



HALIFAX IMMIGRANT
LEARNING CENTRE

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ESL Videoconferencing Pilot



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Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background to the Pilot.....	3
Overview of research on language development and videoconference.....	4
Partners	6
Preparation	8
Objectives	8
Program	9
The Team	12
Meeting the Objectives	14
Outcomes	16
Recommendations	17
Overall Recommendations:.....	17
Program Recommendations	17
Teaching Recommendations:	18
Student comments	20
Challenges	22
Opportunities/Next steps.....	23
Conclusion	26
Appendix.....	26

Executive Summary

Following a short research project conducted in November, 2005 that identified videoconference as one of the options for the delivery of Enhanced Language Training services outside Halifax Regional Municipality, representatives from the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre, Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association and the Nova Scotia Community College met in January, 2006 to explore the possibility of a pilot videoconference ESL program.

Four weeks later, on February 20th, 2006 the equipment was purchased and set up in the three selected campus sites (Kentville, Truro and Halifax), the rooms had been designated, the technicians had been briefed, the equipment had been tested, other partnerships had been established, the program had been promoted, information sessions had been held in each centre, language assessments had been conducted, students were registered, the language training focus and content had been identified, the instructor had been selected and given a technical orientation, the curriculum was prepared, instructional material printed and distributed, and **the class had started.**

The course delivered a six week x 4 hours a week English for Communication and Networking program to 17 participants who came from 14 different countries with twelve different occupational backgrounds. The course focused on effective listening techniques, common language functions, small talk for the workplace and networking dilemmas, elements of enhanced language training that support effective workplace communication.

To our knowledge, this was the first time that language training had been successfully delivered to newcomers to Canada via videoconference. This was groundbreaking program delivery for all the partners, completed in incredible timelines. Only the partners' mutual trust and respect, their profound commitment in the project and the participants' enthusiasm and dedication made this mammoth task into a hugely successful pilot and potential delivery model for settlement services in Nova Scotia

Comments from students were that videoconferencing eliminates physical barriers, makes them feel included and that their language skills improved during the course. One comment from the instructor was that videoconference seemed to encourage participants to compensate for the distance by clearer, more focused pronunciation and language. In addition, one participant noted:

"We as immigrants in rural areas were neglected in terms of ESL training. We needed to know the language and about the culture of proper communication in Canada. This course introduced us to the tools of communication in a Canadian environment. When I came to Canada, I was denied an opportunity to get ESL training because of where I lived. I can not forget this sorry situation. I lost many work opportunities and went through many difficulties because of the language barrier."

Although this was a very brief and limited pilot, all those involved identified that a great deal had been learned, that it had been extremely successful and that further exploration and piloting was essential to determine how videoconference could best be used to provide ELT services outside HRM.

Background to the Pilot

Nova Scotia is currently experiencing a growing interest in immigration and its relationship to regional economic development and population growth. Most communities in Nova Scotia are facing a negative growth rate which impacts all levels down to the foundation of the community and immigration is being seen as one of the potential solutions to address issues of population and economic decline.

Many community organizations and Regional Development Authorities, which lead and coordinate economic development at the local level across the province, are supporting an aggressive approach to increasing and retaining immigrants to rural Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy is targeting the settling of newcomers outside the urban centre of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and for the successful attraction and retention of those immigrants, it is critical that services be made available. Many of the newcomers arriving through the Nova Scotia Provincial Nominee Program are settling in areas outside HRM and this is creating a need for the extension of programs and services outside HRM.

The Nova Scotia Immigration Strategy has already identified a need to *“improve access to (language) services for regions outside metro Halifax that have fewer immigrants (eg. through outreach programs or online)”*. Currently there are very limited services for ESL learners outside HRM and none at the higher language level.

In September – November, 2005 research was conducted with funding through the Enhanced Language Training (ELT) Program, funded by Citizenship Immigration Canada and the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, to explore alternative methods of delivery for existing ELT services in Nova Scotia. (*Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005*) This included the possibility of using on-line technology to acquire workplace language skills and investigation of whether this may be an appropriate method to support the Provincial Immigration Strategy’s commitment to facilitate immigrant settlement outside HRM.

Online education using the internet to communicate and collaborate in an educational context includes technology that both replaces and supplements traditional classroom training. One of the recommendations from the research report was to explore ELT extension by piloting a videoconference language training program.

In mid December, 2005 negotiations took place with both funders to amend agreements to include the pilot of a videoconference program through the ELT project. As this required no additional funding, confirmation to proceed was soon in place and discussions began with the Nova Scotia Community College. The Nova Scotia Community College is one of a few provincial community college systems that covers the province. In addition, the College had been represented on the Research Advisory group, was interested in exploring ways in which it could support the provincial immigration strategy and it has the infrastructure and the technology to support the delivery of videoconference ESL training programs.

Overview of research on language development and videoconference

Although videoconference technology has been available for some time, it is only recently that it has become a cost effective and realistic way of delivering instruction to distant sites. As the technology improved it was only a short time before second language teaching via videoconference would become a subject for close examination.

In the last ten years there have been a number of research studies that have focused on the delivery of second language instruction via videoconferencing. Videoconferencing supports pedagogical approaches that use dialogue and interaction (Goodfellow et al 1996, McAndrew et al 1996) and research demonstrates that ESL videoconferencing is possible in small group and tutorial situations (Abbot et al 1995, Buckett & Stringer 1999). In addition the literature reveals that other elements play a critical part in a successful language learning situation – for example - class size and shared tools like a Smartboard that can provide a focus for the participants (Olson & Olson 1997). Some articles stress the negative effect of technical issues, and emphasise the importance of both the technical equipment and the technical knowledge at the training sites. (Schiller & Mitchell 1993, Carville & Mitchell 2000).

Pedagogically, the existing research stresses the need for the learning to take place in a controlled and well planned program of activities that have been designed for the videoconference learning context. ESL classroom teaching techniques like supervising pairwork, managing collaborative group discussion, monitoring participant energy level have received little attention by researchers and these, among others, are areas that we would like to explore in the next phase of the project.

Research suggests that the evaluation of learning outcomes are more challenging via videoconferencing, that a multidimensional approach to evaluating learning outcomes is likely to be more informative, but *that “given a ‘robust’ videoconferencing hardware and software configuration, videoconferencing does not have an adverse effect on intended learning outcomes.”* (Mark et al in Anderson et al 1995).

The results of one videoconferencing study (Lucas and Riddy, 2002) suggest that communicative methods employed in ESL classrooms are particularly suitable for videoconferencing. The results show that after a few sessions, *“when small technical difficulties associated with audio delay were eliminated, the technology had become almost ‘transparent’, so that learning took place as it does in a face-to-face context.”*

The advent of videoconferencing as a cost effective means of delivering education to remote areas that may not have available teaching expertise or access to specialised knowledge has introduced an entirely new aspect into the concept of computer assisted language learning. Videoconferencing as a tool that links people at both an audio and visual level enables interactivity at a very sophisticated level. *“At the flick of a switch the student can be engaged in a variety of language learning activities that can be designed to meet individual language learning*

needs and levels through direct interaction with a teacher and other students. This has particular applications for people in isolated centres who may not otherwise have the opportunity to engage in live communication with native and other speakers of the target language.” (Lucas and Riddy, 2002)

A number of articles highlight the fact that videoconferencing has particular application for language learning in that it allows for the inclusion of elements that are considered desirable for effective language learning, such as on the spot feedback and active practice in the target language. Without the benefit of face to face contact it can be difficult to provide these elements for distance learners. Furthermore, videoconferencing can be uniquely structured to meet the requirements of the particular group or groups of people with whom one is working. *“Videoconferencing, unlike many forms of technology, has the ability to encourage diversity rather than limit it. This means that the teacher has the capability of providing for different language learning styles by providing a variety of activities for the students. It means that teachers can foster and encourage the use of a wide variety of language learning strategies to help students optimise their learning, often not possible through use of other forms of technology delivered learning” (Pelton 1991).*

However, much of the research that we read as an introduction to this project warned of the challenges of using new technologies - that it was not enough to simply use the technology. *...The new interactive technologies not only require sophisticated equipment...but they also require highly skilled teachers,...if high levels of interactive language learning are to be maintained (Bates 1991, p.14).*

They underscore the need for instructors to be trained in its use if the full potential of the technology is to be realised. In many instances it seems that instructors are introduced to new technology and given the task of integrating it into their teaching without assistance in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the technology and how it can be best used. This often results in teachers giving up on the technology since they cannot achieve successful results. *“In addition to training teachers in its use, careful thought needs to be given to its integration into distance language courses if it is to be used effectively as a tool for interactive language teaching. We need to think about what would and would not be effective using this medium.” (Pelton 1991).*

Much of the research also identifies the importance of truly connecting to the students. They need to be aware that they are expected to interact with the screen, that the screen is not there to entertain them and that they can not be passive participants. Few people feel comfortable holding a conversation with a television screen and it is therefore necessary to engage students in activities where they are interacting with each other and the instructor. *“It is important to plan variety and introduce different elements into the lessons in order to keep interest maintained and avoid students slipping into a passive TV watching mode”. (Lucas and Riddy, 2002)*

It seems from our research that videoconferencing has the potential to deliver distance language learning by providing learners with a unique opportunity to interact with instructors and other language learners. As with any tools, the success of videoconferencing for distance language learning depends on the ways it is implemented.

References in Appendix

Partners

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC), Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), the key partners in the project, have a long and successful history of partnering on various projects. MISA's online New Beginnings project and the NSCC's English for Academic Purposes program that HILC helped to set up, are examples of the commitment of the three organizations to work together to support the integration of newcomers to our community. Representatives from each organization were part of the advisory group of the Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005, a recommendation from which, led to the development of the ESL videoconferencing pilot. Together the three organizations have the skills, experience, technology and commitment to provide services to newcomers outside HRM across the province of Nova Scotia. In addition, HILC, MISA and NSCC share a trust and mutual respect for each other's organizational priorities, capacities and expertise that contributed significantly to the seed of an idea becoming reality within four weeks.

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC)

- provided overall supervision of project
- developed a promotional strategy
- identified potential participants
- provided the instructor and instructional materials
- conducted information sessions for potential participants in the three sites - Halifax, Truro and Kentville
- interviewed participants and arranged assessment of language skills
- delivered the language training
- provided language evaluations and certificates to participants
- organized graduation and networking event
- conducted evaluation and recommendations for next steps in the use of video-conferencing as a model for language training outside HRM in Nova Scotia
- completed final report

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)

- provided location for information sessions in Halifax, Truro and Kentville
- identified key contacts in three delivery sites
- provided initial technical training and ongoing support for instructor
- provided initial technical training and ongoing support for participants in 3 locations
- provided equipment, resources and location in three locations to deliver training via video-conference
- liaised with media, wrote press release

Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA)

- identified potential participants for training
- supported the program through the ELT project
- conducted Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test to some participants in HRM.

The delivery of the videoconference ESL pilot was through the collaborative effort of many partners

Regional Development Authorities

Colchester Regional Development Association

- promoted the program and identified participants

Community Literacy/Learning Associations

Colchester Adult Learning Association

Kings County Learning Association

- promoted the program and identified participants
- provided space and resources for conducting CLBPT

Metro-Region Immigrant Language Services

- Conducted Canadian Language Benchmark Placement Test to some participants outside HRM.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

Nova Scotia Office Of immigration

- Provided funding through the ELT initiative for this pilot

"This technology provides us with a way of looking at settlement services that might go beyond language training. This is a great model for us to look at."

Elizabeth Mills, Executive Director, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration

Preparation

November, 2005

- Following the review of the research report *Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005* by the Research Advisory group, it was decided that HILC would pursue the possibility of piloting classroom based enhanced language training via videoconference.

December, 2005

- Discussions with funders took place to approve the amendment of the ELT contract from delivering a rural pilot in a single centre to delivering a rural pilot in multiple centres via videoconference technology.

January, 2006

- A number of meetings of the principal partners (HILC, MISA, NSCC) took place to determine objectives of the pilot and roles and responsibilities. (See Appendix)
- Decisions were made on course content, delivery sites and instructor, (see below)
- Key HILC staff were attached to the project – ELT Manager, Project Coordinator and Instructor were given a demonstration of the technology.
- NSCC began arranging for the videoconference equipment to be available and set up in the three sites
- Contact was made with RDAs and community learning associations in Kentville and Truro, who would be key to identifying potential participants.
- Promotional materials and application forms were developed and distributed.
- Information sessions for participants were held in Halifax, Truro and Kentville.

February, 2006

- Applications were reviewed
- CLBPT assessments were set up and conducted
- Course participants were provided with information on the course and the technology through which it would be taught. They were also provided with a student workbook.
- Course began Monday February, 20th.

Objectives

- Assess the effectiveness and feasibility of delivering ESL via video-conference.
- Provide equitable means to develop language skills to learners in smaller communities outside HRM
- Increase the self confidence and language skills of participants.
- Provide a base for further rural and distance development.
- Support provincial government's goal of providing services to newcomers across the province

Program

Course Content

With research informing us that videoconference was just an alternative delivery mode and not an alternative course or curriculum, it was decided that the most appropriate and useful material for a 6 week pilot would be the English for Communication and Networking module which forms part of the HILC English for Work and Business Program. The module focused on oral communication skills, it was very interactive, it had proved to be very popular with former participants and it could be delivered in a 'stand alone' format. The module is usually taught in 30 hours as part of the 180 hour English for Work and Business Program. This pilot videoconference course would complete the module in 24 hours. Course content included:

- Effective listening techniques
- Common language functions
- Handling criticism
- Networking dilemmas
- Small talk for the workplace
- Gender neutral language

As the program proceeded it soon became evident that teaching language and communicative competency skills was not the same as teaching content and although the choice of the module was a good one, there were many improvements that could be made to the delivery in this alternative mode.

Sites

In determining the actual sites where the program would be offered, a number of factors needed to be considered. The Nova Scotia Community College had already established videoconference 'blue rooms' in three of their campuses (Springhill, Truro and Lunenburg). The Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005 had identified small groups of newcomers outside HRM who might be interested in taking part in a pilot ESL videoconference program. The Principal of the NSCC IT campus, who was the key NSCC contact and supporter of the program and who had been a member of the Research Advisory Group, was committed to providing the opportunity at the Halifax IT campus although at the initial discussions in January, the technology was not available. By mid February, four weeks after the first official discussions with NSCC, the rooms, the equipment, the technology and the technical assistance were in place in our three chosen sites – Halifax, Kentville and Truro. The delivery of the program via videoconference was obviously totally dependent on the NSCC for the set up of the technology and the commitment and dedication of the NSCC administration and technical staff in all three sites to have it in place within four weeks was extraordinary and opened the door to the program.

Dates/Times

The length of the course was very much determined by the time that we had before the end of the ELT contract. In terms of the times of the language training, the Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005

established that many of the people, who were in need of language training, were employed and that late afternoon or evening would be the most appropriate times for the class. It was therefore determined that the class would be held on Monday and Wednesday evenings, 4:30 – 6:30 beginning on February 20th and ending on Wednesday, March 29th.

Instructor

As the initial research established, selection of the instructor turned out to be a critical element in the success of the program. It was determined that the most appropriate instructor would be the developer of the course and the materials because she had taught the course on a number of previous occasions, was an experienced classroom ESL instructor and also had a theoretical base with an M.Ed. in Adult Education. However, there were other important qualities, which we had not anticipated. Instructor energy, which motivated the students and instructor enthusiasm and tolerance for the technology proved to be critical to the success of the program.

Participants

Because there was very little promotion and lead-in time for the course our initial target for participants was 2 in each of the three centres. However, the course was much more popular than we ever anticipated and the final number of participant was 17. Data is as follows:

Sites	
entville	6
Halifax	7
Truro	4

Immigrant Status	
Refugee	1
Independent	7
PNP	1
Family Class	3
Citizen	5

Occupational background of participants	
Marketing	1
Finance/Accounting	2
Cashier	1
Teachers	4
Electrical Technologist	1
Biologist	1
Engineers	2
Agricultural Technologist	1
Student	1
Artist	1
Dentist	1
Media/Communications	1



Quotes week by week:

Week 1 *"They didn't know at the front desk"*

Week 2 *"What I've been waiting for, for a long time"*

Week 3 *"We are all much more comfortable with the technology and getting faster with it all the time. It is starting to feel much more like a 'normal' class".*

Week 4 *"Because the cameras are now preset, I have very little flexibility and am "locked" behind my desk."*

Week 5 *"I am very happy in this class because I learn cultural information that is so useful, that no-one else teaches us. I am very happy with the new set-up and the technology is working well."*

Week 6 *"It is not an ordinary English class – it's not boring and tiring; we were learning English at the same time we were taught the tips & traits at the work place in Canada. Very practical class. I enjoyed all the class and thankful that I have the opportunity to experience the new technology."*

The Team

From the very beginning it was clear that the implementation of this pilot was dependent on a number of key people who were at four different places across the province – HILC at Chebucto Road, NSCC in Halifax, NSCC in Kentville and NSCC in Truro.

Supervisor – Gerry Mills (HILC)

- Initiated discussions with NSCC
- Provided support and direction to HILC staff engaged in the project
- Assisted in program evaluation
- Wrote evaluation and final report

HILC Coordinator – Kathy Burnett (HILC)

- Researched videoconference technology as a means to deliver language training and provided resources to the team
- Previewed a videoconferencing class to assess the feasibility of delivering an ESL class through this medium
- Organized logistics, schedule and equipment.
- Identified videoconference etiquette and best practices
- Negotiated with NSCC at all three sites to ensure that all rooms, hardware and software were available and the set up appropriate for videoconference.
- Organized Canadian Language Benchmark Assessments
- Delivered information sessions in each location
- Participated in technical orientation
- Monitored the videoconference delivery.
- Updated videoconferencing pilot team throughout the pilot regarding concerns and successes
- Provided feedback to NSCC with regards to room setup and learning environment
- Liaised with NSCC
- Conducted student evaluation of program
- Organized simultaneous graduation and networking event at all three sites

NSCC School of Access Coordinator - Lech Krzywonos (NSCC)

- Co-ordinated the effort within NSCC and liaised with HILC
- Ensured that HILC's classroom needs were met by NSCC technology.
- Ensured that the NSCC technical services staff had the necessary understanding of the academic needs related to curriculum delivery.

- Ensured that all sites were set up in a suitable way to give this pilot the best chance at success.
- Provided orientation and training to HILC staff

Instructor – Carol Derby (HILC)

- Responsible for developing and delivering the course.
- Designed and produced class materials
- Planned lessons, developed and modified teaching materials
- Worked closely with other team members to ensure that students were prepared for each videoconference.
- Developed contingency lesson plans in the event that the videoconference connection failed or other problems prevented the videoconference from going forward.
- Reviewed videoconference etiquette and classroom procedures with students
- Took attendance
- Delivered the videoconference language training program
- Modified and adjusted instruction and activities as needed
- Provided opportunities for students to share, interact and learn from each other
- Communicated any problems or concerns with technical staff
- Evaluated learning of participants

On site Technicians

- Arranged for connecting with all sites.
- Provided technical assistance at all three sites for the duration of the classes
- Ensured that the hardware and software were in working order during the videoconference
- Responded to difficulties with the equipment during the videoconference

Students

- Participated in class discussions and activities
- Came prepared for class
- Completed assignments on time
- Asked questions to clarify instruction
- Showed enthusiasm and interest in instruction
- Shared work
- Worked with others to complete assignments
- Provided ongoing and final feedback to instructor on the program and videoconference technology
- Communicated any problems and concerns promptly

Meeting the Objectives

Assess the effectiveness and feasibility of delivering ESL via video-conference.

An important element to meeting this objective was the research conducted and the teaching experience obtained to answer the questions “Can language be effectively taught by video-conference?” “ Can videoconferencing substitute for face-to-face contact sufficiently well for collaborative task based language learning to take place at a distance?” The three HILC staff are language experts. They have a combined sixty-six years’ experience of teaching ESL in face to face situations using collaborative task based learning activities. They, in particular, needed to grapple with the question whether videoconference was an effective medium for teaching language. The initial research outlined the potential and the challenges. The effectiveness was, however, only to be proven in the language development of the clients. This was a very limited pilot but all clients self identified that their language and confidence had improved and the instructor’s evaluation supported this.

In terms of feasibility, setting up the key partnerships, identifying community stakeholders and organizing the logistics of delivering language training in multiple remote sites were the initial key issues which we had to address. The fact that the course was delivered, that all partners are eager to continue to participate and contribute, that additional campuses are requesting the service, that newcomers in other communities are asking when the course will be available in their community all point to the fact that this is indeed a feasible and much sought after program.

Provide equitable means to develop language skills to learners in smaller communities outside HRM

The success of the pilot delivery clearly established the need and the viability for developing the language skills of learners in smaller communities outside HRM. It provided increased access for newcomers to language training and it has the potential to open the doors for a range of language training (and other service) opportunities to be developed and delivered at a distance.

“ If we tried to offer a program for four students in Truro alone, it probably would not happen. If we tried to offer a program for 6 people in Kentville, it probably would not have happened...but if you look at the work the work that this pilot has done in connecting rural communities, it allows us to look at provision of ESL in a rural province like ours... and have one class with one teacher across three or four sites. I think that has been the single greatest success of this project. ” Mike Smith, Dean of Access, NSCC.

Increase the self confidence and language skills of participants.

Self confidence is best assessed by the participants themselves. Some comments are:

- “Our teacher told us a lot of new information that we can find nowhere.”
- “This course is what I’ve been waiting for, for a long time.”

- *"I improved my English at the same time I met new friends that have almost the same background as me. We shared our experiences and supported each other in a way."*
- *"More classes like this would help improve my English and immerse me in Canadian reality"*
- *"It helps us to improve our communication skills & to explore Canadian culture."*
- *"After a few weeks the technology disappeared and it was like the teacher was in the room with us."*



Although the Canadian Language benchmark level of all clients was determined at the beginning of the program, it was most unlikely, and we did not expect, that there would be any change in CLB level in a 24 hour language training course. However, language development and improvement, language use and appropriateness are not determined by CLBs alone and the language instructor noted an increased level of confidence which leads to increased language use.

Provide a base for further rural and distance development.

The pilot ESL videoconference program certainly increased the capacity of the key partners to deliver ESL via videoconference. It prompted the NSCC to set up videoconference facilities in two campuses, where they were not previously available, it allowed HILC to research and test the use of videoconference for ESL teaching and it encouraged the three key partners to explore the development of the next phase of implementation. For MISA and HILC it also highlighted the need to consider how to deliver settlement services remotely in an effective and efficient manner.

Support provincial government's goal of providing services to newcomers across the province

Comments from the participants, particularly in Kentville and Truro, reinforced the need for settlement services to be made available outside HRM. This pilot has not only provided services to seventeen newcomers but established a foundation and infrastructure for future extension services which are key to the successful attraction, integration and retention of newcomers in areas outside HRM.

"It's never been a more exciting time to live in Nova Scotia... The HILC video pilot program is an example of one of the excellent initiatives that is underway in the province to make the transition into Nova Scotia culture."

Hon. Jamie Muir, Nova Scotia Minister of Education

Outcomes

Increased awareness of the need for settlement services outside HRM

The videoconference ESL pilot acted as a catalyst for expanded interest in settlement and particularly ESL issues outside the main urban centre. The graduation that took place on March 29th attracted 43 people Interest from the media, other immigrant serving agencies, funders and all levels of the NSCC, minister of Education.

Increased capacity to respond to the need for Enhanced Language Training services outside HRM

Although we are in the very early stages of offering and providing ELT services outside HRM, it is very clear that providing one service is going to attract requests for other services. Within one week of the videoconference ESL program beginning, we were being asked by newcomers for mentors and employment placements. In 2006-07 we will be exploring the delivery of these services, delivering additional videoconference language training and piloting some of the other ELT services.

Development of community partnerships

This pilot was a model for collaboration with new and 'old' partners and the work in building these partnerships will be the foundation for the coming year's activities.

Additional videoconferencing rooms available

In January, at the first meeting, four weeks before the course began, there was no technical equipment nor designated rooms available in Halifax and in Kentville. This pilot again acted as a catalyst for the purchase and set up of equipment by the NSCC, whose administration was determined that the resources would be made available at the right time and in the right places for this pilot to take place.

Expanded language skills of participants

All participants identified that their language skills had improved, but that the real difference was in the self confidence that they now had in using their language, which would, be an effective strategy in the coming months to continue their language learning.

Proposal for development of plan

This pilot highlighted the need to develop a plan to deliver settlement services outside HRM and a proposal was submitted to HRSDC for this.

Recommendations

Overall Recommendations:

Develop framework and plan for integrated distance settlement service delivery

The provincial government's plan to increase and support immigrants to settle in rural areas and indeed the increased numbers of newcomers beginning to settle outside HRM is beginning to increase expectations for settlement services across Nova Scotia. The research *Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005* and the delivery of this videoconference pilot has highlighted the critical need for the development of a plan that both addresses the needs of newcomers yet is efficient, effective and responsible.

Consider potential for delivery

A number of advisory group members suggested that we explore the potential for the delivery of videoconference ESL beyond the borders of both Nova Scotia and Canada, especially in terms of delivery to people who have been accepted for immigration and are waiting for their papers to be finalized.

Program Recommendations

Identify and build capacity in instructor(s)

Ensure instructors have experience, energy and enthusiasm. Develop a train-the-trainer workshop so that expertise does not reside in one or two instructors. Provide ongoing support through staff development, conferences and networking with peers across the country.

Clarify roles and responsibilities

Define objectives for use of videoconferencing technology and outline job descriptions and expectations for the members of the videoconference team.

Connect the people

Provide opportunity for students to meet face to face before the course begins. If this is not possible, exchange student lists with first names and personal profiles electronically before the session to stimulate interest in student partners. Include questions to stimulate conversation about the program. Have the instructor visit each site at least once or twice during the course. However this is a problem because *"I was out of the office for six hours and only 2 of them were spent teaching! Perhaps not a very good use of my time"- (instructor)*. Make sure people know each others' names – signs – instructor should use them. Build site camaraderie as well as cross site relationships

Be prepared and flexible with the technology

Ensure that there is a telephone in each room as a means to solicit assistance. Build in a variety of activities and breaks. Videoconferencing can cause extreme fatigue because more intense concentration is required. Avoid trying to troubleshoot technology and connectivity problems on the air during class. Have a backup plan in case the videoconferencing technology fails. Prepare students to understand that this is new technology and that we are all learning and that things may go wrong. Admit there are special challenges (but also opportunities) in video conferencing.

Develop the team

Organize the training and presence of volunteer teaching assistants in the other (receiving) sites. They would play a crucial role in setting the tone in the site, keeping students focused, monitoring activity, addressing any quick questions, ensuring all students are participating. The assistants would understand the lesson's goals, activities, pace and communicate with the instructor when equipment or other difficulties arise. One suggestion by NSCC was to use students from the Adult Learning Program, for whom this could be an integral part of the course. Also consider team teaching as a way of developing a team approach, although, of course, this has financial implications.

Explore an on-line component

Greater opportunities for interaction between students can be encouraged through an on-line discussion forum. Using a discussion forum as a communal area to continue class discussion and social conversation among students would facilitate a greater sense of community and inclusion, despite the physical distance between locations.

Set the conditions for success

Register a limited and optimum number of students in each site. Develop class cancellation policy recognizing that there are multiple sites. Ensure there's not too wide a range of language abilities – videoconference is not suitable for lower level learners. Other employment support for participants is needed during/after the course.

Teaching Recommendations:

Be aware of altered pace

Allow ample time for introductions and ensure movement of cameras so that people appear on screen when they are introduced. Plan flexible activities and projects so that objectives and time can be adjusted. This is most important when working with multiple sites. Other sites that are really focused on an activity and exploring its possibilities should have the time to do so without feeling that they are behind schedule or must rush to finish. Have other activity for those that may finish early.

Watch the cameras

Looking at the camera means looking at the students in other sites. Students feel as though the teacher is talking to them if looking in the direction of the camera. Also be careful with body language – sometimes it is exaggerated on videoconference and sometimes it's overlooked.

Be prepared

Place a clock on the wall so that the instructor can always see it without distracting students. Keep supplies and materials nearby, including camera remote controls. Focus and arrange documents prior to the videoconference to facilitate smooth transitions between documents. Email/ fax additional handouts them in advance (if possible).

Focus on the students

Call on students by name to ensure everyone is participating at each location. Constantly remind students that they need to inform the instructor or technician about issues like sound during class immediately that it becomes a problem. Also, that they must mute when other sites are speaking, and try not to have more than one person talking at one time.

Consider the delivery mode

Consider the desired outcome, factor in the mode of delivery, **then** determine the learning activity or task. For example, utilize MS Power Point more than would be normal. It is an excellent medium for transmitting information.

Place CLB posters in the videoconferencing classrooms

Purchase CLB posters and check lists for all sites and provide orientation to the benchmarks.

Implement Videoconferencing Etiquette (Netiquette)

- Voice – Speech should be clear and loud enough to be heard
- Noise - Regular classroom noise should be kept at a minimum. Microphones are very sensitive, pick up and amplify very slight sounds eg. Moving papers around.
- Interruptions – Plan ahead for interruptions and have a plan how to handle them
- Lighting - Ensure that all participants are able to be seen when on camera
- Body presence on camera. - Be aware of camera placement
- Look at the camera when speaking not at the screen
- Accept the slowness of the medium
- Expect technical difficulties and try to be tolerant of them

Student comments

- Some said it's best to have instructor in room with them, some that it makes no difference if the teacher is near or far.
- Really like the practical information in the class – that the content is very useful.
- The teacher must enthusiastically embrace the technology and think 'outside the box'.
- One student asked for EAP in Truro. She is frustrated that she has to go to Halifax to access this program and thinks it should be set up via teleconference as well.
- The teacher must be very enthusiastic about the class and this must 'carry' to the away sites.
- Really good. Like having the teacher in class. They felt it was more interesting and engaging, and they now feel more connected.

Truro

- Lost screen in the beginning, but very quickly resolved by the techies.
- There should be at least two session of this type class in a year.
- I like this new experience. First 2 classes I feel uneasy but after that, it was O.K. Never feel that teacher was not physically present at class. Carol is a very very good teacher. I like her style of teaching and I enjoy it very much.
- It helps us to improve our communication skills & to explore Canadian culture.
- I like the level of teaching and methods of presenting the material.
- I really like our Student Book with useful information in it.

Kentville

- It would be good to have the instructor in Truro and Kentville at least three times during the course.
- We learned a lot about Canadian Culture. This made me feel more included in my new community.
- I liked the content because it focused the object of the course.
- Even though at the beginning we faced some problems with the technology, it was good.
- It is not an ordinary English class – boring and tiring; we were learning English at the same time we were taught the tips & traits at the work place in Canada. It was a very practical class.
- I enjoyed all the class and thankful that I have the opportunity to experience the new technology.
- I liked the technology, the teacher was so nice and good teacher. Everything was just awesome.
- I liked the curriculum and the instructor method of teaching ESL for communication and networking objectives.
- The new technology is great and different. I have learned a few cultural differences from other countries just by listening to the group.

Halifax

- Nice, helpful, no problems, very happy because in this class I learn cultural information that is so useful, that no-one else teaches us, very happy with the new set-up and that the technology is working well.
- Excellent, fun and interesting.
- Learning lots of new things.
- Thought it was going to be boring but it flies by.
- Idioms are really useful.
- Excellent teacher.
- What I've been waiting for, for a long time.
- One student commented that she really liked the class, but found it slower than a 'regular' class due to the technology.
- I think that the most important thing is that people have to adjust to this kind of classes. They have to put more attention and share their time with other students from other cities. They have to be patient but it also brings a lot of benefits for their studying.
- Students liked interacting with each other via the Smartboard.
- Would like another videoconferencing class as soon as possible!
- I liked what the technology enabled us to do. Actually, the teacher was physically in my class, but I know that it was more than useful for the students from a distance, and I could have been in their position.
- I liked to learn idioms, new vocabulary and pronunciation and it is always useful to work on networking tips and pitch.
- I liked the fact that my classmates were from other countries. It helps to better understand cultural differences and stay open minded. Actually the cultural differences were between the classmates and me more than between my culture and the Canadian one. This is because I am French and the Canadian culture is quite close to mine. Moreover I lived and worked in the States, therefore I learnt over there a lot about North American culture before coming here. There are a few details I discovered though.
- I liked Carol as a teacher. She is dynamic, cheerful, tactful and committed to do a good job.
- It is a small class; everything is clear and easy to understand.
- It was a new experience for each of us. I think that Carol is a wonderful teacher and she told us a lot of new information that we can find nowhere. It was also a great opportunity for students from other cities because it was only a possibility to have classes. I liked the new technology and it become much better every time. The good thing about this kind of classes is that we had to put more attention what Carol was talking about and other students because we had to focus on three cities and main subject.
- It was a class of technology and its fruits.
- I enjoyed very much with getting knowledge about Networking And Communication sharing it with Truro and Kentville via video-conference technology.
- It is free.
- It is better than nothing.
- We had homework.
- We met new friends.
- We got new knowledge.
- We practiced English.

Challenges

The Technology

The greatest challenge, of course was using unfamiliar technology that, to some extent is still in its infancy in terms of development. Not all sites were set up for the first few classes with the optimum equipment but once this was in place, the videoconferencing was much more effective. There was some occasional instability of the system. While it is at first disconcerting to realise that the videoconferencing technology currently available may not be the broadcast quality we may be expecting, it is important to view it as a communication tool, not the perfect solution to face to face interaction. It is an opportunity for people to communicate over distance in a way that has not been possible before and allows for interactive language teaching and learning in a form few other currently available technologies can.

Timing

Timing for the class is going to be a challenge. Because access to technical support is critical for the success of delivery, technical staff persons are required to be on site. Normally, they are not employed in the evenings. Technical staff persons were very accommodating for this relatively short pilot class.

Unfamiliarity with the limitations and potential of videoconference

The instructor noted that activities took longer than usual. *“For example, I had students do role-plays from different location (i.e. Kentville talking to Truro), and normally I would interrupt with a suggestion or correction, but video-conferencing etiquette seems to prevent this, so I was giving feedback after each role-play. This is more time-consuming as I have to explain what I’m correcting, then correct it”* There was also a challenge to balance between the instructor or the students on the video. *“Sometimes the auto works really well for discussions, but at other times it gets a little frenetic trying to read the voices and/or noises in the room.”* Monitoring group work and pair work was challenging not only because of the limited number of students at each site but the instructor felt cut off from the students when they started working in small groups. *“I realised I needed to start thinking outside the box to solve some of these issues”*. Interactions during a videoconference require careful planning and structuring to make them effective and enjoyable. It is more complex than traditional classroom interaction and requires more time in both preparation and implementation; the more complex the activity, the more time is needed to chart out the steps and coordinate the activity.

“Not being there”

It was sometimes difficult to be aware of and sense what was happening – the mood, the energy level, body language, eye contact, the level of understanding – at the other sites and this usually influences the pace and content of the teaching. It was suggested to the students that they look at the camera when speaking, and at the screen when listening. This was generally successful, but in a few cases the impression of lack of eye contact

when speaking was distracting to them. Evaluation of student learning is more complex and time consuming by videoconferencing. Effective administration of assessments at each site needs to be considered.

Although this was not necessarily the case in this pilot, it is expected that some students would not react well to video conference. On the other hand, interestingly, and contrary to our expectations, no students were merely present because of the novelty of the technology. They were all eager to participate because of the language learning opportunity.

The Distance

Distance created challenges that we had not anticipated, but also provided us with opportunities for collaboration. Not being 'on the ground' and not knowing the community, we had to rely on the experience and knowledge of others to assist us. Regional Development authorities conducted some promotion to identify clients. Community Learning Associations likewise identified students and in the case of Kings County Learning Association, opened the doors on a cold Saturday in February so that we could conduct CLBPT assessments. The fact that there were remote sites also meant that visits (by the instructor, the coordinator and the ELT Manager) took a lot of time.

Multiple sites, multiple logistics

The fact there are 51 individuals who are included in the final pages of this report whom we would like to thank for their contributions to the success of the program suggests that the logistics of setting up this project was challenging. Finding space, identifying rooms, making signs, identifying students, setting up information sessions, preparing information sheets, negotiating with NSCC employees, setting up language assessments, getting students to the right place, to the right room, at the right time on, the right date, ensuring the technical equipment was bought, set up, in place, in working order, with technical assistance – all times three (three sites) was an unplanned for mammoth task that NSCC, and in particular, the Project Coordinator took on with passion and determination.

Opportunities/Next steps

Keep going but keep learning

Used to questions about pedagogy, language, grammar, even seating and whiteboards, the HILC staff members who took the lead on this project, knew rather quickly that they were in uncharted territory when questions from the NSCC technicians focused on “Where does the sun set?” , Do you have pockets.....”, “camera 1 and camera 2”, “What are the presets?”, and “Can you share program?”. The pilot brought together technicians and educators to have conversations around learning that don’t normally take place. However, the possibility of culture clash never developed – it turned into a universal determination to make this pilot succeed. The objectives and the expectations were clear and there was no time for hesitation or doubt. There is general agreement from all the key partners that we still have a lot to learn but that we are pioneers in Canada in using videoconference in working with newcomers.

Keep going but keep connecting

Many of the comments that we received from students reflected overwhelming relief *“At last”, “I’ve been waiting for this”, “I never thought it would come”, “Thank you”*. The videoconference pilot supported the language learning development of seventeen newcomers outside HRM, but it did so much more. It reduced feelings of isolation, it linked newcomers to community resources, it provided social contact and it was a means of reassurance.

“I improved my English at the same time I met new friends that have almost the same background as me. We shared our experiences and supported each other in a way. It is a lot easier to learn in that environment.”

“I liked the fact that my classmates were from other countries. It helps to better understand cultural differences and stay open minded.”

Explore potential of delivery mode

Language is not something handed as a package to somebody else. It is a living thing that is best learned in interactive, authentic environments. Computer technologies, including videoconference, are powerful tools for assisting these approaches to language teaching. Pedagogy for videoconferencing often comes down to good presentation, teaching techniques and communication. However, this is a new mode of delivery and we need to further search for, explore and test collaborative task based learning activities via videoconference so that it can be used to facilitate the best of distance and conventional teaching.

Integrate other technology

Videoconference is one of many media that can be integrated into a language course. Balancing face to face interactions via videoconference with other methods of communication eg. email, chat rooms, phone calls, web-based activities, threaded discussions etc allows a productive combination of working alone and working collaboratively. Using the full range of computer based applications that are available on most home computers could allow students to explore the multimedia material at their own pace and in their own time

and would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the language learning process. Videoconference alone does not support open learning. Students must still register, attend classes at pre-set times and progress at the pace established by the course. Using blended learning, using a combination of approaches and technology will allow students to maximize their learning experiences. This would necessitate the development of a range of web-based learning options.

Expand the services available

Research from the Nova Scotia ELT Extension/Outreach Research Project, 2005 established a need for higher level language services to be available outside the Halifax Regional Municipality. However, language, though critical, is not the only factor that will help newcomers to successfully integrate into the community and the into the job market outside HRM. There is a critical need for other services such as employment counseling, mentoring, employment placement opportunities, business and entrepreneurship support. Addressing these issues will require a multi-stakeholder, multi-dimensional approach that is flexible, effective and efficient.

Include other communities

The choice of NSCC campuses was very much based on location of interested participants for the program. However, the Research project that precipitated the pilot did not establish where newcomers were located, nor the services they needed. It was to identify how Enhanced Language Training services could be made available outside HRM. The success of the pilot, which was very limited in scope, suggests a need to include other communities in the next phase. The cross-province coverage by the NSCC will help to facilitate this. In particular, the Federation of Acadians of Nova Scotia (FANE) is developing a strategy to increase Francophone immigration to Nova Scotia and especially outside of the Halifax Regional Municipality. The initial priority is to build awareness and consciousness in the Acadian communities, build welcoming communities and ensure supports are in place to maximize retention and integration of Francophone immigrants. They have identified the need to provide English language learning opportunities in the Acadian communities for those immigrants who are not bilingual. The development of this pilot and distance components of the ELT are of particular interest to the FANE.

Capitalize on the technology

Many of the students explicitly enjoyed the novelty of videoconferencing. They perceived the delivery mode as motivating and their comments were almost invariably positive, e.g. "It was great fun!". Although the pace of the classes tended to be slower, the interaction between students was, on the whole, more focused because there is motivation to use the time efficiently. There seems to be great potential for capitalizing on the medium. For example one technical support person commented "*students often learn about complex multimedia environments by showing each other cool things.*" Thus, through collaborative technology activities, students benefit from working with each other. Also, the fact that clear and rather loud speech from all participants was critical to the success of the program meant that students took extra care with their pronunciation, clarity and tone. Clips from sessions can be used as material for evaluating effectiveness of program and instructor.

Conclusion

The history of collaboration and the cooperative working relationship between Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre, Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association and the Nova Scotia Community College made this pilot both possible and immensely successful, although it was agreed by all that the human and capital resources that the organizations provided to deliver this pilot course were above and beyond all reasonable expectations.

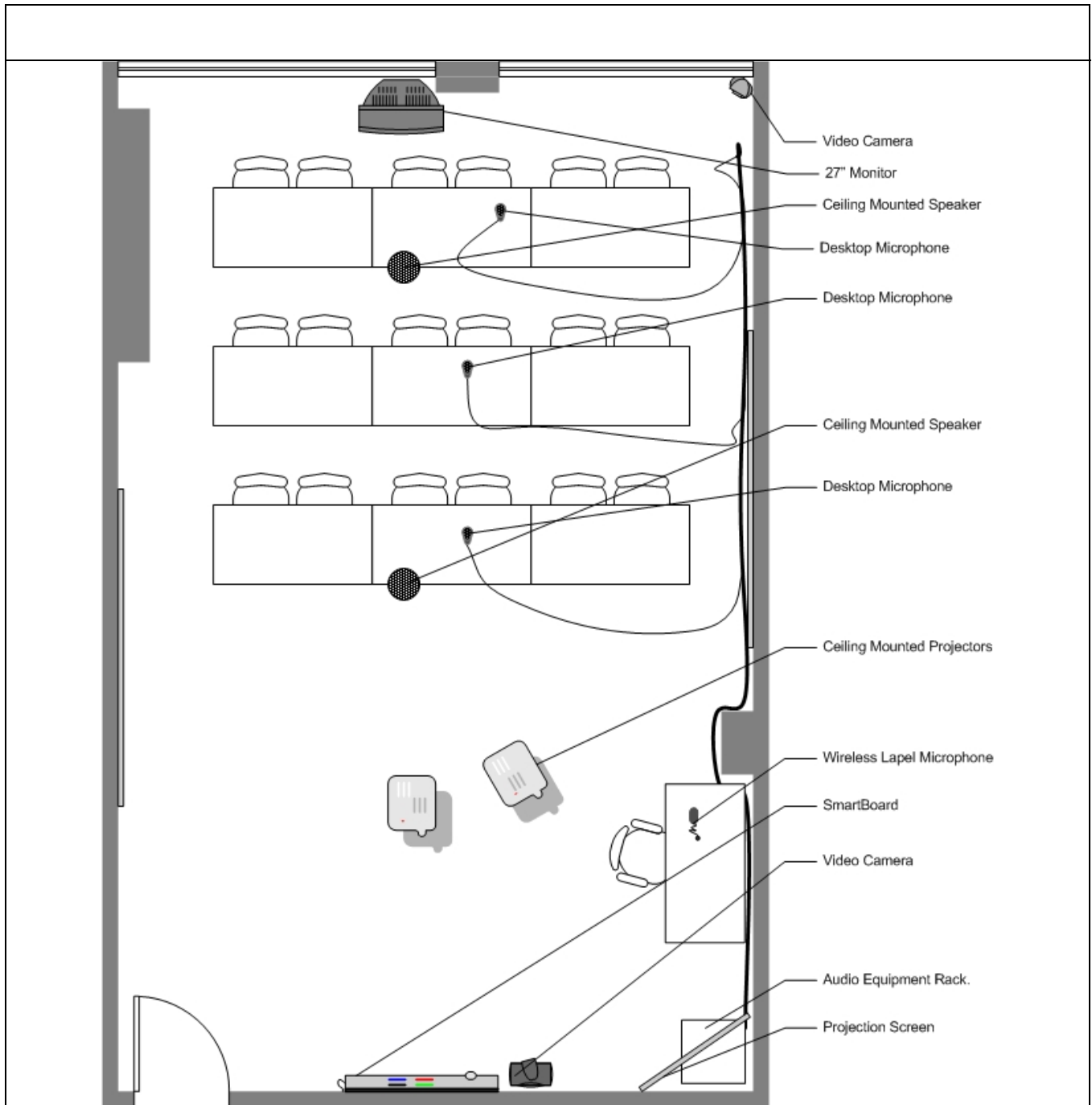
Newcomers were brought together to form a number of communities of practice. Newcomers who formerly were isolated and restricted to learning language alone, if at all, had the opportunity to improve their language skills by engaging in focused and controlled communicative activities with other newcomers. They could receive instantaneous feedback in a supportive environment, bordered by others.

It's certain that videoconference is still a new technology, that improvements can be made in the vision quality and system stability, that we still have a lot to learn about teaching language remotely, that the potential of the program is huge, that face to face language learning is still the best medium, but we have proved, through this pilot that videoconference is a realistic option for delivering language training outside of the larger centres and we are at the forefront of this new advance. Alberta is the only other province that is exploring the use of videoconference as a means to teach language. Videoconferencing brings considerations and challenges not encountered in classrooms bound by four walls, but it can also make learning more accessible, relevant and exciting. Nova Scotia is the only province in Canada that has all the stakeholders at the table. We are the only province that has successfully completed an immigrant language training program via videoconference in Canada and we have the technology, the infrastructure and the commitment to provide enhanced language training across the province (and possibly beyond) that meets the integration needs of newcomers.

Appendix

- Floor Plan of Halifax IT Campus Videoconferencing Room
- Videoconferencing Best Practices Summary
- Application Form - English for Communication and Networking Videoconferencing Class
- Communication and Networking for Newcomers to Nova Scotia
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Research references
- An Overview - English for Communication and Networking Videoconferencing Class
- Student Program Evaluation Form
- Press Release
- Graduation agenda
- Thank you to contributors

Floor Plan of Halifax IT Campus Videoconferencing Room



Videoconferencing Best Practices Summary

The following is a summary list of the best practices learned from the published research project entitled "Instructor And Student Perceptions Of A Videoconference Course" by Trevor Woods, University of Lethbridge:

- Do ensure all the technology is working as expected before offering a course using videoconferencing.
- Do plan time before the start of each class to test the system and troubleshoot any problems.
- Do encourage interruptions if technology is not working properly.
- Do ensure that technical staff is easily and quickly accessible if there is a problem.
- Do use an instant messaging tool so technical staff (if they are used) can communicate behind the scenes and not disrupt the class.
- Do have predetermined strategies in place to identify and deal with problems. For example, if the audio stops transmitting, those at the affected site should interrupt the session by communicating they cannot hear the other location while waving their arms in the air and pointing to ears to indicate that they cannot hear.
- Do insist on microphones on the desk for every student or every second student to produce good sound.
- Do use a fresh set of batteries in wireless microphones each session or track the usage and replace often.
- Do use a wireless lapel microphone for the instructor to ensure consistent high quality sound.
- Do teach participants to speak up when in a videoconference to ensure the remote site can hear what is being said.
- Do have the instructor repeat questions and comments that are made by students to ensure nothing is missed.
- Do teach participants not to talk at the same time as the participants at the opposite location. Try not to interrupt another person talking. If you are interrupted, let the other person talk, or continue talking yourself without a break to prevent confusion of both people not knowing if the other person is pausing or going to continue talking. (Because of the half-second delay in transmission).
- Do reduce student fears of videoconferencing by providing an orientation of the system during the first class where everyone learns and practices using the system.
- Do provide videoconferencing office hours for the remote students, before and/or after each class.
- Do be prepared that less content can be covered in a class discussion when compared to a traditional face-to-face class. Additional out-of-class support materials are beneficial to make up for a reduction in seminar like class time.
- Do ask students to sit in the same location each class to aid the instructor in identifying students.
- Do explain to participants before hand what is going to happen, what they can expect, and what is expected of them.
- Do use a backdrop to improve the quality of the video image.
- Do use cue cards and a thin marker to ensure that the document camera is zoomed to a default state that ensures students can read the text that is written. (Vs. 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper with the document

camera zoomed out so the entire page is in the view causing the writing to appear too small to read but good enough to be used as a guide if the student has a hard copy in front of them.)

- Do ensure supervisors and/or senior administration show their support of the initiative by:
 1. being available to talk about the experience as it occurs;
 2. providing action as issues arise;
 3. providing incentives such as a teaching assistant to help prepare material and/or participate at the remote site;
 4. providing technical support;
 5. providing pedagogical support for adjusting the content and teaching approach to this method of delivery.
- Do not build the videoconferencing technology just before or while the system is being used.
- Do not change or upgrade the videoconferencing system or technology while it is being used for a course. Wait until a break when there is sufficient time to test and fix any unexpected problems resulting from the changes.
- Do not use ceiling microphones because of their poor ability to pick up voices.
- Do not alienate the remote site or the local site. Ensure that both are getting equal attention

(Source: http://www.vcalberta.ca/tip_print.cfm?ReclD=53, accessed on February 16, 2006)

English for Communication and Networking Videoconferencing Class



Personal information – please print

Name			
Apt	Street		
City	Province	Postal Code	
Phone		Email (print very clearly)	
Country of origin		Arrival date in Canada	
Date of birth		Immigration number	
<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee <input type="checkbox"/> Family class <input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Business class		Immigration status	
Language level (CLBA)		CLBA date	
Length of time studying English			
Where you have studied English			
Highest level of education			
Previous profession/occupation			
Current occupation (i.e. working, studying)			

1. How did you hear about this class?
2. Why do you want to take this class?
3. What aspects of your language skills do you want to improve (be specific)
 - Reading:
 - Writing:
 - Speaking:
 - Listening:
4. What aspects of *workplace* English do you want to improve?
5. At the end of this language program what would you like to be able to do (be specific)?
6. Are you comfortable using the computer?
7. Do you have access to a computer on a regular basis?

English for Communication and Networking Videoconferencing Class

Welcome!

English for Communications and Networking is a language training module for newcomers to Canada. It provides business and employment related English language training for professionals from different employment backgrounds. It is one module of a program called English for Work and Business.

This class is a pilot for teaching business and employment related English via videoconferencing. It is an exciting opportunity to participate in this pilot with you and we welcome your feedback, participation and evaluation.

Who is the program for?

- newcomers who already have some English language skills (CLB 6 or above) but who want job related language training to help them find and be successful in a job that fits with their skills and experience.
- newcomers who are already working but who want evening classes to improve their English and employment prospects.

Class schedule:

February 20 – March 29, 2006 (Monday & Wednesday 4:30-6:30)

Location:

Truro
Nova Scotia Community
College
Truro Campus
36 Arthur Street
Forrester Hall
Room 105

Kentville
Nova Scotia Community
College
Kingstec Campus
236 Belcher Street
Room 2204

Halifax
Nova Scotia Community
College
Institute of Technology
Campus
5685 Leeds Street
Room C-306

For more information contact the instructor, Carol Derby, at cderby@hilc.ns.ca (902) 443-2937X 228

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre
Suite 201
7105 Chebucto Rd
Halifax, NS
B3L 4W8

Tel: (902) 443-2937
Fax: (902) 423-3154
www.hilc.ns.ca



Communication and Networking for Newcomers to Nova Scotia

Partnership

Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC), the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) have a long and successful history of partnering on different projects. MISA's online New Beginnings project and the English for Academic Purposes project are examples of the commitment of the three organizations to work together to support the integration of newcomers to our community.

MISA is the largest settlement provider in the Atlantic; Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre is the largest and most experienced ESL developer and deliverer to newcomers in the Atlantic; Nova Scotia Community College has the geography and infrastructure to deliver services across the province. Together the three organizations have the skills, experience and eagerness to provide services to newcomers outside HRM across the province of Nova Scotia.

Background

Both the federal government and the Province of Nova Scotia are committed to increasing immigration outside the large centres. With the launching of the Nova Scotia immigration strategy, it is critical for the attraction and retention of immigrants outside HRM for services to be available, particularly in relation to language and employment.

In October, 2005, MISA and HILC conducted research on delivering employment and language services in rural Nova Scotia. Research and our experience clearly indicate the need for specialized services for newcomer labor market integration but currently there are almost none available outside HRM.

Project

This project is the first phase of a larger initiative of the three organizations to deliver settlement and language services via videoconference to newcomers outside HRM. This initial phase is a pilot delivery of one module of HILC's English for Work and Business course in three centres (Kentville, Truro and Halifax) via videoconference. The course will be taught mid February to late March, 2006 by a HILC instructor in the Halifax NSCC campus and relayed via videoconference to the campuses of Kentville and Truro. It is anticipated that there will be 2-5 students in each location.

Key goals of initiative

- Improve the success rate of immigrants accessing employment in their field in rural Nova Scotia.
- Increase the retention rate of newcomers to Nova Scotia by providing timely interventions and services

Key objectives of initial phase

- Assess the effectiveness and feasibility of delivering ESL via video-conference.
- Provide equitable means to develop language skills to learners in smaller communities outside HRM
- Increase the self confidence and language skills of participants.
- Provide a base for further rural and distance development.
- Support provincial government's goal of providing services to newcomers across the province

Partner Responsibilities

HILC

- Provide overall supervision of project
- Develop promotional strategy and Identify potential participants
- Provide instructor and instructional materials
- Provide information sessions for potential participants in Halifax, Truro and Kentville
- Interview participants and assess language skills
- Deliver training (anticipated to be 6 weeks x twice a week x 2 hours)
- Provide language evaluations and certificates to all participants
- Develop evaluation and recommendations for next steps in the use of video-conferencing as a model for language training outside HRM in Nova Scotia

MISA

- Identify potential participants for training

NSCC

- Provide location for information sessions in Halifax, Truro and Kentville
- Identify contact person
- Provide initial training for instructor
- Provide initial training for participants in 3 locations
- Provide equipment, resources and location in three locations to deliver training via video-conference
- Provide on-site technical support to participants (and instructor) in three locations

HILC/MISA/NSCC

- Identify potential for collaboration on delivery of range of HILC and MISA language and settlement services to newcomers in NSCC campuses outside HRM.

Financial Implications

For this **initial phase** of the project, it is understood that HILC and MISA only have access to funding for the delivery training hours of an instructor. It is agreed that all other expenses will be absorbed by the three organizations in accordance with the partner responsibilities outlined above.

It is further agreed that the financial implications of future phases of the initiative will be negotiated and agreed upon at a later stage.

References to Research from Page 5-6

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The Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre is committed to supporting the language learning goals of newcomers. In a creative and respectful environment we strive to provide quality and effective learning opportunities to promote the active participation of newcomers in our community.



English for Communication and Networking ESL Videoconferencing class



February 20 - March 29, 2006 (Monday & Wednesday 4:30-6:30)

Key goals

- Improve the success rate of immigrants accessing employment in their field in rural Nova Scotia.
- Increase the retention rate of newcomers to Nova Scotia by providing timely interventions and services.

Key objectives

- Assess the effectiveness and feasibility of delivering ESL via video-conference.
- Provide equitable means to develop language skills to learners in smaller communities outside HRM.
- Increase the self confidence and language skills of participants.
- Provide a base for further rural and distance development.
- Support provincial government's goal of providing services to newcomers across the province.

Who is the program for?

- Newcomers who already have some English language skills (CLB 6 or above) but who want job related language training to help them find and be successful in a job that fits with their skills and experience.
- Newcomers who are already working but who want evening classes to improve their English and employment prospects.

<p>English for Communication and Networking ESL Videoconferencing class</p> <p>had: 17 participants from 14 countries with 12 occupational backgrounds</p> <p>at 3 sites: Truro Kentville Halifax</p> <p>Learning about: Communication and Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective listening techniques • Common language functions • Handling criticism • Body language • Networking dilemmas • Small talk for the workplace • Gender neutral language 	Country of origin of learners	Bangladesh	Occupational background of learners	Marketing	1
		Belarus		Finance/Accounting	2
		Bulgaria		Cashier	1
		Colombia		Teachers	4
		France		Electrical Technologist	1
		India		Biologist	1
		Iraq		Engineers	2
		Jordan		Agricultural Technologist	1
		Malaysia		Student	1
		Philippines		Artist	1
		Poland		Dentist	1
		Russia		Media/Communications	1
		Turkey			
		Venezuela			

"I am very happy in this class because I learn cultural information that is so useful, that no-one else teaches us. I am very happy with the new set-up and the technology is working well."

"This class helped me to improve my English at the same time I meet with new friends that have almost the same background as me. We share our experiences and support each other in a way. It is a lot easier to learn in that environment."

"It is not an ordinary English class – it's not boring and tiring; we were learning English at the same time we were taught the tips & traits at the work place in Canada. Very practical class. I enjoyed all the class and thankful that I have the opportunity to experience the new technology."

English for Communication and Networking Student Evaluation of Program

Please answer the following questions and send them to Kathy Burnett by email at kburnett@hilc.ns.ca or by fax to (902) 423-3154 or by mail to 201-7105 Chebucto Road, Halifax, NS B3L 4W8. Consider both the technology and the course content.

1. What did you like about the class?
2. What didn't you like about the class?
3. How can the class be improved?
4. Are you interested in taking more classes like this one? Why or why not?
5. Do you have any recommendations for future classes?
6. Any other comments?



ESL delivered by video-conferencing for first time in Canada

For Immediate Release

March 29, 2006

For the first time in Canada, adult immigrant students have completed an English as a Second Language (ESL) course through video-conferencing technology. Seventeen students from Kentville, Truro, and Metro Halifax will participate in a graduation ceremony tonight, Wednesday, March 29, 2006.

The course, English for Communications and Networking, is a pilot partnership between the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre, the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association and Nova Scotia Community College.

“Our role is to support the language learning goals of newcomers to Nova Scotia,” says Gerry Mills, Executive Director of the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre. “This pilot is such an exciting step forward because we now have the capacity to reach newcomers in communities across Nova Scotia – we are aiming to make learning opportunities accessible to anyone, and geography is no longer a limiting factor in ESL education.”

In January 2006, NSCC was approached by the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC) to explore a partnership to offer English as a Second Language (ESL) to newcomers in rural Nova Scotia. After a short exploration of options, video conferencing was selected as the best means of curriculum delivery.

“While there is currently an identified need to expand services to newcomers beyond the Halifax area, there is often not the critical mass of newcomers in any one rural area to support the existence of such services,” says Lech Krzywonos, the Academic Chair, of the School of Access at NSCC, Truro Campus, and the lead NSCC contact for this pilot project. “This pilot has stood up to this challenge by enabling newcomers in the rural areas of our province to benefit from ESL training in their own communities.”

HILC provided the instructor, curriculum and students while NSCC provided the video-conferencing technology, learning spaces, and technical expertise. The ESL instructor was based at the Institute of Technology Campus in Halifax, yet due to video-conferencing, the 17 students in all three locations could see, hear, and interact directly with the instructor.

Based on the success of the pilot, HILC, MISA and NSCC see potential for expansion. One potential next step is to include full semester offerings of ESL in select rural communities. “It’s all about making Nova Scotia more hospitable and more welcoming to newcomers,” says Mills. “We hope to see this become a longer term initiative.”

Tonight’s graduation ceremony will be held via video-conference. Graduates, and other special guests will attend the ceremony in Halifax (Room C306, NSCC’s Institute of Technology Campus), in Kentville (Room 2204, NSCC’s Kingstec Campus), and in Truro (Room 105, Forrester Hall, NSCC’s Truro Campus).



Welcome to the Graduation Ceremony for the ESL Videoconferencing Pilot, English for Communication and Networking

March 29, 2006

5:10

Welcome

Gerry Mills, Executive Director, HILC
Mike Smith, Dean of Access, NSCC
The Honourable Jamie Muir, Minister of Education, MLA for Truro - Bible Hill
Other Remarks

5:25

Graduation

Carol Derby, Instructor, HILC
Diana Perez-Segovia, Truro, Participant
Joanna Karolak, Halifax, Participant
Awatef Rasheed, Kentville, Participant
Presentation of Certificates

5:40

Demonstration of a Videoconferencing Class

5:55

Networking and Refreshments



Government of Canada

Government of Nova Scotia



English for Communication and Networking Program Participants

Truro

Diana Perez-Segovia Irin Arju
Helen Kripulevich Nidhi Anand

Kentville

Awatef Rasheed Layal Ashour
Efrain Araque Maria Eugenia Peña
Lay Chin Tan Violy Curry

Halifax

Fanny Zara Sabah Abu Salloum
Joanna Karolak Sergey Sklyarov
Leyla Turkdogan Suzan Abu Al Rub
Naime Gurses

Full Screen
Close Full Screen

Thank you ...

to the following fifty one individuals that we know of, and others who we apologize for overlooking, who contributed to the successful pilot and partnership in delivering the pilot English as a Second Language class to newcomers to Nova Scotia via videoconferencing technology in February/March, 2006:

Andre Klefenz	Efrain Araque	Maria de La Paz Sen
Ann Guy	Fanny Zara	Maria Eugenia Pena
Anne Kelly	George Loveridge	Mark Mason
Awatef Rashed	Gerry Mills	Mike Kidney
Betty Burns	Helen Kripulevich	Mike Smith
Brian Hede	Irin Arju	Naime Gurses Mert
Carol Derby	Jane Abernethy-Parker	Nidhi Anand
Carole Chadock	Jennifer Auld-Cameron	Pete Hamlin
Christian Deveau	Joanna Karelaz	Peter Gillis
Claudette Legault	Kathy Burnett	Sabah Abu Salloum
Clint Walker	Kevin Quinlan	Sara Napier
Colleen Hatfield	Lay Chin Tan	Sergey Sklyarov
Dan Spearns	Layal Ashour	Shannon Fleet
Daurene Lewis	Pat Kelly	Sophie Bourgoin
Diana Perez-Segovia	Lech Krzywonos	Suzan Abu Al Rub
Don Bureaux	Leyla Turkdogan	Violy Curry
Donna McLean	Mandy Arnold	Wilson Verge