

Handout 6: Internet Activities – Skills

The Web: Using Authentic Materials

Here we look at using the Internet as a rich source of authentic materials, with which we can design activities to help our learners develop their language skills. Many of the activities below replicate real life tasks in that they require the learners to go online and search for information, listen to or read the news or an interview with someone they admire. These are all tasks they would carry out online in their own language. By giving them the opportunity to practise carrying out these tasks in English you are not only helping to develop their language in a meaningful & motivating way, but also training them to become autonomous learners.

The activities below often require a skills integration of some sort. However, they have been categorised according to the main skill focussed on.

FOCUS ON WRITING

1. The Truth is Out There

Level: B1↑

Time: 90 – 120 minutes

Aims: To practise narrative writing

Technical requirements: One computer per group of 2 or 3

Preparation: Find the website of a popular TV programme (one used here is *The X-Files*). Check the website has episode guides.

Procedure:

1. Elicit which students watch the programme. They discuss a typical episode and the style of the series
2. In groups of 2 or 3 at computers – read the plot of an episode (they choose which episode)
3. Back in class, in their groups they create their own episode plot. They then write (on Word) an episode guide, using the one on the website as a model
4. Once they have finished, students save their documents and email it to the rest of the class or post online. For homework, students read each other's and decide which episode they would most like to watch.

2. What the critics say

Level: A2↑

Time: 45-60 minutes

Aims: To write a book review & publish it on the Internet

Technical requirements: One computer per group of 2 or 3

Preparation: Find a website which publishes reader submissions of book reviews (e.g Amazon)

Procedure:

1. Students go to the website and find a book that interests them
2. Students find a review on the site of the book. They read it and comment on the style of the review
3. Students then look for a book that they have read

4. Students then write a review of the book
5. Students edit their texts and submit them to the site to be published

FOCUS ON READING

3. Virtual Kitchen

Level: B1

Time: 15-30 minutes

Aims: To scan for specific information on a website; to practise vocabulary associated with food and nutrition

Technical requirements: One computer per group of 2 or 3

Preparation: Choose one of the many websites dedicated to health & nutrition. Using the information on the site, prepare a quiz like the example given

Procedure:

1. Brainstorm food types / health issues related to food / nutritional values etc.
2. Give students the quiz to answer questions they think they know the answer to
3. Send students to the website to find all the answers and also to note any vocabulary that is new/difficult/ not new but used in a new way etc.
4. Class discussion on their results and language that came up during the task
5. The next day students can use their quizzes to test each other
6. Variation (for B2/C1): Instead of going to one site students could find the answers to the quiz by using Google. An interesting follow-up to this is to discuss conflicting information that was found which may lead in to a discussion on the nature of information on the Internet.

4. Comparing Blogs (Integrated skills Reading & Speaking)

Aim: To compare blogs that members of a class have chosen to read

Level: B1↑

Technical requirements: One computer per student

Preparation: Select one or two blogs to use as examples if your learners are not familiar with the idea

Procedure:

This activity is in 3 steps over a period of time

1. **Finding a blog:** Introduce the concept of a blog to members of the class who do not know what they are. Explain that each member of the class is going to search for and find a blog that they plan to read regularly outside of class time. Show the class how to use a blog search engine and brainstorm subjects that might be of interest to individual members of the class. Set the task for each member to find a blog and start reading regularly for an agreed period (e.g. one or two weeks)
2. **Reading the blog:** students search for and find a blog which they read daily for the agreed period. They also start to prepare to present the blog to the rest of the class.
3. **Accessing the blog:** After the agreed period, each member of the class presents the blog they have been reading. They need to say why it is (or, perhaps, is not) interesting and provide examples of posting. Other members of the class can ask questions, and the samples are examined for the accuracy of the language they use. If it becomes apparent that any of the blogs being read are using limited or incorrect language, the person who chose it can

defend it, agree to choose another, or pick from the blogs presented by the other class members.

Follow on: With ongoing classes this can be repeated at regular intervals, with class members presenting the most interesting postings from the blog they are reading, as well as any new and useful vocabulary they have learned from the blog.

FOCUS ON LISTENING

5. Audio books

Level: B2 – C1

Time: 30-45 minutes

Aims: To practise listening comprehension

Technical requirements: One computer per student

Preparation: Find a site with suitable extracts from audio books or audio files of literary texts

Procedure:

1. Brainstorm the kinds of texts/genres students like to read. Introduce the idea of the audio book
2. Students go to the site (which has extracts from novels, short stories, poems) and choose an extract they would like to listen to.
3. They note the name of the extract & author. They listen to part of it (maybe 2 minutes)
4. Afterwards they write up a brief synopsis of what they have listened to and decide if they would like to listen to and/or read the whole book and whether they would recommend it to the rest of the class. They give the extracts marks out of 10.
5. Conduct a class discussion on what they liked and what they found difficult about the activity.
6. To see what was most popular with the students write a table on the board showing the types of texts they listened to and marks they gave for each.
7. For homework students type up and email their reports to the rest of the class.

6. Podcasts for self-study (Integrated skills Listening & Speaking)

Level: B1 – C1

Aims: To choose and listen to podcasts outside the classroom

Technical requirements: One computer and one smartphone or mp3 player per student

Preparation: Check that all your students have some sort of device for playing mp3 files and they know how to download them from the Web and transfer them to the devices

Procedure:

1. Brainstorm topics of interest with the entire class
2. Provide time for your learners to search and find podcasts on those topics
3. The learners report back on the podcasts they have found. If you have a group of younger learners, you might want to check whether or not the content of the podcasts is appropriate for that age group.

4. Each learner is allocated a podcast to download, listen to and evaluate, using a worksheet (there is one provided in *Blended Learning* p139).
5. After an agreed period, each learner reports back to the class and gives his/her evaluation of the podcast. Podcasts should be evaluated on the basis of how interesting the content is, how easy or difficult the speakers are to understand, and the sound quality of the recording

Follow on: The class can then select one of the podcasts that they will all listen to as homework to discuss in a future lesson.

7. American accents (listening / writing / speaking focus)

Aim: To provide exposure to American accents

Level: B1-C1

Technology: Search engine & media player

Rationale: The Web provides opportunities to find and listen to a wide variety of different accents. In this activity, the learners also have the motivation of choosing their own audio clip. The following procedure is aimed at teenage learners, but could be used with or adapted for adults.

Preparation: Try this yourself so that you know how it works!

Procedure:

1. The class brainstorms their favourite American movie or pop stars and agree on two, e.g. one male and one female.
2. The class is divided into pairs and given a copy of the **worksheet**
3. At the computer each pair does an audio search (Google 'interview' + name of person or search on Youtube). They choose an interview that is about 5 minutes long.
4. They listen to the interview and prepare a report on the contents to present to the rest of the class
5. The class reconvenes and each person presents their findings

FOCUS ON SPEAKING

8. Coming to a Theatre near You

Level: B1↑

Time: 60-90 minutes

Aims: To practise note taking & giving a short presentation

Technical requirements: One computer per group of 2-3

Preparation: Prepare a list of films which are shortly to be released. Find a website giving details of these films

Procedure:

Explain to the students that they are going to research forthcoming films, to see which one they would most like to see

Give them the list of films and send them to the site. Ask each group to choose a different film

Students read about their film & make notes in a word document

They then edit their notes to form the basis of a presentation

The students then give their presentations, trying to persuade the other students to see their film

Afterwards the class votes on the film(s) they would most like to see

FOCUS ON INTEGRATED SKILLS

Webquests

Webquests are self-contained activities that require learners to access specified websites, collect information, and report back their findings using the target language. They can revolve around imaginary situations or be linked to a real-world task.

The teacher should search for suitable websites prior to the lesson and provide these websites in the webquest.

Webquests are generally divided into five parts:

1. **Introduction:** This sets the scene and gives some background to the task. Learners are sometimes given roles.
2. **Task:** A general explanation of the webquest is given so that the learners know what the target is and what sort of outcome is expected.
3. **Process:** This is the set of instructions which give the steps required to achieve the target. It also includes the resources which are the links to websites where the information required to complete the task can be found.
4. **Evaluation:** This outlines how the learners' performance in the task will be assessed. For language learners, this will include an assessment of the English they have produced, as well as how well they completed the task.
5. **Conclusion:** This final stage explains what learners should have got out of doing the webquest. In the case of language learners, it might be the acquisition of new vocabulary, an opportunity to review or practise some area of grammar, or finding information or material for a discussion or role-play

London city visit webquest

9. Aim: To perform a webquest

Level: B1

Interaction: Pairs / small groups

Technology: browser

Preparation: Check the websites procedure

Procedure:

1. Ask if anyone has been to London before – if so what they visited and what they would recommend etc.
2. Distribute the London Visit Webquest worksheet. Ask learners to read the introduction and confirm that everyone understands what the timeframe is
3. Ask them to read the task and confirm that they are to visit three famous landmarks, one big museum and do some shopping. Make sure that they are aware that they need to consider how much money they will have to spend and that they need to think about travelling around the city and the time that will take.

4. Ask the learners to read the process. Confirm that everyone is clear that the task is to produce a rough timetable for the day based on the interests of the pair or the small group they are working in
5. Divide the class into pairs or small groups; allocate a PC to each group. Set a period of time for doing the online research (approximately 20 minutes) and reporting the timetables (approximately 15 minutes). Before they start researching, ask them to read the evaluation criteria and remind them that it is the language they use in presenting their timetable that is going to be assessed.
6. The learners each present their timetables for the day. You can provide language feedback after, particularly on the language for talking about future plans, which is the grammar focus of this webquest.