



Live Moderated Chat Transcript

Computers and The Internet – what do they offer ELT?

- <Georgina>** Hi, welcome to the live chat session with Jeremy Harmer. Today we'll be looking at Computers and the Internet.
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- <wendy>** Do you think teachers are apprehensive of using computers and the internet in class? Do they think they may not be as computer literate as their sts?
- <wendy>** Do you think using computers encourages interactivity in the classroom?
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Hi Wendy! Well, I think it computers can either encourage interaction or kill it dead. It depends how computer rooms in schools are laid out and/or how teacher gets students to do tasks with the computer and that's quite apart from the kind of thing we're doing right now (which is really interactive, I think!)
- <wendy>** I think you're right. The teacher has to be confident with the use of computers first!
- <Georgina>** Hi Shaun, welcome along.
- <Bob>** So what ways do you suggest we can use the Internet interactively?
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Hi Georgina and everyone
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Yes, wendy, I agree (Hi Shaun, by the way), tho' it's more important for the teacher to have worked out the kinds of activity he or she wants the SS to take part in. But of course teachers should be computer/Internet proficient (up to a point) just as they are tape-recorder proficient, board proficient etc Should making teachers feel comfortable be part of their training?
- <Bob>** Hi Bob. I think so, yes - though that depends on the kind of situation they are going to be teaching in. But we train teachers to use the OHP don't we? We'd be crazy not to. It's beginning to g that way with computers, I think.
- <ShaunBrasilia>** I think the internet is a tool for teachers to use as a resource. Not really effective in the classroom at the moment. I am speaking to you from my classroom and regularly use the internet to discuss subjects with my students
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Well, Shaun, I certainly agree with you that the Internet is a powerful resource (although we have all wasted hours of our lives trying to access that resource successfully hours and hours on search engines) but the Internet is also really appropriate for certain kinds of projects and longer task sequences where SS search and discuss to build something up I think.
- <wendy>** How would you control the student's urge to surf or waste time during internet activities in class?
- <Georgina>** What about the point that Wendy made? How can we control students in class?
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Hi wendy (welcome back!) I think everything depends on the tasks we give students
- <Bob>** Did any of you have any training with computers, I can use them and love the Internet, but don't feel comfortable with using it with my students - the OHP doesn't seem so daunting!
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** There's a good article in this month's development pack about that very subject (Multimedia Madness) I think we have to pre-prepare some of the searches for our SS and cut the task down so they can't surf forever!
- <ShaunBrasilia>** This is the problem. Chat sites in English can help sometimes if you have a lab. I monitor the students by being another person. It really opens up their horizons. I am thinking more for teenagers at the moment. It gives them confidence and they can become more autonomous
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Bob, I think we all sort of grew into using this technology by accident. But it's now got so complex that future teachers will need training so they don't waste as much time as we did learning!
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Bob I agree. sometimes we have too many options which take us away from

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- the real issue our students
- <Bob>** Yes, but I think I need - or at least want more confidence, does anyone have any tips?
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Bob, how many computers do you have in any one room?
- <Georgina>** Bob, what you need to make sure of is, like any lesson, it is well planned take a small activity first and use it as only part of your lesson - or even for homework
- <Georgina>** try getting them to a site like Ebookers (if they are still running) to find out how much a flight might cost to a chosen destination then incorporate that into a lesson on travel - start small and progress.
- <Bob>** We have about 6 pcs.
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Bob, with 6 pcs you could give 6 groups of students a different web page each where they had to find some info to share
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Power point is a good option to get into which comes with windows. there are some cheap self teach CDs about that can make your presentations of grammar really successful
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Shaun that sounds really great - tell us more.
- <wendy>** The internet is great for lessons on travel and cultures in other countries.
- <Georgina>** Yes, and offline is just as interesting and different to the students.
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Like the kind of travel things Georgina speaks of. Then you've got a perfect little info gap activity.
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Taking up Wendy's point, students could compare even simple statistics like the population/climate of different cities around the world but it will be far less chaotic if you've saved the web sites as favourites or you give your students the addresses to go to.
- <Georgina>** or a pairwork activity - the medium may be different, but the lessons can follow familiar patterns.
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Power point is based on using slides like the OHP with transparencies but you can have sound and movement. It is great for presenting simple rules of grammar. Showing sentence stress oh it is limitless as with regards its use. however sometimes it can take over a class and a teachers time so care must be taken and lots of practice
- <Georgina>** Do you mean by animating the presentations?
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Shaun, it sounds great. Is there sometimes a danger with PP that the medium becomes the message? Does it inhibit your teacher-ness'?
- <Bob>** That's a good idea, I might try that! What do you mean by inhibit your teacher-ness, Jeremy?
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Yes Georgina. Visual and audio learners can both benefit from Power point presentations if the technology is available for teachers
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Bob, with a bboard the teacher is flexible and 'instant'. With PP is that flexibility compromised in any way?
- <Georgina>** That's a good point, though I suppose if you're set up with enough equipment, you could change it - or even revert to using a whiteboard!!!
- <ShaunBrasilia>** I agree PPP can be a danger but many course books still use this approach and teachers still use this way so it so this option may help
- <Georgina>** It certainly gives a different approach - I guess one day we'll all be incorporating flash presentations in to ppt.
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Shaun, you're right of course. I didn't mean to sound unenthusiastic especially if the SS are enthusiastic themselves - if it makes a splash. But with all technology, learning how to maximise its use whilst at the same time keeping it in its place is part of experience, isn't it? I guess you've reached that point.
- <ShaunBrasilia>** Maybe you can add a chapter to Scott Thornbury's How to teach grammar for using ppt.
- <Jeremy_Harmer>** Great idea. We'll suggest that to him for a new edition some day!
- <Bob>** I think that's why CD ROMs haven't made as big an impact as they could, because people don't know what to do to incorporate them into lessons.



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<Georgina> How about online courses? Here's a question from Shaun
<ShaunBrasilia> What do you think about courses being sold on the internet?
<Bob> Is this viability? What is out there now is just free material not in any order.
<Jeremy_Harmer> What does everyone else think about Online courses? I'd be interested to hear before charging in!
<Bob> If they are full courses, I think they'd be great
<Bob> I like some material I've seen, but there's lacking structure and progress.
<ShaunBrasilia> I personally don't think these can take the place of a school but could be an option for some learners.
<Georgina> Certainly for those too busy or remote to attend classes. Jeremy - how about you?
<wendy> At least they are easily updateable. You do not have to wait for a new edition with new content.
<Jeremy_Harmer> My gut feeling is that people learn languages in groups because (a) they're at school learning to interact with each other and the world, and (b) because we like getting together to see and smell and talk to each other, BUT some people do like to learn on there own, and some people can't go to classes, and for them. Online courses are fantastic, especially if they maximise the potential of the Internet. Online courses must use the features of the Internet (that you don't have to be so linear) and not just a piece paper coursebooks, for example.

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**<Bob>** Do you think that CD and Internet hybrid courses are the way of the future  
**<Georgina>** CD ROMs with internet connectivity do seem to solve the problem of bad connections - or expensive connections. Longman are bringing out some online courses next year, so let's see what happens there!  
**<Georgina>**  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>** I think that's right, Georgina, especially since somethings on CDs are so much quicker than when you are Online, but the whole point of the Internet is its reach and it up-to-date-ness.  
**<Georgina>** Yes - and you can get different types of media on them that isn't possible without broadband.  
**<Georgina>** What sort of students do you think will benefit from using online course?  
**<wendy>** Georgina - for business students working on their own.  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>** Difficult question, G. Students who want/have to study alone. (Wendy, I agree!) Especially if they are pressed for time (like business people), but I can also see a language school, for example, programming online course use into their timetable, or at least making it a feature (a pathway) for their self-access facility.  
**<Bob>** definitely business students. we offer some courses at our school and we end up turning away some business clients  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>**  
**<wendy>** what about online short courses?  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>** Sorry, Bob, turning them away from what? Why?  
**<Bob>** oh, because we can't get classes at a time to suit them.  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>** Wendy, I think short courses would be great especially if you could come back for more whenever you wanted.  
**<Ren>** We sometimes have to pass beginner sts to another school down the road because it's uneconomical to open a class.  
**<Georgina>** Short online course would probably help in your situation Ren  
**<Jeremy\_Harmer>** Bob, oh I see, and so you're saying that these business people, for example, could go online instead or come into your self access facility, perhaps and work online there?  
**<Bob>** Yes, why not, and then we could be more flexible with class times  
**<Ren>** Yes, but what's out there to do that? The online material I have seen isn't



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- easily manageable for beginners.
- <Georgina>** It is a problem there's heaps of material out there on a variety of different sites but it comes down to the teacher hours needed to sift through it.
- <Ren>** Have any of you used an online course?
- <Bob>** No
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** My own feeling is that it's coming! The 1st wave of materials will be overtaken soon by more sophisticated stuff with interactive tutorial possibilities and various tie-ins. It'll get better!
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** I've tried out some Spanish material, and looked at quite a lot of Online material, but so far visiting once or twice is OK, but the incentive to stick with it has not been adequately provided.
- <Georgina>** I tried an online Spanish course, but in the end it turned out to be an email service and no interaction. I needed a teacher.
- <Bob>** So what about the teacher vs computer and Teacher plus computer I see that article is in this pack how can we as directors or senior teachers convince teachers that they won't be out of a job or will we?
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** Good question, Bob. I included that article because I think it is quite provocative. I have to say I am unconvinced by the idea that computers are better language presenters than teachers (who have paper and technological support to back them up) The Internet will never replace the teacher in my lifetime, but as an extra resource it's just fantastic!
- <wendy>** what courses are coming out soon that provide the 'real teacher' element?
- <Georgina>** Longman are bringing out a series of courses, which have truly been developed with the teachers needs in mind.
- <Georgina>** They have a selection of business courses and general English courses although the student role is an integral part the team working on these have really tried to put themselves in the teachers place [www.englishsuccess.com](http://www.englishsuccess.com) has more details on the courses I think we'll all have to wait and see how they change teaching if indeed they do.
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** And you can bet everyone else is working at it too - especially the bit about being (a) teacher-friendly and (b) giving students a chance to interact with tutors if they are not working with a classroom teacher.
- <Georgina>** Let's hope so, the more competition there is out there, the better it is for both the teacher and the student.
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** Absolutely right, G. It is getting exciting, isn't it!
- <Ren>** I'll go and check them out.
- <wendy>** Thanks for the information.
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** The other incredible benefit of the Internet, it seems to me is the way teachers can talk to each other and share experience and ideas.
- <Ren>** Here's a tech question Does anyone have any problems accessing sites because of the technology they have - non standard operating systems or old browsers
- <Georgina>** Ren, that's something we consider in developing our websites, both [ELTForum.com](http://ELTForum.com) and [Longman.com](http://Longman.com)
- <Georgina>** take every care to make sure the sites are compatible, and I'm sure most people do but when you're dealing with a global market, as we do, we have to move forward, but also provide the best available at the moment.
- <Jeremy\_Harmer>** Ren, yeah, it can be really frustrating. But again (sorry to repeat myself) it's getting better and better!
- <Bob>** This has been great, it's my first time in here and I must admit, I was a bit dubious, but I have found this interesting. I've got to go now but I'll be back next time!
- <wendy>** To keep up-to date with the latest versions of browsers and plug-ins so that you can view material on the internet I check [www.macromedia.com](http://www.macromedia.com), their site can even detect if you do not have software to view stuff and some downloads are free.
- <Georgina>** Yes, that's a good suggestion Wendy - most sites use plug ins that are free



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to download that way everyone can use the sites.

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Ed. At this point everyone said their goodbyes, commenting on how interesting the session had been. If you're reading this now, why not go to The Forum to find out when the next live chat session is and come along to share your views.