

*CREATIVITY and INNOVATION
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Learning on the web

"Online news as a didactic resource"

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Abstract

There has been a huge growth in the number (and quality) of websites for language learning. Two basic groups emerge: the first group dedicated to home learners, offering grammar explanations, examples, and online "lessons", backed up by a varied number of exercises (interactive and non) to complete the learning experience, the other group aimed at language teachers/ tutors, offering not only printable material but also interactive, online material that can be used in class or the lab. There are other sites that combine features from both groups and some that go further, the *BBC News* website is a prime example, that also uses fairly up-to-date material, abridged for the language learner. However, these sites often have the same drawbacks of most coursebooks; although they are fine as core material, they are not always suitable for the specific needs of any particular class, and often the topics chosen do not spark that vital interest among students. There is, however, so much more material available for the more adventurous teacher. This paper will concentrate on the use of news/ information sites which have the advantage of being both up-to-the minute and, perhaps more importantly, authentic. They are designed to offer information to the public at large and thus the language found will not have been abridged for a particular level. This, obviously, creates a challenge for both the language learner and teacher. Ideas and creative use of the material can offer a more "authentic" and "stimulating" use of the internet in helping learners gain more confidence in using original media, be it written, audio or audio-visual, both inside and outside the classroom.

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Feedback from students has been very positive, particularly regarding interest levels and feelings of achievement, especially from those who had never considered using English to find out about global events.

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