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Skype...even for children



Linda Giannini, one of the Xplora teachers, is a nursery school teacher and an educational researcher. In this article she tells us more about her experience in using Skype with children at the nursery school in Latina.

What is Skype?

Skype is simple and free software, which runs under many systems (Mac OS X, Windows, Linux and PocketPC operating system), permitting "to call" all around the world. This means that the voice is running between 2 or more subjects. The voice ... so something that is hard to stop: verba volant! Skype was created by the KaZaA (a software able to share music and files) authors and it uses an innovative Peer to Peer technology connecting more Skype users.

Why have you thought to use Skype at your nursery school in Latina?

I used the beta Skype release in February 2004, but the first approach with this tool, though interesting, was not so great. I did prefer the written chat, which leaves a footprint and let you follow more easily the lines of mind. Anyway I was curious to see the effects Skype could have had among children aged 3 to 5 years old.

I and Jeff Earp, a consultant at the [Institute for Educational Technology – ITD CNR](#) in Genoa, Italy thought to give Skype a try to put in contact my classroom at the nursery school in Latina with him. Some videos and report about this first experience are available at: http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/0405/chat_jeff.htm (in Italian).

How about the children's approach using Skype?

At the beginning children thought to have to do with software or an online game and not with a person. This idea about the human interaction did not change even when texts were written in the Skype chat. Almost all children thought that Jeff was living inside the computer, having a virtual life with a family and children...all inside the narrow and fantastic computer machine space. Mirko, a five years old child, said "Jeff is one of the computers in our nursery school. I don't know if he is a real person as I haven't seen him". Francesca, another five years old children, continued "he is a computer and he lives inside it. He has two sons; they live in the computer and play together". Then Jeff started to send us photo of himself, his daughter and his family. He introduced some games, [Topolina MIA](#) and [UpToTen Kids](#) both in Italian and English and the children, without any particular language or understanding problem, had a good time with him, chatting and playing online.

Later, Lucia Ferlino, a researcher at ITD-CNR joined our group. She has been understood, since the beginning, as a real living person. Probably it has helped to have shown a Lucia's photo, before she came online. In the chat time with Lucia, children have created very interesting games, such as imagines exchange, guessing written words, understanding numbers during download as well as the upload. With Lucia, children co-created simple words using the application "[someone keeps stealing my letters](#)" and drawn using an online [shared blackboard](#).



Have you any online documentation about all these meetings?

Yes, we have some videos available at [La scatola delle Esperienze](#) website. We are also going ahead with the Skype adventure: in the school year 2005-06, we have connected children from a nursery school in Bari, [playing AwEdu with us](#) in the 3D world iCity and we have built new projects with the School of Robotics in Genoa, thanks to the Robot [Project@School](#).

More about La Scatola delle Esperienze:
<http://www.descrittiva.it/calip/>

More about Linda Giannini:
http://www.xplora.org/ww/en/pub/xplora/about/teacher_group/xplora_teachers_group/linda_giannini.htm

Materials:

Poster: "[who is on line?](#)" (it)

Meeting Skype [15-02-2006](#) (it)

Meeting Skype [16-02-2006](#) (it)

Meeting Skype [17-02-2006](#) (it)

Meeting Skype [03-03-2006](#) (it)

Meeting Skype [27-03-2006](#) (it)

Have a nice audio vision!

