

Chairman's Report

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

I would like to begin with a thank you to all those colleagues who contributed to the Language Trends survey carried out jointly by ALL, CILT and ISMLA during the autumn. 200 replies came from the independent sector, and the national press used the publication of the survey to run another series of 'doom-and-gloom' articles on the state of Keystage 4 language learning. Pleasingly, however, independent schools were reported in most newspapers to be bucking the negative trends - a message we are clearly keen to propagate. This annual collaboration with ALL and CILT is vital to raising the profile of ISMLA as it enables us to use the influence and size of our collaborators to contribute to policy debates on language learning at the highest levels. An example of this was recently seen in an invitation to QCA for a dozen ISMLA members to contribute to the current Modern Languages A Level review. ISMLA's examinations officer, Dr Geoffrey Plow, has written a full report of this consultation for the newsletter.

I am sorry to say that Paul Ellis of Felsted School has left the ISMLA committee this December as he takes up a post

with the International Baccalaureate Organisation in Geneva. He has made a substantial impact during his short time on the committee, representing the association at several meetings and conferences, and he has been instrumental in preparing our Annual Conference at Oakham School on 4th February. We wish him the very best with his new post that will involve him travelling throughout Europe, Africa, Asia and the Middle East to both existing and prospective IB schools, and are confident that ISMLA will continue to work with Paul in his new role. I am delighted that Julia Whyte of St Francis' College, Letchworth has agreed to replace Paul as the representative for the East. We are, however, still lacking a Midlands representative and I would be most interested to hear from any colleague willing to serve on the committee, particularly in this year when the conference is taking place in a Midlands' school. Finally on committee matters, I am very grateful to Thomas Underwood, our Newsletter Editor, for the time he has spent updating the ISMLA website www.ismla.co.uk. Recent visitors may have noticed that it has a much more professional appearance due to Tom's input, and we hope that you will visit it occasionally to keep yourselves updated with ISMLA's activities.

If you have not already returned the application form for the annual conference at Oakham School, Rutland, on Saturday 4th February 2006, I would urge you to get in contact with me (using the details in this newsletter), as, at the time of writing, there is plenty of space left for delegates. We are fortunate to have Dr Terry Lamb, of Sheffield University (and past-President of ALL), as our keynote speaker. He is an extremely prolific writer on a broad range of educational interests, such as learner autonomy, differentiation and motivation, and we are lucky to have a speaker of his experience and expertise. The increased interest in the International Baccalaureate among member schools is reflected in the contribution of Tony Evans, Headmaster of King's College School, Wimbledon, who will be speaking on internationalism. KCS was one of the first schools to adopt the IB, and, as a linguist, Mr Evans is well placed to speak of its merits. Dr Helen Wright, Headmistress of St Mary's School, Calne, is the second of ISMLA's patrons to speak at this year's conference. Last year, she published a CILT Advanced Pathfinder entitled Learning through Listening and Dr Wright will be talking about listening skills, particularly at A Level. Details of the full programme can be found on our website

www.ismla.co.uk, as well as in this newsletter.

Finally, I have written previously about the Young Linguist Award, which ISMLA is helping to organise this year. The award is the brainchild of Stephen Barber, of Nottingham High School, and aims to find the best linguist in French, German and Spanish at both year 10 and year 12 levels. It is a competition that aims to test pure language ability and which therefore requires no specialist preparation. Precise entry details and rules will be circulated to members in the New Year, but I can confirm now that the award will be sat at a number of regional centres towards the end of June. Participating schools pay an entry fee, which is recycled as a cash prize to the winners. Following a pilot scheme within the Warwick group of schools last year, we anticipate that the competition will be fierce and the prestige for the eventual winners considerable. I very much hope that you will wish to select your most able linguists to take part in the Young Linguist Award this summer.

I would like to conclude by wishing you a very Happy New Year and I hope to see many colleagues at Oakham School on 4th February.

Languages Trends Survey 2005

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

ISMLA was again invited to collaborate with CILT and ALL in its annual survey on the state of languages teaching. The results of the survey were widely reported in the press during the first week of November and I joined Teresa Tinsley of CILT and Linda Parker of ALL in presenting the survey's findings at the Language Show in Olympia on Saturday 5th November.

The survey's focus was the proportion of schools that have retained MFL as a compulsory subject in Keystage 4. Surprisingly, the 199 replies from the independent sector revealed that only 75% of our schools insist on a compulsory language until the age of 16. However, the comments made by those schools that had made languages optional showed that the reasons for the decision were very different from those afflicting the maintained sector. The vast majority of independent schools that did not insist on a language in Keystage 4 allowed either pupils with severe SEN or with English as a foreign language to concentrate on a smaller core of subjects.

The bare statistics of the Language Trends survey are interesting, inasmuch as they continually point to the newfound status of languages as an 'elite' subject. Grammar schools and independent schools have largely retained a compulsory language (the figure for grammar schools was 85%, compared to a national average of 38%) while schools under DfES 'special measures' seem to have dispensed with virtually all MFL teaching. Regional differences also clearly followed other socio-economic trends with comprehensives in the South-East twice as likely to insist on a language than those in the North-West or North-East. However, I found the teachers' comments that could not make the final survey report most illuminating. Although the maintained sector's criticism is that it is more difficult to achieve a comparable grade in a GCSE language to one's other subjects, several teachers in independent schools expressed their concerns about language take-up in the Sixth Form. Languages are still seen as more challenging than other subjects in many independent schools, and the struggle to make AS and A2 level more accessible to middle-of-the-road students without eroding standards is one of which ISMLA is acutely aware.

The final aspect of the Language Trends survey that I would like to bring to your attention concerned the variety of languages being offered in our schools. It is quite clear that the hegemony of French is being broken, with Spanish numbers increasing dramatically. However, less popular languages such as Italian and Russian seem to be making a comeback, with more and more schools looking to introduce Japanese, Mandarin or Arabic. Indeed, teachers' comments suggested that only the shortage of suitably qualified teachers was preventing these languages from gaining a firmer hold on the school languages curriculum.

If you would like to read the report in more detail, it can be obtained from
http://www.cilt.org.uk/key/lang_uagetrends/2005/ks4.htm.

Core skills in ICT

Monday 13 March 2006 to
Wednesday 24 May 2006

10.00-16.00, CILT, London
£350 or £325 for members
of the CILT Direct scheme

(<http://www.cilt.org.uk>)

The revised Common Entrance Modern Languages Syllabus: can we find the right balance?

Peter Such
Sherborne School

The topic of Common Entrance is a curious one: a turn-off for many, a matter verging on life and death for others, and undeniably critical to the academic development of many of the children who pass through schools in the independent sector. As MFL Coordinator for the Independent Schools Examinations Board, I have been for some years now at the centre of a debate which has been conducted with varying degrees of intensity with regard to the nature of its modern languages examinations at 13+. As the syllabus is reviewed, I once again find myself writing an article which seeks to explain the decisions that have been taken. I am all too well aware that there will be a range of responses, from sources whose points of view are ultimately impossible to reconcile, but I very much hope that we have managed to strike a balance which will be acceptable to most and which will be in the best possible interests of those that we teach.

There have been sharply divided opinions on the papers that have been set since the introduction of the current syllabus. Many, particularly in the prep schools, have been in favour of most or all of their features and have agreed that we were very much on the right lines. Others have been less happy and have been especially concerned at the division of the examination into two levels; it has been argued repeatedly that this renders very difficult comparison between candidates, particularly in the light of the great difference in standard between the early parts of Paper I and the final two sections of Paper II. I must emphasise that these comments refer specifically to the French examination and not to those in German or Spanish, where there have been very few complaints of any kind.

This, then, is the moment at which to come clean and stress that it would be completely wrong to confuse the principles behind the papers with the way in which they have been set. Some of the early papers were simply not as we had wanted them to be. A staggering turnover of chief setters for the French examination at the rate of over one per year did not help and it is only over the past two years that we have been turning out French papers with which we are really satisfied. Given the long lead time for the production

of papers, this means that you can expect to see more balanced and better targeted papers appearing over the year ahead.

The principles, however, do need to be examined. Discussion has centred on two key questions: should all candidates take the same paper? And should all learn and be examined in past tenses? The two-paper structure has been a recognition of the immense range in the circumstances and abilities of candidates taking Common Entrance. Many have spent up to five years studying a modern foreign language - almost always French - with up to five periods per week and sometimes in an environment which was academically very stimulating. Others have studied the language for much less time, have entered the system late or have serious difficulties in coping with a foreign language. Consultation meetings have repeatedly reflected big differences between the situations in different schools and in different areas of the country. The Common Entrance Examination, as we are all well aware, has to do a large and very varied job, playing a very important role in determining what is taught and how in prep schools. By the differentiation built into the examination's structure, we have sought to help children of all abilities to show what they can

do and, we hope, to react positively to the challenge of studying modern foreign languages.

Nevertheless, the critics of the two-paper system have argued cogently that it reduces significantly the effectiveness of the examination as an aid for setting pupils in the senior schools. There has also been considerable confusion over what proportion of children should be expected to offer the much more demanding Paper II, and in addition prep schools have been anxious about how grades are awarded. Will, for example, Paper I candidates be limited to a maximum of a B grade? Moreover, Paper I candidates are at present not required to know past tenses, and, if these make up the bulk of the entry, there are inevitable consequences for teaching in the senior schools. Essentially, then, the concerns are that, while the final sections of the Listening and Reading components of the French papers can be unduly difficult, taken as a whole the examination has not done sufficient to enable senior schools to judge the relative abilities of their candidates.

That said, in the questionnaire sent out earlier this year to all users of the examination, both prep and senior schools, the number who expressed such concerns was very small. The

prep schools seem to have greatly appreciated an examination which has allowed them to target their teaching accurately and which their candidates have been able, on the whole, to approach with some confidence. The setting team understands that there are areas that must be improved and there does seem to be an overwhelming argument for a sensitively set single paper which places all candidates on the same scale. However, we believe that important improvements are already taking place in the sets of papers now in preparation and we do not consider that there is justification for a wholesale revision of the syllabus or the examination. We feel that, for the most part, the present examination is a good one and that some crucial adjustments in structure and level will remove most of the areas of concern.

From 2007-8, then, there will be a single examination for all candidates. The Listening and Reading components will usually consist of five or six sections (the number of questions in each will be variable) and the later sections will contain past tenses, although these will not be targeted in the questions. One section will require short answers in the target language and one will require answers in English. The middle sections will be toughened slightly (indeed, this is

already happening) so that there will not be an undue number of "easy marks". In the Speaking component the marks allocated to the role play will be increased (although the number of items that it contains will in fact be reduced), with a mark included for quality of language. A few additional cultural topics have been suggested as the basis of the first of the two conversations, with the aim of adding variety and rather more interest for all concerned to this part of the examination. In the Writing element we shall remove the first section, which is essentially a vocabulary test, and there will be adjustments to the mark scheme to ensure that there is suitable reward for candidates who can display a good range of knowledge and apply it accurately. In the letter, the bullet points will be rather more specific, in order to reduce the opportunities to include material learned by rote.

The use of a range of tenses will not be demanded by the syllabus. It is clear that in this respect there are marked differences of opinion among senior schools about what should be required. Many, it would seem, adhere to the principle that what is important is not the amount that is covered but how thoroughly. So we have decided to leave the question of tenses open, but to urge schools to consult and

discuss. Of course this is a complicated matter for prep schools with candidates for a range of schools in a single class, but I hope that I am not being too naïve in suggesting that it should be possible for them to find out what the requirements of the senior schools are and to tailor the approach to tenses accordingly. We have agonised over this and we think that our approach is the one that is in the best interests of the candidates. In order to help with the provision of information about senior schools' policies in this matter, ISEB proposes to send out a questionnaire in the next few months.

The examination continues to place equal importance on French, German and Spanish, with the standard required in each of these remaining roughly equivalent. From 2008, papers for the Common Academic Scholarship Examination will be set in French, German and Spanish. It should be pointed out that the number of candidates in Spanish has increased rapidly in the past few years and that the indications are that this trend will continue in the foreseeable future. In a few prep schools this language is offered specifically to the less able, but in some it is taught across the ability range, either as a second modern foreign language or - in a small

but growing number of cases - as the first.

We felt that the issues most likely to prove contentious in the new package were those of the single paper and of knowledge of tenses, and we awaited with some apprehension the consultation meetings which took place in late November. These were attended by about 150 prep school representatives and a much smaller number of colleagues from senior schools, who were most supportive in their response. The outcome of the day was highly encouraging, with very few serious concerns expressed and a general agreement that the flexible approach fundamental to the syllabus can to be made to work to the benefit of all. It was clear to all that for senior schools, as for prep schools, the situation is a complex one, with many schools receiving candidates from a broad spread of feeders. Effective communication and mutual understanding are vital. A great deal is, of course, done already to inform and to promote discussion and our training meetings with those who prepare candidates for CE have made it clear that an appropriate blend of guidance and consultation is greatly appreciated.

What matters most of all now, of course, is that we set the papers well. This is a question of

pitching the level appropriately and of producing a suitable mix of the accessible and the demanding. That is the challenge that the setters now have to face and we are well aware how important it is that we get it right. Specimen papers should be in schools by summer 2006 and we would welcome your comments. We think that we have listened to the concerns expressed by our colleagues and responded as fairly as possible. We very much hope that you will agree.

SPANISH DAY

Association for Language Learning,
in association with Canning House

Saturday 25 February 2006, Canning
House London

An INSET training day for teachers of
Spanish on Implementing the
National Languages Strategy -
implications for the teaching of
Spanish

To obtain further details please
contact Sheila James at
SheilaJ@ALL-languages.org.uk
telephone 01788 546443 fax 01788
544149 or visit ALL's website at
www.ALL-languages.org.uk click on
events

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:

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University College School
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London NW3 6XH

[020 7433 2302]

Exams News

Geoffrey Plow

ISMLA Awarding Bodies Liaison Officer

There were times in 2005 when it seemed that progress on exam board and general assessment issues was destined to be very slow indeed. By December, however, there had been some encouraging moves. The first of these had to do with the new rôle ISMLA was able to play, thanks to QCA's invitation, in discussions about revision of the national A level criteria in readiness for a further reform of the exam in 2008.

A level reform

Members of the ISMLA committee, plus co-optees, were invited to attend a meeting at QCA, Piccadilly on 11 October 2005, where comments were sought as to the suitability of the current Modern Languages A level. One major focus was on an odd imbalance between the AS and the A2 syllabuses: it seemed that, in the oral exam at AS, there was currently more scope for the discussion of culture than at A2. This gave rise to a wider discussion of the place of the oral exam and coursework. Whatever the constraints upon assessment time, those present felt it essential to retain an

examination of speaking at each of AS and A2.

Geoffrey Plow then represented ISMLA at a national meeting hosted by QCA at Warwick University on 5 and 6 December 2005. It involved groups of examining board officials and other subject community representatives. Its aim was to discuss and ultimately revise the subject criteria in all A level areas, ready for the 2008 A level reform.

The focus of the discussion was now on the need to reduce the number of units on offer at AS and A2. Each subject area was encouraged to examine the feasibility of reducing the assessment load across the two years from six units to four. This, and a concern as to the validity of coursework as an assessment tool, led to considerable discussion. As we write (December 2005), QCA is preparing to consult professional associations - including ISMLA - over the exact complexion of the changes. One of the major questions in this consultation will be whether MFL A levels should have two units at A2 or three.

Here, we are faced by conflicting imperatives. Language teachers in independent schools will instinctively feel that the spread of examinable elements we currently teach towards ought to

stay: there ought to be a cultural component; there ought to be an oral; there ought to be a spread of listening; there ought to be writing. The pull of the opposing tendency, however - that says that young people do not take modern language A levels precisely because there is so much for them to cover by comparison with other subjects - is convincing too.

Some ingenuity is needed. Drop coursework, but retain a 'research-based essay' under controlled conditions, with texts (it already happens in Edexcel Chinese)? Put Listening and Speaking in the same assessment module? Watch out for the consultation exercise. It takes place from the beginning of February 2006 and runs until around the end of March. The criteria for the 2008 revision of A level will then be decided by the end of April. There will be on-line consultation open to anyone who wishes to respond, or the response form can be downloaded and sent as hard copy (www.qca.org.uk).

Teacher representation on exam board committees

Readers of the Independent may remember the correspondence in March 2005 between Geoffrey Plow and the OCR Chief Executive Greg Watson over teacher

representation on subject committees. Geoffrey has now been invited to attend the twice-yearly OCR Regional Consultative Committee in the South-East of England. Admittedly, the committee is not subject-specific, but Geoffrey will be happy to receive any comments from ISMLA member schools for further transmission. Incidentally, how many ISMLA members are involved on such OCR committees elsewhere in the country?

The whole question of teacher representation is a matter of real concern, since it seems iniquitous that some boards should pay less attention to the matter than others. We have asked for the comments from the Independent letter to Greg Watson to be passed on to the Education Secretary Ruth Kelly, and this has been done by Alistair Burt, MP for North East Bedfordshire.

GCSE

A reminder that we'd like to keep a long-term eye on possible discrepancies between grades at GCSE in MFL by comparison with other subject areas. There was a concern from some member schools in Summer 2005 that French seemed to be assessed more harshly and that criterion-referencing might be creeping in (which would affect the top end of the candidature more than

most). We do need to have some hard evidence of year-on-year trends before a meaningful set of comments can be made to OCA and the boards. So keep in touch.

Anything else

If you do have any comments, complaints, bouquets or brickbats in relation to other exam-board issues, do pass them on to Geoffrey Plow. Please indicate whether you have taken the matter up with the board first (usually the best way, to start with); and attach a copy of any documentation. That way, we stand a better chance of spotting trends rather than inflating an isolated problem.



**Aiming for success in KS3
Japanese using the BBC Tobu
resources**

Tuesday 28 February 2006

10.00-16.00

The Japan Foundation London
Language Centre (JFLLC)
London

Free of charge

ISMLA National Conference

Saturday 4th February 2006 - Oakham School

Programme

- 9:30 Registration and coffee. Exhibition opens
- 10:15 Welcome by Dr Joe Spence, Headmaster of Oakham School
- 10:30 Dr Terry Lamb, Past President of ALL and Lecturer in Education (MFL) at Sheffield University
- 11:30 Coffee served in the exhibition area
- 12:00 *Choice of sessions*

Tony Evans, Headmaster of King's College School, Wimbledon

Internationalism

Or

Dr Helen Wright, Headmistress of St. Mary's School, Calne

Listening skills

13:00 Lunch followed by coffee in the exhibition area

14:00 AGM

14:30 Language specific sessions: *precise details will be confirmed in the finalised programme sent out with conference joining instructions.*

French and German sessions to be confirmed

Spain and Africa: Neighbours, no?

Dr Rosemary Clark, Downing College, Cambridge

15:30 Dr Peter Such

Sherborne School, ISEB Modern Languages Team Coordinator

Common Entrance issues

or

John Ridge, Ampleforth College

Head of Department responsibilities and Health and Safety

16:15 Tea and departure

Further details can be found at www.ismla.co.uk

Spanish Liverpool Group Meeting (2005) at Cheadle Hulme School

John Wilson

Cheadle Hulme School

On June 10th a group of ten Spanish teachers from all around the North West area converged on Cheadle Hulme School for the annual Liverpool Group Meeting. In attendance were Jayne Ledsham, King's School; Peter Bull, William Hulme School; Sharon Alonso, Rossall School; Michelle Bailey-Barnes, King William College; Jo Wallwork, St Bede's College; Paul Walton, Birkenhead School, Geoff Smoult, St Mary's College; Michael Lomas, Hulme Boys' Grammar School; Silvia Reyero-Cascallana; and Michael Simpson, Manchester Grammar School.

The event was hosted by Françoise Lucas and John Wilson of Cheadle Hulme School. The increased attendance, in comparison to previous years, was no doubt in response to the high quality of the guest speakers.

Kevin Dunne of Ampleforth College spoke positively about writing. He provided useful tips on successfully making the jump from the "first-person" nature of GCSE writing to the much more

demanding requirements of writing during AS and A2. Kevin showed how various media including video can be of great use to students when they are seeking factual material relating to the target language cultures.

Christine Morton of King's School, Macclesfield gave several examples of adaptable speaking activities, applicable to all levels. Christine views her background in EFL as a great source of inspiration and believes that MFL teachers can learn a great deal from adapting activities which have proved successful and motivating in EFL.

Ruth Becerra of Ampleforth College gave a hugely insightful talk into the role of the language assistant. Her talk reminded many of those present of the many benefits of having a good language assistant. Ruth also underlined the importance of a school enabling the assistant to break from the periphery of the school community.

Ruth's presentation after lunch sparked a healthy discussion about how best to obtain a language assistant. Whilst many colleagues were extremely content with most of the assistants they had employed through the British Council, the general consensus was that an ability to obtain an assistant through "word-of-mouth",

perhaps through the previous assistant, is favourable.

The discussion developed to include strategies for teaching the subjunctive, the benefits of I.B. and then moved on to what we must do to promote languages in order to buck the national trend of a decline in uptake. It was agreed that in Spanish the situation was not as gloomy as in other languages. We have an undoubtedly attractive product. We should continue to push for support from our SMTs and make them, and the rest of the school, aware of what it is we do and just how diverse the AS and A2 curricula is. Our principal contribution would have to be a constant reanalysis of the content of our own teaching to make sure that lessons continued to motivate and develop students of all abilities. It was noted that another aim should be to embrace and use effectively the media technology which students now, more than ever before, expect to form a large part of their learning.

The day was a success. I know that such group meetings continue throughout the UK, however, I wish to emphasise their importance in the academic year. The advantage of meeting and empathising with colleagues from other institutions is enormous. Fruitful exchanges occurred throughout the day,

both anecdotally over coffee and lunch; and interactively during the excellent talks and subsequent discussion. I thank all of those involved.

**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
Summer Edition of
the Newsletter
should be with the
editor by
Wednesday 12th
April 2006.**

Reviews

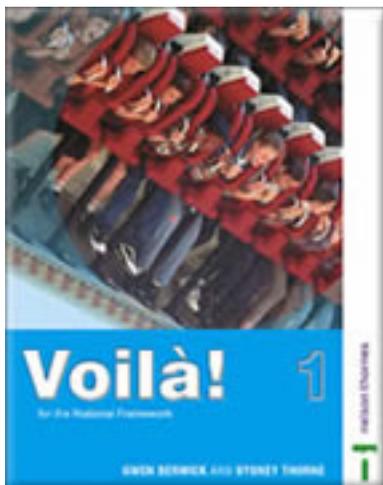
Voilà! 1

Gwen Berwick

Sydney Thorne

Nelson Thornes

Student's Book 10 7487 7847 0



Voil ! is Nelson Thornes' new Keystage 3 French course for the KS3 Framework, and will eventually be extended up to GCSE. It comes with an impressive range of resources, including two differentiated workbooks, an ICT resource CD-ROM, assessment file, flashcards and OHTs. From book 2 onwards, there are two student books, Voil  clair being for lower ability learners.

Voil 's Framework credentials are immediately clear. The ICT resource, called 'Just Click', contains ready-made starter activities, and the content of book 1 has certainly been

refreshed since Nelson Thornes' last generation of French KS3 textbook. For example, opinion phrases are dealt with in chapter one, so that pupils at the earliest stages of language learning can start to express ideas that matter to them. After an initial reaction against the heavy use of photos in

the early chapters, which I felt gave the book too 'busy' a feel, I eventually was convinced by the truism that eleven-year olds are motivated by bright colours and found the format no more confusing than that of Voil 's principal competitors. However, when Voil  splits into two levels at book two, I found the higher textbook to be less colourful and therefore clearer. Publishers clearly believe that the less one has a natural affinity for language learning, the more one's attention needs to be retained by gaudy colours.

There is certainly more English in Voil  than in the previous generation of coursebooks, although it is used sensibly to explain grammar points and aspects of question answering

technique. I also liked the clarity of the sommaire that concludes each chapter. As someone who tries to supplement the coursebook with my own material, I was impressed by the variety of extra resources immediately available to me. Powerpoint presentations from the CD eliminate the need for flashcards and animations and video stories would help to create possibilities for open-ended oral work with high ability learners. The graded workbooks start with book 1 (even though there is only one textbook). What I particularly liked about these was that the exercises are mostly identical content-wise in workbooks A and B, although workbook B gives the learner much less support. This would allow different pupils within the same class to have a workbook suitable to their level of ability without the teacher having to explain two exercises, and without the pupils necessarily being aware that others were engaged in a slightly different exercise. The only box that Voilà fails to tick from my wish list is grammar exercises. Despite a clear section at the back of the student book explaining the key grammar points, there were no exercises to practise them. Admittedly, grammar exercises are relatively easy to make up, but I wonder why so few textbooks choose to help out the teacher by supplying them - it

would certainly make homework setting more straightforward!

I have already alluded to the 'Just Click' CD-ROM, which contains Powerpoint presentations, Word worksheets, animations and video stories based on the content of each chapter in the student's book. Although these are woven into the content of the textbook's chapters, the exercises could easily be used as an independent resource, as they are self-standing. Its cost is between £400 and £500, as you might expect from a whole-school resource, but it could certainly help to liven up a more old-fashioned textbook, such as its Nelson Thornes stablemate, *Encore Tricolore Nouvelle Edition*, so beloved by the independent sector.

In conclusion, I was impressed by the thought and investment that have gone into Voilà! The writers have thought carefully about how to produce a course for mixed-ability learning, and have gone the extra mile to assist teachers in the preparation of varied, exciting lessons. Inevitably, we have to pay for the extras, but I can imagine Voilà! being of use to all but the most able linguists.

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

Voilà! 2

Gwen Berwick
Sydney Thorne
Nelson Thornes

Student's Book 2 0 7487 9094 1

Voilà 2 is the second book in a new series by NT. There are two levels to the course, *Voilà* and *Voilà clair*, which is specifically written for lower ability pupils, within the National Curriculum levels 1-4. The 'student' books are backed up by a range of other resources, including the teacher's book, audio CD, resource file and ICT CD-Rom. The pre-publication publicity is directed at motivating pupils to carry on with French and includes the slogan "Don't let them drop French!"

The student's book is divided into twelve chapters, followed by an '*à ton tour*' section, dedicated to independent study, a clear grammar section and a colour-coded French to English glossary. The table of contents manifests a wide range of topics, with associated grammar coupled with learning objectives.

Each chapter is split into four subtopics, each with their own grammatical and vocabulary objectives. These are then succeeded by a manageable chunk of vocabulary and a summary page. The 'recycling' function allows students to revise

work hitherto covered in book 1 and I like the way that some of these begin with an 'open-ended' question, prompting perhaps a class discussion.

There are (possibly too) many tasks available on each page and although the language does get progressively more difficult, the length of reading text rarely changes. The activities are mostly brief (aside from a few listening exercises) and there are not as many extending writing tasks (although these are catered for in the resource file). On a personal level I would have also liked to have witnessed a greater range of vocabulary and perhaps the introduction of constructions such as *après avoir* and *avant de*. The later chapters do however cater for greater independent use of the language, demanding for example responses to advertisements, magazine articles and a description of a football match. The revision sections also encourage independent study and / or homework exercises. These are once again varied and clearly laid out.

The resource file is a very valuable accompaniment to the *Voilà* course and indeed as a stand-alone resource. The book is divided up into the twelve chapters of *Voilà 2*, followed by a series of 'tests' in each of the four skill areas. There is again a

distinct difference in levels between '*clair*' and the normal standard. Each chapter has separate sections with listening, speaking, reading and writing exercises and in addition there is a useful summary of expected levels of vocabulary and grammar. The exercises contained within are wide-ranging and interesting. There is also greater depth to the reading activities.

On the whole this is a very well organised set of text books, with a variety of short tasks, leading to more extensive activities in the last few chapters. I believe it would serve its purpose well for any teacher wanting a teacher / text book-led French class. I do however have issues with the blurb on the back of the course book and in the prepublication material. How will 12 or 13 year old pupils react when greeted by a frumpy teenage girl and her equally uninspiring friend on page one?!

Thomas Underwood
University College School

**ALL Language World
conference and exhibition
2006**

Language World conference and
exhibition, 7-8 April 2006

University of Manchester
Theme: Working together

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Voilà! 1 ICT Resource

Terry Atkinson
Nelson Thornes

The *Voilà* ICT resource is a comprehensive and easy to use package that includes a wide range of multimedia resources to complement the teaching of French in the early years, particularly when also using the *Voilà* French course.

The user has the option to install the package on the whole school network or on a stand-alone PC. The CD is divided into two sections, one for teachers' use and the other for students. The teacher section comprises a lesson manager, resource finder, book page, planning documents, favourites and the ability to assign resources. These are clearly laid out and navigating from one area to another is a simple process. The book page option is very interesting and by selecting this option the user may access a complete summary of *Voilà 1* the course book, with the pages displayed digitally and a variety of tasks for each page. The teacher may also use this tool to add his or her own resources (in Word for example) to topics, building on the already considerable bank of ready-made activities and notes. Many of the teachers' notes, pupils' notes and lesson plans are in Word, which facilitates printing, document

editing etc. The greatest advantage of this resource to my mind is the capacity to customise and synchronise one's own materials into the package. This would inevitably involve a bit of work when first using the programme, but would ultimately prove an extremely useful tool for future years.

The format of the students' section is very similar, minus a few of the teachers' options. Again this section is very appealing to the eye and simple to navigate. It contains links to the resource file, book page and the glossary. The front page also contains a box where newly assigned resources appear, which makes it easy for the class teacher to dedicate further or specialised tasks to a certain class and for pupils to view any new additions.

A wide variety of activities and notes is available for pupils, for example supplementary documents with advice for creating vocabulary lists and PowerPoint displays. The tasks become progressively more difficult and are all linked to the work and pages covered in the text book. My particular favourites included: completing a '*sondage*', recording your own French for evaluation, the drag and drop vocabulary activities and the audio and video clips. The spoken French is extremely

clear and delivered at a reasonable pace.

This is certainly one of the better ICT resource packages that I have come across. It is colourful, easy to work through and contains a wealth of activities, without being fussy and overwhelming. Indeed the

CD would be a very useful tool for anyone teaching with Voilà. A tour of the package is available at: <http://www.nelsonthornes.com/mfljcwalkthrough>

Thomas Underwood
University College School



Na klar! 1

Spencer / Wesson

Nelson Thornes

ISBN 0 7487 7838 1

Billed as "The only coursebook to captivate all of your students and help keep German alive in your school" Na klar is an attractive and colourful new textbook which is easy to use and clearly laid out. The pupils have access to helpful vocabulary lists (ideal for homework learning), grammar boxes, writing frames and helpful hints linked to the KS3 Framework criterion.

The Noch Etwas section at the back of the book and the two-tiered workbooks provide ample opportunity for independent working and would be useful for setting cover. However the perennial complaint is of the limited scope of written exercises (an average of six questions per exercise) and the lack of meaty written tasks to stretch the more able.

The accompanying ICT resources may be on the expensive side but provide some good quality extension work as well as a mixture of whole-class Whiteboards/Projectors and individual PC work.

Stuart McIntosh

Whitgift School

¡Adelante! 3 verde and ¡Adelante! 3 azul

Kathryn Silvestre

Miriam Regan

LCP

This excellent new photocopiable resource from LCP, prepared by Miriam Regan and Kathryn Silvestre, is aimed at students in their third year of learning Spanish. In reality it can be used with pupils throughout the years at Key Stage 3. ¡Adelante!3 verde is pitched at a slightly lower level than ¡Adelante! 3 azul, but both are based on the same topics and use the same materials; they are differentiated by the exercises. The 40 topics covered range from '¡Qué personalidad!' to 'La historia de Che'. The exercises are clearly set out and attractive in their layout. There is a mixture of grammar, exploitation of language skills, vocabulary enhancing and comprehension exercises. Each worksheet is designed to last about 10 minutes, making them suitable for extension work, lesson fillers or homework. At the end of the workbook there are useful teachers' notes and the solutions to the exercises. At £35 this is an excellent purchase for any Spanish Department.

Ruth Greenhalgh

Sevenoaks School

Soccerlingua

Richard Weaver et al.
www.soccerlingua.net
ISBN 0 9551303 0 1

Soccerlingua is an EU-funded project to promote language learning through the theme of football. Nothing particularly new here, since those of us who teach boys have been shamelessly exploiting football in our teaching for years. However, this is an unusual, but attractive resource that is due to come on the market in the New Year, in time for the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

The first unusual facet of the book is that it caters for four languages (EFL, Spanish, Italian and German), with thirty pages dedicated to each on identical subject matter. The target language is used throughout, so that this resource can be used throughout the EU. The absence of French is peculiar, considering that it is, with English, one of the two working languages of the European Union, and this may limit the appeal of Soccerlingua in this country. The content comprises basic topics such as colours, personal life, body (and injuries) combined with a variety of grammatical structures, and the book is therefore an attractive 'treat' for pupils who have grown tired of the traditional ways in which to teach

these topics. It is certainly very imaginative. The Italian section deals with the topic of daily routine by following the iconic referee, Pierluigi Collina, around his pre-match routine and the perfect tense is revised in German by looking at the multi-cultural youth of England's Bayern Munich midfielder, Owen Hargreaves. When I met the Soccerlingua team at the Language Show at Olympia, exact marketing ploys had yet to be finalised, but there was the suggestion that the pages of the book might be available in CD-ROM format, which would allow a page to be integrated into a lesson via data projector or white board. I am concerned that, in its current four-language book format (yet without French), Soccerlingua may be too much of a luxury for schools and thus fail to engage with its intended audience.

The most exciting part of the project, however, is the interactive DVD quiz, which is entirely in the target language. Pupils have to answer multiple-choice questions involving video clips of past World Cup tournaments to progress beyond the group stages to Quarter-Final, Semi-Final and Final. I was immediately addicted to the quiz and can't wait for the opportunity to try it out with my classes. The DVD is not yet available but the website

www.soccerlingua.net will keep you up to date with developments. If your budget has a little left in it, and your teachers and pupils are as mad about football as I am, this will be an extremely motivating resource to be dipped into as appropriate.

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

**Getting publicity for your
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Eine Bundeskanzlerin* für Deutschland

Stefanie Schmiedel
Northwood College

Regulär wäre 2005 gar kein Wahljahr gewesen. Als jedoch mit Nordrhein-Westfalen im Mai das letzte Bundesland seine rot-rüne Regierung abwählte, gab Gerhard Schröder den Weg für vorgezogene Neuwahlen frei. Und diese Wahlen wurden zu den abenteuerlichsten seit 1945. Deutschland wird sich lange an sie erinnern, denn seit dem 22. November hat Deutschland zum ersten Mal eine Bundeskanzlerin. Sie ist zusätzlich die erste ostdeutsche Kanzlerfigur, die obendrein eine zweite Große Koalition der Bundesrepublik Deutschland leitet.

Nachdem die Unterstützung der SPD Regierung unter Gerhard Schröder in einer Meinungsumfrage im Juni 2005 bis auf 30 Prozent gesunken war, träumte die CDU/CSU bei Neuwahlen von der absoluten Mehrheit. Als das Wahlergebnis im September der CDU/CSU jedoch nur 35.2% und der SPD 34.2% zusicherte, war die Verzweiflung groß. Eine Große Koalition, wie es sie bereits Ende der sechziger Jahre gegeben hatte, wurde von beiden Parteien zunächst ausgeschlossen.

Jedoch neun Wochen nach der Wahl wurde dem neuen deutschen Kabinett der Bundesregierung unter der Führung der 51-jährigen Diplomphysikerin Angela Merkel (CDU) offiziell die Ernennungsurkunde überreicht. Die Minister der schwarz-roten Regierung wurden vom deutschen Bundespräsidenten Horst Köhler im Berliner Schloss Charlottenburg empfangen.

Das neue Bundeskabinett setzt sich aus 15 Ministern und Ministerinnen und der Bundeskanzlerin zusammen. Die zehn männlichen und sechs weiblichen PolitikerInnen bringen es auf einen Altersdurchschnitt von lediglich 54 Jahren. Die CDU hat fünf Ministerposten, während die CSU sich die beiden Posten für Wirtschaft und Landwirtschaft sichern konnte. Die SPD besitzt acht Ministerposten, darunter das leidgeprüfte Amt für „Arbeit und Soziales“, das der Vizekanzler Franz Müntefering leiten wird. Weder der CSU Führer Edmund Stoiber noch der ehemalige Kanzler Gerhard Schröder sind im Kabinett vertreten.

„Der Erfolg der Großen Koalition wird daran gemessen, ob es mehr Arbeitsplätze gibt“ sagt Angela Merkel als frischgebackene Bundeskanzlerin. Vor ihr liegt eine schwere Aufgabe, denn die Arbeitslosenquote lag im November 2005, bei Übernahme

des großen Amtes, bei 10.9% (Statistisches Bundesamt). Der Koalitionsvertrag zwischen CDU, CSU und SPD trägt den Titel „Gemeinsam für Deutschland – mit Mut und Menschlichkeit“. Die Deutschen hoffen, dass sich das neue Kabinett dies zu Herzen nehmen wird.

*Angela Merkel ist zwar Deutschlands erste Bundeskanzlerin, aber in Europa gibt es mit der irischen Staatspräsidentin Mary McAleese derzeit noch eine weitere Regierungschefin. Auch die Ukraine hat mit der Ministerpräsidentin Julija Tymoschenko eine weibliche Führungsperson.

Nützliche Internetadressen:

Zu Zahlen und Fakten
www.bundesregierung.de
www.bundestag.de/wahl2005/
das Statistische Bundesamt:
www.destatis.de/

Zur Bundeskanzlerin
<http://bundeskanzlerin.bundesregierung.de/>

www.angela-merkel.de/

Zur Großen Koalition
www.cdusu.de/
www.spd.de

Allo Drive : une initiative simple qui prend de la vitesse en toute sécurité

Cécile Léonard
Dresden International School

« Boire ou conduire, il faut choisir ! ». « Un verre, ça va ; trois verres, bonjour les dégâts ! » Ces slogans publicitaires résonnent encore dans nos têtes. Mais ont-ils véritablement eu les effets escomptés sur notre conscience et ce qui importe le plus, sur notre comportement ? Pas si sûr... Malheureusement, la France détient toujours de tristes records en ce qui concerne les accidents de la route, malgré les récents efforts du gouvernement en matière de prévention routière et de répression, notamment avec l'installation de nombreux radars supplémentaires à des points stratégiques. Les dernières statistiques de la Sécurité Routière nous informent que 4% des personnes contrôlées de façon routinière avaient pris le volant en état d'ivresse. En France, environ un tiers des accidents mortels de la route sont causés par des personnes ivres.

Depuis deux ans, il est cependant possible de se faire reconduire chez soi dans certaines villes de France grâce à Allo Drive. Il s'agit d'une petite société de

convoyage de véhicules et de accompagnement de personnes ayant consommé deux verres d'alcool ou plus. Créée sur la ville de Nancy, cette petite entreprise est maintenant implantée à Metz, Reims, Lyon et Nice et ouvre une nouvelle agence à Montpellier, vu son succès croissant.

Le principe de fonctionnement est très simple. Après un évènement bien arrosé, vous contactez la société qui envoie à votre secours et dans les plus brefs délais un chauffeur en scooter léger. Le modèle du deux roues est particulièrement adapté à la situation puisqu'il se plie, se range dans un sac et... hop dans votre coffre. Votre nouveau chauffeur vous reconduit à votre domicile, puisque vous avez un taux d'alcoolémie supérieur à 0,5 grammes ! Votre chauffeur personnel d'un instant peut ensuite effectuer sa nouvelle mission en remettant son scooter d'aplomb . En moyenne, une course coûte environ 15 euros, à raison de 10 euros les 5 kilomètres. De toute façon, votre sécurité et celle de vos concitoyens n'ont pas de prix !

En cette période festive, inutile de préciser l'immense succès de cette opération. Cependant, le service reste disponible toute l'année, pour des particuliers aussi bien que pour des

entreprises. Les responsables commerciaux ont cependant noté des heures de pointe : vers minuit, pour ceux qui quittent les restaurants puis vers quatre heures du matin, pour ceux qui rentrent de discothèque.

A quand un telle initiative dans la capitale française ? Ou, mieux encore, dans les régions rurales sans véritable réseau de transport en commun, ce qui pousse certainement à conduire après avoir bu ?

Pour assurer une sécurité maximale, les chauffeurs de cette petite société qui monte sont recrutés selon une série de critères bien précis et une assurance appropriée couvre chaque passager et le véhicule du client. Lors de leur mission, les chauffeurs sont suivis par un système de GPS. Il va sans dire qu'ils sont eux-mêmes soumis à l'éthylotest avant de prendre leur service !

Si puo' diventare piu' intelligenti ?

Ernestina Meloni
American School London

Molti pensano che intelligenti si nasce e non si diventa. E invece non e' cosi. Non esiste un gene dell'intelligenza, che si eredita

dalla mamma o dal papa' e condiziona intuizioni, immaginazione, creativita' e logica. Un cervello e' il risultato di molti geni e dell'ambiente, la cui influenza ha un grosso peso. In altre parole, intelligenti si diventa. Importantissime sono l'esperienza e l'educazione, in quanto istruzione. Altrettanto importante e' l'allenamento. Non e' poi cosi difficile, basta un minimo di applicazione. Del resto il cervello bisogna trattarlo come un muscolo : cioe' va esercitato, irrobustito, potenziato, reso piu' efficiente. Questo vale per i bambini, per gli adulti e anche per gli anziani. Infatti proprio quando le condizioni fisiche sembrano cambiare e spingerci verso la direzione opposta, volonta' perseveranza possono aiutare non solo a mantenere vivida la lucidita' ma a essere piu' brillanti che da giovani : non dimentichiamo che un ruolo fondamentale nell'intelligenza ce l'ha l'esperienza e una persona, in la' con gli anni, ne ha da vendere.

La ginnastica mentale pero' deve cominciare presto e la scuola ha la sua responsabilita' : incoraggiare la lettura anche a casa, far studiare poesie a memoria, far fare calcoli a mente senza usare la calcolatrice, spingere a memorizzare date ed eventi, risolvere, anche per sola curiosita', cruciverba e qualche rebus. Insomma tenere la mente

attiva e sempre piu' elastica la memoria. Ma bisogna dare un avviso, ai piu' giovani : se non si coltiva l'abitudine a leggere, ricordare, calcolare, verificare seguire ogni curiosita' e chiedersi tanti perche' difficilmente ci si abituera' piu' avanti anzi sara' difficile farlo. Il cervello bisogna usarlo altrimenti alla lunga si atrofizza. Forse tutti sanno che il cervello e' diviso in due emisferi : l'emisfero destro e quello sinistro. Il primo, l'emisfero destro, e' specializzato nelle funzioni creative, artistiche e musicali, nell'elaborazione visiva degli eventi e anche nella loro interpretazione emotive. Per esempio per fare un disegno, nella quale hanno importanza i rapporti spaziali tra le cose, e la visione dell'insieme, serve la prevalenza dell'emisfero destro. Questa dominanza pero' non e' automatica, puo' prevalere anche l'emisfero opposto, che puo' svolgere il compito anche se con risultati mediocri. Piu' spesso a dominare e' l'emisfero sinistro, abituato a lavorare molto perche' e' la sede dei centri cerebrali del linguaggio, centrale nella cultura occidentale. Quindi e' importante potenziare e stimolare la meta' destra che spesso e' pigra, appunto il regno delle funzioni intuitive, soggettive, relazionali, globali libere dal concetto del tempo. In questo modo la visione di se' stessi e della realta' sara' piu' ampia e piu' piena. Come

abbiamo detto precedentemente, l'emisfero sinistro ha le funzioni linguistiche linguaggio sia scritto che parlato, ha funzioni analitiche, logiche e di calcolo. Insomma la meta' sinistra scompone la realta', compie astrazioni, enumera, scandisce il tempo, verbalizza concetti basati sulla logica.

Concludendo, dando una lettura psicologica, la dualita' del cervello si rispecchia nei simboli della filosofia cinese dello Yin e dello Yang, gli opposti. Lo Yin ovvero l'emisfero destro del cervello, rappresenta l'elemento femminile, l'incoscio, l'arrendevole, l'emotivo; lo Yang, l'emisfero sinistro, e' l'elemento maschile positivo, aggressivo, conscio, raziocinante.

Obiettivo principe : salvare soprattutto la memoria, che e' lo spirito-guida e la base della nostra intelligenza.

Adult Education Languages
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Fees tbc

(<http://www.cilt.org.uk>)

Area 8 Conference for Modern Languages

Friday 10th March, 2006

Leeds Grammar School

Arrival and registration from 9: 00am
Resources Exhibition open until 15:20

Talks / Seminars include:

“Effective strategies for teaching languages across the ability range”.
Simon Green

“Developments in Primary Language Learning” Therese Comfort
“Using the Interactive Whiteboard in MFL teaching”- Wendy Adeniji

French at KS2 – preparing for inspection. (Sandra Longden)
Teaching using the interactive whiteboard (Frank Hill and Dan Wilton Leeds
GS)

Educational trips and exchanges – getting the most out of them (NST rep Ian
Pearson)

Primary Teaching resources (Sally Maynard)

The position of the 2nd MFL at primary and secondary level (ISMLA: Duncan
Byrne)

Assessment at GCSE & 'A' level.(Kevin Dunne)

Spanish Talk: Latin America today: Ruth Becerra

French: The future of Europe: A French perspective. Régis Faugier

German: “Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Politikkrise – was steckt dahinter?”
Thomas Reimann

More details of this year's Conference can be found on the Area 8 website
atb8.com or you can contact the organiser direct.

Ian Popely (Area 8 MFL Secretary)
iap@ashville.co.uk

We are grateful to ISMLA for their generous support of this event.