher  
Advance Materials  
ISBN: 0 9532440 1 6

The Advance Materials publication *Aspekte deutscher Gegenwart: Texte und Übungen - Band 2* has been devised with the aim of helping students to become more confident in reading longer texts in German and also so that students can work through the material independently, developing reading strategies, vocabulary and general language awareness on the way. I thought it was very successful in both respects.

Each chapter opens with a longer text on a variety of topics (Schule, Familienleben, die Arbeitswelt, Werbung or Ausländer oder Deutsche for example), which is then followed with a clear progression of exercises (from ‘vocabulary access’ activities through varied comprehension tasks to some productive tasks), with relevant explanations dotted here and there on such matters as cognates, past participles used as adjectives or

word-order rules among others. The exercises are engaging and the explanations given are very clearly written but the key to the success of this book as a book you would encourage your students to use for private study are the “Lösungen und Erläuterungen” sections at the end of each chapter. These ensure what the book’s declared aim is: that students should never feel stuck and never have any pretext for giving up trying. To a large extent, this book does for reading skills what a good teacher would do, but as it is devised for independent work, both the struggling students and the more advanced ones can benefit from using it, as they can obviously focus on what they need and go at their own pace.

This book can also be put to good use by photocopying a given chapter without the answers section and setting it as coverwork for a few lessons or as homework, especially if one feels at first that this is the best way to convince students to try it out.

In fact we liked it so much in our department that we thought the only reproach we could make was that it was too short! We are already waiting for the follow-up version and in the meantime will make sure that

our pupils get exposed to it, both for independent study and as homework.

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## Klasse! Neu 1

Corinna Schicker and Morag McCrorie  
Oxford University Press, 2005  
ISBN: 0-19-840644-4

Klasse! Neu 1 is an updated version of the OUP beginners’ German course first published in 2001, and it will undoubtedly find the same favourable response among teachers of German as its older sibling. Corinna Schicker and Morag McCrorie are both experienced authors in the field of German textbooks, and their skill in writing engaging and motivating courses is again apparent here.

The textbook is in full colour throughout and is visually very appealing. It is supported by a wide range of other materials - workbooks for both reinforcement and extension, teacher’s book, copymasters, CDs/cassettes, an OHT file and flashcards; regrettably these materials were not available for review, but if they are written to the standard of the support materials for the original Klasse! course, then they will be an important element of the whole package. Klasse! Neu 1 offers full coverage of the MFL

Framework, and for those of you who like to keep your jargon menu up-to-date, we are promised that each double-page spread offers both 'starters' and 'plenaries'.

Klasse! Neu 1 leans heavily on its predecessor in terms of language content, grammatical progression and page layout - indeed, some of the pages seem almost identical to the original Klasse! 1. Like the Urtext, this latest version is based around the lives of a group of young people living in a German town, this time the town of Hollfeld. The emphasis from the start of the course is on communication in the classroom through the medium of German, and before the first unit even begins, pupils are exposed to the language of classroom survival. The four skills are practised extensively in each unit, although there is perhaps less reading comprehension practice at times. This is compensated for by regular Lese-Spaß pages, in which the texts get gradually longer and more demanding.

Klasse! Neu 1 consists of nine units, which a more able group should be able to get through in a year. A more mixed group may well not manage to get to the end of this first book, but if German is taught from Year 8 it should be possible to cover the three books of this course by

the end of Year 11. For those who start German in Year 9, it would be something of a challenge for a teacher to cover all this material in depth in one year. Each unit has grammatical explanations placed in boxes, and new grammatical forms are introduced gradually. With a group of more able pupils, the teacher would want to provide rather fuller explanations. There is a very useful Grammatik section at the end of the book which draws the grammatical framework together; the authors also provide lots of good exercises and answers (on separate pages). The Perfect Tense is not introduced until unit 9 (which is the last unit in the book), and its position seems a little odd to me - assuming that the book is covered in one year, why leave such an important grammatical topic until the very end of the year?

In common with the original Klasse! series, this book also contains a useful Wiederholung double-page spread after each three chapters, and reinforcement and extension activities for each unit at the back of the book. Bilingual glossaries round off the book; each unit also contains a list of key vocabulary and a checklist of what has been covered in the unit, both of which should help

pupils revise effectively for tests.

In summary, this is an updated version of the original Klasse! 1 book, with some new features but also quite a lot that is similar. If teachers are already using the original version, they will probably be very happy with what they have got. For those who are looking to buy a new German course, Klasse! Neu 1 would be an excellent choice.

Gary Woods  
Bradford Grammar School

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## Bus to Beijing Tintisha Technologies

([www.tintisha.co.uk](http://www.tintisha.co.uk))

Bus to Beijing is a new CD-ROM resource that gives new learners of Mandarin a comprehensive insight into the history, culture and language of China. The CD itself is very easy to install and use and the software has been very thoughtfully compiled. There is a dual emphasis on language and culture, presumably in order to cater for a range of learner abilities, and I particularly liked the variety of high quality photographic resources that illustrate key aspects of Chinese culture. The whole programme is laid out in such a way which is very

appealing to a learner of a new language: each skill is given its own section with exercises to complete and examples to hear. At all stages, pinyin is used alongside the Chinese characters, which might upset the purists teaching higher ability learners, but this is balanced out by attractive animations showing how the characters should be written. Bus to Beijing is a programme that I will definitely use to supplement lessons in the early stages of teaching Mandarin for its cultural input and its range of exercises on each skill at the basic level. It would however be very useful to have this kind of programme for teaching the further stages of Mandarin, to cater for the GCSE pupil who is aiming for top grades.

Tanja Rees  
Whitgift School

### 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 Nathalie Fayaud, Reviews Editor or Thomas Underwood, Newsletter Editor.

## C'est à moi 2

Janet Lloyd & Teresa Huntley &  
Nathalie Lawrence  
LCP, 2003

ISBN: 1 904178 05 7

C'est à moi 2 is a spiral-bound book consisting of 44 fully photocopiable worksheets aimed at pupils in their second year of learning French, usually in Year 8. The worksheets are ideal to be set as homework, or to be used as fillers at the ends of lessons. At the back of the book there are Teacher's notes, full answers to each worksheet and suggestions for extension activities for more able pupils. A separate insert cross-references each worksheet to National Curriculum Levels (generally speaking, Level 3 or Level 4) and to the MFL Framework Objectives for Key Stage 3.

This resource is of the high quality that one has come to expect from LCP publications. The worksheets are well laid-out and very clear, the vast majority of them have some illustration to make them more visually attractive and the different activities on each worksheet are clearly numbered. The majority of the worksheets aim to consolidate and practise vocabulary, and many of the topics that the worksheets cover will be familiar to teachers of French in Year 8, whatever main textbook they are using with their class; the worksheets cover countries and nationalities, numbers, weather phrases, household chores, shops and directions, means of transport, clothes and school uniform and restaurant and café language, to

name but a few topics. Some of these worksheets could be used with a more able group in Year 7 as a revision of language recently taught. Occasionally, a worksheet deals with more complicated lexical items, such as the environment or formal and informal language used in letters and on the telephone, and these worksheets might be more suitable for Year 9. In general, however, the vocabulary content of the worksheets seems about right for Year 8. The format of the worksheets tends to follow a pattern, with the first activity practising the vocabulary and a subsequent exercise asking pupils to write sentences in a guided way. Pupils are therefore exposed to more straightforward exercises before more open-ended ones.

Some of the worksheets are concerned more explicitly with grammatical forms, particularly dealing with those grammatical points often encountered in Year 8 - aller + infinitive, the partitive article, adjectival agreement, the perfect tense (both with avoir and être), quantities and negatives. These worksheets make a welcome change from the unremitting diet of vocabulary and would be particularly good as revision worksheets or as consolidation homeworks. Once again, pupils are guided from more structured to more open-ended activities.

This book of worksheets should prove its worth for many years to come in allowing teachers to set meaningful homeworks, deal with cover lesson emergencies and provide quick lesson fillers. There are just one or two occasions,

however, when the worksheets will date - one of them, for example, refers to both Tony Blair and David Beckham, and one must ask oneself how long these two men will remain household names... That notwithstanding, this worksheet pack ties in well with all the main Year 8 French courses and would find a welcome place in any modern languages department's book room.

**Gary Woods**

Bradford Grammar School

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## Baccalauréat

*<http://www.ilanguages.eu/ifrench/>*  
iFrench

Baccalauréat is a new web resource with some excellent interactive exercises for AS and A2 French. German and Spanish versions are promised in the near future. At an annual subscription of £195, it is a little more expensive than some of the cheerful KS3/4 websites so beloved of MFL teachers, but it is extremely professionally done, and pupils can use the material outside the classroom to help with the independent learning that is so vital in raising standards between GCSE and A Level. There is a slight note of caution: broadband is a requirement in order to access the video excerpts at home.

What first struck me about Baccalauréat was the love and attention to detail that have

been lavished on the product. Resources are grouped into four sections: Vidéos; Infographies; Lectures; and Interactifs. All the resources are, in fact, interactive and organised very helpfully according to A Level topic areas to assist teachers in their planning. Practising teachers have clearly been consulted in the development of Baccalauréat as the video passages are a suitable length (not too long) and difficulty, and are accompanied by accessible interactive exercises. The Infographies are based on graphs and diagrams such as are found regularly in textbooks but which you don't ever really know how to exploit! Baccalauréat, however, typically offers multiple choice comprehension exercises so that pupils can gain experience of this sort of text. The Lectures tab contains traditional reading passages in pdf format with ready made comprehension questions to go over in class, whereas the Interactifs section invites readers to click on various parts of pictures and maps to discover interesting cultural information. In many respects, this is the most attractive part, and I have found that my pupils have appreciated the opportunity to follow their independent interests, having been grabbed by the professionalism of the presentation.



Baccalauréat is without doubt the best Sixth Form ICT resource I have yet come across and worth every penny in my book. I rather regret only having come across it late in the school year - the new Lower Sixth will have to be exposed to it from day one!

Duncan Byrne  
Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School

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## Rigolo 1

Nelson Thornes

Rigolo is an attractive French software package with excellent visual and clear instructions in English. Rigolo is primarily aimed at Key stage 2 students and comes complete with a virtual French teacher. Flashcards and multimedia activities are easy to use and will certainly appeal to the early learner. The package is also rich in videos showing pupils and teachers in real classroom situation. However, I wonder it would have been wiser to show a real French classroom as I do not know how the kids in uniform will appeal to progressive school children. The software is easy to use and will certainly appeal to primary schools where foreign language teachers might need a little bit of guidance or as a back-up to bilingual teaching. Worksheets

provide with reading and writing activities as well as suggestions for extension work. An interactive glossary and ready to print certificates are interesting add-ons.

Patrick LeBerre  
King Alfred School

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## Mastering Arabic

Jane Wightwick and Mahmoud Gaafar

Palgrave Macmillan, 2007

ISBN: 140394685X

Inspection copies are available by contacting Palgrave Lecturer Services on (+44) 1256 302794 (email: [lecturerservices@palgrave.com](mailto:lecturerservices@palgrave.com))

2007 is shaping up to be a great year for Arabic teachers. There is a growing awareness of the merits of introducing Arabic at school level, and many schools have done so successfully. But two things have been holding it back: the lack of suitable resources and the difficulty of the GCSE and A-level. This year has seen a stream of arrivals on the textbook scene which will go a long way to addressing the first of these issues.

The new edition of Mastering Arabic is particularly exciting. The first edition has long been an oasis in a dry landscape. The quirky cartoons, the straightforward explanations and the clear layout have been very good reasons for teachers

to go back to it continually as their textbook of choice. The authors, Jane Wightwick and Mahmoud Gaafar, have dedicated themselves for several years to producing learning materials that make Arabic accessible and fun.

The best features of the original remain in the new edition. The alphabet is introduced gradually, four or five letters at a time. The student is made aware of printed and handwritten styles. The vocabulary is divided clearly into topic areas. The grammar is presented systematically but in light doses. The exercises are well thought-out and genuinely help the student move forward rather than being there for their own sake. The content is supported by a series of lively illustrations that enhance the learning process.

There are also some important additions. While the first edition focused on reading and writing, there is now a greater balance between the four skills, with new conversation sections and expanded listening exercises. The grammar index will be a useful tool for students. The content has been streamlined so that the trickier grammar points, some of which were originally introduced early on, are now kept for the later chapters.

The main shortcoming is the book's boxy A5 format. As a teacher, I would have appreciated the wider, flatter, more classroom-friendly style of textbooks like Tricolore or Sueños. The book is difficult to keep open on a desk and, despite the attractive layout, the content of each page feels rather cramped. The conventional textbook format would also provide more breathing space for the material: there could be longer texts to develop reading skills (the present format allows space for only a paragraph, even in the later chapters); each chapter could contain more vocabulary from previous ones to give the student a smoother sense of progression; and there would be more room to expand upon each topic area.

All in all, this new edition has confirmed Mastering Arabic's status as the most suitable book for beginners. It is ideal for anyone who wants to offer an enjoyable course that will take their students from zero to lower intermediate level.

Haroon Shirwani is Head of Arabic at Eton College. The UK edition of his Build Your Arabic Vocabulary, for students at intermediate/GCSE level, will be available from May.

## Language Factory

www.language-factory.co.uk

The Language Factory offers resource CD-ROMS for French, German and Spanish. I am reviewing its Demo CD that contains a few samples so can only speak about the quality and style of its resources, rather than about its breadth.

The resources offered by the Language Factory can be categorised as audio-visual. Firstly, there are songs and raps for the musically-minded among us and flashcards and pictorial worksheets. The pictorial resources are extremely attractive and very useful as starters and plenaries. The resources CD only costs £40 per language and this could save you a lot of time finding your own pictures on the Internet and putting them into presentable format. The songs are simple and distinctly more 'hip' (or is it 'hipper?') than traditional collections such as 'un kilo de chansons'. Of course, whether you would use them depends on how much you worry about making a fool of yourself in front of a KS3 class.

There is also a book, which I have not had to review, but I can certainly conclude that the Language Factory material has the potential to be useful. There's certainly not anything earth-shattering but is attractive and wouldn't look (or

sound) out of place in a well-equipped IWB multi-media classroom.

Duncan Byrne

Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School

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## 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  
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