

Using the Internet in class

**Enda Francis
Scott**

eli9@eli.es

Part 1: Some Practical Ideas

Introduction to internet:

Background:

If you are planning to use the internet regularly with a class it is worthwhile spending some time on raising awareness of the internet and how it works among students. Most will be aware of the internet, but a clarification of what it is, what it can do is always useful. The following task is a brief off-line introduction to the internet and commonly used terms which are often not completely understood.

Task:

How many of these questions can you answer?

1. Do you know what the *Internet* is?
2. Can you think of two more “names” for the “*WEB*”?
3. Do you know what a “*Website*” is?
4. Do you know what “*Hypertext*” means?
5. Do you know what is meant by a “*Link*”?
6. Do you know what a “*Browser*” is?
7. Do you know *three* ways of finding material on the internet?

Now read the information on the back of this page and see if you were correct.

Extension:

Students who have used the internet before could explain what they have done orally or through writing to those who have not. Students who have not could prepare questions to ask those who have. All students could prepare a brief survey about the internet, what other students know, would like to use it for etc.

1. “**Internet**” is the result of computers world-wide being united through the telephone system (lines, satellite etc). Using a cable and a modem (the machine which encodes the computer information for transfer over phone lines) you plug into the phone socket and can “talk” to computers all over the world.
2. Just as satellites can bring you phone calls, TV and many other services, Internet refers to a collection of different services the best known of which are e-mail (electronic mail) and *the World Wide Web* (**WWW**, the *web*). The web is only one of Internet’s services but is certainly the most used and most interesting because it presents information with text, pictures, sounds etc and also allows you to move from one place to another by simply clicking once on certain words. It is extremely easy to use.
3. The web is composed of “**websites**”. A “website” is a collection of “**pages**” (usually related in theme) maintained by an individual, company etc. Each website has a “**homepage**” which refers to the page you first go to (automatically) on a website (our homepage is what you see when we first open our internet connection) – it’s like the front page of a newspaper including usually a list of contents.
4. You move through pages or sites by using “**hypertext**”. When the mouse arrow turns to a hand (over an image, or underlined text) all you have to do is click once to move on to another page.
5. All websites have an address, something like this: <http://www.yahoo.es> So if you want to find a particular site one option is to type the address (very carefully).
6. Very often however there is so much information we have no idea of the address so we have two options: one is to use **LINKS**, i.e. someone else’s work. The second option is to **SEARCH** the Web using what is called a search engine. www.yahoo.com is a search engine and allows you to search for references for one word “Dublin” or a series “Dublin+Ireland+cinemas” on the www.
7. As with anything on a computer you need a special program to make it happen: if you want to type you need a word processor and if you want to use the web you need a **BROWSER** usually Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Communicator.

Beginning to surf:

Background:

While many families and students are beginning to explore the internet access is still not widespread and many students will have little or no experience of surfing the internet. This, if combined with a lack of computer skills in general, can create problems; indeed there is nothing more frustrating for students than watching others have fun while they cannot participate. It is worthwhile spending some time initially to help students develop the basic skills necessary to use internet effectively: one of the things students find most difficult is typing an address correctly which is of course fundamental to any internet surfing!

Task:

Activity 1:

- Can you find where you type an address in the box at the top of the screen?
- Click once in the box and use the delete button to delete the existing address.
- Type this address very carefully: www.tesol-spain.org and press the ENTER key.
- This is the homepage of a TESOL-SPAIN. Click on one of the red Tabs at the top of the page and you move to another page: this is called using a HYPERLINK.
- Use the **ATRÁS** button (top of screen on the left) to go back.

Well done!!

Activity 2:

- Find **RESOURCES** and click on **MORE**
- How many sections are there?
- Click once on **GO** under one section.
- How many different links are there in these section.
- Try some of the links and find one you like.

Activity 3:

Sometimes you don't know how to find what you want and have to **SEARCH**.

- Type this address **www.yahoo.com** and **ENTER**
- You can type a word (or more) in the space and click on **SEARCH**. Try it for **SEVILLE**
- You then get the results. Click on each option to see if it is interesting.

Well done! Now you are an expert!!!

Extension:

Even though it may be a language class it may be worthwhile allowing students to do the above exercise with pages in Spanish and indeed spend some time exploring the web in Spanish as long as they do not come to identify their internet based English classes with uncontrolled surfing in Spanish! For further surfing skills practice students could be encouraged to select a home page and write some basic questions for a group at another computer about this site. Those who have more experience with computers can help those who are new to them but sometimes this means taking over rather than sharing!

Internet and the course book 1:

Background:

Be it famous people, sport, places, course books tend to organise their material around themes and the internet provides a simple way of bringing these themes up to date and making them real rather than the static presentations often found in books. A simple search on the internet will find material connected to any subject presented in a course book and a few minutes work by the teacher will produce a worksheet or lesson plan for the relevant level. Here is a simple example for lower levels related to food, a typical theme in textbooks. The task is very controlled and quite short so that even though students are dealing with a genuine English text what is expected of them is quite simple both in terms of language and internet skills. Teachers can easily devise similar tasks for any subject area.

Task:

- Type this address very carefully and press the ENTER key.
<http://www.star-inn.com/> now you have information about a typical English pub in England. Can you answer these questions?
- What is the telephone number?
- Can you eat in the pub?
- Who is the manager?

- Click on GALLERIES
- Can you find a photo you like?
- What can you see in the photo?

- Click on SNACK MENU
- Can you find something you would like to eat?
- How much does it cost?

- Click on LIVE MUSIC
- What kind of music can you hear in the pub?

Extension:

Linking internet activities to the students book also provided a means of incorporating internet into normal classes so that time on the computer does not become a disjointed experience. Most internet based activities allow for pre-computer and post-computer activities: prediction of what they will find, vocabulary, questions they would like answered, feedback to other groups, writing up results etc all provide lots of opportunities for general skills practice in class based around internet based material.

Internet and the course book 2:

Background:

With higher levels it is of course possible to produce more general and freer activities although it has to be remembered that even at higher levels, short controlled exercises are best until students develop the internet skills to deal with more demanding tasks. Note taking is particularly demanding as it requires students to identify key information and to summarise it: an area students often need more help with. The following worksheet is an example of a more general worksheet for students who are comfortable using internet.

Task:

- Very carefully type the following address and click on the ENTER key:
www.yahoo.com.
- Search for BOSTON+MASSACHUSETTS
- Select one of the sites that are offered.
- Can you find some maps? Where exactly is Boston?
- Can you find some information about entertainment and what to do?
Make notes about what you would do if you were spending a week in Boston.
- Compare with another student: have you the same ideas?
- Return to www.yahoo.com and search for a city you would like to visit.
- Make notes planning a week holiday in this city: what would you do?
Where would you stay, eat etc.

Extension:

Any kind of note taking or freer activity provides lots of opportunities for feedback in class afterwards in pairs, groups or the whole class together either orally or written. This, combined with the extension of the course book theme to the real life world of internet, makes lessons more realistic and varied while incorporating computer work into normal classes rather than isolating it as an isolated activity.

Cutting and Pasting:

Background:

As students become more familiar with the internet they may want to experiment with taking information, text or pictures from web pages and either printing it for later use or importing it into a word processor. The following worksheet can be applied to any material on the internet as it simply illustrates how text (or images) can be copied from the internet and later pasted and manipulated in a word processor or other program.

Task:

- Type www.yahoo.com and press the ENTER key.
- Go down the page to the bottom. Can you find the section MORE YAHOO'S?
- Now find NEWS and click on TOP NEWS STORIES.
- When this page opens find the section ODDLY ENOUGH on the left of your screen.
- You now have a collection of strange but true news stories. Find one you think is funny.
- You are now going to copy this story into a word processor. Select the text by dragging the cursor over it and keeping the left clicker on your mouse pressed down.
- When the text is in blue go to the menú EDICIÓN and select the option COPIAR.
- Now close the internet and open a word processing program on your computer, Microsoft Word for example.
- Go to the menú EDICIÓN and select PEGAR. You now have copied the text off the internet and you can play with it.
- Either delete some words from the text and ask another student to try and guess what the original words were or type some questions about the story at the end and print for use later in class.

Extension:

The skills developed in the above exercise can be used to create any number of worksheets for other groups. Text can be copied off the net, used as a gap fill, used as a text for comprehension questions, used even to examine the grammar in it. Cutting and pasting can also be a teacher's best friend and the source of lots of worksheets for use in class even if it is the teacher alone who has access to the internet.

Searching 1:

Background:

As students become more skilled with their use of internet there are more opportunities to move from structured teacher-generated worksheets to freer student led activities. This may require students to find information that interests them personally and they therefore have to develop the skills to search for information on the internet. The following worksheet provides an introduction to effective searching skills on the web.

Task:

- Very carefully type www.yahoo.com . In the space type what you want to search for: DUBLIN and click on SEARCH.
- How many sites did the search find?
- If you are particularly interested in only information about Dublin in Ireland it is better to search for: DUBLIN+IRELAND. Try it and compare results with your first search.
- If what you really want is information about Irish pubs in Dublin the best is to go to LOCAL YAHOOs section and click on UK+IRELAND. Now if you search for DUBLIN+PUBS only in this section you will not be wasting time: you are searching the area most likely to bring results.
- Yahoo is organised by categories. Type www.google.com and try the search for Dublin again. How do results compare? Google shows you the most popular internet pages for what you are searching.
- Type www.askjeeves.com You can now type a complete question and see what the answer is. Try: where exactly is Córdoba?

Extension:

For students of lower levels or who might find the above exercise difficult it might be an idea to allow them to use a Spanish search engine or to search an English search engine for Spanish terms: what is important at this initial stage is to develop the students IT skills so that they will not prove an impediment to developing their English through the internet later.

Searching 2:

Background:

Once they have some initial searching skills the following activities will develop the skills further and provide a bit of fun.

Task:

- Internet speed searching.
- How quickly can you answer the following questions? You will need to use an internet search engine possibly www.ayahoo.com or www.google.com
- What is the population of Ireland?
- Where were the Olympics held in 1972?
- What is the name of Sting's latest album?
- Can you find a map of the streets of New York?
- Can you find the weather for Melbourne, Australia?
- What is the most dangerous snake?

- Now write five questions for another student::
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

Extension:

Students should be able to develop their own quizzes or treasure hunts quite easily.

Internet as stimulus:

Background:

One of the key functions of the internet is that of providing genuine language exposure which in turn provides a stimulus: this is the real world and not just an exercise in a textbook. The following task is an illustration of how ten to twenty minutes internet exposure forms the basis for a narrative writing class: inspired by their internet contact, a real task, students frequently concentrate and work much better on this task than they do in a normal writing class.

Task:

- Carefully type this address: www.mysterynet.com
- Find the section SOLVE-IT and click on this option.
- You now have to read a mystery story and at the end select a possible explanation. You can then see if you were correct.
- Now, at the top of the page click on ONLINE MYSTERIES and then on the WRITING CONTEST.
- You now have a mysterious photograph and you have to write a mystery story based on the photograph.
- Open a word processor on the computer and type your story.
- If your teacher agrees you may want to email your story and enter the competition on www.mysterynet.com

Extension:

Again, this kind of activity allows for later oral practice in class as students re-tell their stories etc. They could also write the stories in class or for homework and then re-write them in a process writing type activity.

Projects:

Background:

Once students are comfortable with the internet technically and have become used to achieving specific tasks while dealing with genuine English teachers might wish to consider more demanding project work. The following ideas are related to cinema but virtually any subject of interest to the students from pop stars to sport to food to places to visit could be used in a similar way.

Task:

- Think of a current film you would like to see.
- Make notes about what you know, the stars, the plot.
- Write some questions you would like to know the answers to.
- Now go to the internet, type and search for your film
- Can you find the answers to your questions
- Make notes about more information
- Can you print a picture?
- Use a word processor to write up your notes into paragraphs.
- Print your text and images and you can make a poster for the classroom wall!

Extension:

Project work can take as much time and involve as many skills as the teacher feels appropriate. Ultimately, it can also be linked to publishing on the internet (in a later section).

Communicating 1:

Background:

While internet provides information one of its most attractive uses, especially among teenagers, is that of communication. For language students internet allows them the opportunity not only to read genuine English but to communicate with people all over the world. There are many ways of doing this. One is to open your private chat room (for example go to www.eli.es/chat.htm and click on CHAT NOW). Such a room provides a controlled environment where students can chat to each other or more interestingly to students from another, school or country who you have arranged to meet in this chat room. Alternatively, there are many public chat rooms. These can, however, have the disadvantage off not being controlled so a better solution is to use a chat area specifically for students of English (www.eslcafe.com). There remains one more problem: many chat areas require you to register which in turn requires you to have an email address. This worksheet guides students through the process of creating an online email address after firstly thinking a little about what email means.

Task:

- Type this address followed by ENTER: www.its-magazine.com
- Can you find the option 101 THINGS TO DO? Click here.
- Find number 73 which is all about sending email and answer the questions.
- What is an email?
- What is the difference between a normal letter and an email?
- Why are CAPITAL LETTERS not always a good idea?
- What are attachments?
- What do these symbols mean?
I-O ;-) :-X

LOL TTYL
- send an email message to the editor of this magazine.
- Now you can get your own email address if you wish. Go to www.yahoo.com and click on CHECK EMAIL.
- Follow the instructions for becoming a new user. Remember you have to fill in all the information they ask for (although not necessarily with accurate information). When selecting name and passwords do not use simple ones as they will already exist so be more personal or original: instead of "paco" combine it with the number of your house and use paco72 etc.
- If you create your account successfully try sending an email to another student in the class after you get their email address.

Extension:

Students might want to practice some of the symbols by writing in class; they could even write messages entirely by symbols and invent their own. They could also explore possible differences between writing letters and emails by writing a letter and then changing it to an email format or visa versa. If students have experience of emailing or chat in Spanish they could discuss these or write questionnaires about it for other students to find out their experiences.

Communicating 2:

Background:

Once students have an email address they can explore using it to access chat or pen friend sites. The success of these depends on many factors from who is in the chat room at any one time to whether or not a pen friend responds and whether or not a student keeps the contact going.

Task:

- Now that you have your own email address you can try using it to make contact with other students of English.
- Choose one of these addresses:

www.eslcafe.com

www.its-magazine.com

- On these sites you can find sections devoted to CHAT and to PENFRIENDS.
- If you want to chat they ask you to register with your email address first so just follow the instructions and you can chat with other students of English from all around the world.
- If you want to send emails to other students of English use the PENFRIEND section of these pages.
- Always be careful when communicating on the internet: people are not always honest! Don't give away personal details such as your phone number without being sure you know who the other person is.

Extension:

The teacher may wish to leave this kind activity as a free one to the students or organise a more controlled scheme by contacting a teacher or group of students in another school or country. As always, individual or group student activity on the computer allows for many opportunities for feedback and skills practice in normal class time.

Publishing:

Background:

Publishing student material is a logical extension of project work and also a means of establishing contact with other schools. It does however mean you have to get involved with designing web pages and also in finding a server to store them (some schools already have their own web site and it is easy for students to keep their pages on this site). Here are just two examples of the hundreds of students who already have material on the web.

Task:

- Click on <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~heathschool/>
Here you have pages made
by teenage students in a school in a small town in Ireland.
- Write some questions about these pages for another student.

Extension:

The extension possibilities for this type of project are enormous although so too are some of the technical restrictions and demands on time.

Part 2:

Making your own materials

Introduction:

In the first part we looked at some things to consider when using internet with students:

- not to be over ambitious
- keeping tasks simple and clearly focused initially
- tasks that are not too demanding on computer skills
- how to link internet material to course books
- ideas for incorporating internet material into general lessons

Putting it into practice:

What follows are a number of activities designed at putting all this into practice: in other words, devising lesson plans that can be used with classes we teach.

There are four activities to work through. The first takes you through the steps involved in generating an internet lesson plan linked to a course book; the second does much the same but would provide a worksheet for photocopying and use in class that way rather than actually on the computers; the third explores how some websites could be used for more “fun” activities while the final one offers some ideas about using the internet for communication.

You may not have time to do all four so feel free to concentrate on what is most useful in your given situation.

It may appear that this means a lot of work to make one simple internet lesson but only the first time: once you get familiar with the internet and know how your classes react you can have an internet lesson plan in ten minutes!

Activity 1:

Step 1:

Choose a page or unit from a course book you are currently using. What is the general theme ... food, sport, famous people?

Step 2:

Using the internet search for information about this theme. Remember the differences between www.yahoo.com which is organised by categories and www.google.com which gives results based on popularity. If you are looking for information about a pop singer it may be quickest to go to Yahoo, find the correct category and then search for the name within this category. It is always best to search for the clearest definition possible: a search for "Martin" will not be as efficient as a search for "Ricky Martin Singer".

Step 3:

Once you have searched you will get a large number of results. It is impossible to look at all of them so read the information carefully for clues as to which might be most interesting (for example when searching for a pop singer the "official" homepage is often a good place to start . If these sites do not seem to be of interest you may need to search again but be more specific.

When you do find a list of possible useful sites it is still impossible to analyse all of them. Look through some of them quickly: many are easily disregarded immediately. Choose three or four which look most promising and complete the following chart to help you identify which will be best in class.

<i>Site Name / Address:</i>	<i>Visual Content</i>	<i>Easy to Navigate?</i>	<i>Level and Quality of English</i>	<i>Relevant to students?</i>

Step 4:

Once you have found a site it is now time to make a worksheet for your students. The nature of this worksheet will depend on the class, their level and their experience with internet.

- To start with some simple questions and clear instructions as to how to find the answers is the probably the best approach.

- If your students are new to internet it is sometimes a good idea to get them to tick off the instructions as they do them

- Questions can be about the text but also about the visual content to make the exercise even easier for certain levels.

- It is often useful to have some “freer” tasks at the end for those who have finished first: tasks such as “write five questions about the site for another group”.

- At higher levels, or classes with more experience of internet you may want to try a less controlled task such as “make notes about ...”. This can provide material for lots of follow up activities from reporting orally to writing later in class but it can sometimes be difficult for students to know what to make notes of and will need help.

Write the task in the following space or type it in a word processor.

Step 5:

Once you have an internet based worksheet it is interesting to consider how to get the most out of it in the classroom. This may involve both *pre-* and *post-* internet activities. In the spaces below there are some ideas which may be of use for your lesson plan. Read them and then write some for your lesson plan in the box if you think it is necessary or appropriate.

Possible activities in class *before* using the internet worksheet.

- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Students predict what they will find either speaking or writing
- Students write questions they would like to find answer for

Possible activities *after* using the internet.

- Students compare answers orally
- Students question each other on what they found
- Students report orally on notes they have taken
- Students write a summary of what they found

Step 6:

Finally, before taking students into the computer room to use internet it is useful to think about the technical skills they may need, from using a mouse to “surfing” the internet. This is particularly important the first times you use internet with classes. Think of the class you are going to use the previous lesson plan with and make some notes under the following headings.

Their knowledge of internet:

--

How could their awareness of internet be improved: survey, questionnaire, worksheet?

--

How to deal with different levels of computer skills in the computer room:

--

How to make activity as easy as possible: are instructions clear etc? In Spanish?

--

Activity 2:

The internet provides lots of resources for the teacher without having to have students use it themselves. While the previous activity was designed for students using internet in class it is also possible for the teacher to use the internet to devise a lesson plan which is then photocopied and used in normal class. This is particularly interesting if the teacher has access to the internet but there is no computer room in the school. It means teachers can provide up to date, real English to supplement course book material or simply for variety.

Step 1:

Follow the first three steps in the previous activity, selecting a theme, searching for relevant sites and then evaluating them.

Step 2:

Once you have found a site of interest you will need to copy text and perhaps images from this site into a word processor. To copy text drag the cursor over it until it is selected in black. Then go to Edición and Copiar. Then open a word processor, for example Microsoft Word. When it is opened click on Edición and Pegar. To copy an image click over the image with the right clicker and select copiar. Then in the word processor again select Edición and pegar.

Step 3:

Once you have copied some text into a word processor it can be used for a variety of things:

- a reading comprehension: type some questions below or get students to write their own. The text could also be divided into two to provide a jigsaw reading.
- a cloze test: delete some words from the text for students to fill in later
- grammar analysis: underline some grammar points you wish to highlight
- vocabulary: underline interesting vocabulary / write three definitions for a word and ask students to select the correct one.

Devise some tasks for the material you have just copied into the word processor.

Step 4:

Consider how the material and tasks you have devised can be made into a complete class with pre and post internet based activities.

Activity 3:

Up to now we have considered internet as a source of “real” and up to date information to supplement course book or other themes of interest to students. Internet does of course open up new possibilities and indeed new ways of doing old things. Here are two sites which may provide easy lessons, fun lessons for English students.

Task 1:

Go to www.puzzlemaker.com This is a site which allows you make different vocabulary games from crosswords to word searches. Try one or two out. They can be printed for use in class or on the computer students can make their own either for printing or for another group to resolve on-screen.

Task 2:

Go to www.eslcafe.com This is the most popular and famous web site for students of English. How would you use it in class? Would you let your class use the site freely or give them set tasks.

Write a possible worksheet or set of instructions for either or both of these sites in the box below.

Activity 4:

One of the advantages and most popular aspects of internet is how easy it makes communication around the world. This provides an immediate advantage to a language student as it allows students to communicate with native speakers all around the world quickly and efficiently. Many schools now use internet to communicate on an international level and many of these exchanges are organised after a teacher has searched for and then approached a school or class or teacher in an other country.

Email contact with another school can mean extra work for teachers if students do not have their own email address or only have one computer at their disposal: this means the teacher may have to type all the letters themselves and post them.

Such contact does tend to work very well with students, particularly younger ones, getting very excited about the exchange and in the process being encouraged to use some wonderful language. Exchange of photos or something physical like a mascot also give a concrete feel to the communication and makes it more personal.

Task :

Try going to www.yahoo.com finding UK+IRELAND and the education section. Can you find a school on line which might be interesting in establishing email contact with your class? You may not wish to initiate contact just now but it is an option for the future.