

He who hesitates will be lost

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Internet offers almost unlimited possibilities for English teaching and learning. The article presents some of the resources on the Internet for teachers and students and explains how to use them in the classroom.

Teachers of English are well aware of the fact that boredom in classroom can easily destroy students' motivation and interest in language learning. And we all know that motivation is a key factor in successful language learning. On the other hand, even the most motivated students can lose interest and energy during their English language studies. English teachers must, therefore, constantly search for effective teaching strategies, as well as for ways to sustain the interest and engagement of students not only in, but also outside classes. We can say that teachers are known for their innovation. Innovative educators can always find creative ways to teach. When a new teaching method or approach comes along, many of us attempt to adopt it, partially or completely in order to bring something new.

Language learners vary not only in terms of their purposes for learning English, but also in terms of individual differences in learning. To make English learning and teaching successful, diverse learning styles of students must be respected. Teachers should employ instruments to identify students' learning styles and provide instruction at alternatives to address their differences. Thanks to the huge development of information technologies new media have become part of our everyday life and have found their application in classroom. One invention – the computer has soon turned out to be a powerful language acquisition tool. Many students love computers, they feel comfortable with computers and are very receptive to any learning activities that involve the computer. Increased motivation leads to increased language use which leads to improved proficiency. Hand in hand with the computer goes the Internet that is a goldmine of information resources. There is a wide variety of ways in which the Internet can be used. There are many learning materials on the World Wide Web, and students can use them to study English. They can read news in English and students' newspapers or newsletters can be posted to their email addresses.

In my presentation I would like to focus on the Internet, a fascinating storehouse of information. Those who have ventured into cyberspace are enthusiastic about the wonderful learning opportunities offered to students, as well as the valuable resources for teachers.

For the past several years we have been talking about computers. The discussion was first focused on the use of computers as word processors and teachers were discussing whether the mouse should replace the pen. In many language classrooms the computer has been accepted as a valuable tool for developing students' writing skills.

Our students will be living and working in the society based on information technologies. If the question is **To be or not to be on-line?**, my answer will certainly be **YES**.

And now I would like to share with you some experience I have gathered and present some resources or activities popular with my students.

I would like to begin with the development of **reading skills**. Both for English teachers and learners much of the Internet is an opportunity for ‘authentic language’ interaction and learning: authentic materials including photos, city maps, postcards, etc. can be used for teaching facts about life in English speaking countries. The material is realistic, colorful and attractive and most World Wide Web has been written in English by native speakers.

It is a well-known fact that if you want to be successful you have to be informed. One way of getting informed regularly is to read newspapers and journals. There are many Web journals and newsletters bringing not only the latest news stories, useful articles or announcements but also fun activities and interactive news quizzes. Many newspapers and magazines have on-line versions, some of them even offer free subscription. Magazines for qualified professionals cover a wide range of branches, e. g. business and finance, computers, engineering design, internet, information technologies, manufacturing, mechanical, machine and construction, transportation, telecommunications – these are just a few examples of titles the students of our university are interested in.

It is needless to say how important for effective communication is an adequately developed **vocabulary**. Traditional tedious memorizing of new words is for many students a dull and time-consuming activity. The Internet provides access to dictionaries, encyclopedias or thesauruses that present new words in context. Extremely valuable are pages with dictionaries and glossaries. There is a wide range of professional areas they cover – let me mention just a few: Technical Terms for Aerospace Use; Rubber and Plastic Technology; Radar Meteorology; Pilot Magazine A to Z Aviation Slang (contains aviation acronyms, abbreviations and jargon with detailed definitions); Telecommunications Acronym List (a list of acronyms used in telephony, networking, telecommunications and many areas of computer science). Many students at technical colleges and schools are often at a loss how to read mathematical expressions. The site **Math spoken here** can help to overcome the hurdle: each entry includes an illustration, math and non-math transcription, a reference group or application, and questions. An answer key is also provided. Regular Net-visitors are familiar with the page. **10 things you can do on the Net this week** highlighting hot news.

Cobuilder’s weekly commentary on current English presents in its Wordwatch section interesting and helpful illustrations. One part pays attention to **spelling mistakes**. One example to illustrate this part: How to spell the word millennium correctly? There were many mistakes found in English and American newspapers – the word was written with one l, or with one n only. Another part approaches the problems arising from the existence of adjectives ending with -ic or -ical: An illustration found in the above-mentioned sites: ‘Which one shall I use **geographic** or **geographical**?’ Due attention is paid to various confusable words. Again, one example: ‘Is there any difference between two confusable academic words **thesis** and **dissertation**?’ – and a detailed explanation follows: ‘Thesis is used to refer to research done for a doctorate, although it is also used to refer to research done for a master’s thesis, esp. in American English. Dissertation is the more general term, and can apply to an original piece of research done at any level, including a doctorate.’

Of special importance is the part focusing on vocabulary extension. Each new word, or any word used in a new meaning is illustrated and used in sentences: the verb **pussyfoot** – to behave in a cautious way because you are not sure what to do. Example: Let’s not pussy-foot around the issue – over the centuries Christians have not always used Jesus’s message for the good of all people. The following example from the same source helps to find out all the different things we can do like a **dog**. We can **work** like a dog, **be treated** like a dog, and also

lie, die, screw, suffer, be dumped, be hanged, and be shot like a dog. It seems that, apart from the screwing, dogs do not have a very good time of it.

Those students who are eager to learn **slang** because it makes them feel more a part of the target culture can also find special sites meeting their needs.

Every two weeks a new **idiom** can be found at the **Weekly Idiom Page**. Each new idiom along with an amusing illustration is given with its definition and a sample dialogue. Some pages offer amusing word contests, vocabulary quizzes and stories about words.

I would like to show several examples: one is the idiom of the day **KICK OVER THE TRACES** and some examples taken from *Ye Olde English Sayings* (comments about origins of common English phrases).

I am sure your students will also like on-line reference dictionaries, namely **Ask Doctor Dictionary** they can enter any unfamiliar word and are immediately provided with its definition and context.

Every day, the so-called **Word of the day** is offered, accompanied with its definition and used in context.

Word for the Wise offers a description of word prepared by a linguistic expert. It is a guide to the pronunciation, definition, and etymology of the word.

A special section called **Fun and Games** offers two subsections, namely **New puzzle every day** and **Word search puzzle** which can be successfully used to fix the vocabulary.

Daily crosswords can help to practice and fix vocabulary and the students receive an immediate feedback from the computer.

Grammar can be studied in a more friendly way, too. The students can go through the pages devoted to **Common Errors in English**. When in doubt, correct answers are provided immediately. The students can test their knowledge – there are sets of exercises testing grammar and vocabulary at different levels. Grammar is presented in an easy way, students can ask questions about English grammar and their questions will be responded. They can also take grammar quizzes in a variety of subject areas such as holidays, sport and culture. The quizzes are graded on the spot.

There are sites on the Internet offering instructional handouts on subjects such as **punctuation, spelling, writing research papers** and **citing sources**. Some sections include explanations about **the use of articles** and **the use of prepositions** in English.

I have mentioned just a few benefits offered by the Internet. There are, of course, many more. Still, not every English teacher is ready to board the Internet train. It really is a pity as the Internet has a great potential to change our language instruction and students' learning of foreign languages. The Internet is the door to an "authentic language" interaction and learning that we, English language teachers should open as soon as possible. So, let us not wait and get on-line. **(One possible product will be the autonomous student).**

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