

Web Surfing - A Good Tool for Pedagogy

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A brief overview of some of Google applications and resources, which may be incorporated into teaching, is presented in this paper. These applications may be face to face, hybrid or online contexts. The paper also provides examples of how to utilize Google services and suggests some classroom activities to be implemented.

Introduction

Google is a very popular search engine on the Web. This company has earned a reputation in the market by improving the quality of search results and over time has launched online tools such as a translator (<http://translate.google.com>), a blog constructor (www.blogger.com) and a web browser (www.google.com/chrome). Many aspirants would not have had a chance to know that Google has made tools available for educational purposes. Google for Educators (www.google.com/educators) is an important one. This site offers applications to be used in the classroom, classroom activities, posters, lesson plans, tips, videos, a discussion group and other resources to support teachers. A selection of relevant Google tools and useful ideas for using them in the classroom are presented in this article.

Google Custom Search

The aspirant should customize his/her search with Google Custom Search (GCS) (<http://www.google.com/cse>) by creating a search engine to display on his/her website. Designed to meet his/her needs, this tool enables him/her to include specific websites, providing the students with search results the aspirants regard as most significant and avoiding unexpected content. In other words, GCS refines the search once the aspirant can determine which websites will be displayed on the results page.

The next picture is a results page from a search engine created with GCS – Reading in English – whose objective is to offer EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners material on reading. In this example, the results for the query “tips” are ranked from pre-selected websites.

Google custom search

Reading in English Web Search

[TESL/TEFL/ESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links - ESL : Reading](#)

Advice and Tips for Improving Your English (Johnnie Finnis) ... (te-sol@wp.pl): Here are some tips which may help you to master the English Language ...
iteslj.org/links/ESL/Reading/

[Reading Strategies - Greece Central School District](#)

www.greece.k12.ny.us/instruction/.../reading%20strategies%20index.htm

[TESL/TEFL/ESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links - ESL : Reading](#)

English-Zone.com - How to Be a Good Student - Taking Notes (Kaye Mastin Mallory): A list of tips that will help you take better notes in class ...
iteslj.org/links/ESL/Reading/p3.html

[TESL/TEFL/ESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links - ESL : Reading](#)

Spotlight Online - Monthly English learning magazine (F. Zingibi): Articles from the magazine plus links, language tests, exercises and tips. ...
iteslj.org/links/ESL/Reading/p2.html

[TESL/TEFL/ESOL/ESL/EFL/ESOL Links - ESL : Reading](#)

z_z_The English Language Garden: How to Improve Your English (Johanna Stirling): Some tips. Link Check Status = NOT FOUND ERROR Please tell us the new URL, ...
iteslj.org/links/ESL/Reading/p4.html

[Active Reading Strategies, Mind Tools Reading Techniques](#)

Learn reading strategies and techniques to improve reading speed.
www.mindtools.com/rdstratg.html

This Figure is an Example of a result list with Google Custom Search.

As we teach young learners and they are being introduced to the Internet, this customized search will be a major time-saver for our classes. The students will be focused on the websites we included, not to mention that the search is improved when inappropriate WebPages (with spam, pornography, ads) are left out. However, if we would like our learners to gain a more thorough web search experience, we may set our engine to search the entire web. This option lists the results with greater emphasis on the websites if we select.

Google offers two editions of Custom Search: standard and business. The standard edition is free of charge and allows all to customize the look of their search and host the search box and results on their website. This edition shows ads along the search results, but they can be disabled since we are creating a search engine for educational purposes, i.e. for a nonprofit organization, university or educational institution. For the business edition there is a charge and it comes with additional options. Even though we opt for the standard edition of GCS, we must have a Google account to create our search engine.

Google Scholar

This search engine (<http://scholar.google.com>) provides an academic, scholarly search with a broad scope of sources from around the world. It is feasible to search from articles, theses, books, abstracts or court opinions from different subject areas and from a wide range of academic publishers, professionals

and universities. Research Scholars and teachers may find 'Google Scholar' useful to help them search for trustworthy content on the web. This search engine gives access to reputable WebPages and reliable top-level domains - e.g. educational websites (.edu), U.S governmental/non-military websites (.gov), U.S. nonprofit organizations (.org) - and usually provides works in printable file formats like PDF and DOC files.

'Google Scholar' ranks its documents for researchers. It provides the author, the date of publication, as well as how often it has been cited in other scholarly literature. Results marked as citation are papers not retrieved online, but may help researchers find relevant information such as the complete reference for a document which is not available online yet.

For a more accurate search, it is also possible to specify the year in which articles were published or, should you choose the advanced scholar search, articles can be traced by author. In the same way as with the traditional Google search engine, 'Scholar' does not require a Google account to be utilized.

Google Docs

Google Docs (<http://docs.google.com>) is a web-based word processing, spreadsheet and presentation program that enables the creation of documents, spreadsheets and presentations. We can also create web-based surveys and display them on our blog or educational website in order to gather information from our students. Further, we can create basic documents and upload most popular file formats (e.g. DOC, RTF, XLS, PPT), we can instantly share our files with our students or other teachers. They can view and edit the documents in real time, which means we can work collaboratively at a rapid pace. There is an on-screen chat window available that shows who changed what, and when. The people we invite to be collaborators may add information, edit the layout and make several revisions to the document any time, from anywhere. All contributors, however, must have Google accounts.

As group collaboration seems to be crucial in facilitating writing as a process, Google Docs can be really helpful in serving this purpose. It not only facilitates process writing by encouraging students to work together on a document, but also makes it possible to receive instant feedback from colleagues and the teacher. Another advantage is that we do not need any additional software on our computer to access the documents. Any computer connected to the Internet allows participants to effortlessly have access and save documents for free. Documents can be published to the entire world, a few people or even be posted to a website.

Keeping an electronic student's diary, building a portfolio, sharing the course agenda, completing writing assignments and comparing experiments online are just some examples of what could be done with Google Docs. For more ideas on how to build online documents, the Google for Educators site (www.google.com/educators) offers teacher-submitted docs and ready-to-use templates. These include class activities and lesson plans organized according to the grade and school subject.

Google Groups

Google Groups (<http://groups.google.com>) is a free, online service. It allows the formation of discussion groups. Interaction among group members is facilitated as they can communicate without difficulty and effectively via Web or email and share files. Google Groups are suitable for extending classroom discussion online. This interaction can be used as a component of an online course or deliver an entire web-based course, where participants conduct debates and exchange ideas. Additionally, teachers can make classroom materials and online resources available to students.

A teacher can take part in a discussion group to share his/her ideas with fellow educators. He/she may join the Google for Educators Discussion Group (<http://groups.google.com/group/google-for-educators>). This group attempts to build an online community of educators where members ask questions about education, submit lesson plans, teaching resources, and classroom activities. It is compulsory to have a Google account in order to participate in the Google Groups service.

Google News

'Google News' (<http://news.google.com>) allows all to have access to news from a wide variety of sources in a single place. We can personalize our news page to see what interests us most. It is also possible to stay tuned for the news and have them sent directly to our email. Teachers may encourage students to produce their own newspaper. Once we choose to personalize a news page, custom sections can be added with our keywords. Students could compare and contrast their views on daily or weekly news items.

Google Reader

Google Reader' (<http://reader.google.com>) makes it easy to keep up with our favorite WebPages and blogs. The service constantly checks for updates from selected websites and shows the new content in a single place to be read, sorted, and shared. Teachers and students can read items shared by one another and also make notes on the news articles.

Google Translate

'Google Translate' (<http://translate.google.com>) is a boon to the student community. It is a very practical online translator for foreign language students. As, it is the latest improvement, it enables practicing translators to contribute a more appropriate translation. We can see this in the following figure.

Translate text, webpages and documents

Enter text or a webpage URL, or [upload a document](#).

Google Translate (<http://translate.google.com>) is a very practical online translator for foreign language students.

Translate from: English

Translate

Translate into: Portuguese

English to Portuguese translation

Traduz Google (<http://translate.google.com>) é um tradutor online muito prático para estudantes de língua estrangeira.

Contribute a better translation:

O Google Tradutor (<http://translate.google.com>) é um tradutor online muito prático para estudantes de língua estrangeira.

Submit

Cancel

This figure is an Example of how to suggest a better translation with Google Translator

Conclusion

There are plenty of WebPages available with a lot of resources for not only English Language Teaching but also for various subjects. Only thing is the web surfer should know how to be confined to his purpose of search; otherwise, he would have to end up with having reached the site far from his want. The Followings are some of the websites that could be utilized for teaching learning process.

- Google Blogger: <http://www.blogger.com>
- Google Buzz: <http://buzz.google.com>
- Google Chrome: <http://google.com/chrome>
- Google Custom Search: <http://www.google.com/cse>
 - Examples:
 - <http://iteslj.org/search/> - limited to one website
 - <http://a4esl.org/search/> - limited to 2 websites iteslj.org/v & a4esl.org
 - <http://www.manythings.org/voa/search/> - limited to a sub-directory of a website.
- Google Docs: <http://docs.google.com>
- Google for Educators: <http://www.google.com/educators>
- Google for Educators Discussion Group: <http://groups.google.com/group/google-for-educators>
- Google Groups: <http://groups.google.com>
- Google News: <http://news.google.com>
- Google Scholar: <http://scholar.google.com>

- Google Translator: <http://translate.google.com>

In case of difficulties in reaching the above sites using URL, for example Google for Educators Discussion Group: the URL (Uniform Resource Locator) is <http://groups.google.com/group/google-for-educators>, the user can also go to Google.com and type the very semantic code (i.e. Educators Discussion Group) in the address bar there by he would reach the respective site he intends.

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