

LIVE INTERVIEWS IN VOICE CHAT WITH INTERMEDIATE ESL STUDENTS

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Introduction

Some ESL students have little experience in using the Internet, but as this article will show, this need not be a deterrent if the students wish to use the Internet to practice listening and speaking in real situations. Tapping into a community of practice of language educators, the author found partners from around the world, and her students interviewed them using Yahoo Messenger voice chat. This article explains the equipment needed and the step-by-step process in each lesson building up to the interviews and the follow up.

The voice chat partners were all Webheads (<http://webheads.info/>), a group with over 400 members who are mostly ESL/EFL professionals teaching in various parts of the world. The Webheads are a community of practice that meets informally throughout the year both synchronously and asynchronously to practice using free Internet applications and to develop pedagogically sound techniques to further their students' English skills by using these applications. Interested professionals are welcome to join the group at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/evonline2002_webheads/.

Rationale: This instructor chose to teach Internet skills in such a way as to enable her students to practice oral language on the Internet. The purpose was to make practical use of the learning processes involved in order to provide more meaningful activities for the students. Using the Internet to connect students live to other people elsewhere in the world was deemed beneficial because of the difficulty in arranging for partners to come into the classroom to speak with students face to face.

Level: intermediate level adult students

Time: 5 classes of 75 minutes

Aims: The students

- learn how to sign up for a Yahoo ID
- use voice and text chat in Yahoo Messenger
- use voice chat to ask an interviewee a list of predetermined questions.
- write down the responses to the questions

- share individual responses in a class discussion

Resources/materials:

- A classroom where every student has a computer connected to the Internet
- Data projector and web camera connected to the instructor's computer
- Students all have computer headsets
- All computers need to have Yahoo Messenger set up on them, free from:
<http://messenger.yahoo.com/messenger/download/>.
- Instructions about using Yahoo Messenger:
 1. Getting a Yahoo ID - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym-id.htm>
 2. Logging in and adding contacts - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym.htm>
 3. Using voice chat - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm>

Possible problems:

- The Internet could be down on the day scheduled for the interviews.
- Sometimes not everyone can hear and/or speak in voice chat, and some participants have to use only text chat.

Procedure:

I. First 75-minute class – set up Yahoo Ids

1. Prior to class, print out the instructions for **Getting a Yahoo ID** - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym-id.htm>.
2. During class, have one student come to the instructor's computer station and go through the steps of getting a Yahoo ID while the other students follow along on the handout. One difficulty that often arises is choosing an ID since Yahoo rarely accepts the first one a student chooses, and it's good for students to be aware of this. Emphasize that students must **write down their username and password**. I encourage students to use the same password for everything, but explain that they often don't have the same username. Usually, I provide a blank chart, where students can list all the usernames and passwords they need during the course.

Web page	Username	Password
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ACCL & WebMail http://webmail.azwestern.edu/	(initials and number)	
Student blog at http://www.blogger.com	username: URL:	
Yahoo Messenger	I.D. =	
Web Advisor for grades http://webadvlive.azwestern.edu:8080/WebAdvisor/WebAdvisor		

3. After this, all the students work at their computers to set up their usernames and passwords.
4. After they fill in their username in the chart above, they also type it into a chart on the instructor's computer, so she will have a list of usernames to provide to the class later. Because the screen from this computer is projected onto a large screen at the front of the room, the students can see the usernames of the other students as they finish.
5. When several students have finished, I show them how to **add contacts** - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym.htm> and **start chatting** - <http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm> with another student.
6. Thus, students who finish more quickly can practice voice or text messaging with anyone else who also has a username set up.
7. This normally takes the whole 75-minute class for everyone in a class of 16 students to finish setting up a Yahoo ID and begin practicing with one another.

II. Second 75-minute class – add contacts and practice with voice chat

1. Prior to class, photocopy the list of Yahoo IDs and the pair-work questions and answers described below, and hand them out during the class.
2. Using the instructor computer, again show students how to add contacts and assign them to add everyone in the class including the instructor.
3. Discuss the meaning of “Accepting” and “Denying” a contact since students will receive a message from every student asking to add him or her to the list of contacts. I emphasize “Denying” anyone who is not on our class list unless it is someone the student knows personally outside of class.
4. After this, the students participate in in-class practice with an assigned partner on the opposite side of the room.

- Students on the left get a pink paper with questions 1-5 and answers 6-10.
 - Students on the right get a green paper with answers 1-5 and questions 6-10.
 - Students first adjust their headsets to hear each other well and then negotiate questions and answers using voice chat. (See **Practice 1A** at <http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice1a.htm> and **Practice 1B** at <http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice1b.htm>.)
 - The students write down their responses and turn them in.
5. Usually, it's best to provide another unrelated activity for those who finish early.

Between 2nd & 3rd class – Instructor sets up partners for the students to interview

1. At least a week in advance of the date when students will interview their online partners, make definite plans to determine who exactly will be available at your class time. In the case of the Webheads, **send a message** (<http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/w-message.htm>) to their Yahoo group including date, time, and description of the interviews as well as asking those who will be available to respond. Expect responses in 2-3 days, and accept as many as you need to make groups of 2-4 students in your class.
2. Make up groups of 2-4 students, including students with strong and weak Internet skills in each group. Make a seating chart, so that students within a group sit close together on the day of the interviews.
3. Make up a list of the groups showing which students are grouped together and their interviewees, as in the example below. (All names and IDs in the chart below are fake.)

Group	Student name	Yahoo ID	online guest name	Yahoo ID
1	Josephina	josephina278	Robert	rr263
	Jose	jdrodrig		
2	Maria	meperez703	Andrea	andrea2006
	Maribel	mb7868		
3	Luisa	llxi21	Harold	harrybt301
	Jaime	jav200915		

4. Send this information to the participating online guests, and make copies for your students.
5. Ask the online guests to:
 - add their student partners as contacts prior to day of the interviews
 - wait for all student partners to arrive in class and login before inviting them to a voice conference
 - show their web cameras if available
 - contact the moderator by text chat if there are problems
 - email the moderator their comments about the interviews afterwards
 - save the log of any text chat, take a few screenshots, and send these to the moderator afterwards

III. Third 75-minute class – practice with voice conferences

1. Prior to class, photocopy a list of open-ended personal questions such as What's your name? Where are you from, What high school did you go to, What's your favorite food, etc. Provide space for A, B, C, and D answers. (See **Practice 2** - <http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-practice2.htm>.)
2. Divide the class into groups of 3-4 students, where half sit at computers on one side of the room, and the other(s) sit on the opposite side.
3. Demonstrate how to start a **voice conference** (<http://www.geocities.com/edtec2002/tesol-2004/ym3.htm>) as opposed to a one-on-one chat. Emphasize choosing one person as a leader to invite the others. Otherwise group members might end up in different voice conferences. The students must then take turns asking and answering questions till they have all the information about each person in their group. For example, A is always Maria's responses, B is Jose's, C is Martha's, and D is Javier's.
4. Students write down all the responses and turn them in when finished.
5. Hand out the **list of interview questions** (<http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/ym-int-questions.htm>) for the online guests, and have students practice reading them out loud to each other. (It's also possible to have students spend a class making up their own questions).
6. Advise students about the interviews in the upcoming class. (If they are absent, there will not be an opportunity to make it up.) When they arrive in class, they need to:

- go to their assigned seats and login to Yahoo Messenger.
- accept any new contact.
- wait for a an online guest to invite them to a voice conference.

IV. Fourth 75-minute class – interview with online guest

1. The instructor arrives to class as early as possible and logs in to Yahoo Messenger, so the online guests can see that she is ready to start. She sets the instructor computer to show on the screen in front of the class, so she can see any text messages that the online guests send her asking for assistance.
2. Students come in, take assigned seats, login in, accept new contacts, and wait till all their partners arrive.
3. Each online guest invites his/her student partners to a voice conference.
4. During the first 10 minutes, the instructor may need to:
 - make adjustments in groups because of absentees.
 - help students adjust the sound on their headsets
 - get all members of one group into the same voice conference
5. The instructor can now watch the joy on students' faces as they listen and speak online *in English* with people from all over the world.
6. Students turn in the responses to the interview questions at the end of class.

V. Fifth 75-minute class – Follow-up

1. Put up a large world map if one is not already in the room, or show one from the Internet.
2. Return the students' responses and have the students mark the locations of their interviewee on the map.
3. Share information from the interviews, especially concerning the time of day and weather.
4. Show the students examples of text chat logs and screenshots—either saved by the instructor or participating online guests. **Screenshots and photos of students participating** are shown at http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/screenshot.htm, and an example of a **text chat log** is shown at

<http://geocities.com/edtec2002/publications/chatlog-s05.htm>.



5. Share individual experiences in connecting with the online guests. For example:
 - How easy or difficult was it to get everyone in your group in the same voice conference?
 - Could you hear everyone well? If not, what did you do about it?
 - Did you have to do any part of the interview in text chat?
6. Have students write blog entries or short compositions about how they felt about the experience; for example: http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/st-comments3.htm:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2005

Interviewing a Webhead

I talked with Sasa in Slovenia. In the interview, I liked to know about Sasa who live in other country. Also, I liked to learn about other county My partner and I didn't have problem getting connected, but I asked many times for spelling. Every one in my group got to ask questions. When she described interesting places to visit in her country, it was the most interesting part of the interview.

POSTED BY LIZBET AT 7:57 AM 0 COMMENTS

7. Show them the comments taken from email messages from the participating online guests. http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/w-comments3.htm

Benefits

The students benefit from these lessons when using language authentically and communicatively with genuine English-speaking partners.

- Students are thrilled.
- They use real communication.
- They don't feel shy or inhibited.

Conclusion

Voice chat interviews between ESL students and online guests are very rewarding experiences for everyone involved when they are well organized. Students learn new Internet skills as well as practice speaking and listening in English. Online guests may acquire new ideas for the use of voice chat in their classrooms or professions. Students experience the thrill of communicating with other people outside their physical location while online guests enjoy the pleasure of providing that experience. Over the course of four semesters, everyone involved has provided highly positive feedback in spite of minor setbacks with sound and/or voice technology.

Editor's notes:

This presentation was made as a regular session at the Webheads in Action Online Convergence on November 18 and then repeated on November 19, 2005.

- The URL for the presentation is: http://www.azwestern.edu/modern_lang/esl/cjones/esl_internet/interviews2.htm.
- The first session took place in the Elluminate presentation room at Learning Times. A recording was made and can be heard at <http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042104>.
- The session was repeated in the same venue and the recording of the repeat session can be found at <http://home.learningtimes.net/learningtimes?go=1042161>.