

Using iPads for working, communicating/interpreting

Linda Squelch and Sandra Dowe

Modern technology has enabled us to sign with friends, family and colleagues directly, without having to use written English or communicating systems such as Typetalk.

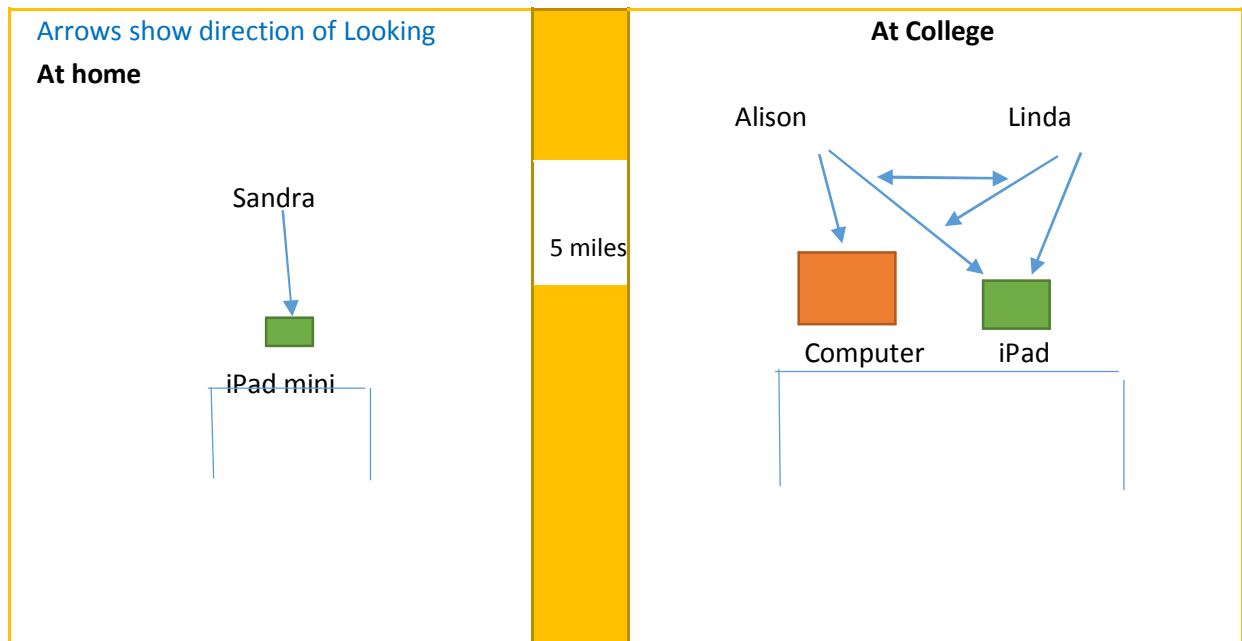
For some time we have used Oovoo and Skype but recently with our iPads have used FaceTime which is quicker and easier. We just click on to the FaceTime icon, then the name of the person on the list and, if they are available, up comes their face and off we go, signing to each other.

The quality is quite good considering it offers only 2 dimensional pictures which can never be as good as 3 dimensional real life fact to face. The sound is quite clear.

Linda works as a teacher of BSL in a local college where most staff do not sign. In February 2014 Linda was required to complete an on-line safeguarding course designed for hearing people. A Human Resource officer, Alison Dewdney offered to show her how to log on the course to access text and subtitles to video clips. The only time Alison was available was on a Monday or Friday and our meeting needed to be soon. We decided to try an experiment using our iPads so that Sandra could voice over for Linda and sign as Alison gave instructions. The meeting was planned within 2 days for Friday 28th February.

At 2 pm Sandra and Linda set up their iPads, Linda at college with Alison and Sandra in her study at her home, 5 miles away. We switched on and clicked onto FaceTime. Eureka! It worked! Linda could see Sandra who could see Linda and also hear Alison well.

This is how the situation looked:



Sometimes Alison would just point to the screen for Linda to locate quickly what was to be clicked. The exercise lasted about 40 minutes. Alison was able to see and appreciate that Linda had to watch the signed interpretation and therefore could not look at her at the same time.

Sandra in the study at home: Linda and Alison on the screen of the mini –iPad in college



Photo by Peter Bradley

Remote interpreting systems have been set up by national organisations for the deaf using computers and qualified interpreters. Where deaf and hearing professionals work in a team in educational establishments, it seems the use of iPads and FaceTime is simple in one to one or small group situations.

From Linda's point of view she does not have to spend extra time meeting an interpreter, hoping they will not be delayed or tired from travel problems. It can be more convenient having the interpreter under control on the screen and not be affected by poor lighting in the room nor having to look from person to person when in a group situation.

The cost of travel and time by the communicator/interpreter is saved; in our case it was a 10 mile return journey by car of 40 minutes by Sandra with no cost of petrol or wear and tear on the car; ideal for a volunteer communicator who is retired.

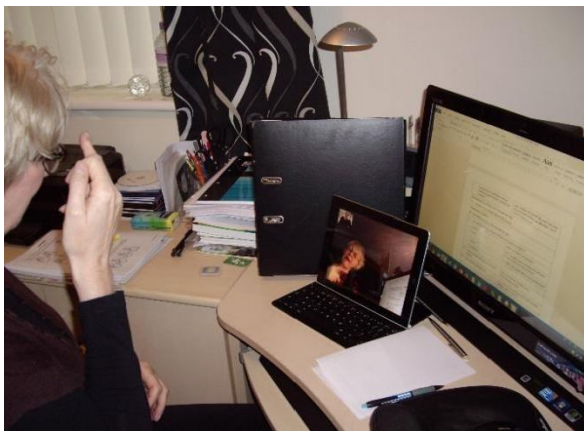
Working together on resources and students' work

Sometimes we need just a 5 minute chat about college work. For example we might need to discuss signed and written English vocabulary. Although we meet for longer discussions, for short items we can save time by using FaceTime to quickly sort out details.

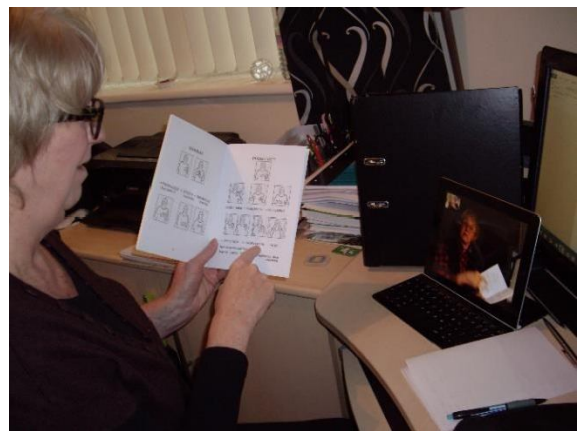
On one occasion Linda needed to show to Sandra how a student had signed COMEDIAN using an anti-clockwise movement instead of clockwise so that she could write the explanation as briefly as possible in written English. Sandra found it much clearer when she saw Linda produce the sign showing the 2 different directions on the screen.

On the same occasion Sandra needed to see how a student had used the wrong hand orientation for INFORMATION and Linda was able to show her on the screen. We then discussed how to remind the student about the importance of orientation by referring to our booklet, 'Sign linguistics in a Nutshell'.

Linda demonstrates the direction for COMEDIAN



Linda and Sandra find 'direction' in the booklet



Linda demonstrates INFORMATION to show correct hand orientation



Linda and Sandra check the hand orientation in the booklet



Photos taken by Kevin Squelch

We think there may be other ways of using this method to work with colleagues and this is the beginning of finding ways to save time and travel and overcome problems of communication visually at distance.