

## Lisa's story

This illustrates the saying attributed to Nelson Mandela - if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.'

Having switched from a degree in English and Spanish to 'straight' Spanish, I had to study either Portuguese or Catalan.

Influenced by meeting a rather dishy young lawyer from Barcelona who lived up the road for a year just prior to my going to university, and by the Catalan Professor being more interesting than the Portuguese one, I chose Catalan. I spent my year abroad at UIB in Mallorca but once I graduated there was little cause to use it and like anything you don't use, it got quite rusty.

Fast forward to 2009 and my school became involved in a Comenius Regio project with a school in Barcelona. On our first visit to Barcelona three colleagues and I visited our partner school where we were invited into lessons. In class I leaned down to listen to hear some children speak to us in English; they were struggling for a word. When I spoke in Spanish, they were so pleased.

Later when they were working I asked them a question in Catalan. They looked at me a little puzzled and shocked, and said '*You speak Catalan?*' to which I replied, yes. With the typical honesty of a child, one of them added '*You talk it like a country bumpkin!*' which made me laugh! After that, I was 'famous' - not just with the pupils but with parents and staff who wanted to talk and share their precious city with me.