

# The pros and cons of interactive whiteboards in relation to the key stage 3 strategy and framework

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**“to support teachers in investigating... and sharing their... practice within a framework which emphasised pedagogy over technology”**

## ABSTRACT

The article describes data emerging from a study of a group of language teachers integrating use of the interactive whiteboard (IWB) into their classroom practice. Data collection tools were developed which allowed participants freedom of action and expression whilst providing a framework for reflection designed to focus on pedagogy rather than technology. The teachers focused primarily on developing their use of PowerPoint for presenting and practising language, using a selection of interactive websites to provide further variety. Analysis revealed varied pedagogical awareness and a range of developmental needs. The research team linked emerging themes to principles underlying the *Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Framework for Teaching Modern Foreign Languages* (DfES, 2003). Participants' views largely reflected recent publications suggesting that use of the IWB can greatly enhance teaching by supporting classroom management, pace and variety and the drawing of attention to grammatical features and patterns. Participants also felt that use of the IWB had very positive effects on pupils' memorisation skills and writing development, though further long-term research is needed to test the accuracy of these intuitions. The study raised important caveats: the need to become comfortable with the technology before being ready to engage in pedagogical discussion; the dramatic increase in preparation time to support full exploitation; the danger of being lured into a 'tell and show' interpretation of teaching; the need for IWB use to be underpinned by a sound understanding of language teaching methodology; the need for a balance of activities to ensure opportunities for kinaesthetic and tactile learners; and the difficulty of finding web-based material at the right level for language learning. Use of the IWB was linked firmly to participants' immediate needs for daily classroom survival. However, some participants were gradually becoming aware of the transformational potential of ICT.

## THE CONTEXT AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Researchers from a higher education institution (HEI) in the fields of modern foreign language education and ICT and pedagogy were approached by senior staff of a language college, who wished to develop a rigorous structure for their language department's development programme. In particular, they wanted to ensure that the forthcoming installation of interactive whiteboards (IWBs) should be accompanied by a firm emphasis on language-specific pedagogy. The college itself is situated in a culturally diverse area in an inner city. A mutually beneficial relationship was negotiated between

colleagues:

- HEI staff were able to collect rich data about the effect of relatively new technology on teachers and teaching;
- language department staff had opportunities for discussion with experienced researchers, to help them to plot and articulate their own developmental processes and needs;
- participants developed a shared discourse to enable them to discuss emergent issues more effectively and to disseminate their learning.

Rather than asking participants to change their pedagogy, the study aimed to investigate the practical realities of teachers integrating new technologies into existing practice to meet their immediate classroom needs. The aim was to support teachers in investigating, analysing and sharing their own developing practice within a framework which emphasised pedagogy over technology. Anticipated outcomes were shared professional confidence and the collaborative creation of knowledge as participants began to recognise the potential of the technology to develop their pedagogical practice in an organic process. The teachers determined both the pace and direction of innovation and the pace of data collection. Several teachers chose to focus on using their newly installed IWB with PowerPoint to replicate and develop their established practices during the presentation and practice phases of traditional language teaching methodology. This was often supplemented by the integration of selected interactive websites for further dynamic practice and recycling. Others chose to highlight the production phase, describing examples of pupils working independently in the multimedia computer suite to produce their own PowerPoint presentations or to interact with foreign language websites in problem-solving tasks. Our discussion here focuses mainly on the use of the IWB in whole-class teaching, though references are made where appropriate to other uses of ICT.

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## DATA COLLECTION

Data collection procedures needed to serve the dual purposes of focusing teachers' reflections and providing evidence for the research team. Throughout the project the researchers' needs were subordinate to those of the teaching staff. We therefore developed a range of qualitative collection tools which would allow teachers relative freedom of action and expression whilst providing a framework which focused firmly on pedagogy and permitted some comparative analysis. After a series of research team meetings to clarify aims and begin the development of research tools, data collection began with focus group meetings in early 2003 and continued through to local dissemination meetings in October 2004.

### *Focus meetings*

To steer the research, group staff meetings were held at intervals to discuss interpretations of good practice, raise emerging themes, introduce and adapt data-gathering tools and negotiate data-collection schedules. Video snippets of participants teaching provided a stimulus for debates about pedagogy. All discussions were recorded and transcribed.

### *Teaching logs*

In November 2003 all language department staff completed logs to benchmark their confidence and competence in classroom ICT use. During the spring term 2004 they completed ongoing logs recording their classroom use of ICT. A format was developed which required comments on lesson content, hardware and software used, any technical issues confronted, the styles of teaching and learning favoured, the role of the teacher and an evaluation of the lesson. Log-keeping was monitored and negotiated; for example, after the first fortnight researchers collected and analysed early logs, reviewed format and expectations to make them more user-friendly, and produced example entries to refocus teacher comments more firmly on pedagogy.

A small number of volunteers representing a range of languages completed a further set of logs during the summer term 2004.

### *Observations and video clips*

For triangulation purposes to supplement their self-reporting, departmental staff were asked to agree to at least one observation of their teaching using ICT. Parts of lessons were recorded and selected examples used as a stimulus for discussion at focus meetings as mentioned above so as to identify elements of commonly agreed good pedagogical practice.

### *Interviews*

After each period of log-keeping, participants underwent a semi-structured interview to explore the following issues:

- clarification of log entries;
- views on the benefits and disadvantages of using ICT in the classroom;

- whether the same activities could have been carried out effectively without ICT;
- what relevant training the teachers had received in the use of ICT in the classroom and where their ideas came from;
- what personal and departmental developmental needs they could identify in terms of classroom ICT use.

In addition, the small number of volunteers who continued to provide data during the summer term were asked to explore in greater depth issues arising from analysis of the earlier material. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis. To assist interpretation, researchers took care to return to the recordings during analysis to take account of features such as thinking pauses, hesitancy, tone, speed and volume.

### *Dissemination meetings*

Built into the original programme were a range of dissemination meetings for teachers from local schools. At the first of these, initial research findings were presented and discussed, and participants were invited to contribute their own ideas both in theoretical discussion and practical planning and presentation. Notes were taken throughout and included in the material for analysis.

### *Data analysis*

Data was read and re-read in a process of categorisation and codification. To increase the validity of interpretation, research team members worked individually before comparing their findings in critical appraisal. We are aware that much of the data relied on self-reporting, though some corroborative evidence was provided by the video snippets. Analysis generated a variety of themes, for example, training needs and individual case studies of development and pedagogic focus. Early findings, such as the need for a technological 'settling in' period before teachers can be expected to concentrate on the development of pedagogy, have been presented elsewhere (Pilkington and Gray, 2004).

## LINKING TO THE KEY STAGE 3 STRATEGY AND FRAMEWORK

One of the aims of the project was to disseminate our findings in as helpful a way as possible through a series of regional teacher workshops. Analysis revealed strong links to themes recurrent throughout the *Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Framework for Teaching Modern Foreign Languages* (DfES, 2003). Heilbronn calls for support for teachers to develop a deep understanding of the principles underlying the *Framework* (Heilbronn, 2004). We undertook to explore links between our data and these principles more fully as a focus for our first dissemination workshop. Data from the workshop supplemented our collection, and the following provides a summary of project findings relevant to the framework.

It should be remembered that participants were not directed to address particular themes; what arose out

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**“One of the aims... was to disseminate our findings... through a series of regional teacher workshops.”**

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of the interviews, logs and video snippets was what teachers understood by ‘good pedagogical practice’. It was a qualitative rather than quantitative investigation, largely reliant upon self-reporting. Data was collected from a relatively small sample of twelve teachers within one department. Any numbers quoted should therefore be treated with great caution. Individual teachers were coded for anonymity; specific quotations for illustration are used from their teaching logs and interviews, and reference is made to video snippets.

## THEMES FROM THE FRAMEWORK

### 1. *Learning more securely and independently over time*

There is a strong emphasis within the framework on creating confident language learners, with the use of target language and the learning of grammar being regarded not as ends in themselves but rather as tools enabling learners to progress. Three of the twelve teachers cautioned that creating independence required a move away from whole-class teaching towards providing focused self-study materials on the school network for use in class or at home. However, there were also comments implying that the teacher’s effective use of the IWB in class could encourage greater independence in learning:

- the IWB could be used effectively in whole-class teaching to withdraw support gradually: ‘I want the kids to be more and more independent in the lesson’ (T3 Interview 1: Paragraph 4 and video evidence);
- pupils could be encouraged to integrate and transfer past material by smooth, quick access to supporting PowerPoint slides from previous lessons (T4 Interview: 74). T4 felt that this process would have been much more laborious without use of the IWB and electronic storage;
- with the IWB as her major teaching tool, T5 felt that she was ‘assisting their learning, whereas I used to be forcing it down’ (T5 Interview: 33);
- pupils seemed to work more independently even in a whole class situation: ‘they’ve got the information they need and they feel that they’re perhaps doing things themselves’ (T8 Interview: 47).

Thus, there is some evidence that some participants felt use of the IWB supported them in encouraging greater independence on the part of their learners.

### 2. *Clarity of purpose and clear objectives*

The framework emphasises the need for transparent, sharply focused learning objectives which clarify for learners what they are going to learn rather than what they are going to do. It is, of course, the teacher who determines objectives and thereby pupil direction and progress. The majority of teachers felt, however, that use of the IWB helped to draw attention to objectives and allowed the teacher to refer smoothly back to them during the lesson (November meeting 2003). T5 also referred to the potential with PowerPoint to return to objectives and change the

colour once they have been met, ‘they can see their progression and they know they’re going somewhere’ (T5 Interview: 15).

Reservations were expressed about the value of transparent objectives. T1 in particular emphasised throughout his interview the idea of deceiving pupils into learning. He described a murder mystery website where he felt it would be counterproductive to inform pupils that they were recycling past tenses and vocabulary in their attempts to survive the threat of murder. Most participants emphasised the need to exercise professional judgement.

### 3. *Not merely coverage but thorough learning and mastery*

Half of the participants commented that use of the IWB supported them in encouraging pupils to practise and recycle recently presented language. Logs, interviews and video snippets revealed ample evidence of imaginative practice and recycling of language material aimed at encouraging thoroughness of learning and the ability to transfer and integrate knowledge. Teachers used interactive websites as well as ‘in-house’ games for practice. PowerPoint resources could easily be recycled to prompt memory (T4 and T5 emphasised this as an important advantage of the IWB). The variety of activities on offer seemed to provide greater opportunity than traditional means to achieve the ‘90% practice after 10% presentation’ required for mastery (Davies and Rendall, 2004: 9). During this practice, however, the teacher’s monitoring and prompting is vital in supporting the development of good learning strategies, since it appears that a fair number of language learners resort to guessing rather than recapitulating (Laurillard, 1997: 32).

### 4. *The skills as mutually supportive*

The capacity offered by PowerPoint to integrate sound and shape work was highlighted independently by three of the teachers. T2 felt that the written word was more prominently integrated with pictures and pronunciation practice – since the IWB became her major teaching tool, she thought that she used the written word ‘not necessarily more, but better’ (T2 Interview 2: 181). T3 agreed: ‘you can manage pictures with words all the time, you can flick from pictures to words’ (T3 Interview 1: 52). Many of the website games commonly used within the department were writing games (T3 Interview 1: 68). T3 felt that pupils were ‘much more focused on the words and spellings’ even though they wrote less themselves, and that this was improving their writing (T3 Interview 2: 149). Both teachers felt that pupils wrote more interactively and copied less; the facility to print and copy pages of their presentations also ensured that pupils had an accurate record of the written form of language. Both contrasted this with the situation in previous workplaces, where they felt restrictions on photocopying had led to a poorer learning experience for pupils. T8 also emphasised the ability with PowerPoint to make words appear, disappear and change, as in her imaginative *Castle nominative* where words popped into the *Accusative case* and popped out differently (T8 Interview: 59).

**“The capacity offered by PowerPoint to integrate sound and shape work was highlighted”**

A third of participants lamented the lack of sound cards in their classroom systems and the limitations which this created for language practice. ICT experts responsible for ordering and installing systems need to be made fully aware of such requirements.

##### 5. Recall and the thoughtful application of new language

Several participants (seven of the twelve) were adamant that use of the IWB was having a dramatic effect on their pupils' ability to memorise language. We were unable to obtain corroborating evidence of this, and further long-term research is needed into the effects of good IWB practice on learning. Their conviction was, however, infectious:

- interactive web-based games were 'extremely effective because certainly a few weeks later you ask them the words and they all know them' (T1 Interview: 88). T1 emphasised generally the 'speed of introduction and recall' (T1 Log);
- IWB games helped to develop the intake and memory skills of a group of pupils with a variety of strong special educational needs: 'it's actually quite amazing what they remember. More than I thought they would' (T2 Interview 2: 68). T3 also felt that pupils retained a lot (T3 Interview 2: 187) and that this enabled her to cover more in the lesson (T3 Interview 2: 185);
- T4 felt strongly that pupils assimilated information quickly when she used PowerPoint (T4 Interview). She would have been able to create a similarly varied lesson using more traditional tools, but 'I don't think they would have picked things up so quickly' (T4 Interview: 58);
- T5 seemed amazed at pupils' ability to memorise material presented and practised through PowerPoint: 'the slide is gone, they have nothing in front of them and they've only seen it once and they remember. So in terms of memory I think it's fantastic, really' (T5 Interview: 37).

Although they are only anecdotal evidence, these comments do support suggestions that use of the IWB makes language 'more memorable' (OFSTED, 2004: 6).

##### 6. Development of cognitive and reflective aspects

Half of the participants discussed how the IWB could be used to stimulate reflection and analysis. T1 and T8 recommended the use of delayed animation effects in PowerPoint to encourage pupils to speculate on the next slide or on a missing word or phrase. T2, T4, T8 and T12 reflected on the ease with which pupils' computer-generated work could be displayed to stimulate self- and peer-assessment and discussion of language quality using shared criteria. Video evidence provided an interesting scenario where, by guided discussion of explicit criteria, a group of Year 8 pupils were led to acknowledge the priority of language quality over the use of impressive presentational effects when assessing the work of their peers (T12 video).

T8 highlighted the ease with which answers to

comprehension questions and other 'quick' exercises can become part of a PowerPoint presentation so that 'instead of giving them the answers we've got more time to perhaps discuss why they got it wrong or right' (T8 Interview: 49); 'it gives us more time to analyse perhaps' (T8 Interview: 51). BECTA, discussing primary mathematics, claim that 'effective uses of ICT should enable pupils to focus on reasoning rather than on answers' (BECTA, 2003: 15). Goodison also emphasises the need to make students' thinking visible to both teachers and students, and the capacity offered by the IWB for prompting discussions which can do this (Goodison, 2003: 557).

##### 7. Adopting a versatile, energetic, interactive classroom approach

Participants were unanimous in highlighting this as the major advantage of using the IWB once they began to feel confident with the technology. Everyone spoke of the benefit of the IWB as a tool in engaging attention, with frequent mention of the positive effect on classroom management with more challenging groups of pupils. Use of PowerPoint animation effects and programmes such as *Flash* were particularly useful in holding pupils' attention: 'clothes flashed very quickly (they had to look at the board)' (T3 Log).

Four teachers commented that the IWB helped them manage their own time and resources, allowing better personal organisation (November Meeting 121 and T2 Interview 2: 48), smoother transitions (T3, T5 and T8), and better teacher mobility (T8 Interview: 2). This echoes Slater and Varney-Burch: 'computer technology gives you a highly efficient way of managing and presenting the different materials' (2001: 4). The downside was that all four also commented upon the time-consuming nature of lesson planning and preparation, a factor repeated by three further staff. All seven female participants felt pressurised to spend considerably more time preparing materials for use with this new resource. One very experienced teacher commented that 'I'm spending a lot more time on lesson planning than I ever have' (T8 Interview: 49).

Opportunities for improving the lesson pace and the variety of available activities were unanimously cited as benefits of using the IWB (see OFSTED 2004: 6, 13). T3 summarised that 'the whole pace of the lesson is different' (T3 Interview 2: 149). There was frequent reference to the smoothness of transition, removing the opportunity for pupils to move off task and chat between activities during those few moments when materials are being organised; even the starts of lessons could be prompter: 'Now, if they've got a starter on the board, they sit down and they look at the board' (T2 Interview 2: 54). Most teachers admitted that they could achieve a similar effect using the overhead projector, but all felt that using the IWB was easier, more efficient, and had greater impact and better pace. There was unanimity about the variety of activities on offer, though at least two teachers highlighted the need to balance use of the IWB with other, more kinaesthetic, practical and interactive

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**"Everyone spoke of the benefit of the IWB as a tool in engaging attention, with frequent mention of the positive effect on classroom management"**

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approaches such as drama and handling objects. Teachers of community languages lamented the limited variety of materials available to them by comparison with their European language colleagues. One German teacher also commented on the relative paucity of web material for German: ‘German lags behind French in terms of ideas on the internet’ (T1 Interview: 120).

Although there was evidence, both from the video snippets and from teachers’ detailed explanation of log entries, of a highly interactive teaching style, several participants were acutely aware of the limitations of the whole-class presentational approach supported by the IWB and of the teacher’s vital role in ensuring participation and learning. Some participants also clearly felt that other colleagues were not as secure in this basic understanding of language teaching methodology; they referred to departmental discussions of shared materials which they felt prompted a more ‘show and tell’ style of teaching and failed to exploit the interactive potential of the technology. The data revealed interesting differences in pedagogical awareness and mastery of pedagogical discourse.

Project participants thus agreed unanimously with OFSTED’s appraisal of the potential impact of the IWB on classroom teaching (OFSTED, 2004), with most also being aware of the need for clear pedagogical principles to guide its exploitation.

#### 8. *Beyond a knowledge of single words*

Two-thirds of participants highlighted ways in which the IWB – mostly combined with PowerPoint – could support their teaching of grammatical patterns and encourage pupils to move beyond word level. Video snippets provided ample evidence of teachers drawing attention to form, now regarded as a prerequisite of classroom learning (see Chapelle, 1997; Chapelle, 1998; Lightbown, 2003). IWB use was felt to be highly successful in supporting T2’s attempts with a very challenging group to ‘get the kids to move towards sentence level and being interactive’ (November Meeting: 104).<sup>1</sup>

The use of visual effects such as colour, highlighting and animation were felt to be the most important aids in drawing attention to patterns such as endings, negative expressions and reflexive pronouns, as well as different parts of sentences such as question words, nouns and adjectives. None of the participants appeared to have read any of the literature available on the use of ICT to support language teaching or recent publications on effective language teaching methodology,<sup>2</sup> yet they all clearly felt that drawing attention to and practising the use of grammatical patterns was an essential aspect of language teaching methodology. They also felt that the IWB, often in conjunction with PowerPoint, offered them a range of easily accessible and effective ways of achieving this. Their intuitive sense as language teachers thus aligned them with the ideas expressed by experienced researchers (in addition to the above see BECTA, 2004; Slater and Varney-Burch, 2001: 31; Lamy and Mortensen, 2003).

#### 9. *Making the process of learning more explicit and keeping the focus on quality of language and improvement*

Specific reference was made by nine of the teachers to ways in which use of the IWB enabled them to monitor pupil output more frequently, provide more effective feedback and focus on language development:

- T2 felt that her less motivated and less able pupils took correction better during whole-class work using the IWB (T2 Interview 2: 139);
- T3 felt that her role in a well-prepared IWB lesson using a variety of interactive games to practise new words and structures became that of a ‘judge ... I’m granting the points ... in terms of how well they say the sentences or words’ (T3 Interview 1: 30). She also referred to the use of animation as good visual support to clarify and prevent confusion during peer correction (T3 Log);
- T4 found the IWB useful for involving pupils in self and peer assessment, allied with the development of clear criteria (T4 Interview; see also Section 6 above);
- T6, T9, T10 and T11 explained that enhanced pupil participation in IWB-based as opposed to paper-based activities afforded the teacher better insights into pupil learning and greater opportunity to support correction;
- T1 recycled web-based games as starters to encourage developing automaticity in language production through the desire to achieve ever higher scores.

Further in-depth, long-term research into pupil performance is needed to corroborate and justify these claims. Again, however, teachers’ intuitive work and spontaneous commentaries were in line with findings of the research literature urging teachers to ‘promote learners’ dual concern for communicating linguistic meaning while attending to and correcting their linguistic form’ (Chapelle, 1997: 11) as well as with BECTA’s suggestion that good use of the IWB can lead to ‘increased interactions between teachers and pupils prompted by the dynamic interaction between pupils and computers’ (BECTA, 2003: 22). There was also clear evidence that at least some of the participants were aware of the need to refocus pupils on linguistic achievement rather than allowing them to see task completion itself as the aim of a language lesson (Davies and Rendall, 2004: 28).

#### 10. *Objectives driving the use of resources rather than the reverse*

Despite considerable enthusiasm for the IWB and other ICT, ten of the participants expressed cautious scepticism about the appropriateness of available materials, with seven of them highlighting the need to adapt resources for specific pupils. T1 favoured web-based materials over teacher products, but acknowledged the limited linguistic value of many of the popular word-level games available. Even his murder mystery game, though inspiring many pupils,

“visual effects... were... important aids in drawing attention to patterns such as endings, negative expressions and reflexive pronouns”

was linguistically too challenging for others (T1 Interview). T3 at the other extreme preferred to create her own materials because of the difficulty of finding authentic materials at the right level (T3 Interview 2).

Websites in regular use were trialled by individuals and disseminated throughout the department. Staff were encouraged to produce materials for general use via the shared area, though some respondents felt this was patchy, as certain colleagues were struggling with the methodology needed to underpin effective use of the IWB. Small sharing networks were being developed, both within the department and beyond; two teachers worked closely together exchanging materials which they could adapt, and a third swapped materials with a friend in another school. All emphasised the ease with which PowerPoint materials could be adapted across levels and languages.

Community language teachers revealed that learning to use the Urdu and Panjabi keyboard layouts slowed down their pupils and affected lesson pace; T9 felt that it was inappropriate to use ICT with Years 11, 12 and 13 because of time pressure to cover the syllabus. By contrast T8, a European languages teacher, felt pressure from pupils to use ICT constantly, though she might prefer sometimes not to (T8 Interview: 29). T3 and T5 also felt strongly that other types of resource were more effective in achieving certain language learning goals and addressing different types of learning style, and emphasised that although their project logs and interview discussions concentrated on ICT, they employed a range of styles and resources. T3 insisted that methodology was paramount: 'the methodology behind ICT is the same methodology as you would apply if you didn't have ICT' (T3 Interview 1: 86). These participants seemed to be moving towards Bax's ideal of 'normalisation' (Bax, 2000: 209).

### 11. *ICT as a real-life factor*

Participants were more concerned with reproducing their everyday teaching materials in a more engaging format than with exploiting the potential of the IWB to transport classes into a new cultural experience. Teachers' emphasis was on controlled pre-communicative activities in the presentation, practice, production cycle of traditional language teaching methodology. PowerPoint presentation of new material was favoured, followed by interactive practice games and a pupil PowerPoint project summarising the topic.

There were, however, examples of early exploitation of the 'real-life factor' such as T1's German mystery website. T5 and T6 used video recordings made personally in Spain and India. T8 used the *Bundesbahn* website to practise booking rail tickets, and was pleasantly surprised at the pupils' increased tenacity in tackling German when in an authentic situation. Language learning websites had a motivating effect because of their 'real-life factor', even where games were similar to, and in linguistic terms frequently more basic than, those created 'in-house', and raised teachers' credibility (T1 Interview: 98). T3 preferred greater control of

materials and levels and was developing a range of content-free games for adaptation (T3 Interview 2: 209). For most, exploiting the potential of ICT without losing the control over language content and learning process so essential to their established methodology seemed to present a major challenge.

## SIDE-EFFECTS

Participants unanimously felt that use of the IWB had a positive (sometimes dramatic) effect on their teaching and was subtly changing their role. Analysis of video material featuring IWB use highlighted 'pushing the pace' and 'providing feedback' as prominent teaching roles, with direction of lesson content and classroom management more indirect and subtle through prior planning and preparation of materials. Teachers saw themselves in the role of 'facilitator' – a role, however, highly dependent for success upon the amount of prior preparation. There were examples of lessons similar to those reported by OFSTED where ICT seemed to be used for novelty value, and links with the achievement of learning objectives were not clear (OFSTED, 2004: 9). Where lessons were carefully planned and prepared, with well-chosen and well-sequenced activities ready at the touch of a button, teachers appeared to have more time to engage with pupils' learning. This again warrants further long-term research.

The perceived role change was not always a completely positive experience. T8 described herself as being less animated and less involved, becoming more a deliverer of material (T8 Interview: 25 to 43). Groups in previous schools and her current Year 7 classes seemed more open to a range of resources and approaches where she became more 'actress as opposed to teacher' (T8 Interview: 33). Others acknowledged this 'sharing of stage' with the IWB; it removed some of the pressure to be the 'all-singing, all-dancing' languages teacher (T3 Interview 2: 198 to 203). Most did feel that the IWB supported their own inventiveness, especially T5, who felt that its introduction had revived her creativity from collapse following her move from adult to secondary education. The contribution of the IWB as a classroom management tool had definitely improved her teaching (T5 Interview: 31).

This change of role was effective only when adequate preparation had been carried out; it was perhaps significant that those who acknowledged the greatest changes in their teaching style were those who most emphasised the dramatic increase in preparation time. T1 was the only exception; he emphasised the use of websites rather than his own materials. Most acknowledged that the time input would diminish as they developed a personal and departmental resources bank, but the current burden was sometimes unacceptably heavy for teachers and their families.

## IN SUMMARY

After initial teething difficulties, participants were overwhelmingly positive about the potential of the IWB to enhance their teaching. There was evidence

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**“Teachers saw themselves in the role of ‘facilitator’, a role highly dependent for success upon the amount of prior preparation.”**

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that used well the IWB supported many of the essential features of ‘good practice’ recommended in the framework. However, participants gave us important messages about supporting *effective* use of the IWB:

- teachers need extra planning and preparation time built into their timetables;
- the IWB is a support for good language teaching, not a panacea. A balance is needed, including a range of practical, hands-on kinaesthetic activities using objects, flashcards, the overhead projector and drama;
- the IWB in conjunction with PowerPoint can lure teachers into a ‘show and tell’ style of teaching, pushing pupils into a passive role;
- even during genuinely interactive IWB work, in large classes it is practically impossible to involve all learners; pair work is a vital language practice tool to supplement whole-class IWB;
- the potential to bring the wider world into the classroom will remain unfulfilled unless teachers are given more time and support to exploit it;
- good teaching using the IWB requires a sound pedagogical underpinning so that the teacher remains in control;
- early work was highly dependent upon the use of PowerPoint to replicate and expand existing traditional teaching materials and lesson plans. Participants with greater pedagogical awareness were beginning to perceive transformational possibilities, but emphasised that progress had to be step-by-step within time and energy constraints. They were also aware of staff development implications, both for themselves and for less aware colleagues.

Within the space available, we have provided a brief overview of our collected data, organised for early dissemination under themes from the MFL framework. There are many other aspects of the data to be explored, particularly in terms of individual case studies of teacher development and the identification of training needs. Yet important messages have emerged from this limited discussion of the findings, which echo themes already highlighted within the research literature. Interestingly, participants raised the themes spontaneously, which confirms the research team’s belief that we should be more respectful of teachers’ intuitive situated knowledge.

**“the IWB in conjunction with PowerPoint can lure teachers into a ‘show and tell’ style of teaching, pushing pupils into a passive role”**

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> A more detailed discussion of this lesson is available in Pilkington and Gray, 2004
- <sup>2</sup> Teacher 1 was the only participant who made any reference to reading when asked where his ideas came from, and was not one of the eight referred to in this sample

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