

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Why not Google it?

Tips for Using Google in a language classroom

By Gayleen Mackereth

There are many ways in which teachers can use Google for language teaching which you may not have thought of. Firstly set your webpage at www.google.com then try a few of these tips below.

Target language search

On the Google home page, restrict the results of your search to the language of choice by using Google's 'Preferences' (beside the 'Search' rectangle) Using 'Language tools' in the same spot allows you to search in English but find pages in another language with translations alongside. Try it!

Images

Need an image to put into your presentation? Double click 'Images' (top left) of the Google home page and enter your search. You will soon come upon a large number of images, many of which are free to be used, which will probably suit your purpose. However, BEWARE! a lot of images are copyright and you cannot use them for inserting in documents you will hand round the class unless you get permission from the website listed below the image. You may also need to think twice about what you load on publicly accessible sites when you realize all images on public sites can be scooped up by Google and published under 'Images.' I got a shock when found myself there after I typed my name in!

Powerpoints

To find a ready made Powerpoint, say on festivals for Year 9, if you don't have time to make one, add the suffix .ppt after your search in the Search box and see what comes up! (Make sure you are searching in the target language).

Vocabulary

If you want to get a list of similar words a handy tool is to use the term define followed by a colon then the word. e.g. define:coffee or even define:Fêtes Google immediately brings up several collocations, definitions or references which help expand vocabulary.

[Google Suggest](#) (you need to download the latest Google toolbar) is another way of bringing up a whole lot of collocations some of which will surprise you.

Google Docs

One of the best little known uses, Google Docs offers collaborative word processing, Powerpoint and a spreadsheet. It is like a free web based Microsoft Word but it is collaborative. Hence a teacher can set up a Powerpoint in a classroom on the other side of the school or world and once participants are registered, all can contribute or improve the work done by the others. (I wish I had used this tool when I was getting students to prepare Year10 ppt.s on their school for viewing by our sister school). Each group prepared a different aspect such as: subjects studied,

sports and arts, tuck shop food, etc but I had to go to a lot of trouble to amalgamate it all on to one ppt. called: Notre Collège to send overseas. Now it could be co-operatively done in class using the ppt in Google Docs and could at the same time be viewed by the sister school's class without even needing to email it or send it on a CD.

[Google Earth](#) takes students with amazing accuracy right to a street in their target country.

[Google Maps](#) (these can be accessed straight from Google Earth or separately) offers accurate maps of an area complete, often with a gallery of photos loaded by readers. Students can ask for directions from point A to point B and read the outcome in the target language. The 'My Maps' feature allows learners to mash up and tailor-makes maps they can add descriptive text to, add digital images and even drawings!

If you set [iGoogle](#) as a home page (but note a number of the aforesaid uses must be entered through www.google.com not iGoogle) you can get students to present their hometowns complete with digital images, weather forecasts, current events, foreign language dictionary and time clock for the target language, country or city.

Other Google applications are www.blogger.com where your students can blog in the target language. I find blogging in the target language an excellent way to stimulate productive language.

[Google groups](#) allows asynchronous class discussions.

Finally, [Google Scholar](#) is ideal for teachers looking up theories of second language acquisition.

For other indispensable tips on Searching with Google go to:

www.google.com/help/cheatsheet.html

So HAPPY GOOGLING!

Some other useful web based ideas

[DEL.ICIO.US](#) <http://delicious.com>

You don't use del.icio.us? Why ever not? Here you bookmark all your favourite sites with tags. Instead of having different bookmarks on every computer, Del.icio.us makes it easy to have a single set of bookmarks. Even when you are at school, you can still get to your bookmarks on the Delicious website.

It's like a snowball. When others use your bookmarks you can then access all the sites they have bookmarked too, so there is a growing corpus of associated knowledge. So if I tag a site I like as: French activities for juniors then when other people bookmark my find I then get hundreds of similar sites they have bookmarked, which saves me a great deal of time searching

Eg: I bookmarked: Learn French by podcast.com and associated tags brought up

[Learn French](#), [French Pod](#), [French flashcards on Edufire](#), [Learn French vocabulary lists](#), [French and Francophone radio stations](#) and many more.

WIKIS

Don't forget to wiki. In the last Polyglot I recommended www.pbwiki.com.

I still believe this is the most user friendly wiki site available incorporating coloured text, pictures, video, etc.

I have produced a resource using pbwiki for teachers of combined Senior classes (Years 12 and 13 French) which incorporates all the vocabulary and grammar for these years with each chapter leading on to further study of senior themes. This is any time any place use of IT. Teachers are able to comment on student work on the site and add any material they wish. You can preview chapters at www.eduvite.pbwiki.com and go to En Caledonie link, or contact me on mackereth.g@gmail.com for more information and a subscription to the full site.

The internet has boundless possibilities!

Easy Internet

by Inka Helwig

For those who missed the Easy Internet presentation at Conference, by Inka Helwig (German) Correspondence School, here again are her notes on PowerPoint

<http://kunterbunt123.wikispaces.com/NZALT+presentation>

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