



## Embassy CES

### Improving language learning with SMART Response™ interactive response system

How SMART Response is helping Embassy's international students to master the English language

Embassy CES is one of the world's premier English language training institutes. Over the last 30 years it has helped over half a million students to learn English at its state-of-the-art, purpose-built centres across the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand. Winner of the Language Travel Magazine Star Award for Best Chain Language School 2007 and Innovation Award 2008, Embassy attracts students of all ages and backgrounds from every corner of the globe.

Some might need to become fluent in English for their job or merely wish to top-up their language skills; others may require formal qualifications to get into university. But whatever their motivations and whether they're full-time or part-time students, Embassy offers a comprehensive choice of modern courses designed to achieve practical results – and technology is playing an increasingly influential role in delivering effective learning.

The Embassy philosophy is to combine tried and tested traditional teaching with leading-edge innovation and experimentation. "I'm really excited about using digital technology in my classes," says Clementine Annabell, a teacher at Embassy's Cambridge school. "We have SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards in all our classrooms and they really bring a lesson to life with music, video, photos, and the Internet... all available at the touch of a button." Her students certainly agree: in a 2008 Embassy survey, 91% agreed that their lessons were more enjoyable when a SMART Board was in use, in turn helping to improve learning outcomes.

# Case study

#### Challenge

Assessing how SMART Response interactive response systems could help to enhance educational outcomes for international students of all skill levels and backgrounds as they learn English.

#### SMART solution

SMART Response system  
SMART Board interactive™ whiteboards.

#### Result

Embassy's use of SMART Response has enhanced student engagement, enjoyment and confidence, while improving formative assessment and flexibility for teachers.

“The teachers are all very enthusiastic about SMART Response, and are always interested to see how other people are using it.”

**Clementine Annabell**  
**Teacher**  
**Embassy School, Cambridge**

In addition to her day-to-day duties, Clementine is also the lead teacher on Embassy’s ‘Smart Classroom’ project, which is exploring the educational effects of using different digital technologies in the classroom. “As well as a SMART Board in every classroom, each student has a laptop and the whole environment is run with an online Learning Management System,” she explains. “As we were already using SMART software extensively, it made sense to look at the SMART Response (formerly known as Senteo interactive response system) as part of the project.”

A free SMART Response demonstration kit was provided by Steljes, SMART Technologies’ exclusive representative in the UK, and the company also organised training for Clementine and her colleagues.

“One of the areas we particularly wanted to explore was formative assessment,” says Clementine. “With SMART Response I can set a number of questions on a particular grammar point at the beginning of the lesson, for example, and assess how well students already understand it. Depending on the results, I can adapt the lesson accordingly and, if necessary, divide the class into different ability groups. The students can then be tested again at the end of the lesson to gauge individual understanding.”

Confidence is a vital factor in learning to speak another language, and SMART Response is also proving extremely helpful in encouraging student interaction and speaking practice. “In certain circumstances we only allow one handset between two students, so they are forced to discuss the questions and answers among themselves,” Clementine explains. “This helps to keep them engaged and ensures they practice their language skills at the same time. In other situations we also use SMART Response to canvass opinion in the classroom. Using it in anonymous mode, we can discuss a topic and then students can vote without seeing what others are doing, which again helps to build confidence.”

Following a successful trial, Embassy has purchased two SMART Response handset kits, one for Cambridge and one for its Oxford school. Each kit is shared among all the teachers on each site and is used selectively depending on the degree to which the individual lesson would be enhanced. “On average we probably use SMART Response once or twice a week,” says Clementine. “The teachers are all very enthusiastic about SMART Response, and are keen to share best practice in using the technology. Personally, I think one of the biggest benefits of SMART Response is its flexibility. Our students love using their course book ‘Cutting Edge’, and we can easily adapt the quizzes into SMART Response format. Sometimes a quiz provides the framework for an entire two-hour lesson, where we explore branches off the trunk of the quiz. I also like being able to manipulate the questions on the SMART Board.”

“But the most important thing is the beneficial effect that SMART Response has on our students’ learning overall,” she concludes. “Students have been really positive about SMART Response; it really does add fun and interactivity to the lesson. I would recommend trying out SMART Response to anyone who teaches with an interactive whiteboard.”

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