Internet English. WWW-based communication activities

Authors: **Christina Gitsaki & Richard P. Taylor**

Publisher: **Oxford University Press, 2000**

pp. 70

ISBN 0-19-437226-X

Reviewed by Irena Żywluk-Dudowicz

Overview

Internet English. WWW-based communication activities is a conversation course for pre-intermediate and intermediate students. It shows students real-life English utilising the *Information Super Highway,* the Internet. Using this coursebook students develop not only their language skills but also computer abilities. By being engaged in basic computer operations students are getting more and more motivated and creative. Through *Internet English* students develop basic information technology (IT) skills such as word processing, Web-browsing, e-mailing, typing. But what is more important using the course lets learners have the opportunity to manage their own learning.

The course contains two main components: student and teacher's books, as well as an accompanying website.

The student book consists of;

-        13 four-page units comprising 3 Computer Skills units and 10 Web Search units

-        13 Practice Pages (Language Window, Computer Project, Share Your Project)

-        3 Technical Tips pages

-        An Internet Vocabulary glossary

The teacher's book includes:

-        Step-by-step instructions for each unit

-        Answer keys to activities

-        An Extension Activity for each unit

-        Lists of useful URLs related to the topic of each unit

-        A Vocabulary Log

-        An Introductory to HTML

-        Four tests

Additionally the coursebook is accompanied by the *Internet English* website with:

- Student Keypal Center

- Teacher WWW-Board

- Useful URLs for each unit

- Links to websites concerned with English language teaching and learning.

Description:

Internet English. WWW-based communication activities is a very friendly coursebook that can be used in computer labs and in traditional classrooms. It allows (both students and teachers) to develop new skills.

Student Book

First three units introduce basic word-processing, E-mail and Web searching vocabulary and techniques. These *Computer Skills Units* include activities that help learners to carry out the activities in the remaining 10 units. They are designed to be run at first in a traditional classroom introducing and revising basic computer and word-processing terms, some search strategies for the Web and different ways of communication. In this way students are well prepared for the practice sections run in a computer laboratory.

They learn to identify different uses of computers, to recognise computer parts and become familiarised with the keyboard. Getting to know basic word-processing terms and commands saves their time during online classes. The unit entitled *Surfing the Web* introduces *Frequently Asked Questions about the Internet* and presents some techniques how to use a *Web Search Engine.* At the end of these introductory units learners are prepared to sign up for a free E - mail account.

These units can be skipped if all students have good computer skills. Then they can start with *Web Search Units.* Each unit consists of basic four sections:

Identity,

Prepare your search ,

Search your Web,

Web Talk.

At the end of each lesson we can find an additional *Practice Page* that includes *Language Window, Computer Project* and *Share Your Project* sections.

Each *Web Search Unit* can be taught over two 90-minute classroom sessions. *Identity* and *Prepare Your Search* sections can be run in a traditional classroom. *Language Window* given as homework is a good introduction to *Search the Web* and *Computer Project* sections involving students in searching the Net and creating their own pieces of "computer work." After completing these sections students have an opportunity to carry out the *Web Talk* and *Share Your Project* activities that can be conducted either in a traditional classroom or computer laboratory.

Web Search Units –organisation and features

Identify section contains a lot of warm-up activities. It introduces the topic with photos related to the unit and exercises engaging learners in vocabulary review and sharing ideas. For example in unit 8 entitled *Shopping Spree* students are asked to complete the table by writing down some things they would buy using different ways of shopping such as a mail-order catalogue or a TV home shopping program. Then they compare their answers with the partners sitting next to them.

Prepare your search section has exercises developing students vocabulary and involving them in new topics, ideas or choices. It generates ideas that can be used in their *Web Search*. The last activity of this section gives them a chance to discuss their choice and to clarify their preferences. A model dialogue and selected vocabulary items also helps them make a decision. For instance in unit 9 titled *Watching Movies* students choose the movie they would most like to see and then they talk about their choice with a classmate.

Search your Web section encourages students to look for information on different websites that directly refer to the main topic of the unit. To help students complete the tasks in this section there are two options dedicated to techniques of searching the Net. In the first method learners are asked to define a set of keywords that can save their time during the search for specific information. After that they scan their search results and then explore several websites. In this way students have a chance to experience new techniques and organise their time in computer lab effectively. The last two activities involve them in organising the information they find. Different types of connection and amount of online time available encourage learners to choose the best options.

Web talk section gives students the opportunity to share the results of their Web search. They can share their findings via E–mails or present them as their group projects. There are role-play, pair work and group work activities. Moreover, students are given models for the conversation tasks. In this way they find it easy to generate their own dialogues based on their search.

Practice Page is divided into three sections:

Language Window presents and revises language structures. It can be introduced before *Search the Web* or *Web Talk.* It can be given as homework. In this way it helps students be well prepared to speaking parts of these sections.

Computer Project engages learners to use the information they find on the Web and to create and edit the files as a brochure, a profile or a poster. Completing these tasks they can use *Technical Tips* when for example copying images and text from the Web to a word-processing document.

Share Your Project usually involves E-mail tasks. Students present their projects and evaluate others. But this task can be run in a traditional classroom involving learners in speaking.

Teacher's Book

It provides assistance to the teacher in different ways:

- step-by-step instructions showing how to carry out the activities in each unit,
- Teaching Tips and Web Tips giving teachers several prompts on how to search the Web effectively and to overcome obstacles that can arise when using computers,
- optional activities allowing teachers to fulfil the lessons successfully,
- photocopiable *Extension Activities* that can be used for more ambitious and skilled students in mixed-ability groups,
- pages with lists of useful URLs related to the topic of each unit,
- photocopiable Vocabulary Log page useful for revising new words and phrases,
- four photocopiable tests for assessing students after each set of units,
- a photocopiable *Introduction to HTML* guidebook on how to create homepages.

Advantages

1. A variety of topics satisfying different interests such as *Famous People, Eating Out, Shopping, Watching Movies, Vacation Abroad or Working Abroad.*
2. No advanced computer skills are required.
3. The course can be used in a computer-equipped or traditional classroom.
4. Useful tips for teachers; especially photocopiable Extension Activities and Useful URLs.
5. Project pages involving students in pair and group work.
6. Perfectly designed vocabulary introductory sections to practical online activities.
7. *Internet English* summary tests after some units.
8. Activities involving students' imagination and creativity.
9. Activities developing students' international cultural awareness.

10. Interactive activities improving students' computer skills.

Disadvantages

1. Some URLs suggested in a teacher's book are not active.
2. It takes a while to load some active pages.

Recommendation

This course can be recommended not only for teachers who are experienced in computing but also for those who need some help and be run step by step through the diversity of the Internet. Activities are designed to involve teachers and foster students' creativity. What we need to remember is that the main goal of *Internet English* is "not to teach computers" but "to run a conversation course that utilises computers and the Internet."

Minimum system requirements

Internet English is designed to be used with

- any type of computer, Macintosh or IBM PCs (with or without Windows) with access to the Internet,
- the use of graphic browsers (Netscape, Internet Explorer),
- word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Word Perfect).