

The answers for the interview

**1. Why do you use ICT-based collaborative projects in your foreign language lessons?**

I have been using ICT-based collaborative projects when teaching my students English for years. Long ago it happened by chance that I was invited to participate in a short internet project – Write a letter to Santa. It was a challenge and I tried it with my youngest students. It was a lot of work although they had to write only one single letter each. They were not skilled enough in typing and their English was not very good. Nevertheless it was fun for them and me. But the most wonderful thing was that 'Santa' sent us a nice story book at the end and they were thrilled as their letters proved to reach the goal. From then on I have been constantly trying to find appropriate projects for different age groups of my students and topics. It's not possible to describe the benefits in a simple way as they are complex and long-term oriented. I would maybe expose the fact that learning through project work students see the practical use of learning a foreign language, they can compare their level of knowledge with peers abroad and they appreciate what they get and how they can pass it on. Finally I can say that learning through projects is more contextual and directed to collaborative learning aims and even more real.

**2. What advice would you give to foreign language teachers who want to start an eTwinning project?**

The most important and essential I would say is our ESP slogan KISS – Keep it Simple and Short when you first enter in the world of Internet projects and just later from your own experience and experience of your colleagues you can proceed to more complex ones. Step by step you gain different ICT skills and become more self-confident. Once you are in, you have to proceed to mutual plan with your e-partner with all the important details clarifying and discussing beforehand all milestones to avoid problems, misunderstandings and disillusion in future. It has been proved wise to meet partner teachers in live as then the further communication is more genuine and friendly. Don't push too much and don't include too many activities at a time, it's wiser to add them gradually throughout the project term later if needed. Follow the timelines and apologize beforehand if you are not able to do certain tasks. Always choose topics that are integrated in your curricula and do most of the activities during your lessons. Listen to students' wishes and ideas as only then project becomes more effective and powerful. Evaluate activities promptly and try to understand and partners' wishes and problems.

In future when technology will provide us with better videoconference possibilities, foreign language teachers will profit a lot as they will be able to simply prepare lessons via videoconference with appropriate native speakers. Even today when connections don't allow quality videoconference I use this tool as a powerful one and my students enjoy it and learn a lot. Through transmitting voice and image their distance peers become real. We can say there are almost no limits.

**3. Which ICT tools do you use in your foreign language classes? How?**

I use different ICT tools from Word processor, PPT, Paint, Internet, videoconference, chat, e-environments (EUN Community, Manhattan, Moodle...), scanner, digital camera, CD-roms... in my English lessons. It depends on the level of students' knowledge and topic. I would rather point out the fact how often it is wise and appropriate to use it. It's not wise to overdo it neither skip it. There is no rule, but if you have the right equipment handy then you can plan to use it at the right moment during the educational process. You also have to prepare all materials and procedures well beforehand to guide or better monitor your students when using ICT. There always have to be backup activities handy if ICT fails. Sometimes I don't use ICT for a while as

we have to go through certain curricula topics in a traditional way, but later we try to consolidate the knowledge through different ICT activities and projects.

How do I use ICT tools? Well, it depends on the topic the lesson covers. If we have to deal with weather, disasters..., let's say, I introduce it traditionally first then I prepare some worksheets and students surf the net to find relevant text on the topic and prepare their own presentations, mainly in groups or pairs. They make posters or they prepare PPT presentations for the class. If the topic is some grammar item we do it almost the same way, only that they practise by using interactive exercise on the net or CD-roms. And finally sometimes the lessons deal with the same topic as they are dealing with in their international collaborative project The Image (I usually involve at least one of my classes in this project each year), so they use Manhatan, e-environment where they virtually meet their peers from partner school and there they either exchange e-mails on the topic or chat or even discuss it in the discussion forum. The variety of tools make students more interested in learning certain items and they are forced to waste no time, but to work hard to catch the speed of the group.

#### **4. How do you find your partners?**

Due to my active engagement in different European groups and worldwide and being ESP coordinator for Slovenia and a member of MyEurope I'm privileged to meet many active teachers from different parts of the world in live. This way it is much easier to arrange a partnership or ask to help me find appropriate one. I'm also a coordinator of a Comenius school project with 6 other partner schools. But if I need a partner for The Image our portal for the project helps me find one. There is a possibility to apply for a partnership and see who else wants to work the same way with the same students' age group so you can contact that person (<http://www.europeanschoolsproject.org/image/>).

#### **5. Have you experienced any problems using this methodology? How did you cope with them?**

In my long career I faced some problems when using this methodology, but none of great importance. Some of them were connected with inappropriate equipment, some were too time consuming, in some cases I was not satisfied with the outcomes, sometimes partners in projects simply 'disappeared' or couldn't cope with the activities and ICT tools. But I didn't give up as me and my students consider this kind of learning efficient, challenging and fruitful, so problems only force us to overcome them and so getting new skills or experience.

#### **6. You are an active promoter of the Image of the Other network. How do you think it can be linked to eTwinning? Have you tried to link these two projects in your classroom? How?**

The project The Image of the other is actually e-twinning in its function and its broadest meaning. It's used to be only a language project, but today it is more and more used cross curricula way. It requires two partner schools, classes or groups, teachers who organise, provide learning materials and different communicational tools and finally monitor the project activities. The use of ICT tools depends on how skilful teachers and students are or what equipment is available, but we can say that there are almost no limits. It's interesting how this project has existed for years and survived most of the others. Why? Because it is flexible in content and in performance so those using it can freely adopt its materials, update them, add or skip things, decide freely what technology for communication would be used during the project. It is not only language oriented, but it could be also prepared as cross curricula activity. E-Twinning can no doubt profit from the experience of the project and use it as one of possible activities within e-twinning, I'm sure.

Last year I used it when e-twinning with a Czech partner school from Vlasim. We used Manhatan e-classroom and The image of the other materials and methodology. Students grade 8 collaborated throughout the school year on different topics, exchanged e-mails, materials, presented their schools in texts and images and discussed different tradition. Once a week my classroom had a lesson in computer lab and they used virtual environment to check their mails or

send them. Apart from this I also used The Image material for e-twinning with Portugal and Romanian partners. But this time a group was small and we used EUN Community as a virtual environment.

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