TO CHOOSE OR NOT TO CHOOSE? – OR HOW TO SELECT THE MOST APPROPRIATE INTERNET SITE FOR TEACHING PURPOSES

Delia LUNGU[1]
Laura CIZER[2]
[1]Associate professor PhD, "Mircea cel Batran" Naval Academy
[2]Lecturer, PhD "Mircea cel Batran" Naval Academy

Abstract: The Internet nowadays has become the most resourceful data bank for teachers around the world. There is not any single topic that a teacher would think about which could not be found on the Internet. There are numerous sites which provide ready-made lesson plans, loads of grammar exercises, hundreds of quizzes and many other resources which can be easily turned into teaching materials. However, when it comes to deciding which site is best for use in class, teachers sometimes feel lost and not always the searching engines provide them with the best resources. The aim of this paper is to offer a selection of sites, grouped according to a specific purpose, with explanations about what can be found in each group.
Keywords: Internet sites, teaching materials, ESP

Introduction

Who can have doubts that the internet today does not have an important role and immense potential in education in general and in teaching languages in particular? How many teachers have not only once turned to the internet for a quick help when they were lacking ideas or they wanted to find out more about different subjects or events going on around the world? Is there any other quicker source of information which at one single click opens to countless resources?

Internet nowadays is gaining more and more territory and teachers even from remote places have learned how to benefit from its advantages. Nevertheless, one can argue that there are also disadvantages and that not all the information coming from the internet can be reliable or has value for the educational program. The authors of this article will discuss briefly the advantages and disadvantages of using the internet in the teaching process with an emphasis on the English for specific purposes (ESP) and will present a series of internet sites grouped according to topics so that they can be easily accessed by those interested in using them.

Advantages

There are numerous research results indicating that the acquisition of the second language, in our case English, has increased a lot due to the internet. Both synchronous and asynchronous communication among language learners is done nowadays by internet surfers in chat rooms, via email exchanges, or by using virtual life, wikis, webquests, etc. Thus, the advantages of using the internet are countless:

- The language can be used in real communication situations (with native or non-native chat partners);
- It motivates learners to use English in their daily lives and provides functional communicative experience;
- It can be used as a platform on which learners can experience and present creative works such as essays, poetry and stories;
- It helps students to improve their computer skills (keyboard skills, opening and storing files, browsing the Internet, to name just a few);
- It can change the percentage of teacher/student participating in the class, making the whole activity more student-centered;
- It is valuable resource of authentic materials.

Disadvantages

Nevertheless, there are numerous voices that are against the positive role of the Internet in education stating that the disadvantages of using it outnumber the positive sides. Thus, some of the criticism refers to:

- Lack of computers and internet access in many schools around the world;
- The difficulty in finding a reliable resource (sometimes "more is less" which means that there are so many resources that a teacher or a learner might not know what is worth using as a teaching/learning material);
- Some researchers say that the internet use in language teaching/learning may be a waste of time if it is not based on a language curriculum.

Suggestions

The authors of this article strongly believe that the disadvantages of using Internet in the teaching/learning process can be easily overcome. Solutions to problems:

- How could a teacher overcome the situation when the **internet connection is poor** or the school does not have enough computers to

enable teaching/learning online? One solution would be for the teacher to select materials online and then turn them into materials which can be used offline. A good example is the VOA site which allows teachers to download podcasts and their transcripts. Lesson plans are also provided. The news is updated every day and there are new stories every week. Thus, the teacher can create her own data bank which can be used anytime during the school year.

- **The Internet use is not based on a curriculum**. Once the teacher identifies the sites she would like to use in her teaching process, they can be assigned to specific topics which are already part of the curriculum: language, culture, customs and traditions, functions, etc. in other words, we suggest bring the materials to the curriculum not vice versa. When teaching vocabulary for example, the teacher can find on the Internet thematic vocabulary (both theory and exercises) and plan it according to the curriculum.

- **The difficulty of finding a reliable source**. It is true that the enormous amount of materials found on the Internet can sometimes make the teacher's job very tiresome. The teacher might also feel insecure about which site to use and thus, a series of useful tips will be offered below.

Method

Research has been done on the Internet and numerous sites have been analyzed and assessed in order to be provided to teachers. We are going to refer to a selection of sites, grouped according to a specific purpose, with explanations about what can be found in each group. Nevertheless, there are numerous other sites which could be added to our list and we encourage those interested in the topic to contribute with their own ideas.

We will refer first to military sites or sites which provide materials with military content that are good for ESP in the military field. Then, we will continue with recommendations of some dictionaries which can be found and used online. Finally, we will conclude with sites of general interest which can be used for teaching vocabulary, grammar, culture, having in mind all four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Military sites

http://www.strategypage.com/
This is a site on which teachers can found videos, photos, jokes with military content. There is also daily updated news dealing with topics such as Afghanistan: (so many targets, so many casualties), Yemen (victories and defeats),

Somalia (the Islamic Conundrum), Electronic weapons (a sense of being hacked to death), etc.
http://www.english-to-go.com/wll/lessons.cfm
This is a bank of teaching resources to raise awareness of landmines and the dangers they cause.

http://www.campaignmilitaryenglish.com/
This is a three-level English language course from Macmillan, designed for multinational military and peacekeeping forces on peacekeeping operations.
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_11821 0.htm
This is a compilation of online A-Z pages, which explain every aspect of NATO: its origin and fundamental security tasks, policies and decision-making processes, peace-support and crisis-management operations; how it tackles threats and develops capabilities; its partnerships and cooperative activities; and its civilian and military structures, specialized organizations and agencies, and its programs and activities.
http://www.nato.int/
This is the official NATO site. Here teachers can find all necessary information about NATO (What is NATO? NATO on duty; Member countries; Partners; Structure; History).
https://www.stratfor.com/
Strategic Forecasting, Inc. — known as **Stratfor** — is an American publisher and global intelligence company founded in 1996 in Austin, Texas. This extremely resourceful site leads its readers through the most recent events around the world. Stratfor has been cited by media such as the Associated Press, BBC, Bloomberg, CNN, Reuters, and *The New York Times* as an authority on strategic and tactical intelligence issues.
http://www.un.org/en/index.html
This is another resourceful site about events going on around the world. A very detailed presentation of United Nations and its missions can be also found on the site. Very useful are the maps with United Nations Peacekeeping Operations which are constantly updated. The site also contains general maps and mission maps. They are in PDF format for best display and print result.

Dictionaries

http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02. pdf
The American Department of Defense published in 2010 (amended in 2015) dictionary of standard US military and associated terminology to encompass the joint activity of the Armed Forces of the United States. This publication supplements standard-English language dictionaries and standardized military and associated terminology

to improve communication and mutual understanding with DOD, with other federal agencies, and among the United States and its allies.

http://www.hazegray.org/danfs/
The *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, commonly known as DANFS, is the foremost reference regarding US naval vessels. Published in nine volumes (from 1959 to 1991), it gives histories for virtually every US naval vessel. To make DANFS accessible to a larger number of people, the authors are working to put all DANFS ship histories online through this site. Currently the online collection includes over 7000 ship histories, and more are being added. These files are faithfully transcribed from DANFS, without updating or corrections.

http://www.feldgrau.com/glossary.html
This glossary contains hundreds of German terms related to the armed forces of Germany during the WWII era. This glossary has been compiled from numerous sources and was written especially with the military historian in mind.

http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/?cc=ro
This is the new edition for 2015. It adds 900 new words to the already existing ones, new usage words (for example, Express yourself), new features (like My Wordlist). Those interested in building their own topic dictionary, can do that on this site. There are several topic areas such as: animals, body and appearance, business, crime and law, culture, education, family and life stages, science, technology, the media, war and conflict, etc.

http://www.yourdictionary.com/diction5.html#military
This site offers numerous dictionaries on a single page. Here one can find links to dictionaries on topics such as: History, Multimedia, Music, Horology, Humor, Hunting, Insurance, Investment, Jewelry, Labor relations, Law enforcement, Linguistics, Literature, etc.

Sites of general interest

http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/
This is a free website from the British Council where one could find games, stories, listening activities and grammar exercises. You can search for your favorites or have a look at the site map to find out where everything is.

http://www.macmillanenglish.com/resources/
This is a very resourceful site where free teaching materials for primary, secondary, adult, business and academic ELT classrooms can be found. The site has special pages for teachers and students. A selection of topical resources is designed for teachers. Accessing this section, teachers will find resources to support their classroom 365 days a

year whether they are preparing for the start of a new term or celebrating the holidays in class. Thus, topics in this section may refer to: Carnivals, Christmas, Sports, idioms, etc.

http://english-learning-online.blogspot.ro/2008/05/clever-villager.html
Millions of people try to find the good ways to learn English today. Learning English through English ESL short stories is a good method to improve one's reading comprehension and vocabulary. This site contains a great collection of English ESL Short stories which help English learners enjoy their reading and learn English at the same time. These English Stories contain practical English expressions in daily spoken English that are most useful for learning to speak English.

http://freerice.com/#/english-vocabulary/13405
Are you looking for a funny way to teach new vocabulary? This site offers a vocabulary game developed on 60 different levels. What makes this site special is the fact that for each right answer each person donates 10 grains of rice through the World Food Program to help the hunger.

http://www.webquestdirect.com.au/whatis_awq.asp
WebQuests are activities, using **Internet resources**, which encourage students to use **higher order thinking skills to solve a real messy problem**. WebQuests are a sub-set of Problem-Based Learning (PBL). Teachers around the world are making WebQuests for their own classes as well as to share. Students of **all ages and grades** can use WebQuests. Most, if not all, of the information used in WebQuests is drawn from the Internet.

http://www.theconsultants-e.com/resources/webquests/repository.aspx
This site is also about webquests but it is dedicated to webquests created by different authors on the following topics: General language, Business English, Teacher training and education, and English for Peacekeeping.

http://www.developingteachers.com/
This site is dedicated to developing language teachers. Extremely resourceful, it provides online support for students and teachers, offers teaching tips, links, lesson plans, warmers, coolers, fillers, etc.

http://www.eslvideo.com/
ESLvideo.com provides educational resources for English as a Second Language Students to improve their listening, speaking, grammar, and vocabulary skills. The quiz activities and lessons are created by teachers, and are free to use in class, lab, or at home. Teachers are welcome to build a library of favorites, assign quizzes, view student scores, and create new quizzes.

http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/
This site contains free, interactive and printable English lessons in 6 levels. There are handouts, mini-lessons, online activities, speed-listening, multi-speed reading, dictations, speaking, current events, topical lessons, etc.

CONCLUSIONS
The aim of this article was to provide teachers with some interesting internet sites which could contribute to improving teaching materials and teachers' abilities in selecting materials from the internet. The authors have opted for only a few sites, hoping that the teachers' interest in the topic has been aroused and thus, teachers will start exploring and trusting the Internet more.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:
[1] Chafe, A. (1999). Effective use of the Internet in Second Language Education: Benefits, Challenges and Guidelines for Teachers. http://www.cdli.ca/~achafe/Internetinclassroom.html
[2] Cononelos, T. & Oliva, M. (1993). Using computer networks to enhance foreign language culture education. Foreign Language Annals, 25(3), 527-534.
[3] Graus, J. (1999). An Evaluation of the Internet in the EFL Classroom. http://home.plex.nl/~jgraus
Kasanga, L. A. (1996). Peer interaction and second language learning. Canadian Modern Language Review, 52 (4), 611-639.
[4] Kern, R. (1995). Restructuring classroom interaction with networked computers: Effects on quantity and quality of language production. Modern Language Journal, 79(4), 457-476.
[5] Kitao, S. K. (1998). Interaction and on-line synchronous communication in English language learning, CALL-EJ, http://www.lerc.ritsumei.ac.jp/callej/3-1/kkitao.html
[6] LeLoup, J. & Ponterio, R. (1997). Internet technologies for authentic language learning experiences. Washington, DC. ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.
[7] Means, B., & Olson, K. (Ed.). (1997). Technology and Education Reform. Document prepared by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. U.S. Department of Education.
Mike, D. (1996). Internet in the schools: A literacy perspective. Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 40(1), 1-13.
[8] Muehleisen, V. (1997) Projects Using the Internet In College English Class. The Internet TESL Journal, 3(6), [Online], URL http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/Lessons/Muehleisen-Projects.html June 1997
Peterson, M. (1997). Language teaching and networking. System, 25(1), 29-37.
[9] Singhal, M. (1997). The internet and foreign language education: Benefits and challenges, the Internet TESL Journal, Vol. III, No. 6, http://iteslj.org/
[10] Sullivan, N., and Pratt, E. (1996). A comparative study of two ESL writing environments: A computer-assisted classroom and a traditional oral classroom. System, 24(4), 491-501.
[11] The World Bank, (2004). http://web.worldbank.org/
[12] Warschauer, M. (1997). Computer-Mediated Collaborative Learning: Theory and Practice. Modern Language Journal, 81(3), 470-481.