



Case Study

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Using Connect for 'Listening as Learning'

Context and challenge

I became Head of MFL at Princes Risborough School three years ago. Despite a talented team, KS4 numbers were low and languages lacked their deserved status within the EBacc. We revitalised the curriculum to improve perceptions among students and parents and increase KS4 uptake. We designed a curriculum grounded in cognitive science and second language acquisition. At KS3 we adopted a "less is more" approach, teaching one topic per term, and a lexicogrammar pedagogy. We prioritised 95% comprehensible input through listening and reading, shifting listening from testing to learning. In Years 8 and 9, one weekly lesson develops listening skills.

What was delivered

We started using Sanako Connect, an online language lab solution, which means teachers can benefit from all the benefits of a traditional language lab, without the logistics of going to a dedicated computer room. Teachers log onto the system, create classes, upload tasks and share a classroom link with their classes. We do this in our classroom using students' own devices or Chromebooks with individual headphones for each student.

Students independently complete a series of listening and oral tasks aimed to teach listening, embed vocabulary and structures learned in lessons and actively work with the language: **listening for learning with 95% comprehensible input.**

Sanako provides a wide range of pre-populated activities for both KS3 and KS4, but it also allows the teacher to create their own resources with the help of AI.

Activities I created for my students as a lesson sequence:

- **Some flashcard vocabulary revision, including translation from English into target language, before tackling the listening tasks.**
- **Dictation activities where teachers record their voice, directly with Sanako or upload an audio file, for example, created by using a text-to-speech tool.**
- **Finish the sentence tasks, based on specific audio material.**
- **Match the two halves of a sentence, based on a specific audio file.**
- **Rearrange the words in a sentence based on specific audio input.**
- **Fill in the blanks texts based on a video/avatar input.**
- **Pronunciation and reading aloud tasks based on given sentences and texts, where the system will rate students' pronunciation via different stars.**
- **Oral activities based on a set of oral questions with the feature of "voice insert" where the system creates a gap between each question for each student to record their own answer to a question.**

Pedagogical impact

As students can 'talk' all at the same time within their devices, this means that teachers do not need to listen to individual students face to face, saving valuable time and cover requirements to carry out oral tests.

The system can mark many of the activities straight away but in the case of oral input, the teacher can listen to individual students, mark their work and provide individual oral feedback, which students can listen to, once they log into the system! This is invaluable for KS4 practice!!

Students love their independent listening and oral sessions during lessons at KS3 and KS4. This approach has had a massive positive impact in the way our students learn and interact with a second language. They feel more confident and learn vocabulary and structures much better, which makes our students experience success and do well in our departmental assessments. This has translated into a big increase in the numbers of students opting to study French and Spanish at KS4, by 400%.