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Brief Task 1 "News from the School"

Production 'News from the School'

- *Collecting Ideas:*
 - which subjects could we choose?
 - special events, class, staff, school building, problems,
 - get into groups, each group produces its own report
- *Recording Images:*
 - what could be recorded?
 - record footage for each article
- *Writing:*
 - what comments/text would we need for each report?
 - each group writes one short report to go with the recorded footage
- *Studio: (or classroom)*
 - who will be the presenter/operate camera/..
 - each group records their short text
- *Editing:*
 - what would we use for our first programme?
 - select the material for the first programme (tape number, timecode, length of the sequence)
 - The programmes will be edited in Berlin (max. 10 min. each)

First Task:

Produce a news programme 'News from the School'

Distribution of the tapes

- *Transmission*
 - Programmes broadcast at the Open Channel Berlin
- *Exchange*
 - Video tapes exchanged with all partners

Evaluation

- *Discuss the programmes in the class*
 - how have the other children done their programme?
 - what do we share with them?
 - in the way we made the news?
 - what is different?
 - why didn't we do it like they did it?
- *Ideas for next task*
 - what could we do better the next time?



Evaluation Task 1 "News from the School"

December 1999 - March 2000

Task: To produce a school news programme

Main focus of contents: Construction of school reality

At our first project meeting in Berlin in autumn 1999 we discussed at length how to begin our project. We agreed that we didn't want a long introduction, forcing the pupils into a particular direction. Instead we wanted the goals of the project to develop through continuous practical work which would be continually reflected upon. As a first task we decided on 'school news'. For the teachers involved this was a comprehensible subject. Each partner class had the task to produce a ten minute programme with news from the school.

The project teachers introduced the framework of the first task to the pupils, who in turn collected ideas for the programme. The pupils organised themselves into productions groups (mostly four pupils in a group) and then selected a subject for a contribution (see internet). A short production schedule was made and then the groups began their work with the camera: Interviews with classmates and teachers, presenting the school, recording the activities and discussing problems in the school.

The use of the video technology was not explicitly taught - the pupils discovered how the camera worked simply by using it themselves. This led of course to disappointments about lack of sound, about the wind which disturbed the interview, or about recordings which were inadvertent deleted. However, with the help of the TV in the classroom mistakes could be quickly identified and corrected. After completing the news texts and designing the studio backgrounds they began recording the news programme. Each group presented the material they had prepared. In Berlin the recording took place in the Offener Kanal studio, whereas the partners in England and Spain created a simple television studio in the classroom.

In order not to overload the partners with the editing, in the first year all the programmes were edited by the project coordinator. The pupils however selected the material and decided the order themselves. Subtitles in all three languages helped communication between partners. The results were then transmitted in the Open Channel Berlin, via Satellite (Europe by Satellite) and in a livestream in the internet (see internet).

Evaluating the task

If we want to analyse media messages in 'real' television, then it is only logical, to do this also with our own programmes. When watching the programmes one could think that all three classes simply represented their own school with its characteristics. This is of course correct - the decisive factor though is *how* the school was represented. Which elements were



shown, which were not made? Each class constructed an individual impression of their school - *their* impression. At this point it is important to begin to ask questions: How is our school represented? What other impression could we have made? What do our classmates think about it, do they have the same opinion? How would they have done it?

We tried to set such a process of inquiry in motion in the partner schools using questionnaires, class discussions, video interviews and essay reports. Here are a few answers from the pupils in Berlin about their own programme:

Did we represent our school realistically?

"Yes, it's always like that."

"Kind of."

"We didn't show everything, but I think so."

What could be different in other German schools?

"Maybe a different playground and different classrooms."

"That they don't have their own television show."

"Every school has problems, we have lots of pupils, hmm, it's different."

"I don't know."

As the pupils' answers show (which maybe was to be expected) the critical reflection on their own programme proved difficult. The next step which considered the programmes from the partner schools was already easier:

What did you notice (about the Spanish programme)?

"They had subtitles."

"They talk very fast."

"They had only a few subjects."

"They do a lot of performances."

"That they put a lot of effort into it."

"That the school is smaller."

What did you notice (about the English programme)?

"That they used a lot of sign language."

"They were wearing school uniform."

"That they put a lot of effort into it."

"Nothing."

"They showed us a lot of projects."



Do you imagine an English school to be like this?

"I have never been in an English school, so I don't know."

"Yes."

"I have never been to England."

"Yes, of course."

"No."

Of course the pupils perceived individual messages but found it difficult to recognise these within an overall construction. One group of girls from England tried however to interpret the German programme: they thought it was brave of the class to report about fighting during break and not to simply give a positive general impression of the school.

Altogether we discovered that the task-conception of three individual programmes had rather more a divisive than unifying effect. During class discussions in Berlin generalisations about the representations of the partner schools often came up. This was the opposite of our intention (e.g. reducing prejudices): "That is typically Spanish," or "that's how I imagine England to be." The pupils' own film was quickly put in the foreground. Furthermore we observed rather self opinionated attitudes, which the statement of a Berlin pupil, among others, illustrates: "Anyway we are the best."

Similar remarks came from some boys in Spain who understood the whole project as a competition rather like European football.

