

Using Internet in Improving One's English Language Skills: 50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites

Dr.Vangeepuram Sreenathachary

Introduction

Acquiring a good level of competence in English language today is a necessity, but not a luxury. Economic liberalization and spread of multinational companies, with a spurt in the use of English in the urban social communication as well as in the corporate world have opened many avenues in the field of Information Technology and Business Process Outsourcing. This phenomenon has generated the felt urgency on every graduate-employee's part to acquire competence in English communicative skills. Global communication is necessary at all levels in the organizations, companies, business firms and educational institutions and English is enabling them to operate more efficiently. And yet, with this opportunity emerge challenges. Employees of global companies need increasingly sophisticated English communication skills to succeed.

A recent study on the globalization of English made by the website, namely <www.globalenglish.com> points to a huge and growing English skills gap within global corporations:

- 91% of employees say that English is critical or important for their current jobs.
- Only 7% say that their current English skills are sufficient.
- In addition, 89% of employees state that they are more likely to advance in their company if they can communicate effectively in English.

Modern technologies through internet, satellite television and mobile connectivity have shrunk the world to a globalized place. "In the global village English plays a pivotal role as a medium of communication. It is the language used on the internet, as elsewhere. Since it knits the world together in a worldwide web, English has, more than ever before, gained a global identity¹."

English is spoken as a first language by more than 300 million people throughout the world, and used as a second language by many millions more. "One in five of the world's population speaks English with a good level of competence, and within the next few years the number of people speaking English as a second language will exceed the number of native speakers.²" This could have a dramatic effect on the evolution of the language. In the process of being absorbed by new cultures, English develops to take account of local language needs, giving rise not just to new vocabulary but also to new forms of grammar and pronunciation.

At the same time, however, a standardized 'global' English is spread by the media and the Internet. The main regional standards of English are British, US and Canadian, Australian and New Zealand, South African, Indian, and West Indian. Within each of these regional varieties a

number of highly differentiated local dialects may be found. Oxford dictionaries try to include many regionalisms encountered in different English-speaking areas of the world.

The world is truly becoming flat. Companies are entering new markets. Industries are restructuring. Outsourcing and offshoring are no longer radical ideas but accepted as productive solutions. As business goes global, so do the projects and teams. Teams in Hyderabad are working shoulder-to-shoulder with groups in Chicago and Beijing. Conference calls, online meetings, video conferencing, emails, and advanced technologies offer the possibility of instant integration of far-flung offices into one global team. But the inevitable convergence of cultures and languages presents an ongoing obstacle to teams that need to think, act and communicate as one. Seamless communication is a fundamental, strategic imperative. To be global, one needs to speak global.

Functioning at peak efficiency in a globally integrated business requires employees to be proficient in the standard common language used for business: English. Forward-thinking business executives, human resources professionals, and training leaders recognize both the challenge and opportunity of developing business English competence and are seeking fast and effective ways to address this critical training need and enable their employees to learn English online.

Why Learning English Through Internet?

Surfing on the Internet has been the most popular way to learn English because it is convenient as well as entertaining. It saves a lot of time. Some websites provide beautiful illustrations to learn English. A few websites supply amusing games and online language exercises to attract netizens' attention thereby helping them learn English effectively. For example, ALE website teaches many vocabularies through an interesting game called 'English Sharp Shooter'. The website, <www.askoxford.com>, clarifies the doubts asked by the netizens. Then, the netizens would listen to the online radio to train their listening comprehension without spending money to buy CDs. Another website, <www.englishdaily626.com> provides very useful information about the English language.

Internet gives us a lot of convenience. It is a useful tool for learning English or anything. We can receive many emails and messages daily on English using Internet and learn many a new thing. Internet also provides many materials and many types of learning methods. Although Internet has many merits for learning, of course, it has its own drawbacks. To sum up, one can learn English well or improve English abilities, if one makes good use of the Internet.

50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites

Here is the list of 50 websites through which the language enthusiasts can improve their competence in English. However, one is expected to use these sites consciously so that the learning will take place rapidly.

1. <http://www.1-language.com/>

This is a one-stop resource site for learning English and other languages containing relevant, localized information for International students and people. The website fosters global communication through a world auxiliary language. This is a free, comprehensive ESL (English as a Second Language) Site including forums, real-time chat, jobs, grammar, helplines, multi-lingual content and much more.

2. <http://www.esl.about.com/>

One can use this website to find the very best websites. It is a very useful guide to ESL sites and lots of other subjects.

3. <http://www.antimoon.com/>

The website, which uses simple English, provides advice from people who learned English successfully.

4. <http://www.appliedlanguage.com/>

ALS (Applied Language Solutions) Translation Services provides translation to and from over 140 different languages and specializing in all types of translation including websites.

5. <http://www.thecommunicationstation.com/>

By browsing this website, one can read a chain story and then add one's own paragraph! One can create one's own funny caption for a strange picture!

6. <http://www.soundsofenglish.org/>

The site offers pronunciation instruction. It explains how each sound is made and offers audio and video examples with exercises.

7. <http://www.eslcafe.com/>

Dave's ESL Cafe is one of the best ESL sites on the web!

8. <http://www.englishtown.com/>

You can take a fun trip to Englishtown!

9. <http://www.towerofenglish.com/>

This is an excellent site that provides resources for both academic and non-academic teachers.

10. <http://www.twinuk.com/>

This website offers information about the English language courses available in London, Salisbury and Eastbourne, Junior Vacation Centres and accommodation. These English courses range from General English courses to one-to-one English courses.

11. <http://www.englishclub.com/>

A great site with much useful information for students and teachers. Don't forget to play '*Hangman*'!

12. <http://www.englishforum.com/>

A comprehensive web portal with a wealth of resources for students and teachers of English (ESL/EFL). There are many Interactive Exercises, Message Boards, ELT Bookshop, Good School Guide, Web Directory, World News, Links, Cool Tools and more...

13. <http://www.gvenglish.com/>

Global Village is a group of unique English language schools dedicated to the concept of "Serious Learning, Serious Fun!" Their language institutes offer ESL, EFL courses for all levels, Cambridge examination preparation, TOEIC, TOEFL and IELTS preparation, high school and university preparations, work experience programmes and teacher training courses. They also offer courses for children and teenagers, including residential summer camps and homestay/school-based teen activity programmes.

14. <http://www.edu.ge.ch/cptic/prospective/projets/anglais/>

A site with pages for students and for teachers including material to download. There is also a growing exercise page. Be sure to try the crosswords!

15. <http://www.eslcafe.com/>

Over 2500 links in 76 different categories can be accessed through this site!

16. <http://www.go.english4today.com/>

English4Today has collected into one easy-to-use website a catalogue of the best English language learning and information websites on the Internet.

17. <http://www.esllessons.com/>

A great collection of ready-to-use lessons in 12 different categories. For use in the classroom or computer lab.

18. <http://www.esl-lounge.com/>

Here are free ESL Lesson Materials for TEFL and TESOL teachers. Grammar, reading comprehension, worksheets, song lyrics, board games, pronunciation, flashcards, surveys, role plays and more. Many levels. All free and printable. Also on site: Teachers' forum, TEFL Guide, Student site, ESL links, teachers' embarrassing tales...

19. <http://www.eslmonkeys.com/>

Free English-as-a-second-language teaching materials and learning resources for teachers, students and schools. One can search for ESL jobs, lesson plans, English schools/programmes, books, school resources and more.

20. <http://www.eslworldland.com/>

Much useful information and many activities are here for every language learner!

21. <http://www.esldirectory.com/>

This is a very useful resource for ESL students around the world to research and locate English as a Second Language programmes from all around the world. The database contains over 1,000 ESL schools from all corners of the globe so that they are accessible in one place.

22. <http://www.headsupenglish.com/>

Here are many ready-to-use EFL lessons based on world events.

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

This website provides many articles, research papers, lesson plans, classroom handouts, teaching ideas and links!

24. <http://www.eslpartyland.com/>

Teachers can find enough number of ideas for lessons and over 10 discussion groups at this excellent new site.

25. <http://www.languageassociates.com/>

This is a competent ESL training company. Courses teach professionals to improve their English writing, listening and speaking skills.

26. <http://www.nelliemuller.wordpress.com/>

Here are the collaborative writing project ideas on how to integrate technology into the classroom, with resources for teachers and students.

27. <http://www.onestopenglish.com/>

This website offers teachers many free resources and ideas on lessons.

28. <http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/678/01/>

Here you will find variety of handouts, workshops, presentations, and resources related to writing. You can also read archived issues of the weekly email newsletter, the Purdue OWL News.

29. <http://www.schackne.com/Languageteaching.htm>

The site offers Internet resources for life-long learners.

30. <http://www.englishnetlinks.homestead.com/index.html>

It provides an index of many sites in the alphabetical order.

31. <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/ESL3.html>>

This is the website of the Internet TESL Journal.

32. <http://www.home.gwu.edu/~meloni/gwvcusas/>

Includes READING (literature, Notable Citizens of Planet Earth), WRITING (Quiz on Punctuation, Writer's Web--online writing, handbook—Writing, Help for academic/business/technical/fiction/grant/online writing), VOCABULARY (Quiz on Flags and Countries, Word Drop and Quiz Wiz), GRAMMAR (A Guide to Grammar and Writing with grammar explanations and quizzes, Grammar and Style notes with lessons, exercises and quizzes), LISTENING (The Listening Lounge, The ESL Wonderland with authentic listening materials and instructional materials to accompany them), CONVERSATION, DISCUSSION (Discussion Lists/Keypals--SL-Lists--International EFL/ESL E-mail Student Discussion Lists, and STUDENT SITE REVIEWS.

33. <http://www.oelp.uoregon.edu/index.html>

The site contains many resources for teachers and students.

34. <http://www.anglik.net/links.htm>

Excellent links to resources (mostly British English) for all areas of English language learning and teaching, including English for Academic Purposes.

35. <http://www.gwis2.circ.gwu.edu/~gwvcusas/>

This site provides links and reviews of different websites to improve reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills.

36. <http://www.etanewsletter.com/>

The Newsletter for busy, innovative, ESL and EFL teachers and tutors. Fresh and new ideas and activities for teachers to teach grammar, reading, writing and other language skills.

37. <http://www.gl.umbc.edu/~kpokoy1/grammar1.htm>

Links and reviews of sites to improve reading, writing, vocabulary, and grammar skills.

38. <http://www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-115/esl/>

Online activities are broken down into listening and speaking, reading with understanding, and grammar and writing. In addition, there are some great links to other ESL/EFL sites.

39. <http://www.cleanfun.cz/efl/efllearn.htm>

Here you will find a variety of study materials and links for English language.

40. <http://www.englishpractice.com/>

It offers online courses for improving grammar, vocabulary, and reading.

41. <http://www.englishclub.net/study/pronunciation/sentence-stress.htm>

Helps how sentence stress helps one understand spoken English.

42. <http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/chorus/call/cuttingedge.html>

The site includes the latest in cutting edge lessons, quizzes, and activities for students of ESL.

43. <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~itesls>

Free online textbook and fun study site. You can learn much about slang, proverbs, anagrams, quizzes, activities, and more.

44. <http://www.esl.to/esl.html>

A new, enjoyable and effective way to learn and improve your English.

45. <http://www.usingenglish.com/>

English Language Learning Online. Helps in learning the English language for ESL, EFL, ESOL, and EAP students and teachers.

46. <http://www.ec.hku.hk/vec/>

This is a very good ESL site with translations in 15 languages.

47. <http://www.vocabulary.co.il/>

Builds one's vocabulary with flash cards, dynamic test and games, for SAT, TOEFL, GMT, GRE and more.

48. <http://www.world-english.org/>

It contains English language activities, exercises and tests.

49. <http://www.myefa.org/login.cfm?fuseaction=learnmore2>

A free Web-based multimedia system for adults learning ESL/ESOL/ELL. It incorporates California standards for High-Beginning ESL and the Skill Modules of the Latino Adult Education Skills Project (LAES). EFA materials include: an interactive website that is the core of the programme, five stand-alone video tapes, each containing four 15-minute programmes, five CD-ROMs designed to work with the EFA Website, and printable materials for students and teachers that are available as **.pdfs** or in **Rich Text Format** (compatible with most word processors). After watching a video, learners can practise listening, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and "life skills" based on the video segment.

50. <http://www.learnenglishfeelgood.com/>

Free English grammar and vocabulary exercises for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels.

CONCLUSION

In a way, the present article, “**Using Internet in Improving One’s English Language Skills : 50 Informative, Educative & Entertaining Websites**” has its own limitations. Generally materials are conditioned and determined by theories and methods of teaching that the teacher adopts. “Some theoreticians like P.T.George opine that materials cannot claim independent existence. These postulations do not seem to be reasonable as methods and materials have to be dynamic to suit the ever changing teaching-learning scenario. Experimentation has to be continued in methods, materials, strategies and approaches because teaching and learning processes are creative, making the whole interaction more interesting.³” However, the English language learner or the netizen who is desirous of improving his or her competence in English through the Internet must remember the practicality of the netizens’ saying—*Help your English help you. In this process, the Internet or/and the English language teachers will help you both.*

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