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Simulated Internet Activities inside the Classroom

Ismail A. Fayed
Integrated English Language Program – II, Egypt
E-mail: ifayed@aedegypt.org

Abstract:

In this presentation, we would like to refer to a special kind of technology's manipulation inside the classroom. This kind is not totally technology-aided, but it is rather about technology skills' and competencies. The focus here is on "simulating" most popular Internet activities rather than the traditional CALL activities that one can work on using a computer and Internet connection. Using this simple and funny approach, the presenters are trying to overcome the challenges a teacher may face with students who are unfamiliar with computer or internet usage and applications, especially in a developing country, when there is a shortage in equipment or resources needed to achieve these goals.

Introduction:

Most of you must have had a similar challenging situation, where you wanted to develop a teaching experience or skill but felt more confusing about how to apply it for certain reasons. The solution to your problem could be more easy and simple than you may imagine. In all cases, teachers should try all possible ways to find solutions in order to achieve their fruitful goals planned in advance. In our case, which is a common one in different parts of the world, we are more concerned about applying Internet usage and information technology to language classes that have shortage in equipment and resources. We are not concerned with the benefits or advantages of a computer, as we are concerned with how a teacher could overcome literacy, attitudes, possibilities, resources, or problems with IT, Information Technology for language classes.

There is a wide range of variety among information technology teachers with their different skills and attitudes. This paper dedicated to the teachers, who would like to foster the internet in their actual teaching, but are not able to do this either because of their lack of appropriate knowledge, skills, shortage of equipment, or internet connection in schools. Those teachers could start with the models presented in this study to improve their

competence, teach the language lessons in an interesting new ways, and rather prepare their students to acquire and practice this new technology and use it for educational purposes.

In this paper, we will try to offer some suggested practices, as solutions to the previous mentioned problem. By applying these brainstormed (produced) skills, both the teacher and the students will develop their skills and attitudes to a more pleasant and easy-to-reach learning environment. Learning the language, for those students, would be for fun as well. This funny introduction to the *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (CALL) and network-based language teaching (NBLT) activities through focusing on internet different applications would consider the use of emails, surfing for information, and web design (development).

These three skills are of the main and most familiar skills for web users around the world with all their different varieties in proficiency and language level. They are very familiar to teachers who use web-based activities for this language change. Although, they are still vague symbols to other communities around the world; this is regarding the knowledge and skills side of this matter, let alone the attitude issue.

These three main skills that we will deal with in this paper are presented as follows: "Exchanging Messages to Encourage Spontaneous Composition", "Searching Resources for Obtaining Knowledge", and "Collaborative Work to Produce Class magazines". By trying these three models, I am trying to pave the way for other efforts and suggest simple solutions to the main question/ problem in this study, which is how could we apply modern and recent areas of knowledge/ education in the teaching of language situations, even with simple and easy-to-access resources and facilities. The concept of "*simulation*" here is a simulation of the better reality or future to fit others' realities.

Skill Produced	Internet Source Activity	Expected Results
<p>Exchanging Messages to Encourage Spontaneous Composition</p>	<p>Vs. E-mail Exchange</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Students will be able to understand what an email is 2- Students acquire this new experience in a friendly and interesting way 3- Assisting writing skill 4- Students will be able to communicate with one another through written and spoken forms in a more spontaneous and friendly environment
<p>Searching Resources for Obtaining Knowledge</p>	<p>Vs. Surfing for educational resources and searching the web</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Students will be able to understand what surfing web sites means 2- Students acquire this new experience in a friendly and interesting way 3- Assisting reading skill 4- Students will be able to share acquired information and experiences with their pairs and with the teacher as well
<p>Collaborative Work to Produce Class magazines produce class forums</p>	<p>Vs. Designing and developing web sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Students will be able to understand what web sites development could mean and be done 2- Students acquire this new experience in a friendly and interesting way 3- Assisting , brainstorming, reading, writing, collaborative independent, and group work skills 4- Students will be able to share acquired information and experiences with their peers and with the teacher as well 5- Students would proud of producing their own resources and expressing their own opinions to others to share with them

(Figure 1 shows the three main web skills that will be to be handled in this paper and their source “simulators” as well).

(1) Exchanging Messages to Encourage Spontaneous Composition

Demonstration:

Item	Description
Level	Second Preparatory – Hello “4”, Unit (8), Lesson (1) – “Pen Friends”, p.36.
Skills simulated or practiced	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing skill <input type="checkbox"/> Reading skill <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail and internet skills orientation
Learning Objectives	<input type="checkbox"/> Understanding and writing addresses, envelopes, emails and other messages forms <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage cooperative work among students
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (address – envelope – stamp – post card – letter) • (e-mail – computer – subject line – sender – recipient – text)

8 Pen Friends


F Pen friends
 Read this advertisement from 'Hello World' magazine. Then write the names of the young people under their pictures.

Pen friends all over the world
 Would you like to write to a pen friend? A lot of our readers have found pen friends. Would you like to choose one?


<p>1 Name: Ted Green Age: 13 Nationality: British Interests: football and cycling Favourite subject: Maths</p>	<p>4 Name: Jim Fox Age: 14 Nationality: American Interests: music and reading Favourite subject: Science</p>
<p>2 Name: Ali Hassan Age: 12 Nationality: Egyptian Interests: fishing and football Favourite subject: Maths</p>	<p>5 Name: Reem Hassanein Age: 15 Nationality: Syrian Interests: cooking and music Favourite subject: English</p>
<p>3 Name: Ann Brown Age: 12 Nationality: British Interests: playing the piano and computers Favourite subject: English</p>	<p>6 Name: Tom Wood Age: 13 Nationality: American Interests: music and swimming Favourite subject: History</p>



(a) *Reem Hassanein*




(b) _____



(c) _____



(d) _____



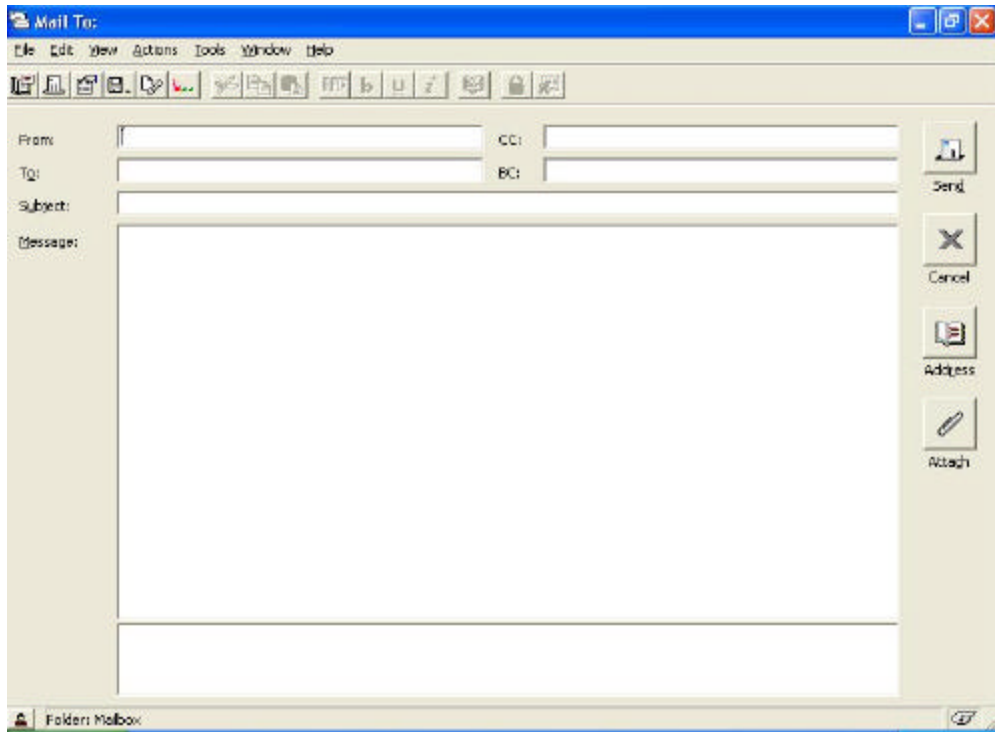
(e) _____



(f) _____

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[Figure 2 from Hello (3) lesson (1) “Pen Friends”]



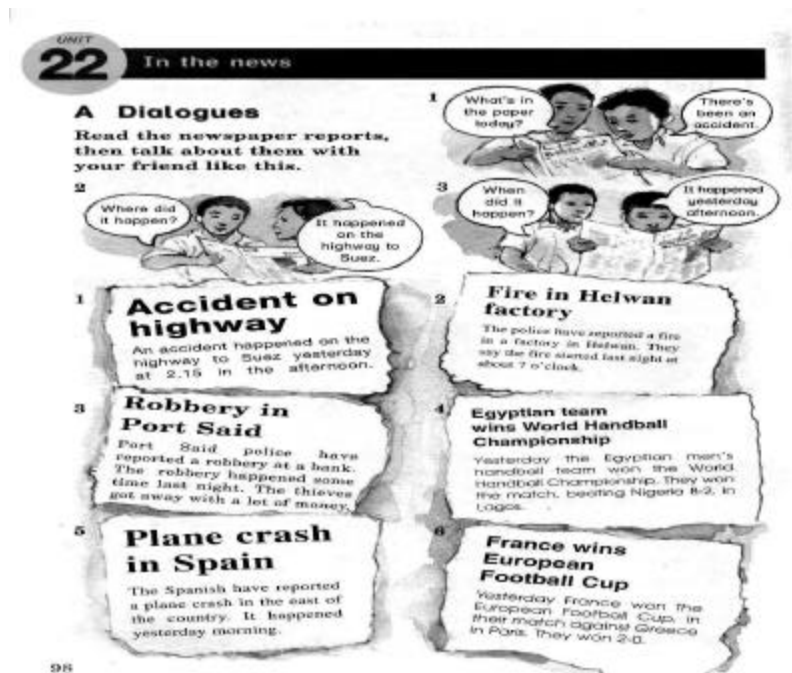
[Figure 3 “An e-mail blank template”]

<p>Assignments</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Students are encouraged to write another message or a “reply” to their colleagues, friends, the whole class, or to their teachers about the same or another topic that they would like to talk about by their own. 2- Some students may share their messages with the whole class in the next lesson time.
<p>Comments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher here is trying to encourage all Ss to participate in and share her/him the activity there are about to participate at. In addition, the teacher here is giving them the chance to obtain that far-from-reaching facility that s/he cannot afford to the students. • Teacher may also give some hints/ tips about the lay out, format of an email message, putting into consideration that one is dealing with a monitor screen and not a normal sheet of paper. That means that one should try not to include so many lines horizontally, rather make it in shorter paragraphs with fewer horizontal lines.

(2) Surfing Resources for Obtaining Knowledge

Demonstration:

Item	Description
Level	First Preparatory – Hello “3”, Unit (22), Lesson (1) – “In The News”, p. 98
Skills simulated or practiced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surfing for educational purposes or getting information in general
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✍ Work out the meaning of the words from the context ✍ Writing skill ✍ Reading skills (skimming and scanning) ✍ Speaking skill
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (news – news paper – report – accident – highway – fire – police – robbery – bank)) • (Surfing – resources – information – web site - visit)



[Figure 4 from Hello (3) lesson (1) “In the News”]

<p>Procedures</p>	<p>Warm-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher asks students if they read newspapers or even tried to find some news in the internet in news web sites, like in CNN for example. • Teacher asks if the students are aware of the meaning of surfing or searching web sites.. • If any answer positively, teacher encourages some students to explain how was their experience, what they gained from that search and if they really find the kind of information they were looking for. <p>Reading Activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1- Teacher gives students a moment to go, quickly, through the six different reports on the student's book on page 98. 2- Teacher tells students that they have three minutes to read through these reports. 3- After that, the teacher will choose two volunteers to come to the board and to act a similar dialogue using a certain report from the lesson. The first student will ask a question about a certain accident or news item. The second student will try to quickly find the item and the answer, from the report, to his/ her colleagues' question. e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>S1: What is in the paper today about "The factory I Helwan"?</i> • <i>S2: There's a "fire" in Helwan factory at 7 O'clock.</i> 4- Teacher shows students how to help him identify the needed source of information through setting a plan or main topics, ideas, or key words that could help them reach the required information. 5- Teacher asks other students to come to the board and to act different situation with their dialogues. <p>Wrap up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teacher summarizes with students the techniques they used for identifying their information. Teacher elicit students to reflect on their experiences and their use of skimming and scanning in reading, identifying certain key words, setting a reading plan for their work. ➤ After that, the teacher could refer to the web site search as a similar strategy that students or other researcher could be using to get the information from a web site.
<p>Assignments</p>	<p>Teacher will ask her/ his students to search for certain information about a certain topic, from their local newspapers or magazines, where they are encourage to identify these resources, set the most appropriate and more useful to their search and get a report about that event. Teacher tells students that they are going to share their findings with the rest of class for next time.</p>

Comments	The teacher is getting her/ his students more familiar with the learning process through the acquisition of information and searching for certain resources. S/he is also becoming a changing agent who is changing students concepts that might refuse or feel anxious from trying such methods.

(3) Collaborative Work to Brainstorm and Produce Class Magazines

Demonstration:

Item	Description
Level	First Preparatory – Hello “3”, Unit (22), Lesson (1) – “In The News”, p. 98
Skills simulated or practiced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Students would be familiar with the purpose and mechanism of web design ➤ Writing and composition skills ➤ Presentation skills
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students would be able to compose and produce intellectual and informative works that reflects on students’ experiences and acquired knowledge.
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (design – develop – write – produce - chart – articles – text – picture – title – draft) • (Develop – links – topics – heading – image – page)

<p>Procedures</p>	<p>Warm-up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☞ Teacher asks students if they the names of some famous writers. And encourage them to talk about these famous characters.☞ S/he shows how news reporters or writers are “producers” of mental works and how they influence other peoples’ attitudes and mentalities by their ideas.☞ Teacher refers to students’ web sites as a new way that they can use to express their thoughts and show others their ideas. They can use these magazines or what they will refer to as a “web sites” as a window that will reflect their thoughts, ideas, dreams and experiences that they would like to share with others. <p>Designing Student’s Magazines Activity:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1- Teacher asks students to work on groups to produce a “magazine”, where they will write whatever information they would like on that magazine. Students have ten minutes for that task.2- After that, teacher will call on each group to present and show other groups what was their magazine a like.3- Some students will read and reflect on their group’s experiences on writing these articles and other things in these magazines. Other students will reflect and give feedback about what parts they like most and what others they do not in the magazines. They may suggest some points or ideas as well.4- Teacher explains to students tat this is exactly the same features of web site development and design. They need to know that there is what could be called the layout, the ideas, the design, and the information that could be included in a web site. <p>Wrap up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☞ Teacher also would be recommended to encourage all colleagues to participate in such an activity, may be giving a simple award to the best magazine(s), etc..☞ The teacher may also reward all the groups by putting their magazines in some public place where all other teachers and students could read these magazines, and s/ he may also refer to it as a “publishing” process. <p>Comments:</p> <p>Teacher showed how this is a very important and how this could be a very important tool in their hands to use for expressing themselves and to show their culture and other things to other communities. This technique could be very helpful to shy students and could encourage them, through using writing in cooperative groups, to talk and write about themselves and their personal environments.</p>
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Findings:

By getting students practice such simple activities, the teacher is doing the following:

- ☞ Encourages students, through individual and group work, to be more familiar with modern technology and the concepts for these activities. This is something that many of them would have considered a very difficult skill that required professional user to go through.
- ☞ Makes the learning environment a fun and an attractive one to all students.
- ☞ Involves as many students as possible in the activity being preceded and limits the absent minded students to the minimum level.
- ☞ Fosters students' contribution and encourages grouping of students in collaborative teams.
- ☞ Integrates many different language skills e.g. students are writing emails messages to their partners, other colleagues reply to these messages, ask and answer questions after reading or skimming certain texts, and finally students are expressing their thoughts and are able to share it with their colleagues.

Supporting Ideas:

A similar activity was produced in (Gitsaki & Taylor 2000), "Internet English" the teacher's guide suggested activities for teachers. The authors suggest these activities for the traditional classroom without computers. It was limited to the e-mail blank template and not extended to extra developed techniques.

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For Further Readings:

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