

Web Pages for Learners of English

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英語学習者用のウェブ・ページ

英語の学習者用のウェブ・ページは最近大変増えている。実は、サーチ・エンジンで検索すると何万のEFLとESLサイトが表示され、どのページが役に立つか判断しにくい。そこで、たくさんのサイトを研究し、その中で一番価値があると判断したページ幾つかを集めた。ただのリンクだけをリスト・アップしても価値が分からないので、(その上、EFLリンク集を表示するウェブ・ページもいっぱいある)この作文では、各ページを紹介し、その特徴、内容、役割、量、などについて述べる。辞書、発音、リスニング、会話、文法、語彙、リーディング、作文関係などのページを紹介するが紹介するほとんどのページは、どちらかと言うと学生・学習者向けのページで、先生向けではない。

Introduction

There has been a tremendous increase in the number of Web sites created during the last few years. Even at Sophia, hardly anyone had a homepage around 1996, but today there are a few hundred homepages. On a global level, of course, millions of homepages have surfaced within the same time span. Although most of these Web pages have little to do with the learning of English, even the relatively small percentage of English-related Web pages is too large for an individual to examine. When I searched in August 1998 for the word *English*, the search engine *Excite* produced 1,255,323 hits! Trying to reduce the hits, I tried various other search words and phrases, and the results were as follows:

<i>Search Words</i>	<i>Hits</i>
English	1,255,323
+English +Grammar	67, 240
+English +Writing	66, 910
+English +Reading	29, 880
ESL	28, 476
+English +Pronunciation	25, 779
+English +Skills	20, 280
+English +Conversation	7, 340
EFL	4,789
+English +Dictation	1, 854

Although it's heartening to see so many Web pages related to the learning of English, most of these are useless for learners, since some are merely tantalizing mirages, some are long dead carcasses, some are premature miscarriages, and some are technical monstrosities. In fact, only very few are of immediate value to learners, and these are the ones hardest to find.

Surely, an experienced Web explorer would perhaps seek out university Web sites and those maintained by EFL scholars. Some pages of academic megalinks, such as *TESL/TEFL/TESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links* at <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/links/>, with 3604 registered links, Kathleen and Kenji Kitao's *Useful Resources and Learning Materials for Students* at <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/visitors/kenji/student.htm>, Dave Sperling's *ESL Cafe* at <http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/eslcafe.html> and Portland Community College's *Links for Students* at <http://thor.pcc.edu/~ap-sec/links.htm> are truly noteworthy. Learners of English may do well to explore such academic links rather than use search engines to hit upon truly useful EFL Web sites. Unfortunately, though, even such academic pages tend to have too much information or too many links (of uneven quality) making it difficult to identify reliable sites for learning English. Often the difficulty is due to lack of reviews or specific details about

each link; so one cannot find out the worth of a link unless one follows it all the way, opening several pages without getting distracted on the way by other links. Sometimes the links may lead to a great treasure; sometimes to a damp squib.

The idea for this article arose as I personally explored hundreds of EFL sites and went through stages of frustration and exasperation. It seems to me what busy students and teachers need is not long lists of sites whose value is unknown, but a list of select sites with some description of the contents and characteristics. Such a list can save much time and energy, especially for beginners. Another reason for writing this article is to provide CALL software developers with some samples of existing Web-based CALL. Currently, several professors in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Sophia are interested in creating CALL software to teach their respective languages, such as French, Spanish, or German. The sites and the descriptions presented here may give them some insights and ideas as to how to create programs to teach pronunciation, conversation, listening, etc. Without adequate familiarity with existing software, one may end up reinventing the wheel.

Obviously, the list I present here is neither exhaustive nor the best in any absolute sense. It's nearly impossible for an individual to examine all the Web pages related to English learning, and it would be presumptuous to make any claims of having discovered the best. I've browsed perhaps a few hundred EFL sites and picked up the best among those I browsed. Since describing even these relatively best sites would require numerous pages, I've selected for presentation here only two or three sites per category. The criteria I used to pick out these few sites are as follows:

Rich in resources: Some sites have an extremely limited number of resources. Commercial sites, for example, are notorious for offering just one or two sample resources free, reserving the bulk of resources to paying

customers. Many sites of individual scholars too tend to lack depth since it's hard for an individual to maintain a really rich or voluminous site. For this article, I've tried to choose mainly sites with a large number of resources, so that students can spend at least an hour or more at the site.

Freely accessible: Surely it's naïve to expect something highly valuable given out for free. Most commercial sites offer their services only for a price, and the little they offer for free is meant to be bait for customers. Providentially though, there are extremely generous people and organizations out there that offer a limited number of very useful resources for free. Even among commercial firms, some tend to be more generous than others. For this article, I've taken into consideration only those sites that permit free access, not those that require payment.

Interactive: Some sites contain valuable information without any interactive exercises, as for example, a site in which you can listen to news but cannot read the script or check whether you've understood what you've heard. Surely, such sites can be very useful to learners, but in this article I've excluded them. I present here mostly sites that have some interactive exercises. Interactive sites can engage the attention of learners and help them test themselves.

Technically superior: Since there's no quality control for Web pages, there are technically advanced as well as technically primitive Web pages. Clearly, for learning purposes a Web site need not have all the bells and whistles of a commercial program; neither does it have to have distractions in the form of animated graphics, blinking titles, or scrolling ticker tape. However, even a site for learners should have a pleasing layout, user-friendly interface, and sound or video clips as required. For example, a site purporting to teach conversation without audio clips is clearly inferior to a site that uses audio clips. Although it's too much to expect technical excellence in free Web sites, I've listed here the best among the ones I examined.

Learner-centered: There are many remarkable EFL sites meant for teachers, such as those containing lesson plans, grammar handouts, reading texts, etc. My aim in this article, however, is to satisfy the needs of learners, not teachers. As much as possible, therefore, I've included only those that address the needs of learners.

In order to benefit from most of the sites listed here, you must have a networked multimedia PC, with a standard browser such as *Netscape* or *Internet Explorer*. You should also have some of the freely available plug-ins such as *Acrobat Reader*, *Shockwave*, *QuickTime*, *RealAudio*, and *RealVideo* installed. Without these or equivalent plug-ins, you won't be able to see video clips or hear sound bytes. Actually, even if you don't have these plug-ins already installed, you can connect to the sites listed here and download the plug-ins. Almost all the sites listed here have links to the plug-ins required to take full advantage of the sites.

Dictionaries

Dictionaries are very important for most learners, and luckily for them, there are several excellent dictionaries freely available on the Internet. Perhaps the best Web dictionary for learners is the highly acclaimed *Cobuild*. Printed versions of *Cobuild* (*Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*, London: Collins, 1987) have been on sale for several years, and the Web version seems to be almost the same as the printed one. To access *Cobuild*, go to: **<http://www.linguistics.ruhr-uni-bochum.de:8099/ccsd-set.html>**. The opening menu gives, among others, the following options: *grammar*, *pronunciation*, *new entries*, and *search by picture*. You can enter the word you want to look up in the small edit box on the opening page. For example, if you type *make* within the box and enter , you get about 14 detailed entries like the following one, each with a definition and sample sentences:

make /meik / makes, making, made / meid/

1 You use **make** to say that someone performs an action.(VB.WITH.OBJ)

For example, if someone **makes** a suggestion, they suggest something.

I made the wrong decision.

He made the shortest speech I've ever heard.

We have got to make a really serious effort.

He had two phone calls to make.

The first line “ make /meik/ makes, making, made /meid/ ” gives the key word, its pronunciation (within slashes) in IPA symbols, a mouth icon (not shown above) the verb forms, and the pronunciation of the past form, followed by another icon (not shown here) You can hear the key word or the past form pronounced by clicking on the icons close to the phonetic symbols. Besides the 14 definitions and related sample sentences, there are also cross-references to phrases such as: *making, make good, make way, make for, make of, make off, make off with, make out, make up*. Almost each of these phrases is hyperlinked too; so you can click on “ make for, ” for example, and get a new window with the following comments: “ **make for** is defined under the headword: make 1 If you **make for** a place, you move towards it. We joined the crowd **making for** the exit. ” As a learner’s dictionary, the great merits of Cobuild are the IPA pronunciation symbols, actual pronunciation that can be heard, sample sentences, and clear -almost verbose - explanation in simple words.

The options found in the opening page of Cobuild mainly deal with the conventions used in the dictionary. The *grammar* button, for instance, shows a page of grammatical symbols and abbreviations used in the dictionary, together with some explanatory comments. Similarly, the *pronunciation* button shows a page of conventions used in the dictionary regarding pronunciation symbols. The *new entries* button lists about 150 contemporary words, e.g., *cellular phone, cola, hard disk, network, workstation*.

The *search by picture* option leads to a page of links to illustrations, under the headings of *car and bicycle, food (fruit and vegetables) musical instruments, and tools.*

Another highly recommendable dictionary is *Newbury House On-Line Dictionary of American English - Definitions, sample sentences, idioms, cultural facts and figures* at <http://nhd.heinle.com/>. This dictionary seems identical to the printed version, *The Newbury House Dictionary of American English* (Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers, 1996) The blurb on the printed version describes it to be “ the first learner’s dictionary developed from an American English vocabulary base. ” According to the note at the site, the online version contains 40, 000 entries and will soon be linked to a 50,000 photo database, so that learners can look at illustrations for several words/concepts. Apparently “ over 75 teachers had their hand in writing and editing this new dictionary, ” and that makes it quite suitable for EFL teachers and students. If you don’t find a word in the dictionary, you can suggest that the word be included, and even contribute your own definitions, sample sentences, cultural notes, and synonyms. Thus it’s a sort of interactive dictionary. There’s also an option titled “ Cultural Note of the Day, ” and if you click on this you get a word or phrase, fully defined, and accompanied by a rather lengthy *Usage Note*. The word shown doesn’t seem to have anything in particular to do with the day, but rather is arbitrarily chosen. For example, on the day I checked the “ Cultural Note of the Day, ” I got:

skim milk n. milk with its cream (fat) removed

USAGE NOTE: Milk is sold in four forms, according to its fat content: (1) skim or nonfat, (2) one percent fat content, (3) two percent fat content, and (4) whole milk (four percent fat) When you go to the store, would you get me a quart of two percent milk?

To look up the meaning of a word, you just type in the word, as at the Cobuild site. For example, on submitting the word *sleuth*, you get the following output:

sleuth /sluθ/ n. v. frml. a person who tries to solve mysteries, (syn.) a detective: *The woman hired a <n.> sleuth to find out who stole her jewelry.*

Here too the pronunciation is given in IPA symbols, but there seems to be no audio file associated with it; so you cannot hear pronunciation as you can at the Cobuild site. The grammatical information offered is quite adequate for learners. Some words, for example *detective* in the above definition, appear hyperlinked, and by clicking on any of them you can jump to that word. The fact that there are always sample sentences in each entry is a big bonus to all learners.

The Web Edition of *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Tenth Edition, at <http://www.m-w.com/dictionary.htm> too is a great online dictionary. However, for most learners, especially beginners, this may not be ideal since the pronunciation symbols used here are proprietary (not IPA symbols) and though the definitions are very detailed, there are few sample sentences. There're no audio files either. This dictionary can be recommended only to advanced learners.


Japanese English Dictionaries

Japanese learners might be interested in some Japanese English dictionaries. The URL <http://www.notredame.ac.jp/cgi-bin/jed.cgi> leads to a free Japanese → English dictionary. The input at this site has to be *only in roman letters*, though the output is in Japanese (kanji and kana) and

English. A far superior dictionary is Jeffrey Fried's Japanese English Dictionary at <http://www.gsquare.or.jp/cgi-bin/j-e/jis/dict>. At this site you can select whether you want to look up an English or Japanese word, and enter the word in roman letters, doublebyte katakana, hiragana, or even kanji. Besides words, you can also look up names, legal terms, and life-science terms. For instance, if you enter *toshiko*, after clicking on the radio button for names in the J-E dictionary, you get 63 entries, i.e., 63 different ways in which the word *Toshiko* is written in Japanese and their meanings where relevant.

Pronunciation

The first site for pronunciation I'd like to introduce is *Okanagan University College English Pronunciation* site at <http://www.faceweb.okanagan.bc.ca/pron>. The opening menu presents six units: one dealing with the *th* of *thin*, another with the *th* of *there*, another with the contrast between [I] (as in *sin*) and [i] (as in *seen*) and three others dealing with the following consonant contrasts respectively: *l/r*, *s/sh/ch*, and *v/w*. Each unit contains several sections such as *Introduction*, *QuickTime movie*, *Minimal Pairs*, *Tongue Twisters*, and *Dictation*.

The section titled *Introduction* opens up a page that describes in phonetic terms how to pronounce the sound in question (e.g., θ) and gives about 20 words in which the sound occurs so that learners may practice their pronunciation. Perhaps the most appealing feature of this page is the Macromedia Streaming Audio. By clicking on the *play* button (shown by the symbol ) in the *Shockwave* logo box found at the top of the screen, you can hear the whole page read out by native speakers. The sound quality is excellent and the transmission smooth.

The section titled *QuickTime movie* shows a mini video clip in which a word with the sound in question is pronounced. For example, if you activate “*Thought the Movie*,” you’ll see a woman pronouncing the word *thought* three times. Since the goal of the movie is to teach learners how to pronounce, the movie highlights the movements of the lips, tongue, and mouth. By observing these movements closely, learners can try to pronounce the sound more accurately.

The section titled *Minimal Pairs* helps the learner distinguish between similar sounds. For example, in the Minimal Pairs section of θ , you can learn to distinguish the following eight pairs: *boat-both*, *sink-think*, *moss-moth*, *four-Thor*, *frilled-thrilled*, *sin-thin*, *brought-broth*, and *tree-three*. You can click on any one of these words and hear it pronounced. Once you’ve learned how each word is correctly pronounced, you can challenge yourself by taking a listening test. The test is quite simple. All you have to do is to click on a question-mark icon found between each pair. You’ll hear one member of the pair, and you’ll have to identify it correctly by clicking on the word you think you heard. If your answer is correct, you’re congratulated; if not, you’re asked to try again. You can similarly test your listening skills with each of the other minimal pairs.

The section of *Tongue Twisters* is quite a challenging and educational one. For instance, the following are three of the ten tongue twisters in the *l/r* Unit.

1. Laura and Larry rarely lull their rural roosters to sleep.
5. It’s the right light with the glimmer in the mirror.
9. Yellow arrows frilled with reefed leaves are rarely light.

After clicking on a button at the top of the page, you can listen to each one of these tongue twisters pronounced by native speakers. This section has no quizzes or tests.

The *Dictation* section too is quite interesting. You get a *Shockwave* window, with an edit box and the icon of an audio speaker. When you click on the icon, you hear a sentence like: “ The royal loyalty played for a wooden tool. ” You are to type exactly within the edit box what you hear, and then enter . Immediately, your sentence is corrected, and errors pointed out in terms of clues (not answers) For example, if you misspell the second word “ royal, ” you get, “ The second word is spelled incorrectly; it begins with R and ends with L. ” Seeing this, you can correct your spelling. If you can’t get even a single word of what is spoken, you can “ cheat ” by clicking on a row of question marks, which will show each of the uttered words. Looking at this, you can type in your answer in the edit box. It’s extremely user-friendly, and a *Hint* button gives explanations for phrases, defines meanings, and lists potential errors. A score window shows the score for your performance. The learner can proceed to the next sentence only after writing the current sentence correctly. There are altogether about ten sentences in each *Dictation* section.

It’s a pity that this site contains only a few of the numerous English sounds. There’s hardly any coverage of vowels (except the I/i contrast) Despite the narrow scope, the available units contain interesting gimmicks and activities that can benefit Japanese learners.

Another interesting site for learning or rather practicing pronunciation is the *English Karaoke Jukebox* at <http://users.netmatters.co.uk/~gitaylor/sekar-qt-songs-jbox.html>. Learners visiting this page can select a song from the jukebox and sing to accompanying music as they view the text scroll by. Surprisingly, there's no video, though it may be a blessing since learners can concentrate on the words without being distracted by visual images. There are altogether about 50 songs: Country and Folk (2) Easy listening (2) Oldies but goldies (20) and Pop and Rock (22 pieces) Although you may find some unfamiliar pieces, you'll also find popular ones like Lennon's *Imagine*, Abba's *Waterloo*, and the traditional *Waltzing Matilda*.

For serious students of English phonology, there are at least two excellent sites. One is the *Sounds of English* at <http://mason.gmu.edu/~swidmayer/sounds.htm> and the other is the *Online Phonology Course* by Stephen Luscombe of Stirling University at <http://www.stir.ac.uk/epd/celt/staff/higdox/stephen/phono/phonolg.htm>. Both sites are of high academic quality, presenting all the English vowels and sounds, with detailed phonetic descriptions, figures, and sound clips. The former describes American English, whereas the latter the RP (Received Pronunciation) variety of British English. These sites are not for the light-hearted casual browsers, but for academically motivated learners who'd like to learn English pronunciation thoroughly and scientifically.

Listening

Perhaps the best listening site tailored to suit the needs of learners is Randall S. Davis's *ESL Cyber Listening Lab* at <http://www.esl-lab.com>. It's an amazingly user-friendly and pedagogically sound collection of audio and video clips, which

one can use to listen to English, view the script, and answer comprehension questions, etc. The opening page presents numerous options, but for learners the most useful ones are those listed under the three main sections: *Short Listening Exercises*, *Long Conversations with RealAudio [Text Completion Quizzes]*, and *Long Conversations with RealVideo*. In each section, items are grouped under two to four levels of difficulties: *Easy*, *Medium*, *Difficult*, and *Very Difficult*. The topics covered are quite diverse. The *Short Listening Exercises* section, for example, deals with basic pronunciation problems, grammar points (e.g., numbers) vocabulary items, several notions and functions (e.g., *saying hello and goodbye*, *giving directions to find a place*) The *Long Conversations with RealAudio* are like chapters in a book, with conversations appropriate for several situations and contexts, titled e.g., *Tokyo, Restaurant, Hello. May I help you?*, *Hotel Reservations*, *What is she like?* *Where's the movie theater?* *A Visitor from Space*, *It's a Home Run!*, *The Japanese Economy*. There are only five clips of *Long Conversations with Read Video*, each like a mini lecture on specific topics such as *Culture Shock*, *Bamboo Artifacts* and *Guidelines for Safe investing*.

The basic approach of Randall's lab is to help learners listen to a text and perform some activity based on understanding what they have listened to. Frequently, the activity performed is answering quizzes. To give an example, if you click on "Directions 2" in the *Difficult* section of the *Short Exercises*, you'll get a horizontally split screen with a top frame and a bottom frame. In the bottom frame, you'll see a colorful street map with street names and buildings. In the top frame, you'll get instructions as to how to proceed and a set of comprehension questions regarding the data given in the bottom frame. These are the instructions you get:

Instructions: Study the map before you begin. For each question, listen to the speaker giving directions to different places on the map by pressing the "PLAY" link, and then choose the correct answer. See the [Quiz Script](#) here. Press the "Final Score" button at the bottom of the page to score your quiz.

Figure 1 Randall's ESL Lab (Short Exercise/Difficult/Directions2)

The questions are phrased simply with a PLAY link and four choices. Following the instructions, first you have to study the map and then click on the PLAY link, located within the top frame (hidden in Figure 1). Immediately, a recorded script is played, hearing which you must choose the correct answer. You may play the recorded script any number of times. Also, if you find it too hard to make out even one or two words, you may click on the link *Quiz Script*. This link allows you to view the script as it's spoken, but since the script and questions are on different pages, you can answer the questions only while hearing the script, not while viewing it. You may input your response by selecting it from a list box, which shows a small box displaying the message " Choose one number here, " with the four choices hidden. When you click on this box, you'll be able to see the hidden choices. Of course, you may go through all the questions scrupulously, without looking up the answers. However, if you want to, you may also look up the answer any time, by merely

clicking on another box next to the user-input box. In essence, Randall makes it possible for learners to control their own pace and strategy. There's no atmosphere of TOEFL-style tests or time pressure.

The *Long Conversations with RealAudio* are each about two minutes long. For example, if you select the Chapter titled " Hotel Reservations, " you'll enter a new page showing a set of questions and a button marked *Play Conversation*. If you click on this button, you'll hear a dialog of about 200 words, between a hotel clerk and a customer. By default, the text itself is not visible, since you're expected to respond to the comprehension questions by merely listening to the dialog. However, if you find the dialog impossible to follow, you may " cheat " by clicking on the *Quiz Script* button. This button opens up a page in which the whole dialog is shown in text form, and you can follow the script as you listen to the dialog.

You may listen to the dialog any number of times, before, after, or while answering multiple-choice questions based on the dialog. Questions are like the following:

1. The man makes a reservation for which day?
 - A. March 20th
 - B. March 21st
 - C. March 22nd

2. What kind of room does the man prefer?
 - A. a non-smoking room
 - B. a smoking room
 - C. either one is okay

Here again, you may answer the questions one by one by selecting your response from a list box, and then finally check the score. Or, if you prefer, you may switch to another mode (*Quiz with answer menus*) in which the answers are immediately accessible.

Finally, the *Long Conversations with RealVideo* contain video clips (each about two minutes long) which you can view with a RealVideo plug-in (See Figure 2) Actually Randall gives four options: RealAudio only, RealVideo at 28.8, RealVideo 56KB, RealVideo 112 ISDN. You may choose the first option if you have only an audio, but no video, plug-in; the second option, if you use a modem of 28.8 kbps; the third option, if you use a 56 kbps modem or ethernet cable; and finally the last option, if you have an ISDN connection. I viewed it after selecting the 56KB option, and though the video was a bit jerky, the sound quality was excellent. The video screen is about 4.5x3.0 cms on a 17 " monitor.

Here again, Randall makes it possible for learners to view the whole mini-lecture in text form (follow the *Go To Quiz Script* link) while listening to it. He has also annotated a few difficult words such as *frothy*, *artifacts*, *stem*, *flexible*, which are all hyperlinked with their meanings. The learner can get the meaning by merely clicking on the words. The comprehension questions are like the following:

Figure 2 Randall's ESL Lab (Long Conversations with RealVideo)

According to the presentation, it was believed that:

- A. bamboo was the food of the Shinto gods.
- B. the Shinto gods lived inside the bamboo.
- C. the early inhabitants worship bamboo as their gods.

The user input here is by radio buttons which are to the left of each option, and the evaluation is given at the end when the student clicks on the button *Final Score*.

Randall's site is a treasure many learners will cherish, for it's characterized by a variety of lessons, user-friendly interface, inventive technological aids, and above all sound language-teaching principles.

Another notable site for listening is the University of Stirling's *Listening Exercises* at <http://www.stir.ac.uk/epd/celt/Listen/index.html>. Since it's a university site and one maintained by Professor John Higgins, a well-known CALL pioneer, it has several interesting, innovative, and interactive activities based on listening, grouped under the following six categories: *Logic puzzles*, *Crossword puzzles*, *Stirling Treasure hunt*, *Hidden words*, *Telephone Messages*, and *Treasure hunt: the Penny Black*. Unlike Randall's, however, this site offers no transcription of sound segments at all. The learner has to answer quizzes solely by hearing and understanding what is spoken.

For example, if you choose the section of *Logic Puzzles*, you enter a new page with two frames, a smaller one on the left and a larger one on the right. The right frame gives a sample puzzle and shows you how to solve it. The sample puzzle given is essentially to find out what the ages and the pets of three boys named Peter, Paul, and Philip are, based on three short audio clips spoken by each of the boys respectively. The following grid shows the data and the questions in table format:

Since it's a *logical* puzzle, the audio clips do not contain straightforward sentences like "I'm Peter, aged 10, and I like cats." Rather, Peter says, "I am older than Philip," Paul says, "I am the oldest but I don't have a dog," and Philip says, "Peter has a fish." Although in this example you can see what each one says in text form, in the actual puzzles, you can only hear, but can't see, the clues. Since the ages of the three boys are given to be 10, 11, and 12, and the pets they keep are given to be *cat*, *dog*, and *fish*, you can solve the puzzle by listening to the clues given by each boy.

The left frame lists the titles of three unsolved puzzles like the above: *Four friends* (in which you'll have to identify the full names and occupations of four persons, based on what each one says) *What's for dinner?* (in which you'll have to find out what courses a Mrs. Beeton will be serving for dinner on each day of the week, based on eight audio clues) and *Grand tour* (in which you'll have to find out in which order a group of tourists visited seven named towns, based on four audio clues)

Let me outline briefly what the other listening sections are about.

Crossword Puzzles: These are like ordinary crossword puzzles, but with sound clues instead of text clues. There's a *cheat* button, in case you're stumped; and another button to check your answers. There are three crossword puzzles to solve: one with eight clues, another with seven, and another with just four clues. As crossword puzzles, they seem to be rather amateurish, but for learning purposes they're quite adequate.

Hidden Words: There are three units here: the first based on an Air Canada in-flight announcement, the second based on an announcement to shoppers at a shopping mall, and the last based on a prerecorded message heard when one calls a movie theater, about the movies currently playing. All the three units are identical in format. If you select the first unit, for example, you see a new page with five *play* buttons, and a set of four questions. By clicking on

the first *play* button, you can hear the entire 45-seconds long Air Canada announcement. Each of the other four *play* buttons precedes the four questions respectively. By clicking on these *play* buttons, you can hear a segment of the complete announcement, and based on this segment you have to answer the question following it. The 'question' in each case asks you to identify the one word that occurs in the sound segment from among four words given as options. After answering all the four questions, you may click on a button titled *Mark the test* and immediately a JavaScript window pops up giving your score and the correct answers for each. Similarly you can go through the other two *Hidden Words* units. Each question in each of the three units calls upon you only to identify the word heard in a sound segment. The focus of this section, therefore, is on sound recognition rather than on knowledge of grammar or meaning.

Telephone Messages: This section has five units, each unit containing a sound segment of about 15 seconds. Each segment is like a recorded message left in a telephone answering machine by a caller, giving some specific information like the details of an appointment or an address. There are three questions based on each sound segment, and they deal with some information contained in the message. Here again you can submit your answers and get feedback immediately.

The *Stirling Treasure Hunt* and *Treasure hunt: the Penny Black* are similar activities that challenge the learner to play detective and solve a problem, which is finding a historical document in the first case, and a precious stamp, in the second. Both offer visual clues in the form of an *image map* or *clickable image* (i.e., a photo, picture, or map with several sections of it hyperlinked to other sites, messages, sound bytes, images, etc.) and audio clues, which are heard when users click on the hot (i.e., hyperlinked) portions of the image. The *Stirling Treasure Hunt* is a much more complex activity, with several branching options, dead ends, etc. like an arcade game, compared to the *Penny Black*, which is quite a simple and straightforward activity.

Several of these sections are experimental pages, constructed by graduate students working for their master's degree. There are some lapses (e.g., in some cases answers are given away by filenames) but overall the site is noteworthy for its creative ideas and interesting exercises. It's surely a great place for learners who want to improve their listening skills to visit.

Another interesting page for improving listening comprehension is: <http://www.senshu-u.ac.jp/~thc0408/CCDBF/movies/index.html>. When you enter this page, you get about 35 hyperlinked phrases both in English and Japanese. These links are grouped under the following five categories: *Movie Demo*, *Pronunciation*, *Grammar*, *Usage*, and *Love*. You may select any of the 35 phrases listed under these categories. For example, if you choose the first item under *Movie Demo*, titled 女性とお酒を (whiskey and woman) you'll get a new page with a small fill-in-the-blank question :

_____?

-Whiskey.

Two whiskeys

1.wrink 2. link 3. drink 4. blink

Also, immediately a 12-second video clip from the classic movie *The Third Man* is loaded, and you can see this clip and hear the dialog. After listening to the dialog carefully - you may listen to it any number of times - you have to answer the above question.

The movie clip is about 7x5 cms on a 17 " monitor. It's moderately visible (depends on the lighting used in the segment), but the sound quality is excellent. Once you enter your answer, you get a popping JavaScript window which tells you whether the answer is correct or not. Though perhaps not intentionally inserted, the movie clip also has Japanese subtitles!

Almost each one of the thirty-five entries has such a short movie clip, making the listening experience quite interesting. The exercises too are very similar, concerning just one small word or phrase that was uttered in the movie.

Clearly, this is not a site with great variety or depth. It seems to be an experimental construction, done with a view to demonstrating the use of video clips from movies for learning English. Naturally, the items presented are somewhat random (not clearly focused on, say, grammar or vocabulary) and the activities expected of students are very brief: answering just one question per clip. Despite these limitations, however, it's ideal for beginners and advanced learners who have difficulties in grasping English words. Even the brevity of each item may be an attractive feature for those who cannot concentrate for too long. Also, since each item involves some listening activity, accompanied by most of the text, sound, visual representation, and even Japanese translation, it can be used profitably by those who want to improve their English listening skills.

Conversation

Learning conversation from Web pages is perhaps the hardest thing to do since currently there seems to be hardly any academic Web site where learners can communicate orally. Moreover, even if there were such sites, the computers learners use have to be specially equipped with microphones and associated software so that they can send the sound bytes they produce. Most learners do not yet have such sophisticated computers. Currently, therefore, students can learn conversation primarily by listening to and repeating the conversation they hear, rather than by synchronously communicating with a live partner. The closest they can come to synchronous conversation is by conversing by writing, especially in chat rooms and MOOs (See *Bronzed_Aussie's Learn-to-MOO Page* at **http://home.vicnet.net.au/~twf/learn_schMOOze.html**, where he shows how to enter the SchMOOze University)

Here let me first introduce the Chat Room in Dave Sperling's *ESL Café* at **<http://www.eslcafe.com/chat/chatpro.cgi>**. You can access this page also by first opening **<http://www.eslcafe.com/>** and following the link to *Chat Central* in the opening menu. This is a chat site with graphic interface; so it's much easier to use than SchMOOze University, a popular MOO site, which doesn't yet have a graphic interface. You can chat in the Chat Room of ESL Café live with other learners, who may be chatting from different parts of the globe.

Before beginning to chat, you have first to register, which means, immediately after opening the site, you'll have to enter your name (may be a fictional name!) email address (must be real) and a password chosen by you. For future reference, do make a note of the name and password you give. You cannot chat without entering these data. Dave assures us that ESL Café won't use the information you give for purposes other than confirming your registration through email. Once you've sent in the registration, you'll receive a confirmation number by email; so check your email before continuing with the chat session.

After you're properly registered, all you need are your name (i.e., the real or fictional name you gave while registering) and the password. Open the site once more, and enter your name and password. You'll then enter the Chat room shown below (see Figure 3) Any time you don't know what to do, click on the *HELP* button. To see what's going on, click on the *Reload* button; that'll give the latest exchange or current conversation among people in the current room.

The purpose of the chat room is to chat or converse with others, who may be logged on to the same site at the same time from different parts of the globe. Clearly, the first time you log in, you won't know anybody who may be chatting; so you have to be bold enough to select someone to chat with or to address all the persons in the entire room! You can select the one(s) you

want to address from the box following *To*:. If you examine the page carefully, you'll see that a line on top right says: " You're currently in: Lobby. " You can look at that line to orient yourself. If you like to visit a different part of the Chat complex, click on the window above " Go there " on top right, and it'll show you a variety of rooms, such as: *Lobby, Students, Teachers, Grammar, and Jobs*. You can select any of these rooms, and click on " Go there " to go to that room. Suppose you select the *Students* room. Immediately, the caption on top right will show, " You're currently in: Students. " By clicking on the box titled " Who is in this room? " you can get to know the names of all others in the same room. At times, there may be no one else. In which case, you can select a different room and go there.

Figure 3 ESL Chat Central

To communicate with others, you can type in your message in the big window below the caption ESL CHAT CENTRAL. You can just place the pointer inside the window and click, and then begin typing. You can enrich your message with some images. If you click on the box titled “ Picture, ” you’ll find a list of about 40 titles such as *Baby, Computer, Crazy Smile*, etc. These are all titles of small figures, sort of graphic smileys, and you can click on any of them to show your mood. Once you’ve completed composing the message, select the audience. Click on the *To:* box and choose the *Entire room* or any specific individual in the room. If you select the *Entire room*, then everyone in the room will be able to read your message; if you select any individual, only that individual will be able to read the message. After selecting the audience, click on the *Post* button, and your message, together with the image you selected, will be posted immediately. After posting, give a few minutes for the audience to read your message and respond to it. Meanwhile you can read the messages posted by others.

Unfortunately, since the Chat room does not update messages automatically, you won’t know automatically whether someone has responded to your message. So, after a minute or two, click on the *Reload* button, and you might see someone or other responding to your message. Periodically you’ll have to go through this process of clicking on the *Reload* button to see what’s going on. If you just leave the screen as is, you won’t see any change in the screen. Once you’ve read the messages sent in response to yours, it’s your turn again to continue the chat. You may ask another question or make some comments and *Post*. Then wait, *Reload*, and read the feedback. You can go on chatting like this as long as you wish, and when you want to quit, click on the button marked *Leave*.

Chat rooms are quite popular among learners, since they can strike up a conversation with learners from different countries. Casual acquaintance in the Chat room can sometimes lead to serious friendship or even romance. Students planning to study abroad may sometimes meet in the chat rooms

their future classmates. Friends from different parts of the world may meet in the chat room by logging in at the same time. Pedagogically, the most appealing aspect of chat rooms is that learners can engage in realistic communication using their target language.

A great site for learning basic conversational skills by listening, reading, and repeating is Rong-Chang Li's *Learning Oral English Online* at **<http://www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-li5/book/>**. This site contains the following seven snippets of conversation, each lasting about one or two minutes: *Making Friends*, *Apartment Hunting*, *At the Library*, *Asking for the Way*, *A Visit to the Advisor*, *Shopping in America*, and *Going to a Party*.

If you open *Making Friends*, for example, you get the script of a dialog between two men named Thin and Jim, who meet for the first time. The script is about 150 words long and introduces conversational phrases and formulaic expressions required when introducing oneself to or getting acquainted with a stranger. You can listen to the entire conversation, or the utterance of each speaker separately, by simply clicking the mouse on appropriately marked buttons. Once the sound bytes are loaded, you can listen to the conversation as many times as you like.

At the end of each section, there are two options, titled: *New Words and Expressions* and *Drills*. When you click on *New Words and Expressions*, you're shown explanatory comments such as the following for most of the words and expressions used in the conversation:

“ Allow me to introduce myself. ”

This phrase is used when you want to tell your new friend that you are going to tell him your name.

Naturally, by going through each of these words and expressions, you can learn when and in what context to use the word/phrase.

When you select the *Drills* section, you get several important expressions together with sample sentences containing these expressions. You can say these aloud by yourself or enact them as a dialog with a classmate. There's no evaluation or audio clips in drills. One of the several drills, for example, goes like this:

I. Using phrases " Allow me to introduce myself " and " Pleased to meet you. "

A: Hello. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Think.

B: Think, pleased to me you. My name is Jim.

A: Good morning. Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Jim Peters.

B: Good to meet you, Jim. My name is Think.

Not all the study activities are identical. Some of these have simple exercises calling on learners to give free responses or discuss with a neighbor, and some have JavaScript multiple-choice questions, whose responses are evaluated instantly (e.g., *A Visit to the Advisor Segment*) Overall, for learning basic conversational skills, this is a great site.

Reading

Perhaps the best place for reading and related exercises is Keio University's *English Section B* at http://www.sfc.keio.ac.jp/~kabune27/esl_lessons.html. This site, with several interesting and challenging exercises, is ideal for intermediate students. There are 12 complete lessons at this site, titled *Time, Indoor Sports, The New Year, Work & Money, Biorhythms, Sleep, The Lottery, Stress at Work, Water, UFO's, The Volkswagen, and Women & Medicine*. Each lesson is organized into five sections, each section on a different page. Each page has a link to the Webster's dictionary so that students may look up any word in Webster's.

The first section of each lesson consists of warm-up activities, in which students respond to some preliminary questions, thus organizing their ideas and orienting themselves to the main theme of the lesson. They can also read the ideas previously submitted by other students. For example, if you select the lesson on *Sleep*, you're asked to write your responses to the following questions: " 1 When was the last time you went to bed after 2 a.m.?" " 2 What is the least amount of sleep you can get by on?" " 3 Describe an interesting nights sleep you've had," and " 4 How does jet lag affect you?" All these are open-ended questions, to which you can respond briefly by typing your answers within an edit box corresponding to each question. Under each edit box, there's a button with a title such as *Going to bed after 2 a.m.* When you click on this button, a small JavaScript window pops up, giving a sample response, presumably written by the author of the Web pages, such as: " It is a very rare event for me to stay up after 2 am. The last time this happened was on New Years[sic] Eve when I stayed up to watch the bonfires on Kamakura beach. " You can fashion your comments modeled on this text. There's also another button, titled *Student's Ideas*, below the edit box. If you click on this button, you can see responses given by other students to this question. After answering all these open-ended questions, you have a multiple choice question such as: " 5 How many hours sleep do you get every night?" You can select your answer from an array of radio buttons, marked 6, 7, 8, or *more than 9 hours*.

After loosening up by answering the preparatory questions, you enter the second section, where you study about 25 key words and phrases that will be used in the article you'll be reading. All these words and phrases appear in one page, each word/phrase in a small drop-down list box, with its meaning hidden. When you click on a word/phrase, the hidden meaning drops down so that you can see it.

The third section encourages you to write an original story, based on a list of words and phrases provided. For example, if you've chosen the *Sleep* lesson, here you'll get the following list: *mysterious; drift off; mind; walk about; body*

rests; babies; 16 hours; 80's; 6 hours; why; repair; prove it; essential; experiment; mice; awake; sleepless; drop dead; blood infection; sleep; ingredient; healthy life.

These words and phrases are taken from the article to be read and presented in the same sequence in which they appear in the article. You are encouraged, though not obliged, to use these items in composing your story. The list of items automatically suggests how the story will proceed, so you can freely develop the story line. There's a big edit box for you to directly type in your complete ' story.'

The fourth section finally presents the article itself, which is about 250 words long. Following the article there are a few comprehension questions (about three in the *Sleep* lesson) which you can respond to by clicking on one of the choice buttons provided. A sample comprehension question in the *Sleep* lesson is as follows:

1. Sleeping eight hours every night
 - A. is important for babies
 - B. is average for teenagers
 - C. leads to good health
 - D. is normal for 30% of people

As soon as you input your response, a JavaScript window pops up evaluating the answer and giving explanatory comments. Once you've completed the comprehension questions, you can proceed to the fifth section.

The fifth and last section presents the same article edited as a gap-filling exercise. The article, therefore, appears with blank boxes instead of words in about 20 places. The removed words are not, as in typical cloze tests, every fifth or seventh word, but rather what the author has considered important. Below the article is a list of all the twenty words which have been removed from the text. You can select a word from this list and type it in one of the 20 blanks that appear in the text. After filling all the 20 blanks, you can

submit the test for evaluation. Evaluation is given in the form of accepting correct responses and rejecting incorrect responses - without directly showing you what the correct answers are. You have to work out by yourself by deduction what the correct answers could be. You can resubmit the test repeatedly until you get all the answers correct. If you find the exercise too tough, you can make use of the 'cheat' button, titled *Hint*. As you click on this button, one of the blanks is automatically filled. You can, of course, click on it 20 times to get all the answers! Certainly, the goal of this exercise is to encourage you to learn, not to test you. Once you've completed one lesson, you may go on to another lesson and proceed similarly through the five sections outlined.

This is quite a structured and pedagogically stimulating Web site. Clearly, the author or authors have tried to implement current theories of learning, encouraging pre-reading and post-reading activities and the acquisition of integrated skills. According to a note at the site, each lesson is supposed to take about 20-30 minutes to complete; but it might take much longer, say about 40-60 minutes. Since there are twelve lessons, you may require about 10 hours to complete all of them.

Another excellent site for reading English is **<http://lrs.ed.uiuc.edu/Impact/toc.html>**. There are no audio or video files here; neither are there comprehension quizzes or vocabulary tests. Still, the site is commendable for the variety of texts and the vocabulary assistance it offers. The opening page presents the following four sections: *Social Issues*, *Health and Fitness*, *World News*, and *Sports, Entertainment and Miscellaneous*. Under each section there are about two to six articles, each with a title such as, "Airline safety a concern for travelers." Each article is about 500 words long. You can select any of these articles for reading, by clicking on the title. The article appears on a plain screen, without gaudy bells and whistles. About 30 to 40 of the

words/phrases used in the text are hyperlinked to their meaning, so that you can look up the meaning by merely clicking on these words or phrases. For example, if you click on the word *addictive*, a hyperlinked word, you'll get a dictionary entry for the word, including its grammatical class (e.g., *adjective*) meaning, pronunciation, synonyms, other forms of the word (e.g., *addict* and *addiction*) and several sample sentences (e.g., *I believe John is addicted to alcohol. He gets drunk every night*) The pronunciation is not shown in any symbols, but hyperlinked; so if you click on the word *pronunciation*, you can hear the key word, e.g., *addict*, pronounced. After looking up the meaning, you have to go back to the page of text to continue reading.

At the bottom of the page displaying the text, there are several related links. For example, a link titled "See the vocabulary list for this article" shows a page listing all the difficult words and their meanings; another link shows graphs or tables related to the article. There are also links to sites specializing in related topics, and finally a list of links to English-English, Japanese-English, English-French, English-German, and English-Slovene dictionaries.

Overall, this is a very useful reading site. If only it had audio files to go with the text and the glossary on the same page as the reading text, it could be even more user-friendly.

If you enjoy short readings and related verbal activities, you may find the site titled *Fluency Through Fables* by the Comenius Group at <http://www.comenius.com/fable/index.html> quite interesting. This site presents a new fable every two months. There are currently only six fables in the archive (*The Donkey and the Grasshopper*, *The Father and His Sons*, *The Kingdom of the Lion*, *The Musical Fisherman*, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and *The Thirsty Pigeon*) but in course of time there may be many more. The fables are all quite short, as the following example illustrates:

The Musical Fisherman

A fisherman who was a fine musician took his flute and his nets to the seashore.

Standing on a rock, he threw his nets into the sea and then played several tunes in the hope that the fish, attracted by his melody, would dance into his net.

At last, having waited a long time, he put down his flute, and casting his net into the sea, made an excellent haul of fish.

When he saw them leaping about in the net upon the rock he said: " Oh, you perverse creatures, when I played you would not dance, but now that I have stopped you do so merrily. "

At the end of each fable are the following four types of exercises: *Vocabulary Matching Exercises*, *True or False Comprehension Exercises*, *Vocabulary Completion Exercises*, and *Written Discussion Exercises*. The *Vocabulary Matching Exercises* require you to identify the meaning of about 12 isolated words taken from the fable. The choices consist of the 12 corresponding meanings (answers) listed in random order. You choose your response from a list box. When you submit your responses after matching all the words with their meanings, you get correct answers for all the 12 words and your grade. The *True or False Comprehension Exercises* and *Vocabulary Completion Exercises* are similarly quiz-style exercises, requiring only a selection from radio buttons or from the choices displayed in a list box. The *Written Discussion Exercises* encourage you to write freely by way of responding to questions such as: " What lesson does this fable teach? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why or why not? How might people apply the lesson of this fable to their lives? In what ways might the lesson of this fable apply to your life? " After typing your answers within appropriate edit boxes, you may submit them so that they may be added to answers that other readers have given to the same set of questions. You may find it interesting to read these answers given by others.

In connection with reading, you may also visit the *TOEFL Preparation Site* (see below) which has several well-written and well-presented reading passages and exercises.

Vocabulary

The site titled *vocabulary* at <http://www.better-english.com/vocabulary.htm> has numerous vocabulary quizzes grouped under 35 headings, such as *Adjectives, Numbers, Evening Entertainment, What do you do with?, Business Vocabulary, Match The Words, Workplaces, Polite Requests, Answering Requests, Telephone Language, Telephone Language 2, I'm afraid, Get, Get 2, Take 1, Odd word out, Offers and Suggestions, Up, In, Out, Body, Useful Expressions 1, Useful Expressions 2, Therefore etc., Because/so that, etc., Say Tell etc., However etc., and Business Expressions 1~5.*

If you choose, for instance, *Business Expressions 4*, you'll see a new screen with two frames. The top frame, occupying about one fourth of the screen gives you brief instructions and shows you the score as you answer each question. The bottom frame presents about 10 questions, such as:

1. I imagine their company jet was very expensive indeed. It probably _____ .
 - a) cost the earth
 - b) clear the decks
 - c) cut it fine
 - d) cut-throat

2. Our Silicone Valley site is right at the _____ of the new technology.
- a) cut our losses
 - b) cutting edge
 - c) cut it fine
 - d) cut-throat

You can input your response by clicking on one of the choices. If the choice is correct, the top frame shows a message such as, “ Your current score is: 100 %. Remaining questions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. ” If the choice is incorrect, the top frame shows a message such as, “ Try again. Your current score is: 50 %. Remaining questions: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. ” Of course, you can answer the same question once more, but since there’s a penalty for each error committed, the score won’t return to 100%. So although you may easily find out what the correct answer is, you can score 100% only if you answer all questions correctly on the first try.

Given that almost all questions are contextual, this site may be highly recommended for those who wish to learn vocabulary, idioms, and phrases. A minor drawback of this site is that there’s no way to look up or study the correct meaning of the items tested. The site is strictly for quizzes, supplying only the information whether a response is correct or incorrect; there’s no explanation as to why a certain answer is correct. Neither is there any hyperlink to dictionary entries or commentaries. You have to infer from the correct answer what the item tested means, or open up a dictionary page at a different site and look up the meanings. The questions seem to have been constructed for purposes of testing rather than teaching - unlike the *ITESTLJ Self-Study Quizzes* discussed below.

Another remarkable site with a large number of quizzes for vocabulary learning is *The Internet TESL Journal's (ITESLJ) Self-Study Quizzes for ESL Students* at <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/vocabulary.html>. Here almost all questions are contextual, and they're grouped under a large number of categories (in the order of hundreds!) such as *Baseball, Road Vocabulary, Signs, School Words, Sports Words, Transportation Nouns, Troublesome Words*, etc. Since each category has about 10 to 20 questions, there are thousands of questions. The quiz mechanism itself is rather simple (with drop-down list boxes) allowing easy access to answers. However, since the purpose of the quizzes is to let users learn by themselves, such easy access to answers may be ideal for those who want to challenge quizzes freely, at their own pace. The same site also has another quiz section titled "Idioms, Phrasal Verbs & Slang Quizzes" at <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/idioms.html>. Here there are about 80 categories of idioms, phrasal verbs, and slang, each category having about 10 to 20 quizzes. The quizzes related to idioms and slang are listed in alphabetical order, and the other quizzes in the order of the phrasal verbs treated.

Although the site does not have any section titled "*Learning vocabulary*," you can use most of the quizzes to learn new words and phrases. For example, even if you don't know the answer to the following quiz when you see it the first time, you can click on the *Answer* button, and use the answer to teach yourself what the idiom *scarf it down* means, and how to express the idea of "eating really quickly" by the phrase *scarf it down*.

I wish they wouldn't just rush in, *eat really quickly*, and then leave.

- a. snippet
- b. stop it up
- c. scarf it down

The ITESLJ site is the mecca for quiz aficionados, for besides the quizzes mentioned above it has quizzes related to grammar, reading, writing, general knowledge, sports, culture, etc., etc. There are literally thousands of quizzes, and you can spend many days or months studying them.

An interesting site for learning vocabulary through games is the one sponsored by *Longman Dictionaries* at <http://www.awl-elt.com/dictionaries/wgame.html>. The range of words covered is rather limited, but the activities may be of interest to learners who get bored with routine multiple choice questions. The opening page offers you a menu of four choices: *Elementary*, *Intermediate*, *Upper Intermediate*, and *Advanced*.

If you choose the *Advanced* category, for instance, you have 13 games listed, under titles such as *Word Pairs*, *Word Families*, *Informal Language*, *Missing Word*, *Anagrams*, *Odd One Out*, and *Common Errors*. The titles are descriptive of the types of games, and you can select the one you like.

For example, if you choose *Anagrams*, you'll get a question like: " Use these letters to make five words. You must use all the letters for each word: EMSTA. " You're given five slots in which to give your response. Once you've answered, you can press a button marked " Reveal Answers, " and you'll get the correct answers, as follows: *Steam*, *Mates*, *Tames*, *Meats*, *Teams*. There's no evaluation, so you can enjoy your work without worrying about the grade!

Almost all the games deal with non-contextualized words; so, the words appear in isolation, not embedded in a conversation or story.

If you're interested in slang, try <http://www.eslcafe.com/slang/list.html>, which gives many slang words with meaning, e.g.

biggie: something important.

“ I was hoping to get my homework completed, but it's no biggie. ”

biker: a motorcycle rider.

“ Dave used to be a biker until he got into a serious motorcycle accident. ”

If you're interested in phrasal verbs, try <http://www.eslcafe.com/pv/pv-mng.html> which gives about 100 phrasal verbs, with meaning and sample sentences. For example,

add up to (inseparable) : to total.

“ The bills add up to \$734.96. That's more than I expected! ”

ask out (separable) : ask for a date.

“ Nancy has a new boy friend. Joe asked her out last night. ”

You also have many quizzes on phrasal verbs at the ITESLJ site mentioned above: <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/quizzes/idioms.html>. In particular, a section by Vera Mello contains numerous phrases with the following verbs: *break, come, get, give, go, keep, look, make, pass, run, take, and turn*.

Word For the Wise (<http://www.m-w.com/wftw/wftw.htm>) is a great site to learn fascinating details about some specific words. It's based on the script of a popular two-minute radio program “ broadcast daily on public radio stations nationwide. ” Since there's an entry for almost every day, you can learn interesting stories about many words by going through the archive,

which has entries starting from September 1997. Each entry is a small essay, beginning with some contemporary story and leading up to a study of words. For example, the entry for September 30, 1998, begins with the baseball frenzy created by homerun kings Mark McGwire and Sammy Sosa, and then speaks of Babe Ruth and his contributions to baseball as well as to the English language. The following extract suggests the type of vocabulary information offered:

Paul Dickson, who has compiled more than 5,000 baseball terms, includes at least two other Babe Ruth senses in his Baseball Dictionary. The first is the Babe Ruth curse, which the Boston Red Sox have supposedly suffered since 1920, when Harry Frazee sold the Babe. One of the more ominous aspects of this curse established the team penchant for losing the 7th and deciding game of the World Series.

The second Babe-Ruth-derivative is Babe. Soon after the Sultan of Swat began to show the effects of excessive eating and drinking, that name began to be applied to any overweight player.

This site may be of special interest to those in American Studies, since it's rich in information about the United States. Many of the words and events taken up relate to American culture and American events.

Another, somewhat dull but occasionally challenging, vocabulary site is <http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/defsgameform.html>, which presents a word game based on the definitions found in Cobuild dictionary.

After opening the page, if you press the button marked *Try It*, you'll get a randomly selected definition such as: “ ##### things are things that you make or do yourself, rather than buying them ready-made or paying

someone else to make them or do them. ” Your job is to guess the missing word shown by a series of #s. There’s no edit box to enter the answer or list box to select from choices, so you’ll have to make a mental note of the answer. Then you can click on the hyperlinked word *answer*. Immediately, you’ll get the following definition on a new page: “ *do-it-yourself* things are things that you make or do yourself, rather than buying them ready-made or paying someone else to make them or do them. ” According to the information provided at the site, there are nearly 60,000 such definitions available for you to challenge yourself; so you can spend many many hours here, provided you don’t mind the monotony.

Grammar and Composition

One of the best sites for learning traditional grammar and composition techniques is <http://webster.comnet.edu/HP/pages/darling/grammar.htm>, titled *Guide to Grammar and Writing*. Managed by Professor Charles Darling of Capital Community-Technical College, Hartford, Connecticut, this site is so comprehensive that if one can only be assured of smooth data transmission, one can use it regularly as a textbook, even in class. It contains a variety of features, including a *Grammar* section, *Quiz* section, and *Grammar FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)*

The *Grammar* section comprises *Sentence Level*, *Paragraph Level*, and *Essay Level* topics, totaling about 40 chapters. The *Sentence Level* chapters deal with the usual grammar issues such as agreement, punctuation, use of articles, etc. The *Paragraph Level* chapters deal with topics such as sentence variety, consistency of tense, pronoun reference, sentence-combining skills, coherence and transitions, and paragraph development. And the third part titled *Essay Level* is a book by itself containing “ A whole section for writers in Composition courses-*featuring handouts on Getting Started, Structure, Tone, Transitions, Editing, Logic, Formats, Rhetorical Patterns, Research, and more--along with plenty of sample essays.* ”

Each grammar chapter is superbly laid out in eye-catching colors with clear section headings. The explanation for each grammar point is quite brief and simple, with plenty of examples. For example, a section on *Agreement* is as follows:

Remember that phrases such as *together with*, *as well as*, and *along with* are not the same as *and*.

The mayor as well as his brothers **is** going to prison.

The mayor and his brothers **are** going to jail.

The phrase introduced by *as well as* or *along with* will modify the earlier word (*mayor* in this case) but it does not compound the subjects (as the word *and* would do)

In certain sections, there are hyperlinks to related topics and additional examples or comments. After learning each chapter, you can challenge a few grammar questions related to the topic. For example, after studying *Subject-Verb Agreement*, you may answer questions such as the following:

1. Either the physicians in this hospital or the chief administrator
___ going to have to make a decision.
 is
 are
2. _____ my boss or my sisters in the union going to win this
grievance?
 Is
 Are

You can input answers by clicking on the radio buttons found next to the choices, and get the results evaluated by clicking on the *Submit Application* button located at the bottom of the page. There are about 15 such questions for each chapter, giving you a large number of grammar quizzes to work with. When the answers are submitted, they are evaluated and feedback returned. When you answer correctly, you see an animated smiley near the answer, and encouraging comments such as:

You're right! When subjects are connected by *or*, the subject closer to the verb (which is, in this case, singular) determines the number of the verb.

When you give an incorrect answer, a different animated image appears, with comments such as:

Some is the subject in this sentence; it is plural because the word *votes* makes it a countable indefinite pronoun.

You can thus have your knowledge reinforced, and learn from your mistakes.

If you choose the *Essay Level*, you enter into a page with about 25 chapter headings, all dealing with pointers for writing a good essay. A few of the chapter headings are: *The Writing Process*, *The Editing Process*, *Proofreading Symbols and Abbreviations*, *The Computer as Writing Assistant*, *Avoiding Plagiarism*, *The Thesis Statement*, *Patterns of Composition*, *Narrative or Descriptive*, *The Argumentative Essay*, and *Guide to Writing Research Papers*. Each chapter explains different principles and norms of writing, with many examples. There do not seem to be any quizzes or interactive exercises; so you can use the chapters of this level solely as those of a reference book.

Another option in the opening menu is *Interactive Quizzes*, where more than a hundred *cgi* and JavaScript quizzes are listed. These seem to be the same quizzes that are linked to the grammar chapters. One interesting option in the menu of *Interactive Quizzes* allows you to take a computer-generated test. If you click on the *Random Quiz Generator* button, you get a randomly generated quiz with about 10 questions.

Another item in the opening menu is *Ask Grammar* (suggestive of *Ask Grandma*) which allows you to post any grammar questions you may have. The questions, if not previously answered, are answered by *Grammar [Grandma.?] English* within a few days in the *Grammar Logs*, which is another

option in the opening menu, and you're informed about it by email. The *Grammar Faq* file contains a selection of the most frequently asked grammar questions. The *Grammar Logs* section allows you to look up answers to all the questions posted by learners from around the world since March 15, 1997. There are already 24 volumes of questions and answers since that date! Among other bits in the opening menu are a bibliography on writing and grammar, a collection of student goofs (absolutely hilarious!) and quotations from eminent authors on writing.

Another site similar to Darling's *Guide to Grammar and Writing*, introduced above, is Anthony Hughes' grammar at <http://www.edunet.com/english/grammar/>. When you open this page, first you get an introduction and instructions on how to use the grammar. Briefly put, there are three ways of finding information: (1) You can browse through an alphabetical list and pick up the grammar topic you're interested in; (2) you can search for any topic of interest, and (3) you can use the *Table of Contents* and go to the topic of interest. There are also audio (.au) files you can play, for learning the pronunciation of English alphabets.

The *Table of Contents* link found in the opening page leads to a new page, showing the following menu:

- How to use the Table of Contents
- Table of Contents
- Subject Index (alphabetical)
- Home-Page: Online English Grammar
- English Language Practice Pages
- English Grammar Clinic
- D.E.N. Home-Page

Below this menu are listed all the grammar topics covered, under headings such as Adjectives, Adverbs, Nouns, Possessives, Determiners, Pronouns, and Verbs. The topics dealt with are as comprehensive and detailed as Darling's *Guide to Grammar and Writing*. Unlike Darling's site, however, this site has no built-in quizzes going hand in hand with the grammar topics, but the link *English Language Practice Pages* leads to **<http://www.go-ed.com/english/practice/rside/Home.html>**, which contains several grammar quizzes.

Creative Writing

As a learner of English, you might like to write something original and see it **weblished** (*Web+published*) or to read what other learners have written. A great place for such creative and interactive activities is the site named *Exchange* at **<http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/exchange/>**. It's is an **eine** (*electronic magazine*) freely available for all English learners. According to the information at the site, "the goals of EXCHANGE are to provide an opportunity for non-native English speakers to express themselves through the use of English to create a unique source of knowledge and insight about different cultures." Learners can freely write stories, articles, or letters to the editor, and exchange cultural information. For using English productively and realistically this is an ideal site.

The opening menu offers as options: *Cookbooks*, *World Culture*, *Stories*, *Letters to the Editor*, *Penpals*, and *Class Projects*. Each of these options contains interesting pieces of writing and useful information. For example, the *Cookbooks* option offers various recipes (e.g., for appetizers, salads, main dishes, desserts, etc.) written by learners, and the *World Culture* option presents learners' works on their native culture. Since the writers are from different parts of the world, most of the essays (e.g., about weddings or birthday celebrations in their respective countries) are quite fascinating. The *Stories* section contains short stories, poems, reviews, and essays written

by learners. As the title suggests, the *Letters to the Editor* section contains feedback sent in by the readers of Exchange. There are in this section some heated exchanges among readers, especially those provoked by an article opposing same-sex marriages. The *Penpals* section offers a venue for students to make penpal requests and to respond to previously made requests. The *Class Projects* section is highly interesting since each student of a class writes about the same theme, but from his/her own perspective. For example, if you open the class project *Essays about Spain*, you get 16 essays (each about 300 words) about different cultural and regional aspects of Spain written by students learning English.

One of the major attractions of Exchange is that readers can send in their feedback after reading practically anything that someone else has written. So even learners who are unable to write anything original can take part by responding to someone else's comments.

Another ezine for EFL students is *Topics* at <http://www.rice.edu/projects/topics/Electronic/main.html>. According to the opening page, " TOPICS is an electronic magazine where learners of English as a second language consider topics of interest to them, express their ideas and opinions, and illustrate their writings with drawings and photographs. " It has many articles written by students, both in the current issue and in the previous issues archived at the site. Usually they are short and can serve as good models for learners to imitate. Like *Exchange*, here too learners can submit their own essays (follow the link " *Submit your work* " within the " *Interact with it* " group of links in the opening page) There is a link in the opening page to *Teacher's Corner*, and here you find a few articles written by teachers, usually those who conducted the class project which produced most of the essays in the current issue, about how and why they conducted the project. Teachers interested in conducting class projects will find this section quite

inspirational. There's also another link in the opening page to *Book Corner*. Here students introduce some books they've read. There's another link to *Language Corner*, where certain specific grammatical or vocabulary topics useful for learners are introduced.

Another ezine for EFL students is *WINGS Electronic Magazine* at <http://weber.u.washington.edu/~wings/>. According to a note at the site, WINGS is "published for and by students involved in the International Student Lists Project. WINGS is published both in it's[sic] World Wide Web version and it's[sic] Electronic Mail version on the 15th of every month except for June and September." The *International Student Lists* are mailing lists established in 1994 to encourage English-learning university students to communicate in English. There are nine student lists, namely, chat-sl, discuss-sl, business-sl, engl-sl, event-sl, movie-sl, music-sl, scitech-sl, and sport-sl. Although in 1995 I directed the students in my *Composition Class* to take part in these lists, I have not done so in recent years. I'm not quite sure, therefore, how active these lists currently are or how much they contribute to the production of Wings. I mention this because the Wings Web site, though still accessible, seems dead. There are only seven old issues, October 1995 to April 1996, and nothing more recent. Perhaps there were no other issues at all. Although I emailed the Webmaster of the magazine asking whether Wings is alive or dead, I got no reply. It's unclear, therefore, whether it'd come back to life. At present, you can only read the old issues. If ever Wings comes back to life, it could be another great site for submitting your original essays or comments.

TOEFL and TOEIC Preparation

The *TOEFL Preparation Site* at <http://www.studint.net/toefl/> is excellent not only for students who wish to prepare for TOEFL or TOEIC, but also for everyone interested in English grammar, reading, vocabulary, and listening. The opening menu gives nine options, of which only *1. Start here for TOEFL Prep...* and *9. 600+ TOEIC Questions at TOEIC Prep* are the most useful for English learners. A few options lead to information concerning TOEFL itself, but probably you can get more authoritative information by visiting the official *TOEFL Online* site at <http://web1.toefl.org/>. What's perhaps most appealing at the *TOEFL Preparation Site* is the smooth and user-friendly Shockwave interface, integrating sound, image, and text. The interface, with animated cursors and gliding texts, makes doing exercises at this site great fun.

Try, for example, the option *1. Start here for TOEFL Prep...* in the opening menu. This opens up a Shockwave window, offering a menu of 25 *Grammar* lessons, 13 *Reading* lessons, and 16 *Listening* lessons. Each lesson has about 10 questions.

If you choose a *Listening* lesson, for instance, you get a beautifully laid-out Shockwave screen showing you instructions and the first comprehension question at the center, and a row of choices on the lower left, and a scrollable mini-window on the lower right for showing hints, dialog, menu options, etc. To the left of the mini-window are three buttons: one marked *Hint*, another marked *Menu*, and the third showing a loudspeaker glyph. Although the instructions don't say so, first you should click on the loudspeaker glyph and hear the dialog. The dialog is quite short, spoken by native speakers clearly and at natural speed. After hearing the dialog, you may answer the first question that appears on the screen. The question goes like this:

1. The man met the woman by coming by
 - A. car
 - B. airplane
 - C. taxi
 - D. bus

Figure 4 TOEFL Preparation Site

You may input your response by clicking on any of the buttons representing A, B, C, and D. The program gives a response to each input, saying either the answer is correct or incorrect and giving some explanatory comments. The program won't let you skip any question; neither will it let you move to the next question if you've not answered the current question *correctly*. Of

course, you can find out the correct answer by clicking on each of the four buttons until you get it right, though for scoring purposes only the first response is taken into consideration.

When you don't know the answer, instead of selecting an answer at random, you may click on the *Hint* button once. Immediately, you get a hint like, " It's some sort of public transport. " If you can't get the answer even with this hint, you may click on the *Hint* button again, which produces another hint such as, " It's not a car . . . " To help you keep track of the number of *Hint* clicks, at each click of *Hint*, an eye-like glyph appears next to the *Hint* button. So, if you've clicked it twice, you'll see two eyes! If you click the *Hint* button a third time, you get within the mini-window the script of the whole dialog, which you can freely scroll and read.

Man: Heh! Sorry to keep you waiting!

Woman : What kept you? Don't tell me it was the public transportation system again!

Man: You guessed it! I'll make it up to you with lunch, OK?

Woman: You're on!

As you may notice, even the dialog does not give the answer explicitly, since the question explores the learner's ability to make inferences. Once you've answered the question correctly, a *forward* button automatically appears and you may proceed to the next question by clicking on this button. All the 10 questions are based on the same small piece of dialog, so the questions are quite inventive. You can listen to the dialog at any time and any number of times while answering any of the questions.

If you click on the *Menu* button, you'll get a list of all the lessons of the chosen section (e.g., the 16 lessons of *Listening*) and options to choose any of the other two sections (i.e., *Grammar* and *Reading*) You can then choose another lesson from the current section, or move on to one of the other two sections.

The *Reading* section, containing 13 lessons, too is superb. Set in a Shockwave window, each lesson offers a text of about 200 words, with about 20 words hyperlinked to their meaning. There's also a glossary below the text. After reading the text of each lesson, you can take a multiple choice quiz having 10 comprehension questions. You can similarly go through all the other *Reading* lessons.

The *Grammar* section, containing 25 lessons, is also set in a Shockwave window. Each lesson contains 10 questions, which require the learner to identify an ungrammatical word/phrase or to select a correct phrase/word from a list of choices. When you answer correctly, a rather lengthy commentary appears explaining the grammar point tested. So you can use these lessons not only to test yourself, but also to increase your knowledge of grammar.

If you choose the 9th option in the opening menu, namely, *9. 600+ TOEIC Questions at TOEIC Prep*, you get TOEIC questions grouped under the following seven parts: Photos (10) Questions (3) Conversations (15) Longer Talks (6) Incomplete Sentences (15) Errors (15) and Reading (4) The number within brackets shows the number of units in each part. Each of these units contains about 10 questions; so altogether there are over 600 questions. Many of these units also have sound files, so that learners can listen to spoken English. The user interface for these units too is created in Shockwave, with features similar to the ones found in the TOEFL preparation lessons. An additional feature is the graphic and colorful image that appears as a hint for the quizzes. No doubt, all these TOEIC questions too are highly recommended for those who, though not interested in TOEIC, may wish to master English grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

Overall <http://www.studint.net/toefl/> is a rare site, having not only a technically advanced user interface but also a large amount of useful study material.

For questions and answers related to TOEFL, you may try Professor Toeff's *Previous Questions and Answers* at <http://www.slip.net/~caa/past.html>. Most of the questions commonly asked by those interested in taking TOEFL concerning English and other methodological issues are answered. All the questions seem to have come from actual TOEFL candidates, and you too can ask your own questions. The current week's questions and answers maybe found at: [http:// www.slip.net/~caa/answer.html](http://www.slip.net/~caa/answer.html).

Thematic Resources

If you want to do research on specific topics or themes, you may visit http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU_Language/project/index.html. This site has links to such themes as *Ethics on the Web*, *Abortion*, *Affirmative Action*, *AIDS/HIV*, *Animal Rights*, *Biomedical ethics*, *Business Ethics*, *Censorship*, *Climate Change*, *The Death Penalty*, *Drug Policy*, *Economic Development*, *Environment*, *Environment-Latin America*, *Evolution & Creationism*, *Ethics*, *Euthanasia*, *Gender Issues*, *Gun Control*, *Human Rights*, *Immigration reform*, *Migration and Humanity*, *Minimum Wage*, *Race and Ethnicity*, *Sexual Orientation and Discrimination*, *Tobacco Use*, *U.S. Presidential Election*, etc. There are also numerous other topics related to history and culture (e.g., mythology, civil rights movement, men's and women's movements, world cultures) and science and technology (e.g., climate change, cloning, endangered species)

If you select, for instance, the *Abortion* link (http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU_Language/project/abortion.html) you'll get numerous links to other abortion-related sites, including *Pro-Choice* views and *Pro-Life* views. Although you can get a list of abortion-related sites by combing the Web with a search engine, sites such as the present one are more conveniently arranged for the benefit of researchers. For example, in this abortion link, at first numerous

abortion-related words such as *abortion*, *ban*, *birth-control*, *conception*, *embryo*, *fetus*, *pregnant*, *terminate (termination)* *trimester* are linked to the Webster's Dictionary, so that definitions can be obtained instantly. Then the links of various types of abortion resources are listed, together with some introductory comments, so that interested researchers can surf off to the relevant sites. Finally, there are stimulating questions such as the following:

1. What are the main points of the argument against abortion rights?
2. What are the main points of the argument for abortion rights?
3. Why do you think opponents of legalized abortion call themselves " pro-life " while supporters of legalized abortion call themselves " pro-choice " ?
4. What efforts have been made to find areas of agreement and cooperation between supporters and opponents of legalized abortion? Are these efforts likely to be more successful or unsuccessful?
5. What advice might you give to a friend who was faced with an unplanned pregnancy? Why?
6. As you explore the links on this page you will find that some make contradictory claims. Which of them can you feel most confident in trusting, and why? How can you judge whether or not information you find on the Internet is worthy of consideration?

Since the site is primarily a page of links, the contents and style of the sites linked to will substantially vary. There are, however, a large number of links with the keyword " Our page, " all of which follow more or less the format of the *Abortion* link discussed above.

Another theme-based Web site is <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~leslieob/themes.html>, managed by Leslie Opp-Beckman, Technology Coordinator and ESL Instructor of the University of Oregon. Here there are about 45 themes listed under the following headings: *Contemporary Issues*, *Cultural Issues*, *History and Culture*, *Holidays*, *Just for Fun*, and *Technology Issues*. This page is essentially a collection of theme-based links with a brief description of each link. There are no other special aids to help learners. The merit of the page is in providing a good collection of topics that might interest EFL learners and providing sites most relevant for each theme. It may be hard to pick out such sites if one were to use the ordinary search engines.

The theme-based sites can be very valuable for teachers who'd like to assign specific projects to students, especially when the latter are not well-versed in Web use and search techniques.

Conclusion

As may be obvious from the representative sites I've described, the World Wide Web is an extraordinary source of sources for learners of English. The only drawback is that there's no guarantee that the Web pages we browse today will exist tomorrow at the same URL or with the same content! So although I wish you'd be able to access all the fantastic Web pages I've referred to in this article, be aware that some or all of these pages may vanish without a trace or metamorphose into academically useless techno monsters anytime without notice!