Integration of Videoconferencing in ESP and EAP Courses
Focus on Community of Practice Interaction.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter is devoted to the use of videoconferencing technology and other social media tools for creating a community of practice communication within which authentic tasks and activities in multicultural ESP and EAP classes can be carried out. It describes theoretical background for effective use of these media based on the results of INVITE project and other research in the area, it mentions the importance of international institutional cooperation and the chapter shares examples of good practice pointing at their advantages. Samples of end-of-course feedback reflecting students’ worries at the beginning of the course, their personal and professional achievements at the end of the course are included as well.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The language centres at MU and AU have been using VC technology for teaching purposes since 2004. John Morgan from AU introduced this medium to the following visiting scholars from the Language Centre of MU: Alena Hradilová, Barbora
Chovancová, and Hana Katrňáková. Hradilová experimented and ran the first course between AU Erasmus students and MU law students in 2004. Both universities simultaneously created an international consortium of academic and non-academic educational institutions, which was joined by manufacturing companies. They also repeatedly wrote projects to receive funding for more systematic work.

**SETTING THE STAGE**

The consortium of six partners came from the United Kingdom, Spain, the Czech Republic, Italy, and Slovakia. Three of these were public universities and two were private manufacturing companies. The sixth was a private further education company. The consortium was led by the project co-ordinator, Hana Katrňáková, and could focus more systematically on work as a result of funding from the Leonardo da Vinci Programme in 2006. Results of the two-year INVITE project, “Communication Technologies and Acquiring Academic and Professional Communication Skills: An Interactive Learning Infrastructure and New Methodology,” can be found at http://invite.cjv.muni.cz. In this project, the consortium:

1. Developed training and learning materials for academic and professional purposes
2. Experimented with effective use of advanced technological resources for authentic communication tasks
3. Created an internationally-accessible virtual learning environment
   a. Developing and utilizing an open subject village website
   b. Matching academic outcomes with the needs of prospective employees

Morgan was a driving force in developing and teaching the theoretical framework of a new teaching methodology. Other team members—Janice de Haaf, Hradilová, and Libor Štěpánek—were leaders in experimenting with the VC framework and tasks concerning organisational, technical, intercultural, and language skills. Chovancová developed useful preparatory exercises and Quick VC guides, which were prepared in English, German, French, Spanish and Czech.

The INVITE project experimented with three forms of VC sessions. In the first, two groups from different institutions formed an EAP or ESP VC class. This type will be described below in more detail. In the second, one VC equipment was used in a traditional format in order to give lectures and provide feedback on the students’ writing. Hradilová and Štěpánek experimented in this area and developed a highly successful and motivating course for PhD students at Masaryk University.