

languages ICT



Technology for languages • Focus on audio- and video-based on-line communication

Please note that on-line communication of any type requires careful consideration of security issues to ensure your duty of care for pupils. Refer to your school's Acceptable Use Policy and visit the DfES Superhighway Safety website at <http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk> for guidance.

I-spy icebreaker

If you have a **Web-based video-conferencing** link via a webcam and program such as Microsoft NetMeeting, pupils can play the game *I spy with my little eye something beginning with ...* in the target language. A small group of pupils in one school position their webcam appropriately and start the game in mother tongue. The corresponding group of pupils in the partner school have to make guesses in their target language, keeping a link open to an on-line dictionary for support. Note that some countries play this game by colour, not first letter.

Listening for gist

This is a simple idea for beginners, both in terms of language and experience in **Web-based video-conferencing**. Pupils in both partner schools work in groups to prepare brief speeches in their mother tongue about a number of topics of their choice (e.g. family, school, pets). Topic headings only are exchanged with partner school pupils, who have to procure an image to correspond to each (and vice versa). During the live video link, pupils read the text they have written and the opposite group confers before holding up the picture to match the topic. Pupils can gain confidence with this type of activity and the texts can be made available to the partner school after the session for more detailed language work.

Telephone role-plays

Web-based audio-conferencing using a program such as CuSeeMe or Microsoft NetMeeting can be useful for staging role-plays, which might usually take place over the phone. You can differentiate for varying language ability by the amount of preparation material given. Pupils in different schools can work together in this way, or the FLA can conduct conversations from a separate location. Where you wish pupils to practise vocational and/or transactional language, the 'retailer' could refer to a relevant target language website, such as an online shop, hotel bookings or train reservations. Be aware that audio quality can vary, so have alternative communication options ready.

Interviewing panel

With a **Web-based video-conferencing** link via a webcam and program such as Microsoft Netmeeting, a panel of interviewers can take turns to question a student at the other end. This simulates the reality of many job interviews today and could be the focus of a project with local businesses or schools. With one of the more sophisticated programs, there may even be the opportunity to record the video feed from the interviewee, allowing them to see themselves afterwards and evaluate their performance both as a linguist and as an interviewee.

Advanced story-telling

A simple use of **Web-based video-conferencing** is for pupils at one end to act out a scene or to show a number of pictures, which the others then use to compose a story. Working individually, in pairs or in groups, the resulting stories can be posted as text on a **notice board**. Alternatively, pupils can create an audio file (using Sound Recorder in Microsoft Windows or other software) to post instead, which can be easier to download and listen to than a live audio feed. Pupils could then judge the best story or 'interpretation'.

To read about tried and tested ideas for audio- and video-based on-line communication, try searching the *Useful ICT ideas, effective language lessons* database on the Languages ICT website (www.languages-ict.org.uk).

Note: reference to specific software products does not imply endorsement by CILT, the National Centre for Languages nor ALL.