

The Head of Modern Languages

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LINKWORD

Since the Lent Term, 2001, we have been trying an alternative approach to language acquisition and linguistic improvement with Ff6, then taught by Mr Neil Jarvis.

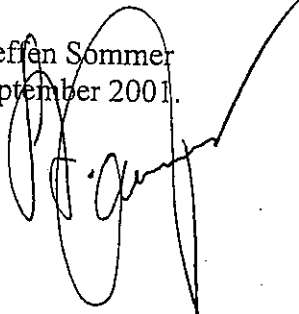
I learned about the approach through a publication by Dr. Michael Gruneberg, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at University College, Swansea. The approach fascinated me because it seemed so different from the traditional approach to language learning that we have been using here at Rugby School, and at schools in general. The approach is based on imagery, (mnemonic strategy) which was not exactly new, but the success rate described in Dr Gruneberg's publications persuaded me to invite the author and discuss the approach in more detail.

At our first meeting Dr Gruneberg convinced me that the approach was worth trying, simply by demonstrating on a number of pupils (that I classified as bad linguists) a very fast learning lesson, in a variety of different languages, using different phonetic systems, related and completely unrelated, to English. I also learned during the demonstration that the approach is not only unconventional but also fun, particularly for slow learners and learners with difficulties in approaching foreign languages. We have subsequently used the coursebooks and the diskettes that Dr Gruneberg can provide for French, German, Spanish and Italian, and also other languages, with our bottom French set. The success rate has been conspicuous. The pupils developed a very high level of motivation for language learning, as they could see very rapid progress and they remembered rather difficult vocabulary for a long period of time using the imagery. This culminated in what I would classify as a very good performance for this set in the end of term examination, after the Trinity Term, leading to the promotion of a quarter of the set. (They can now continue in their own time using ICT, which will be incorporated in preps).

Dr Gruneberg also ran a questionnaire with the pupils who were involved in the trial, the outcome of which clearly states that all of the pupils have enjoyed the approach and that it was their own perception that they made more progress than they would otherwise have made. We have not used the LINKWORD approach as a stand alone course, as I supposed it has been designed for, but as a supplement to the coursebook that we are using in the F Block which is *Encore Tricolore III*. Three lessons per week were spent on the regular scheme of work and the coursebook and one lesson per week plus one prep was spent on LINKWORD. The beauty of the course is that it can be used by the pupils independently in their own time, using ICT on their laptops

or desktops as available. We have been very happy with the outcome of this approach and would recommend it further. We will continue on the course with this particular set in the E Block (the 4th Form) to ascertain the exact progress of the pupils over a longer period of time and to see, once the GCSE results have come out, whether or not the approach has made a difference for this particular group and subsequently make a decision on whether or not to use it with other sets too.

Steffen Sommer
September 2001.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Steffen Sommer', written over the typed name and date. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.