

Engaging & encouraging Language students in independent learning

Colyton Grammar School's Head of Languages, Tim Love explains how their new SONY Virtuoso language lab software has helped improve the quality of new digital resources & student enjoyment in language speaking



Founded 1546 Colyton Grammar School has enjoyed a long and distinguished history. The school has a tradition of high academic expectation nurtured by a culture that values achievement in all activities and supports fully the development of each student. Within Languages French and German are taught through years 7 – 13 and Japanese through years 11 – 13.

Moving from analogue to digital formats

For many years the languages department had been using an older SONY analogue tape based language lab system, which although was reliable was becoming increasingly outdated in the world of digital media. Tim Love and his languages team were keen to develop crisp, lively and contemporary lessons using digital media formats like MP3, MP4, Flash etc. They also wanted students to access listening resources independently of the teacher both inside and outside the classroom.

21st Century Skills

Tim continues by saying that 'the benefits for us, within the wider context of

languages, is that we wanted to develop both listening skills and encourage the use of video in languages. The lab has helped us to talk the same multimedia language as our students and has therefore brought our up to date with student expectations'.

Accessible content anywhere across the school network

Once the new SONY Virtuoso lab was installed Tim and his team quickly saw the improvement in the quality of the resources they were able to use. Instead of slow and cumbersome audio files teachers were able to quickly gather in feedback from students, send audio and video files directly to students and easily manipulate MP3 files. 'Sound files can be stored centrally and accessed anywhere across the school network. The 'Vocalist' player is our main player outside the lab but inside the classroom. It's great to no longer have to carry CDs or large MP3 players around.'



Students working at their own pace & listening over and over again to their own audio files

Tim continues by saying that 'our students find the SONY Virtuoso software interface for listening easy and pupil friendly. Being able to bookmark sections of audio and revisit them is a big plus for pupils; they can quickly find the sections they need.

Another big strength of SONY Virtuoso software is the independent access to audio resources so students can work at a pace that's right for them. They love random pairs, and the ability to listen over and over again to their own audio files quickly and efficiently. They also enjoy working with video; this is an area we intend to develop more on in the future'.

Studying Languages instill confidence

'Verbal skills in general are extremely important. Clear and eloquent self expression is not a quality that many teenagers boast. The confidence that comes from mastery of a foreign language especially when gained in the foreign country is very significant. I have got students who have gone abroad by themselves for a week doing work experience and they come back brimming

with confidence – they can do anything! Also there is an intellectual challenge in getting to grips with words and sentences so there is a sound developmental benefit to learning a language too”

Allows & supports independent learning

In terms of ongoing teacher development Tim with the IT department and his languages team speaks of how they 'have a shared area, any lessons we felt have gone well we publicise and share this good practice with colleagues. As far as developing skills in using the SONY Virtuoso software we started with small steps and built our knowledge and confidence of use up over time. All language lessons are timetabled to be done in the lab so both teachers and students have built up their confidence in using the software. In fact Sixth form love using it and often come in at lunchtime to use the lab – this is a really important aspect of the software, the fact that it allows and supports independent learning'

For information about Colyton Grammar School:
www.colytongrammar.devon.sch.uk

