

EFFECTIVE WAYS OF TEACHING ENGLISH VIA SKYPE

Modern technologies are everywhere. We can experience both positive and negative sides of the overpowering impact of IT on our lives. Though we meet with friends less, we communicate with them more. How can it be? The answer is: with the help of technologies. Mobile phones, e-mail, different social networks, and, without doubt, Skype have become an integral part of not only the everyday life of people, but of other spheres as well. Education is not an exception.

Learning English via Skype so far is a novelty in teaching foreign languages and not all people have experienced such ways of learning and teaching. Teaching via Skype is a new level for creativity, and it gives teachers new opportunities and advantages in focusing on best practices and innovations. As for students, they belong to the digital generation, and they deserve to be taught with 21st century technology. Even without teachers, they find ways to learn languages using Skype. Students in different parts of the world are paired up, and each is a native speaker of the language that the other wishes to learn. In conversations over Skype they alternate between the two languages.

Our study, however, shows that almost 70 per cent of the respondents claim that in spite of the fact that it is cheaper to learn a foreign language without a teacher, they prefer learning under the guidance of an experienced teacher. Money does not matter in the case of real need to be motivated and controlled by a teacher.

Our experience in teaching foreign languages via Skype allows us to make some recommendations.

The most common tools used in teaching via Skype are Microsoft Office and Google Docs (while working with texts), audio and video materials of any kind.

Consider every step and type of the activities which should be employed at the lesson. Before the lesson the teacher sends all the necessary materials (texts, audio and video) to the student. When the class starts, any file can be used by the teacher sharing screens.

Microsoft Office and Google Docs give the opportunity to work (explanation, drilling, revising) with grammar rules, examples and exercises, vocabulary, word formation, speaking patterns, etc. Possibility of colouring the parts of the texts, which should be paid more attention to, adds more effectiveness to the process. It is reasonable to use different colours for different purposes. For example, red - mistakes, green - new words and word combinations, yellow - grammar points, etc. As a result, such visualization helps the student remember the most important features of the given material.

Audio and video are successfully used in teaching via Skype, almost in the same way as in a traditional class. For lower levels they should be authentic but still educationally-oriented (standard English, low speed of speech); the higher the level of the student's knowledge is the faster the speech and the more diverse the accents and pronunciation of the audio and video are. Application of authentic materials has lots of

advantages: students get used to listen and understand different people from all over the world speaking in natural environment and situations (based on the material studied).

We believe it unreasonable to do written tasks during on-line classes, because the speed of student's typing can be very low and it turns out to be just a waste of time. In fact, learning English via Skype provides more live communication, not writing. However, written homeworks are of great importance, and analyzing mistakes at the next lesson is a good way of revising the material of the previous lesson. For corrections the teacher can use the Skype function "Demonstration screen", which replaces a real whiteboard in the classroom.

Like any other method of learning foreign languages, lessons via Skype have both advantages and disadvantages.

Students learning English by Skype can do so from any location with a fast Internet connection. This is especially convenient in cases where they need intensive language study, for example, more than 3 times a week. So, studying English online allows to develop language skills in the most comfortable environment.

Besides, E-learning involves zero travel time so more energy can be devoted to actually studying. And it is a possibility to save physical resources — on transportation, on paperwork. Study materials such as texts, tables, audio, video, presentations, or any others can be transferred from the teacher to the student instantly without any additional expenses.

It is also obvious that one-to-one tuition ensures rapid results and an individual approach to study.

Speaking of disadvantages, it should be mentioned that learning English via Skype largely depends on the proper operation of equipment and an Internet connection. Without them, effective lessons are impossible. Experienced teachers recommend for easy learning process to use the headset, so background noise interfere neither the student nor the teacher. Generally, the main factors for successful learning English via Skype are student's dedication, desire to acquire knowledge and perform all the tasks of the teacher, without which one cannot succeed in learning a foreign language [1].

For those who finally decided to use Skype (both teachers and students), there are various resources on the Internet. The following sites have wonderful materials if you don't feel like re-inventing the wheel. One outstanding find is the [English Out There](#) initiative by Jason West who has created six-level courses of English that incorporate the use of social media for fluency development, confidence-building and social/emotional engagement. [ESOL Cambridge](#) has free online exam materials for teachers and other online preparation courses. The British Council also provides a lot of online support for [IELTS preparation](#). Other great resources can be found at [busyteacher.org](#), [EFL classroom 2.0](#), and [TeachersPayTeachers.com](#) [2]. Numerous tips for teachers, students and even parents who want to use Skype for teaching and learning English not only one-to-one, but also in the classroom or at home can be easily found on the following site: <http://www.teachingdegree.org/2009/06/30/50-awesome-ways-to-use-skype-in-the-classroom/> [3].

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