A Guide to On-Line Resources for Language Teachers

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Abstract

The proliferation of online journals, abstracts, indexes, and computer searches has made research articles more accessible to language teachers than ever before. However, trying to navigate the multitude of web sites associated with language learning research can be overwhelming. This paper will provide language teachers with a guide and a framework for finding resources on the World Wide Web. Finally, some thoughts about the role of on-line resources in research will be examined, including the need for more critical evaluation and new opportunities available.

Introduction

To stay competitive for teaching positions in Japan, it is becoming more and more important for teachers to supplement their CVs and résumés with publications. Recent articles in The Language Teacher (Cornwell, 1998; Braine, 1998) have emphasized the importance of writing for publication. However, these articles have generally failed to provide concrete suggestions on how or where to begin obtaining current research articles in the field of language teaching.

With the number of research materials now available on the Internet, teachers have a tremendous resource at their fingertips. But navigating the various web sites associated with language learning and teaching research can be a challenging and overwhelming task.

These challenges will be addressed by exploring some of the most significant avenues for locating and obtaining research articles and resources on the Internet. These avenues include On-line Journals and Newsletters, Commercial sites (publishers and bookstores), On-line Libraries, Databases, Document search services, Conference listings, and Resource Indexes.

Publishers and Bookstores

One of the first places to look for research information on the internet is at commercial sites such as publishers and bookstores. Recently, there has been a dramatic upswing in the number of commercial sites on the WWW as publishers and bookstores attempt to create an online presence. There are commercial sites containing directories of publishers such as "Academic Publishers" and "AcqWeb's Directory of Publishers and Vendors" which contain lists of publishers and vendors arranged alphabetically, geographically and by subject. Finally, TESOL has a publications page which includes books and serial publications with the latest research findings as well as practical books for classroom use.

Searches

There are several search services and databases on the internet available for research purposes. One of the most comprehensive is ERIC (Educational Resources Information Center) which is sponsored by the National Library of Education. ERIC has a number of gateways but the main one is "accesseric.org". For novices, I recommend "Ask ERIC" which is sponsored by the US Department of Education and the University of Syracuse. "Ask ERIC" provides tips to assist the user in navigating through the site and answers frequently asked questions such as "What is an ERIC Clearinghouse?" and "How do I obtain documents from ERIC?". Other online databases include "Modern Language Association" and "Sociological and Linguistic and Language Behavior Abstracts". "Uncover" is an on-line database that offers document delivery. Finally, search engines and meta-searches, such as "dogpile.com", can be used to track down papers and research articles that are not catalogued in any of the above databases. This type of search can be more of a hit and miss approach but with a little bit of strategy, using advanced searching techniques, it's surprising what can be found.

Conferences

Attending conferences and various presentations related to language teaching can provide a valuable source of information for doing research. There are a number of sites that provide lists of conferences for Language teachers such as "Dave's ESL Cafe" and "TESOL's Conference Site". For conference listings in Japan, the "JALT Language Teachers Conference Schedule" and the "ELT Events Calendar" are the places to look. Several local JALT chapters also have conference listings such as "Kyushu JALT" and "Hokkaido JALT".

Libraries

Libraries all over the world are realizing the importance of digitizing information and the number of libraries with research material available on-line is escalating at a rapid rate. A good place to start looking for libraries and on-line catalogs is at "Lib-Web-Cats" which has a listing of 5,000 libraries worldwide as a resource. "National Library Catalogs Worldwide" offers login access to national library catalogs in 38 countries. For information in Japan, The National Center for Science Information Systems (NACSIS) has a research institute that serves all universities in Japan. The "NACSIS webcat" is a system for searching the catalog databases of books and serials held in university libraries in Japan on the World Wide Web.

Journals

One of the most useful sources of research articles in the past has been through printed Journals, Newsletters, and Serial Publications. In this age of digital information, more

and more of these journals are becoming available on the WWW. Some of these journals include "The Internet TESL Journal", "The TESL Electronic Journal" and "Language Learning and Technology". For language teachers in Japan, selected portions of "The Language Teacher" and "JALT Journal" are available on-line. Many other journals have abstracts available on-line for researchers such as the "ELT Journal", "Applied Linguistics" and "The Modern Language Journal". Another useful source of information for teachers is the ever-growing number of on-line magazines and newsletters. These e-zines provide an abundance of information for teachers ranging from current research findings to practical applications and sample lesson plans.

Resource Indexes

There are a number of excellent resource indexes containing hundreds of useful links for language teachers. Two of the most comprehensive are "Dave's ESL Cafe - Web Guide" and "Internet Tesol Journal (ITESLJ) - Links". These sites are organized by subject categories and are loaded with links (3,314 and 6,341 respectively). Another very extensive collection of links and resources can be found at "On-Line Resources and Journals: ELT, Linguistics, and Communication" written by Kenji Kitao and S. Kathleen Kitao. This web site is full of on-line resources and useful WWW sites for teaching and learning languages.

Future of On-Line Sources

What does the future hold for on-line resources? The phenomenal growth of available resources should elicit a word of caution. The lack of accountability and standardization for electronically published documents should cause the user to be more circumspect and careful in choosing which sources are reliable. A wonderful site created by Claire Bradin entitled "The Internet for ESL Teachers" (Bradin, no date) has much useful information for evaluating websites for teachers. Another useful website is entitled "Evaluating Quality on the Net" (Tillman, 2000) written by Hope Tillman.

The incredible growth of on-line journals and magazines should also give rise to more opportunities for teachers to publish their work. On-line journals and e-zines are constantly seeking material for publication. Yes, you too could become a TESOL author.

Conclusion

The incredible rate of growth of on-line resources for teachers has provided a valuable benefit for research and teacher development. Although the sky is the limit on the availability of on-line resources, language teachers will need to become more critical in selecting reliable and valid material. Furthermore, the burgeoning growth of on-line journals and magazines should provide greater opportunities for teachers to submit their work for publication.

References

Bradin, C (n.d). The Internet for ESL Teachers http://edvista.com/claire/internet-esl.html - eval

Braine, G. (1998). Academic Publishing: Suggestions from a Journal Editor. *The Language Teacher*, 22(9), 5-8; 43.

Cornwell, S. (1998). Advice for Writers: An Interview With Sandra McKay. *The Language Teacher*, 22(10), 13-15.

Kitao, K., Kitao, S. (1997). On-Line Resources and Journals: ELT, Linguistics, and Communication http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/visitors/kenji/onlin.htm

Tillman, H. (2000). Evaluating Quality on the Net http://www.hopetillman.com/ findqual.html

Appendix

Publishers / Bookstores

- "Academic Publishers" <http://www.edoc.com/jrl-bin/wilma/pac>
- "AcqWeb's Directory of Publishers and Vendors" <http://www.library.vanderbilt. edu/law/acqs/pubr.html>
- "TESOL publications page" <http://www.tesol.edu/pubs/index.html>

Search Services / Databases

- "ERIC" <http://www.accesseric.org/>
- "Ask ERIC" <http://ericir.syr.edu/>
- "Modern Language Association" <http://www.mla.org/>
- "Sociological and Linguistic and Language Behavior Abstracts" <http://juno.concordia.ca/collections/llba.html>
- "Uncover" <http://uncweb.carl.org/>
- "Dogpile Metasearch" <http://www.dogpile.com/>

Conferences

- "Dave's ESL Cafe" <http://www.eslcafe.com/search/Conferences>
- "TESOL's Conference Site" <http://www.tesol.edu/isaffil/confcalendar.html
- "JALT Language Teachers Conference Schedule" <http://jalt.org/conferences>
- "ELT Events Calendar" <http://www.eltnews.com/events.html>
- "Kyushu JALT" <http://www.kyushu.com/jalt/kyushuelt.html>
- "Hokkaido JALT" <http://www.bekkoame.ne.jp/~gettings/JALT/index.html>

Libraries

- "Lib-Web-Cats" <http://staffweb.library.vanderbilt.edu/Breeding/libwebcats.html>
- "National Library Catalogs Worldwide" <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/ssah/jeast>
- "The National Center for Science Information Systems" (NACSIS webcat) < http://webcat.nacsis.ac.jp/webcat_eng.html>

Journals

- "The Internet TESL Journal" <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/ ~iteslj>
- "The TESL Electronic Journal" <http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/information/tesl-ej>
- "Language Learning and Technology" <http://polyglot.cal.msu.edu/llt>
- "The Language Teacher" <http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt>
- "JALT Journal" <http://www.als.aoyama.ac.jp/ jjweb/jj_index.html>
- "ELT Journal" <http://www.oup.co.uk/eltj/contents>
- "Applied Linguistics" <http://www.oup.co.uk/applij/contents>
- "The Modern Language Journal" <http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/mlj>

Resource Indexes

- "Dave's ESL Cafe - Web Guide" <http://www.eslcafe.com/>
- "ITESLJ-Links" <http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/links >
- "On-Line Resources and Journals: ELT, Linguistics, and Communication" <http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/visitors/kenji/onlin.htm>

Future of On-Line Sources

- "The Internet for ESL Teachers" <http://edvista.com/ claire/internet-esl.html - eval>
- "Evaluating Quality on the Net" <http://www.hopetillman.com/findqual.html>
- "TESOL Publications" <http://www.tesol.edu/pubs/author/index.html>