

INTERNET AS A POWERFUL SOURCE OF MATERIALS AND RESOURCES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

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Resumen: Los adolescentes de hoy en día viven rodeados de las nuevas tecnologías. Teléfonos móviles, ordenadores portátiles se usan para comunicarse de modo on-line, y en su mundo, internet juega un papel muy importante. Como docentes necesitamos explotar internet como increíble fuente de materiales y recursos. Desde cómo enseñar a descargar y guardar documentos hasta las redes sociales, deberíamos incorporar internet en nuestras clases a través de actividades motivadoras ya que, además de resultar atractivas para los alumnos les ayudará a pensar y a hablar en inglés. En este artículo nos centraremos en la importancia del uso de internet en el aula de idiomas y las diferentes posibilidades que ofrece la red como innovación pedagógica.

Palabras clave: Internet, TIC, proceso de enseñanza y aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras, materiales y recursos en la red, web 2.0.

Abstract: Today's children and teenagers live in a world of technology. Mobile phones, computers, laptops are used as screens for communicating on-line, and in their world, internet plays a very important role. As teachers we need to exploit the internet as it is an incredible source of materials and resources. From showing how to download and save documents to social networks, internet should be incorporated through motivating and engaging activities into the lessons so that, apart from making the lessons more attractive for students, it will help to get them thinking and talking in English. In this article we will focus on the importance of the use of Internet in the foreign languages classroom and the different possibilities offered in the web as an incentive for educational innovation.

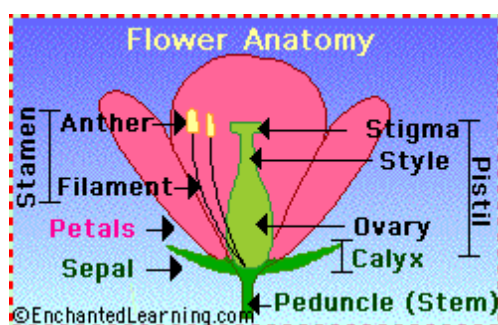
Keywords: Internet, ICT, English language teaching and learning, materials and resources in the web, Web 2.0.

In recent years, the sense of education has added a new approach based on computer technology since the moment in which implementing ICT into general education is one of the most important elements in the educational policy. The school of the future will require new settings and most of all, creative methodologies that exploit ICT to their full. Internet is a fantastic tool for teachers who have incorporated the use of ICT into their lessons creating a community of learners ready to cooperate and learn from one another. The use of internet is not the answer to simple teaching or learning, but it is an incredibly motivating resource for both, teachers and learners. In the web you can find materials to be used in traditional classes, you can access message boards and discussion groups with other teachers, you can get inspiration and ideas for the activities in your lessons, you can use the net as a communication tool which allows your students to interact with people around the world in English and you can use it as

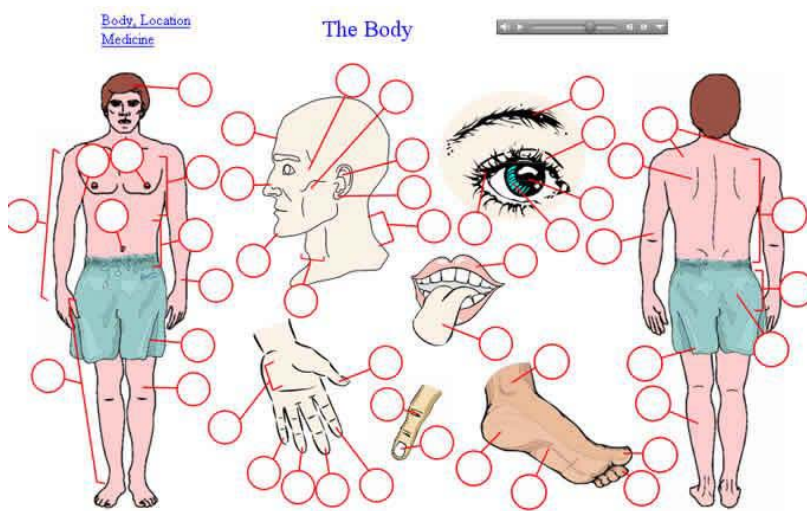
the basis of lessons with students accessing the internet live during lessons. These are some of the best reasons to use internet in the foreign languages classroom although teachers might not find it always easy to use and it does have its problems but the real truth is that it is a motivating and engaging resource for both students and teachers.

1. Resources and materials to work in the English classroom

The web contains a lot of resources that teachers can access and use to prepare teaching materials. These range from sites specifically designed for teachers and learners, in which the different skills can be worked, to sites from national and international newspapers, museums, galleries and so on. Teachers can use these materials much the same way as they would other print based resources, to create worksheets and exercises for their classes. Therefore, the net as a material research has a lot to offer the teacher in different ways. There are authentic resources and materials, places where you can find prepared lesson plans, ideas and worksheets. There is a great number of web pages devoted to the teaching and learning of languages and in them different materials are offered to work the four skills reading, writing, listening and speaking. Some of these materials are based on texts, others on listenings or videos and all of them can be used to present or review vocabulary:




From: <http://www.enchantedlearning.com>



From: <http://www.languageguide.org>

Grammar points can also be presented through ESL Lessons using powerpoints:

• **break**



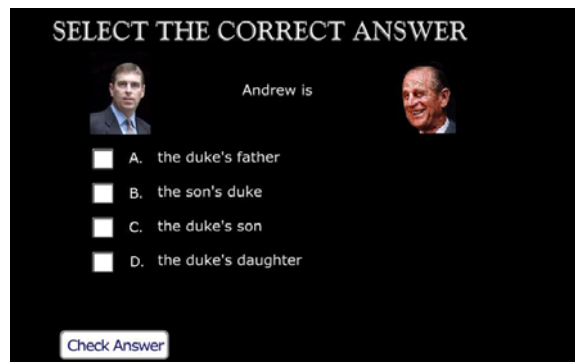
Present	Past	Past Participle
?	?	?

Can you list these verb forms?

From <http://www.iteslj.org>

And interactive exercises through which teachers can work at their own pace:

SELECT THE CORRECT ANSWER



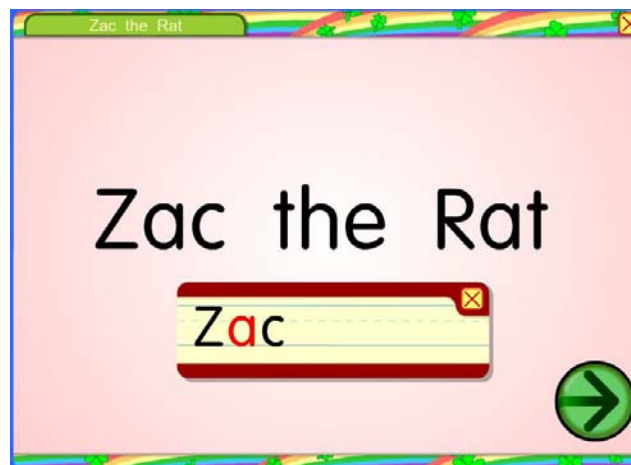
Andrew is

- A. the duke's father
- B. the son's duke
- C. the duke's son
- D. the duke's daughter

Check Answer

From <http://www.clicknlearn.com>

Pronunciation can also be worked giving the students the possibility of repeating the sounds, with the possibility of listening their own productions and even check them:



Zac the Rat

Zac

▶

From <http://www.starfall.com>

Dictionaries and Encyclopedias can be used by students to search information for projects and essays, such as the page of Cambridge Dictionaries on-line, where you can look up a word in one click:

English Language teaching...

CAMBRIDGE Dictionaries Online

the web's favourite learner dictionaries

Diccionario Cambridge Klett Compact

Select another dictionary..

We publish dictionaries for people learning English all over the world
Choose the right dictionary for you...

Resources

- Activities
- Top 20 words
Data for Language Researchers
- Word of the day
About the corpus

From <http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org>

Or The Internet Picture Dictionary

The Internet Picture Dictionary: English

Learn English - Browse English Words: Animals

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

< Back | Next >

Expand your English vocabulary! Browse English language words and pictures using the controls on this page. Test yourself in a variety of ways using one of the interactive learning activities in the column to the left.

 ant	 bear	 bird
 butterfly	 cheetah	 chick

From <http://www.pdictionary.com>

These are some of the examples of the different resources and materials we may find in the net. There is no doubt that all the materials and resources we can find in the web for our lessons offer, in one way or another, a great number of advantages to teachers and of course, to students. The internet offers, among others, these important and valuable features:

- Its vast size, that is, the incredible expanse of the internet, which means that the teacher has the ability to tailor lessons very specifically to students' needs and interests. Learners tend to respond better when they feel involved and engaged in the subject and the extent of the web means that if you can find out what the students are interested in, you can find it on the web.

- Its relevance, since much material is modern and up to date, which helps motivate the students. It is remarkable to say that good web sites continually update their material.

- Its widespread use by students, who enjoy using the net in their free time, therefore they will appreciate its use in class.

- Its nature since it is a dynamic medium involving movement from site to site, promoting decision making and learner independence.

All foreign languages teachers should keep these important features of the internet in mind and try to go farther since the moment they decide to introduce the internet in their lessons as a powerful source of materials and resources.

2. Searching the web

As we have seen the internet has a lot to offer the teacher: there are authentic resources and materials, but also sites where you can find prepared lesson plans, ideas and worksheets and places where you can share your ideas and thoughts with others around the world. The difficulty is often in finding what you want since there are several billion pages of content and that number is growing all the time. Therefore, one of the most important skills to develop when using internet in the lessons is that of developing an effective searching of the different sites. When searching the net, the important tips to remember are:

- We should choose our tool with a search directory since it is good for looking at general topic areas and their contents have been sorted by real people. We can search them as we might search in a library by clicking through the different sections and sub-sections. Search engines list content which has been gathered automatically from the net. There is much information to choose from and it is very important to be careful in our choice of search terms.

- We should refine our searches: if we are looking for exercises or information connected with the present perfect, for example, we could just type "present perfect" in the search box. This, however, would give us many thousands, possibly million of hits. Some of these would be what we are looking for, but many would be irrelevant. We need to be

able to narrow down or refine our search. We can do this a number of ways; One possibility is using key words and terms by adding a few words to our search using relevant expressions such as “ELT” (English Language Teaching). Putting “Present Perfect ELT” into the search box will reduce responses from many thousands to only a few thousand. Another possibility is using advanced search tools since most search tools have a section which allows further to refine our search. This way, if, for example, we wanted to look only for information that came from academic sites in the United Kingdom, we can select in the advanced search area to look for sites with the domain “.ac.uk”. Doing this reduces the number of responses to hundreds. We can also use Boolean operators (Boolean logic), these are characters such as “-“ (minus) and “+” (plus) which are used to exclude or add certain words in the search. For example, we do a search for “English teaching” and in the results there are many job opportunities, but we are looking for classroom materials. So, using Boolean operators we could write “English teaching-jobs-opportunities+ materials”. The search tool will then look for sites which have materials but do not have information on jobs or opportunities. They are a very effective way of narrowing our search to exactly what we are looking for.

- We should validate our searches: Once we have narrowed down our search results, it is also important to establish how reliable the information is. There are many sites on the web and not all of them will have accurate information. There are some clues we can look out for to help us judge a site. One of them is the domain, for example “.edu”, or “.ac” indicates that it comes from a university or academic institution. We also must pay attention to the producer, the company or individual producing the site and its reputation. The author who has written the information has also its importance and the same happens with the linguistic accuracy.

These features, of course, do not guarantee that we can trust the information on the site, but they are general guidelines which can apply with our own knowledge and common sense to help us make an informed decision about searching the different materials and resources in the net for our lessons.

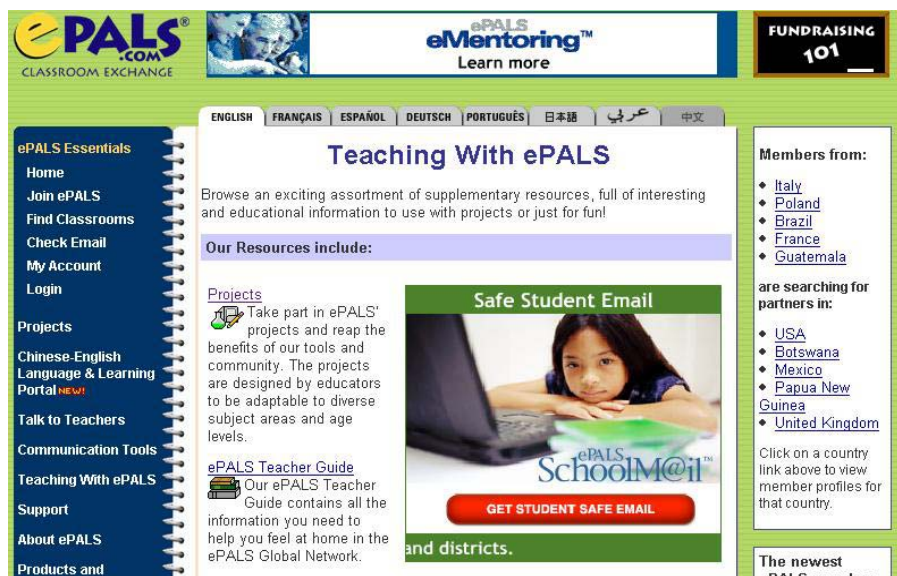
3. Communication using the web

Internet has a number of possibilities that can provide teachers with information and support, besides, we can find different useful tools which play a very important role for communication. These are:

- Discussion lists/ groups: we can take part in a discussion list or discussion group can by joining an email discussion group teachers can communicate, learn and share with many other teachers. Once we are subscribed every message that you send, it will be automatically distributed to all of the other members on the list, and we will receive all the replies and messages from all the others.
- Message boards: if we do not have the time or do not want to be looking at potentially hundreds of e-mails every week, then message boards are another good way to get or give answers to specific questions. Many sites have message boards on a range of topics and it is usually possible to look at the questions and answers without having to subscribe.

Discussion groups and message boards are like “virtual staff rooms” through which we can communicate with teachers all over the world. If we are having a problem with a student, class or just need ideas on how to teach a particular language point, we can be sure that other teachers have had the same problems. By joining message boards and mailing lists we can have access to the knowledge and experience of many other teachers which can help us in saving time and also in giving the reassurance that we are not alone.

- Chat: the net gives users the power and freedom to communicate instantly across the globe and nowadays with the digital era and the Web 2.0 we can do our best . If we can make contact with people from other cultures and countries, we can motivate students to improve their writing skills. Writing on the internet is more realistic than, say, a letter writing exercise in class as the students have an authentic reason for writing. This way, chat rooms are a facility on the web which allows to communicate directly and instantly with other people online. Unlike email, messages are displayed on the screen as they are written. It is like having a conversation, but in writing. However, as teachers, we need to be very careful using chat rooms with students. We cannot always be sure who your students are talking to- so if we plan to use a chat room it would be very advisable to try to find one that has been set up by a reliable organization for use by school students. Some examples are:

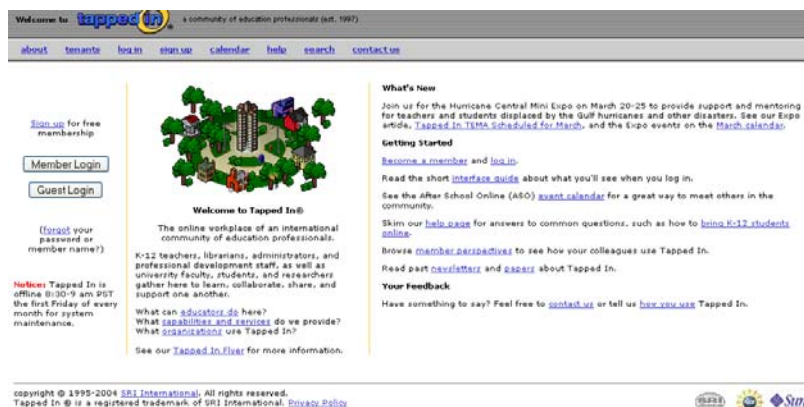


From <http://www.epals.com>



From <http://www.elscafe.com>

And there is also the possibility of having a chat only for teachers where they can share their ideas, problems, doubts and suggestions:



From <http://www.tappeddin.com>

- Inter- school contacts are used especially when we have already made contacts with another school. In this case, Twin Space, a platform offered by the programme eTwinning, gives teachers the opportunity of using its own chats, forums, email and the platform itself to share all the information between both schools.



From <http://www.etwinning.net>

Teachers can have access to internet in the classroom during the different lessons, exploiting the net as a dynamic medium. Using the internet brings the real world into the classroom, giving the students an opportunity to explore learning in a different way. However, having students facing a computer rather than the teacher, means teachers of internet lessons do not need to be vigilant. As teachers using the internet in the different lessons, we should learn how to search effectively in the net and evaluate the materials we find. We should prepare carefully internet lessons and materials, and always remember to have alternative material ready in case of technological or other problems. It would also be a good idea that before using the internet in class, we should check any sites that we will be asking the students to use. We cannot forget that during the lesson, we should monitor the students carefully and finally, we must try to have fun and be creative in our lessons, as Albert Einstein suggested: *“If you search for different results, you should not always do the same things.”* In our educational world, Web 2.0 gives us an opportunity to do different things and we, as English teachers, should exploit internet in our lessons as much as possible.

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