

Chairman's Report

Richard Hoare
Tonbridge School

I would like to start by saying a big thank you to all those members schools which participated in the Language Trends Survey last term. You will have noted the flurry of press activity which it triggered at the end of October when the results were revealed. It was encouraging to see that languages are in robust health in the independent sector where we are spared the effects of short-sighted government policy. The comparison with the situation in the state sector was a telling one and allowed convincing arguments to be put forward in defence of languages. Thanks go to Duncan Byrne in particular for collating the returns for ISMLA.

The Tomlinson report was also published in October - a busy month - but it is unclear as yet which of the recommendations will be adopted by the government. The opportunity to make the case for putting languages back at the heart of the curriculum was regrettably not taken up by Tomlinson. However, there were some interesting proposals such as reducing the number of A Level modules from six to four, combining AEA and A level, and introducing a 4000 word

extended essay to replace coursework. The new Education Secretary, Ruth Kelly, will have some important early decisions to take.

It is customary for me to make an appeal for a new committee member and I would not wish to disappoint in what is to be my last report. This time we are looking for a regional representative for the Midlands. It need not be a particularly onerous role and consists primarily of keeping the committee in touch with feeling and developments in that part of the country. Please do contact me or any other member of the committee as listed in this newsletter if you would like further details and consider yourself geographically qualified.

I will be stepping down as Chairman after the Merchant Taylors' Conference in February and would like to pay tribute to the excellent work carried out by the committee on your behalf. I leave ISMLA in very capable hands and am confident that it will continue to flourish. Reform continues to be in the air with expected changes to the 13-18 curriculum and the challenge of implementing the ambitious Key

Stage 2 plans which will have implications for independent schools. However, ISMLA is well placed to respond to these developments and indeed, Duncan Byrne has already coordinated an ISMLA response on Key Stage 2.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the last seven years on the committee including my three years as chairman, and would like to conclude by encouraging you all to continue to support ISMLA. Firstly, by ensuring you maintain your membership - plans for a direct debit arrangement should help here - and secondly, by encouraging members of your department to involve themselves with the running of the association. Serving on the committee offers significant rewards both personally and professionally (although sadly not pecuniary ones!), and your own department stands to benefit greatly from the sharing of experience with other like-minded linguists.

ISMLA Annual Conference 2005

Merchant Taylors'
School, Northwood

Saturday 5th February
2005

Members (£60) will have
received an invitation.

Non-members (£80)

Full programme inside back
cover

Further details can also be
found at

www.ismla.co.uk

Languages Trends Survey 2004

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

This autumn, ISMLA was invited to collaborate with CILT and ALL in its annual survey on the state of languages teaching. The particular focus this year was on language learning in KS4, now that it is no longer compulsory to study MFL after the age of 14. A copy of the survey was sent to all ISMLA members in September, with approximately a third of members responding. Interestingly, the proportion of respondents was much higher in the maintained sector (55%), suggesting that departments under threat in the state sector felt a more urgent need to contribute to the debate concerning KS4 languages.

The survey highlighted a growing gulf between the experiences of the independent and maintained sectors in language learning. Although specialist language colleges and other enlightened schools are bucking the general decline in secondary language teaching, it is clear that independent schools are becoming more and more significant players in our subject. Astonishingly, a

foreign language is compulsory at KS4 in only 30% of maintained

schools, while the figure among ISMLA members is virtually 100% (only two schools indicated that this was not the case, due to large number of SEN pupils in one case, and to the high proportion of pupils whose mother tongue was not English in the other). Whereas our colleagues in the maintained sector spoke of "languages not (being seen) as important", ISMLA's respondents cited the exact opposite: "the school and parents see languages as part of a balanced curriculum and extremely useful in today's world".

Nevertheless, we must be wary of complacency, as anything seen in the maintained sector may ultimately affect us. The most worrying trends concern post-16 take-up of languages and the perception of languages as 'anti-vocational'. An MFL is seen as a tough option in the state sector when placed as an option alongside ICT, Food technology, Art etc. Will senior teams in independent schools use the removal of protected status in KS4 in the maintained sector as an excuse to re-evaluate their own provision? A Level linguists are also becoming a dying breed in many maintained schools. It stands to reason that if there are

fewer pupils studying a language in KS4, A Level numbers will be gravely affected. Respondents to the survey from the maintained sector also cited the relative difficulty of achieving a top AS/A2 grade in a language as an impediment to higher pupil numbers. In a recent conversation with a Cambridge Admissions Tutor, I was told of the difficulty in attracting UCAS language applications from state school pupils. Increasingly it seems that independent schools are a bastion of post-16 language learning. Can this privileged position be maintained?

The Languages Trends survey confirmed the decline of German at the hands of Spanish in the independent sector (50% of schools reported more Spanish classes than in the previous two years and 34% fewer German classes). The reasons for this phenomenon have been widely discussed in recent years, not least in the pages of this journal (e.g. parents and pupils being more aware of the growing economic influence of Latin America). CILT, however, is challenging this received wisdom in a publication due out in January 2005. *Language and Culture in British business: international communication, needs and strategies* by Stephen Hagen asserts on the back of market research that Germany is currently the most important

non-English speaking market for British small businesses. Nevertheless, it was interesting and encouraging to note the much wider range of languages being taught as mainstream choices (as opposed to after-hours 'clubs') in the independent sector. The growth of Spanish in the sector as a whole has not prevented Italian from flourishing in 15% of schools. Russian was described as 'strong' or 'popular' in half-a-dozen schools and Japanese and Arabic were named as non-European languages that had proved successful in several schools. Interestingly, however, community languages received no mention, despite the fact that boarding schools and urban independent day-schools both have significant numbers of pupils for whom English is not the language of choice at home.

More positively, the optional status of KS4 languages has led many maintained schools to experiment with new types of courses and new modes of delivery. 15% of respondents reported 'fast-tracking' pupils in MFL (using the KS3 Framework as a basis for this), allowing them to take their GCSE in either year 9 or 10. This was followed by an option of a second foreign language in the two years of KS4 or by the Certificate of Business Language. Many ISMLA member schools have been entering entire cohorts of pupils for GCSE in year

10 for some years, and three schools in the survey reported significant numbers sitting the examination in year 9. Expansion of 'fast-tracking' would seem inevitable and often desirable. Pupils from preparatory schools who have been taught a language since the age of seven should be quite able to take GCSE at 14. In the past, Senior Management's reluctance to set according to prior exposure to a language, or a school policy decision to leave all GCSEs until year 11, may have thwarted such a possibility, but with the KS2 Languages Framework about to start, and the Tomlinson adaptable curriculum model in the public domain, I would suggest that more flexible examination arrangements are a thing of the near future.

The full survey report can be read at
<http://www.cilt.org.uk/key/trends2004.htm>

My thanks go to Paul Ellis of Felsted School for his help in compiling the survey with CILT and ALL.

KS2 Framework Consultation: ISMLA response

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

The Department for Education and Skills launched its Key Stage 2 consultation in the autumn. As the future of secondary language teaching will be significantly affected by this initiative, ISMLA submitted its official response, which is reproduced below. The committee invites members whose views are at variance with those described below to get in touch.

Principal point

The Independent Schools Modern Languages Association wholeheartedly supports moves to make a KS2 MFL entitlement compulsory, recognising the value of formal language learning at an earlier age. We are concerned, however, that the language learned during KS2 must be part of an integrated approach to MFL from the ages of 7 to 16. If too much freedom is afforded to Primary Schools in their choice of MFL curriculum, there is a real risk that Secondary Schools will be unable to cater for the variety of languages and attainment levels among their year 7 intake.

Despite our theoretical approval for freedom of choice, as

outlined in paragraph 2.9.1, we feel that the concerns of secondary schools must be taken into account. If pupils arrive in year 7 with too large a variety of language experiences, secondary schools will be unwilling / unable to accommodate them in KS3 language courses.

Is the aim of the KS2 Framework to give pupils transferable skills that they can apply to a different language in KS3, or is it to ensure that the initial building blocks of a language are in place, so that KS3 is a continuation of language learning, enabling pupils to achieve a much higher level of fluency than is currently the case by the time they sit GCSE? If the latter, as we hope, this point cannot be neglected. Much of the response that follows is based on this premise.

Paragraph 1.5 assumes that "schools will choose which modern foreign or community language to offer" We will only be able to produce a new generation of bilingual young people (such as those found in our Northern European neighbours) if they have access to a continuous language experience from KS2 into KS3.

Therefore, we feel that the languages which are taught in neighbouring primary and secondary schools (paragraph 2.9.1) should be the main

criterion upon which MFL entitlement is based.

Realistically, this may limit the choice to two languages (maybe French and Spanish) or to a community language. Where a community language is solely to be offered, it should be clear that local secondary schools can cater for this in KS3. If our pupils are not given the opportunity to further develop the language they have learned during KS2 (because their secondary school does not offer it), we risk rendering the KS2 Framework ultimately useless.

Subsidiary points

Paragraphs 1.12 - 1.14: we welcome the acceptance that Intercultural Understanding, Knowledge about Language and Language Learning Strategies should be three of the five Learning Objectives laid out in the Framework. In a society where racist and anti-European views are prevalent, children need to learn that concepts are expressed differently in different cultures. Knowledge about Language fits in with the National Literacy Strategy in English and should help pupils as they are exposed to different languages in the future.

Paragraph 2.2 suggests that pupils "should have the opportunity to reach a recognized

level of competence on the Common European Framework", no doubt referenced through the new Languages Ladder. We welcome this suggestion as awareness of different pupils' level of achievement will assist Secondary Schools in providing adequately for them upon transfer from Primary Schools.

Paragraph 2.8.3: "There are many benefits from an arrangement where children's regular class teacher is also their MFL teacher." We would argue that specialists should be employed as far as possible, and certainly in the initial stages of the framework. Pupils at a younger age (7+) are very receptive to the sounds of a language and would benefit from being taught by a confident linguist. Furthermore, primary school teachers are already required to teach a wide range of subjects and this would add a further unreasonable burden on them which might threaten the success of the initiative. The financial implications of importing outside specialist help are, of course, considerable.

Notwithstanding our views on the desirability of using language specialists in KS2 teaching, we applaud the initiative described in the Consultation document

foreword, whereby new primary teacher training courses incorporate language learning. A long-term objective of the framework could therefore be to have the KS2 languages entitlement delivered by more classroom teachers, as it is a positive message to children that foreign languages are spoken by everyone, not just by a group of specialists.

Paragraphs 3.3.2 - 3.3.4: "The Framework does not prescribe specific topics or contexts for learning" - we challenge this assertion on the grounds that pupils' KS2 language experiences will be more meaningful if learners are developing skills and knowledge that can be built upon in secondary education. A core of basic grammatical concepts (that correspond to those encountered in the National Literacy Strategy) and specified topics will allow pupils to progress more quickly in KS3. In addition, if the intention is for pupils to achieve "a recognized level of competence on the Common European Framework" (perhaps through the Languages Ladder) at the end of KS2, it will be necessary to be prescriptive in the content to be delivered by primary teachers.

The National Languages Strategy

David Cragg-James
Ampleforth College

The National Languages Strategy was born two years ago in December 2002, and since then there has been no shortage of prophets of doom, myself included, lamenting the decision to drop the compulsion to study a Modern Foreign Language beyond Key Stage 3, and convert this compulsion into a wholly spurious, as we saw it, 'entitlement', of which few youngsters seemed likely to avail themselves given a free choice. The compensatory decision to provide a similar entitlement, this time perhaps not dependent upon pupil choice, at KS2 level proved inadequate to the task of reassuring critics like myself, who had seen similar well-intentioned but inadequately funded initiatives founder at the primary/secondary transitional stage more than thirty years earlier.

It was with a shock that one realised in October, with the publication of the Tomlinson Report on the 14-19 Curriculum, that the current KS4 core curriculum had had to be taken as given, MFL downgraded as it was. Our aspirations for the subject had now to be lodged in the hope

that Tomlinson would be regarded as the beginning rather than the end of the debate - (perhaps by the time this is read the government's response will be known!), in the further hope that MFL might still come to be regarded as essential in most of the proposed Diploma 'lines' if merit or distinction were being targeted, and finally in the hope that the primary initiative, despite the uneven nature of the provision, might indeed succeed. It is a source, I would suggest, of considerable encouragement that schemes such as the one described above are in place throughout the country, schemes which, with considerably increased government funding to secure uniformity of cover, and "parity of experience", could still ensure a future for a subject we believe so vital to the rounded education of our children and therefore to their world.



Whither Modern Foreign Languages? A solution?

Laure Sirvin

Easingwold School

Modern Languages Teaching in Easingwold School's primary cluster schools, in North Yorkshire

In February 2003, I qualified to become one of the four Primary Modern Languages AST's (Advanced Skill Teachers) recruited by the North Yorkshire LEA to develop the teaching of languages in primary schools across the county.

In the first instance each of us was asked to work with the primary schools feeding into our secondary schools. We each developed an approach tailor-made to the requirements of each of the cluster of schools.

The Easingwold School Cluster is almost unique in the way we chose to operate. Our ten main feeder schools opted to work and train together. In my role of PMFL AST, I organised a training programme for the MFL coordinators nominated by each of the schools. The whole of the last academic year was dedicated to training and planning. We met twice a term and the (non-specialist) primary teachers were given training on how to teach languages using a variety of

methods and media. As a team we reviewed the courses

available and decided all to work with one course. We then created a Scheme of Work to provide further guidance and ensure parity of experience.

In September 2004, children in years 5 & 6 of these ten primary schools started learning French with 'Early Start'. Lessons are all delivered by classroom teachers during at least 30 minutes of the curriculum time.

Teachers use a range of resources (songs, videos, interactive whiteboard activities, the Internet) to accompany and supplement the course. When the year 6 pupils join Easingwold Secondary School in September 2005, their transition into KS3 will be eased as they will be fast tracked through the early classes in French to build on the knowledge acquired in primary school.

This year my role is to advise other primary schools in North Yorkshire wanting to develop MFL teaching whilst continuing to support the Easingwold Cluster. I have visited

most of the ten schools involved. In all cases, I have been

impressed by the enthusiasm with which teachers have taken up the challenge and the children's response has been fantastic. It is really heart warming to see young people enjoy languages and make such great progress.

Recently the cluster was asked by the North Yorkshire LEA to trial the DFES KS2 Framework which is to be available from September 2005; six of our schools have opted to evaluate this document and will be using it for planning and delivering lessons for a 6 week period. In January 2005, three of the primary schools will receive a visit from Bernadette Holmes from CILT, when they will give their feedback on the workability of the Framework. So; very exciting times in the Easingwold Cluster!



Articles for the
Summer Edition
of the Newsletter
should be with
the editor by
Monday 28th
March 2005

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

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

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

Please keep in touch with Geoffrey at

gaplow@hotmail.com, or via:

*Dr Geoffrey Plow
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London NW3 6XH*

[020 7433 2302]

Examination Board Correspondence

The following letter was sent in November to the Subject Officer for MFL A level at Edexcel from Christopher Wright, Head of Modern Languages, RGS Worcester.

Dear Mrs Knott

As the host of the annual meeting for MFL Heads of Department in the Monmouth Group of independent schools, I have been asked to write to you on behalf of the eight schools which enter candidates for your language A levels. Together we have a sizeable number of entries.

The strong and unanimous feeling of those present was one of great concern about certain aspects of the examination, the Unit 3 speaking module in particular. I understand from two colleagues present here at our meeting that very similar concerns were expressed by many of those who attended recent feedback meetings with Edexcel.

Since the advent of the new specification, we have all been perplexed by some very unexpected outcomes in Unit 3, whereby very weak candidates have achieved a higher score than their much stronger fellow candidates. Whether there has been an internal or external examiner has been immaterial. In one case quoted, the result was changed on appeal from an E to an A grade. We also felt there was a discrepancy in the results between the AS units with the Speaking component faring very poorly compared with the other two.

Many of us also felt that a weak candidate who chose a straightforward topic fared better than a stronger one whose choice was more adventurous and demanding.

Nobody present at the meeting felt confident about how to prepare a candidate for the examination, given the apparently random nature of some of the results. The complete absence of any feedback as to the appropriateness of the questioning or guidance as to how to improve it, exacerbates the problem.

Furthermore, disquiet was expressed about the perceived differences in assessment between French, German and Spanish in Units 3 and 4. It was felt that it was noticeably harder to achieve a good grade in French than in the other languages, as evidenced by the many candidates we have entered for two languages.

While we are beginning to lose confidence in the assessment process, we are also able to but disillusioned sixth formers who would have continued to A2 and fielding questions from parents about results. Nobody at the meeting felt that corresponding with Edexcel had in any way clarified the issues raised and some centres are contemplating a switch of examination board.

Other matters raised included the experience of several colleagues who were given contradictory advice depending on who at Edexcel answered their query. For the word count, by way of example, a colleague was told by one advisor that il y a was one word, but by another that it was three. Similarly there was conflicting advice as to whether Monsieur and Veuillez agréer, Monsieur... were counted at all in a formal letter. Such decisions should be consistent and made known to teachers candidates.

Finally, on the question of administration of the examination, frustration was expressed that labels for dispatching tapes were invariably late and one school's tapes were lost on two occasions.

I look forward to receiving your reply to the issues raised by the meeting and shall pass it on to all those present at the meeting.

Yours sincerely

Chris Wright
Head of Modern Languages

ISMLA is delighted once again to offer its support to ATB8 on the occasion of its annual conference, this year on Friday March 4th at Ampleforth College. Members of schools not in membership of ATB8 are invited to apply for places at £35 per head to include lunch plus an additional temporary membership fee of £5 per institution. There may be transport available from York station. Those interested should request further details from the ATB8 MFL Secretary, David Cragg-James: jdcj@ampleforth.org.uk

Area 8 Modern Languages Meeting

AMPLEFORTH COLLEGE

By kind permission of the Headmaster Rev. Gabriel Everitt OSB, M.A., D.Phil

Friday March 4th. 2005

0830 - 0850	Arrival and Coffee. Exhibition in Main Hall.
0850 - 0900	Welcome by the Headmaster of Ampleforth College. Notices.
0905 - 0955	1 st . session Steven Fawkes Creativity and Culture
0955 - 1020	Coffee. <i>Exhibition in Main Hall</i>
1025 - 1115	2 nd . session David Crystal Grammar Rules
1120 - 1145	Guitar Recital. Mikhail Asanovic. in Main Hall
1150 - 1315	Lunch (finish by 1240) and Exhibition.
1315 - 1325	Guitar Recital, Mikhail Asanovic in Main Hall
1330 - 1420	3 rd . session 3a. John Ridge 'N'ayons pas peur des avocats' In English 3b. Nick Mair '15 ideas to motivate pupils tomorrow morning.'
1425 - 1515	4 th . Session 4a. Jenny Zobel "Que vous êtes français!": le rôle de la France en Martinique 4b. SPANISH To be announced 4c. Sofie Steinberger. "Bin ich stolz darauf, deutsch zu sein?"
1520 - 1535	Plenary. Coffee/Tea. Exhibition.
1540 - 1630	5 th . Session 5a. Duncan Byrne The IB: what's in it for linguists? 5b. Michèle Muirhead La Porte Ouverte - a hands-on session for Primary/Preparatory French
1645	Departure bus leaves for York.

Japanese success stories - schools teaching Japanese still on the rise

Kornelia Achrafie

The Japan Foundation London Language Centre

Is it because Japanese grammar is quite straight-forward? Is it because Japanese culture has got so much to offer, from martial arts to manga, origami and sushi? Or is it the script that fascinates pupils? Maybe it's a combination of all of these factors. Language crisis or not, Japanese is still on the rise! Be it the State or Independent sector, Primary or Secondary, Japanese continues to be a popular option in languages departments at secondary level and - thanks to the National Languages Strategy's KS2 entitlement for primary pupils - in more and more primary schools too.

300 UK schools (a quarter of which are independent schools) currently teach Japanese to over 9500 pupils. About three quarters of all these schools have included Japanese into their timetable, and teach up to GCSE and AS/A2. The remaining 25% teach the language as an extra-curricular subject, at lunchtime or after school, as part of an enrichment programme or as a gifted and talented club. In these cases, WJEC's Japanese for Everyday Conversation is a popular option for a smooth start up. The

majority of teaching goes on in the Secondary sector, with 140 Secondary Schools, 100 Language Colleges, and 20 Sixth Form Colleges, but Primary Schools are catching up - currently about 40 teach the language to children as young as 6 yrs of age.

In September 2003, Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls in Hertfordshire, employed Yuka Yokozawa, a fully trained teacher of Japanese to teach all Lower School girls 35 min of Japanese twice a week. As for the reasons 'Why Japanese?', the Head Mistress and Junior School Head decided to add a different language to the programme to enhance the spectrum of subjects and give children a chance to excel in a subject that was a brand new challenge, and one that not even their parents could compete in. After initial doubts from parents and governors, the idea was fully supported. The decision has proved to be a success: pupils are at ease in responding to target language in the classroom and greet their teacher in Japanese in the corridor.

As for Secondary Japanese, Tavistock College, a Language

College in Devon, has been teaching Japanese for many years. A six-strong Japanese department is led by Head of Japanese and AST Crispin Chambers, and as a team they are offering the teaching of Japanese to no less than 1200 pupils throughout all year groups. Nearly 200 pupils are expected to sit GCSE Japanese in 2005. The Japanese boom at Tavistock is such that Year 8 pupils are already putting their names down for an exchange trip to Japan in 2008 and the Tavistock community competes fiercely for being host family for the next cohort of visitors from Japan in the summer.

There are many more successful examples, less impressive in numbers maybe, but not at all lacking in enthusiasm for the language both from teachers and pupils alike.

The Japan Foundation London Language Centre (JFLLC) was set up in 1997, to respond to a growing demand from UK schools wanting to set up Japanese in their language departments. The Centre supports the teaching of Japanese throughout the UK, offering teachers of Japanese, Senior Managers, and Heads of MFL teacher training days, language refresher courses, courses on how to start up with

Japanese, expertise and advice on resources, staffing,

methodology and accreditation, as well as providing links to other organisations able to help with exchanges, school links, Japan Days, cultural demonstrations and workshops.

One of the JFLLC's courses, 'Head Start - Japanese from Scratch', for Senior Managers, Heads of MFL and Primary Language Co-ordinators, is designed to teach participants the basics of Japanese language, and also aims to shed some light on issues associated with introducing Japanese. After three days, participants walk away with more confidence, a bit of Japanese up their sleeves and very eager to impress their colleagues and pupils back at school.

The JFLLC has got the biggest collection of contemporary Japanese language teaching resources in the country, possibly in Europe. The centre aims to keep the teaching community up to date with trends and teaching ideas, producing a termly newsletter and maintaining a website featuring teaching resources on-line, a database of private tutors and a list of Adult Education institutions teaching Japanese throughout the UK.

The publication of the Languages Strategy in December 2002 inspired the JFLLC to launch Ready Steady NihonGO!, a Primary Japanese project, in

joint partnership with Japan 21 Education and the University of Nottingham. Extensive research in the Primary languages field provided the foundation for a 10 week Japanese Primary Pilot Course, which is currently being trialled at a number of London Primary Schools, team-taught by non-specialist class teachers and native Japanese speakers. For more information go to www.japan21.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from schools wanting to make Japanese work for their school in 2005!

Download a copy of 'Mado', the latest newsletter from the JFLLC website www.jpff.org.uk/language/ or contact Kornelia Achrafie, at kornelia.achrafie@jpff.org.uk, or call 020 7436 6698 for more information.

Un Dia Hispánico para estudiantes de AS y A2, martes 12 de octubre 2004

Gail Bruce
Woodhouse Grove School

Another marvellous day organised by Kevin Dunne of Ampleforth College, where the event was held, with his organising group of Patricia Bartley, Notre

Dame Sixth Form College, Leeds, Gail Bruce, Woodhouse Grove School, Leeds, Andy Jefferson, Scarborough College, John Wilson, Cheadle Hulme School, Manchester. The day was an opportunity for students to meet with their peers from all over the North of England, and for teachers and assistants to make contacts and liaise with each other.

There were 4 talks, 2 in English and 2 in Spanish, interspersed with guitar music and singing to celebrate the 12th of October - el día de la Hispanidad. The 1st talk in Spanish was presented by Maria González of Scarborough College about España 2004. This followed a welcome to the event by Fr Gabriel Everitt OSB, Head of Ampleforth. The presentation was very slick, using Power point, with notes using the same format for the students, and it covered the Madrid bombings, the General Election, the Royal Wedding, and the recent ETA arrests and the lessening of ETA's power.

The students really enjoyed this session, and it was followed by a group activity for about 15 minutes, which helped students to get to know a few students from other schools.

The 2nd talk was El Dia de la Raza in Mexico, in English, by

Professor Peter Beardsall of the University of Hull, which gave a great deal of information about the different attitudes to the Dia de la Hispanidad in Latin America.

This was followed by lunch, and a tour of the school for the students, and a meeting for the staff which is always very popular, giving staff an opportunity to discuss areas of concern in the curriculum and in teaching of Spanish generally.

The afternoon session was the Spanish Civil War (in English) presented by Fr Alexander McCabe OSB, and Kevin Dunne, of Ampleforth College, which concluded with some fascinating slides of posters used during the Civil War.

The final session of the day was on Cuba, in Spanish, delivered by Isabel Añibarro, University of Santander. As with the Civil War session this was also delivered using Power point, with supporting notes, and the students found this most helpful and informative.

The background of music in between sessions was another very high point in the day, there were some wonderful performances. The food was excellent, the chocolate cake received particular mention in despatches!

Another wonderful day, and all our thanks to Kevin Dunne and Ampleforth for their hospitality and for all their hard work and organisation.

Language World Conference and Exhibition 2005

The Association for Language Learning is delighted to announce that the 2005 Language World conference and exhibition will take place at the University of Kent at Canterbury between 1-3 July.

The theme for Language World is 'Creating Opportunities', and there will be a wide range of talks, workshops and plenary sessions on the latest developments and innovations in language teaching to keep you fully informed on all that's happening in the world of languages. Alongside the conference will be the UK's largest exhibition of language teaching resources and equipment, running on 1-2 July. A full programme for the event will be available in Spring 2005.

“Busman’s Holiday” en España

P R J Ellis

Felsted School

Elsewhere in this journal we report the increasing number of Spanish lessons being taught in schools nationwide. In my own school we had to create a new set for beginners in Year 9 last year, and the uptake in the 6th Form is starting to threaten the position of French as the primary foreign language. These days, especially in small schools, it is becoming perhaps more necessary to be able to teach a second “mainstream” language to at least GCSE, and many of the adverts in the TES would lead us to believe even up to A Level would be preferred.

The joint CILT, ALL and ISMLA survey on Language Trends would appear to suggest however, as did my small postbag last year when I was advertising successively for a Head of Spanish and a teacher of Spanish, that there are not enough Hispanists in the market (apart from dubious sounding South American au pairs and waiters!) who are willing to teach in our schools. Meanwhile, those who can teach German are finding fewer and fewer students for their language, to the extent that in some state schools (and perhaps independent schools too), specialists suddenly find

themselves with no classes at all. The Consejería de Educacion is apparently keen too at the prospect of teachers of other languages retraining to teach Spanish.

My first foreign language is French, I spent my years abroad in France, and when I was not there in my university years, I was in Italy, home of the second language I was studying ab initio as part of my degree in Modern Languages. School options had prevented me from learning German beyond the 3rd Form when I was younger, but Spanish had never been a possibility in my grammar school. To enable me to open up a second beginners’ group at Felsted therefore, I had suddenly to learn the language fast, but there is only so much you can teach yourself, so I elected to spend my two-week October break this year in Spain.

I had been to language schools in Italy before and had met with mixed experiences. Also, I wasn’t convinced I wanted to pay for a fortnight of study to take up what is often the most deserved break of the year in the tough first term. It was necessary therefore that I find something good for my

precious two weeks, and I was fortunate enough at the Languages Fair in Hammersmith in 2003 to come across a language consultancy called Lanacos*, which has its offices near Sevenoaks in Kent.

After much excellent and speedy emailing and some very good advice from Martin Pickett, the director of Lanacos, I decided on a don Quijote school in Granada, and was then recommended and helped to seek funding through the Comenius section of the British Council, working under the Education and Training aegis of the European Community. A few forms and a couple of signatures from my Headmaster later, and I gratefully received a full grant to cover not only my course costs, but also my accommodation, subsistence and flights. All I needed then was a decent amount of cramming to get me up to an appropriate level to make my stay in Andalusia worthwhile!

Shocking though this may sound to purists of the communicative approach, I was frankly rubbish at speaking Spanish when I arrived in Madrid for my connecting flight. Using my base in Romance languages I had myself primed for the majority of potential situations, and thought I was actually doing pretty well until the lady at the Iberia check-in desk told me to go to the other

terminal for my flight to "Canada". A bit more rolling of my "r" and a few more furtive glances in my dictionary saw me eventually arrive safely at my hotel in Granada and me plunge further into the grammar books I had packed in my suitcase to ensure a good showing in the following day's grammar test at 8.30am.

Somehow I made my way into intermediate level, and I joined an interesting class containing three Canadians, two of whom were bilingual, a German, a Swede and a mysterious English girl, of varying ages and varying backgrounds. I was pleased to see I wasn't the oldest nor the youngest, and I soon settled into the pattern of classes in the morning, a good long Spanish lunch, another hour of individual tuition in the afternoon (which was part of the Comenius grant deal: I had to attend classes on pedagogy to justify the grant), then plenty of time for tapas and salsa!

I'm sure language schools are obsessed with the subjunctive, as, just as in my previous two times in Italy, I soon found myself subjected to the intricacies of the mood. This really did see me in at the deep end, with little vocabulary, and a hastily learnt past tense, especially when we reached the imperfective subjunctive, based on the

preterite, in the second week, but somehow the sink or swim attitude, the fact of being surrounded by Spanish, plus plentiful drinking of Alhambra beer and Rioja enabled me to make an incredible amount of progress in just a fortnight of teaching. I was astonished at what progress I had been able to make in such a short space of time, and starting from such a low base.

It was not only the language I learnt though, I also gained a great deal from being on the other side of the desk. Back with new found confidence in my Spanish classes in the UK I'm still wading through the notes I took and using new ideas I found in practically every lesson. I also got to see first hand just how significant the Spanish language is, and, slightly naïve about its position and stature in the world I might have been before flying out to Spain, I can now far more readily see as a Head of Languages how key it is and what a role it has to play on the world stage.

Moreover, I have been encouraged further to learn even more Spanish. I can't wait to return, and I practise my speaking as often as I can with Hispanists wherever I go. I have also been tempted into the land of salsa classes on a Monday evening! I am a way from being

able to teach the language to A Level, but perhaps that day will now come sooner rather than later, and I can open up more classes at my school for those who wish to study the language to GCSE. This sort of busman's holiday isn't for everyone, but my two weeks away certainly means I can now catch the right autobus (and especially when the sentence demands the subjunctive)!

*www.lanacos.com

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Italiano Si! Si!

Extract from the American School in London Newsletter

While most of the American School was off on summer vacation, the Lower School Italian program was busy collecting accolades. The 'Italian in PE' project won a prestigious European Award for Languages, and LS Italian teacher Ernestina Meloni was knighted by the Italian government.

Ms. Meloni received her honor at the Italian embassy in London on 12 July. 'The ceremony was very impressive, with medals, pins and proclamation,' said LS Principal Julie Ryan, who attended with John Smithies, assistant principal.

The title, Cavaliere all'ordine del Merito della Repubblica Italiana (OMRI), is given by the President of the Italian Republic, Carlo Azelio Ciampi, and is the highest recognition for service to the country, Ms. Meloni explained. It is often given to people who have done something special to promote and develop abroad good programs, projects and ideas about Italy.

'In my case, being a woman and a teacher, it is a very special recognition for ongoing

dedication and enthusiasm in promoting the Italian language and culture in the UK,' Ms. Meloni said. 'I hope my enthusiasm never fades away and I will carry on working with the same dedication and the same strong beliefs.'

Meanwhile, 'Italian in PE' was among 17 winning projects from across the UK cited for representing the vitality and diversity of language learning.

The European Award for Languages, supported by the European Commission, is also known as the European Label. It is a Europe-wide initiative that has recognized more than 450 innovative projects across Europe since 1999, aiming to draw attention to innovation and effective practice in language learning that has potential for replication.

Sir Trevor McDonald, patron of the National Centre for Languages (CILT, which organizes the award in the UK), will present the awards at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 27 September as part of a special celebration of the annual European Day of Languages.

Winners are selected on the criteria of excellence, innovation and the extent to which they provide a model for others. In addition to ASL's Italian in PE program, this year's winners include a video-conferencing project, a creative-writing initiative and a bilingual learning project in which geography and other subjects are taught through French or Spanish.

CILT says that all the winning projects have proved highly effective in developing the nation's capacity in other languages including British Sign Language, French, Gaelic, German, Italian, Somali and Spanish.

Peter Boaks, Acting Director of CILT, said many of this year's winning projects 'show the benefit of language skills on a practical level. We see here how well languages combine with other areas such as science, geography, drama and industry, highlighting their relevance in all walks of life.'

ASL's program, for Grade 1 students, uses movement as the focus of the lesson. Students listen carefully to instructions in Italian, and respond physically by performing the task. Activities, such as counting throws, obstacle courses and singing traditional songs, are introduced by key

Italian words that are then used throughout the class. Movements become naturally associated with words and the children then use the vocabulary in different contexts in the class. Italian in PE classes are supported by small-group Italian lessons in Grade 1.

Residential Course for Teachers of Italian

Royal Holloway, University of London (Egham Campus)

7-9 April 2005

For further details contact

Bruno Grazioli,
Royal Holloway

b.grazioli@rhul.ac.uk

Wer wird Kulturhauptstadt Europas 2010 in Deutschland?

Thomas Underwood
University College School

Im Jahre 2010 wird eine deutsche Stadt den begehrten Titel 'Europäische Kulturhauptstadt' tragen. In der Zwischenzeit bewerben sich die Städte Braunschweig, Bremen, Essen, Görlitz, Halle, Karlsruhe, Kassel, Lübeck, Potsdam und Regensburg um diese Auszeichnung. Bis Ende des Jahres 2005 wird der Bundesrat über die verschiedenen Städte beraten und schließlich fünf Bewerberstädte nach Brüssel melden. Nur eine der gewählten Städte wird dann im Frühling 2006 von einer Expertenkommission in der EU zur Kulturhauptstadt gekürt. Auf Grund des Beitritts neuer Mitgliedstaaten im vorigen Jahr soll es von 2009 an auch eine Kulturhauptstadt im Osten geben. Zuerst ist Litauen zusammen mit Österreich an der Reihe, dann stellt Ungarn neben Deutschland eine Kulturhauptstadt Europas.

Zweimal schon haben deutsche Städte den Titel tragen dürfen und zwar Berlin 1988 und Weimar 1999. Beide waren aber ohne Wettbewerb von der EU bestimmt. Die Stadt Cork wird Kulturhauptstadt 2005 und sie hat sich lange auf dieses Ereignis

vorbereitet und auch viel Geld investiert. Mit Festivals, Theater und Konzerten und einem Programm zur Stadterneuerung will sie Nachdruck auf das neue Europa legen. Für das Kulturstadtjahr 2010 gibt es bisher keinen wirklichen Favoriten.

Die Initiative der Kulturstädte Europas geht auf eine Idee der früheren griechischen Kulturministerin und Filmschauspielerin Melina Mercouri zurück und die Auszeichnung wurde im Jahre 1985 zum ersten Mal ins Leben gerufen. Eine unabhängige, europäische Expertenkommission begutachtet die Kandidaturen und legt dem Rat ihre Empfehlung vor. Um den Titel gewinnen zu können und bei der EU-Jury Eindruck zu machen, müssen die Gemeinden verschiedenen Kriterien und originelle Konzepte zeigen. Bei einer Kulturstadt assoziiert man normalerweise historische Stadtkerne, Theater, Museen, Musik, Straßencafés und Einkaufszentren und so weiter. Die Deutsche Vereinigung der Europäischen Kulturstiftung sucht aber dieses Mal nach neuen

Bewertungsmaßstäben und sie will, dass von der Bewerbung neue Impulse ausgehen. So der Präsident Olaf Schwenke, "Es geht sehr darum, deutlich zu machen, dass das, was in den 80er Jahren wichtig war für den Prozess der Kulturhauptstädte, dass dieses so nicht mehr gelten kann, sondern, dass wir neue Kriterien, neue Maßstäbe, neue Horizonte brauchen - eine neue Agenda brauchen."

Am Ende November präsentierten sich die zehn deutschen Bewerber vor dem Brandenburger Tor in Berlin. Jede der Städte stellte sich in Schaufenstern am Vorabend der EU-Konferenz 'Europa eine Seele geben' vor. Sie mochten ihre europäischen Facetten in Vordergrund, aber auch ihre kulturelle Wurzeln demonstrieren. Der Wettbewerb unter den jetzigen Kontrahenten ist schon längst in vollem Gange und das Entscheidende wird wahrscheinlich die Werbung für jede Stadt sein. 'Europa bewegt Potsdam' und 'Regensburg 2010 - Alles und denkbar!' heissen zwei der Bewerbungsslogane. "Die alte Hansestadt ist nicht nur Weltkulturerbe, sondern auf Kultur trifft man in Lübeck beinahe an jeder Ecke" findet man auf der Webseite der Stadt. Immerhin gibt es schon Hymnen, die gerappt oder gesungen werden muss, zum Beispiel:

There's quite a lot to see
There's such a lot to be
Welcome we'll see you then
Brunswick: 2 k 10

Kein schooner Land so schön
Wir wolln euch alle sehn
Willkommen, see you then
Braunschweig 2010

Die Bewerbung um den Titel der Kulturhauptstadt wird sicherlich ohne Weiteres laufen. Vielleicht sollen die Teilnehmer aber zurück an Weimar denken und den Wettbewerb nicht übertreiben. Der letzte deutsche Titelträger hat heuer große Schulden und das Stadtmuseum musste bereits geschlossen werden. Eine Folge des zu hohen Ausgabens aus dem Kulturstadtjahr?



Weitere Information finden Sie unter:

www.regensburg2010.de/
www.braunschweig2010.de/
www.goerlitz2010.de/
www.kassel2010.de/
www.karlsruhe.de/Projekte/Kulturhauptstadt/
www.kulturhauptstadt.luebeck.de/

Réforme de l'Éducation : vers un modèle anglo-saxon ?

Cécile Léonard

Dresden International School

Le Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale François Fillon a présenté au grand public les grandes lignes de sa réforme lors de l'émission « 100 minutes pour convaincre », diffusée sur France 2 mi-novembre. Son projet de loi, qui prévoit une nouvelle orientation pour l'école et une modernisation du baccalauréat, sera débattu et voté au Parlement au premier trimestre 2005. Il devrait entrer en vigueur à la rentrée 2006 et être mis en place pour la première session du bac 2007.

En France, la loi d'orientation sur l'école, dont le rôle est de définir les grands objectifs du système éducatif de la maternelle jusqu'au baccalauréat, est révisée tous les quinze ans. Les grands principes éducatifs restent fondamentalement les mêmes qu'en 1989, à savoir la maîtrise de connaissances de base en fin de cycle scolaire et l'obtention du baccalauréat pour la majorité (80% d'une classe d'âge). Monsieur Fillon insiste cependant sur le fait de donner une qualification à 100 % des jeunes français. A l'heure actuelle, 150

000 élèves quittent le système éducatif sans diplôme.

Pour atteindre ces objectifs, plusieurs mesures ont été proposées. La notion de socle commun de connaissances est acquise depuis plusieurs décennies. En plus des connaissances traditionnelles de base en français, mathématiques, sciences et sciences humaines, on exige maintenant la maîtrise de l'outil informatique et celle d'une langue étrangère. L'ensemble de ces connaissances devrait être sanctionné par un « certificat des savoirs fondamentaux », c'est-à-dire un examen plus complet que le brevet actuel en fin de collège. Cette qualification comportera des mentions, une note de discipline et déterminera l'orientation en classe de seconde.

Il n'y a aucun doute que les compétences linguistiques des élèves français doivent être améliorées et le Ministre recommande par conséquent l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère dès le CE1. La grande révolution dans ce domaine consiste cependant à créer des

classes de niveaux au collège et au lycée en ce qui concerne l'enseignement des langues. Dans la pratique, les groupes de niveaux en langues étrangères mèneront-ils à la création de classes de niveaux ? En dédoublant officiellement les classes selon les capacités des élèves, on est bien loin du principe de l'école unique pour tous des dernières décennies.

C'est bien sur ce point que réside l'innovation pédagogique la plus importante de la réforme Fillon : reconnaître et identifier les élèves en difficultés dès le cycle primaire et mettre en place jusqu'en fin de collège un parcours différencié : trois heures de soutien individualisé hebdomadaires avec une approche pédagogique spécialisée. La réforme envisage que l'établissement passe un « contrat de réussite éducative » avec l'élève en difficultés et sa famille. Il va sans dire que le pouvoir de décision en matière de redoublement sera rendu au conseil de classe, diminuant ainsi la position actuelle des parents.

Un autre changement important touche l'organisation des épreuves du baccalauréat, accusée d'amputer le troisième trimestre et d'être trop lourde et complexe. Pour la simplifier, on considère l'introduction du contrôle continu en première et en terminale. Ainsi, six matières

seulement seraient sanctionnées par l'examen final.

Avec la création d'un soutien individualisé et d'un contrat de réussite pour les élèves de primaire et de collège, l'introduction d'un examen plus exigeant en fin de troisième, le regroupement des élèves selon leur niveau linguistique, l'introduction du contrôle continu au bac, il semblerait que la loi d'orientation du système éducatif français s'inspire des structures de ses homologues britannique, canadien, australien...

Pourtant, en ce qui concerne la gestion du corps enseignant, la commission Thélot qui a préparé cette proposition de loi, souhaitait introduire un principe de substitution de professeurs absents (obligation de remplacer les collègues du même établissement temporairement absents à raison de deux heures par semaine) et comptait allonger le temps de présence à l'école des enseignants. Face à la fronde spontanée des syndicats, le Ministre de l'Éducation a reculé sur ses deux points. A quand l'organisation des matières scolaires en départements ? Il faudra encore du temps avant de « dégraisser » complètement « le mammoth ».



Reviews

Métro Electro 3

Rosi McNab

Heinemann, 2004

ISBN 0 435 38248 9

Métro Electro is slowly but surely catching up with its counterpart, the highly successful Métro course book written by Rosi McNab and published by Heinemann. The latest offering off the production line is Métro Electro 3, and like parts 1 and 2, offers a varied and stimulating addition to the course. Like the book, the ICT components are divided into two parts, 'rouge' and 'vert' to cater for pupils of differing abilities. One of the initial menus on the CD allows the teacher - or pupil - to find the appropriate level immediately. Once the exercises have been accessed, the most striking aspect of the CD is the sheer volume and variety of the tasks. They mirror the modules of the course-book, so that they can be usefully be employed at any stage of the teaching of a module, and the integration of graphics and sound means that pupils are effectively practising several skills simultaneously, rather than moving from one skill to another. Pupils can work at their own pace, and the soundtracks can be paused and rewound to give the pupils more opportunity to listen. For a

generation of children brought up on Playstation, the attractions of the activities are obvious, even if the graphics are, inevitably, rather less sophisticated. The exercises can be used in a ready-made sequence, or in a sequence customised by a teacher with specific objectives or limited time to spend in the computer room. Navigation is straightforward, and pupils have the option of checking their own work at the end of each exercise. Record keeping can also be done electronically, matching marks against the register of pupils: marks are available to teacher and pupils alike.

The user manual is clearly written and contains details of the various ways in which the modules may be used. It is written with teachers in mind, and technical information is kept to a minimum. There is also a Métro Electro help desk which can be reached by telephone or email. Colleagues who have already used Parts 1 and 2 will want the third part as quickly as possible. I am already looking forward to the fourth and final part for use with GCSE candidates.

D.J. Colwell

University College School

**Facettes de la France
Contemporaine - Lecture et
mise en pratique - Livre 2**

*Hélène Mulphin - Jenny
Ollershaw
Advance Material
ISBN 0 9532440 8 3*

Having used the first book with my sixth form classes very regularly, I was delighted to receive Facettes de la France Contemporaine - Livre 2 and was not disappointed at all!

The book is divided into eight different units based on authentic texts and covering a wide range of topics such as "Les dangers de l'Internet", "L'énergie et le terrorisme"... Each unit is divided into up to nine exercises: written tasks, vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension. The "Corrigés et explications" sections give us the correct answers and samples of essays.

All worksheets are photocopiable. This is much more thorough than the first book and will certainly stretch our more able students. This is suitable for A-Level as well as IB students.

Nathalie Fayaud
Sevenoaks School

Expo 2 Vert & Rouge

*Jon Meier & Gill Ramage
Heinemann, 2004
ISBN 0 435 38557 7 (Pupil Book
Vert)
0 435 38512 7 (Pupil Book Rouge)*

*(Resource & Assessment File, CD-ROM, Workbook, Cassettes/CDs, Flashcards, OHT file, Teacher's Guide & CD-ROM also available)
Price:£10.25*

Expo 2 follows on from Expo 1 and is the middle book in a series of 3 to be completed in 2005. As with the first book, Expo 2 relates closely to the National Framework for Languages and is divided into six modules which are further divided into units. Each module also ends with a section entitled "Bilan et Contrôle Révision", containing further activities, a vocabulary list and strategies for learning words. Both the harder Rouge version and the easier Vert edition are clearly set out, with plenty of good examples of vocabulary and grammar and suggestions for further activities. The accompanying pupil's workbook, resource and assessment file and CD-ROMs also provide lots more materials, and students enjoy the possibility of working through activities at their own pace. Schemes of work are easy to design, following the examples given in the teacher's

guide, and readily show how the textbooks fit into the National Framework. The books are probably too thin on material on their own to push the very brightest students, but are good news for awkward middle or lower sets in Year 9 or below. Students aiming at an eventual A grade would still be challenged by the Rouge book, and the Vert would be a good stepping stone to a B or a C.

Paul Ellis
Felsted School

Avance! 2

*Colin Christie, Anneli McLachlan
and Eleanor Mayes*
Hodder and Stoughton
ISBN 0 340 81171 4

Avance!, which styles itself as one “that makes teaching with the Key Stage 3 Languages Framework straightforward” is a new course from Hodder and Stoughton. The book I have reviewed is the second book in the series.

Having analysed the initial chapters in depth, I can certainly confirm that it does indeed have a logical, consistent approach to the principles of the KS3 Framework. Although the recent CILT/ALL/ISMLA Languages Trends survey revealed that only

12% of responding independent schools are using the KS3 Framework, those teachers in the sector who have had the opportunity to learn about it are enthusiastic about the benefits it could have upon our teaching.

Each chapter of Avance! is constructed around about ten double-page spreads, each dealing with a particular sub-topic. As might be expected, each sub-topic has a series of exercises using most if not all of the four language skills, and, in addition, there is considerable emphasis placed on cultural knowledge and the need to acquire the grammatical foundations of the language. I would say that a double-page spread equates to either one or two lessons and I would agree with the assertion that the structure makes planning according to the principles of the Framework somewhat easier. The first exercise on most pages is a clear ‘starter’ activity that allows for revision of key language introduced previously and which would last only 2 or 3 minutes to get the class into the correct frame of mind. Although I did not have access to the OHT file, the promotional material I received refers to “one copiable OHT sheet for each lesson ... for whole class activities”, which if true (and I have no reason to doubt that it isn’t!), would certainly facilitate the task of the busy

teacher looking for an inspirational start to a lesson. Similarly, the 'plenaries' referred to in the KS3 Framework are catered for in a recurring section entitled "On réfléchit!" where a final exercise allows pupils to put their new language into context. The teacher's book also contains clear instructions as to how this material can be adapted according to the dynamic of the class.

What is remarkable about the presentation of grammar in Avance! is the lack of apology for using English to explain key concepts. We have recently reached a watershed in the perception of grammar teaching, and grammar is dealt with clearly and methodically. Although there is frequent recourse to the cloze test to gauge grammatical understanding, I would have liked to see more exercises drilling the grammar points. Nevertheless, I was particularly interested to see the use of proper terminology such as "third person singular" or "imperative". Does this signify a new dawn for Secondary languages teachers confronted with pupils who have met these terms through the KS2 Literacy Strategy?

Cultural knowledge is dealt with at the end of each unit with a double-page of quite lengthy reading material accompanied by questions usually in French.

The content is far from patronising, with some of the information about French History new to me! However, apart from this double page per chapter, there is precious little 'meaty' reading material, although I admit that I have not seen the photocopiable masters file.

Despite a couple of minor reservations, such as the absence of vocabulary listed by topic, Avance! seems to be an intelligently constructed course that would suit teachers following either the letter or the spirit of the Key Stage 3 Framework.

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

Español Mundial (3rd Edition)

Sol Garson, Sonia Asli and Rosa Martínez

This is an update to the popular two-part Spanish course Español Mundial and takes students from ab initio to GCSE over either two or three years. It describes itself as 'exciting' and although I do not know if I would go quite that far, the layout is certainly very clear and would be user friendly for both teachers and students.

Language is presented in a straightforward way; avoiding

gimmicks and placing more emphasis on how it actually all fits together. Vocabulary is introduced at a reasonable rate and is, by and large, placed in cultural context with the inclusion of information about things such as Spanish fiestas and the Madrid metro. Grammar points are presented in their entirety rather than being watered down for beginners and there are plenty of drill type exercises contained within the student's book itself to make sure that they get it right from the word go. Regular references are also made to the grammar summary included at the back of the book so that hopefully students might learn to use this with a little more regularity!

Even when dealing with the most basic language early on there seems to have been quite an effort made to include longer chunks of text. There is also a good variety of different types of comprehension exercises making sure that all the passages in the book are fully exploited and that there is a good balance between the four skills. There is a workbook to accompany the series though no ICT package as yet.

This course would certainly hold up well in most independent schools. Students are pushed hard from an early stage and the pace is brisk with the emphasis on

accurate and authentic language. I would say, however, that the element of excitement the book claims to contain would, in my opinion, have to come from the teacher!

Ruth McCann
University College School

Don Quijote - Firewalk Theatre Company

When you receive publicity material from a foreign language theatre company, it is difficult to know whether the production is to be worthwhile and the play comprehensible. In this case a quick telephone call to Peter Such at Sherborne confirmed that this was a company he had hosted on several occasions and was happy to recommend.

The first part of the play introduced the characters of Don Quijote and Sancho Panza giving a flavour of their adventures such as the famous tilting at windmills scene while the second part focused on the episode involving the shepherdess, Marcela and Grisóstomo. The cast of two managed to play over ten roles, including three on stage at the same time, with the help of ingenious costumes and Commedia dell' Arte techniques. Pupils, even of GCSE standard, were able to follow the play

thanks to the very helpful preparatory materials sent out in advance, the use of mime and on occasions, moments of Spanglish. Indeed, the company offers three versions of the play an English, Spanglish or Spanish.

Overall, I liked the production, particularly the first half which gave something of the flavour of the Quijote. The simple but imaginative scenery worked very effectively while the acting was good and aware of the needs of its audience. I had a couple of reservations regarding the plot of the second half as well as the use of Spanglish and more modern cultural references, neither of which seemed necessary (we had requested the Spanish version). This is not a production for the purist! Nevertheless, I felt it was a very worthwhile event both culturally and linguistically, and the students who came were delighted by how much they could understand.

The setting up and performance (70 minutes with no interval) went very smoothly - the company was in and out within the day - although the financing was more complex. The school booked the company with the Spanish department underwriting the production, an unnerving experience as too small an audience would have meant no more copies of Caminos for next year! Fortunately, our Facilities

Department took care of the publicity side of things and the show attracted a very healthy audience.

The Firewalk Theatre Company is a bilingual (Spanish-English) company based in Zaragoza which tours the United Kingdom twice a year in September and March.

Further details can be found at its website:

<http://www.firewalktheatre.com>

Richard Hoare
Tonbridge School

The Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (ISMLA), anxious to play its part in the development of languages nationally, is interested in promoting Languages' partnerships/links between independent secondary and maintained primary schools, and between independent and maintained secondary schools. I have offered to collate information on such links and would be grateful for such details as members of the Area Training Boards and/or ISMLA felt able to provide me with.

Please write to David Cragg-James, at Ampleforth College, York or email me at jdcj@ampleforth.org.uk