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USING THE WORLD WIDE WEB WITH STANDARD AND SUBSTANDARD ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) LEARNERS

The topicality of the given article is conditioned by the language research in its realizable functioning in the World Wide Web and determined by the necessity of further systematization and complex studying of pragmatic resources of English especially such substandard realization as Internet slang (Internet language, Netspeak, Chatspeak, Computer Language).

The aim of the article is to specify reasons for using World Wide Web activities in standard and substandard English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language classroom, to present the issue of preparing learners to use the Web, and suggest activities that use authentic learning experiences to enhance skills.

Developed for the military and adopted by universities as a medium for research, the Internet network that links computers all over the world, is now used widely by businesses, educators, government staff, and individuals for information gathering, entertainment, commerce, and communication. In this connection _Internet_ users have popularized and, in many cases, coined Internet slang (Internet language, Netspeak, Chatspeak, Computer Language) "informal (and often transient) lexical items used by a specific social group, for instance teenagers, soldiers, prisoners — and are frequently particular to a certain _subculture,_ such as _musicians"._ Much has been written about the use of Internet technologies such as e-mail, listservs, bulletin boards" [7], [1]. However, "another feature of the Internet, the World Wide Web, is also an excellent source for authentic language learning experiences" [3:59]. Websites cover a wide variety of topics and interests including health, entertainment, news, and sports. These sites provide information with which learners can interact in order to build basic [1]. A number of websites were created especially for English learners and contain exercises in grammar, vocabulary, writing, or reading as well as practice in listening; Frizzy University Network (FUN); Weekly Idiom; and Grammar Self Study Quizzes for ESL Students; Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab.

To develop reading skills, learners employ skimming and scanning skills to find the information they need. Hyperlinked menus — where readers

click on highlighted words, phrases, or images and move to another section of the page or site — facilitate the use of these skills. Web reading includes both prose literacy (narrative) and document literacy (charts and graphs). Instructors can introduce learners to sites that may be relevant to course content and personal interests. Since most English language websites are written for English speakers, the language may be more appropriate for intermediate and advanced learners. However, if instructors choose websites that include graphics and pre-teach the vocabulary, even learners with limited English can take advantage of the Web resources. "Teaching materials should be chosen for their (learners') usefulness and interest. Their selection must be influenced by the language level of the learners, their age range and whether they have some writing experience (including their mother tongue) or not. The choice of the materials should be motivated. If new topic covers the aspects of the youth communication we shouldn't omit the fact that new dialect "leet" of Internet slang has outgrown its roots as an obscure communication system for computer bulletin board users and has become a broad cultural phenomenon. So the motivation will be greater with e-mails, SMS, text chat or spoken conversations expressed by acronyms and synonyms, substituted letters with numbers, punctuation marks, and phonetic combinations [8]. In this case our aim is to enable readers to gain a basic familiarity with leet mechanics and culture, and to be able to translate small amounts of text back and forth from leet to English for instance, if we deal with Business courses their motivation will be greater with instructions, short advertisements and descriptions of products, simple business letters and so on. In other words, for all ages and all levels motivation is increased if writing is placed in realistic context".

Writing is a natural response to Web reading as learners respond to articles, request further information on topics, register complaints, and provide information about themselves. Websites prompt learners to complete forms, send e-mail messages to political representatives, request information on travel destinations, and write comments for bulletin boards and guest books. Engaging in these authentic tasks make writing meaningful. The large amount of information available on the Web requires learners to synthesize what they have read as they write reports and opinion pieces and make oral presentations. Individuals can also create their own websites as a way to publish texts and projects [4].

Studies have shown that computers can also facilitate oral communication between learners. Learners want to talk about their research and

what they are learning. The Web also makes it possible to listen to news broadcasts, historical speeches, and films. These sound files can easily be replayed as needed for comprehension [5]. One of the greatest challenges of searching the World Wide Web is finding appropriate information. A lesson on Web searching will give learners more control over the process. This lesson should include brainstorming keywords and concepts, adjusting these terms as needed, using search engines such as Yahoo, Hot Bot, and Alta Vista. Learners can keep logs to see which keywords yield the best results for particular searches [3].

"Preparation can turn an overwhelming experience into a manageable one" [3:13]. Learners should be introduced to the use of the mouse, the browser, and the modem or Internet connection. A lesson in how to use icons and a mouse will make learners feel more comfortable as they approach the World Wide Web. If they have used computers before for word processing, they may already be familiar with many computing conventions. Because Web-based materials are not necessarily accurate or truthful, Web searching can also help learners develop their critical literacy skills. Finally, learners should be prepared for the possibility that, "because the Web is an uncensored medium, searching it can yield unwanted results. Sites containing pornographic photographs and videos may appear.

Web-based activities can include electronic field trips to museums and historical sites; comparison shopping online; and finding information about health, home buying, and travel. However, as with any language teaching tool, there must be clear objectives, focused activities, and evaluation. There are three essential steps for Web-based activities:

1. Prepare learners for the activity. Ask learners to define a problem and then identify possible sites or sources that may contain information that will help them to explore that problem. Be sure that learners have familiarized themselves with the use of search engines. Brainstorm keywords to be used in the search. Be sure that learners know how to use the browser and hardware (such as a CD-ROM drive) or software (such as Sound Card) that might be needed for audio or video. Establish how learners will record the information. Will they print pages, make notes, or complete a survey form?

2. Perform the activity online. Locate the sources and gather the relevant information from each source.

3. Process the information. Ask learners to organize the information collected from multiple sources. They may present this information in an agreed upon format. Have learners evaluate the information gathered as well as the information gathering process.

The following is an example of a Web-based lesson "Monitoring the weather" [2:315-317].

1. To prepare learners, review weather expressions (e. g., hot, cloudy, rainy). Teach or review the formula for converting Fahrenheit and Centigrade temperatures. Choose the cities that the class will monitor and locate them on the map. Decide whether to monitor the weather daily, weekly, or monthly. Ask learners to suggest some Web sources for weather or brainstorm some keywords for finding weather sites through a search engine. Decide what information will be tracked (e. g., temperature, precipitation, or other conditions). Record the information on a chart in the classroom; groups may choose to keep individual charts for different cities.

2. To perform the activity online, have individuals or groups search for weather sites that contain information on the selected cities and record this information.

3. To process the information, learners can organize the information they have gathered and make bar charts and graphs that illustrate the temperature or rainfall for each city. Ask learners to evaluate the various weather sites they used. Were some better than others? Why? Ask learners what part of the activity they would have changed.

To sum up the World Wide Web is an immense library of authentic materials for the language learning classroom. With careful planning, adult ESL instructors can use the Web in the classroom to introduce them to British and American culture, and to help them improve their English language skills.

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