

Use of Web Resources in Fine-tuning English Language Skills among the Students

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Abstract

In traditional class rooms, bright students find the teaching slow and weak students find it too fast. With the advent of IT, all aspects of our life and life style are changing. CAI (Computer Assisted Instruction) becomes a topic of great interest to educators. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is the offshoot of this effort. This paper will discuss about the paradigm shift that has come into being in regard to language learning, with the advent of computer training in all fields.

Keywords: Classroom teaching, CAI (Computer Assisted Instruction), Language learning, Language skills, Web-based resources

A Paradigm Shift to Language Acquisition

CALL uses attractive pictures, animation, music and human voice in the background which makes it livelier and gets the individual attention of the students. The online environment provides both inexperienced and experienced teachers, updated materials that are easy to adopt for use in classroom. CALL has provided a new lease of life to the language teachers. Language teachers today have the opportunities of combining a variety of materials to help them in the process of developing the language skills of the learners.

Flexibility and adaptability of course materials for language instruction with availability of online resources offers a wider choice for language teachers. Multimedia computers have given us the ability to work with all types of information. Since all types of information exist in digital form, they can easily be processed, stored or retrieved from databases and copied without loss of quality, or shared over the internet protocol networks. The possibility of using different media in one single interface has exciting prospects for the teaching and learning of English.

We can make provisions for a variety of instructional options, learner choices and a high degree of interactivity. This will enable the learners to adapt the learning experiences to his / her own needs, interest and living style. Paul Brett in his article on ‘Multimedia for Listening Comprehension’ points out how computers can be used interactively providing learner choices in the following areas:

- Content : of what to watch or listen to and how much
- Mode : video or audio mode
- Activity : whether or not to complete tasks
- Type of Tasks : comprehension tasks or language awareness tasks
- Difficulty : a choice among several levels of graded tasks
- Sequence : learners choice of the next activity
- Times and place of learning : learning control over stop/start of input
- Guidance : through use of online help.

Computer integrated language learning with suitable instruction material makes a language teacher a language diagnostician, information gatherer, course content developer, evaluator of learning performances, home based instruction designers and targeted distance educators.

Using Web Resources for Teaching

Most people have some experience in browsing many websites to explore various resources for language teaching and learning. In many cases one can adapt online material for use with activities and exercise types you have been using for years. Let us now look at some strategies for sifting through the overwhelming amount of materials on the web. The secret of finding good resources on the web is being able to browse effectively.

Many search engines like Google, Mozilla, and such are extensively used these days. Every search engine differs slightly in the way it treats search terms. Search engines generally have a page of tips which help you search more efficiently. All the materials available on the

web are copy right. Using copyrighted materials in the class room will probably not cause any problem but be aware that one should not publish the content in any form without obtaining necessary permissions.

EFL / TESOL Websites and Forums

The most obvious web-based resources for teaching are those websites devoted to teaching English. They have been created either by language schools (in some cases the schools themselves are entirely online) or by dedicated individuals. These sites often include interactive exercises where students, for example choose the correct multiple-choice answers and then check their answers by clicking on the button to receive instant feedback.

Another popular tool is Discussion Forum, where students or teachers can post messages that can be read and replied to. In a discussion forum a sequence comprising the original message plus all the replies and counter-replies is known as ‘thread’.

Exercises and Activities

For EFL teachers the web becomes handy for planning lessons. No other medium offers such an enormous range of materials in every conceivable topic. All the material is available in electronic form, so just copy and paste text into a word processor ready for being made into exercises (fill in the blanks, word-completion, reconstructing text and so on).

Topics

Depending on the interest of the student one can find information on any topic under the sun on the web and turn into exercises, tasks and activities.

i. Music

Using A – Z lyrics site or by doing a google search (search for ‘name of song’ lyric). Here are some ideas for activities using song lyrics).

- Turn the song into gap-fill listening exercise.
- Ask students to write an extra verse to the song.
- Rewrite the lyrics so that some of the lines are wrong. Students listen to the song to correct the lyrics.
- Jumbled the lines or words

ii. **Celebrities and famous people**

Most students are interested in celebrities like film stars, sports persons and pop-musicians.

Biography.com features – biographies of famous people both living and dead and one has to simply type the name of the person into the search box and the website will show you the person's biography.

- Get the students to search for information about their favourite stars and talk about them.
- Group activities: to make quizzes for each other.
- Role-play: interview between the celebrity and the journalist.
- Quiz master: some unique description about the personality which will identify the person himself can be given and answer can be asked.

Other good websites about celebrities are Hello and the BBCs Music profiles pages.

iii. **Films and Music Reviews**

Many movie review sites can be found on the internet. Two good sources of information about films including reviews are:

- Internet movie database
- All movie guide/All music guide

iv. **Food**

Food is a topic which few people can fail to be interested in, and the profusion of food-related sites on the internet reflects this.

Ask students what their favorite food is. Send students online to find recipes of their favorite food.

Find a recipe for a dish which students will be familiar with. (just search for '(name of dish) + recipe' on a search engine. Blank out significant words such as names of ingredients.

Can students guess what the recipe is for?

Put the recipe steps into the wrong order. Tweak a recipe so that it includes deliberate mistakes. (There is plenty of scope for humour).

Get the students to write down everything that they ate yesterday. Students then use a nutrition website such as caloric Control Council to work out how many calories they consumed.

v. Jobs

Job Websites – www.naukri.com, timesjobs.com, [faculty plus](http://facultyplus.com), [career plus](http://careerplus.com), and so on.

- Find a selection of job advertisements which are relevant to students. (search for (job title) + job advertisement. Ask them to prepare a suitable CV.

vi. Holidays

Holidays are a favorite topic in most English classes.

- Tell the students that they are going on a holiday.
- Ask the students to make a presentation on the place they have visited by finding information about it on the internet.
- Ask the students to check the weather of the place they are going to visit (information about hotel accommodation, places of interest and importance).

Need to Incorporate Web Sources in the Learning of Language

There are a number of free websites for teaching and learning English.

- It helps to learn to speak, read and write better English. It provides lessons to help you develop your vocabulary, grammar, fluency and pronunciation. Its completely personal learning experience, that is easy, flexible, fast and convenient; improves life through language and communication.
- **One to one** – Get focused for faster learning practice speaking and writing to build your skills and confidence.
- **Personalized** – Learn what you need, at your own pace, with exercises designed for your individual needs. You can enjoy improving your English for work, for education, for travel or for fun.
- **Flexible** – You can study online any time and anywhere (provided you have the facility). It doesn't need any software. Just go online at any time and start using it.

- **Interactive** – Unique web-based tools and methods will inspire and support your progress to help you achieve success fast.
- **Customized** – Highly qualified, authentic materials / tutors will adapt course formats for corporate clients to deliver training that meets your organizations particular needs.
- **Assess your own level of English and Start Learning** – Materials are highly professional, well written, have been extensively tried and tested, over a number of years. They are graded, practical, easy to understand and use.

Some Interesting and Important Websites for Learning the Language (Self)

ESL Gold.com – gives you that opportunity to practice your English skills in many ways. For beginners they can check vocabulary pages where they can see, hear and say new words in English. For help in grammar, listening or reading they can look through hundreds of pages of explanations, examples and exercises or browse through the quick link section. For conversation practice, there are study buddy, tutors or teachers in speaking partner program.

Need help with TOEFL or TOEIC checkout TOEFL/TOEIC Section?

For pronunciation or idioms practice, improve in Business English speaking, writing skills, they have extensive list of useful expressions for business encounters as well as phrases for conversations along with situations and topics for pair and group discussions.

For Teachers – It provides teachers with thousands of ideas and materials for classroom teaching, lesson plans, handouts, or new ideas. It offers tons of resources for both ESL and EFL environment. It saves preparation time, it's a library of E.T materials that can be adapted to fit individual classrooms and students.

For multimedia lab – You can assign online assignment homework in vocabulary, study, quizzes, grammar, punctuation, exercises, speaking practice etc. or choose games and activities to make the learning process more fun supported with the software and CD ROMs – a virtual gold mine material at the click of the mouse.

www.englishjobmaze.com/ejmlinks - If you are looking for a self-study option for the student which combines cutting edge technology and leading educational learning theories, there is no better place to start than English Maze. It contains free comprehensive lesson plans for teachers to use in class with students.

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There are quizzes, word games, word puzzles, proverbs, slang expressions, anagrams, a random sentence generator and other CALL activities. Even though it is primarily for ESL learners and native English speakers may also find some interesting things on this site. It is non commercial with no advertisement. TESL/TEFL teachers may want to recommend this site to their students.

manythings.org – is wonderful fun study site for learners of English. It deals with grammar, vocabulary, spelling, word games, puzzles, quizzes, and exercises.

www.nonstopenglish.com - It gives room for practicing English grammar, vocabulary and English skills with interactive test on this free website with interactive email test. New tests are added every week.

www.englishclub.com – This site helps you learn English or teach English as a second language. You will find everything including interactive pages such as forum games, quizzes, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, LSRW with interactive ESL activities with special interest in Business English for work jokes and articles.

The list is endless as many websites are available on the internet that are catering to the needs of language learners and teachers making language learning easy and helping the learners to fine-tune their English language skills

Conclusion

Since language learning is skill based, multiple techniques should be used for improvement in learning communicative ability of the user.

Learners who are interested in the social and cultural customs of the native speakers of the language are likely to be successful. Similarly when learners have a strong instrumental need to learn the language will probably prosper. Formal instruction aids the rate of success by facilitating rapid development. Learning can become acquisition when it is sufficiently practiced. It is firmly believed that the use of web sources will give ample scope for learners for their various needs. Listening and speaking are almost neglected in our curriculum which

is clearly evident among graduates and post graduates. These two skills along with many other language skills can be developed and fine-tuned by web based resources.

Some English Learning Websites

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| 1. | www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish | 11. | http://wordsteps.com |
| 2. | www.youtube.com/user/bizpod | 12. | www.meetingenglish.com |
| 3. | www.englishpage.com/listening | 13. | www.teachenglish.org.uk/think/resources |
| 4. | www.eslcafe.com | 14. | www.usingenglish.com/links/teaching-and-teachers-resources |
| 5. | www.learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/ | 15. | www.learnenglish.com |
| 6. | www.eslpoint.com | 16. | www.englishjobmaze.com/ejmlink |
| 7. | www.flo-joe.com | 17. | www.learn-english-online.org |
| 8. | www.mes-games.com | 18. | www.manythings.org |
| 9. | www.englishinteractive.net | 19. | www.freeenglish.com |
| 10. | www.vocabulix.com | 20. | www.davesenglishclub.com |

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