

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND INTERNET: USING SEARCH ENGINES IN FRENCH

As we begin the new millennium, thousands of French Web sites are becoming easily accessible through Internet search engines that allow surfing the Internet in French. These search engines and the Web sites they list can provide our students with a strong reinforcement of the lessons they are learning in class. Information technology is growing so fast that soon it will seem foolish not to tap into its resources. Marie Christine Weidmann Koop and Jayne Abrate have given us important lists in various articles of the *AATF National Bulletin* over the past two years.

This is an important resource, and I urge all French instructors to share this list with their students and colleagues. Those who have tried using foreign words in exclusively English search engines know that the list of results may not be very productive.

In the following activities, students will be able to demonstrate their ability to scan for words and expressions previously learned in class and view vocabulary as part of a whole context different from the context created in class. They can then (re)produce ideas in French that they themselves have (re)searched.

Surfing the Web in French not only reinforces the language learned in the classroom, it also demonstrates to our student body that French still has a commanding global and technological presence despite the recent popularity of Spanish.

Search engines in French can be utilized by students studying all levels of the language, from the beginning level to doctoral program candidates. A list of search engines is first provided, followed by samples of ways to incorporate their use in beginning- and intermediate-level activities. The search engines were classified into five different groups (note that accent marks are not necessary when typing Web sites):

### Four major international search engines completely in French

1. Lycos at [http://www.lycos.fr]
2. Microsoft at [http://www.msn.fr]
3. Netscape at [http://www.netcenter.com/fr]
4. Yahoo at [http://www.yahoo.fr]

### Other search engines completely in French

5. C'est Trouvé at [http://hot.ctrouve.com/com]
6. CNRS UREC at [http://www.urec.cnrs.fr]
7. Cocorico at [http://www.cocorico.com/francophone/moteur.html]

8. Écila at [http://www.ecila.fr]
9. France Pratique at [http://www.pratique.fr/]
10. Francité at [http://www.francite.com]
11. Groupe Acticiel at [http://www.acticiel.com]
12. Lokace at [http://www.lokace.com]
13. Linux Start at [http://fr.linuxstart.com]
14. Netscan at [http://www.netscan.fr]
15. Nomade at [http://www.nomade.fr]
16. Phantom at [http://www.rechercher.net/phantom]
17. Présence Web at [http://www.presenceweb.net/]
18. Le Seuil at [http://www.leseuil.com]
19. Sitexplorer at [http://sitexp.hypermart.net/francais.html]
20. Sympatico at [http://pre.sympatico.ca/fr/]
21. Voilà at [http://www.voila.fr]
22. Wanadoo at [http://www.wanadoo.fr]
23. Who You at [http://www.whoyou.com]
24. XRecherche at [http://www.x-recherche.com]

### Regional search engines

25. Administration Suisse at [http://www.admin.ch/ch/index.fr.html]
26. Africaonline at [http://www.africaonline.co.ci/]
27. AltaVista Canada at [http://www.altavistacanada.com]
28. Euroseek at [http://www.euroseek.com]
29. Excite France at [http://fr.excite.com]
30. Gouvernement du Québec at [http://www.gouv.qc.ca/]
31. Infoseek France at [http://www.infoseek.com]
32. Le Village at [http://www.le-village.com]
33. Pagefrance at [http://www.pagefrance.com]
34. Pagequébec at [http://www.pagequebec.com]
35. The Swiss Search Engine at [http://www.search.ch/index.html.fr]
36. Toile du Québec at [http://recherche.toile.qc.ca]
37. WebTop at [http://www.webtop.com]
38. Woyaa for African Internet at [http://www.woyaa.com/indexFR.html]

### Specialized search engines in French

39. Estat at [http://www.estat.com] for

statistics searches—subscribers only

40. Nautilia at [http://www.nautilia.net/fr] for maritime searches
41. Perso-Search at [http://www.perso-search.com] for searching for persons
42. 3-D and multimedia at [http://3dup.com/search\_french.html] for 3-D, 2-D, audio visual, and multimedia searches
43. Surfrance at [http://www.surfrance.com] for cities and activities
44. SuperWin at [http://www.superwin.net/F/jeux-concours.html] for game shows

### Search engines in English that can recognize French words and provide response to searches in French language

45. Google! at [http://www.google.com]
46. Hotbot at [http://www.hotbot.com]

### Special Note on three Web sites

Tennessee Bob at [http://www.utm.edu/departments/french/french.html], second edition, has more than 8500 links valuable to French studies categorized into the following:

- Finding New Francophone Sites
- Books and Literature
- Art, Music, Film and General Culture
- History of France and the French-Speaking World
- Virtual Francophone Tourism
- The French Language
- Press, Radio/TV, Telephone
- Education in French-Speaking Schools
- French Across the Curriculum and in Everyday Life

Up-to-date articles and stories from news media all around the world in original language are also available at [http://www.mundolatino.org/prensa]. This site links 856 Hispanic news media Web sites and 342 Web sites in other languages, including 4 Francophone countries—Belgium (15), Canada (26), France (15), and Switzerland (8) with the number of linkable sites in parentheses. France, for example, gives direct links to the *Agence France Presse* (AFP) which is a press agency similar to the Associated Press, five newspapers (*Ouest-France*, *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *La Voix du Nord*, *Libération*), two magazines (*Elle*, *Le Monde diplomatique*), five sites for television (Canal +, France 2, France 3, La Cinquième, TF1), and two sites for radio (Europe 2, Radio France Internationale).

Search Engines Worldwide at [http://www.twics.com/~takakuwa/search] lists 124 countries and 786 search engines. The list includes the following 15 Francophone countries and regions (with the number of search engines available in parentheses): Africa (8), Algeria (1), Belgium (7), Cameroon (1), Canada(30), Caribbean (3), Egypt (2), Europe (8), France (16), Haiti (1), Luxembourg (2), Monaco (1), Morocco (1), Switzerland (4), Vietnam (3).

### Useful Options and Features for Class/Academic Searches

Some of these search engines have options that help delimit or widen the scope of a search. These options are noteworthy, particularly when one needs to scale down the research for a specific detail. Lycos, for example, gives us a choice between the *Web français* and the *Web mondial*. To further narrow down a search, one can click on *recherche approfondie*, and the entire screen is filled with options in refining the search:

1. *Rechercher:*
  - Tous les mots*
  - Au moins un des mots*
  - Langage naturel*
  - Tous les mots (dans l'ordre)*
  - Tous les mots (distants de 25 mots max.), etc.*
2. *Dans quel catalogue?*
  - Web mondial*
  - Web français*
  - Sons*
  - Librairie BOL*
  - Pages perso Tripod*
3. *Dans quelle partie du document?*
  - Document entier*
  - Titre uniquement*
  - Adresse URL*
  - Un site en particulier*
4. *En quelle langue?* *Toutes, etc.*
5. *Quelle importance donnez-vous aux critères suivants?*
  - Chercher tous les mots (Haute/Moyenne/Base)*
  - Mots proches les uns des autres, (Haute/Moyenne/Base), etc.*
6. *Comment souhaitez-vous afficher les résultats?*
  - Afficher: (10/20/30/40)*
  - Classer par: (Domaine/Pertinence)*

Each search engine has a different way of refining its results, and it is just a matter of playing around with the options. A nice option of particular engines is the ability to link you directly to another search engine with the results of your current search or to give you an option of using a different engine. For example, Acticiel provides an option to search other engines like Altavista, Voilà, Google, or Linux.

Search results are presented in different ways. Francité gives the document title, a summary, the date, the size of the docu-

ment, and the linkable Web site address itself. Excite, on the other hand, ranks results with a percentage rating based on their pertinence to the actual search. One has to be careful because sometimes too many options and too many results make the search more complicated.

### Use of the Internet in French Courses:

The Internet can be used in every level of French being taught. From Montaigne to Proust, from grammar to composition, from music to economic trends, teachers can take advantage of the Internet for course enrichment. One must not forget, however, that an activity using the Internet should not be an end in itself. It is a valuable and creative supplement for further use of the language. Once a vocabulary or grammatical lesson is first learned in class, these Internet activities can provide follow-up reinforcement to the lesson. Follow-up activities could enhance the language viewed or heard on the computer. Using the Internet for reading and comprehension exercises will be more effective if these are followed by writing and speaking activities. Internet viewing should include or be followed by activities such as completing sentences, dialogues, and paragraphs; verifying comprehension through multiple choice; providing words and/or phrases for definitions or vice versa, etc.

It is expected that the Internet text will contain a lot of premature grammar and vocabulary. Students have to be prepared to encounter these new and still unlearned grammatical structures and terms. They should not be deterred from their given task. The beginning-level college French grammatical text *Rendez-vous: An Invitation to French* suggests and incorporates some techniques in reading such as: recognizing cognates, contextual guessing, skimming for the gist, reading for Global Understanding, anticipating content, scanning paragraphs, awareness of the audience, summarizing the main idea in the paragraph, and understanding complex sentences by identifying main and dependent clauses (Muyskens and Omaggio Hadley). Applying one or some of these techniques should enable students to sift through information in the Internet. When the student goes to the computer, the reading will most likely be done silently. There are two possible ways to prepare the student for the reading: (1) a pre-reading activity where questions and topics are provided, discussed, brainstormed before the assigned Internet search; (2) a post-reading activity with a prepared list of either multiple choice, true or false, or comprehension questions. Richard K. Curry of Texas A & M University has some very useful suggestions in the development of post-reading skills that students can apply when

searching the Internet:

- a. doing summaries of the reading, but avoiding a word for word translation;
- b. preparing a list in answer to "What d'ya get?"
- c. sharing and explaining their choice of favorite sentence from the reading;
- d. drawing pictures;
- e. 3 and 3 (or 5 and 5), where the students give three important things they learned from the reading and three things they want clarified by the instructor (73-74).

With these caveats in mind, here are some possible activities:

### 1. Beginning Level

Despite the limitations of beginning students, they can surf the Internet on topics such as shopping for clothing and food, looking for lodging in a particular city, or finding a vacation spot. Students will be exposed to words related by a certain context. Vocabulary words, grouped into clusters, make skimming for information more efficient. The post-viewing class practice activities can improve the ability of the students to retain and use again these words (Foerster 70). The use of the Internet in French will allow students to re-view vocabulary and expressions (some of which are part of the lesson currently being learned in class) that are interrelated and contextualized by the Web site.

Surfing the Web will not only provide our students quick access to information in French; it also exposes them to "foreign" ways and systems of doing things. Colorful pictures, video clips, and even music and sound add so much life to this educational resource. No French textbook on the market can compete with the resources available through the Internet. It is just a matter of tapping into them.

The following activities can be done inside a networked classroom or as homework. It is assumed that most students have access to the Internet in their school.

#### a. Shopping for a trip to Paris.

**Day 1**—Students learn vocabulary on clothing, colors and numbers up to 1000. Then they are given a list of 5 to 10 items of clothing and \$700 worth of pretend money. They are asked to window shop (without overspending their \$700) on the Internet using any of the search engines in French. They then provide a list of the items with the prices, the colors, and if possible, the names of the stores and the city/country where they are located (reading/skimming for comprehension/cultural exposure).

**Day 2**—Using cued questions in French, students share and compare answers among themselves (speaking activity). (Les

robes bleues à \_\_\_\_\_ (store) coûtent \_\_\_\_\_.)

**Day 2 or 3 or 4**—Students work in pairs to come up with a short paragraph in French describing what they have and do not have in their suitcase or what they plan to buy for the trip based on their Internet search (writing practice). (*Pour le voyage nous avons \_\_\_\_\_.* Nous achetons le \_\_\_\_\_ (item and color) à \_\_\_\_\_ (store), les ...)

#### **b. Looking for lodging in Montreal**

**Day 1**—Vocabulary lesson for the day is Lodging/housing or the parts of the house. Give students varying amounts of money (\$500, \$1000, \$1500, \$2000, \$5000) per month and ask them to surf the Web and locate print ads for lodging in Montreal for each of the price ranges given (reading/skimming for information/cultural exposure).

**Day 2**—The teacher reads aloud 2 or 3 ads or describes some of the lodgings, then asks the students to guess the price range (listening activity). Students then work in groups of 3 or 4 doing the same thing (speaking/listening activity).

**Day 3**—Students are asked to write an ad (using a cued form similar to the ads that were previously discussed) describing their present lodging for rent in the city of Montreal. How much will they price it? (writing practice).

### **2. Intermediate Level**

In this level, the Internet becomes a valuable resource for compositions and class discussions. Topics such as geographical regions and current events in French are already at the fingertips of our students. To avoid possible plagiarism at this point, it might be preferable to use specific Web sites and have some guide questions already prepared based on the particular site.

#### **a. Specific Web site on French**

**Antilles** at [<http://www.antilles-info-tourisme.com/le-moule>].

**Day 1**—Students pretend that their family will be spending 12 days in the French Antilles. Using the future tense, they describe the upcoming vacation, including transportation, food, lodging, and holiday activities. 75-100 word mini-composition (reading and writing practice).

**Day 2**—For class discussion, the instructor uses the 3 and 3 method of Richard Curry, while listing items on the board (speaking).

#### **b. Class debate from a newspaper article** at [<http://www.liberation.fr/quotidien/debats/fevrier98/wyplosz0202.html>]

**Day 1**—Before assigning this Internet reading, the class discusses the difference between the 40-hour work week in the U.S. versus France's 35-hour work week. After doing the assigned reading, students are asked to list the advantages and disadvantages

of a 35-hour work week. Students should come to class prepared for a discussion.

**Day 2**—First half of class time: the class is divided into four groups (more groups for greater individual student participation); two groups will brainstorm for a list of ideas on the 40-hour work week, while the other two groups brainstorm the 35-hour work week. Like groups are merged, and an informal debate/discussion takes place, while the teacher notes important items in two columns on the board.

**Day 2**—Second half of class time: after the discussion, students are asked to write a short paragraph (75-100 words) on the 35-hour work week in France.

The Web is rapidly changing the world we live in, making almost everything close-knit and accessible. The Francophone world becomes one through the Internet. We have to respond to globalization in our curriculum and our syllabi. The Internet facilitates the globalization of French classrooms—why settle for two or three newspapers or magazines in print from the library when the Francophone world is just a few keystrokes away in the computer? As Cornell University professor Nelly Furman recommends, “our course offerings as well as our pedagogical emphasis need to adjust to and exploit this new technology” (70). I agree with her concluding statement that the challenge for teachers is “to create a French studies program that is attractive to students with pluridisciplinary interests, across national borders and historical time zones, answering the needs of today's society” (79).

If any reader of this article knows of other Internet search engines that might facilitate our research and our teaching in French, please share the information with me at [[jjvillen@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:jjvillen@gwm.sc.edu)]. A full text version of this article can be downloaded at my university Web site at [<http://www.sc.edu/beaufort/library/forlang.html>].

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