

INSTANT LESSONS – BOTH IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM

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Introduction

The Internet has been touted by many as the world's largest library. In many ways, however, it is a disorganized library without a librarian. Now the potential of the Internet is being realized with a resource that is easy for language teachers to take advantage of.

English-To-Go (www.english-to-go.com) produces photocopiable lessons and stores them on the Internet in a searchable library designed exclusively for teachers. English-To-Go supplies a variety of resources, the main one being "Instant Lessons" - English language training material based around Reuters news articles. These are printable, topical lesson plans that exploit current news articles. As a follow on to classroom work, there are also Instant Workbook (www.instantworkbook.com) exercises. These are online interactive activities for students and are linked directly to Instant Lessons. Grammar points are either further extended, material recycled or students can further practice reading and listening using material on the same topics as have been used in class. Teachers can choose specific exercises for students to do either in a computer lab or as homework exercises. The activities are fun and rewarding and teachers are easily able to control those exercises students are to do.

The following link <http://www.selfaccess.com/iatefl> will take you to a page where photocopiable materials, comprehensive teachers' notes and answer key and on-line exercises have been provided. Below is a lesson outline showing how one teacher has used these materials.

Title: Bah Humbug!

Level: Intermediate

Time: 90 minutes

Aims:

- to enable students to listen for specific information
- to familiarise students with Christmas traditions
- to enable students to understand and use “like” and “as” in context
- to practise first person narrative writing

Preparation:

Print lesson and photocopy.

Procedure

This lesson was used as a lead up to Christmas. The theme of Christmas was introduced using Christmas cards and then students’ opinions on the good and bad things about Christmas were elicited and written on the board. Students then wrote down a short text that was read out three times by way of introduction to the text.

The 7 Pre-Reading and Reading Activities were then completed in the classroom. Upon completion of the language section, students were given background information to Dicken’s “A Christmas Carol”, the origin and meaning of the words “Bah humbug”, (provided in teachers’ notes) and then taken to a computer lab. Learners were asked to log in to <http://www.instantworkbook.com> using a username and password that was valid for five days. This password allowed students to view only those exercises selected by the teacher – in this instance the 4 exercises linked to the “Bah Humbug!” lesson.

The first two exercises students were asked to do were both listening activities – a multiple choice exercise and a cloze. This particular listening was the dictation text students first heard as an introduction in the classroom. However, this time students were exposed to a different speaker, a different accent and given control over how many times they heard the text. Many students felt more confident after recycling the listening in this way, as dictation exercises can prove challenging for some.

After completing the listening exercises, students were then placed in pairs – two students to one computer. This was done to increase peer interaction and led to much discussion before choices were selected. Students then completed the vocabulary exercise relating to the article in the “Bah Humbug!” lesson and reading exercise based on “A Christmas carol”.

For homework students were then asked to write a diary entry for Colin Wood from inside his bunker. This was to be printed and saved on disc to allow for peer correction the following day.

Conclusion

The diary entry activities in this lesson were successfully used as vehicles to practise different skills: listening, text comprehension, and writing. The pre-reading and reading activities worked well together and students really enjoyed the opportunity to work with the listening text again in the computer lab.