

## Successfully Using and Making Multimedia Multilingual Talking Books

*Sheilagh Crowther of CIRCLE, Gloucestershire's Ethnic Minorities Achievement Service, describes how they make their own resources in the shape of multilingual talking books, and how you can do the same.*

- What is a multimedia multilingual talking book?
- Why use multimedia?
- Our context and why we made our own multilingual books
- Some examples
- Making your own talking books
- Points to consider

Working with EAL (English as an Additional Language) pupils, refugees, and pupils seeking asylum in Gloucestershire schools, we have been making multimedia multilingual talking books using Clicker4, a program which includes a multimedia authoring option.

### **What is a multimedia multilingual talking book?**

A multimedia multilingual talking book is a book that is made on the computer and used on screen. You can also print out a version to read away from the computer. On screen you may have any combination of text, pictures, photos, drawings, animations, sound effects and video. The computer can also read the text aloud to you. There are talking books which are English only, or in another language, but the focus here is on talking books which are made with two or more languages, including English. For a comprehensive article on talking books see 'Creating Electronic Story Books for Minority Language Learning'.

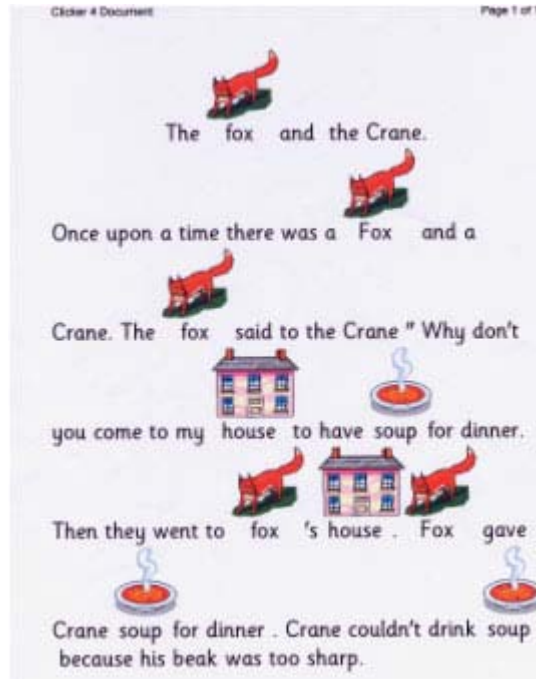
[http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion\\_lang/community/resources/storybook1.html](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion_lang/community/resources/storybook1.html)

An example of a talking book which we have used is the 'Hounslow Talking Stories Project' CD-ROM. This has three traditional stories: 'The man, the boy and the donkey', 'The hare and the tortoise', and 'The fox and the crane'. Each story is in 9 languages (Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Punjabi, Somali and Urdu) plus English. There are also symbol and BSL video versions. For more information on this CD-ROM, see '[Using multilingual talking stories with pupils and parents](#)'.

[http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion\\_lang/community/casestudies/talkingstories.html](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion_lang/community/casestudies/talkingstories.html)

These fables can be used with pupils of any age. I have used this CD-ROM successfully with primary children both for whole-class teaching and small group work, and also with beginners at secondary level. Used in conjunction with an interactive whiteboard in the Literacy Hour with a Year 2 class at Kingsholm Primary School, Gloucester, this resource allowed Bengali pupils to hear and see their own language in the classroom for the first time, to the delight of themselves and also their classmates, one of whom commented – "That's my friend's language – it sounds beautiful". This friend requested a copy to take home for her mother to read to herself and her siblings, so we made a copy using the children's coloured-in drawings for pupils to borrow.

Clicker 4, as well as being a multimedia authoring program and talking word-processor, provides picture, word and sentence support for writing. Reading and listening to the stories was followed up with writing activities. This program supported access for beginner EAL pupils. For example, this is the beginning of a retelling of the story by a group of EAL pupils. The picture support helped a beginner EAL pupil to join in reading back the group's story in the plenary session.



We have added our own language versions to this resource: initially Korean, Greek, Turkish and Kurdish, with Polish, Czech and Tamil to be added soon – and anticipate adding new languages as and when the need arises.



'The fox and the crane' in Korean



'The man, the boy and the donkey' in Turkish

### Why use multimedia?

Multimedia computer-based books have several advantages over traditional paper books. Features of multimedia, such as being multi-sensory – having

sound effects, still and moving pictures – and interactivity mean that they can cater for a range of learning styles. For example, some pupils may prefer to listen, some to read, while others may rely more on visuals for meaning. This range of media also supports bilingual learners because readers can control the pace, and replay as often as they like. It is easy to go back and forth, and revisit pages to check things. Links to other pages, further information or word glossaries are easily incorporated, and text can be differentiated for different reading levels; for example the ‘Find out and Write About’ series of non-fiction titles by Clicker are differentiated in three levels.

Video can be used for sign language for deaf bilingual learners. A computer and projector, or interactive whiteboard makes it possible to share the book with a whole class. It can be also used independently by individuals, pairs or small groups, on a computer with headphones while other activities are going on in the classroom.

The reasons for making multilingual books on the computer are similar to those for making bilingual paper books, and using stories on audio-cassette:

- They promote the development of both first language and English.
- They can raise the status of community languages within the mainstream classroom – and in the case of multimedia, they can bring community languages into the classroom even if no adults can speak or read that language.
- They provide a resource for raising language awareness among all pupils.
- The potential exists for an extensive range of languages in one ‘book’ whereas most paper books can only be bilingual, or at most trilingual.

Examples of trilingual books include ‘Sengilo, Mengilo and Qalicengilo’ , a traditional Kurdish folktale published in Kurdish, Turkish and English, by the Refugee Council [[www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/](http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/)] and ‘A bridge of sea’ in Turkish, Greek and English, published by Kok Yayincilik, Ankara.



- It is easy to find and switch between languages. Similarly, audio cassettes are usually monolingual, or at most bilingual. CDs allow more versatility because they can have many languages on one disc; for example, Mantra have recently published stories in up to 12 languages on one CD.  
[[www.mantralingua.com](http://www.mantralingua.com)]
- It is potentially easy to switch between tracks in the same way that you can choose tracks on a music CD.
- Video allows sign language to be used.
- Stories can be revisited unaided for individual or paired work – even if pupils are not literate.
- Pupils with different languages can work collaboratively on a shared text.

Few multimedia multilingual stories are commercially available at the moment, although more are likely in the near future; Mantra, for example, have already published picture dictionaries in 20 languages, in combinations of 5 per CD-ROM, and plan more publications for the future.

However, by making your own books you can personalise content, and address specific language and curriculum needs.

### **Our context and why we made our own multilingual books**

In the local context, these books are proving to be a particularly useful resource for EAL pupils. Gloucestershire is a rural county, with approximately 800 EAL pupils in schools. Some 55 languages are spoken in schools in the county, but more than three quarters of these languages are only spoken by a handful of pupils. There are many isolated pupils, including beginner pupils. For example, of the 115 primary schools with EAL pupils, there is one inner-city school which has almost 200 EAL pupils, but there are 88 schools which have 5 or fewer EAL pupils. Out of these, 42 schools have only a single EAL pupil on role. There are 36 secondary schools with EAL pupils, of which 26 schools have fewer than 20 EAL pupils and of these 10 schools have fewer than 5 EAL pupils. There are few bilingual teachers or assistants in Gloucestershire schools.

Although a variety of community language schools, attended by approximately 200 pupils, are active in the county, first language literacy – especially among primary age pupils – is not yet the norm. Younger pupils, who have spent their whole school career in England, may develop skills in first language literacy much later than skills in English, although there is a great variation between schools and families. Consequently, using first languages and bringing community languages into the mainstream classroom can be problematic. Many schools have access to a good range of bilingual books, but there may be no one in school who can read them.

Talking books offer one solution to that problem. Individual children and whole classes can listen to community languages, and see familiar scripts, even though they may not yet be able to read them.

The EAL pupils in Gloucestershire schools include approximately 60 refugees and pupils seeking asylum. Some of these are about to go to university. Others have had little or no education, or a very interrupted education. Their first languages in their home countries may have been banned officially including their use in schools, for example Albanian in Kosovo, Kurdish in Turkey. For this reason, literacy in first language may be lacking, though they may or may not be literate in another language (Kurdish refugees may be literate in Turkish, for example). Introducing *spoken* first languages in the classroom thus serves two purposes: it raises the status within the school system, and shows that it is acceptable and even welcomed in the host country – and it also assists communication where pupils and parents may not be able to read or write in their own first language.

The use of an electronic medium means that these resources can be made relatively quickly, and also they are not a static resource but can be changed and adapted according to need. For example, the bilingual stories can be personalised by changing the names for a new pupil. Children are motivated to read when presented with a story made for them personally, with themselves as the central character. Additional languages can also be added to stories. Writing for a 'real' audience improves the motivation of writers to check their accuracy in both languages. Some pupils enlisted parental help to check their first language spelling, and spent some time in deliberation over the best translation of certain words. However, in some cases, where help is not available, it is possible that there may be inaccuracies in the first language writing.

This is an ongoing project, and work planned for the coming year includes: making books of journeys by Traveller and fairground pupils, accounts of work experience by beginner EAL Year 10 and 11 pupils, and competent bilingual secondary pupils making resources to support parent and family literacy.

## **Some examples**

Gloucestershire EMAS has several projects and initiatives which provide links between schools and pupils, both primary and secondary. Making talking books has been a development of this way of working with pupils and schools.

In making our own talking books, we have begun by using multimedia in three projects:

- “Let’s write a book”
- Family partnership books
- Journeys

### **“Let’s write a book”**

This scheme was started some years ago by Dee Russell-Thomas (EMAS Advisory teacher for secondary schools) to link older and younger bilingual pupils together. The writers are older competent bilingual pupils and the readers are beginner EAL pupils who share a first language. Contacts are made within a school, linking Year 10 and 11 pupils with new Year 7 pupils, or between secondary and primary schools, partnering pupils who share a first language, sometimes between siblings. There is now a substantial collection of paper books in dual language, and others in progress.

The advantages for the *writer* include an opportunity for:

- increased self-esteem
- bilingualism to be recognised and valued
- skills in first language literacy to be maintained and developed
- development of English and ICT skills
- creating coursework.

The advantages for the *reader* include:

- a personalised reading book in their first language
- an opportunity to introduce the pupil’s language and culture to the whole class
- an opportunity to be made to feel both welcome and special



- an opportunity to develop and maintain both languages.

Using multimedia has the following added advantages:

- Spoken language is easier to access on CD or computer. Audiocassettes were made for some books, recording first one language, then the other language, then both languages page by page. This is still a useful resource as pupils can take them home with the paper version of the book to share with their family. In some cases, parents may be developing their own literacy skills in one or both languages alongside those of their children.
- Child can set their own pace when listening.
- It brings community languages into the classroom for all to hear and share.
- Using a computer raises the status of their first language in the eyes of the child and his or her peers.

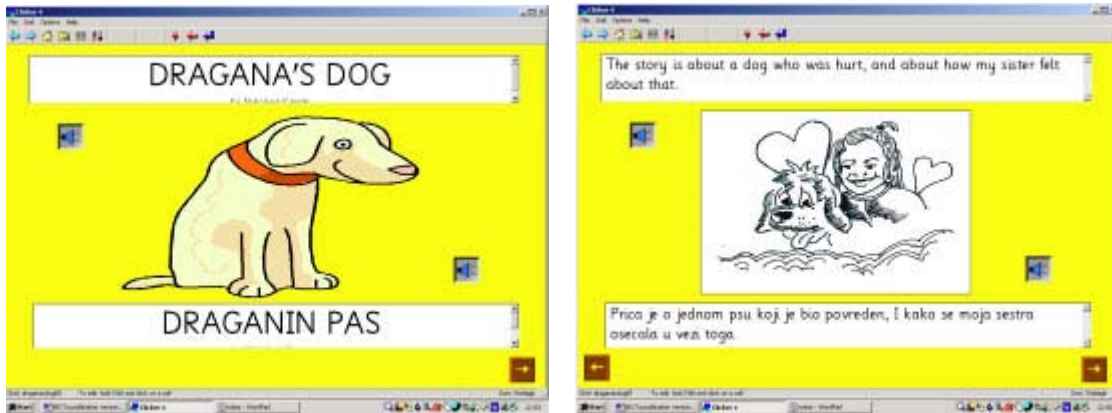
We have introduced multimedia by converting some previously made paper books into talking books. This has allowed us to gain confidence in techniques, and find solutions to problems encountered before progressing to making books with the pupils taking more control of technology process and design decisions. We have started with the following titles:

'The Stolen jewellery' in Japanese (Beaufort Community School, Gloucester)

'Grandma's gift' in Croatian (St Peter's High School, Gloucester)



'Dragana's Dog' in Croatian (St Peter's High School, Gloucester)



'The Adventures of David and Peter Pan' in Korean (Balcarras school, Cheltenham)

'Joseph and his Pokemon Pal' in Korean (Balcarras school, Cheltenham)

'The Friendship' in Portuguese (St Peter's High School, Gloucester)

'Zelia's Adventure' in French (St Peter's High School, Gloucester)

All these books are illustrated with drawings by teachers or pupils or with clip-art illustrations. Some books written with pupils this year are illustrated with photos taken by the pupils themselves.

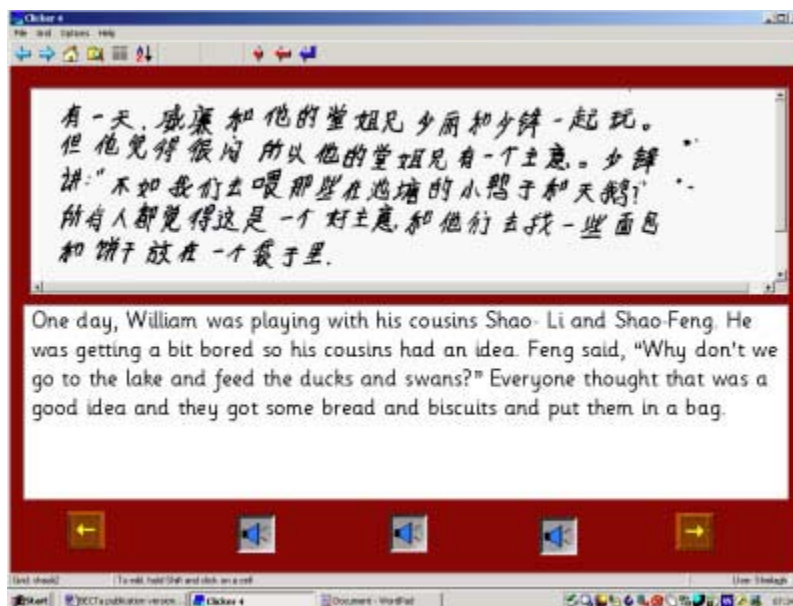
'Halime's secret' is in Turkish Kurdish and English (Brockworth Comprehensive School, Gloucester)



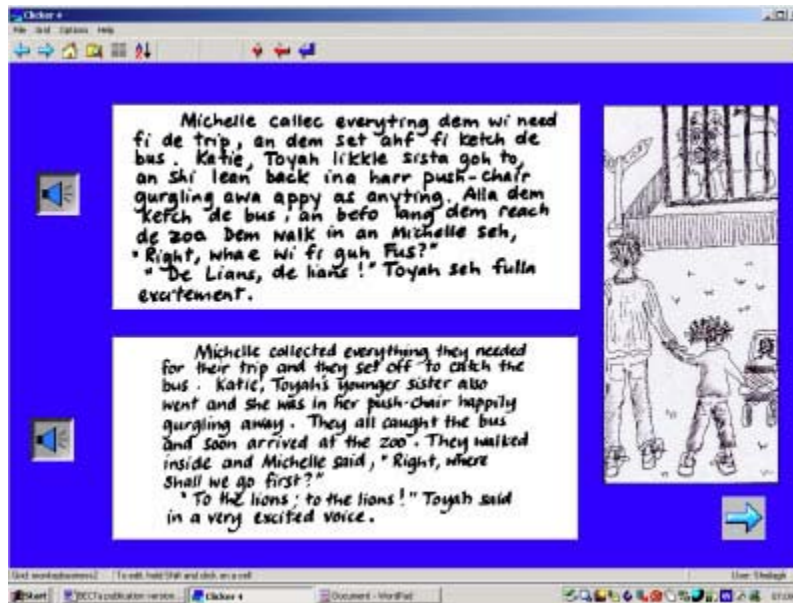
'A story for Hamza' is in Arabic and English (Beaufort Community School, Gloucester)



Using multimedia can be used to raise language awareness in the classroom, for example showing that the same script can be used for different languages, for instance Mandarin and Chinese. The book [below](#) by a secondary school pupil will be recorded in Chinese, Mandarin and English.



Languages that are more usually spoken than written can be recorded and listened to. 'Monkey business' by a pupil from Barnwood Park School in Gloucester, has been written in English and Jamaican Creole.



There are many possibilities for future books; for instance pupils sharing several different languages could be encouraged to collaborate on a project, maybe in different schools, via e-mail and school web sites.

### Family Partnership books



These books are made with contributions from the whole family, and include family histories, stories, information about culture and language – whatever the family want to share. If the books are multimedia it makes it easy to share them with a whole class and they provide potential as a family literacy or ICT project,

to develop skills.

### **Journeys**

Many pupils will make an extended visit abroad with their family at some point during their school career. Sarah Owen (EMAS Advisory teacher) has worked with pupils to make books of their visits on their return. We have now transferred some of these books to multimedia, and have made several new books directly on the computer.

Prior to children making extended trips abroad, a meeting is held with child and parents, and the book project explained. The child is encouraged to feel important about the work they will be doing. The children are given disposable cameras, and take photographs of their own choice to record their visit. They may start by taking a photo at school, or at the airport. They also keep a diary. Workbooks specially made for this purpose are available from the Resource Centre for Multicultural Education, Leicester (tel. 0116 231 3399). Back in school, captions are written and the photographs are made into a book. Doing this with a small peer group is beneficial, as their questions stimulate discussion and comparisons, and can contribute to language extension.

Making a book with a group, and sharing it with the class, can ease the transition back to school after an absence. The finished book can be used as a focus for literacy and oracy work in English to support the child's return to using English in school after a period when they may have used it less. This is especially useful for younger pupils. It is a means to share experiences with peers and raise awareness of pupils' backgrounds, knowledge and skills.

It can also become a valuable personalised curriculum resource. For example, in Tredworth Junior School, Gloucester, these books have been used as a starting point and stimulus for whole class and group research on Bangladesh and India, culminating in the production of displays and presentations in a school assembly.



*These photos were taken by Year 4 and 5 pupils with disposable cameras*



India: vegetable seller



India: milking the buffalo

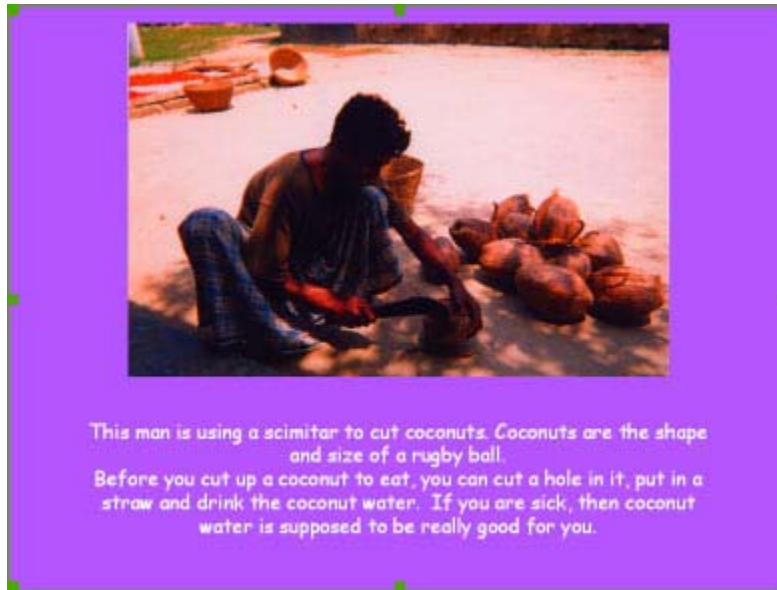


Bangladesh: sun-dried chillies



Bangladesh: taxi

An advantage of making these books with multimedia is that it can make it much easier to share with a whole class – or school – in assembly. Having visual support can help a pupil give an oral presentation, and therefore help develop speaking skills. This could allow even a beginner at English to develop confidence in speaking, because the audience can see the words as well as hear them. It also develops listening skills in the audience. On the computer, it can be revisited individually or as a whole class.

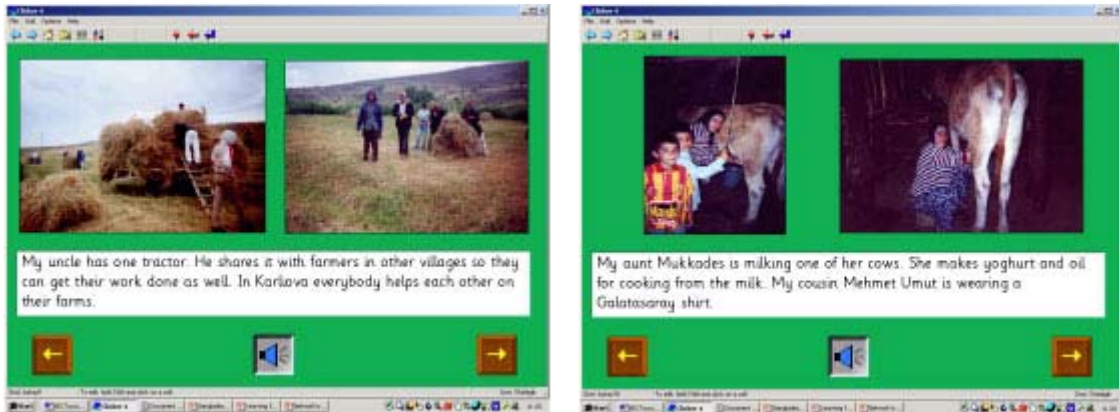


*PowerPoint slide from a book presentation on Bangladesh*

A younger or shy pupil, or a beginner whose pronunciation may not always be perfect, can be supported by knowing the audience can also see the English text. This is good for confidence building, self-esteem, and developing speaking skills.

For instance, a Year 6 pupil gave a talk using a PowerPoint version of her book to a Year 2 class studying Bangladesh. Having the pictures on a big screen meant that the whole class could see the pictures and also join in reading some of the captions, which made the presentation more interactive. Children were later able to refer back to the presentation on the class computer for their topic work. Having an older child to visit stimulated a lot of questions – and discussion, and also served to raise the self-esteem and confidence of younger Bangladeshi pupils. After the visit, Bangladeshi pupils in the class were keen to talk about some aspects of their own background and experiences. For example, one child asked me to write down her own personal account of a visit to Bangladesh which she had made with her family a couple of years previously – her account ran to several pages. Another child told about his Maddressah classes at the mosque in Gloucester, and information he had gathered about Bangladesh from watching Bangla television at home.

Kurdish refugees at a secondary school also took disposable cameras with them on a return visit to stay with their grandparents in their home village in Turkey. They have been writing an account of their trip with their tutor. They have been able to give presentations in assemblies as part of 'Refugee Week' activities in schools.

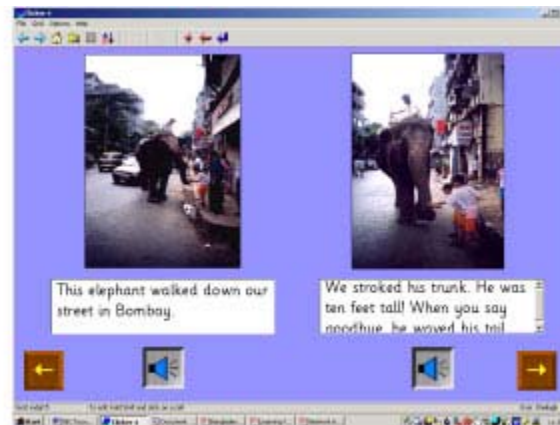


Some more examples from 'Journeys' are a trip to Bangladesh by a child in the Reception class. The child's father recorded the book in Bangla, and the child read in English. This book was also featured in school topic work on Bangladesh.





A trip to India by two brothers at another primary school gave them the opportunity to talk about their Hindu religion.

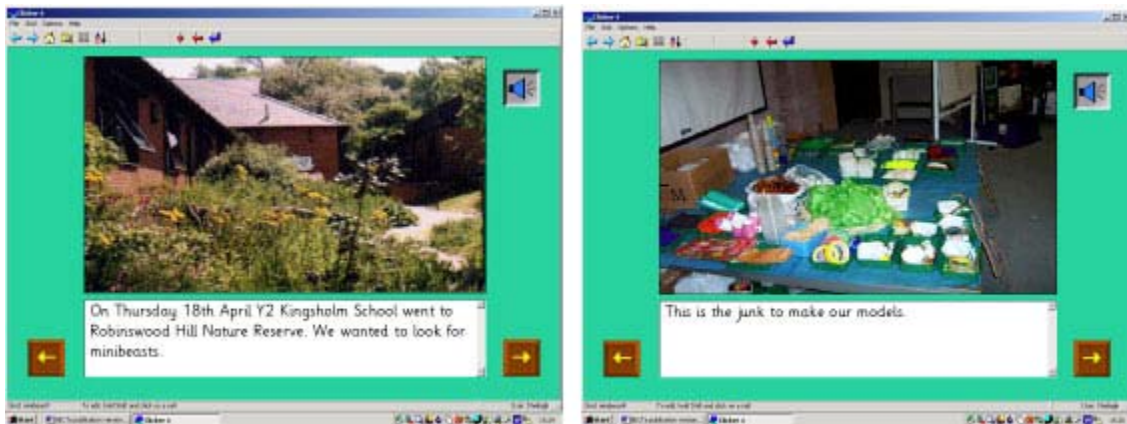


Multimedia books will also be made by Traveller and Fairground Children, on their return to Kingsholm Primary School this autumn, as a way of sharing their experiences with their peers.

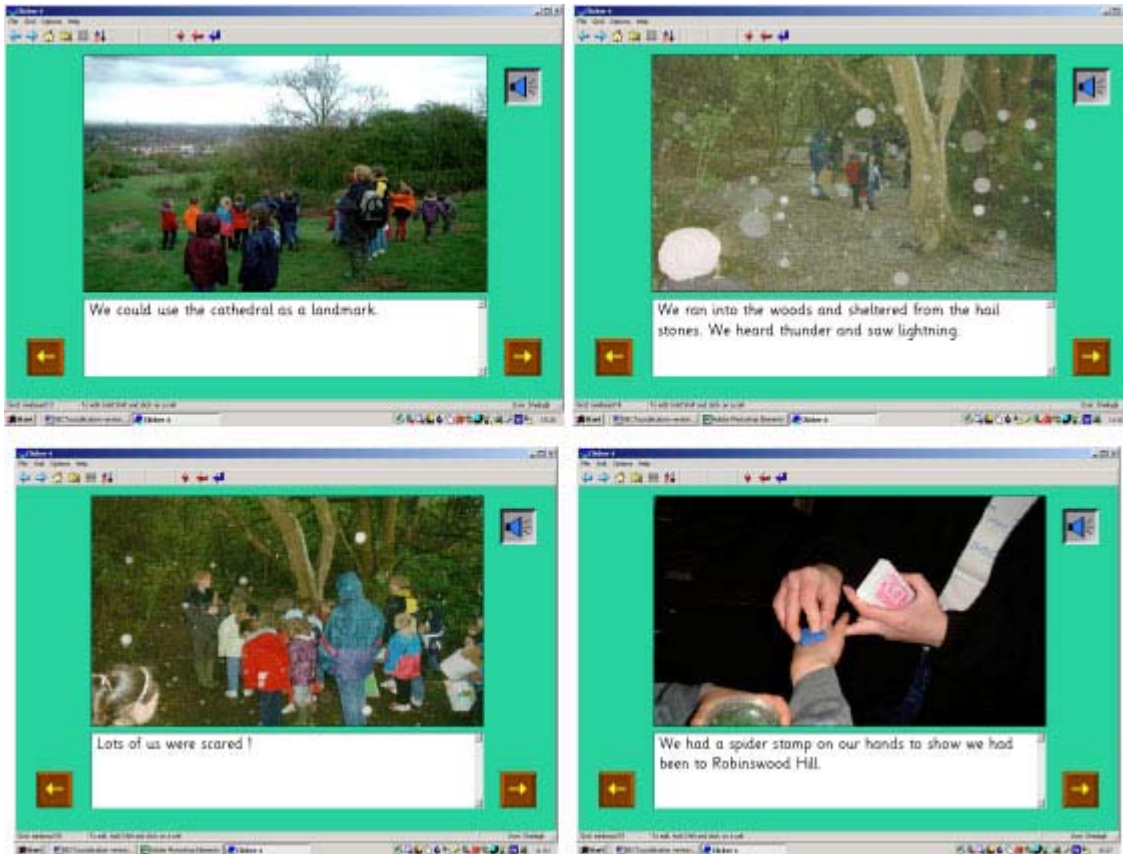
**Other applications**

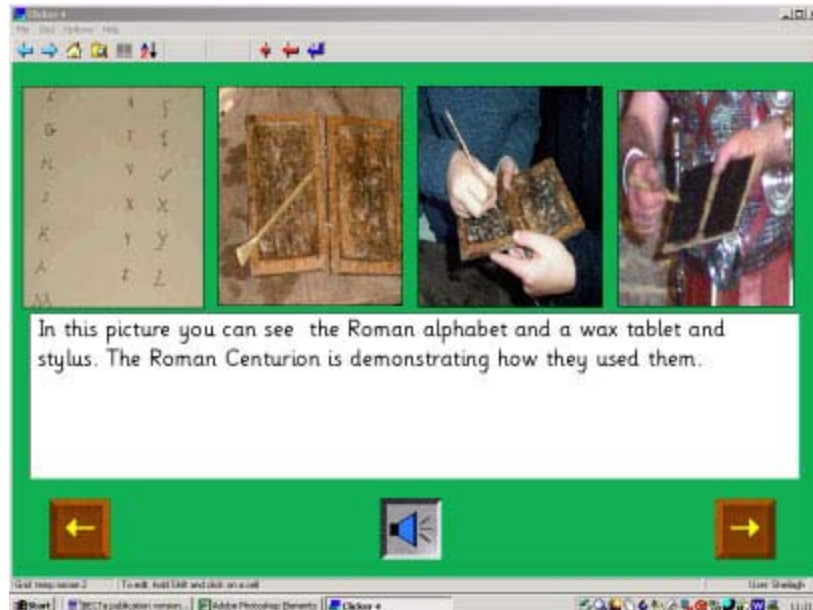
School trips and outings often make a valuable contribution to children's learning. However, EAL pupils may not always gain the maximum benefit from these experiences, because outside the classroom setting, and listening to unfamiliar speakers, they may find it difficult to process and remember language, lexis and information. I have used Clicker 4 to make multimedia books of school trips. This is another instance of a resource to support EAL and ethnic minority pupils, which also enhances learning for all pupils.

For example, at Kingsholm Primary, we took photos on school trips with a digital camera. I then put these into linked clicker grids to make a book. Using the interactive whiteboard, the classes were then able to add captions to create an account of the trip. The whole class contributed, giving plenty of opportunity for discussion of subject specific and general lexis, and also language and grammar (for instance punctuation and time connectives).



*Minibeasts*



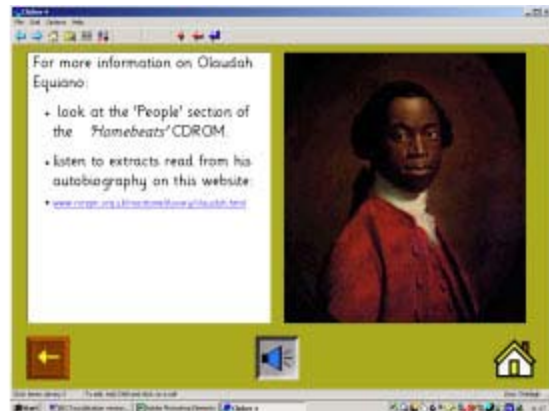


*Roman trip (Year3) – visit to Cirencester museum*



Another application is in making curriculum resources. For example, a history topic on Benin has few commercially available resources. This book has been made to support teaching this topic to Year 5.





## **Making your own talking books**

You will need:

- Clicker 4 or another multimedia authoring program
- The facility to record sound, such as a microphone or Minidisc recorder or cassette recorder
- Software to edit sound files
- Scanner
- Digital camera
- Fonts (if non-Roman script is required)
- CD-ROM writer

We chose Clicker 4 for a number of reasons:

- It is easy to use
- There are some ready-made templates for book making
- It can be used with and by pupils at all key stages
- Books can be made available for others to download on a web site where teachers share resources (Clicker Grids for Learning)
- The web site includes an EAL section
- Many primary schools already use program
- Books can be linked to grids, providing writing support for follow-up literacy activities

- Software is being actively developed, for example, the addition of foreign speech engines
- There is excellent technical support from Crick Software.

However, there are many alternative multimedia authoring programs to choose from.

### **Sound recording**

When working on a desktop computer in school, sound recording is not a problem and can be of good quality, even without an external microphone. In this case, voice can be recorded directly onto a page of the multimedia book.

However, sound recording on laptops is never of a very good quality. This has been one of the main problems which I have encountered as a peripatetic teacher, making these books on a laptop computer.

The solution which we have found works best for us is to record voice onto minidisc. This is preferable to using an audio-cassette recorder because the recording is digital rather than analogue and can be transferred directly to sound files on the laptop computer. Minidisc recorder/players are small and unobtrusive and with a clip-on microphone, the reader is less conscious of being recorded.

### **Scanner**

This may be needed for inserting non-Roman fonts into Clicker. It is also useful for putting in children's own drawings, though they could alternatively create pictures in a drawing or painting program on the computer.

### **Camera**

There are many digital cameras available. Some features to look out for are the ability to take short video clips as well as still shots, a zoom lens, and a cradle with USB port to allow quick and easy transfer of pictures to computer. Some digital cameras can record directly onto floppy disc or CD-ROM. There are also cameras specially designed for very young children to use. Disposable cameras

can be bought quite cheaply – when processing film, this can be put straight onto CD which saves time spent in scanning in pictures.

### **CD-ROM-writer**

Copying onto CD-ROM is a convenient way of sharing the resources made.

### **Fonts**

Fonts are needed for non-Roman scripts such as Korean, Chinese, Bengali, Arabic and Gujarati. There are many sources for these, and some can be downloaded free from the Internet, for example see '[Language tools including software and fonts](#)'

[www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion\\_lang/community/software/index.html](http://www.becta.org.uk/inclusion/inclusion_lang/community/software/index.html)

### **Points to consider**

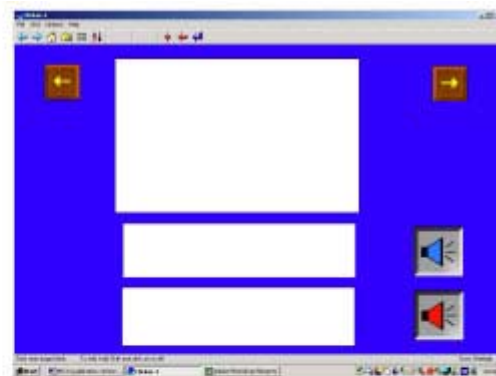
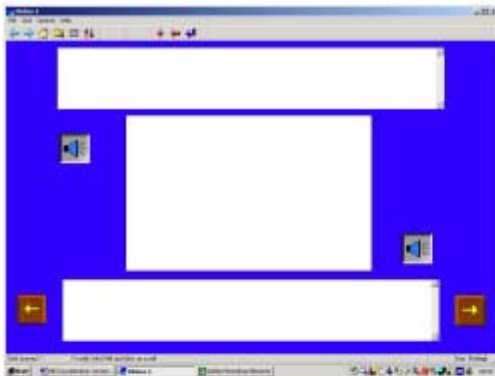
Clicker has ready-made templates for creating multimedia books, but for extra languages, we needed to create our own. Organisation and page layouts had to be considered carefully with regard to factors such as positioning of text, graphics and whether this makes one language appear more prominent than the other; which is the best layout for comparing languages – separated by picture, side by side, one below another; and how factors such as script, left-right directionality can affect this choice.

Making these books has raised my awareness of issues to do with languages and school, including discussions with parents about which spoken form to record – Bangla or Sylheti or both? Do pupils have access to multilingual word processing in school?

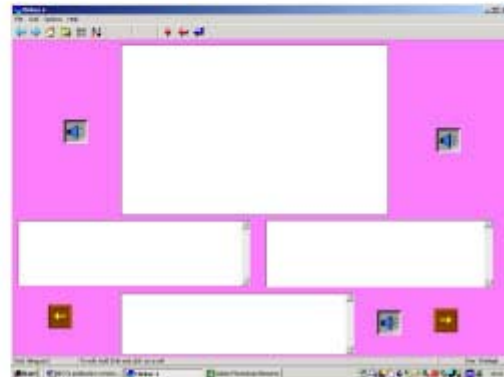
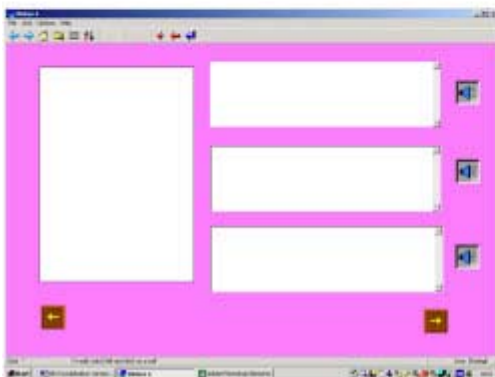
Each book we have made has been a collaborative effort, involving a number of people; teachers, pupils and parents, colleagues, members of the community and friends have given up their time to provide translations and voice recordings. It would not have been possible to make these books without this help.

Once all the materials have been assembled, actually making a book is not a time consuming task. Briefly, the process is very simple:

- Collect all files needed – graphics, sound, video, into folders on your computer.
- Select a ready-made template or page – or create your own (our bi- and tri-lingual templates will be available to download from the Clicker web site), name it, copy the number of pages necessary, numbering sequentially (e.g. *india1*, *india2*, *india3* and so on). Clicker recognises this and automatically opens the next page of your book when you click on the next page icon. If you wish, you can change the background colour easily.



*Our bilingual templates*



*Our trilingual templates*

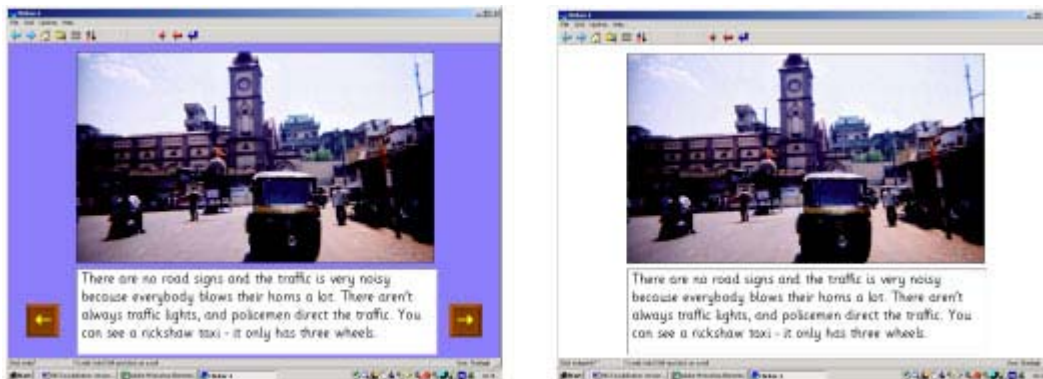
- Insert text: type in (Roman scripts), copy and paste from a word processor (Roman and some other scripts) or insert a graphic file of text (most non-Roman scripts).



- Insert graphics (your own pictures or photos, or choose from clip-art or the Clicker graphics library).
- Insert sound: record directly into page, if using a desktop computer, or insert a previously recorded sound file.
- Save and repeat for each individual page.

Now the basic techniques have been mastered, we have begun to experiment and develop things. One example is in the use of sound effects. In a book about a journey to India, you can hear the elephants, monkeys, traffic and an aeroplane.

Another development is in making a printable version of the book; the coloured background and buttons are hidden, so that the printed copy looks attractive, and also does not unnecessarily waste ink. This is then laminated and bound with a ringbinder to produce an attractive and durable addition to the school library.



The main drawback to using Clicker for these stories has been problems associated with multilingual word processing – it has not been possible to cut and paste text from other applications into text boxes for some languages (for example, Gujarati) – although this can be done for other languages such as Greek and Arabic.

This means that we have had to scan in text and put it in as a graphic file, which does not allow you to change appearance, font size and so. However, this is an aspect that we are still investigating – and to which we hope we may find a solution!