

Questions of Good Practice - what is it?

In terms of everyday teaching and the use of ICT, it must be possible to address this question and come up with a satisfactory answer. There have been many attempts in the past to identify methods of software evaluation and areas of usage. These were created enthusiastically, perhaps to satisfy a perceived requirement to prove the absolute necessity of using ICT in teaching. In some ways, we have now moved beyond that point. ICT is now widely used and we no longer have to justify its inclusion. In some ways, the opposite reaction is now setting in, and teachers are being forced to justify their non-inclusion of it in their teaching, as the inspection teams turn up ready to be wowed by the latest displays of technology in teaching.

In basic terms, it is fair to argue that good practice is something which incontrovertibly improves learning and results. If the use of ICT can simplify a task, or address learning in a unique way, then it can be justified. The following exercise could act as exemplification.

An electronic verb chart

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Tables of grammar are a pain to teach. Students learn huge charts of information but are unable to apply the knowledge gained to other systems they encounter. By bringing some technology to the process, the Find/Replace system found in any word processor or spreadsheet can help them reduce time spent in forming the next verb or learning the next conjugation or declension. It can be used to show essential differences between, for example, -er and -re verbs in French, or different declensions or conjugations in Latin.

The technique can be used in different ways but I like to take charge and show it in action, using a data projector. I start with a set of information, say a verb chart. This could be a table of all finite verb forms of the first conjugation verb *parare*, meaning I prepare. I make these ready for action, in a pre-prepared document, containing 120 verb forms. The text of these is on the next page of this document.

Initially, I show how all the endings of *parare* can be applied to another verb in the same grouping, say *navigare*, meaning I sail. By a simple Find/Replace of "par" for "navig", I convert all 120 endings and hey - the whole thing is done in one mouse click: the entire endings set of *navigare* appears quite seamlessly. The same sort of thing could work for verbs such as *donare* and *ludere* in French.

To convert from one distinct system to another, I use Find/Replace to convert the *parare* endings to a full set for the second conjugation verb *monere*, meaning I warn. I can do this in 6 steps, starting with a swap of *parare* to *monere*, then *parare* to *monere*, *paratus* to *monitus* (whole word), *parati* to *moniti* (whole word), *pare* to *monere* and finally, *para* to *monere*. So when a student meets the entire endings set for the second conjugation, he or she can in fact learn 120 apparently new endings by learning just 6 changes. Now that's efficient. In fairness, the same is not true of, say, a conversion from 1st to 3rd conjugations, but even then, the burden is heavily reduced.

Active Indicative	Active Subjunctive	Passive Indicative	Passive Subjunctive
paro paras parat	parem pares paret	paror pararis paratur	parer pareris paretur
paramus paratis parant	paremus paretis parent	paramur paramini parantur	paremur paremini parentur
parabam parabas parabat	pararem parares pararet	parabar parabaris parabatur	pararer parareris pararetur
parabamus parabatis parabant	pararemus pararetis parent	parabamur parabamini parabantur	pararemur pararemini parentur
paravi paravisti paravit	paraverim paraveris paraverit	paratus-a-um sum paratus-a-um es paratus-a-um est	paratus-a-um sim paratus-a-um sis paratus-a-um sit
paravimus paravistis paraverunt	paraverimus paraveritis paraverint	parati-ae-a sumus parati-ae-a estis parati-ae-a sunt	parati-ae-a simus parati-ae-a sitis parati-ae-a sint
paraveram paraveras paraverat	paravissem paravisses paravisset	paratus-a-um eram paratus-a-um eras paratus-a-um erat	paratus-a-um essem paratus-a-um esses paratus-a-um esset
paraveramus paraveratis paraverant	paravissemus paravissetis paravissent	parati-ae-a eramus parati-ae-a eratis parati-ae-a erant	parati-ae-a essemus parati-ae-a essetis parati-ae-a essent
parabo parabis parabit		parabor paraberis parabitur	
parabimus parabitis parabunt		parabimur parabimini parabuntur	
paravero paraveris paraverit		paratus-a-um ero paratus-a-um eris paratus-a-um erit	
paraverimus paraveritis paraverint		parati-ae-a erimus parati-ae-a eritis parati-ae-a erunt	