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German as a foreign language

Before you go online:
A feasibility study for distance-taught courses
in German at the DSLC

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Before you go online: A feasibility study for distance-taught courses in German at the DSLC

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This paper considers the introduction of distance-taught courses in German at the Diplomatic Service Language Centre (DSLC) in London. It gives the reasons for planning provision of such courses ensuing from the changes in the organisational framework of the DSLC. As part of a feasibility study it presents a checklist of issues for market research in this area and suggests web-based searches to obtain some of this information about potential competitors. Part 2 of the paper analyses and evaluates the materials collected against a catalogue of explicit evaluation criteria and presents its findings. Part 3 concludes with an evaluation of the web-based search as a methodological research tool and argues that it is a necessary but not sufficient tool for gathering market intelligence in this area.

0. Introduction

This paper considers the introduction of distance-taught courses in German at the Diplomatic Service Language Centre (DSLC) in London. It gives the reasons for planning provision of such courses ensuing from the changes in the organisational framework of the DSLC. As part of a feasibility study it presents a checklist of issues for market research in this area and suggests web-based searches to obtain some of this information about potential competitors. Part 2 of the paper analyses and evaluates the materials collected against a catalogue of explicit evaluation criteria and presents its findings. Part 3 concludes with an evaluation of the web-based search as a methodological research tool and argues that it is a necessary but not sufficient tool for gathering market intelligence in this area. Thus the paper follows the procedure of a standard marketing research plan[1]:

Part 1 -----------------------------   Part 2 ---------------------------   Part 3 ---------

Defining the problem (rationale) and research objectives	Developing a research plan for collecting information (Web searches)	Collection of data; discussion of evaluation criteria	Interpretation and presentation of findings	Evaluation of research tools

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[1]   See Kotler (1986:95).

1. Consideration of distance-taught course provision

The core task of the DSLC at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is to prepare officers, prior to their departure, for a range of specific tasks abroad through an intensive 6 to 9 month full-time training programme which focuses on language with a heavy emphasis on current affairs and bilateral relations. The language training programme is tailored to the level of proficiency required for the posting, in many cases near native proficiency. A number of factors have led the DSLC to plan provision for their language training programme also in Distance Education (DE) mode:

- To increase flexibility – many officers at the FCO have commitments on other training courses during their intensive language training and would benefit from a study in mixed mode (face-to-face plus distance learning)

- to make provision for language tuition where courses are presently taught outside the DSLC due to geographical dispersion of officers within the UK. These courses are difficult to moderate in terms of their efficiency and quality control

- to allow the DSLC to train officers on postings throughout the world. It is vital for officers abroad to maintain the language(s) they are not using in their current postings and an allowance is awarded to those who pass an examination every four years

- to extend opportunities of access to and participation in language training throughout the FCO and OGD (other government departments)

- to position itself as a competitor in the commercial world over the next two years when the DSLC becomes a business unit/agency within the FCO. Opportunities will then arise for the DSLC to tender for business also outside the FCO, in particular for other government departments, other international organisations and possibly large multinational companies.

Initial steps have been taken to initiate a pilot DE programme for language training in German in the form of a detailed funding bid for content development. Primary stakeholders, i.e. those people who could most constructively influence the project's development were contacted and were in favour of the proposal to explore ways in which language provision could be made in

distance learning mode. The project has just been approved by the Director of the DSLC and the financial procurement department.

Due to the uniqueness of the language provision by the DSLC and delivery to a specific target group with a heavy emphasis on current affairs and bilateral relations, we assume that there will be few if any direct rival courses. However, the DSLC might be interested in buying from other providers (or selling to them) language training 'modules' in areas of expertise which are compatible with its (or other institutions') programmes.

1.1 Objectives

With this rationale in mind we can now specify the kind of information we are seeking from 'rival courses' and what search tools we may wish apply to seek out this information from the Web. In order for the DSLC to position itself in the market and/or to investigate whether its language services could be offered successfully elsewhere, our marketing strategy will be to explore the following issues in as much depth as possible:

[information which the potential student should expect to find on a good Web page is marked with arrows rather than bullet points]

The Product

⇒ What types of courses are offered and what is the course content? (e.g. general purpose or German for special purposes; focus on area studies, literature, business German etc.)

⇒ What are the aims and objectives of the course?

⇒ What accreditation is offered? Who are the awarding bodies?

⇒ At what levels is German language offered?

⇒ Are the courses up-to-date?

The Customer

Who is the target audience and what do we know about current students in terms of

• Demographic characteristics

⇒ Level of education, qualifications and experience

- Study skills and motivation

- Customers' expectations

⇒ Customers' evaluation and feedback

The Price

- How much are the course fees?

- Are there any other costs (e.g. equipment, study materi als etc.)

Demand and Supply

- Who are the main suppliers? (FE, HE, commercial organisations?)

- What is the demand for individual courses? (enrolment figures?)

- How high is the 'wastage' rate?

Delivery

⇒ How are the course materials delivered? (mail/to be collected, CD-ROM, via WWW?)

⇒ Is there a personal tutor or mentor?

⇒ What provisions are there for interaction of the student with course tutor(s), other students and the organisation?

⇒ Which resources are provided? (textbooks, tapes, online material?)

⇒ Which facilities are required for students' access? (computer, audio/video playback facilities, email, etc.)

⇒ Are the courses free-standing or are there pre-requisites?

Market position

- Are there market leaders, who are they?

⇒ What is the reputation of the institution and/or the expertise of the instructor(s)?

⇒ How much experience does the institution have in the delivery of DE?

Although one would really need to know all of this information before deciding whether to launch a new course/courses, we do not expect to find answers to many of these points. However, from a customer's point of view, good quality Web pages should provide information on all the questions marked with an arrow.

1.2 Web Search Tools

Our search strategy is mainly based on Blakeman (1998), Bradley (1999) and Cooke (1999) and is geared to the rationale and objectives described above. Where would one find courses in German at a reasonably high level which focus on politics and international affairs? Our first inclination was to look at degree level courses in HE. The UCAS database (http://www.ucas.ac.uk/) search yielded a total of 1752 courses, however none of the them in DE mode!

Select a subject from the list below...

German (1752 courses)

Business german (1 course)

German informatics (1 course)

German language (32 courses)

German law (12 courses)

German legal studies (1 course)

German literature (1 course)

German studies (146 courses)

Modern german (1 course)

We searched further for named pathways "German and International Relations" and "German and Politics" and found 1 in each category at Lancaster University, one in "German and Politics" at Oxford Brookes and discarded "Politics *with* German Studies" at Sunderland. Our first conclusions from this search were that great demand for this combination of study in HE was unlikely and we needed to widen our search to German Studies/language courses and narrow down our searches to distance-taught courses.

We then directed our search to online course directories and DE databases such as the ICDL and European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)

and similar databases (cp. bibliography). We found a number of German language DE courses at different levels and for different target groups offered by US/Canadian universities (Madison, Oklahoma, and Guelph).

Further searches on subject specific sites, in particular *The Human Language Page* (cp. list in bibliography) produced DE courses in German as a foreign language (University of Kassel), one commercial online German course (Berlitz), some free online courses run by individuals and, as expected, a degree course in German run by the OU.

We tried global search engines with and without Boolean operators as well as 'intelligent agents', wildcard/truncation searches – none matched the power of the subject-based and the IDCL-related databases. It seems that the greater the number of resources covered by a search tool, the less selective the guide is in terms of the quality of the materials included[2].

2. Evaluation criteria and analysis of documents

The Web allows anybody to provide and retrieve information in every imaginable field. Searches can therefore prove to be a frustrating waste of time when the information retrieved turns out to be irrelevant, outdated or difficult to authenticate. We may come to different conclusions about the usefulness of a source, but to argue our case for the decision making process – in this case, for/against the launch of a new course(s) - we need to be able to refer to assessment criteria on which we base our judgement. We shall therefore analyse and assess the usefulness of sample documents collected against the following non-exhaustive list of evaluation criteria and present our findings.

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[2] Compare, for example, the high-quality professional information service for librarians (http://www.bubl.ac.uk) with a global search engine such as AltaVista. A search for 'Intelligent agents' in BUBL resulted in 7 relevant hits whereas AltaVista produced nearly 2 million hits!

2.1 Presentation of evaluation criteria

a) Purpose and coverage

Users should look for a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the distance-taught course, which ought to include information such as course level, pre-requisites, intended audience as well as the expected level of education, qualifications and experience. Evaluating coverage includes reviewing the content of a subject on which the site is focused and noting the depth and breadth of the subject area. In our case, a listing of language skills is insufficient without an indication of language topics covered. The user will also want to know about cost and study time. Information on purpose and stated limitations in the coverage (scope) will assist us to decide on the relevance of a course for the DSLC.

b) Course credentials/authority

Who is the provider of the course and what is its reputation? Is the instructor an expert in his subject? Can one find the author's qualifications/publications on the subject? How much experience does the institution have in the delivery of DE? Some of this information can be verified from the URL domain (ac, edu, gov, org, com). Most university lecturers' credentials can be found on the institution's web pages and an institution's reputation is often measured by its research output which, in Great Britain, is reflected in HEFCE ratings/funding. However, it is important to remember that reputations and expertise can change and that a newcomer to a field may be capable of producing high quality work. A commercial language provider's reputation, on the other hand, is much more difficult to ascertain and is influenced, amongst other things, by its corporate image and advertising.

c) Accuracy and currency

An evaluation of the factual accuracy and correctness of a source relies to a large extent on expert subject knowledge. However, for non-experts it is helpful to check whether a site is referenced by other sites for its content; this may be done by reverse searching, such as Hotbot's 'Links to this URL' option (http://hotbot.lycos.com/). One may also judge the professionalism of the site by spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. A reputable site will have a facility to send corrections of inaccurate information!

The currency can be revealed by identifying the publication or copyright date, by checking when the page was last revised, and by ascertaining whether the content page dates differ from home page dates. It is also worth checking whether there are contact details available for site maintenance. Since the DSLC is looking for courses with a focus on politics and current affairs, both accuracy and currency are of paramount importance in our context.

d) Soundness, appropriateness of method (Hawkridge, 1997:56)

Are the methods of course delivery appropriate for a distance-taught language course? What access devices are provided in terms of tutorial support, materials needed, equipment, etc. (Lockwood, 2000:3)?[3]

e) Navigation and design, 'value added' features

Presentation issues include intuitiveness and consistency of navigation facilities, clarity of the site's organisational design, and help sections. Presentation issues, although not as important as content issues, impact on the overall impression of a site's quality. However, they are to a certain degree a matter of personal taste and preference. General points to be checked here: is extra software or hardware needed? Is the site accessible to people with disabilities?

There are certain features which can be considered to be a valuable addition to a Web site: can the user contact someone who receives and responds to feedback? (Jacques, 1996). Has the site been evaluated or rated by a recognised external organisation? Does the site have search and/or index facilities?

2.2 Evaluation of sample documents and recommendations[4]

2.2.1 Professional German, University of Guelph, Canada

http://www.open.uoguelph.ca/offerings/offeringstemplate.cfm?courseid=207

a) The Web site for this course opens with a description of objectives: "… to enable students to express themselves at the appropriate level in the German language in general day-to-day

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3   See categories under 'delivery' in part 1.

4   In the analysis below we shall be using the same five evaluation criteria and their numbering as outlined above.

professional situations both in writing and orally". Although the descriptors 'professional' and 'appropriate level' seem vague, the summary of outcomes leaves the user in no doubt that this is a fairly basic (post GCSE?) business German course: "By the end of the course students should be able to understand simple texts, formulate routine correspondence, and to respond accordingly to standard professional conversations". The stated pre-requisites "1st year German in North American universities" is realistic and confirmed our impression of the 'appropriate level'. The site clearly lists the degree credit rating, the course and resources fees.

b) The document is clearly identifiable by its URL as a proprietary university Web site, which has its own 'Office of Open Learning – Distance Education'. It identifies the co-ordinator for the programme development and refers the user to the 'School of Languages and Literature' as the department with overall responsibility. There is a named instructor whose credentials are likely to be found on the School of Languages homepage.

c) The information on the course is sparse but accurate and current. There are, at present, no other distance-taught German modules on offer. The copyright date is 2000, maintenance of the site is assured by a webmaster (e-mail address) and a Web site team.

d) The document contains information about resources provided (course manual, video tapes and audio tapes) and resources required (access to VCR, TV and cassette player/recorder). However, there is no information on provision for interaction of the student with the course tutor, other students or the organisation, and no information on assessment procedures. It is also worrying that none of the facilities advertised for most other open learning programmes such as computer conferencing, e-mail, online resources are being exploited for language learning (cp. page: 'About the Office for Open Learning'). Still a second generation course? (Nipper, 1989)

e) Our overall impression is that of a well-designed Web site which is easy to navigate. Features such as a site map, listing of courses, index and search facilities helped us to find the information we were looking for.

Recommendation: This is a low level language module with an inappropriate infrastructure for a distance-taught course, which has many competitors amongst European self-study courses. All BBC language courses, for example, provide access to interactive Web sites with feedback facilities. This course is unfit for global competition and of very limited use in both content and language level for the DLSC.

2.2.2 Fernstudienkurs 'Fremdsprachlicher Deutschunterricht in Theorie und Praxis',
University Kassel, Germany (discarded)

http://www.uni-kassel.de/fb9/daf/fernst/fernstud.htm

A first-class site which has all the hallmarks of a high quality course; there is even excellent
sample teaching material on view. Unfortunately, there was not much point in assessing this
document since it turned out to be a PGCE (Postgrauduate Certificate of Education) course for
teaching German as a Foreign Language!

2.2.3 Third Semester German GER201, University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA (discarded)

http://www.cf.uwex.edu/ics/disted…/CourseDetails.cfm.?ProgramID=909

This is a sad example of what happens if the course description on the Web is left to an
'Instructional Technologist' and forced into the straightjacket of an A4 form. The description
speaks for itself:

"Reviews grammar taught during first two semesters while adding new material with some stress
on idiomatic usage. All four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are practised and
continued emphasis is placed on acquisition of cultural knowledge. Field trip may be required."

It is difficult to think of a more vague or more boring advertisement for a course.

The evaluation of this course also had to be discarded since this course – although clearly marked
as 'Distance Learning' – in fact meant delivery across a number of UW campuses via interactive
video conference.

2.2.4 German language course, Berlitz Online, Germany

http://www.global-learning.de/berlitz/

a) The document does not include a statement of aims and/or objectives, information about the
level of the language course remains vague: "Berlitz Online courses are aimed at students who
already have quite a good level of the target language". In the category 'Admissions' we find a
definition of 'good level': "… they are able to survive abroad, order food, reserve hotels, conduct
simple telephone calls etc". In HE terms we would classify these students as false beginners. For
information about duration, accreditation and price of the language course one needs to consult

the home page. Courses last between 6 weeks and three months and students are awarded a Berlitz certificate of achievement (after 6 weeks?). As regards content of the course(s) we are told, also under 'Admissions', that: "The courses are profession-oriented, relating to business, banking, telecoms etc [sic!]". The page contains a great deal of confused, unstructured and contradictory information and leaves the user wondering about the professionalism of this organisation.

b) Course credentials are seriously compromised by the fact that the document does not distinguish between educational and promotional materials, the latter being overwhelmingly predominant. The reference to Berlitz participation in an EU project five to eight years ago or the alleged recognition of the quality of their products by "Prof. Dr. Dr. hc …" (home page) are an indication of the lack of external recognition.

c) Doubts about factual accuracy were raised above (language level); it is also obvious that the document has been translated by a German speaker and not even checked by a native speaker of English. The syntax is clumsy and the language is neither authentic and nor idiomatic. The document is dated 19 April 2000, but there is no indication of any site maintenance or reference to Web master, not even on the Berlitz home page.

d) The user will not find answers to queries on course delivery or access devices other than the information that he/she will need a PC and access to the Internet. The 'revolutionary' Berlitz method of online teaching speaks for itself, and is again an interesting piece of translation from a 'leading' language school: "At the core of Berlitz Online training is not Person to PC communication as in CBT, but rather a development of this twosome into a threesome Person to PC to Person the principle of personal communication".(sic!)

e) Again, the mixing of advertising features on the Web site and information on courses makes it difficult to seek out the relevant course information. We have tried in vain to link from Berlitz's home page to the document above, which is listed on the ICDL database. The search on the home page located another German business course at a different level. Does Berlitz know that they have an online German course?

Recommendation: The DSLC should not avail itself of Berlitz online courses.

2.2.5 Variationen: German Language and Society, L213

Open University, United Kingdom

http://www3.open.ac.uk/courses/bin/p12.dll?C01L213

a) The L213 site opens with a rather vague statement of aims, which is too general to be meaningful: "… is designed to improve your language skills and your knowledge about aspects of Germany and its people". The ensuing course description is shorter than the initial summary and is fairly redundant. The course claims to cover an enormous breadth of the subject area: "The topics covered in the eight months of study are geography, politics, history, language and identity, migration, arts and architecture, science and technology, and Germany within Europe".

There is comprehensive information of all study-related issues such as course level, pre-requisites, accreditation, starting date, duration, price and - unlike any of the other sites discussed here - a helpful section on 'Studying outside the UK'.

b) The OU is a well-known reputable provider and specialist in open and distance learning as well as a global player in DE. However, the teaching of Foreign Languages, in particular of German, is a relatively new venture (1997) and it would be reassuring to know the academic credentials of the course team/tutor(s) for this module.

c) The document is accurate, although in parts repetitive, and up to date (next start date: Jan. 2001). The accuracy and currency of the content, however, cannot be assessed – the user has no access to sample materials.

d) The methodological approach of this course is distinctly 2nd generation. Why is no use made of the first-class technical infrastructure of the OU, which would certainly help to raise the quality of interaction on this course? Access to and exploitation of the vast array of internet resources in languages is vital for language learners (see Rösler 2000).

e) The site makes excellent use of hypertext links where it rightly suspects that certain information will only be relevant to a limited number of students (e.g. foreign students, students who are unfamiliar with the OU's accreditation system, etc.). The design is aesthetically pleasing and the navigation facilities are good with easy access to in-depth information.

Recommendation: Although this course seemed to match most closely the language level and content requirements of the DSLC, we have reservations in recommending this course to our

students due to the mêlée of topics (ten very diverse topics in 8 months), which we suspect will lead to a rather superficial treatment of content. It is no serious contender for our planned course provision.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of obtaining information from the Web for market intelligence on distance-taught courses

Providers of education, particularly in the DE market need to recognise that education is rapidly becoming a consumer good and that 'customers' will exercise the same kind of parameters in making their decisions as they do for anything else. "The connected world is full of learning shoppers (or students) who are browsing through the e-learning supermarkets, seeking the best buys. […] And if universities do not have e-courses and products on the shelves, they will be out of business." (Spender, 2000) Although this might be a slightly exaggerated statement, it does, however, highlight the importance for any education provider of ensuring that there is sufficient demand for their products, old and new, and that they compare favourably with the competition. It seems obvious to assume that market research for distance-taught courses should avail itself of Web searches as its main market research tool, but will these searches yield sufficient market intelligence for the planning and implementation of new courses?

3.1 Strengths of Web searches

In theory a comparison of Web searches with traditional marketing tools shows a number of distinct advantages over traditional market research tools.

- Speed of data collection and flexibility

  Given the right search tools, a company report can be retrieved or a bibliography compiled within minutes from the researcher's desk independent of his/her location. Obtaining information by writing to various DE organisations with a query on distance-taught courses could take weeks, whereas retrieving the same information from a good Web site is almost instantaneous.

- Quantity of data and control

  The quantity of data which can be collected through traditional research tools such as mail surveys is usually limited by cost and sample size. Surveys are normally costed for the smallest statistically viable sample and often yield a low response rate. Cost is normally not a limiting factor for Web searches – most large organisations pay a fixed fee for unlimited access to the Web – and the researcher has control over the amount of data s/he wishes to retrieve.

- Response rate

  In our experience, the response rate to e-surveys on subject-oriented bulletin boards is excellent. However, this may not be the case if individuals or organisations suspect you of gathering information for a competitor by infiltrating their business operations.

- Costs

  At present, the DE market is still dominated by educational, non-profit making institutions who can ill afford professional market research services prior to the launch of new courses. Inexpensive Web searches will go at least some way towards identifying potential competitors and gathering intelligence about their marketing strategies.

Any serious contender in DE will eventually have to market their courses globally and offer access via the Web. Thus, Web searches for distance-taught courses are an important initial step to gather intelligence and gain an overview of the market segment under consideration. However, our research shows that Web searches leave many questions unanswered and are, on their own, an insufficient tool for any serious market research.

3.2 Weaknesses

Web-based searches are not as easy and straightforward as one may initially assume for a variety of reasons, most of which were touched upon in the above discussion. Cooke (1999:6) neatly summarises the most serious problems as:

- Information overload

- The availability of vast quantities of useless information

- The potential for inaccurate materials

- The ephemeral nature of materials disseminated via personal home pages

The difficulty in finding quality information is further compounded by the rareness of sophisticated search tools. For example, a search for 'Intelligent agents' in the global search engine 'AltaVista' produced nearly 2 million hits, whereas BUBL (a national information service for HE) resulted in just 7 relevant hits.

The average quality of documents retrieved was fairly unsatisfactory and comparison of standards between different courses difficult to ascertain due to the lack of access to the content of the courses. This highlights the lack of global accreditation and QA systems in DE; there is possibly also a role for a kind of consumer 'watchdog'.

Our initial objectives to ascertain whether there is a demand for courses in German and Politics/International Relations and to research the supply of distance-taught course in this area remain unanswered. The fact that we have not been able to find any courses which match our requirements in both subject area and quality may lure us into a false sense of security about the absence of competitors in this field; insufficient search skills may well account for the lack of success in our search.

Furthermore, our marketing strategy contains quite a number of issues (cp. objectives) for which we have not been able to find the necessary information in the documents retrieved by our searches. For example, none of the documents gave us information on enrolment figures or on 'wastage' rate. We could not retrieve vital market intelligence about our target audience, their demographic characteristics, their level of education, qualifications and experience.

Our search presents a non-exhaustive snapshot of the present situation; a proper market analysis should also take a longer term view in order to establish trends and developments in the market; if the size of the web is estimated to double every 5 months, then our market intelligence may be out of date by the time we launch we course!

4. Conclusion

Our Web searches have revealed a whole spectrum of DE courses from 'traditional' distance education (2nd generation), to regional distance education across campuses, to international

distance education, to (often free) online courses, to virtual universities edging towards globalisation. Despite the fact that they have not yielded many useful 'hits' in our chosen subject area, they are a necessary but not a sufficient tool for gathering market intelligence.

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Spender, D. (2000) 'Trade in your skills, The online age of learning is here', THES, 7 April.

2. Websites (Selection of URLs which we used for my searches)

Searches on courses:

ICDL and European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU)
http://www.icdl.open.ac.uk/

Higher Education Funding Council
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/

University Central Admission System
http://www.ucas.ac.uk/
http://search3.ucas.co.uk/cs30/index.html

Campus Service Information (UK)
http://www.niss.ac.uk/sites/he-cis.html
Athabasca University. Resources in Distance Education:
http://ccism.pc.athabascau.ca/html/ccism/deresrce/de.htm

University of Wisconsin-Extension:
http://www.uwex.edu/disted/resources.html

Online Course Directories, lists 16 for online universities and private training organisations.
http://wwwtafe.lib.rmit.edu.au/teaching/director.html

Discussion on evaluating web sites

World Wide Web Search Strategies, University of Wisconsin; includes a section on evaluating web sites
http://wwwtafe.lib.rmit.edu.au/teaching/director.html
URL:http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/Steenbock/services/wwwstrat.htm

Site commenting on: Authority, Content and Scope, Design, Functionality
http://www.baylor.edu/~Billie_Peterson/checklist.html

Site commenting on: Content, Authority, Organisation/Presentation, Searchability, Accessibility, Comparability
http://www.canisius.edu/canhp/canlib/webcrit.htm

Site commenting on: Scope, Authority and Bias, Accuracy, Timeliness, Permanence, Value Added Features, Presentation
http://www.inform.umd.edu/LibInfo/literacy/index.html

Site commenting on: Web Format, Scope, Relation to similar works, Authority, Treatment, Arrangement, Special features
http://ils.unc.edu/~fents/310/#Evaluating

Subject-based sites (Languages)

WWW sites for languages:
http://www.cilt.org.uk/
CILT's home page (Centre for information on language teaching and research)

http://www.linguanet.org.uk/
CILT's Virtual Language Centre - probably the most useful URL for language teachers – offers many links to foreign language sites.

http://www.well.ac.uk
The Well project's immensely useful pages point to materials for language learning and make suggestions about how best to use them. It also contains a very easy tutorial on web skills, e.g. on how a search engine can be exploited to its best possible use.

fdtl projects
This site offers an overview over all government-funded projects, such as the
Ciel Language Support Network on independent learning. Here one also finds useful information on questions relating to educational copyright .

http://www.europeonline.com/sitemap.htm
Europe Online provides easy access to European web sites in a number of categories for twenty-four countries in and around Europe. In each category for each country Europe Online lists web sites including those of the country's most important companies, organisations and national institutions. For each country, there is an English version of the page and a version in the country's official language.

http://www.june29.com/HLP
The Human Language Page is a comprehensive catalogue and searchable database of language-related Internet sources. Here's where one can find online lessons in many European and non-European languages.

Biodata

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