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ON THE NET

Sites for Soar(ing) Eyes

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Recent counts by search engines tell us that the Internet currently boasts well over a billion Web sites, most of which could disappear tomorrow and leave it much the better. On the other hand, because of its worldwide nature and the wide variety of Web pages created each day in the languages that we teach, the Internet is a potential gold mine of sites that may be of use to foreign language (FL) professionals. Finding the shining nuggets hidden among all the pebbles can represent a daunting challenge to the experienced surfer, let alone the techno-newbie. The task is worthwhile because access to authentic materials and target language (TL) input available on the Internet is unprecedented, and FL teachers can find much to supplement and support their curricula. Among the resources readily available on the net are: TL newspapers and magazines, tourism information, museums, home pages of educational, governmental, and commercial institutions in TL countries, live radio and television shows in the TL, and even lesson plans created to employ the aforementioned resources. So many resources, so little time.

Where to begin? Happily, several FL professionals and individuals with an interest in this field of study have undertaken the enormous task of creating pages that pull together numerous sites that serve as wonderful ancillaries to FL teaching materials. These people have actually taken the time to categorize these sites by subject areas and interest: bless them! Thus, when you are looking for materials and information on the Web to use in your FL classes, rather than reinventing the wheel, you can just go to one of these "collection sites" as we call them. A good number of worthwhile collection sites exist due to a cadre of professionals or aficionados who truly care about providing good information and a service to their colleagues and fellow human beings. One man's ceiling is another man's floor, so there can be no one right way to organize a collection or to evaluate the potential value of a Web page. A variety of collection sites can help meet our own variety of needs and satisfy our different preferences. This column will mention several such sites and highlight one in particular as a very good example and resource for FL educators.

Some collection sites have a particular theme or focus. For example, [COMFM](#) boasts links to 4685 live radio stations and 401 live television stations. Organizing live audio and video media by type and by country can help the teacher track down programming of particular interest.

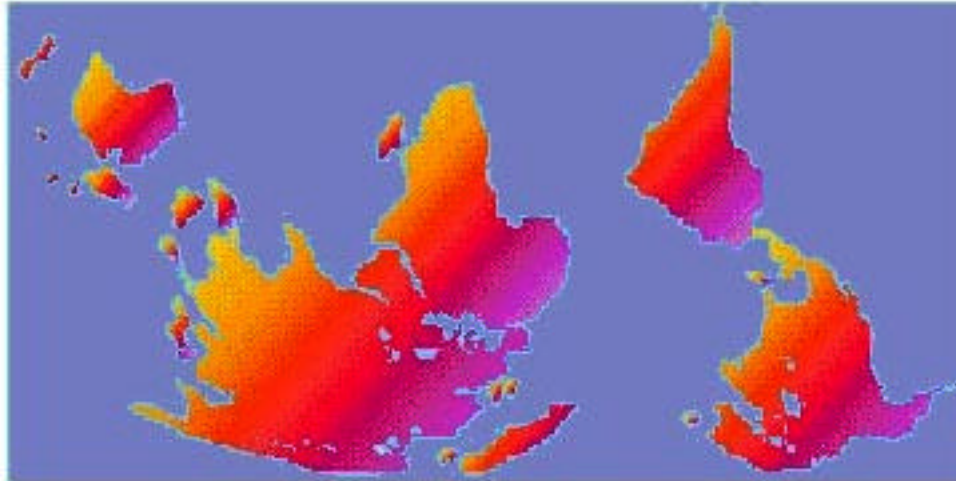


[The Linguist List: Dictionaries](#) provides links to dictionaries and dictionary projects in a wide range of languages from Albanian to Urdu.



[Language Links](#) is a good example of a collection site intended for foreign language teachers. Its focus is materials for use by teachers and learners of languages offered at the University of Wisconsin. This is important as an indication that the site has the specific needs of such learners in mind. Of particular interest is an area entitled [Teaching with the Web](#). This section offers Web activities, including language-specific activities, teaching resources, online publications on the topic, and links to learning centers and associations. [Language Links](#) is maintained by Lauren Rosen.

Language Links



The UR-CVANET [GLOBAL VILLAGE](#) is a joint project of the University of Richmond and Central Virginia's Community On Line. This site has collections of links for 12 languages (including Arabic, Chinese, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish), a multilingual resource link and a section on FL pedagogy. Janice B. Paulsen is the Webmaster.



The [VCU Trail Guide](#) at Virginia Commonwealth University is a fine example of a collection maintained by a language department at a university. The Trail Guide theme works nicely as it shows us the way to a small but useful sample of materials. It also includes some additional "collection" sites, as well as links to language studies

information and language/literature sites for the FLs offered at the university. [Robert Godwin-Jones](#) maintains this well organized site.



These sites are just a few examples of those that are available to the FL professional. Selecting the most useful is often as much a matter of personal taste as of intrinsic quality or completeness. Where one teacher may appreciate having a very extensive selection of links, another may prefer to see a more limited collection of only the very best or most appropriate sites that may provide a better fit with the FL curriculum. Another may put a premium on clear and informative critiques of each link. Attention to appearance may be an important consideration for some, while others may care little for style if the substance offers high quality or extensive volume. We recommend trying out many collections to find those that best fit our own particular preferences. To this end, our own FLTEACH resource site includes a [collection of collections](#) that might serve as a practical starting point in this search.

Sample "Collection Site" In-Depth

Anyone who has spent any time at all on FLTEACH (Foreign Language Teaching Forum) is familiar with the name Eva Easton. Many wonder if she lives inside her computer, making frequent forays onto the Internet in search of sites that will answer a plea for help. With amazing alacrity, Ms. Easton responds to posts requesting information on any number of FL-related topics with suggested sites offering possible answers. She is most generous with her assistance in finding information, and she is clearly a wizard at locating resources. Fortunately for us FL teachers, she has harnessed much of this expertise and information and placed it on the web at <http://eleaston.com/>.



Below is a slightly more in-depth description of Eva Easton's site. This should give you an idea of how a number of "collection sites" are organized and the possibilities they may offer.

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[English Online](#) is an extensive portion of the site. Here Ms. Easton has gathered materials for learning and teaching English that encompass just about any category imaginable, addressing language, culture, pedagogy, and a broad range of syllabus topics.

Subcategories under this portion are

Business English	Art
World English	Banking - Currency
Etymology	Calendars - Clocks
Grammar	County Studies
Reading	Flags
Writing	Maps
Speaking	Geography
Pronunciation	Government: U.S.
Listen to English	Government: World
Vocabulary	History
Quizzes - Tests	Holidays
English for Speakers of ...	Law - Medicine
English for Specific Purposes	Libraries - Museums
ESL Websites	Live Cams
Why Study Languages	Medicine
Search Engines	Military
Classroom Management	Movies - Scripts
Methods ...	Music ~ Lyrics
Lesson Plans	News(papers)
Mail Lists	Politics
Distance Ed	Radio - TV
Internet for Teachers	Religion
FL Bookstores - Publishers	Science - Math
Language Humor	Sports
	Telephone
	Travel
	Weather

In addition to the English language resources, the [Languages Online](#) portion of the site offers an extensive listing of other languages:

Albanian	English	Italian	Russian
Chinese	French	Latin	Spanish
Croatian	German	Polish	Other Languages

There are materials for teaching and learning for all of the above languages. Many of these language sections include links to sites on the language itself; reading and listening to the language; movies and music in the language; sites with information about the history/geography, government/politics, business, religion, art, famous people, literature, holidays of the TL people; quizzes, dictionaries, and e-mail lists for teachers and other aficionados of the particular language.

Under the methods rubric for both English and other languages, the [Language Classroom](#) section includes links to more useful information, including the following subcategories:

Why study languages?	Classroom Management
Education	Grade-Keeping
Quizzes	Standards & Testing
Create Online Quizzes	Cheating
Lesson Plans	Schools Worldwide
Teaching Methods	Teacher Exchange
Multiple Intelligences / TPRS	Distance Education
Home Schooling	Internet for Teachers
Key Pals / Mail Lists	FL Bookstores / Publishers
Materials for ESL	

Of special interest here is [Why study languages](#), a topic not found on many other collection sites. We FL teachers are frequently called upon to defend our position in the school curriculum to superintendents, principals, parents, and our own students. The links gathered here provide much "ammunition" for this fight. In particular, the ADFL/MLA brochure, entitled "[Knowing Other Languages Brings Opportunities](#)" can be downloaded here.

Also going beyond the collection of materials, a section on [Teaching Methods](#) seeks to help the FL teacher develop professionally. Here Eva Easton presents links to

information on, and examples of, methods and techniques for FL instruction. The needs of beginning teachers are addressed in particular, and we all know that helping new teachers survive those critical first years should be one of our goals. Those interested in multiple intelligences, distance education, particular approaches to FL instruction, and even home schooling will also find additional links to enable further exploration.

Finally, recognizing that the FL teacher is almost by nature a world traveler, [The Independent Traveler Online](#) is a final section that provides links to important travel information such as

Airlines
Cars, Trains, Subways
Dorms & Hotels
Embassies
Languages
Maps
Media

Medical
Money
Packing
Passports
New York City
Italy

Clearly, Eva Easton's site has much to offer FL teachers and other FL aficionados. It is a collection of hundreds of sites that educators can use in their classroom as part of projects, as ancillaries to textbook materials, to further their own knowledge, to assist students in their FL learning. "Collection sites" -- those we have mentioned here and the numerous others that exist -- are a real boon to busy FL teachers who would like to be able to find this information but do not have the time or do not yet know how to search for it on the net. Even those of us with expertise in tracking down those hard to find jewels can benefit from the efforts of our colleagues. Our thanks goes to Ms. Easton and to all the others who have done so much of our work for us. We can now virtually soar to new heights, launched, as it were, from the shoulders of giants.

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