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Brief Task 4 "Environment"

Introduction

The new task continues on from task 3. The interpersonal communication between the children and the developing relationships between schools and partners has been very encouraging and we hope to keep them alive. Whereas task 3 focussed more on general introductions, task 4 will concentrate more specifically on the theme 'environment', one of the goals being to create a joint video programme.

The environment itself is a very broad subject and it is probably useful to first discuss with the children what we understand by this word. This might include not only physical (and especially ecological) issues but could also include a human dimension (local and global relationships, understandings, identities).

We want to keep the task open for the children's ideas - the children should choose the themes themselves. A theme could be a local issue or a part of a global issue which the children are interested in. It could be something the children are particularly enthusiastic about or it could be a problem which they would like to investigate.

If we choose to focus on a 'problem' in the environment then it is necessary to be realistic about chances to influence or change anything. Is there something we can do or are we rather stirring emotions? How can we tell other people (for example other children in the school) about our problem? How can we motivate other people to do something about it?

As well as using our own ideas we want to encourage the children to research their issues. We want to stimulate them to look through the whole range of media, looking for references related to their issue: What can they find in the internet about their issue? Which television programmes include elements about the environment? At the same time we want to try to look behind the information we find: How is this information presented, what are the possible motives behind this information?

Find enclosed a suggested sequence of how task 4 could be implemented.



Proposed Sequence

1. Introduction

- What do we mean with the word 'environment'?
 - What would a definition include?
 - Where have we heard about the environment?
- What do I like about my environment? (local)
- What problems do we have in our environment? (local)
 - What problems exist in our school, at home, ...?
 - Would children in other countries have the same problems?
- Which problems are there in the world? (global)
 - Are local issues connected with global issues?

2. Define a theme

- Which issue would you like to concentrate on?
 - What do we know about it?
 - Where have we heard about it?
 - If your chosen issue is a 'problem' then can you do anything to change it?
 - Is somebody else doing anything to change it?

3. Investigation

- What can we find out in the media about the environment?
 - Research in traditional media?
(television, radio, books, newspapers, ...)
 - Research in the internet?
(For example: UN Database, Greenpeace, other school sites, ..)
- How is our issue covered in the media?
 - Which arguments, images, sounds are used?
 - Which motives are behind the information?



4. Collect Material

- Collect material from the media (texts, images, video clips, sounds)
- Record your own material with the video camera (interviews, documentations, ...)

5. Design your programme

- Decide on your overall message
- Edit your material according to your message
 - Try to keep your programme short (around 2 minutes)

(as an option you could create a campaign for a particular audience)

6. Exchange and Evaluation

- Exchange of videos and broadcasting in the Open Channel Berlin
- Evaluation of the material (own and material of the partners)
 - What have the partners done?
 - Where have they set their focus?
 - How did they bring across their concerns?

Parallel

- Communicate with each other through email
- Use the eboard www.eutask4.eboard.com to keep up with the development of each others projects
 - password to read: "taskboard"
 - password to edit: "71563"
- Document the task using the video camera



Evaluation Task 4 "Environment"

March – June 2001

Task: Produce a short article related to an environmental theme
Main focus of contents: Introduce investigation of a subject and create a campaign

Introduction

The design and execution of task 4 sought to continue the work of the previous three tasks. By focussing on the theme of 'the environment' we tried to encourage the participating children to investigate one specific environmental concern and present their ideas in the form of a campaign. We motivated the children to use different media for the presentation of their ideas, to edit their own video material and communicate with each other through an internet board (you can find the detailed brief of task 4 here).

Description of the task

The final results of all four participating teams have thematically similar contents but show different approaches of how the tasks were undertaken. The teams produced either one long article (Israel and Spain) or a series of shorter articles done by different groups of children (England and Germany):

- Team Haifa/Israel:
 - *Article:* Local environmental issues in Haifa: Littering on the streets, air pollution through traffic and industry, water pollution. Interviews with the local environmental authority, commentaries. School issues: Littering in the school and what could be done about it. Interviews with children and the head teacher.
 - *Advertisement:* "You can also switch them off" - noise pollution through mobile phones
 - *The making of:* Productions shots of the participating children
- Team Segovia/Spain:
 - *Article:* Looking into the littering problem in Pradena. Images of litter on the roads, preparing the project, interviews with a person from the city hall, creating and delivering posters and handouts, interviews on the street.
 - *Advertisement:* (part of the article) "Keep Pradena clean", commercial related to the littering problem



- Team Cheadle Hulme/England:
 - *Article 1:* Litter in the school (showing the litter, clearing the litter, hanging up posters, commentary)
 - *Article 2:* Dog fouling (showing dog dirt, interviewing people and a dog warden)
 - *Article 3:* Noise pollution (measuring the sound levels in different places)
 - *Article 4:* Street littering (images of litter, interviews, clearing the litter)
 - *Article 5:* Street littering (images of litter, collecting litter, putting up a poster)
 - *Article 6:* Park littering (images of litter, collecting litter, putting up posters)
 - *Article 7:* Dog fouling (interviews with people and dog warden, putting up posters)
- Team Berlin/Germany:
 - *Article 1:* Water pollution (measuring the PH level in local waters, interviews)
 - *Article 2:* Food packaging (interviews with shoppers, doing a questionnaire, filming in the back of a shop)
 - *Article 3:* Dirt in the playground and classroom (Interviews with the caretaker, what you can do with waste, images of litter in the school)
 - *Article 4:* Recycling bottles (short sketch about recycling) and school garden (looking at the run down school garden)

The carrying out of the task varied significantly ranging from a straight forward production approach (Germany) to the presentation of a documentative campaign (Spain). In this sense watching the Spanish programme is a worthwhile effort, because we do not only see the final outcome but can take part in the decisions of the children and can observe how they put their campaign into action. Focussing on the specific village audience of Pradena (roughly 400 inhabitants) the children tried to deal with something which was relevant for the local people: the littering of the roads. Some of the English teams included campaign elements as well. Three teams produced posters and hung them up.

The element of 'investigation' (researching a subject) was another part of task 4 and has been partly integrated by some teams. The Spanish and Israeli teams met with a local expert to find out more about the respective environmental problems. They enjoyed moving out of the school and interacting more with their communities. They hardly did any internet research. Some of the German children looked at material from another school which had done an environmental project.

The use of the internet board hardly happened either. The children and the project partners could leave notes for everyone to see. The Israeli children were the most active there and tried to establish communication but did not get very much response from the other children. This has partly to do with restricted internet access in the schools.

All of the children did some editing. The Berlin children had many different opportunities and



edited all their material themselves. Additionally they produced the summary tape of task 4, selecting and combining clips from all of the partners. The children in Israel and England edited their material with assistance. In Spain there was no time left at the end and our partner finished the editing himself. The kids there edited some other material at the beginning of the task. Most children included their favourite music in the editing.

Evaluation of the task

Task four brings in new issues and questions. This task was the first where the children edited their own video footage. We expected that the children would have no significant problem using the digital technology. What particularly surprised us was the fact, how confident they were in the way they set their 'in' and 'out' points. The German teams, who had lots of opportunities to learn the editing, did all of it themselves. They selected the footage and created their own titles. They brought their own music along and mixed it with the original sounds.

Knowing technically about digital video editing does not mean increased media competence. Bringing in all layers of image and sound increases the complexities and can make it harder to look behind their own creations. The children were highly interested in the use of their own music and forgot sometimes totally what they wanted to say with their article. This is where the only discussions came in during the editing: Which soundtrack should we use now?

During our evaluation meeting we decided to rather use simpler editing exercises. We did a short edit exercise based on material of a park (you will find the shots in the online module) as an introduction to editing. Using the same amount of material each group had to create different final edits of the park with different messages (for example a nice looking park, a horrible looking park). This proved to be a fruitful exercise since the children could a lot more easily analyse what happened.

Most of the articles were rather thin regarding their message and were more carried by the music than by anything else. Maybe this reflects the high amount of commercial television the children consume, the glossy images with no deep discussions. The production itself seemed to be more exciting than the actual message. The German 'water pollution' team for example examined the local water with PH test strips. The results were slightly different. The team therefore concluded that the water with the higher level was more polluted. Discussing their article it became apparent, that they actually did not know what a PH value was and if the higher level meant more contamination or not.

Expanding the task into a campaign was a useful step to take. The whole issue of the audience is vital if we explore the media. The Spanish team produced something for a specific audience but was at the same time part of that audience as well. This proved to be difficult. The children knew most people in the village and were not as critical as they might have liked to be.

It was interesting to see the concern from all the participating children for their local



environment. We hope that seeing similarities in other countries helped to bring different cultures together rather than separating them. Looking at the different tapes provided new insights and raised new questions about environmental issues. For example the German system of recycling bottles was new to most of the other children in Israel, Spain and England. This was a good entry for joint discussion. It would have been interesting as well to discuss more what the children could actually *do* about the problems and what the short video productions could be used for.

