



Making the e-spider web mean possibilities not traps.

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Introduction

The internet has become an integral part of our everyday lives, often our main means of communication with those outside of our everyday circle.

However, as an Irish person living in a non-English speaking country it is also a very valuable source of news as to what is happening in Britain and Ireland. It is the main means by which I keep up to date with happenings at home.

And now through Skype it is the main means I communicate with my family and friends!

It has also developed a crucial role in the ELT world. The web now hosts literally hundreds of thousands of websites all devoted to teaching English as a Foreign Language. I'm actually under-exaggerating! A search using simply the the word English produced 1,500,000,000 responses!

TEFL websites

What date is it? Never mind, because for every date in the year there is a TEFL website for it! Millions of them abound, many really terrible, some bad but with some great elements, others quite good and others fantastic! A search for the initials TEFL produced 1,330,000 responses!

As a commercial site run by Macmillan, I am loath to promote one specific commercial site, however it has been so beneficial to me in the past that it must be mentioned.

www.onestopenglish.com is probably one of the best TEFL websites available in my experience. It provides a wide range of high-quality free printable materials and good methodological advice for teachers.

A second very good website is www.teachingenglish.org.uk . This website is run in conjunction between the BBC and British Council. Therefore has an up-to-date range interesting articles with detailed lesson plans!

However try this website again from the BBC if you want literally print and run lessons! Click on the link for teachers.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>

Below are a list of websites which have been useful to me and other teachers in the past. Not every part of them is useful but certain sections have certainly proved to be.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>

www.homeschooling.com

<http://www.abcteach.com/>
www.anglisci.pl
www.cambridge-efl.org/teaching
www.eltweb.com
www.englishpage.com
www.onestopenglish.com
www.teflgames.com
www.eslgo.com
www.teachervision.fen.com
www.free-english.com
www.handoutsonline.com
www.manythings.org
www.esl.about.com
www.oup.com/elt
www.angielski.host.sk
<http://www.uebersetzung.at/twister/en.htm>
www.englishlearner.com
www.englishclub.com
www.englishforums.com
www.isabelperez.com
www.nonstopenglish.com

Grammar on the web

I am a great fan of the cautious use of grammar on the web. Often coursebooks provide very staid examples, the type which are students have seen a million times. Examples are intended to be understood by everyone and insult no-one. I have therefore very often replaced grammar activities or instructions from coursebooks with materials I have found on the internet.

I have not included a list of useful grammar based websites here as it is very much dependent on what structure you are looking at. Best bet is to go to a search engine, type in the name of the structure / word and do a search. If this piece of terminology is used in different subjects, you may have to specify the subject i.e. English.

Exams

For many teachers and students the internet has become a key source of materials for exam preparation.

What use do you / could you put the internet to in order to help your students prepare for their exams?

- practical information on grading and exam tips
- sample papers
- additional grammatical exercises / explanations
- keep up to date on changes in an exams structure
- replace old fashioned articles with a more modern version based on the same topic.
- Access to exam based on-line lesson plans

Here are just some of millions of web pages dedicated to helping EFL exam students.

www.selfaccess.com

<http://www.flo-joe.co.uk> though activities do tend to be need to done mainly on line.

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/lessonshare>

<http://www.english-online.org.uk/exam.htm>

<http://www.cambridgeesol.org/index.html>

<http://www.readyforfc.com/>

<http://www.englishclub.com/esl-exams/index.htm>

Overall there is very useful material on the internet available for use within the classroom, however, in my experience they should be used in conjunction with similar material in the coursebook. More often or not it is only a very good reference source.

Chat

Our students are so used to the concept of chatting on the internet. Have you noticed how quickly they now grasp the concept of the verb 'to chat'? Instantly! If they don't use it themselves then at least their son or daughter does!

Why not try using chat in class? If your students have access to classroom computers then why not have them in groups complete a task, however without speaking – only using a chat rooms – preferable one you have set up for them.

Alternatively allocate your students written homework, they have to go on the net and have a discussion with a stranger, a friend or another member of class. This can be about an open topic (or specific – in which case suggest good chat rooms for them to use). Students have to print these out and bring them to class. Additional task would be to error correct what they and the other participant have written.

However, a really nice idea I have only begun to use recently is to print off real chat histories from the internet and use them in class.

What could you do with these texts?

- create a full story of how and why this conversation came about?
- What happened to each of the participants once the conversation was over?
- If an additional person is mentioned in it – who are they? What is their relationship to the participants.
- Produce a mini-drama re-enacting the dialogue using the same script.
- Students have to write each line out in full, rather than shortened internet speech.
- If participants refer to something which happened in the past or will happen in the future, write the scenario of what will happen / happened.

Newspapers

A quick word on the use of newspapers on the net.

What are the main benefits of this material?

- up-to-date information on current events.
- Authentic material
- More realistic and interesting for students.
- Local English speaking newspapers can be used, which helps students speak more freely about what is happening in their country.
 1. www.new.pl (New Warsaw Express) – free registration.
 2. www.warsawvoice.pl
 3. <http://www.wbj.pl/> - Warsaw Business Journal
 4. <http://www.warsawinsider.pl/>
 5. <http://www.inyourpocket.com/poland> for various Polish cities.
- Students who have a particular interest in a topic / country can easily be provided with relevant but linguistically useful articles.
- Provides examples of a wide range of different types of English throughout the globe – African, Australian, American etc
- Helps demonstrate the diversity of the English speaking world, perhaps providing topics / materials that would not touch our everyday lives.

An excellent source to find pretty much any online newspaper available throughout the world is:
<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com>

To demonstrate the diversity of the world's English speaking newspapers lets look at the five main stories on Nov 29th 2005 from three newspapers spread throughout the globe.

British – Guardian Newspaper

1. Greenpeace disrupts Blairs speech
2. Falconio accused smuggled drugs
3. Rumours of a riot
4. Third Britain dies after Baghdad bus attach
5. Vatican rules against gay priests

Australia – The Australian

1. Revamp to create fast lethal army
2. Joyce heeds farmers over unions
3. U.S. lawyer joins Saddam legal team
4. Growth in exports hits 50 year low
5. Last legal scramble to save Van

Ghana – The Accra Daily Mail

1. The GT story – Great Improvements fighting for survival
2. Minister not amused with 'wild speculations' in the media
3. Encourage full participation in local governance
4. Ghanians in Qatar want stronger ties between the two countries
5. Educate subjects on NHIS – Chief appeals to colleagues.

Warning:

1. Some articles written in English but in non-English speaking countries may not be as accurate as newspapers from English speaking countries.
2. In English speaking countries (e.g Ghana) where English is one of the first languages, the use of English may be different to that we have grown used to in Britain, Ireland and America.