

Chairman's Report

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

Writing towards the end of August, once again we find our subject on the front pages on the national press, as a significant drop in the number of candidates sitting both A Level and GCSE languages is announced. The headline figure of a 14% decrease in French and German GCSE candidates in a year comes as no surprise to anyone within the teaching profession, bearing in mind the decision to make a language optional in Keystage 4. Next year the drop will be even more spectacular. More interesting was the news concerning the drop in A Level numbers. The number of A Level French students has more than halved from 31000 in 1992 to only 14000 in 2005, with 27% of A2 language candidates coming from independent schools. All these statistics emphasise the vital role the independent sector has to play in language learning in this country, because, quite simply we represent an ever larger proportion of those studying a foreign language.

It was good to see some familiar ISMLA faces at the ALL Language World conference at the University of Kent at the beginning of July. The scale of the event is simply extraordinary, with seven or eight sessions

running concurrently for two and a half days, and all those colleagues with whom I spoke found the conference inspiring and thought-provoking: no easy task in the final weeks of Summer Term! I really would encourage you to attend next year's conference, to be held at the University of Manchester from 7th to 9th April 2006. With independent schools becoming increasingly important for our national languages capacity, I genuinely feel that we can benefit from the feeling of renewal and mutual support engendered by such events.

This brings me onto the ISMLA Annual Conference, which, I am delighted to announce, will take place at Oakham School on Saturday 4th February 2006. Oakham has one of the largest languages departments in the country, having embraced the International Baccalaureate some time ago, and the Headmaster and Modern Languages department are very enthusiastic about welcoming us. Letters of invitation will be sent to all independent schools in the second half of this term and we hope that the Midlands location will encourage some ISMLA members to attend the conference for the first time.

It remains for me to refer to two of the initiatives in which ISMLA is being involved during this academic year. Firstly, avid readers of this newsletter may recall reading at this time last year about the Young Linguist Award, which was trialled last year in the Warwick group of schools, under the leadership of Stephen Barber of Nottingham High School. The rationale behind the award is that our current examinations do not test the very best students, and that it would be motivating for our top pupils to participate in a demanding event similar to the Olympiads held by Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. 36 Warwick group students competed for year 12 and year 10 awards in each of French, German and Spanish, taking written and oral exams that required no prior preparation, and the success of the pilot has led ISMLA to introduce the competition on a national level in 2005-06. More details of how to enter pupils for the Young Linguist Award will follow in the January edition of this newsletter. Secondly, ISMLA is collaborating with CILT and ALL for the second time on the annual Languages Trends survey, which is being sent to a representative sample of independent schools. The subject of the survey again concerns KS4 languages, and could I please urge you to return this brief document, so that the positive state of language

learning in our schools is clearly seen against the worrying trends noted in the maintained sector.

GSA / HMC Joint Education/Academic Policy Sub-Committee Meeting

P R J Ellis
Felsted School

In June ISMLA was kindly invited to attend a meeting of the GSA/HMC Joint Education/Academic Policy Sub-Committee to talk on issues affecting Modern Foreign Languages nationally in independent schools. There were 25 head teachers present and the meeting was chaired by Dr Peter Mason of Stamford Endowed Schools. Geoff Lucas, secretary of the HMC and also a linguist was also present and very encouraging in his support. Our aim was to put forward recent concerns expressed by our members and also to present statistics and information gained from the CILT/ALL/ISMLA Language Trends survey last autumn, which were further backed up by work done subsequently by the Independent Schools Council.

Primary Level

The government's decision to increase the provision of MFL in KS2 was welcomed by all, but concern was expressed that this could actually exacerbate problems already seen from mixed experience and attainment on transfer. In the independent sector, the vast majority of preparatory schools offer French, but whereas some teaching is very successful, elsewhere pupils tread water or have several "starts" before KS3, and this coupled with a squeezed curriculum and a less formal approach to teaching, can serve to demotivate pupils before they reach secondary level. As we always insist, it is very important that secondary level teachers talk to their feeder schools and ensure sensible progression from one school to the other. Likewise, feeder schools should be wary of making decisions without consultation which may affect secondary provision. We would welcome more and different languages being taught in KS2 but appreciate the problem in finding teachers at that level and are also concerned about potential class sizes in languages for which we do not have enough teachers in our own schools. Primary Level could become a key area in the next few years, especially as the Common Entrance exam is reviewed.

Secondary Level

Here, the statistics were shown and examples were given to illustrate the state of MFL up to GCSE level. There is a decline in the number of students taking French, but a growth in the independent sector in Spanish and also other languages such as Chinese and Japanese, although these subjects are sometimes only taken by native speakers. German continues to decline in all sectors and some independent school teachers are having to re-train. Above all, the feeling shared by ISMLA and those on the committee, is that the current GCSE specifications lack relevance and need reviewing, especially since they are largely untouched since 1986 when the exams were introduced. Where students are allowed by schools to take a GCSE language early, there remains the problem with what to do with them in the remaining time before AS or IB begins and how to keep them motivated and well prepared for the 6th Form.

It was thought that AS/A2 specifications also need revision. The points made elsewhere in this journal and previously were re-iterated, suggesting that pupils are bored by the topics which seem to many like "citizenship by the back door". The gap is too wide between AS and A2 and MFL is seen as a much harder option comparatively to

other subjects at this level. Maybe the answer lies with the staging of capabilities seen in the IB (*ab initio*, standard and higher level, near-native and native). Some concern was expressed too that increasingly in our sector students are wishing to take languages which are normally the preserve of native speakers. It was suggested that there should be different exams for non-native speakers, such as already exist in Wales. Our pupils' interest in European languages (other than Spanish), appears to be waning, especially as students take gap years in more exotic locations, and perhaps this is partly the fault of our more "functional" learning in MFL, which disallows pupils from seeing the more traditional languages as a gateway to their literature and culture.

Action Points

The GSA/HMC policy remains that students should study at least one modern language to GCSE level, unless there are exceptional circumstances and needs. This, coupled with the points raised at the meeting and the statistics presented, shows the importance now of the role of independent schools in helping shape the future of MFL in this country. The Language Trends survey suggests that languages beyond the age of 14 will soon only be compulsory in the state sector in language colleges and grammar schools,

and it is with them that we need to form some sort of partnership to ensure the decline of language provision does not become pandemic.

The following action points were agreed:

1. To invite research by Durham University into the issue of the relative difficulty of different subjects in the curriculum, with the aim of proposing practical solutions to be adopted nationally and prevent further decline in the take-up of difficult subjects which are in the national interest (not only MFL, but also Maths and the Sciences).
2. To urge ISC to promote the "public benefit" provided by the independent sector in terms of its contribution to the national supply of expertise in MFL, and also to focus on ways in which the independent and maintained sectors may pool resources and collaborate in the national interest.
3. To ask ISC to do more research, both quantitative and qualitative, in all "core" subjects at secondary level, and also to undertake a survey, in collaboration with ISMLA, into MFL provision at KS2 and seek examples of

innovative or entrepreneurial practice in MFL from 11-19 in independent schools.

4. To support ISMLA in putting pressure on QCA and DfES to review MFL specifications at all levels, using GSA/HMC links with these bodies and the media to further ISMLA's case.

The chairman of the committee and the secretary of the HMC know of only two other subject areas (Design and Technology and Music) which have associations such as ours, and they were delighted to know that we exist and in strength. ISMLA is grateful for the invitation to attend the committee meeting and delighted to obtain the excellent support of the GSA and HMC in the action we would wish to take forward.

**French taster day for
primary teachers**

Wednesday 7 December
2005

CILT, London
In association with the
Institut Français
£70/£60 (members of
CILT Direct)
197LO1105FIP
(<http://www.cilt.org.uk>
)

Languages Ladder - an update

Duncan Byrne
Whitgift School

Following a series of pilot schemes during 2004-05, the Languages Ladder was officially launched in May by the National Director for Languages, Dr Lid King, and the project leader, Kate Green. For the uninitiated, the Languages Ladder is a series of 'can do' statements in each of the four language skills that enables learners to gauge their progress, by giving them short-term motivational goals. There is also the opportunity for external assessment, which has frequently been compared to the Associated Board Music 'grades' system, so that learners can receive credit for their learning at a level below GCSE, or indeed for achievement in one or two skills alone.

The question that must be answered is why do we need it? In the maintained sector, schools that allow students to drop a language in KS4 will use it in year 9 to certificate pupils' learning in their language (the external tests carry league table points), and, in addition, the ability to take tests in different levels for different skills will help SEN pupils to achieve a recognised level in a language, where the writing component of

traditional exams might have previously been an impediment. I am conscious that the question has still not been answered within an independent sector framework. Firstly, we should not underestimate the motivational value of the Languages Ladder. Four or five years to GCSE (or more if our pupils have studied the language at a primary or prep school) can be a long time, and the setting of intermediate targets could help to maintain our learners' interest. Secondly, many of our pupils may study for two languages in KS3 but only continue one to GCSE. The *Preliminary* stage tests would allow them to receive accreditation for their two or three years of learning at a level below GCSE. Thirdly, using external tests pre-16 takes away the 'fear factor' of GCSE. This is particularly significant with languages, where the oral exam is the most nerve-wracking exam experience that most students go through at school. Nick Mair, of Dulwich College, was involved in the pilot last year and will continue to use the Languages Ladder. I reproduce below a selection of his comments as to why he believes in its value:

- Exam papers are clear, logical and interesting. Pupils 'enjoyed' sitting them.
- Exams can be sat 3 times a year, i.e. when pupils are ready.

- Excellent for pupils who will choose a MFL in year 9 and then give it up after a year - they get a certificate rather than just a failed year. It is also possible to do it in the first term to motivate and encourage them to choose a second MFL when they make an option choice in Lent term.
- Likely to be of use to employers as it is simple to understand: "I want someone with intermediate speaking."

The Languages Ladder has had huge investment from the DfES as a major element in the National Languages Strategy. Imagine how helpful it would be in five years time if entrants to our school could be setted according to their levels of achievement on the Languages Ladder while at primary / prep school? I would be delighted to hear from any ISMLA members who are planning to follow the example of Dulwich and take the Languages Ladder plunge.



Saturday 4th February 2006

Oakham School, Rutland

Speakers to include:

Tony Evans (Headmaster of King's College School, Wimbledon) on Internationalism

Helen Wright (Headmistress of St. Mary's Calne) on listening skills

Peter Such (Sherborne School and CE examiner) on Common Entrance issues

John Ridge (Ampleforth College) on Health and Safety on language trips

Rosemary Clark (Downing College, Cambridge) - Spanish lecture

Letters of invitation will be sent out in November

QCA response to "Modern Languages: a rehearsal for something which will never happen." (P. Ellis) published in the ISMLA newsletter, Summer 2005.

Dear Paul,

I received (and read) recently the latest ISMLA newsletter (Summer 2005). Of particular interest to me, given my role, was the article you wrote (on pages 11-14): "Modern Languages: a rehearsal for something which will never happen." Exams Forum

I do feel that the report is misleading in the section on AS/A2/IB (page 13) and it may well be that this reveals widespread misconceptions about the role of the regulatory authorities (QCA, ACCAC & CCEA) and our ability to influence the content of AS and A level specifications.

I attach the Subject Criteria for GCE AS/A level MFL. These criteria were revised before awarding bodies started to draw up the current A level specifications that were accredited in 1999. A broad group of stakeholders was involved in revising the subject criteria and there was wide public consultation on them. It is the criteria that define what awarding bodies must do and that are our reference point when considering the specifications submitted for accreditation.

The key criteria with regard to "topics" appear in 2.1 (Aims), 3.2 (AS content) and 3.3 (A level content) in slightly different versions of the following: "aspects of the contemporary society, cultural background and heritage of one or more of the countries or communities whose language is being studied". The criteria are no more explicit than this. I hardly think it is correct or reasonable to state that "the awarding bodies are limited in the topics they may choose as the content is prescribed by QCA".

If topics are "both hard and uninviting for students at this age" (page 14) this is the result of choices made by the principal examiners who write the papers. It is no easy task to set an examination paper, but teachers do have a choice of 5 different AS/A specifications for the most widely taught languages (French, German and Spanish), so they can consider which papers they feel are more accessible and attractive to their students when making their choice. This is the whole point of having more than one awarding body - choice for teachers.

I hope this clarifies matters!

Christopher Maynard
QCA Adviser for MFL

GoChinese: web-based Chinese language educational platform

Linda Wu

There can be no doubt that Chinese is a growth language in this country. Although we might not yet have taken the plunge, we are no doubt considering its introduction on the back of huge support in the media and parental interest. One of our concerns might well be the availability of resources, and therefore GoChinese may be an exciting development for those schools that are already offering the languages.

GoChinese is a newly launched, web-based Chinese language educational platform that supports a strong phonetic and word-based (in 'normal' Chinese, word groups are not explicitly segmented) approach to teaching Chinese. This software is founded on several key engines: a leading text-to-speech module, word segmentation engine and a 250,000-word Chinese-English dictionary and Hanyu Pinyin phonetics database. When using GoChinese, students click on individual words or highlight phrases to hear selected words recited. Entire passages can be read aloud and the text-to-speech engine is extremely accurate. GoChinese also auto-

generates Chinese phonetics and displays English definitions upon "mouse over", facilitating the learning of this non-alphabetic-based language.

GoChinese is available with teaching materials (see www.gochinese.net), but teachers are also provided with authoring tools to create their own web-based lessons and exercises, and scorekeeping can be maintained by the teacher and student. Finally, the good news about technology. GoChinese is purely web-based, not requiring any plug-ins and the software itself can be installed independently in any school server. While GoChinese boasts over 30,000 users in Asia, from primary school students to business professionals, it is new to this country, and the British representatives of the company hope to be able to demonstrate the product at ISMLA's Annual Conference at Oakham School next February.

If you would like a glimpse of GoChinese, try the interactive Flash tutorial at <http://www.gochinese.net/tutorial.htm>, which provides a good overview of GoChinese's main functionalities. The company can also be contacted by email at sales@gochinese.net.

Memoirs of a German assistant

Lea-Friederike Neubert

University College School, London, was for two years the place at which I had been assigned the task to teach four male adolescents in their best and wildest years how to converse tactfully in German. Luckily, the environment I found at University College School could not have been better for such an undertaking. Both, faculty and pupils were of a distinct amicability towards me and amongst each other. Furthermore, the school community had created an surrounding that stimulated the process learning outside the class room - from a theatre group or 'party political associations', to a debating club or the orchestra. I perceived as important that learning German was thus a project embedded in a vivid social and intellectual discourse - a crucial aspect for a language that has its share in the development of the idea of 'Kulturnationen'.

The mentioned four adolescents, striving to rid themselves of the epithet 'boy', did their very best to fulfil the demands of their German oral teacher. Naturally, a slight disinclination to work, accompanied by a surprising

creativity and audaciousness when it came to apologies for missing homework, seemed to stop us from having heated and instructive discussions in German.

It was only when I started seeing German, the Germans, and Germany from my pupils' point of view that I could arouse their interest. It was only then that my hope they would not forget what I had taught them was substantiated. Sometimes logic helped them to understand the German grammar, sometimes it was a drawing and yet at other times a similarity between German and Latin. Regarding the Germans and Germany I found it helpful to spice the explanations of words with peculiar stories often known only to native speakers. Or I challenged them with the 'German' take on the issues we tackled. The time of real discussions, where the actual meaning of the German sentences mattered, had arrived.

Teaching German to my pupils with their wide-ranging interests from politics to history, sports music and even etymology was a privilege for me. Indeed, shedding light on the ambiguities and intellectual flexibility of the German language and thus opening a door for these young men to the German culture as part of the closely interlinked European culture was a pleasure.

The actual progress my pupils made in speaking German seemed slow. I thought so mistakenly. While they had hardly grasped a whole sentence, even though clearly pronounced, at the beginning of their year in the Lower Sixth, I debated with them at the end of the Sixth Form on a level close to that of German native speakers. Looking back, I am very pleased with their progress. Besides their listening comprehension, their oral expression improved equally substantially. The position of verbs, relative clauses and other grammatical ingredients Germans enjoy using to express complex ideas, were mastered to a large extent at the end of the Sixth Form. And if my pupils had had a wider and more systematically acquired vocabulary at their disposal, their progress would have been ever more impressive.

The wide curriculum for learning German supported my teaching efforts to a considerable extent, especially in the Sixth Form. For not only were the exam topics generally interesting, both for Lower Sixth and Sixth Formers. But the Sixth Form topics were predominantly of contemporary relevance. Many of them were topical among Germans themselves at the time. That, of course, made it easier for me to motivate my pupils.

I believe after these two years that fascinating pupils for the German language, its peculiarities and the culture it carries is the most important element of the oral assistance teaching. And at this point I would like to thank the German faculty of University College School. For it was their inspiring ground work, which I could build on. Not only was I myself warmly supported in every way during my time there. But the enthusiasm, professional competence and psychological sensitivity of the German faculty had in essence already enticed my pupils to learn before my work had even begun. I hope that the cooperation between the German full time teachers and the assistant oral teachers at University College School will be as fruitful in the future as I experienced it to be.

Lea-Friederike Neubert was one of two German assistants at University College School from 2003-2005.

Speechless

P R J Ellis
Felsted School

It began, I suppose, on the Promenade du Peyrou in Montpellier in February of this year when I first noticed a tickle to the lower left-hand side of my throat. I thought it was just the beginnings of a cold caught from exposure to constant sub-zero temperatures and sunny skies as I wandered from one work experience placement to another, but by the end of the first week back at school I couldn't speak - I was a language teacher without the main tool of my trade!

Laryngitis is a common complaint amongst teachers, and probably most of all with those of us who speak a lot and mostly in foreign languages during the course of a school day. Rarely can we get away with or do we wish to have a lesson where pupils sit in silence writing answers to exercises (unlike some of our Maths colleagues along the corridor!). Hard is it to demonstrate a new grammatical point or show the pronunciation of an item of vocabulary without saying a word, and some languages come less easily with a tickly throat than others, especially Spanish! The only cure in the end was to take some time off of work and have a rest.

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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Back at work I thought little more about my throat problems. Life in a boarding school gives scant time for reflection, but I was sensible enough to take a swig from my water bottle between and during lessons, and also to take up more exercise and deny processed food completely. But my voice rattles came back to haunt me, and by the half way pause of the summer term, but fortunately after (and maybe because of) the 20 hours plus of oral exams I had been completed, my ability to speak deserted me again, and I decided it was time to use some of that school BUPA membership and see a consultant.

I had an endoscope shoved down my right nostril and some happy snaps were taken of the inside of my throat. No visible deficiency was obvious apart from that perhaps my vocal chords were too "toned". My life history was taken into account and Mr ENT couldn't believe the hours I was being asked to work, nor the Sunday morning parents' meetings I had to endure. Something would have to give, so I was referred to a speech language therapist and it was here that the interesting news began.

A baritone in his 30s should be able to produce between 12 and 20 decibels at normal speaking

level: I managed just one. No wonder I couldn't be heard at the back of the assembly hall but no wonder either that females were flocking to my husky voice (I wish)! Remedial action was required and it soon became evident that I wasn't breathing properly in addition to having had acute laryngitis probably brought on by the excesses and stresses of work. I turned out to have something slightly scarily known in New Zealand as hyperventilation syndrome (HVS), and it would appear I'm not alone: apparently more than 40% of patients sitting in GP's waiting rooms have some degree of breathing difficulty related to HVS.

The main symptoms to look out for are breathlessness for no apparent reason (not just because you've been forced to do afternoon sports), frequent sighs or yawning (I thought that just came from some child getting the *passé composé* wrong yet again), incessant throat-clearing, palpitations, light-headedness or feeling "spaced out" (don't start accusing your bottom set of having HVS!), tingling or numbness at extremities (it's not just because your 200 year-old classroom is cold), achy muscles, tiredness, clammy hands and anxiety. All symptoms I would say are very common around the staffroom, although even a combination of these will

admittedly not necessarily mean you have HVS. The general idea, according to my biologist friends, is that your body becomes more alkaline as carbon dioxide levels drop through sharp and shallow breathing, meaning the flow of blood to your brain is affected, and your normal pH balance is altered. More lactic acid is produced, meaning muscle ache, exhaustion and chronic tiredness, and your brain is starved of oxygen, making it harder to concentrate and complete those reports or target grades. As one therapist has put it, those of us who work in schools, "high-achievers and workaholics are sitting ducks for HVS".

So what should we be doing? It's not easy to cure quickly, but statements from those who have overcome HVS are encouraging. Firstly, breathe through your nose. Sometimes mouth-breathing will be necessary (in singing and in extremes of exercise), but if you do not breathe mostly through your nose, you are missing out on the air-conditioning that takes place behind your nostrils and disallowing proper breathing. Experiment: if you breathe through your nose but close off each nostril in turn you can see every three or four hours which side of your nose is clearing out the debris! Only 20-30% of breathing should be in the upper chest, the rest coming from the

diaphragm, low and slow at the rate of 10-12 breaths per minute, with exhalation being the slowest part. Shoulders should be dropped and should barely move with breathing: imagine carrying two heavy shopping bags, a music teacher advised me.

Think of tense muscles too. Try curling your toes or tensing any part of your body, and see how you can feel it in your throat. Taking time out and sitting or standing properly while teaching are just as important as breathing correctly. Exercise is good, and even if you consider yourself unfit, gardening, dancing or walking the dog for 30 minutes can be just as beneficial. One book advises to take up a "whacking" sport such as tennis or squash "to release anger, resentment and frustration". Perhaps our corporal punishing ancestors had less vented-up stress in their jobs?!

Coffee breath is not attractive, and nor is drinking coffee or any other caffeine-based drink much good for the health of your throat. Two to three litres of water a day is the way forward, though make sure the lavatories are not too far away! Dairy products are not very useful either, particularly if you know you will have to do a lot of speaking soon after. I gave up milk and cheese for a while, and was especially sorry as a

Francophile to lose the latter, taking up soya-based products instead. They don't taste too bad, but luckily my experiments proved I could return to my Stilton and Bleu d'Auvergne again! Chinese food is out though if you want a good night's sleep: save that monosodium glutamate till the weekend and holidays.

The thing I have found most difficult is speaking a lot while trying to concentrate on breathing through the nose. I have always had a tendency to speak too fast, and can find myself gasping for breath, especially in a room which is not well-ventilated. Just as we put punctuation into writing, the same should happen for speaking. We should take enough breath to get us to the end of or as far as we would want to go with a phrase. This one's quite easy to practise away from the classroom, but not so easy when you're in front of the class and the bell's about to go. Good breathing from the diaphragm should also help more resonant speaking and it's nice to be able to project to the back of the school hall again!

There are, of course, more serious possibilities leading from very similar symptoms to those seen in HVS, and it is worth checking things out if you are unsure. I contacted Cancer Research UK to see if there was

any direct link between teaching and laryngeal cancer, and was reassured to hear there is not and my ENT photos proved I'm safe. Continual vocal strain is obviously not a good idea physically or psychologically and the TUC through their Hazards website give good examples of this and emphasise the importance of a safe and healthy environment for those who use their voice a lot at work.

As for me, I've learnt a lot, but I'm still not better. Stresses and strains, and a weakened body from the lingering laryngitis have given me thyrotoxicosis, but the endocrinologist reckons I should be cured within the year. It really is essential that we as language teachers look after ourselves, as a linguist in the classroom really is not much good without his voice.

Hyperventilation Syndrome - Breathing Pattern Disorders, Dinah Bradley, (Kyle Cathie Ltd, 1991)

More Care of Your Voice, Voice Care Network UK, 1999

www.voicecare.org.uk

www.hazards.org/voiceless

www.cancer.org.uk

Storylines

Andrew Hunt
Whitgift School

During the course of my PGCE at the Institute of Education I was fortunate enough to be invited to take part in a Comenius project exploring the use of pupil-driven narratives as a tool in the MFL classroom. As part of the 'Creative Dialogues' project which is based on the storylines approach developed in Scotland during the 1970s (see <http://www.storylines-scotland.freeserve.co.uk/whatistoryline.html>), I spent a week teaching English at the Rangenberg Grundschule in Lübeck.

The Creative Dialogues approach is characterised by allowing pupils to have ownership of their learning as far as is possible within a broad framework provided by the teacher; the acquisition of new vocabulary and structures occurs because pupils need them to complete a project. Structures and vocabulary acquired as a result of pupils' need or desire to learn them seem to be retained much more effectively than those acquired in other ways. The Creative Dialogues approach is further characterised by maximum target language use and the creation of an end product (e.g. display or

performance) which lends the learning a sense of direction and purpose.

Perhaps the simplest way to illustrate how the Creative Dialogues approach works and what it has to offer the MFL teacher would be to outline briefly the structure of the series of lessons I taught in Lübeck by way of an example. I taught a class of 22 9 year-olds for an hour each day in a dedicated classroom. Their prior knowledge of English was limited to colours, numbers and some simple songs. Pupils had access to children's dictionaries.

Day 1 - Warm up song. Games to learn names.

Introduction of the storyline - the classroom is a brand new shopping centre but so far there are no shops in it. Our job is to finish the shopping centre off and get it ready for opening.

Stage 1 - brainstorm what shops we might have. Pupils use their dictionaries but are also free to brainstorm in their own language or by giving the names of chains of shops. The teacher provides the English where necessary and notes 8 of the shops on the board.

Stage 2 - brainstorm of what each of those shops might sell - creation of wordbanks.

Using a game, groups of 3 are created and allocated a shop to be responsible for.

Pupils asked to bring in objects to stock the shops with.

Day 2 - Previous day's learning elicited from pupils (both the names of shops, what they might sell and the storyline itself).

Stage 3 - Pupils name their shops (stimulus material was provided - British phone directories and advertising) and create signs.

Stage 4 - Show and tell of objects brought in for the shops. Missing English provided by the teacher. Colours and numbers elicited where appropriate.

Stage 5 - Objects labelled using dictionaries and with the help of the teacher. (Opportunity for teacher to point out the fact that English nouns are generally not capitalised)

Day 3 - Stage 6 - Teacher visits all shops and elicits from groups what kind of a shop it is, the name of the shop and what we can buy there while other pupils listen and repeat.

Stage 7 - emphasis on what colour is it/are they?

Stage 8 - Money introduced. Explanation of pounds vs euro including the different writing conventions. Pupils price goods.

Stage 9 - "How much is it/are they?" "That's cheap!" "That's expensive!"

As `homework` the pupils were given photocopied sheets of British notes and coins to colour in and cut out and asked to bring

them in a purse/wallet the following day.

Day 4 - Shops/products/prices etc elicited from pupils as warm up.

Stage 10 - Pupils visit one another's shops and buy products using their money. (Introduction of "I would like.....please." , "That's 10 pounds please" and "Here you are".)

Stage 11 - Pupils feedback to whole class (introduction of "I bought..") e.g. " I bought 3 bananas at the greengrocers. They cost five pounds."

Day 5 - Previous day's leaning reactivated.

Stage 12 - a mannequin was introduced to the class as "Bob", an English exchange pupil. Bob has just arrived in Lübeck. A suitcase was also shown to the class and they were invited to guess what Bob has brought with him for his stay. The suitcase is then revealed to be empty - Bob has forgotten to pack. The pupils are then asked to go shopping for Bob and buy him the things he needs for his stay.

Stage 13 - Pupils feedback - e.g. "I bought Bob a blue jumper from the clothes shop. It cost ten pounds." Parents were invited to observe the final lesson and after the lesson the pupils showed the parents around the `shopping centre`.

As can be seen, by the end of the week the pupils were able to use

a considerable amount of vocabulary and structures accurately and in context. During the lessons of course I used a lot of traditional approaches such as choral repetition or the 3 stage Q&A approach (Is this an orange? - yes/no, is this an orange or a lemon?, what is this?) to reinforce the learning. The storyline might have been taken further if more time had been available by creating characters who work in the shops and inventing backgrounds for them (working on ages, families, nationalities, physical descriptions etc) or by working on advertising material for the shops.

This example was of course with young learners who had very little prior knowledge of the language but the same general approach can be used with more advanced learners. An example of a Creative Dialogue which has worked well with much older pupils is that of creating a hotel (deciding on location, size, facilities etc), filling it with staff and guests and allowing them to interact, imagining events such as the arrival of a famous person, a fire, a murder and writing a script and then acting it out. With intermediate pupils a Creative Dialogue which also works well is that of planning a trip - pupils can decide where to go, who to go with, what to take

and then work on events which occur during the trip, perhaps writing a report about it from the perspective of having returned thus working on the past tense.

Creative Dialogues has real potential for use in MFL teaching - it motivates pupils by providing a change from working through a text book, giving them a meaty project to work on and allowing their imaginations free reign. It revises and extends learning and pupils are left with an end-product and a true sense of achievement. It can also have a positive effect on the pupil-teacher relationship as pupils come to see the teacher as a resource and team-member during the period of the Creative Dialogues project.

For more information on Creative Dialogues see www.creativedialogues@lernnetz.de

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Etudes universitaires de médecine : vaccin contre la désillusion à la faculté de Nancy

Cécile Léonard
Dresden International School

L'université de Nancy a envoyé au début de l'été une lettre de dissuasion à l'inscription en première année de faculté de médecine à une cinquantaine d'étudiants en possession d'un baccalauréat non scientifique. Cette initiative isolée, une première en France, se trouve en désaccord avec la loi Savary de 1984 qui régit l'enseignement supérieur et qui stipule que l'accès à l'université est libre pour tout titulaire du baccalauréat, quelle que soit la série. Ce récent courrier de dissuasion constitue-t-il une forme de sélection déguisée, contraire à la politique éducative générale de la France qui prône l'égalité des chances ?

La difficulté que représentent les études médicales est loin d'être un mythe : lourdeur des programmes, amphithéâtres surchargés, aucun soutien individuel pour les étudiants. Tout le monde sait qu'il faut passer le cap de la première année. La question de capacité d'accueil des étudiants reste cependant un véritable problème

au sein de toutes les branches universitaires.

En consultant les statistiques établies par le rapport de la Commission Pédagogique Nationale pour la première année des études de santé publié en 2003, on constate qu'environ 30% d'une cohorte de PCEM1 (première année du premier cycle d'études médicales) intègre le PCEM2, soit en un an, soit surtout en deux ans, voire en trois. Mais la moitié de cette cohorte quitte le cursus médical sans aucun diplôme, sans aucune équivalence ou aucune dispense. Le concours, qui clôture cette première année d'études commune à tous les étudiants en médecine et dentaire, se révèle donc très sélectif ! Les conseils donnés par le site Internet du magazine mensuel « L'Etudiant » (www.megasalon.letudiant.fr) aux bacheliers qui envisagent ce type d'études indiquent clairement qu'un bac S est quasiment indispensable pour réussir, sauf exception, dans environ 1% des cas. D'ailleurs, environ un bachelier sur deux, ayant obtenu le bac S avec au moins une mention bien, échoue également. Les universitaires et certains membres de la classe politique n'hésitent pas à parler de « gâchis humain » de la première année de médecine.

C'est donc pour éviter aux jeunes de connaître l'amère désillusion

de l'échec que la faculté de Nancy a adressé un courrier pratiquant la dissuasion douce aux candidats dont le profil paraît particulièrement inadapté. Jean Pierre Finance, président de l'université Henri Poincaré à Nancy a déclaré : « Même ceux qui ont eu leur bac S à l'arraché échouent à 98% au concours. La faculté de médecine a donc pensé qu'il était de son devoir de leur déconseiller cette voie qui les mènerait à l'échec et leur ferait perdre du temps. Deux ans pour trouver son orientation, c'est trop long. »

La lettre invite donc les jeunes bacheliers, titulaires d'un bac L, ES ou professionnel à revoir leur orientation et réfléchir à un autre projet professionnel afin de bénéficier d'une formation mieux adaptée. En aucun cas, elle n'empêche les étudiants de tenter leur chance et de suivre le parcours qu'ils avaient choisi. L'inscription reste possible même si elle est fortement déconseillée. La loi de 1984 demeure donc respectée.

Il se pose cependant toujours la question de la sélection à l'université en France. Officiellement absente à l'entrée, elle se pratique véritablement en cours d'études.

Puisque la sélection est inévitable, la mission de tout éducateur n'est-elle pas de conseiller au mieux les apprenants ? Quel est donc le moment le plus propice à la sélection dans un système qui se veut égalitaire ?

Il ne faut pourtant pas oublier que l'enseignement supérieur en France reste dual : les grandes écoles, sélectives, dont les élèves sont issus de classes préparatoires elles mêmes sélectives à l'entrée, forment l'élite du pays alors que l'université accueille la masse.

„Das Wichtigste ist, dass man nie aufhört zu fragen“ Das Einsteinjahr in Deutschland

Stefanie Schmiedel
Northwood College

2005 ist das offizielle „Einsteinjahr“ in Deutschland. Vor genau einhundert Jahren bereicherte der in Baden-Württemberg geborene Albert Einstein die Welt mit der Formel aller Formeln: $E=mc^2$. 2005 ist zudem das Jahr, in dem sich Einsteins Tod zum fünfzigsten Mal jährt. In den USA und in

Deutschland sind in diesem Jahr zahlreiche Ausstellungen zu finden, die sich auf unterschiedlichen Ebenen mit dem Wissenschaftler, dem Weltbürger und dem Menschen Einstein beschäftigen.

Wer war Albert Einstein?

Albert Einstein wurde am 4. März 1879 in Ulm geboren. Er verbrachte einen Teil seiner Jugend und Ausbildung in Italien und in der Schweiz. In der Schule bestach er nicht durch hervorragende Leistungen, auffallend war jedoch seine Fähigkeit abstrakt zu denken. Einstein war als Mathematik- und Physiklehrer ausgebildet worden, nahm aber zunächst eine Stelle beim Schweizer Patentamt an. Während dieser Zeit gelangen ihm seine wichtigsten naturwissenschaftlichen Entdeckungen. 1905 legte der damals 26-jährige Physiker in seiner Doktorarbeit die Relativitätstheorie vor, die er 1915 mit der „Allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie“ erweiterte. 1914 wurde er Leiter des Kaiser Wilhelm Instituts für Physik und Professor an der Universität in Berlin. Einstein lehrte und forschte in Berlin bis 1933, bevor er die amerikanische Staatsbürgerschaft und eine Anstellung als Professor in Princeton annahm. Während seines ganzen Lebens beschäftigte sich Einstein nie ausschließlich mit der Physik,

sondern auch mit dem Zusammenleben der Menschheit. So publizierte er beispielsweise Aufsätze und Schriften über den Zionismus und die Absurdität des Krieges. Die Gründung eines jüdischen Staates in Palästina und der Pazifismus waren zwei Themen, die er vehement in der Öffentlichkeit vertrat. Auch privat war Einsteins Leben ereignisreich: 1919 ließ er sich von seiner ersten Frau, mit der er zwei Kinder hatte, scheiden und heiratete bald darauf seine Cousine Elsa Löwenthal. Einstein starb in Princeton am 18. April 1955. Trotz seiner 22 Jahre Lehrtätigkeit in der Universität findet man in der Stadt auf Einsteins eigenen Wunsch keine Spuren des großen Physikers und Nobelpreisträgers.

$E=mc^2$: „Der glücklichste Gedanke meines Lebens“

Um die eigentliche Errungenschaft des jungen Doktors der Physik zu würdigen, muss man die Zeit betrachten, in der die Relativitätstheorie veröffentlicht wurde. Während Conrad Röntgens Entdeckungen 1895 beispielsweise auch für die Mehrheit der Nicht-Mediziner in der Bevölkerung anschaulich war, geht es bei Einsteins revolutionärer Erkenntnis um unsichtbare Teilchen und abstrakte Größen wie Lichtgeschwindigkeit und Masse. Die Gesetze der Mechanik, mit deren Hilfe alle

Naturerscheinungen nach dem Ursache - Wirkungs - Prinzip berechnet werden konnten, wurden spätestens seit der Entdeckung elektromagnetischer Wellen in Frage gestellt. Einstein geht 1905 noch einen Schritt weiter, indem er erklärt, dass Raum und Zeit nicht überall gleich seien, sondern von der Bewegung des Beobachters abhängen. Wenn sich zwei Objekte geradlinig und mit konstanter Geschwindigkeit zueinander bewegen, dann ist Energie (E) gleich Masse (m) mal Lichtgeschwindigkeit im Quadrat (c^2). Alles klar? Man bedenke, welch abstraktes Denkvermögen Einstein seinen Zeitgenossen vor einhundert Jahren zumutete!

Einstein als Vorbild für die deutsche Jugend

Bei der offiziellen Eröffnungsfeier des Einsteinjahres im Deutschen Historischen Museum in Berlin forderte Bundeskanzler Gerhard Schröder, dass ein neues Bewusstsein für Wissenschaft im Alltag gefördert werden müsse. Für die deutsche Jugend sei Einstein ein Vorbild: ein leidenschaftlicher Forscher, der sich für soziale und politische Themen interessierte und als engagierter Weltbürger auf verschiedenen Ebenen ins Weltgeschehen eingriff. Die deutsche Medienlandschaft hat seit Beginn des Jahres den Auftrag, sich auf die Produktion jugendgerechter Beiträge über

Biotechnologie und Teilchenphysik zu konzentrieren. In Deutschlands Hauptstadt Berlin sind einige Gebäude und Bürgersteige mit Einstein-Zitaten geschmückt. Vom „Genie des 20. Jahrhunderts“ sind zahlreiche Aussprüche naturwissenschaftlicher, politischer und zwischenmenschlicher Natur überliefert. Einsteins Äußerung „Das Wichtigste ist, dass man nie aufhört zu fragen“, die auf einige Überreste nationalsozialistischer Architektur geschrieben wurde, unterstreicht die Aktualität Einsteinscher Arbeitsmoral und Lebensweisheit. In Anbetracht der ermutigenden Ergebnisse der zweiten Pisa Studie hofft man, dass sich deutsche SchülerInnen Einsteins Philosophie des „Wissensdurst als Lebensaufgabe“ weiterhin zu Herzen nehmen.

Das Einsteinjahr ist eine Initiative von Bundesregierung, Wissenschaft, Wirtschaft und Kultur.

Weitere Informationen finden Sie unter

www.einsteinjahr.de

www.einsteinausstellung.de

www.einstein-heute.de

Acoso escolar

Elena Caballero

University College School

Últimamente vengo observando que cada vez se publican más artículos sobre el acoso escolar en los periódicos españoles. Desde luego éste no es un fenómeno nuevo en los colegios - todos hemos sido víctimas o verdugos en mayor o menor grado en nuestra época escolar- y el acoso es tan antiguo como la institución del colegio. Entonces, ¿a qué se debe la relevancia pública que actualmente está cobrando el tema en España?

Recientemente, diversos casos de violencia escolar han salido a la palestra y han disparado la alarma social, política y educativa: un joven de 14 años, Jokin Zeberio acaba suicidándose en Hondarribia (Guipúzcoa) debido a la presión psicológica que sufría en el colegio, y otro joven en Elda (Alicante) acaba lanzándose desde un puente.

La sociedad española ha cambiado considerablemente en los últimos treinta años. De "la gran familia" hemos pasado a diferentes modelos familiares, entre ellos las familias monoparentales; la mujer se ha incorporado al mercado laboral; la tasa de divorcios se ha disparado; la de natalidad ha descendido hasta cifras

inimaginables en la época de la familia numerosa que tanto alentaba y recompensaba el régimen del General Franco (actualmente España tiene la tasa de natalidad más baja del mundo).

Los niños de hace 30 años también fuimos llamados "cuatro ojos", "gordos" o "empollones" por compañeros intimidadores, sin embargo no sufrimos por ello grandes traumas y por aquel entonces ni siquiera habíamos oído hablar del *bullying*, fenómeno que se generó en EEUU en los 70 y para el que ni siquiera disponemos de un término en español acuñado y/o aceptado por la Real Academia Española de la Lengua.

¿Éramos psicológicamente más fuertes los niños de entonces? Supongo que nos defendíamos haciéndonos amigos del grandullón de la clase o buscando a nuestro hermano mayor en el recreo, o corriamos que nos las pelábamos en un intento de escaparnos del acoso del que estábamos siendo víctimas, y al llegar a nuestro destino simplemente esbozábamos una sonrisa de victoria sin importarnos si alguien nos veía como a unos "gallinas". Al menos actuábamos. Al llegar a casa ya se encargaba el hermano mayor "de soplar" lo que había ocurrido ese día en el colegio y toda la familia lo comentaba mientras

engullíamos el cocido o las lentejas de rigor.

Hoy día ¿a quién acude el niño? Como consecuencia de la actual estructura socio-familiar, el niño pasa la mayor parte del tiempo en el colegio, y cuando vuelve a casa, no siempre hay alguien esperándolo para comentar cómo le ha ido el día en el cole, no puede ver a sus amigos entre semana o no tiene hermanos con quién charlar. El mundo virtual suele ser su único aliado y referencia, aspecto poco beneficioso para él; la televisión y el ordenador o videoconsolas, además de aislarlo aún más, contribuyen a fomentar tanto el aislamiento como la violencia.

El fenómeno del acoso puede, en determinados casos, rebasar el ámbito escolar. El auge de las denominadas pandillas callejeras o urbanas podría agravar el problema con la posibilidad de que entraran en juego factores diferenciadores, no sólo socioculturales y económicos, sino también religiosos, étnicos y raciales, como reflejo de una sociedad desarrollada que promueve el estado de bienestar.

El *bullying* se convierte así en tema polémico y complejo, de difícil solución, en el que se vería implicado el triángulo Gobierno-padres-educadores.

Por un lado, el Gobierno debería plantearse modificaciones de la actual Ley del Menor y el Código Disciplinario. Por otro, padres y educadores deberían llevar a cabo una labor conjunta de seguimiento del alumno y fomentar la tolerancia ante las diferencias sociales, tanto en el seno familiar como en el colegial. Los casos puntuales de victimización deberían ser tenidos en cuenta como actos que podrían desembocar en situaciones de riesgo si no son controlados a tiempo.

El actual gobierno de Rodríguez Zapatero quizás deba plantearse introducir nuevas asignaturas en lugar de suprimir algunas ya existentes, que tan sólo ayudarían a perder la identidad de esta España, que parece tan perdida, y que habrá de reinventarse a sí misma. No estaría de más introducir un nuevo código de valores más acorde con la nueva actualidad española.

Scusi, che italiano parla ?

Ernestina Meloni

American School London

Guardie svizzere, scienziate, cardinali, in una Roma, giura l'autore del Codice Da Vinci, più vera del vero. Peccato che, nel successivo romanzo, *Angeli e Demoni*, si esprimano in una lingua inventata.

Dan Brown ha venduto, in Italia, più di 800 mila copie di *Angeli e Demoni*. Anche in questo libro Dan Brown ha assicurato di aver basato la trama, quasi inverosimile, su fatti veri e documenti storici, insomma sulla realtà. Potrebbe anche essere vero però quando poi si arriva alla lingua ci vengono dei dubbi. Per esempio, quando appaiono due guardie svizzere alla ricerca di quattro cardinali scomparsi, i due parlano in italiano, quindi in corsivo sul testo. Uno urla al telefono : *" Continua cercando!"* E l'altro dice *" Probasti il museo ?"* Ma forse essendo svizzeri masticano male l'italiano? Eppure lo scrittore e' un tipo preciso. Ma mentre si continua la lettura, l'italiano diventa sempre più creativo. Infatti c'è la scena della guardia svizzera che si rivolge al Comandante e gli dice, in tono cospiratorio : *" Spazzare di Cappella"*. Ora, non solo la guardia parla all'infinito, come parlavano gli indiani d'America

nei film western doppiati in Italiano, ma usa anche il termine spazzare che può decisamente creare degli equivoci. Salta fuori invece che vuole solo "sweep the chapel" cioè eliminare eventuali microspie nascoste nella Cappella Sistina, dove si dovrà presto tenere il conclave. Le guardie svizzere hanno fatto cilecca ancora una volta ! Più avanti, infatti, i due protagonisti, il semiologo e Vittoria, la bellissima scienziate italiana, ricevono la seguente ingiunzione a fermarsi: "Para". Quando la donna reagisce, la guardia le punta addosso la pistola e intima : *" Non sportarti !"* Lei per fortuna capisce ... e non si sporta !!!

Ma non solo le guardie svizzere parlano un italiano strano. Verso la fine del libro due donne anziane romane si rivolgono ai protagonisti che non si può entrare nella chiesa di Santa Maria della Vittoria perché *"è chiusa temprano"* *" Closed early ?"* chiede Vittoria e miracolosamente anche le due signore romane parlano inglese. Nel frattempo è entrato un uomo e ha cacciato via tutti. *" Hanno conosciuto l'uomo ?"* chiede Vittoria, che in realtà voleva sapere se le donne avessero riconosciuto l'uomo appena entrato. E loro poi continuano con un italiano piuttosto strano concludendo *"è uno straniero crudo"* e non si fermano qui, continuano dicendo che lo

straniero è anche bar-arabo. Come lo hanno chiamato ? Chiede il protagonista. Barbaro ? Non proprio così " risponde Vittoria. "Bar-arabo è un gioco di parole insultante che vuol dire "arabo". Insomma in quale dialetto o lingua parlino non si sa. Quello che invece si può dire è che nella versione italiana, uscita nella scorsa primavera, le traduttrici hanno cancellato tutti questi strafalcioni, compreso il giochino di parole bar-arabo, che pare sia stato proprio inventato dallo stesso Dan Brown. Ma non bisogna esser così severi e cattivelli ! Con "Il Codice da Vinci" Dan Brown ha portato decine di turisti al cenacolo di Vinciano. Ha fatto molto di più : ha aperto per la prima volta le porte del Louvre alle telecamere impegnate al remake cinematografico del romanzo. Anche con "*Angeli e Demoni*" , ambientato nella splendida Roma antica, ha ispirato un gruppo di giovani che hanno disegnato un itinerario ad hoc. I quattro amici hanno messo su un'associazione culturale Dark Rome e hanno lanciato nel web il "Tour ufficiale di *Angeli e Demoni*. Il risultato è un percorso che ricalca le orme degli Illuminati protagonisti del libro di Brown, attraverso la chiesa di Santa Maria del Perdono, la Cappella Chigi e le tele del Caravaggio, San Pietro, la chiesa barocca di Santa Maria della Vittoria, Piazza della Minerva, il Pantheon, Piazza Navona e,

naturalmente Castel Sant'Angelo. Insomma chi volesse unirsi deve solo prenotarsi sul sito : www.angeli demoni.i E ... buona vacanza !!!

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New technology for 'la rentrée'

Thomas Underwood
University College School

A challenge for a number of MFL departments at this moment in time is the ever increasing amount of new ICT and which direction to take. There are many different software packages that have saturated the market, let alone new advances in web hosting, VLE's and digital whiteboards. Some schools, UCS included, are also set to embrace or already have a Modern Languages ICT suite, and with it the task of digitalising current resources and developing new content. At present publishers do not offer such digital files and there are various issues concerning copying rights etc. However it is still possible to convert one's own material for ease of use within the department. Of course this involves much work in the short-term, but in theory once the resources are stored on a hard drive, there should no longer be any issues regarding lost tapes or CDs (or colleagues hoarding the past 10 years' worth!). To this extent I have been using the excellent *'Super MP3 Recorder Professional'* by *Admiresoft* (available to download from the Internet and £18 to register for full usage) on my computer, which enables tapes and CDs to

be converted to mp3 format. I have found the program to be a truly invaluable tool, as it also permits the user to record 'live' from the internet (radio stations, news clips etc) and can record live sound from a microphone. I recently took advantage of having some Austrian friends staying with us and recorded some conversations and questions and answers for my Year 11 set next term.

A new project of mine this year is to give each pupil in my Sixth form French and German sets a USB memory stick and to regularly upload news clips, sounds, extra articles and tasks and other video / TV clips for their independent use. At the end of the summer term they expressed much interest in this idea and I hope it will encourage them to watch the news clips, complete the tasks that I have set and expose themselves to more language. There are some excellent websites that contain video and sound files, in my opinion the best are www.rtl.de, www.sat1.de, www.tv5.org, <http://videojts.france2.fr> and <http://videojts.france3.fr/>, the latter has amongst other programs all the regional news bulletins from across France, giving a great insight to the various accents and local events. Another dependable and easy to use language tool is *'Hot Potatoes'*, a free package from

the University of Victoria in Canada. This enables the user to create a wide variety of interactive questions (for example gap fills, jumbled sentences, straight question and answer) and include graphics, video and sound files as well, should one wish. These can then be easily transferred to a website for easy access for the pupils. I generally create a package and upload it on to my website at the end of a specific topic, enabling the pupils to revise independently and at their own pace. I was fortunate enough to be at the RGS High Wycombe as a PGCE student five years ago when Andrew Balaam and co first discovered the software and their website has expanded at an incredible rate since.

I feel quite strongly that as language teachers we should embrace new technology, if it is likely to be beneficial to the learning process. It can also be an excellent resource outside of the classroom. I am sure new technology can co-exist with traditional teaching styles and indeed compliment one another.

<http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/>
<http://www.languagesonline.org.uk/>
<http://www.tpugerman.co.uk>

Review of U.C.S. Modern Languages Evening

Terry Kyan
University College School

I teach French to GCSE. And if I'm entirely honest, and it's probably time to come out of the closet, one of the aspects of the teaching I most enjoy is the grammar. Yes, of course, I want to inspire a love the language, the culture, a desire to go France etc., but what really turns me on is the glorious security of knowing that certain verbs take être in the Perfect and that the adjectives 'marron' and 'orange' are invariable. And it's not just the grammar (it's all coming out now), I do get more than a twinge of pleasure from drilling vocabulary, doing listening comprehensions... OK, I'll stop there. Suffice it to say that I love the structure and regularity of it all, of knowing that, as long as I abide by a set of rules, my universe (and with luck that of my pupils) should come out more or less intact.

However, the downside of this approach, is that I tend to get lost in the 'rules' and forget to connect with the person on the other side. And this, I think, is why a Modern Languages evening is so important, to remind us about the people - me, you,

other colleagues, Moliere, the catering staff, Lorca, , Franz Schubert, Bertolt Brecht and, of course, most important of all, the pupils.

Did I know, for example, that Robbie Stern, to whom I taught direct object pronouns when he was in the Lower Remove, was also a violinist of extraordinary virtuosity,- as demonstrated when he played a piece by Pablo de Sarasate? Did I know that Jamie Breslaw has a real flair for comedy (actually his behaviour in my lessons gave me an inkling) as shown when he played the dazzling British blonde in a Spanish restaurant? Not to mention Ed Bailey in the Remove who played a nagging German housewife in a Lorient sketch and countless other pupils who amazed with their musical, dramatic and comic talent.

What struck me in the verbal pieces was not only the fluency within the three languages (French, German, Spanish) but also the ability to hit the right 'beats', particularly in excerpts from 'Andorra' and 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme' where the emotions and dramatic tone were maturely caught by the actors.

As for the pupils behind the scenes, I was struck by their professional efficiency, particularly those who dealt with the lighting and sound.

For my part, helping to organise the evening gave me a chance to connect in a new way not only with pupils but with staff and to gain a wider experience of the school outside my departmental 'box'. For example, I got to meet a wide variety of new pupils - an opportunity I might not otherwise have had, as I don't teach certain years with the school this year.

From the organisational point of view, I believe we got it more or less right. An enthusiastic boy did a fantastic job on the publicity. The wine and food, a selection of charcuterie and tapas, was superb and plentiful. The only shame was there weren't enough of us after the show to do justice to it. So perhaps next time we need to point up the fact that supper is definitely on the house.

If there was one failing it was perhaps that we needed more contributions from pupils at the lower end of the school - not only to help them feel more involved, but from a purely selfish Thespian point of view, to boost the audience figures (working from the unmistakable fact that the more pupils you involve the more parents attend). The house was respectably filled. Next time we want them hanging from the rafters.



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 Spring Edition of the Newsletter should be with the editor by Friday 6th January 2006.

National Film Theatre French Cinema Study Day: Truffaut

Richard Hoare
Tonbridge School

The NFT organises Study Days on French Film for both students and teachers at least once a term. They are led by Wendy Hewing and the one I attended in March was devoted to the director beloved of awarding bodies, François Truffaut. The morning session involved a lecture on the New Wave in English followed by analysis of Jules et Jim and Le dernier métro in French, both parts incorporating a little audience participation. In the afternoon, there was a showing in NFT 1 of Le dernier métro.

This was a useful study day which met with the approval of my Upper Sixth students' who have studied the topic for A Level. They particularly enjoyed the detailed introduction to the New Wave which was sensibly delivered in English. The audience participation was not always so successful although it did break up the delivery. I was doubtful in advance about the value of the afternoon showing of the film but the big screen experience of the film transformed some of my students' perceptions of the film. I would recommend these study

days for Sixth Form students studying French cinema.

National Schools Film Week

Monday 17 - Friday 21 October 2005



2005 marks the 20th anniversary of Film Education and the 10th anniversary of National Schools Film Week. Since 1985, Film Education has been developing the range of its publications and services to respond to the growing importance of Media Education in the National Curriculum and to meet the increasing demand for current educational material on film and film making.

The Goethe-Institut supports the National Schools Film Week and contributes to educational screenings of German speaking cinema with films ranging from the historical, such as Sophie Scholl, to the classics of the silent movie era such as The Doll. In supporting teachers, the Goethe-Institut gives pupils the opportunity to enjoy films as an integral part of language learning and intercultural understanding.

Calendar

17.10.05
Sophie Scholl. The Final Days
Goethe-Institut London

19.10.05
The Miracle of Bern
Goethe-Institut London

20.10.05
The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant
Goethe-Institut London

21.10.05
The Doll
Goethe-Institut London



**ALL Language World
conference and exhibition
2006**

Language World conference
and exhibition, 7-8 April 2006

University of Manchester
Theme: Working together

A full programme for
Language World will be
available in autumn 2005.