

Ready to get your teens to use English?

Open your classroom to *video producers, social media users and real travellers.*

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Adolescents in socioeconomically underprivileged milieus do not generally see the need of learning English as they have no expectations of using it in their daily lives. However, mastery of a foreign language reduces the achievement gap in educational outcomes between affluent and low-income students. This is why, within the framework of a project on research and innovation (2016ACUP-001), a team composed by teachers and teacher trainers took up the challenge of designing and implementing a project to create a real need for their teenage students to use English.

Through the eTwinning platform, we contacted a school in Greece and carried out a few telecollaborative actions jointly in order to enhance significant use of English in and outside the classroom walls. One of these actions involved planning a two-way exchange trip. The virtual actions and the visit of the Greek peers would benefit the whole cohort of local students. As only a small group of learners could participate on the real exchange trip to Greece, a selection process was organised within the project so that everyone could apply for their participation on this trip, helping students develop 21st century skills similar to those they will need when facing a real recruitment process for their professional development. Real projects activate real interest in communication, which explains why most participants in the project in both countries started using social media to engage in informal personal communication.

In this talk we will describe our experience by reflecting upon the challenges we had to face when planning and implementing the project and how we managed them. We will combine this narrative with videos and written materials produced by teenagers in the local school.

By sharing our experience, we hope to encourage teachers who have not yet planned collaborative or face-to-face meetings with other schools to embark on such an adventure.

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