

## Interim report IATL project

### 'Culture and Global Citizenship: Learning Around the Year Abroad'

#### **May – June 2015**

20 students were recruited to the project and attended a training programme run by the Centre for Professional Education at Warwick and trainee Modern Foreign Language PGCE students. Students worked with PGCE students to identify the learning potential in everyday objects and to create learning activities around these. A minority of students subsequently visited the schools they had been partnered with. Unfortunately, some students were not able to arrange a mutually-convenient time to meet with their partner teachers (because of pressures at the school end as well as the problems of fitting meetings around university exams). Face to face meeting was hugely beneficial for those that did manage it, however, and these meetings led to productive goal-setting for the coming academic year.

#### **July – August 2015**

Cathy Hampton presented a paper at the *Culture of Study Abroad for Second Languages* Conference at St Mary's University, Halifax, Canada (via Skype). The paper linked a previous IATL funded Student as Producer Project (*Finding a French education programme fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century British school children*) with the current project. It was well received, and has now been written up for the journal *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics / Revue canadienne de linguistique appliquée* (publication forthcoming).

Our objective for the summer was to set up a dedicated Moodle area for the project using the Languages@warwick moodle. This had been discussed and planned with the techsupport team there, but extensive changes to this moodle platform over the summer meant that the page was not fully accessible to all students and school teachers until early November 2015. This was unfortunate because it meant that we were not able to familiarise them with the site before the students left for their Year Abroad, leading to a weaker uptake in use of the site (more of which later)

#### **September – December 2015**

The students left for France and Martinique at the end of September. I gave them a month or so to settle before contacting them again about the project. In the meantime I appointed a project administrator, Sarah Scales (a postgraduate student working in French who had previously been an MFL teacher)

13<sup>th</sup> November saw the terrorist attack in Paris, which generated considerable anxiety, and pastoral work with students took priority throughout the French section.

Over these first few months, despite the lack of stability that resulted from the attack in Paris, students who had made good face-to-face links with their schools successfully began to exchange material in accordance with the project contracts they had put in place. Students whose links with their schools were weaker were less focussed: some developed materials independently, despite a lack of teacher input; others did not engage with the project.

## **January to March 2016**

With the arrival of the New Year, we decided to inject some new life into the project! I telephoned and skyped some students to find out how they were faring. Sarah contacted students and teachers repeatedly by email. We ran an interim questionnaire for both teachers and students. We also reviewed the aims and outcomes of the project so far. A number of things became clear as a result of this:

- Despite the agreement made in the summer to use the VLE as an area for sharing resources and ideas, few students would do this, and not a single member of staff made use of it.
- Neither students nor teaching staff would readily respond to emails and forum correspondence, so it was very difficult to discover why this space was not being used
- Those staff who had good working relationships with their student representatives were communicating by email. This worked very well for them, but prevented us from seeing what they were developing together.
- Some students had not been in regular contact with their appointed schools and felt unsure about what they should be looking for in terms of resources.

### **The following steps were taken to remedy this:**

- We met with the CPE staff to establish clear targets for all students based on national curriculum topics at key stage 3 and 4.
- Sarah organised the VLE into themed areas so that all students – even those who had had minimal contact with their partner schools – could contribute meaningfully.
- I communicated via skype / phone / email with students about uploading video and images to the site using the shared Kaltura media gallery, and made further training videos to accompany this.
- We added some examples of good practice, with comments, to stimulate and give confidence to students
- We involved 7 2015-16 trainee MFL PGCE students on the project. I went to talk to the group about the project (one student was being trained at a school that was already working with one of our students very successfully, and endorsed its usefulness). We then planned for these students to transform some of the materials uploaded onto the VLE into learning resources and to re-upload these onto the site to show our students how their hard work could be put to good use. The PGCE students also left forum entries for our YA students requesting particular resources.

### **Interim goals**

- Students were asked to contribute a range of materials to specific topic areas. A new topic area was prioritised every couple of weeks
- We stressed the importance of using video to communicate with the UK school children. A resource is always much more useful if accompanied by a short film in which the student explains how and why it was collected, where it was collected from, what influenced their choices, etc... This makes for more meaningful engagement between pupil and student. It would also be extremely useful for teachers to have video of interviews with French school pupils and other French young people about their lives.

### **Interim Outcomes**

- Some topics attracted a very good response, and have generated a number of resources.
- We received some further information about good practice from those teachers and students who have been running the project successfully, but independently of the VLE

- In general, students are very reluctant to make or use video. With one or two exceptions, they have lacked the confidence to make short films.

## **April – May**

We began to review the project and to put in place a series of major changes for next year, in the following areas:

- We have recognised that the VLE platform is not working. We have begun to develop a new platform for the project in Facebook (much used by teachers and students alike) and in Warwick Blogs (a group blog is in the process of being established)
- With the CPE we have made a decision to link the project explicitly with local training schools used for the PCGE course. In the course of 2016-17, Modern Foreign Language PGCE students will be tasked with using materials gathered by students abroad to create learning resources as part of their training.
- We have planned a new training workshop, for use with future students, which incorporates training in the use of video and other online resources.
- We have planned for resources from the project to be used in Subject Hub meetings for local schools run by the CPE (these are training events)
- We are targeting new developments in the MFL National Curriculum and preparing our students to source material in these areas (in particular, the new GCSE culture section and the new A level syllabus with its focus on the analysis of literature and ideas).

We have run a presentation jointly with the CPE to advertise the project to next year's students. The recruitment was very successful: 42 students have now registered their interest in participating in the project next year.

We are presenting the project at the next Teach Meet (meeting of local Coventry and Warwickshire schools), taking place on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016. We have already secured the involvement of some local school 'superteachers' to help us promote it and to identify areas of need.

## **Financial expenditure thus far**

Given the lack of participation in the VLE, the administrative costs of the project have been much lighter than envisaged so far. We anticipated that our administrator would be ordering and analysing materials gathered on the VLE and redistributing them to schools, but it was clear that our pilot group of teachers did not have the time to engage in this way. The administrator was therefore unable to fulfil the original role we had envisaged for her during terms 1 and 2; we have thus revised the areas of focus for May – August:

- Developing teaching and learning activities from resources collected this year, as demonstration material for next year's project. These will be showcased at the Teach Meet in June.
- Developing hard copy packs of learning activities and materials from resources gathered this year to be distributed to teachers at the Teach Meet for trial use in the classroom.
- Co-running the training session for outgoing students (17<sup>th</sup> June 2016)
- Setting up mailing lists and Facebook page for new student volunteers.
- Writing, running and analysing questionnaires for this year's project participants.
- Revising project information materials

- Contributing to conference paper on the project for presentation at Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies Subject Centre conference in July 2016: *Frameworks for Collaboration and Multilingualism* <https://www.llas.ac.uk/conf2016>

### **Project high points:**

Here are some quotes:

*'Found the project v useful. Received some fab resources which the kids love, esp the videos and the cultural stuff.*

*Had been easier for me to communicate via email and then download resources.*

*Yes A level resources for new spec would also be useful.*

*V pleased to have been part of this and would like to continue next yr'* Heidi Elliott, Cardinal Wiseman School, Coventry

*'I had some great resources in the form of emailed ppts'*. Lou Smith, Cawston Grange Primary, Rugby

*'I've set up a link between Holbrook Primary School (Coventry) and École Jules Ferry (La Celle-Saint-Cloud); one class from each school will be exchanging letters and photographs as they get to know each other and practise their translation skills.*

*The French pupils of CM2 are very excited, as is their teacher M. Lewkow. They have each written an introductory letter about themselves, their family, where they live and what subjects they like at school. They also included a class photo, so the recipients can put a face to the person they're reading about.'* Shannon O'Neill, primary teaching assistant at the École Jules Ferry

*'Hi, I'm Fiona, an MFL trainee at Warwick! [...] These photos are really useful; I am planning on teaching an Easter themed lesson at the end of term as I am on placement in a Catholic school, so it would be great to use these to get the students thinking about religious events in other countries. Would you be able to post anything else? Perhaps a video clip of Easter being celebrated or anything in the lead up to Easter?'* Fiona Smith

*'Hi, we're Lizzie and Seve, two of the trainee teachers at Warwick*

*These pictures are really great. We just wanted to say we could incorporate these into a culture lesson by having descriptions and explanations of the pictures in French and in English then putting them and the pictures themselves up around the room and running a poster search with the students. They would have to match the image to the English and French descriptions. We would then have them do further research on the pictures and artist as a piece of homework. It would also broaden their TL vocabulary!'* Seve Harrison; Lizzie Strivens