School Uses Multilingual Software to Enhance Learning, Native Language Fluency

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The Valencian language, which dates to the origin of the Valencian Kingdom created by King James I of Aragon in 1238, has existed for nearly eight centuries. Today, the Valencian community has more than 5 million inhabitants. Approximately 50 percent of the population in this community speaks Valencian on a regular basis. Despite a rich history as both the language of administration and literary expression for hundreds of years, political circumstances led to the prohibition of its use in public throughout much of the twentieth century, which threatened the long-term health and vitality of the language.

In 1982, a regional Valencian government, known in the native language as the Generalitat Valenciana, was established. For the past three decades, the autonomous regional authority has stressed the use of Valencian in official contexts, such as government affairs and education. By instructing students in the Valencian language, schools have played an important role in helping to reintegrate the language into everyday life.

Located in the city of Albal, Albal High School is a Valencian-language high school founded in 2004. The school serves 800 students from ages 12 to 18. At Albal High School, students receive an education in both Valencian and Spanish. To enhance instruction and help students develop technical skills, administrators wanted to standardize the use of computers in school classrooms. They stressed the importance of access to easy-to-use software programs with dual-language capabilities.

“Our school reflects the bilingual reality of our society,” says Francisco Masquefa, the Principal of Albal High School. “To align with our curriculum and to be effective, it was absolutely critical that the technology we adopted offered students the ability to communicate in Valencian and Spanish.”

While the school investigated possible solutions, it partnered with the Microsoft Local Language Program to evaluate the adoption of localized versions of Microsoft products. The mission of the Microsoft Local Language Program is to empower the members of cultural communities around the world to access technology in their native language. In this way, Microsoft hopes to help local cultures bridge the technology gap—while enabling these societies to establish and strengthen their presence in the digital domain.

“We loved the fact that Microsoft offers software in Valencian because it gives our students the ability to use their native tongue in a modern context,” says Masquefa. “The availability of these programs in our native language shows that Microsoft is truly committed to helping local communities sustain cultural traditions—while supporting advancement through technology.”

The Albal High School was interested in the Microsoft Captions Language Interface Pack (CLIP), a language translation solution that uses tooltip captions to display results in multiple languages. With the CLIP installed on their laptops, students can view content in Valencian by simply moving their mouse and hovering over text that they want to translate. And, the software features translation capabilities for multiple languages, so students can switch target translations with the click of their mouse. Now, students can use popular programs, such as Microsoft Word, to complete classroom and homework assignments in Valencian—while strengthening reading and writing proficiency in multiple languages. Lucía Puchalt, a teacher at Albal High School, says: “Students have been very eager to use programs in their native language. It’s exciting to them, and it also gives teachers the opportunity to diversify our lesson plans to keep students engaged in the learning process.”

The school has enjoyed notable success with its multilingual technology initiative. Teachers report that students are demonstrating more interest in lessons and are able to work more independently now. “Students are really happy to be using software in Valencian,” says Masquefa. “Their knowledge of all subjects has increased. In particular, spelling and Valencian grammar have improved dramatically.”

School leaders also point to the anticipated long-term benefits of integrating local-language technology into the curriculum. “Now, students get to use the same software programs as children in schools all over the world—while reinforcing their fluency in Valencian and familiarity with other languages through the CLIP software,” says Masquefa. “I believe that the future of Valencian is connected to our students’ ability to speak the language of technology and their native language at the same time.”

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