INTERNET-BASED EFL UNIVERSITY COURSE DESIGN:
HUMANISTIC CONSIDERATIONS, OPTIONS AND APPROACHES

Independent Professional Project

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by

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This project by Russell Garofalo is accepted in its present form.

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the developing field of internet-based education as it pertains to the EFL learning environment within the university context. Guidelines and suggestions for approaching EFL course design at the university level are presented in universal terms, with details from one specific Korean university context serving as the experiential touchstone. Humanistic education is the underlying theme of this paper which outlines ways of adapting humanistic learning principles to internet-based classrooms. The learning potential afforded by the internet is weighed against its potential drawbacks. The paper attends to considerations that need to be taken into account at all stages of the course development process: options for internet-based learning, context analysis, student assessment and syllabus design. The proposed syllabus centers on an EFL inter-class cyber-partnership with content-based activities that seek to establish meaningful intercultural relations between the individuals of two distant EFL classes.

ERIC DESCRIPTORS

Computer-assisted instruction
Curriculum
EFL
International educational exchange
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INTRODUCTION:

OPENING THE LEARNING SPACE

voices
hailing from the corners,
singing through the walls
-listen-
to the world

It has been less than ten years since the internet first became accessible to the masses. In this short period of time, it has revolutionized the way people get information and the way people communicate with one another across long distances. Unlike the other lifestyle altering invention of the 20th Century, the television, the internet is an interactive tool that requires manipulation and discrimination to use. It is an incredibly versatile and effective tool that is constantly expanding in its scope of functions and possibilities.

Since the early years of widespread public internet use, foreign language educators have been discovering ways it can be used to augment and facilitate the language learning process. Visionaries strove to tap into the functions of the internet and adapt them for educational purposes. In the short span of ten years, an entirely new corpus of internet-based educational practices has arisen, reaching to remote locations all over the planet.

Humanistic educators who have striven to incarnate their principles in traditional classroom settings now have a new environment to explore for its humanistic educational potential. This paper is an invitation to educators to join the burgeoning field of internet-based education and make their own contributions to the field. By understanding
the options and making mindful efforts to merge traditional humanistic approaches with this watershed technology, educators can help create language programs and courses that effect truly intercultural exchanges, appealing to learners as individuals by giving them access to the world.

The internet already has innumerable users around the world; what it needs now is more partnerships, a commitment on the part of educators to explore it together and to bring their learners along with them into the great non-linear circle of sharing.
CHAPTER 1
INTERNET-BASED EFL COURSE DESIGN:
HUMANISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

1.1 - HUMANISTIC EDUCATION

The cornerstone of humanistic education is treating the individual as both an intellectual and emotional being. Gertrude Moskowitz (1978) points out that a humanistic learning environment focuses on students’ interpersonal connections in the learning of a language. Positive interaction between learners and teachers impacts the students’ affective demeanor in that the material to be learned exists in a complementary relationship with the people who are learning it. Learning is not the acquiring of information, but the development of the individual. The individual acquires a foreign language as part of his or her growth as a person. Teachers effect humanistic learning by stressing whole-learner interpersonal dynamics.

1.2 - BRINGING THE INTERNET INTO THE CLASSROOM

Take a moment to visualize for yourself a humanistic learning environment. What do you see? Where is it? When I conjure up an image of such an event, I see a gathering of people. They are all visible to each other and are positioned in such a way that each person is afforded a similar perspective of the others in the group. Whether in a room or outside, they have created a special space to mark the learning event. Along with this space is a tacit commitment from the participants that they will reflect the spirit
of the space by seeing themselves as individuals each forming an equal link in the 
composition of the whole. The teacher is the one who initiates and brings this spirit to 
the place and must convey to the learners the nature of their gathering.

Now try to visualize a humanistic learning environment in a multi-media lab that 
involves the use of the internet. What do you see? Inclusion of the internet radically 
changes the spatial arrangement of the learning event. Rather than being face to face 
with the others in the group, the participants are now lined up in rows each facing their 
own computer terminal. There is one central figure standing apart from the others, the 
leader of the event. Interaction between individuals is physically hindered by the 
arrangement of the room and the bulky machinery sharing each person’s space. Their 
natural focus falls on the space in front of them, which is not another person but a 
computer screen. If this is a humanistic classroom, then what dynamics exist to foster 
the kind of caring and sharing that is part of the humanistic learning experience?

This is just one initial consideration for teachers in bringing the internet into the 
classroom. The issues that it raises are indicative of the new set of challenges that exist 
for the teacher who wants to adapt humanistic approaches to a complex learning 
environment such as the internet creates. This paper will explore the steps one needs to 
take in planning an internet-based EFL university course and designing a syllabus. This 
chapter considers what it means to have a humanistic internet-based classroom. Chapter 
2 will discuss the various options for internet learning. Chapter 3 will look at ways to 
analyze a specific context in preparation for syllabus design. And Chapter 4 contains one 
possible syllabus, intimately tied to context, for a humanistic internet-based 16-week 
university course.
1.3 - THE INTERNET AND LEARNING CONTEXTS

Although language learners have universal needs, their personalities and contexts, which vary greatly from person to person and place to place around the world, make each individual learner’s needs and motivation for learning a unique phenomenon. At times, generalizing the experience of language learners helps to create a foundation for approaches to teaching a foreign language. But these generalizations are predicated on the fact that they necessarily must extend to specific learning environments and so must at some point concede to the individual learner as the ultimate determiner of what will be learned and who will learn it. Successful methodologies adeptly allow this degree of freedom within a deterministic framework.

With the advent of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the boundaries separating learners from one context to the next have blurred considerably, and this tempts the impulse to re-group learners who utilize the internet into an altogether new and shared context, the internet virtual community. The truth is the internet provides a unique medium through which individuals from contexts around the world can communicate and it does offer new settings in which to learn and interact in the language of study. However, these do not replace an individual’s context but rather are extensions of it. To effectively assist learners who make use of this medium, a teacher must not make the mistake of relegating their experience to a common, universally compatible context. The teacher must still treat the learner as an individual, and by being attentive to the learner’s needs, the teacher can plan an internet curriculum based on the dictates of that learner’s local context. The internet is actually not one community but many
communities co-existing and intersecting. Only by attending to individual’s needs can a teacher determine which of the innumerable virtual communities that can be accessed will benefit an individual and help him or her to learn.

The focus of this paper is the localized context of the Korean university classroom, the Korean university learner. It is important to address the specific conditions of this context, and Chapter 3 will expound upon the unique demands posed by this particular learning environment. Teaching demands a dynamic toggle between global beliefs about learning based on experience and reflection, and the manifestation of these beliefs as a systematic pedagogy in the classroom. The two are intertwined and impact each other in reciprocal fashion. To effect elucidation on both, however, the continuum must be artificially separated so that prevailing elements of each can be cogently processed. This chapter will explore the global, underlying principles and beliefs which govern an internet-based course. Even at this general level, though, one cannot ignore the localized context, and reference to it will be necessary.

1.4 - LEARNING POTENTIAL FOR THE INDIVIDUAL

Nicholas Kokkas in his article entitled “Internet Activities in the EFL Classroom,” which is posted on the internet (www.thrace-net.gr/bridges/page_13.htm), identifies nine benefits internet use has for the learner. In this section, I will give my own interpretations of some of the benefits Mr. Kokkas has identified, with a focus on individual learners in a classroom setting.

A. Experiential learning. The internet offers a special kind of experiential learning in that students have a mobility hitherto unknown in the classroom. The
traditional classroom is necessarily limited in space and situation. Role plays and simulations are imaginative ways of expanding and altering the walled-in academic space. The internet offers real mobility, the chance to engage in many different kinds of authentic situations. Surfing the internet and interacting on it enables students to travel directly to brand new places.

**B. Motivation and self-investment.** The internet gives an increased amount of responsibility to the learner. At the same time, it asks of the learner to clearly define what he or she wants to learn, wants to discover. Student investment in the learning is heightened by student generated materials that are produced through all the stages of internet interaction: from their deciding the specifics of their searches documented through pre-surfing activities, to their collection of materials that reflect their initial intent, to their contribution and presentation of the materials to the class. The work that students do bears a very individual stamp on it, and this individualization process is a source for continued motivation.

**C. Self-confidence.** With a growing accumulation of produced materials, students have a tangible record of their effort and progress. Different ways of saving work can be utilized to provide the student with an impressive account of his or her own learning. Electronic dialogue journals, saved e-mail messages, materials posted to a message board all contribute to a corpus of student work. This record can serve to increase students’ self-confidence in their learning. Working in small groups or pairs to complete tasks builds feelings of interpersonal cooperation, which can also boost self-confidence. The teacher’s choices for activities and tasks, if they have the spirit and tone
of enlightened discovery, will give students a positive feeling of accomplishment which in turn will promote self-confidence.

D. Authentic Texts. It has traditionally been the role of the teacher to provide students with authentic texts. This reflects a primary role of the teacher as resource. As an individual from a foreign culture whose personal history is itself a wealth of socio-culturally charged stories, the teacher has access to materials from his culture that foreign students do not. The logical outcome of this proposition is that the responsibility of obtaining authentic texts falls on the teacher. The burden of providing texts is the teacher’s. It was hitherto an unavoidable burden which kept teacher and student bound up in an unchanging relationship of provider and dependent. A competent teacher could be trusted to provide an ample and diverse body of stimulating material, but remained the sole human channel through which one culture accessed the other. The internet contains endless libraries of authentic material. It provides students a direct interface with what was before a personally inaccessible foreign culture. Students have an unprecedented empowerment, a ticket to go anywhere and discover the world for themselves. This watershed expansion alters the role of teacher. No longer is the teacher needed as resource. He now becomes a guide rather than a provider. The burden of gaining authentic material can now be shared by student and teacher, and shifting further in due time, can rest more and more on the learner.

This freedom to explore can motivate students to self-directed learning, but it can also leave them stranded in a quagmire of indecipherable language that will only serve to intimidate and discourage them. The duty of teacher as guide is to teach them the skills needed to search the net for content that they can process, a major component of which
are the skills of persistence and discrimination. Surfing the internet is like driving around in a totally new and unknown city. Though a map can give you a general idea of where you’re going, you have no idea what the place is going to look like once you get there. Some destinations will not suit you well. You have to be trained to turn the car around and leave that place rather than suffer through it due to a deficiency in exploratory behavior. Students who persist and find sites that contain language they can handle will have a positive language experience and feel good about their journey. Fortunately, sites with language at all different levels of difficulty abound on the internet. There are sites suitable for false beginners and sites that challenge native speakers’ language proficiency. The teacher can guide students through suitable sites and have them become familiar with the type of language they can expect from a variety of sites.

E. Intercultural understanding. By being able to directly contact others from around the world, learners can get to know cultures in a personal and authentic way. Even if direct contact with foreign learners is limited, students’ interaction on the internet itself is an act of intercultural participation. First-hand experience of authentic sites, which may be viewed as interactive multi-dimensional cultural relics, is another act bringing learners in touch with various cultural elements.

F. Interactive communication. The benefits for the learner arising out of myriad communication opportunities is so vast as to warrant its own section. The next section will discuss the great learning potential this increased interaction affords.

1.5 - COMMUNICATIVE POTENTIAL OF THE INTERNET
The primary function of language is communication. For language learners to acquire a foreign language, they need chances to engage in authentic communication. The internet presents opportunities for language learners that have never existed before in the history of foreign language study. Prior to the widespread availability of the internet, if a learner wanted to engage in authentic communication using the language of study, a standard number of choices were open to him. He could go live in a country in which that language was the native tongue. He might become friends with a native speaker and correspond by mail or speak on the telephone. He might befriend a foreigner living in his own country. As is most often the case, though, at least with learners living in Korea, these are rare instances. By far the most common language experience for Korean learners is the foreign language classroom, their interaction with their classmates and their foreign language teacher within this setting. Teachers are usually the only native speakers with whom students have contact, and since it is relatively uncommon for Korean students to participate in English speaking clubs or groups with other Koreans, that means their foreign language teachers often offer them their only opportunity to communicate in English outside of the classroom. Internet-based courses offer learners the possibility to communicate with others from around the world. For many Koreans this means the chance to interact in English for the first time with someone who isn’t their classmate or teacher. More significantly, it is a chance for them to extend their use of English into a realm beyond the classroom. Moving their use of English into this new realm gives them a purpose for using English that never existed before. As a new experience, it can either serve to motivate them or discourage them.
The familiar surroundings of the classroom can foster a dependency on the kind of predictable and safe interactions experienced in such a controlled setting. While the security within such settings is crucial to students’ affective well-being as language learners, it can ultimately lead to over-dependence with the resulting negligence of their true learning potential. Even when lessons allow for spontaneity and unexpected developments, there remains the psychological impact of participating in a timed, deterministic experience.

For university students especially, their motive for learning is at least as dependent on their motive for getting a good grade, if not more so, than learning for the sake of acquiring a language. The grading system further marks the classroom as a detached experience in their psyche. For learners to truly learn, they must perceive a purpose for the language other than to yield a respectable grade. The best way to effect this is for them to have communicative experiences outside the classroom. This would ultimately serve them better as the security they develop through non-classroom interactions approaches the kind of authentic exchanges of everyday life.

The internet introduces three main categories of interaction into the classroom. In the first, students are interacting with information found on the web. In the second, students are interacting with other people through the use of the web. The third is classroom interaction which focuses on content from the internet. With these three types of interaction comes a responsibility on the part of the teacher to integrate and balance them and to provide a means for students to gain satisfaction and feelings of success throughout the shifting interactive focuses.
In the early days (or weeks) of a course, it is a good idea for the teacher to assume the traditional role of content provider. By choosing websites that relate to the content of the course, the teacher can control the students’ initial exposure to English based sites. The initial experiences students have with the internet are crucial for establishing a relaxed, interesting, inspiring and secure atmosphere in the class. Teachers have two choices for content: that which is purely authentic, that is, websites made by native speakers for native speakers; and content which is geared toward language learners using the internet for study. The choices a teacher makes will be determined by the specific nature of the course and the expected results from the course (an in-depth analysis of contextual considerations is given in Chapter 3). Whatever the choice, a teacher should be mindful of the students’ levels, needs, and individual expectations and goals. As the course progresses, students can be given more freedom to search and interact with sites of their own choosing, but it is important that they have the skills and awareness to search multiple sites in pursuit of the information they want to find.

Students can interact with others in the internet community. This is a singular potential of the internet. They can ‘publish’ their own writing through discussion forums and respond to the writings of others (for a detailed list of the types of person-to-person interactions available through the internet, see Chapter 2). Teachers from two different contexts can have their students participate in e-mail exchanges which may be made an integral part of the course. Students can also write and submit editorials or reviews to various news or entertainment sites. The teacher must decide on ways to have their work documented as part of their assessment throughout the course (student assessment is discussed in Chapter 4). Keeping student satisfaction and feelings of success in mind, the
teacher should be aware of the pitfalls of exchanges that involve others outside the classroom. One cannot exert any control over outside variables (while one can exert control within the class by making certain assignments mandatory), so one should be aware that student efforts to communicate with an ‘outsider’ may not be reciprocated. This is likely to have a detrimental influence on the student and should be avoided. If students are going to take the risk of communicating with strangers in English, they at least deserve a response. No response keeps them within the confines of the classroom, less confident that their efforts to communicate in English will ever bear fruit in a non-classroom setting. A response, however, no matter how short, will have a tremendous psychological impact on them, giving them a first hand experience of having used English to make a real life connection in cyberspace. Again, it is the responsibility of the teacher to ensure this happens.

Then there is the interaction within the classroom itself. To begin with, the teacher has to use the largely unalterable spatial organization of a media lab to the class’ best advantage (see the next section). The interaction between students and the teacher can take many forms, and the internet introduces new ways of effecting classroom interaction. Besides the standard array of pair work, group work and whole class sharing, the internet offers the potential for intra-classroom e-mail exchange, electronic dialogue journals, conferencing and chats. The dialogue journal between student and teacher has the characteristic of an e-mail exchange, thus eliminating the affective stigma associated with handing in a notebook for a teacher to review. It puts the student and teacher on the same plane and has more of the feel of a true interaction rather than a forced or plastic one. Students can also e-mail each other, and the teacher can devise
ways to have them do this, factoring in a need to monitor their work and providing outlets for them to expand their written exchanges to include the other three skills for in-class work. An alternating e-mail pal system allows students to communicate with different members of the class on a variety of topics. Conferencing enables students’ written work to be read by all the other members of the class and offers a multitude of ways to have students respond to each other’s work.

1.6 - CREATING POSITIVE DYNAMICS IN THE MULTI-MEDIA LAB

As was mentioned in the introduction, use of a multi-media lab brings with it a whole new set of challenges for the learning environment. Dependence on technology can lead to time-consuming endeavors, not to mention failed ones. Internet connection can be haltingly slow. Internet connection may not be able to be established at a given time. Students have not only to contend with their language skills but with their computer skills as well. Writing is slowed and made more complicated by introducing the sub-skill of typing. The spatial arrangement of the multi-media lab does not immediately lend itself to interpersonal interaction. How can a teacher compensate for these hindrances?

Keep actual on-line time limited. Design lesson plans that have internet use secondary to other types of in-class interactions. The internet is then seen as a tool, not an end, which is what it is. Also, the less time students spend on the internet, the better they can communicate with each other and the teacher. The classroom community should be the first priority, not the internet. Teachers will find that even if used only in a limited way, the internet’s greatest potentials can be accessed. Keeping on-line time
limited also serves the practical function of not depending too much on willful
technology (chapter four contains activities with either limited internet use or handout
back-ups of internet material).

**Have students sharing terminals.** When students are on-line, structure activities
so that two students, sometimes three, share one terminal. One student is the operator
and the others have other roles such as conductor and scribe. Not all computers are
created equal, even if they’re sold that way. Shared terminals give students a better
chance of working at a superior terminal. This also serves the deeper humanistic
function of fostering truly collaborative efforts. English communication is naturally
effected (if it’s enforced as a rule) by students having to speak to each other to perform
tasks. This introduces speaking and listening to tasks that are reading and writing based.

**Do plenty of pre-surfing activities.** Before students get on the internet, they
should engage in whole-class warm-ups and instruction. During this time, the students’
monitors are turned off to keep attention and energy focused within the class. They need
to engage in small group and pair work activities which activate their background
knowledge, such as brainstorming. They should also be very well prepared for whatever
internet work they are about to do. They can scaffold their on-line searches or
communication by using worksheets that document prior knowledge, outline the
parameters of the search, and predict the content they’ll find.

**Do post-surfing activities.** Nothing could be more detrimental than ending a
class with students surfing the net. Closure is an important facet of EFL education, and it
is even more pronounced when the internet is introduced. The dizzying exposure to an
enormous amount of information and the multi-layered tasks students are performing
need decompression time. Students also need a forum by which they can consolidate what they’ve experienced and make sense of it. More pair and group work, with monitors once again turned off, will smoothly transition them back into the classroom and give them practice with the new found language. Finally, a whole class closer will strengthen the classroom community and give students a chance to voice comments and concerns.

Never go into class depending solely on the internet’s accessibility for the day’s lesson. Whatever the day’s lesson is, the teacher should have materials prepared that can be used in case internet connection cannot be established. Always expect the worst from the technology. Though it is unlikely that an entire multi-media lab will be disconnected from the internet, lessons should be planned that utilize back-up sources. Flexibility is key here. For instance, if the teacher had intended to take the class into an authentic site and do a reading-based activity, the teacher should have a hard copy of the reading and be prepared to turn it into a listening activity if there’s no internet connection. Or the teacher could make copies of the text and give it as a handout.

1.7 - THE INTERNET-BASED CLASSROOM

Ultimately one wants to achieve the same kind of spirit that one effects in a traditional classroom setting. The transition into a media lab should be viewed as another manifestation of the humanistic learning experience. In making the transition, a teacher might find it helpful to use a humanistic classroom framework or guideline to assure that the major principles are preserved when the classroom is a multi-media lab. Dr. Earl Stevick created a timeless and impressively adaptable framework which addresses the
salient features of a humanistic classroom (Stevick, 1976). Revisiting Dr. Stevick’s six cardinal points from the perspective of a multi-media internet-based classroom will assist in a mindful transition.

“**I hope to find the students involved in whatever they are doing, contributing to it and getting satisfaction from it on many levels of personality.**” The internet offers students the chance to work with material that is relevant to them. Loosely structured on-line activities leave space for students to make a task their own by finding material that interests them. Careful steps must be taken to ensure that students gain satisfaction from the information they work with and not feel bogged down by it. This is done by carefully scaffolding activities as mentioned in the previous section.

“**I hope to find the students comfortable and relaxed, even in the midst of intense intellectual activity or vigorous argument.**” The language on the internet will surely challenge students. They need to be very comfortable first with the medium, so necessary steps must be taken to properly orient students to the functions that will be required of them when using the internet. Limited internet use and plentiful off-line activities as mentioned in the previous section will assist in creating a comfortable atmosphere.

“**I hope to find that the students are listening to one another and not just to the teacher. I also hope that they will be getting help and correction from one another, and not just from the teacher.**” Students will have a tremendous wealth of information to share with one another from their group and pair searches. The challenge is for teachers to find diversified ways for students to share their information with each other. Active listening is demonstrated and promoted so that students are not only
providing information but also making an effort to process the information that other students (physically or virtually present) contribute to the class. Many small group exercises will pair up students with different strengths, computer and language, so that they can assist each other in their tasks.

“The teacher is in general control of what is going on.” The teacher must have very detailed lesson plans which progress through a series of activities and tasks that the students perform. The danger is to have students engaging in free internet searching that lacks purpose and directives. The teacher can give structure to searches by preparing handouts and worksheets to assist students in their collection of information. A pitfall of internet use is the sheer amount of information that students will be exposed to. The teacher must devise ways to focus on discrete language development and have students practice the language they have found in the discriminative information gathering process.

“The teacher allows/encourages/requires originality from students, whether in individual sentences, or in larger units of activity, or in choice among a range of techniques.” When working with authentic texts, students can easily fall into the habit of copying directly from the source, without doing the necessary work to process the language they’re using. As mentioned in the previous section, warm-ups and brainstorming gives students a chance to speak from within. By having themes and topics relating to students’ choices, the internet-based activities will give students freedom to express what is most meaningful to them.

“One of the first things I notice is whether the teacher seems relaxed and matter-of-fact in voice and in manner, giving information about the appropriateness
or correctness of what the students do, rather than criticizing or praising them.” A great way to organize internet-based activities so that students do not feel that they must follow a set of rigid instructions to produce satisfactory results for the teacher is to establish a system whereby information gathered is information that the students themselves have identified as pertinent and meaningful. In this way, students largely direct their own searches, with initial guidelines and coaching provided by the teacher. Even if it is the teacher who has decided on the topic of the searches, it is only to give structure and directive to the learning. From pre-surfing through to post-surfing activities, the content is student gathered, student generated. By creating and working with transcripts from internet-obtained information, the teacher demonstrates to students that his goal is to organize and systematize the language to assist their learning. Transcript work in the vein of Dr. Charles Curran’s CLL approach demonstrates that the teacher is serving the student, not the other way around.

When approaching an internet-based course, the teacher should have humanistic principles at the forefront of a design plan. Seen from a humanistic perspective, the internet doesn’t offer volumes of information to be acquired, but a new way for students to discover their interests, strengths and potential as individuals. The internet also offers a new way of communicating with others, which enhances the language learning process. Being mindful of the setting of an internet-based course helps to ensure humanistic learning conditions. Coordinating language learning objectives with supportive human interaction will preserve the purpose of humanistic education.
CHAPTER 2
OPTIONS FOR INTERNET-BASED EFL LEARNING

In continuing with one’s considerations in preparing to design an internet-based EFL course, the next logical consideration is knowing all the options that are available through internet use and sifting through them to settle on those that are appropriate to one’s context. The process involves looking closely at the options and deciding upon those that promise the greatest potential to deliver a humanistic curriculum to students and to create a supportive environment that fosters the essential components of humanistic education: caring and sharing. An effectively executed course will be a mind-opening experience whose compass is facing toward a future of self-directed learning. “So much time, so little time to do it,” the anthem of visionary spiritual-architect A.G. Rizzoli, is a fitting obsession here as so many fascinating new tools and possibilities present themselves as great options for an internet-based course. The only way to reach the decision to try some and wait on others is to carefully ponder what each option is offering the student and the class, its potential for learning, and its consequences.

2.1 - Overview of Possibilities
This chapter explores the many options that exist for using the net to assist the learning process. The options are grouped into categories that reflect their function and applicability to different types of course design and learning plans, with reflections on the deeper humanistic dynamics that the options hold within them.

The term CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) refers to a wide range of computer related language practice, from the use of word processors to multimedia packages to the internet. This chapter will focus strictly on the internet, specifically, ways in which the internet is currently being used as the basis of course content and classwork and options that exist for self-directed independent learners. At the time of writing, a search with the keywords “EFL Internet Activities” conducted via the search engine Google (google.com) produced 8,440 hits. “ESL Interactive Activities,” “EFL Independent Study” and “EFL Internet Classroom Exchanges” produced 10,300 hits, 4,550 hits and 727 hits respectively. These numbers are to some extent misleading as individual sites are sometimes counted multiple times, but it’s safe to say that huge numbers of sites exist relating to various types of internet-based instructional material and forums.

The advent of the internet has not only introduced an entirely new dimension of learning possibilities for foreign language learners, it has also revolutionized the way teacher-researchers find, publish, and discuss new developments in the field. Many of the books that are now in print concerning internet-based education, books which document trends, techniques, ways of incorporating the web into the classroom, and innovative uses of the internet for language learning, contain contributions that are also ‘published’ on the web. These books serve as compilations for easy and convenient
It makes sense that the most definitive and global research one can do on the subject of CALL is on the internet itself. In this arena of internet-based education, the internet contains the main body of resources from which print sources are derived, thus shifting the main venue by which teacher-researchers approach and contribute to the research process. In keeping with this shift, sources taken directly from the internet serve as the bulk of the research on the current status of internet-based language education that will be discussed in this chapter.

There are two basic types of interaction on the internet. One is with websites and all the computer programs they contain in them, in educational terms, on-line applications. These include lessons, tutorials, dictionaries and other learning materials. The second type of interaction is with other people through various venues. Only this second type of interaction is truly communicative. There are two types of communication through the internet: asynchronous and synchronous. Asynchronous communication means it is not done in real time. One posts or sends information from one site to another. Examples include message boards and e-mail. Synchronous communication means it is done in real time. One is sharing the same virtual space at the same time as another, engaging in direct text, audio or video-based conversation. Examples are MOOs and video conferencing. The bulk of this chapter is devoted to the manifold learning opportunities these types of communication make possible.

Discrimination between the types of sites relating to internet-based foreign language education reveals that they fall more or less into two major categories: lessons and activities for independent self-study; and interactive forums for individual learners, classes and teachers. These two classifications of site-types often co-exist on a single
site. In some cases the format and options of the two types are essentially the same, the only difference being the focus either on independent learning or course-bound learning. As independent learning is ultimately what teachers want to encourage and support, it is the responsibility of the teacher to raise students’ awareness of the potential for independent learning and to orient them to these possibilities. While independent learning sites are not the direct focus of this chapter, some mention of them is necessary for an understanding of their uses and the role they can play in a whole-learner, humanistically designed curriculum. The second type, the heart of the internet’s communicative potential, consists of sites meant for person-to-person, class-to-class and teacher-to-teacher exchanges.

Only one or two representative sites will be given as examples for each of the following categories of learner relationship to the internet. The focus here is more on the nature of each option rather than being a review of various sites. Internet sources run the risk of becoming outdated and non-extant. Some sites may no longer be in service upon publication of this paper. However, the types of interaction themselves are constants, with new technologies of the future likely to expand the number of possible interaction types. Teachers interested in finding more information about a particular facet of internet-based education can conduct searches on a search engine using keywords similar to the ones mentioned above.
Table 2.1 - OPTIONS FOR INTERNET-BASED LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner Orientation</th>
<th>Type of Interaction</th>
<th>Communication Type</th>
<th>Interactive Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td>With Websites</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Using On-line Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surfing the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Others</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Discussion Forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mailing Lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key-pal Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>MOOs and Chats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class-Based Study</td>
<td>With Websites</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Using Search Engines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visiting Websites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Others</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Discussion Forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key-pal Exchange</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Mailing Lists</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>MOOs and Chats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Video Conferencing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 - OPTIONS FOR THE INDEPENDENT LEARNER

At some point in an internet-based course, depending on the extent of students’ computer literacy and English proficiency, the teacher will want to introduce students to the potential for independent learning the internet has to offer them. How a teacher does this is very important. The amount of care a teacher devotes to raising students’ awareness of the different educational sites will be the difference between a dim awareness and true understanding. Dim awareness will not motivate students or positively impact their affective disposition to these sites while true understanding means they not only have knowledge of these sites but concrete experience with them. So even though use of independent study sites may not fit at all into one’s curriculum plans, some class time should be devoted to them. A suggestion for how this may be done follows.
By choosing a virtual community that includes both independent and communicative educational venues, the teacher can give students a comprehensive idea of the internet’s potential in a grand way. One such virtual community is Dave’s ESL Cafe (eslcafe.com). Teachers can guide students through a tour of the site, looking first at the various links and as a class putting them into one of three categories: self-learning, discussion forums, links for teachers. The links for teachers will probably not be of interest to them, and by being able to identify them, they will be spared time-consuming ventures into them. By going into each of the major links as a class, students will gain first hand exposure to their content. Then by having students sample some of the interactive activities associated with different links, they will have a concrete experience of using them. The teacher can monitor their effort and lend support where needed. At the end of the tour, new knowledge can be reinforced by having students recap each link’s content, purpose and/or potential. Questions can be answered on the spot, thus serving to eliminate lingering confusion or frustration. Following is a breakdown of the different types of independent learning possibilities on the net.

### Table 2.2 - OPTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT LEARNING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Interaction</th>
<th>Communication Type</th>
<th>Interactive Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Websites</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Using On-line Applications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surfing the Internet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Others</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Discussion Forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mailing Lists</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key-pal Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>Using MOOs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chats</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. INDEPENDENT INTERACTION WITH WEBSITES

The number of sites focusing on independent study is exhaustive. The Internet TESL Journal site (www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/) is an excellent place to start, as is the ESL Independent Study Lab site (www.lclark.edu). The Internet TESL site offers links under an impressive list of headings, some of which include: culture, grammar, vocabulary, games, penpals, and each of the four skills, to name just a few. Some examples of independent study activities follow.

Clicking on the link for Reading, one can choose from a variety of lessons such as reading a short passage and then doing a cloze exercise, with the correct answers given after completion. Another lesson, submitted by Mark Feder, concentrates on speed reading. In this lesson, a sentence flashes on the screen for one second. One word is highlighted in pink. After the sentence flashes on the screen, the learner is then given a choice of three words, one of which is the correct highlighted word. Learners are given an immediate response as to the accuracy of their choice. There are also many stories of varying levels of difficulty to be read, some with comprehension questions to answer as a follow-up.

For most of the lessons under the Listening heading, one must have audio programs installed on their hard drive. The listening exercises include listening to a passage and then completing a cloze exercise or filling in the blanks to complete summary sentences or answering comprehension questions. Learners can check their answers after completion. Another listening lesson, submitted by Maki Shimada, focuses on weak forms and contractions. Students listen to a passage first and are then alerted to
common reductions in natural speech. They then listen a second time with raised awareness to these forms.

The Writing link contains a lot of instructional information on sentence formation, letter and report writing. Many of the writing activities are a hybrid of independent study and person-to-person exchanges. One example is a chain story activity where the first part of a story is given (submitted by native speakers and language learners alike). The learner is expected to add to the story and submit it. One can read his or her own and other submissions which appear just below the original passage. In another lesson, one is guided through the composition of a five-line poem with each line having particular linguistic requirements. Learners submit their poems which appear as links on the page.

These examples provide a very brief glimpse into the types of activities one may encounter. The somewhat disjointed presentation of these examples reflects the great range of instructional materials often found within one site, their only connection to each other being that they fall under the very broad classification of ESL/EFL-related materials. These sites are composed of submissions by teachers and researchers and are meant as resources for other teachers and students. The teacher has a responsibility to make students aware of the existence of these sites and would greatly assist students by choosing sites that contain material related to work that’s being done in class. Simply presenting students with a random list of self-study sites can result in information overload for students with consequent feelings of confusion and distaste. The teacher is advised to choose not only sites but specific links within the sites that correspond to the topic being worked on in class. As mentioned before, an interactive tour of one site will
be a good introduction, and then the teacher can keep providing students will new sites to visit.

Basically, the lessons that exist in these sites are extracts that fit into other teachers’ overall course designs. The greatest value of these sites for visiting teachers is two-fold: they provide examples of how the internet can be used to augment learning as well as being a resource of lessons ready for use. They also provide forums where teachers wanting to experiment with programming language can seek help and assistance. Teachers can then try designing their own activities directly related to their lesson plans and have their students do these activities for homework or as in class reviews.

**B. INTERACTION WITH OTHERS ON THE INTERNET**

**Key-pal exchanges.** Many sites offer venues for learners to connect with other learners through e-mail exchanges. This service is offered through the virtual community Dave’s ESL Café (www.eslcafe.com). Learners read through introductory e-mails on a bulletin board and can respond to the ones of their choosing, with the potential for establishing a personal exchange independent of the site. They can also post messages to the bulletin board. The site is very active, with new additions everyday but can sometimes be overrun with learners who abuse the venue by disregarding the proper purpose of the forum, such as treating it as a service through which to advertise for romance rather than establish friendships and share ideas. Sites like this one which give unmonitored, loosely structured access to all individuals, run the risk of being abused. Another factor leading to possible disappointment on the part of the learner is that many post messages with the hope of meeting someone from a particular country. Learners
may be disconcerted to find twenty messages from students in a country that they have no interest in, while not receiving any replies from people they’ve contacted from countries they do have interest in. Culturally sensitive learners should have no trouble finding someone with whom to connect; more culturally selective learners may not be able to make the connection they’re looking for.

**Virtual communities.** The options that being a member of a virtual community affords the independent learner are many. Key-pal exchanges represent only one facet of a virtual community exchange. Students can also participate in discussion forums, interact with message boards and engage in chats.

**Chats.** They can be a component of an independent learning plan, intra-class activity, or inter-class exercise. Through a site called ICQ (web.icq.com), students can contact primarily native speakers through a number of topic-centered chat rooms. Another option is to use a web browser such as Yahoo (yahoo.com) and choose from their extensive list of chat rooms.

**MOOs.** One can engage in chats through the chat room forums mentioned above or one can seek chats through a slightly more complicated but potentially more exciting venue, an educational MOO. Hunter College in New York runs an educational MOO through a site called schMOOze University (schmooze.hunter.cuny.edu:8888/). A basic set of commands must be learned and used for interaction with the MOO. MOOs are simulations of physical spaces, a virtual walking tour where every choice is made from options that are given by text prompts. A sampling is: the prompt tells you that there are the names of some classes written on a blackboard. It then asks which classroom the user
wants to enter. Once there, more options are given. Students can chat with others they encounter in these virtual classrooms and other virtual spaces.

These options will be discussed further below with regard to classroom learning situations. The basic format is the same in both independent and class-related cases.

2.3 - OPTIONS WITH DIRECT CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

The links and sites pertaining to classroom applications can be divided into two groups. The first group may be termed inter-class learning options. They are communication based forums for person-to-person or class-to-class interactions. The second group relates to links and sites suitable for intra-class learning. It includes examples of ways teachers have given students access to authentic sites, and the tasks that students can engage in to work with content found in this sites. It also includes ideas for class projects, namely the design of class webpages. Of course, the inter-class communicative venues can be used in intra-class settings as well. All these types will be discussed in this section.

Table 2.3 - CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Type</th>
<th>Communication Type</th>
<th>Interactive Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter-class</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Message Board Postings/Discussion Forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mailing List Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key-pal Exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>MOO-based Exchanges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Video Conferencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intra-class</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Website Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Webpage Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Key-pal Exchanges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. INTER-CLASS LEARNING

**Message Boards and Discussion Forums.** Ruth Vilmi, a teacher at Helsinki University of Technology, runs an international writing exchange that has been in existence since 1993, making her a pioneer in this type of forum. The sites contains discussion topics, ranging from general introductions to current events to the death penalty, and one participates in the discussion by posting messages to a message board. Other learners then respond to the messages by posting their own, which appear just beneath the original. Jane Hoelker (2000) documents the learning her students effected through use of this site.

**Discussion Lists or Mailing Lists.** Thomas Robb is the moderator of a well organized and well run discussion list, also called mailing list. The site is called SL-Lists: International ESL/EFL Discussion Lists (www.latrobe.edu.au). Students can become independent participants, but the forum has been designed mainly for class participation. Teachers contact the moderator and register their classes by supplying the moderator with all the participating students and their individual e-mail addresses. The site makes it clear that these lists are not for personal e-mail exchange. They are meant as public sites that foster and sustain group discussion. There are two addresses a student needs to participate in a discussion list, one for subscribing and one for posting messages. After registering with the site, students can then subscribe to specific lists with topics such as movies, music, general discussion, sports, etc. There are different forums for varying levels of proficiency. Once a student subscribes to a list, he or she will begin
receiving e-mail messages that relate to that list. The student can then post his or her own messages that contribute to the on-going discussion. Teachers play an important role in the process in that they are expected to have oriented students to forum etiquette, and in the early stages at least they should monitor their students’ writings to ensure that the students can form grammatically accurate sentences and cohesive paragraphs that appropriately address the particular topic. Students are asked to go beyond simple “I like” or “I don’t like” statements and to submit commentary that lends itself to more stimulating responses.

Through this site and others like it, teachers have the opportunity to communicate with other teachers to share ideas on how forum participation fits into their overall course objectives and lesson plans. These discussion lists are ideal for writing classes but can also supplement reading and oral communication courses. Some teachers make weekly submissions by students, to be done as homework, a mandatory requirement of their course. Others have more or less demanding requirements depending on the logistics of their courses.

**Key-pal Exchanges.** A more personalized forum is offered through the Beaumont Virtual Learning Community website, a division of Beaumont Publishing, in the section entitled Cyberjourneys-Online-EFL/ESL (www.cyberjourneys.net). Different classes from around the world participate. The site moderator links two classes together, pairing first the teachers of the classes who then work together to pair up the individual students in their classes. The tasks are varied. One task involves students striving to learn about each other’s countries and daily routines by creating questionnaires to send to their virtual partners via e-mail.
This type of forum has a much more humanistic appeal than the discussion forums. The aforementioned forums serve the practical function of language learners communicating with other language learners from other countries or other locales, but the bulletin board format does not promote true interpersonal learning in that the objective seems not to be the formation of human relationships but rather the initiation and continuation of topic-centered ideas. Indeed, the very disclaimer of the SL-LIST site that it is not a forum for one-to-one exchanges seems to discourage the essential spirit of communicative exchange, which is making personal connections. The Cyber-journey forum, on the contrary, is conducive to the kind of real person-to-person interaction that serves to motivate, inspire and comfort students. Instead of the somewhat staid and anonymous bulletin board format, the main focus for students in this forum is establishing bonds and meaningful friendships through information sharing. Another benefit of this format is that students are paired on a one-to-one ratio and keep the same partners throughout the duration of the course. This way, they have a chance to exercise another crucial dynamic of language learning which goes beyond initial or ephemeral introductions and seeks instead the development of a relationship over an extended period of time. The time factor is often overlooked, but a sustained interaction is the only true way in which personalities can be revealed to the extent that they need to be if the exchange is to have any lasting meaning. A final advantage of this format is that it forces students to make the effort to connect with others, and after months of sustained effort there is a very good chance that the friendship will continue beyond the time frame of the course. For a student to have made a lasting friend with whom she or he can communicate in English across cultures and long distances is a miraculous
accomplishment. Perhaps the greatest potential of language learning through the internet is the promise it holds to foster independent self-directed learning outside of formal educational settings. This forum lends itself to the access of this golden potential.

**Class Pairing through MOOs.** Teachers who want to organize an on-going project with a distant class can use the extensive services available through the Tapped In Virtual Environment (www.tappedin.org). Tapped In is a MOO that can accommodate large numbers of educational professionals in a single virtual place. After registering one’s individual school with the site, service staff will assist in the organization and implementation of the proposed projects.

An example of a successful international project is the Water Pollution Project designed by Linda Ullah, which connected a school in California with a school in Brazil. Though this project was not ESL/EFL based, it is a great example of an inter-class collaboration, the product of which was the creation and running of a website relating to the topic. Linda Ullah used the virtual office space service on Tapped In to communicate directly with the partner teacher in Brazil. Together they devised a battery of questions to use in student discussions and discussed the development of the project. Students from the classes met in a virtual classroom (a text-based chat room) also located through the site. The information that was shared through cyberspace was then consolidated, also through cyberspace and then posted in various forms on a webpage.

**On-line Chats.** Intra-class and inter-class chat forums are possible through the same above mentioned outlets. Options exist through the web browsers to create individual chat rooms. For inter-class chats, a teacher should first contact another willing teacher either through personal connections or through discussion forums for teachers
such as Tapped In, Education World, or Dave’s ESL Cafe, to name a few. Chats may be a one-time entertaining experience or may fit into a more comprehensive class-to-class interaction plan.

Once two teachers have agreed to work together, they can set a time and location for their classes to meet in a chat room. For the chat to run smoothly a fair bit of preparation is recommended. Students should choose their chat room ID beforehand and a list of student names and corresponding ID’s should be made available to all students in both classes before the chat begins so that everybody has a reference whereby they can know who is saying what. To avoid complete chaos, it would be a good idea for teachers to agree upon a general topic for discussion, preferably something that corresponds to what both classes have been working on within their respective courses. The teachers can act as moderators of the room, with time set aside at the beginning for general introductions and informal banter, and then proceeding to more organized discussion after some time.

The fast paced nature of chats can be intimidating for students, and the pedagogical objectives will most likely fall under the realm of positive affective stimulation rather than discrete language work. It should be viewed and presented as a fun exercise, a party of sorts. Arranging for a chat just before or after mid-term exams can be a welcomed stress reliever. Having the exercise be a low-stress, entertaining experience will promote participation from the more reserved students and assure a positive encounter. Teachers may have to monitor their own students to make sure the more outgoing ones don’t dominate and to encourage at least some participation from all. By having a list of all participants, teachers can eliminate dead air time by posing direct
questions or comments to individuals. The chat can be brought to a close by having everybody give feedback on the experience and/or by exchanging farewells.

**Video Conferencing.** Robert O’Dowd has posted an article on video conferencing on the Geocities website (www.geocities.com/Athens/Rhodes/8247/vcingarticle.html) which discusses both the advantages and disadvantages of such a forum. He identifies three major uses of video conferencing currently in practice. They are group-to-group, ESL/EFL group-to-native speaker group and teacher-to-group. Video conferencing is a way in which classes can meet face to face via monitors in the respective locales. This is ideal as a supplement to class-wide e-mail exchanges whereby students can put a face to their virtual partners. The technology is still developing, and so drawbacks include fuzzy images and distorted sound as well as sound and image delays. It also seems to be an awkward venue for fair-sized classes in which only the students nearest the camera are clearly visible. For each student to be seen and to see clearly, a lot of movement is entailed. The forum has the distinct disadvantage of shifting the center of focus from the participating individuals to the limitations of the technology. It can also make listening comprehension a nearly insurmountable task. Students run a greatly increased risk of not understanding and not being understood. For very small classes this forum might be more acceptable. At present, though, this option seems to be a less desirable choice than the chat forum in which each student has equal logistical access to the activity and can concentrate on the content that’s being discussed.

The forum might have greater educational value if the conferencing is between a native speaker on one end and an EFL/ESL class on the other. In such cases, a friend or family member of the teacher’s might conference with the teacher’s class thus providing
stronger connections between students and that teacher’s native culture and/or hometown.

B. INTRA-CLASS LEARNING

Website Interaction. There are a variety of ways a class can work together on internet-based material. This section will explore two main avenues: examples of learning that can be accomplished using authentic sites, and the creation of a class’ own site as in webpage design project work. Of course, some of the learning opportunities mentioned earlier, such as key-pal exchange and discussion forums also have intra-class applications. The term discussions forum would translate into conferencing when speaking of intra-class work. These intra-class applications will be explored in-depth in Chapter 4, and so will not be explored in this chapter.

Scavenger Hunts and WebQuests. There is a virtually unlimited number of ways to work with authentic sites. Like any lesson, the creation of a plan that works with authentic sites is as unique as the teacher who produces it, and the learning is as unique as the individual. The following two types of activities simply give a taste of the possibilities.

Scavenger Hunts are great for orienting students to the web, and for beginning language learners. They are as varied in content as different teachers’ imaginations and pedagogical approaches. The format usually consists of students being given a worksheet with a list of questions or tasks on it and then having to search through the internet to complete the worksheet. The Internet TESL Journal
(www.aitech.ac.jp/iteslj/th/) has on its comprehensive site links that offer many Scavenger Hunts as designed and submitted by teachers from around the world.

Scavenger Hunts make use of search engines and individual sites. One example from this site, submitted by Charles Kelly, asks students to use the Yahoo search engine and go to the link for Music. Learners should find the list of musicians and note how many links there are for the students’ favorite musician. Then they should go to a variety of sites on those musicians and comment on the best site, and be able to explain why they liked that site the best.

Another Hunt, submitted by Melinda Gleeson, has students searching various individual sites and gathering information about those sites. For example, students are asked to go to the homepage for The Australian daily newspaper and document that day’s heading. The list of tasks includes their finding a homepage for currency conversion and noting the exchange rate between the Australian dollar and U.S. dollar. Another asks them to search a webpage on jobs and to note which job would be suitable for them and why.

A more involved, and engaging, alternative to Scavenger Hunts are WebQuests. They seem to be the epitome of the potential for the internet to be a rewarding source of manageable authentic content. WebQuests engage students in creative, enjoyable and highly educational tasks that require their interaction with authentic texts to find specific, largely student-directed, pieces of information. Well designed WebQuests leave space for student initiative and creativity, and force students to think and work together to come up with interesting results.
The Internet TESL Journal site contains a link to the Worldwide WebQuest Database. Another very useful site is The WebQuest Page, run by the College of Education at San Diego State University (edweb.sdsu.edu). The WebQuests on this site are organized according to task. By clicking on the link called WebQuest Taskonomy, one can see examples of WebQuests from each of eleven identified task types. Bernie Dodge, the creator of this link, carefully classifies the WebQuests and gives insightful considerations for each of the task types to ensure that the WebQuests go beyond mere information gathering and compel students to engage in thoughtful collection of information to be synthesized into a creative product that demonstrates understanding of the language they’ve encountered.

Bernie Dodge identifies eleven tasks, but remarks that there are fifty or more ways to task a learner. The ones he identifies are: retelling, compilation, mystery solving, journalistic, design, production of a creative product, consensus building, persuasion, self-knowledge, analytical, judgment making and scientific analysis.

An example of a retelling task-based WebQuest is called “Will That Volcano Spoil Our Party?” created by Bill Byles. Students are given a fictitious scenario about a fictional island that is threatened by the pending eruption of one of its volcanoes. The teacher has selected four authentic sites which the students are to explore to complete the task. This WebQuest also combines role playing as it has students working in groups of three to compile data, with one student being each of the following: geologist, photographer and historian. They are to help each other gather information pertinent to their respective jobs. The task is for them to recombine the information to produce a multimedia report that explains: the types of volcanoes that exist on this island, the
history of volcanic eruptions of that type, and major dangers associated with eruptions. The purpose of the report is to assist the mayor of the city in his safety plan for residents.

WebQuests give students a purpose for searching sites, which in turn helps them make meaning out of the information they encounter. WebQuests can be designed to target a topic or theme of the class. The tasks asked of students through a WebQuest are project oriented, that is, they require research first and collaboration to present the information in some way to others in the class. Whereas Scavenger Hunts are finished as soon as the information is collected, WebQuests ask that students work with the information they find, change it into something that is their own. This crucial step is what makes true learning possible. Students also have a lot of chances to bring their personalities into the process as they will control the creation of a final product, a synthesis of their new knowledge and understanding. WebQuests can lead one into another for an entire semester, with a succession of completed mini-projects serving as the tangible learning that has been accomplished.

**Projects for Webpage Design.** The previous section offered ideas on how to work with pre-existing sites. The focus of this type of work is the interpretation and synthesis of information found on the authentic sites. This section does not relate to pre-existing sites, but rather the creation of new sites, the design and management of which can be realized as an on-going class project.

The content and function of such a class-made webpage are under the control of the class itself. The class can make an English study site, a site for cultural exchanges, an on-line magazine or newspaper. The nature of the course and its objectives will determine the type of webpage that is produced.
Teachers interested in webpage design and who have no prior experience can go to the Yahoo Geocities site (geocities.yahoo.com) which has a variety of free instructional links that outline the steps for webpage design, making the process quite methodical and easy. As another indispensable service, the site gives the user access to a FTP server through which the finished webpage can debut on the internet.

**Key-pal Exchange and Dialogue Journals.** Students can participate in key-pal partnerships set up by the instructor. They can use a free e-mail account such as Hotmail (hotmail.com). These can be set up early in the course. Another e-mail-based option is the dialogue journal where the student sends his or her entry to the teacher and the teacher replies using the counseling-response method.

**Message Boards, MOOs and Chats.** See the previous section for uses.

The internet offers many options for language learning. The individual can use the internet as part of an independent plan of study. Class-based learners can also use the internet for learning. Interaction with software such as web browsers gives students access to the internet. Through websites, learners can interact with a variety of instructional materials. The greatest potential of the internet is the opportunities it affords the learner to interact with other language learners on-line. Teachers can exploit this expansive, unprecedented facet of language learning to its fullest potential by setting up communicative exchanges with distant learners. Students can also work directly with language found on websites by engaging in well-structured searches that seek to access information relevant and meaningful to them.
Before deciding which of the myriad language learning opportunities available through the internet are most appropriate for a particular group of students, the teacher must first look carefully at the context in which the course is being held. By asking some initial questions, the teacher can first ascertain the appropriate objectives and direction of a course and then can proceed to look deeply into the heart of any context, the individuals who comprise it. If the teacher has given sufficient attention and care to understanding these individuals, then the correct and best path of class-based study will become apparent. In this chapter, the specifics of a Korean university context will be examined. The discussion will progress through a framework for a methodical line of inquiry. The framework provided is more or less universal for university contexts, with specifics about one Korean university course serving as an example of the kinds of pertinent and necessary information that can be discovered through this inquiry.

3.1 - KOREA AND THE INTERNET

Before looking at the specifics of a Korean university context, it will be helpful to understand the general national attitude toward and familiarity with the internet. Korea has experienced a tremendous boom in internet usage in recent years. This is evidenced in the founding of over 10,000 commercial computer room businesses in the past three years alone. Each of these public computer rooms (called PC Rooms) holds an average of 30 terminals which can be used at a very cheap hourly rate. Patrons of these rooms can play computer video games and surf the internet twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Chatting, sending e-mail and surfing for the latest information on pop culture seem to be the favorite past-times of the young net-generation crowd.
Knowing this information before actually meeting the students taking the internet-based course is extremely helpful, as one can gain a preliminary idea of the amount of orientation to the internet that students will need.

3.2 - QUESTIONS FOR ANALYZING A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

The following questions help one to frame the parameters and purpose of a course and get an idea of the individuals who will be participating in the classroom learning event.

1. Where is the course being taught?
2. What kind of course is it?
3. What are the administrators’ expectations for the course?
4. Who are the students taking the course and what do they expect from it?

**QUESTION 1. Where is the course being taught?**

**Universals.** In answering this question one wants to discover facts about the specific university context, being careful to look at the national university system in general and the particular university in question. The goal is for one to get an idea of the academic standards of the school and the degree of student engagement.

**Korean Context.** Education in Korea is based around the acquiring of information. It differs greatly from U.S. educational goals which focus on thought development and the interpretation of information. Korean education is almost exclusively fact based. Students are the vessels into which teachers pour the drink of knowledge. Students are accustomed to one-way pedagogical methods where the direction is from teacher to student. They do not have choices as learners. They learn what they’re told to learn. And they demonstrate their learning by doing well on exams.

Students spend their middle and high school years in intense study, going not only to regular school in the day but often also a second private institute in the evening. The society is extremely competitive educationally which mirrors its occupational competitiveness. Students complete a rigorous battery of standardized tests throughout these years with hopes of getting into a good university. When young Korean adults enter university, they experience the greatest freedom they have ever known in an academic environment. This is their reward for years of hard work, and it comes before a lifetime of more hard work. The university years of Koreans, it may be argued, are the easiest years of their lives.
The particular context discussed in this chapter is that of Seokyeong University, in Seoul, a university ranked within the lowest tier of Seoul universities. This is considered a last chance school, and students who attend it most certainly do so because it’s the only university that accepted them. Whether this is the case because of innate intelligence, study habits, or test taking skills, is not clear. But nonetheless, the student body on average is comprised of students who have not fared particularly well in the national system.

**QUESTION 2. What kind of course is it?**

**Universals.** This question should be answered in two ways. First, is it a core class, class for majors, or a general elective? This will assist in determining the purpose and place of the course within a student’s individualized schedule. Secondly, what is the title and content of the course? This will help the teacher frame the broad parameters of the course.

**Korean Context.** The particular internet-based course discussed here was a 2-credit elective course given at Seokyeong University. The amount of work expected of students in elective courses is low compared to core subjects and subjects needed to fulfill requirements for a major. Students often take a course-load heavier than their requirements for graduation. They typically register for such courses with the rationale that they can drop the course if the work proves to be too demanding.

Another reality about this particular course was that it was a pilot course being taught for the first time at this university. There was no precedent for an internet-based EFL course, and therefore no guidelines to follow or prior experience from which to
draw. The course was somewhat vaguely entitled Internet English, and it was described as a course where the internet would be used for English communication. So, basically it was understood to be a communication-based internet course.

The continuance of such a course will depend on its perceived value and merit by students and administrators alike. For the course to be successful and to be implemented as a regular course offered by the school, positive feedback from the students is necessary as well as written documentation of the benefits of such a course, to be presented to the administration.

**QUESTION 3. What is the administration’s expectation of the course?**

**Universals.** The teacher should know exactly what the administration or program director expects of the course. Is there any special purpose for the course? Where does it fit into the university’s EFL program? Is there specific content that must be covered? By answering these questions, the teacher will have made a list of restrictions, demands and possibilities for the content and workload of the course.

**Korean Context.** Various EFL classes are offered at Seokyeong University, but foreign instructors only teach three types of classes: Listening Comprehension, English Conversation, and communication-based courses for English majors. Korean instructors teach reading and writing classes. The administration’s rationale is that the foreign instructors are there to provide students with the opportunity for listening to and speaking with a native speaker. Students taking these courses expect to engage in direct dialogue with native speakers. Reading and writing skills are not concentrated on, and too much attention to these skills is discouraged. Finally, of these regular courses, only the English
Conversation course is an elective. The emphasis is on conversational interactions stemming from a variety of topics almost always drawn from a textbook. But some teachers are given complete freedom to choose the content.

An important note about all the EFL courses given is that there are no placement tests. Students are grouped into core classes by major, grouped into English major classes by year. Anyone can take an elective course. This means that the level of students varies greatly within the class, which obviously needs serious consideration.

The major function of EFL general electives is for students to have a positive English learning experience where they can learn practical, culture-laden usage from a direct source. Positive affective consequences of a course are perhaps the course’s greatest value as part of the university curriculum.

One can deduce from this information that an Internet English class taught by a foreign instructor should focus on communicative skills, with a provision for significant direct interaction with the instructor. The amount of homework must be in concordance with the 2-credit weight the course carries. Furthermore, as it is an elective course, and a pilot course at that, careful attention must be given to the prospect of students dropping the course due to unwanted and overburdening course requirements. This is not to mention the affective issues of student security and comfort levels, as well as other pedagogical principles governing the course, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

A final consideration at this initial stage is the exact nature of the course. Using the internet in the classroom will entail the use of the four skills. In this case, it is important to remember the philosophy and expectations of the university, and one should focus mainly on the communicative aspects of the language accordingly, though it is
clear that an integrated approach is necessary to access and work with the information found on the internet. Honoring this rationale, the course will work on the four skills, the emphasis being primarily on speaking and writing insofar as they are used for colloquial communication.
QUESTION 4. Who are the students taking the course and why are they taking it?

**Universals.** The teacher must know a few things about the individuals in the class right away. The crucial things to know are: students’ academic focus in university, their expectations of the course, their English proficiency levels in the four skills, their computer and internet proficiency levels, and their affective disposition toward an internet-based course. The best and perhaps most comprehensive way to know this information immediately is to prepare a survey or questionnaire to give to students on the first day of class. This self-assessment tool will provide the teacher with insights into the individuals of the class, what their interests and expectations are, what their interests are, what they are feeling, and where they stand in relation to the skills they’ll need for the course. The teacher can then use these questionnaires to determine the nature and extent of internet use in class.

**Korean Context.** One such questionnaire or survey was given to students on the first day of class. It was written in their native language to facilitate accurate comprehension. The students had the option of answering either in English or Korean. The results were then used to determine the discrete activities for the initial weeks of the course. Following are the significant results of the student surveys.

### 3.3 - STUDENT SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEYS

The surveys targeted two areas: studying EFL and using the internet. As mentioned above, there are no placement tests at Seokyeong University. This means that...
the level of students in the class will vary greatly, and so the teacher must be prepared to
meet the needs of the students by making tasks doable at multiple levels and to varying
degrees of proficiency. To adequately forecast the language that will be at or slightly
above the level of understanding, even if this reveals a grossly unbalanced spectrum of
comprehensibility and productivity, the teacher must make initial and fairly global
assessments as best she or he can as early as possible. The goal of the questionnaire was
to provide valuable insights into students’ history and prior experience with English. The
benefit of using a questionnaire, written in the students’ native tongue, as an assessment
tool rather than other possible formats such as a free-writing task or short taped
interview, is that students are less likely to feel intimated or adversely challenged by the
process and can concentrate better on the content they are being asked to produce. A
questionnaire calling for multiple choice and short answers is a concise format through
which valuable information can be disclosed.

A. STUDYING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Insight 1. One question asked students to rate their own English language
proficiency. In this case, English majors and non-English majors alike rated themselves
between high beginner and low intermediate. This self-assessment may have been based
more on self-confidence or self-perception than actual ability, and clearly further
assessment devices are needed. Yet, this question afforded the teacher an important
perspective on how the learners see their ability and could use this in designing activities
that gave them access to the language on the internet.

Insight 2. When asked to rate their comfort level with regard to reading English
texts, it is not surprising that this question produced a high level of positive answers, with most saying that they feel fairly comfortable to wholly comfortable and just a few saying that they felt uncomfortable. This is the skill that is most stressed in primary and secondary education.

As a follow up to this question, students were asked what kind of reading they have done in English. Most responded that they have read English texts insofar as they appear in prep books for standardized tests, the tests themselves, and English textbooks. Only a few had actual experience with authentic texts, and these texts included magazines, books, and newspapers. As the aim of this course is for students to work with authentic texts, pre-reading tasks are needed for scaffolding to provide sufficient access to internet texts.

**Insight 3.** Students responded more negatively to the question about their comfort level with regard to writing in English. Their writing has been largely limited to the short answer responses they need to make on the many standardized tests they’ve taken in their school life. A few stated they have exchanged letters with a pen-pal or key-pal, and one said he kept an English journal. Since communication is a major goal of the course, employing the use of e-mail and having students record discoveries on the internet through an Internet Log are planned components. Taking their experience and feeling about writing into account will be important factors in determining the exact nature the writing tasks will assume.
**Insight 4.** When asked what they see as a hindrance to their learning of English, they replied: dearth of vocabulary, incorrect grammar, lack of interaction with a native speaker, shyness, and L1 interference. It’s clear that there are a wide range of hindrances. The teacher can take from this that students need a supportive teacher with whom to interact, one who will help them find confidence. Language goals are also many, and with proper exposure to the internet, students can strengthen these skills.

**Insight 5.** When asked what would help them learn English in this course, they replied: talking with a native speaker, getting praise, free talking on any topic with classmates, group work, practicing English everyday and being interested in the topics. It’s clear that the humanistic principles mentioned in Chapter 1 will be conducive to establishing the type of classroom atmosphere that students want and need.

**B. USING THE INTERNET**

**Insight 1.** When asked how they would rate their internet ability, students’ gave a wide range of answers. Only two students rated themselves as advanced users, while the others rated themselves as either beginning or intermediate level users. This initial question was very broad, and was meant to elicit their overall impression of their own ability. From this question alone, it might be surmised that extensive internet orientation would be needed.
Insight 2. The next question asked them how often they used the internet. The responses to this question were surprising given the responses from the first question. Many said they used the internet everyday, sometimes for more than two hours a day. Others said they used it almost everyday. Some said they used it a few hours a week. Only one student gave an indication that she did not use it much at all. These results were more in keeping with the general wave of internet use that has spread throughout the country. Clearly, these students do have quite a lot of experience using the internet, and perhaps their self-assessment of their ability reflected not experience but the degree of more advanced functions (such as downloading and using program language) they are able to perform.
Insight 3. Next, students were asked to describe their time spent on the internet. Responses included: sending and receiving e-mail, using search engines to acquire information related to subjects being studied in school, surfing websites for general interest and entertainment purposes, and downloading information such as games and music files. The results of this survey indicate that student by and large know how to perform fundamental internet functions, having done so on the Korean net. The question now remains how familiar they are navigating through English websites.
Insight 4. To determine how much time they spend in Korean sites as compared with English sites, students were asked to estimate the ratio, in percent, between the two. One student estimated a 60 to 40 ratio, Korean to English. Another estimated a 70 to 30 ratio. Four estimated a 80 to 20 ratio. The rest responded that from 90% to 100% of their time was spent on the Korean net. The conclusions to be drawn from this are that students are fairly familiar with the internet, but only as it pertains to the Korean net. The objective, then, is to introduce students by degrees to the universe of language and information that is waiting for them in the vast English sector of the Wide World Web.
To design an effective, humanistic internet-based university course, a teacher has to first take steps to understand the specifics of his or her learning context. One can do this by being mindful of the university’s program goals and objectives and by knowing the purposes of the course being taught. Furthermore, the teacher should strive to know the predisposition and history of learners with regard to the two dual course objectives, studying EFL and using the internet. The teacher does this by utilizing self-assessment tools such as surveys and questionnaires which students complete at the beginning of the course. The insights gained from these surveys will give the teacher an indication of the amount of orientation the student will need to the internet as well as her current location in her individual language learning continuum. From these results, the teacher can plan a humanistic, learner-centered syllabus.
CHAPTER 4

AN INTERNET-BASED EFL COURSE SYLLABUS

4.1 - CHOOSING A TRACK

There are two tracks an internet-based course can take: intra-class and inter-class. For all the exciting potential of the latter, it may not always be suitable to pursue that route. An intra-class course has the potential of drawing close human bonds between people who share the same physical space. Inter-class courses have that same sharing of physical space but included is an added dynamic, connecting with remote individuals through cyberspace. Both dynamics require energy and time expenditures from the people involved. Energy and time are two important factors to consider. Internet use is time consuming, takes a lot of energy, and puts a strain on the body. The eyes are especially taxed as are the hands and fingers, not to mention the discomfort of sitting at a terminal. Before committing to either tract, the teacher has to consider how much time the students will actually be on-line during class, and the possible consequences of this.
The teacher must also think about the directional of the energy. Does the teacher want the energy to be pointing inward, circulating among the members of the class or pointing outward into cyberspace? How will these two energy paths fit into a harmonious plan? This, as with all other matters, will be largely influenced by the exact nature of the course, its purpose and function.

The argument could be made that either an inter-class or intra-class syllabus could be a highly effective course for a given subject. For example, say the class being taught is an English for Academic Purposes course for Korean students preparing to continue their studies at universities in America. An intra-class course that focuses exclusively on authentic sites for its content and has students working with authentic texts found on these sites can be very practical and effective. An inter-class course would link students with a partner class in America, ESL students already in the university system or fulfilling language requirements before matriculation. The relationship can be one of big/little brother/sister, with the students in America serving as the knowers, the counselors, and the EFL students being the seekers of wisdom and knowledge. This pairing could lead to high energy exchanges, with very concrete and practical information being shared, each virtual partner benefitting on a personal and functional level. While this inter-class syllabus will still undoubtedly work with authentic texts, the amount to which it does will be diminished by the partner exchanges. The first might target discrete skills more effectively, and the second would provide indispensable practical knowledge and target affective issues. Another option is relegating virtual partner work to assignments outside of class time, keeping the syllabus intra-class for
classroom practice. This raises the possibility of a combined tract, an intra-class syllabus with inter-class homework projects.

A discrete skills class such as writing or reading can also be augmented in varying ways depending on the type of internet course given. An inter-class course has the benefit of providing the EFL learner with an international audience, where an intra-class course promises more hands-on attention and easier accessibility to other learners and the teacher.

The Korean group identified in the previous chapter averages into the intermediate English proficiency-intermediate internet proficiency type, both at the low intermediate level. This means that it’s feasible that they carry on fairly extensive exchanges with virtual partners, and they could with some effort grasp an understanding of a large percentage of texts found in various sites.

Both options offer their own set of unique opportunities and benefits to the learner. Close look at the nature of the course and student needs revealed that students in this class wanted communication, a chance to interact in a conversational way with others in English. Conversation can be interpreted to mean the use of colloquial language to establish relationships with others. The truth is, a strictly conversation focused course doesn’t suggest internet use. But since it’s an internet-based course, the essential facets of conversation can be transcribed into an internet format by designing a class whose focus is person-to-person interactions. This can be done either as an intra-class or inter-class syllabus.

4.2 - DESIGNING A COURSE FROM EXPERIENCE
This paper was written shortly after the pilot course was completed. Thus, many of the insights contained in the first two chapters are the result of reflection upon the course. The course did not have the kind of organization or cohesion necessary to have facilitated the kind of humanistic learning discussed in this paper. One can learn as much as and sometimes more from those things that don’t go well as from those things that do. This paper is a coming to terms with the things that went wrong and an affirmation of what went well. Mistakes can be seeds for great insights if the teacher is committed to understanding the dynamics of the learning process.

The class followed a mostly intra-class syllabus. Students exchanged e-mails with other members of the class, documented internet activity by keeping an internet log and making on-line dialogue journal entries. The topics were decided by the students on the first day of class. Each student was asked to write five topics he or she was interested in. The topics with the most votes were chosen by the teacher. An average of two class periods were spent on each topic. They included music, movies, sports, culture and travel. Authentic texts were chosen that related to the general topic headings. Work was done with these texts at the beginning of the class and during the second half of the class students conducted on-line searches to gather information on an aspect of the topic that most appealed to them. There was minimal contact with other individuals outside of the class. This was limited to the kind of discussion forums as found in Dave’s ESL Cafe, mentioned in Chapter 2.

The students’ English and internet proficiency levels were fairly accurately predicted by the self-assessment questionnaires completed on the first day of class, as discussed in Chapter 3. Thus, their internet skills were quite sufficient for the kind of
tasks they were asked to complete. What became a problem was the language they encountered in these sites. Internet language is quite idiomatic and culture specific. Students struggled with meaning in many cases which slowed and frustrated the learning process. While the authentic texts used in the presentation phase of the lessons was manageable, as they were carefully chosen, when students conducted their own searches, difficulties arose.

A parallel problem arose from the lack of purpose or direction of the searches. Finding information based simply on interest in a subject is not enough. Searches need to have very specific goals, as in the Scavenger Hunts and WebQuests mentioned in Chapter 2. When the goals are very specific, students are less likely to be bogged down by language they don’t know and have a greater chance of focusing on the overall gist of the language they encounter.

Perhaps the greatest flaw of the course was that it lacked a unifying theme. A smattering of topics was covered, with each successive week bringing with it a new topic and new tasks that bore no connection to what had been covered earlier. Thus the course lacked continuity, but more importantly, it lacked a deeper purpose with which students could identify. In short, though the rationale of creating an organic syllabus based on students’ needs and interests was well intentioned, it led to too much freedom for the student with a resulting dearth of structure, support and meaning. The remaining sections of this paper will discuss ways to endow an internet-based course with the kind of purpose and direction that can truly facilitate language learning, intercultural understanding and personal growth.
On a positive note, student feedback on the course was very promising. Though many did mention the issues of having had too much homework and having struggled with overly difficult language, these were counterbalanced by positive experiences. Most were excited about having conducted searches only in English. They revealed a sense of pride in themselves at being able to find and understand material from authentic sites even though it was overburdening at times. Many noted that their confidence with regard to learning English had risen due to the interactions between class members, with the teacher, and on-line. There was a definite sense that students felt they had done meaningful work, that they were not just learners in an isolated EFL class but had crossed a psychological and linguistic boundary into authenticity and international community. Interestingly enough, the lessons they enjoyed the most were the ones where they had the least amount of so-called freedom, lessons in which they were guided in quite a detailed way through sites. This supports the claim of the need for supportive structure. Finally, the mood in the media lab was mostly jovial. Fostering positive dynamics in the media lab as mentioned in Chapter 1 goes a long way to put students at ease and make them feel secure and comfortable. Even though there were the predicted technological glitches, the comical atmosphere curtailed stressful situations. There was a feeling of comradery at times, we humans versus those little silicon chips. If a teacher keeps a positive, light-hearted attitude, students will follow, and through the chaos real bonding can occur. Any shared experience holds within it the potential for coming together in a productive way. The teacher can be instrumental in making this happen.

The flawed aspects of the course still need further consideration. As was mentioned above, a unifying theme is needed for the crucial component of continuity.
There is another issue, one that perhaps the students of the course were not consciously aware of and hence did not mention. The course failed to access the truly miraculous feature of the internet: directed, sustained intercultural communication. Intra-class courses are valuable for certain learning contexts, but in this case, as the course was a communication-based course, an inter-class syllabus would have been far richer and rewarding. Inter-class courses offer motivational factors the intra-class type doesn’t. They have the added inspirational value of bestowing responsibility on the student to satisfy the obligations of cyber-interaction. Students don’t only have themselves to consider but also their class, their virtual partners and the distant class. While added responsibility can translate into added pressure, if implemented effectively, its main result can be meaningful and relevant learning.

Following is an outline for a fluid 16-week course syllabus of the inter-class type. The remaining sections describe a course that has not yet been taught at the time of writing. It is the result of internet-based educational experience and extensive research on the subject. While it is a theoretical proposal, the reasoning behind the content and progression of the course is founded on proven methodologies and pedagogy.

4.3 - LOGISTICS OF AN INTER-CLASS SYLLABUS

The procedures for setting up an inter-class course are quite involved. For one, a teacher will need to have made the decision to this type of class far in advance to begin circulating his desire to find a partner class through on-line teacher forums such as Tapped In or Cyber-journeys. When one advertises the wish to link up with another class, one should supply very detailed information about the exact levels of students, the
specifics of the localized context, the purpose and the content of the class, the intended
time and degree of interaction between classes, and possible projects. The chances of
finding a suitable partner are good but not guaranteed, so a teacher should always have a
back-up plan ready to implement. The back-up plan can be a largely intra-class syllabus
with limited inter-class exchanges. Or, if even that is not possible, as it may not be, an
interactive intra-class syllabus is called for. Because the inter-class option is what this
particular context seems to point toward, that is what will be discussed here. The
framework given for designing an inter-class syllabus is more or less the same for an
intra-class one.

Inter-class exchanges can vary in degree and scope. The most demanding
logistically and potentially most rewarding is the special case of mirror-classes. This is
the case where two classes follow mirror syllabi, working together intimately and
intensely the entire semester. The classes are inextricably bound together through mirror
activities. For each class week, the content will be student generated material produced
intra-class, sent through cyberspace and interpreted by the distant class. The intricate and
incisive potential for learning is a true miracle of instantaneous information transmission.

Teachers meet through a discussion forum. Once a partnership is established, the
two can work together to decide the common theme of the linked classes, the extent and
nature of interaction between virtual partners and groups, mini-projects and assignments,
and whether the course will have a product such as a collaborative webpage. The
following questions can help teachers form the foundations of a syllabus.

**4.4 - SEVEN QUESTIONS FOR DESIGNING AN INTER-CLASS COURSE**
1. What is the unifying theme of the course?

2. What are the goals of the course?

3. What are the learning objectives?

4. Which of the possible virtual interactions will be implemented?

5. What will be the specific intra-class and inter-class activities?

6. What will be the methods for assessment?

7. What will be the forum for student feedback?

**QUESTION 1. What is the unifying theme?**

Two classes with general all-purpose communication as their focus would be served well by having such a theme as travel or culture. These are broad enough themes that produce space for a great variety of content. The travel theme can include virtual trips to one another’s countries, hosted in turn by the respective classes. All students will have the chance to be host and traveler. Ultimately travel and culture are linked in this way, as the former is a physical action whereby the latter is experienced. This theme lends itself also to a lot of intra-class work, where students can work together to prepare questions, answers, and other materials for their virtual partners. The exchanges that are likely to occur hold the promise of being sincere, informative, friendly, interesting, colorful and melodic (as we shall see), thought-provoking, mind-expanding and practical. They will engage multiple intelligences and positively impact affective demeanor. How the theme plays out, keeping in mind that it is a fluid syllabus that will contain student-directed choices, will be demonstrated by addressing the other questions.
QUESTION 2. What are the goals?

The goals of the course will span language, computer, and intercultural boundaries.

**Language Goals.** Students will learn communicative language associated with travel. They will achieve increased confidence in engaging in personal and cultural communication. They will become more proficient speakers and writers for interpersonal communication related to travel, friendship and cultural expression. They will expand their vocabulary and be able to use new words in context.

**Computer Goals.** Students will be able to use e-mail to initiate and sustain a key-pal relationship. They will gain familiarity and comfort using English message boards. They will be able to use search engines to find information on English websites. They will gain confidence interacting with English websites. They will be able to create multi-media documents.

**Intercultural Goals.** Students will learn more about their own country by researching it for exchanges. They will learn more about the partner country by understanding texts supplied by the partner class. They will become more aware of and sensitive to foreign cultures.

QUESTION 3. What are the learning objectives?

The learning objectives can also be divided into the same above categories.

**Language Learning Objectives.** Students will be able to read extended discourse for general content and specific detail. Students will be able to write cohesive, organized e-mail messages. Students will be able to form grammatically correct
questions and follow-up questions relating to personal inquiry, cultural investigation and travel situations, and they will be able to answer questions pertaining to the same topics. They will be able to scan text for specific information. They will learn and use new vocabulary arising from searches and exchanges.

**Computer Objectives.** Students will be able to use e-mail and message boards. They will be able to interact with websites and use them to collect information. They will be able to import multi-media items into documents and download files from the internet for incorporation into multi-media documents.

**Intercultural Objectives.** Students will be able to express facts about their country. They will be able to understand cultural facts about another country. They will establish personal ties and engage in on-going communication with a virtual partner from another culture. They will appreciate a foreign culture by engaging in a good-will communicative relationship with a foreign culture.

**QUESTION 4. Which of the possible virtual interactions will be included?**

There are a number of ways the classes can communicate through cyberspace, including person-to-person and class-to-class exchanges. Key-pal partnerships can be established sometime after the second week into the course. The reason for not establishing partners right away is to give teachers at least a few class periods to gauge varying levels so that they can then pair up students with some concession to ability. Students keep the same partners throughout the course, with the exchange of messages being mandatory assignments and hopefully with extracurricular exchanges also occurring.
Another tool classes will definitely want to make use of is an inter-class message board. Through either of the schools, teachers should be able to obtain a private virtual conference room where messages can be posted, read and replied to. Another option is to contact the Tapped In site and create a space through that site. Through different tasks and activities, message boards can be a way to convey asynchronous information from class to class. This potential of having a place where one class can have the communal experience of viewing a posting by the other class should be utilized to its fullest. There is tremendous potential for intra-class bonding through the shared inter-class experience. Ways to access this potential are mentioned in the Activities section.

Organizing a class-to-class chat will depend largely on the time differences of the participating classes. A mid-morning class in Korea would have to connect with an evening class in South America. Another option is to have a special class meeting for the chat, but conflicting schedules might make that unlikely. Alternatively, the chats can be distant teacher-to-class. Another choice is to offer an optional class-to-class chat at an odd hour for whomever can make it.

**QUESTION 5. What will be the specific intra-class and inter-class activities?**

When thinking about the inter-class activities, teachers should consider the way different activities can bring the two groups together in meaningful ways. They should also consider the language learning potential of the activities, and different ways information through sharing can be presented to maximize learning. There are many fascinating routes the activities can take. One possible sequencing of activities is provided in section 4.4.
QUESTION 6. What will be the methods of assessment?

Depending on the requirements of the context, assessment can be conducted online in a variety of ways. The Korean university context requires the administering of both a mid-term and final exam, each worth 30% of the final grade. This requirement is fixed.

The mirror-class format lends itself to fair and humanistic assessment. First of all, all the material that the classes have worked on are permanent (for the duration of the course at least) records that appear on the message board or as multi-media files. Students can feel secure knowing that the content of their exams will come from these sources. Everything that has been studied for the course is neatly contained in easily accessible locations.

For the test themselves, the teacher may want to exercise a dual assessment option. Since the course is inter-based, at least one part should be administered through an internet communication forum. Since the classes have been doing so much work on the internet, the teacher might also want to include a face-to-face interview with students about the material covered. For the mid-term exam, this will give the teacher an idea of what the students are feeling, their mid-term review of the course. Teacher and student can talk about the merits of the course as well as any problems the student is having. If the teacher wishes, he or she can make the internet-based exam worth all the credit for the exam, and make the chats mandatory but informal and non-graded parts of the exam. This will depend on what the teacher has observed about student action and interaction in the course thus far.
Options for the internet-based exam are also intriguing. A written test can be given to students. Classes can compose a list of questions they think should be asked about their own culture and country. They can post these as study or review questions which the distant students can use to direct their study for the exam. They will also be tested on the information they have identified about their country. On exam day, teachers can choose from these dual postings and ask students to write on a number of them. The whole exam can be done on-line, but as typing skills may prove to be a major hindrance and unfair cause for anxiety, the exam questions can be posted on the message board, students access the board and then write their answers on provided paper. As questions, answers and extended text have all been worked with intensively with attention to accuracy, it is fair to grade the exams including accuracy as a criteria. As it is not specifically a writing class, some concessions should be made to style. But sentence formation, vocabulary and content seem to be fair criteria. A rubric that categorizes the proficiency levels should be made to ensure consistent analysis.

**QUESTION 7. How will feedback be conducted?**

Students will have many chances to offer on-going feedback. Feedback can be done on a weekly basis as an informal class chat at the end of class. More formal feedback can be done as e-mail messages sent to each student containing questions to answer. The students answer the questions by replying to the message. This will have the effect of a feedback dialogue journal entry where the teacher responds with a counseling message. Feedback can also be given through face-to-face chats at around the mid-point and end of the course.
4.5 - SEQUENCE OF ACTIVITIES IN AN INTER-CLASS SYLLABUS

Cycle 1 - Course Introduction and Orientation

On the first day of class, teachers hand out self-assessment surveys for students to complete (see Chapter 3). He explains the syllabus, namely the plan for mirror-class interaction with a distant class. He asks students about their impressions of this plan. Also on the first day, the class engages in a Scavenger Hunt activity or a simple WebQuest (see Chapter 2) so that students can have a taste of the learning challenge. It serves the dual function of giving the teacher an idea of students’ internet strengths and weaknesses, which he will then use along with the surveys to determine orientation activities that are needed and the pacing of the course. This will also be the time for students to set up free e-mail accounts if they don’t already have one.

Cycle 2 - Teacher Introductions via Message Boards

In the beginning weeks, classes can first begin to interact by using the message board format. Both teachers can post self-introductions for the distant classes to read. In this way, students are meeting the other class’ teacher first, his or her introduction serving as a model for content. The teachers can be careful to interweave cultural points into their introductions, speaking about the context in which they teach, the country in which they live and some facts about their lives. Each teacher posting will be read as an intra-class communal reading by the distant class. Language practice can be done by working with concrete language relating to factual information. Instead of the hollow textbook characters whose fictional lives students are used to talking about, this format
offers a real person to get to know, real facts to understand and ponder. It has the practical function and spirit of establishing acquaintances with one’s cyber-homestay mother or father, one’s cyber-host.

As a follow-up to this activity, students can work together in small groups to prepare questions for the distant teacher. The class can decide together on the most interesting questions to post to the distant teacher. A response which will be waiting for each class the following week will help recycle the previous week’s material as well as further the development of the relationship with the distant teacher.

**Cycle 3 - Introducing countries via Message Boards**

As an intra-class exercise, the class can work together to produce an introductory statement about their country. The teacher can use a mind map to visually organize students’ ideas for what to include in the statement. Then students work in pairs to prepare statements that flesh out the ideas collected on the board. A selection of statements is chosen to produce a student-generated paragraph or two for posting to the message board. This statement along with the one produced by the distant class will remain on the message board for the duration of the course, as will all other work, forming a corpus of inter-class activity that all students can revisit at individual will or as part of in-class language practice and review.

Classes use the next class period to read the postings by the distant class. These readings will undoubtedly be engaging for students, especially knowing how much effort went into them. This calls attention to another benefit of mirror-class partnerships. Motivation is enforced knowing that the work is mirrored, that the amount of energy one
class expends is equal to the other. Being aware of mutual efforts also serves to establish a bond between classes, augmented by shared whole-class-generated products written with sincerity and care. One can best appreciate the harvest by tilling and planting.

After checking understanding of the passage, students can then form questions that arise from the statements. Instead of posting it as a list to be read by the whole class, which is still an option, this time they can each post one question to the board with students from the partner class, the knowers in this case, each handling one question to answer. Depending where this fits into the exact schedule, this may be students’ first individual exchanges. They introduce themselves briefly via the questions they post and answer. The mirror-class symmetry means they’ll in turn be seeker, learner, knower and teacher. Their questions are self-generated, and then they become an authority when it’s time to supply their answer.

For intra-class practice, the questions and answers can be discussed, and can be collected into one text as transcripts to be worked with in various ways.

**Cycle 4 - Key-pal Questionnaires**

Once teachers have had a few weeks to assess their students, they can decide together on the key-pal pairing. The key-pal partner list will be posted on the message board, and students will be directed there to note their new pal. If this pairing follows the activities mentioned above, it will be with increased investment that they will begin communicating with their partners. A lot of class time will already have been devoted to the other class’ culture and in sharing with the other class. The dialogue, the inter-class communication is already in full swing. By having a solid introduction to and a growing
interest in each other’s countries, individual exchanges will be enriched by the information already learned, the dynamic already established.

**Cycle 5 - WebQuest on Famous People**

To continue the inter-cultural exchange, the generationally relevant sub-theme of pop culture can be a great vehicle by which important people and movements are discussed. Any number of sub-themes or topics can serve this purpose: famous people, historical landmarks, big news stories. Pop culture has the added energy of speaking directly to the age groups involved.

As an intra-class activity, the teacher elicits major facets of domestic pop culture and collects them on the board. Topics such as music, film, fashion, art will probably be included. These topic headings can be fleshed out to include actors/actresses, directors, movie titles, musicians, songs, fashion trends and so on. Students work in groups of three on a topic that appeals to them, with an effort made to have every group working on a different topic if possible.

The task for the students is to create a multi-media report with information culled from the internet. For example, say the topic is music. Students choose a famous musician they like, keeping in mind that their choice will be serving as a representative of their country’s music. They use the internet to gather some factual information about him/her. They search for pictures of the musician and possibly video clips. They can also search for a song located in the vast mp3 file libraries on the net (unless legislation has eliminated it by now). Finally they can find the lyrics to the song and translate them loosely into English.
This will be quite a lengthy project that could easily span four class hours for its intra-class completion and then another class period for the reading of the distant class’ reports. All the skills will be used on a rotating basis throughout. This may be students’ first lengthy exposure to authentic sites in class, so an internet warm-up like a Scavenger Hunt might be a good idea.

Two important considerations arise once the internet is introduced. Korean students are especially prone to rote copying. This is a very serious downside to internet use for Korean classes in which blatant plagiarism is like a weed that if not attended to can overgrow the entire learning process. This can be avoided with the inclusion of pre-surfing brainstorming activities. A second consideration is that once students start accessing the web, they may be bogged down by the amount of information they encounter. This danger can be partially avoided at least by having students prepare for their searches by listing specific bits of information they want to find, thus producing their own information base for on-line scanning. The teacher can prepare students for this by teaching them scanning techniques and having them complete scanning tasks on teacher-chosen passages pertaining to famous people, a preview of what they may encounter on the web.

Before students use the internet, that is, with their computer monitors turned off to eliminate temptation, they do brainstorming in small groups. Given their topic, whether it be a famous athlete, politician, actor, etc., they decide on one famous person to cover. In their groups they brainstorm things they already know about this person. Then they decide on other facts they want to include but do not know. They compile a list of information they want to find on the internet. The teacher circulates around the class and
helps students streamline and focus their lists. This list will then serve as a scanning base, so that students know exactly what they need to gather from various sites. Then, and only then, the monitors get turned on, the students divide the work evenly between them, and they each begin searching on their own terminals. Alternatively, they could share one terminal between them, with one student operating the computer, another directing the search content, and the third writing the information down. When the information has been gathered, students work together to order it all into a concise paragraph. A second paragraph can be about students’ impressions of this person, and this person’s significance to the culture.

Once the text part is complete, a second search is conducted to find pictures, audio and video clips to be compiled into a single multi-media document. Of course, some class time will be devoted to instruction on this. The instruction itself can serve as a total physical response activity. Students are given a handout of instructions which the teacher explains and offers assistance on.

The reports, once finished, will be sent either as attached files to e-mails or the classes can use the Tapped In website for document sharing. In the next class period, both classes enjoy the rich reports prepared by their counterparts. The reports will provide students with very concrete and interesting information about the respective cultures.

As a follow-up, students exchange e-mails with their virtual partners for homework in which they give feedback on the reports that have been shared. The feedback should be positive, noting the facts that most struck them and any questions or comments the reports have initiated.
Cycle 6 - Cyber-tours

In the next cycle, students prepare to ‘visit’ each other’s countries. Distant classes will serve as on-line interactive travel guide resources, counseling students on specific details about their country that will help students prepare for a trip to their country.

As an intra-class activity, classes work as a whole to draw up a list of questions to ask the distant class. The teacher can start the brainstorming process by providing a few guide questions. Some questions might be: How much is city bus/subway fare? How much does a budget hotel cost per night? How much money are they likely to spend in a day of travel? What is the terrain like? What is the weather like now? What kind of clothing should they bring? What are important landmarks they should visit? What are some laws or social norms endemic to that country that the traveler should know (i.e., can one walk in the streets with an open beer container in hand)?

Once again, students can work in small groups or pairs to compile a list of questions. The class works as a whole to compile a final list of questions, thus drawing up a transcript to be posted to the message board. During the next class period, classes work to answer the posted questions. Students can work in pairs at first to answer questions, and then the class can work as a whole to form a consensus on the best answers. The answers are posted and read in the following class period.

Because these activities will be on a one-week delay for their mirror-class completion, there may be some remaining class time after the intra-class task has been finished. During this time teachers can initiate the next major activity which will be the
planning of a cyber-tour. Each class will create a five-day itinerary of its city/country intended for the distant class.

The activity begins as an whole-class brainstorming session where the major facets of travel are written on the form in mind map format. Some facets can include: food, shopping, landmarks, museums, walking tours and nightlife. Task groups of three or four are assigned one facet of travel. Students brainstorm places to visit and descriptions of these places, noting their location in the city.

The teacher posts a printed map of the city on the whiteboard. The map is divided into four quadrants. Students come to the board in turn and mark the places they’ve identified for travel by writing a letter denoting the category, say “F” for food, “L” for landmarks, etc. The class breaks into groups of four, each group responsible for one area of the city. Their task is to create an itinerary for one day. Groups use the identified places on the map to plot the day’s schedule.

Once a thoughtful itinerary has been settled on, groups then go to the net to find text, pictures and other multi-media items to augment their itineraries. Each destination in the tour should include a text-based description and other multi-media enhancements, where possible. For example, plans to eat at a noodle shop can be accompanied by pictures of the dish as it’s served or at the least a description of the food. Landmarks can be accompanied by pictures and text. Cultural events such as a traditional music performance can be accompanied by audio clips. Each group is responsible for putting together a multi-media document as in the famous people WebQuest task.

This is one case where a lesson will benefit from a print source, namely maps. Sometime early in the semester, the partner teachers should snail mail good colorful
maps of their cities and/or countries to each other, so that when this lesson is taught, they can display the maps in their classrooms. The week after trading documents, with maps in central view of the class, the classes ‘travel’ through the foreign cities.

Students can follow-up their ‘travel’ experiences by sending e-mails to their partners noting the high points of the trip, what they enjoyed most, what they learned.

**Cycle 7 - Thank-you notes**

At this point the semester will be drawing to a close. To bring closure to the class, students work to prepare thank-you notes for the distant class’ hospitality and kindness. This can be done in a variety of ways. One idea is to have each student prepare a thank you note, giving their overall impressions of the intercultural exchange and saying something about what most excited or interested them. Teachers can walk around to assist students in composing the thank-you notes. Then students post their notes individually to the on-line message board. In the final week of class, each class has the shared experience of reading the thank you notes from the distant class. Students not only consolidate what they’ve learned and review it, but on a deeper level, students are expressing what has moved them, interested them, fascinated them about the other country.

At this time, intra-class closure can include final thoughts on the exchange, their feedback on the course, and congratulations to each other on an effort well made.

The specific nature of the course will give a teacher an indication of the different routes a course can take. The teacher should strive to access the communicative potential of the internet as much as possible. By designing an inter-class syllabus, the teacher can
serve to motivate students and give them added incentives for learning. A mirror-class syllabus allows for authentic intercultural relationships to develop. The content is enriched by the students’ own selves; they have the confidence to assert what they know and can reciprocate information sharing by being active listeners for their distant partners. By keeping certain cardinal points in mind, the teachers will ensure that the course is pedagogically sound and humanistically implemented. A thoughtful progression of activities and tasks leads students through a fascinating journey of intercultural and interpersonal sharing and caring.

CONCLUSION:

CLOSING THE LEARNING SPACE

*Imagine*
*all the people*
*sharing all the world...*
- John Lennon

Options are just options until teachers turn them into realities. Setting up an internet-based university course requires quite a bit of initial time investment. It requires becoming an active member of educational virtual communities and forming relationships with other educators through communicative internet forums. Those who approach membership with a spirit of cooperation and visionary evolution will quickly
find kindred spirits wanting to engage in thoughtful dialogue about the potential for linking individual learners through internet use.

Humanistic educators owe it to their students to introduce them to the unprecedented opportunities that await them through the internet. When this is done on the scale of class-to-class interaction, the cyber-connections will quickly materialize as emotional bonds and intellectual discovery.

The internet is in its infancy. The myriad of options already available will pale in comparison to new tools the future will bring. Imagine instantaneous video conferencing with crystal clear reception and audio. Even better, imagine interfaces from individual terminals where one can see and talk to their partner from across the world. Imagine that these interfaces exist as a menu, and that learners can choose from a variety of camera angles, affording them one-to-one interactions with any member of the distant and local class. They can also choose a view of the whole classroom or a selected group of learners. Imagine small group tasks being completed on-line with members at different physical locales. Imagine having the option to choose either text-based, video-based, or audio based methods of on-line exchanges. And imagine having the option to customize some combination of the three.

Imagine the future of MOOs, virtual text-based spatial simulations. Imagine when they become visually and aurally-based. Imagine when they become kinesthetically-based. Students will have concrete experiences that will blur the boundary of the virtual and real. Students will exist in a virtual space with every sense engaged. They will be able to project themselves holographically into this virtual space so that they are three-dimensional entities in that virtual space. Individuals from distant
locales who are projected into this space will be able to interact with each other as if they were physically present. Imagine classes that meet in a virtual space in this way.

One might argue that this will lead people into a pit of virtual reality, where plasticity has overtaken the natural. This is why humanistic education needs to be inextricably linked with internet-based education. Humanism endeavors to serve the individual, to help the individual discover and grow both emotionally and intellectually. Whatever the technological advances, teachers need to consider the individual learner first. Whatever will provide individuals with mindful experiential learning where their personalities are expressed and fulfilled, those will be incorporated by humanistic educators into systematized programs. Whatever abuses the individual and saps him or her of vital life energy, those will be identified by humanistic educators and avoided. In this age of the internet, humanism is more needed than ever, because humanistic education is the ethical force, the human face among the wire, the soul in the machine.

New options will come from enlightened educators, united and in close contact with each other, virtual or real. Ideas will be deemed beneficial or detrimental by virtual communities of educators who have established permanent school-to-school ties. The fundamental unchanging facet of the internet is that it connects distant locales. In years to come, when the internet has become a cornerstone of any educational practice, school-to-school partnerships will be commonplace, indeed be a prerequisite for acceptance as an educational institution. The world will be brought closer and closer, with intercultural exchanges that are so multi-dimensional and extensive as to become part of everyday life. Teachers will be the models for these exchanges. The spirit they bring to the exchange is the spirit their students will emulate. Learners in classrooms will be ambassadors of
good-will across cultures. If ever world peace is to become a possibility, it will be when the world grows together and then grows up together. The internet holds the potential for the world to do this.

Imagine. And then act. The bridges have already been built. They’re waiting to be traversed.

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