VOKI-**BASED TASKS**

TARGET GROUP	Beginners (A1/A2+)
CONTEXT (Ex: in class, online etc.)	Blended learning environment
LEARNING OUTCOMES	Use Voki to practise the topic 'my town' (Home and Local Environment).
TOOLS AND RESOURCES	Voki, a blog, whiteboard
CONTENT	*Duration: three forty-five minutes lessons*

STEPS:

Lesson 1

Lesson 1 focuses on revising the appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures using an interactive whiteboard and introducing Voki to pupils by:

a) playing memory games with the aim to consolidate key vocabulary (the author used Linguascope, a fee-based subscription website);

b) using Notebook (SmartBoard's proprietary software), I placed the recently revised nouns on the interactive whiteboard together with some key verbs and conjunctions to be rearranged by pupils with the aim of forming increasingly complex sentences and introducing Voki to pupils.

At the end of the lesson, assign a homework task of writing between 80 and 100 words in which students have to describe their city, town, or village so as to base their Voki speaking task upon it. The students should be made aware at this stage that the aim is to increase the range and complexity of their Spanish sentences and that the speaking task is going to be the following week's homework. If the pupils are beginners and are not very confident in their writing skills, take in their homework and highlight what is wrong before moving to the recording stage.

At this stage, their work should be closely controlled in order to ensure that the aim of producing as rich and complex a target language as possible for each individual pupil was adhered to.

Lesson 2

After reviewing their homework task and returning their books with highlighted errors and some corrections, start the recording session. The lesson can be divided into two main parts:

- Have pupils make corrections to their homework using a word processor.
- Encourage them to work together, in groups of three or four, so that they could contrast among them what each other had written.
- Monitor their work.

This should take around 25 minutes.

Then ask pupils to open their web browser, navigate to the Voki website and register as users. I encouraged them to play around and familiarise themselves with the application for the remainder of the lesson (approximately 15 minutes).

This ensured that pupils acquired the appropriate ICT skills to achieve the goal of producing a Spanish speaking avatar. They also enjoyed changing the characters' appearance, often with a wacky and colourful outcome, and recording test utterances in the target language and hearing themselves through the avatar on the screen. The main objectives for this lesson were therefore to produce a piece of writing on which to base their speaking task and to familiarise pupils with Voki. By setting the objective of writing in Spanish, I ensured that it was clear in pupils' minds that there was a tangible outcome to this task and that the ensuing speaking task was also real work and not just a game.

Finally, set your pupils the task of producing a Spanish speaking Voki for homework on the topic of my town following these instructions:
- Create or add the final touches to your Voki.
- Speak clearly, in Spanish, into the microphone.
- Make a concerted effort to pronounce each word with your best Spanish accent.
- Remember to include a variety of vocabulary and sentence structures, including conjunctions.

Pupils are expected to complete the task outside lesson time and are also instructed to send their finished work to the teacher via email before the next lesson the following week. In order to do this, pupils have to copy the appropriate string of code from their finished Voki and paste it into an email or a forum thread.

Lesson 3
Once you receive all the finished Vokis electronically, embed them into your classroom blog, creating individual post entries for each student's Voki. The objective of the third lesson is to watch as many Vokis as possible in the given time, with the aid of the interactive whiteboard, and to evaluate each other's work by means of taking notes and then share the findings with the other students in English. This was the set of criteria that pupils should consider:
- Was the pronunciation accurate as far as they could tell?
- Did the Voki include a wide range of vocabulary, as studied in lesson 1?
- Was the Voki sufficiently complex? I.e. did it include conjunctions?

After teacher-guided feedback for the first two Vokis, highlighting and agreeing on what had been good and not so good about them, continued listening to other Vokis for the remainder of the lesson (around 25 minutes) but, this time, intervene only occasionally. Pupils are also encouraged to give each other constructive feedback, making the sort of contributions a teacher normally makes, such as: your accent was very good, you should have said "x" instead of "y" or you should have included more conjunctions.

At the end of the lesson, assign the final homework task: to add feedback comments on the blog.

ASSESSMENT

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS' WORK	TEACHER SELF-EVALUATION OF THE ACTIVITY
Two phases: 1) Highlighting possible errors made in their written homework 2) Commenting on pronunciation of the pupils' vokis	

ADDED VALUE
(Increase in value created by the use of the ICT tool)

- Introducing the use Web 2.0 tools in the form of blogs and Voki is justified on the grounds that it will engage pupils to a greater extent than traditional teaching methods and it will bestow in them a wish to participate.
- Pupils are not under 'usual' pressure while speaking as they might be in a 'traditional' learning environment where, according to their perception, both teacher and other pupils listen to them carefully while speaking and thus putting pressure and putting them off speaking freely.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

The bulk of the work, both written and spoken, is to be done at home as homework so teachers need to make sure all their students have computers and Internet access.

Example adapted from José Picardo
Source: boxoftricks.net