


FÓN project

Foghlaim Ón Nuatheicneolaíocht

Mobile phones - we've done our best to ban them from schools... so why are we now encouraging their integration? Read on to find out how the NCCA has been proving that mobile phones and online chat can be effective teaching, learning and assessment tools.

The NCCA has partnered up with Foras na Gaeilge, the NCTE (National Centre for Technology in Education) and our counterpart in Northern Ireland, CCEA, to bring mobile phones and online chat to 420 second year or Year 10 students and their fifteen teachers in six cross-border schools.

You might remember reading about phase one of the  FÓN project, called **MALL**, in a previous edition of **info@ncca**. This time around, we've added to the ways students can use their mobile phones and improved on the technology working behind the scenes, so that all teachers can tailor the content being delivered to their students.

So how are the mobile phones and online chat used?

Well, phones can now be used in three different ways. To

- schedule vocabulary SMS delivery to students
- facilitate student-to-student chat which is recorded for the teacher
- record student responses to (a) a set of teacher's questions or (b) practice sessions, both of which the teacher can later access.

The online chat is a secure and teacher-monitored chat area, where students converse with one another around a teacher-designated task. The task is based on a stimulus, like a video, audio excerpt or graphic, and everything is recorded for later access by the teacher.

How do teachers and students interact with the FÓN system?

Teachers can draw from pre-recorded content within the phone system in order to set up their vocabulary SMS deliveries, tasks for their students to chat around and question-answer sessions.

We added to the interest factor when compiling the content for the system by asking celebrities to lend their voices to record scripted content for us. Caroline Morahan, Mario Rosenstock, Éanna Ní Lamhna, Fiona Looney and a number of Irish sports personalities can be heard by students when they log in to complete a session. They've certainly added to the excitement.







Teachers can also add their own content, which allows differentiation for their own class group.

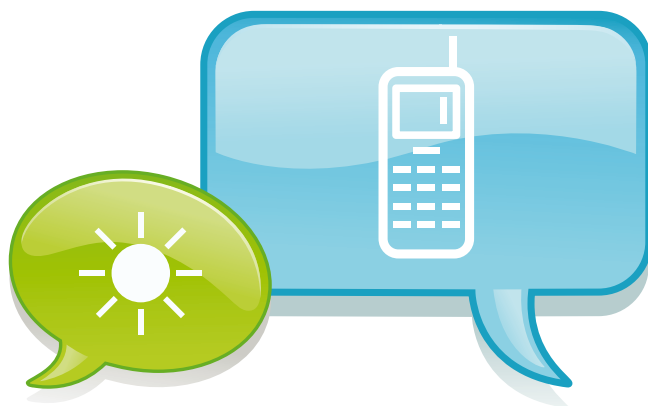
What are teachers and students saying about using mobile phones and online chat for teaching, learning and assessing Irish?

The FÓN technologies are working a treat! Students are enthusiastic about the new learning tools and have commented on their improved speaking abilities in Irish, their increased vocabulary and their increased motivation to call up and complete their Irish homework.

Students are also engaging in meaningful communication with other students from schools around the country, while improving their awareness and understanding of different dialects. They mentioned their ability to practice their Irish at any time, in any place and at their own pace. And their feedback also shows how they are becoming more autonomous learners and using their recordings to increase their awareness of their own abilities and track their own progression in Irish.

From the teachers' perspective, the technologies allow them to hear more from each student and to hear the marked improvement over time. They have noticed students' enjoyment of Irish increasing and remark on students using their phones a few times each evening for homework, often late at night! While they do require more time to plan for and work with the new technologies, they feel it is very worthwhile. Teachers also commented on the technologies facilitating a shift to more student-led (self-directed) learning.

This phase of the  FÓN project will continue in schools until June. To find out more about the project as it progresses, log on to the FÓN blog at  <http://foghlaim.edublogs.org>. We'd love to hear what you think!



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