

ICT-in-Education - impact scenario

No.3 - Student engagement with German increases by almost 45%

Abstract - Pupils in a German class were asked to prepare a lengthy piece of work, in German, to share with pupils at the school's link school in Germany. The students were writing about themselves, their interests and hobbies, and about their school and neighbourhood.

Instead of this being done as an essay (as was usually done), the students created web pages in the school's learning platform. As this is done with a drag-drop toolkit that is very easy to use, only a few minutes had to be dedicated to showing the students how to construct web pages.

During the majority of the lesson every single student engaged with the task at the level normally only expected of the most interested students.

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Level of impact – enhances existing process (transitional)

Impact on who? –Students and their teacher

Particularly relevant issues – None, could equally apply in the majority of schools.

Scenario – In order to get the pupils to write in German, one of the tasks the teacher used was to get the pupils to write about themselves, their neighbourhood and interests for the pupils in their link school in Germany. This had traditionally been done by the pupils writing in essay format. While the pupils would normally engage with the task reasonably well, they saw it as a learning task rather than an activity that interested and excited them.

The school has implemented a Frog learning platform that includes an easy-to-use drag and drop page-making toolkit for creating web pages. There is complete control of the design of the pages and the ability to add in images and media files. The teacher decided that instead of having the pupils write in essay format, they would instead create web pages.

The students were familiar with logging on to the learning platform so the only introductory work necessary was the introduction to the page-making toolkit. The teacher noted that the pupils engaged with the task with considerably more enthusiasm than was normal for other groups doing this task and for this class generally. They became much more concerned with what they wanted to communicate and hence about how best to use the German language for this.

Though some time was taken up with designing pages, the teacher felt that this was fully justified as the engagement with using German increased significantly. Design of a web page does of course cause one to think carefully about how best to express oneself in the space available in a page. If a linked page is used for some aspect of what is being said, then this can cause the pupil to write at greater length in order to make the page stand alone better.

Overall the pupils found the exercise much more fun than the teacher would expect were they to have been doing the task in essay format and the the teacher felt the amount of learning of German that had happened during the exercise had increased significantly over the previous approach.

Previous approach – The pupils wrote in essay format and could not make what they were writing visually appealing or hyper-linked.

Quantification - A reasonable estimate of engagement of the class in the previous approach is to assume a normal distribution. For a class of 30 this works out to roughly

10% (3 pupils) engaged 90% = 2.7 pupil lessons

20% (6 pupils) engaged 70% = 4.2 pupil lessons

40% (12 pupils) engaged 50% = 6 pupil lessons

20% (6 pupils) engaged 30% = 1.8 pupil lessons

10% (3 pupils) engaged 10% = 0.3 pupil lessons

total = 15 pupil lessons, or on average each pupil only 50% engaged.

If all the pupils were 90% engaged that equals 27 pupil-lessons.

If we then assume that 20% of the lesson was used to focus on how to build web pages, rather than on language construction, we must take only 80% of the time the pupils were engaged = 21.6 pupil-lessons.

Though this is obviously a gross simplification, it suggests that the pupils were almost one and half times as engaged with the work as normal, with a consequent improvement in quantity and quality of the work.

Case Study/Full Description – tbc

Caveats - none

New skills (teachers and pupils) inc SEAL and PLTS – Ability to design and create effective web pages. This ought to include assessment of differences between web pages in German and English, as the German writtent language takes up around 50% more space than English.

Other evidence already available - Comparison of the language work produced by this group could be made with previous years when the task has been undertaken, or compared with the teacher's expectations of their students.

The teacher could be asked to make a better assessment of the degree of engagement of each pupil with this task, by comparing the German language they created for this task with what similar classes in the past created in essay format.

Next steps in quantifying the impact - tbc

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