

THE (INTER)NET. SPECIAL USE OF ENGLISH

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Abstract. *The Internet is a large group of computers that are connected to each other. It is used to send information quickly between computers around the world. It has millions of smaller domestic, academic, business and government networks, which together carry lots of different information and services. The Internet is used for many things, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer and the interlinked web pages and other documents of the World Wide Web. In general, the universal language on the Internet is English, or more precisely, a vague collection of languages called „English”, because their common origin is the national language spoken in England. That national language has spread over the world, and several variants, such as American (US) English, Australian English, and Canadian English. In the textbooks I am using in high school classes there are some lessons concerning teaching English for the Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate/MISSION 2) lessons dealing with special use of English as a foreign language.*

Rezumat. *Internetul este o rețea de calculatoare, legate unele cu altele. Sunt folosite pentru a trimite rapid informații între calculatoarele din toata lumea. Internetul are milioane de utilizatori casnici, academici, de birouri, firme sau rețele guvernamentale, care transmit diferite informații sau servicii.*

Internetul este folosit pentru multe lucruri, cum ar fi email electronic, discuții online, transfer de fișiere, pagini web accesate sau orice alte documente ale rețelei electronice (World Wide Web). În general limba utilizată pentru internet este engleza, sau mai bine spus, o colecție de cuvinte din engleză, pentru că originea rețelei este un limbaj vorbit în Anglia. Acea varietate de limbă s-a răspândit prin lume, luând naștere engleza americană (US), varianta australiană, canadiană, ș. a. m. d, aceste varietăți regionale coexistând de secole. În manualele pe care le folosesc la clasele de liceu apar lecții care privesc predarea limbii engleze pentru Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate / MISSION 2).

Cuvinte cheie: *Internet, rețea web, limba engleză, manual de liceu, vocabular specific*

Keywords: *Internet, World Wide Web, English, high school classes / textbooks, special use of English*

Introduction

English is a West Germanic language that arose in England and South - Eastern Scotland in the time of the Anglo-Saxons.

Following the economic, political, military, scientific, cultural, and colonial influence of Great Britain and of the United States since the mid-20th century, English has been widely spread around the world, becoming the leading language of international discourse.

It has acquired the status of *lingua franca*¹ in many regions.

It is widely learned as a second language and used as an official language of the European Union and many Commonwealth countries, as well as in many world organizations.

¹ A **lingua franca** (originally Italian for "Frankish language") is a language systematically used to communicate between persons not sharing a mother tongue, in particular when it is a third language, distinct from both persons' mother tongues. This can also be referred to as **working language** or **bridge language**.

Approximately 375 million people speak English as their first language.

English today is probably the third largest language by number of native speakers, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish.

However, when combining native and non-native speakers it is probably the most commonly spoken language in the world, though possibly second to a combination of the Chinese languages (depending on whether or not distinctions in the latter are classified as "languages").² The countries with the highest populations of native English speakers are, in descending order: United States (215 million), United Kingdom (61 million), Canada (18.2 million), Australia (15.5 million), Nigeria (4 million), Ireland (3.8 million), South Africa (3.7 million), and New Zealand (3.6 million)

Because English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a "world language", the *lingua franca* of the modern era and while it is not an official language in most countries, it is currently the language most often taught as a foreign language.

English is the language most often studied as a foreign language in the European Union, by 89 % of school children, ahead of French at 32 %, while the perception of the usefulness of foreign languages amongst Europeans is 68 % in favor of English ahead of 25 % for French.³

Among some non-English speaking EU countries, a large percentage of the adult population can talk in English - in particular: 85 % in Sweden, 83 % in Denmark, 79 % in the Netherlands, 66 % in Luxembourg, and over 50 % in Finland, Slovenia, Austria, Belgium, and Germany.⁴

1 – about TEFL

Teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) refers to teaching English to students whose first language is not English.

TEFL usually occurs in the student's own country, either within the state school system, or privately, in an after-hours language school or with a tutor.

As a non - native speaker I have looked for ideas and methods to attract students with something new: and that SOMETHING was using role play activities, songs, poems and drama performances, whenever possible.

Having English textbooks that allow such methods, but also taking part in workshops and summer schools (in Oxford, UK, 1994, Barnstaple, North Devon, UK, 1998, or Sliema, Malta, 2003 and lots of webinars recently) where international professors pleaded for these fresh and modern techniques, I become acquainted with them and started to use during my teaching practice.

2 – about textbooks

In the textbooks I am using in high school classes there are special lessons concerning teaching English for Internet (PROSPECTS advanced / UPSTREAM upper intermediate / MISSION 2),

² Languages of the World (Charts), available at The World's Most Widely Spoken Languages

³ 2006 survey by Eurobarometer, in http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/pdf/doc631_en.pdf

⁴ idem

teaching English through music (SET SAIL 3 / INSIDE OUT), or special lessons dealing with English as a foreign language.

It is not a hypothesis, but a proven fact, that the use of prompts such as masks, costumes, pictures, role – play cards, scripts or situational cards, have the magic effect of creating a whole new world, in which students feel different, playing roles that make them loose their inhibitions and communicate more freely.

3 - lesson details

In Prospects Advanced (Ken Wilson, James Taylor, Deirdre Howard – Williams, Macmillan Education, 2001), Upstream Upper Intermediate (Bob Obee, Virginia Evans, Express Publishing, 2003,) or Mission 2 (Virginia Evans, Jenny Dooley, Express Publishing, 2005) one can teach lessons about internet and special use of English.

The topic is introduced at different units of the textbooks (Unit 7 in Prospects Advanced, page 34 – 37; unit 1 in Upstream Upper Intermediate, page 7 – 13; or unit 3 in Mission 2, page 64 – 67) but it is presented to students who are familiarized with the topic.

Let's have as an example PROSPECTS ADVANCED, Unit 7, Surfing the Internet.

Students have to start discussing the topic from a motto: "I don't surf the Internet, - I drive it...!"⁵

The so called First Impression activities follow:

a) Read and comment on the following statistics:

It took forty years for radio in the United States to gain audience of fifty millions people. The same number of people was using personal computers only fifteen years after they were introduced. From the time the Internet became available to the general public, it took just four years for fifty million American to be regularly using it.

b) How do you feel about the spread of the Internet? Do you agree with any of the following opinions? Do you have another opinion? Discuss your ideas with the rest of the class.

Since I started using the Internet for research, studying has been easier and more fun.

The Internet is quite simply the biggest breakthrough in communications there has ever been. I don't know how we ever lived without it.⁶

The Internet is difficult to access, full of unreliable information and contains offensive material that should be banned.

I don't understand the Internet. I'm not very computer – literate and I find it confusing.

Thus vocabulary is introduced:

(a) Computers and the Internet have created some new words, and given a new meaning to others. What do the following verbs mean? Which of them are also nouns? Access / click / download / format / store / surf

⁵ The Prospects Advanced textbook, page 34

⁶ Idem, page 34

(b) Complete these sentences using the verbs above: (there are 6 sentences to be filled in, using only words linked to the Internet.)

(c) Discuss with the other students what you know about the following words and phrases: (students are given 5 definitions of the following: The Internet; an Internet service provider (ISP); a search engine; a website; a domain name.) ⁷

Reading practice 8 is the next activity, as students are to read about domain names.

4 – discussion

Teaching the same textbooks for many school years now, being myself an Internet surfer and a Facebook addicted, I have always challenged my students to tell me what they will do in a world WITHOUT internet connection.

And the following honest answers are taken from my own 10th grade students' essays.....

"... the technology helps very much in our society. Young people use the modern technology for photos, video, movies or music. (...) they have many applications on their phones..."(Alexandra S, 10th B)

"...we cannot imagine our life without computers and the fact that IT has become so important that nothing can replace technology..." (Delia O, 10th B)

"...I have never imagined my life without e-mail (...) one could post a letter, but it would take days for the other to receive it. With email is so much easier and faster..." (Henrietta L, 10th B)

5 - conclusion

In my opinion life without modern technology would be MORE beautiful because nowadays all the children / people have them (smart devices), they don't have time for things that really counts. Like a blue sky, a summer rain, a smelly rose, or ...a birthday call

So, during my years of teaching alternative textbooks I have to "upgrade my vocabulary", to "access new files", to "download and store new Intel", so as not to be overpassed by my students.

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⁷ The Prospects Advanced textbook, page 34

⁸ Idem, page 35