Improving lecturers' professional learning and PhD research

Cindy Kuiper is Communication Lecturer and PhD Student at Saxion University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands. Cindy shares how she's been using IRIS Connect as part of her PhD research on writing skills in Dutch higher education.

Why did you choose to work with IRIS Connect?

Cindy: My PhD research is focused on improving first-year students' writing development. Subject lecturers deliver content-based writing instruction during lessons which I then analyse. These subject lecturers have to be trained beforehand. When I heard about IRIS Connect and the possibilities it could offer me in facilitating the subject lecturer training, I was very excited. Especially by the user-friendliness and time synchronous recordings.

How have you used IRIS Connect?

Cindy: Each week, for about a year, I have recorded one hour lessons taken by two subject lecturers involved in my research. After each lesson, I view the recordings in full length, reflecting on them from the point of view of a researcher and a trainer. I add comments to good and poor examples of embedding writing during the lessons and then invite the subject lecturer to go through them with me in what's called, a "stimulated recall interview". The process is as follows:

- At the beginning I ask the subject lecturer to share his/her general impression of the lesson with me.
- I then show them 5 to 7 clips of the lesson where their writing instruction is good or needs improvement.

- After each clip, I ask them to describe what they see and how they think it can help or hinder students improving their writing skills.
- Then, we discuss why some activities work well and others don't. We also discuss how the subject lecturer can improve his/her writing instruction in the next lesson.
- After having shown all the clips, the interview concludes with me asking the subject lecturer again to share his/her overall impression of the lesson.

What have you achieved by using IRIS Connect?

Cindy: Both subject lecturers were excited about the use of IRIS Connect when we first began the lesson recordings. They discovered, after a number of stimulated recall interviews, how helpful it was to view the recordings of their lessons. It made them more aware of what happened in their lessons and what impact they, and their instruction had on the students.

Both lecturers also admitted to having a more positive feeling about the lessons and themselves as lecturers after watching the recordings.

As a researcher, IRIS Connect has helped me to easily analyse the subject lecturers practice, seamlessly facilitate the stimulated recall interviews and drive the subject lecturers professional development forwards, while conducting my own research at the same time.