

Case study



Gumley House school students get inspiration from EdComs linguists



In March 2010, researcher Sarah Seymour and web producer Katherine Mengardon from EdComs ran a French workshop for a class of 30 Year 10 students at Gumley House school in Isleworth. The education consultancy boasts eleven languages among its 50-strong team, and despite their work being mainly limited to the UK, they have conducted projects using French, German, Spanish, Polish, Russian and even Welsh.

Giving students reasons to study French

The workshop started with a clip of Lauren “am I bover’d” Cooper (the Catherine Tate character) offering students reasons they might not be interested in learning French – swiftly followed by a discussion around why they might, in fact, want to. After introducing themselves and explaining how languages had helped in their careers (Sarah started out as a translator and Katherine answered calls in Japanese in a call centre), they showed the students how much French they already knew with a game of language ‘Taboo’. Following a short break, the next exercise was a game where words were picked from a hat, each team having to create a scenario of their own invention. This showed students that they didn’t need to know every single word to understand what is happening – and generated some very entertaining outcomes! Lastly Sarah and Katherine explained how all these skills could help students in the world of work, and how many more interesting job opportunities are open to you if you have a language.

The EdComs staff were truly impressed by the enthusiasm of the students and the amount they took in during the workshop. “I can’t say the thought of appearing before a group of 30 15-year-olds to tell them about the wonders of learning another language didn’t make us a bit nervous,” said Sarah. “But we were really pleased with how the session went and got as much out of it as the students (hopefully) did! Now we’ve done it once, we could easily adapt the workshop for another age group or another language.”

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