

USING ICT TO ENHANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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Some of us may experience difficulties and frustrations in accessing and using ICT. Yet few of us doubt that it has a contribution to make to the effective teaching and learning of MFLs and most of us also accept that ICT skills can be enhanced through the kind of activities carried out in the MFL classroom.

However, it's easy to become a little overwhelmed with the plethora of choice now available to us in ICT. I'd like to start by highlighting the benefits offered by television and video. Most schools have VCR equipment. Most teachers and pupils are confident about using it. Broadcasters such as Channel 4 continue to commission and transmit programmes that are generally of a high quality. Programmes can be recorded off air by centres holding the ERA licence. Reasonably priced videos can be bought. Most importantly, children respond positively to television and are motivated by narrative, which television does well. Television/video is also highly flexible and can be used with the whole class, groups and individuals. There is also a wide range of support available, some of it in the traditional print formats of teacher guides and activity/resource books and increasingly, some of it on line. It's also worth bearing in mind that the skills in making good use of TV/video are transferable to any medium. For example, CD-ROM/DVD uses moving image technology and television production companies continue to supply the highest quality of moving images that are increasingly being used in new technologies.

So do we just go on using television as we have always done? Yes and no. Certainly we should feel confident about our skills in using the medium but not complacent and new teachers or those embarking on MFL for the first time do need to give some thought as to the effective use of the medium for language learning. Here's a reminder of some of the basic principles:

- Familiarise yourself with the resource and the language content, using all the support available (teaching guidelines, transcripts etc.)
- Match the resource to your programmes of study - where/when can it fit in?
- Decide which part of the resource you are going to focus on - most programmes are far too long to show right through unless just as a taster or for revision. The language content is usually high and they are designed for intensive use.
- Decide what learning outcomes you are looking for. Don't try to cover everything - you can always revisit for another purpose.
- Decide on a viewing plan - what do you want the pupils to do - before viewing, during viewing and after viewing?
- Ensure you have organised pupil support material.
- Decide the viewing situation - location, group, and time.
- Check equipment and set the video.
- Brief the pupils.
- Be prepared to stop/start the video and to use the pause button to still the screen to allow you to interrogate the image.

Here is a reminder of some of the key skills you can practise with pupils:

- Listening for understanding, information, enjoyment and pronunciation - give pupils specific tasks, differentiate, make it fun.
- Speaking - repetition for pronunciation, question/answer, turn off sound and supply dialogue, role-play, transfer language elements to real life situation.
- Reading - words/phrases on screen, language elements transferred to worksheets, extracts from transcripts, your own posters, notices etc.
- Writing - captions, completing worksheets, word-processing.

With some investment of time and hard work the potential for using video for language learning is enormous. Too often we see it as an easy option and miss out on many aspects of its usefulness.

Here are some of the television resources and support available from Channel 4:

- **We Are From** - children from European countries show us their countries and tell us about their lives. Support: Website www.channel4.com/wearefrom
- **Chez Mimi, Hennings Haus, La Tienda de Luis** - three series especially made for Scotland and for beginners in the primary school. The programmes offer basic language material in a fun situation with larger than life central characters. Support: Teacher's Guides, Personal Activity Book, and full transcripts on the 4Learning website: www.channel4.com/primary. For French and German there are also interactive websites with 10 games for youngsters to play at three different levels: www.channel4.com/modernlanguages.
- **Top! 1 & 2** - ten programmes for French, German and Spanish in the form of a games show but designed to introduce basic language skills, the linguistic content underlined by visuals and repetition. Support: Learner Books with photo-copiable activity sheets plus on the website key vocabulary and programme content: www.channel4.com/secondary and then select your language.
- **Animated Tales of The World** - five tales for each language: French, German, and Spanish. These are beautifully crafted tales with sensitive commentaries, quite demanding but very appealing. Primary teachers might like to discuss with their secondary schools focusing on, say, one tale. Support: programme notes on the web, which include transcripts, key vocabulary, and activity sheets, which you can simplify: www.channel4.com/secondary and then select your language.
- **Homework High** - a unique free service for pupils who need some help with their homework. Real teachers provide online help which often contains references to a range of very useful and user friendly websites and pupils can also consult a vast library of previously asked questions. They can search by typing in their age and key words about what they are looking for. Real time help is currently available Wednesday evening 6.30 - 8.30: www.homeworkhigh.com

It's a good idea to look at both our primary and secondary output, as most children in other parts of the UK don't start MFL until secondary. Also for your own continuing professional development it's worth looking at the secondary output which includes series such as Extra and the associated CD-ROMs, and also our secondary website where there is a range of useful material, often supported by transcripts.

And finally just a word about the use of the Internet. Undoubtedly, for teachers and pupils one of its main uses is providing a wide range of materials that can support cultural understanding and language acquisition - material that is devised by organisations in the UK such as Channel 4 but also material that comes from a variety of other countries. Our website offers information regarding scheduling i.e. what is broadcast - go to Quick Links on the site and scroll to TV Listings and you can search by subject, series, programme or date. Generally programmes are transmitted for a minimum of three years and virtually all are available on video. There is also an online shop, which gives you information about availability, prices and allows you to purchase online. For every recently made programme we offer you, under primary and secondary and then the subject area, a synopsis, curriculum relevance, and often key vocabulary, suggested activities and sometimes transcripts. While much of the material can be printed out for your reference, you may prefer to copy and paste material you wish to use with pupils as this allows you to be selective, to modify and to change font, style and size. The material can then be used in a worksheet format or with an overhead projector.

Our interactive websites for pupils are designed to be motivating and fun to use as well as educational. Pupils can practise skills in searching and finding, navigating and using, and emailing (Homework High and Grid Club) as well as practising their foreign language skills. Our resources can also stimulate a range of other creative activities that will develop both ICT and language skills, for example, creating a range of products such as posters, invitations, documents, projects, presentations/PowerPoint and websites.

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