



Web Conferencing as a Tool to Provide an Authentic Foreign Language Environment for Primary School Children: Two Case Studies.

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Abstract

The development of oral skills appears to be one of the most critical issues in foreign language teaching at primary school level in many countries. At the root of this problem may lie the lack of an authentic communicative context in the foreign language lesson. Today's communication technologies allow opening up the language classroom to the world, thus assisting teachers in providing authentic language contexts and in increasing the motivational levels of their students. Emerging tools such as Videoconferencing via web allow collaborating at a distance with other pupils on a common project, sharing information and tasks in real time. This paper provides a survey of the main aspects to take into account in order to design and implement an effective collaborative learning experience with a foreign class integrating Web conferencing. Then, it presents two case studies of telecollaboration projects in which Italian primary school pupils shared common tasks with English peers through Skype sessions. Finally, it analyses the motivational impact on the Italian pupils due to the emotional involvement experienced with such an innovative learning programme. All the information provided in this paper is based on data collected observing the two case studies, gathering the pupils' opinions and reactions through a focus group methodology and gathering observations and opinions through a questionnaire administered to the two Italian teachers involved.