

*Readers are encouraged to submit annotated lists of links and reviews of sites in their literacy based area of interest. See the Submission Guidelines in this issue for more information. Note that opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of Literacy Across Cultures or any group associated with it.*

### On-Line Newspapers as a Source for Language Teaching Material: Part 2

*by Charles Jannuzi  
Fukui University  
<jannuzi@hotmail.com>*

*In the last issue of LAC, Paul Wringer and David Dycus covered in detail how to find and use newspapers on the WWW for EFL learning and literacy. This is a brief follow-up that supplements what they discussed.*

The WWW presents a host of problems for newspapers. It is absolutely necessary for newspapers of record to establish themselves on what has become the world's most important conduit of information. However, it is difficult for newspapers to make any money online while at the same time the margins for turning a profit in print are thinner than ever. They do not have their traditional base of advertisers to support them, and readers are reluctant to pay for subscriptions so long as there is so much free information out there on the Web.

Moreover, the WWW has presented opportunities for alternative sources of news. For one thing, broadcasters such as CNN and BBC translate well to the hypertextual, mixed media reality of the Web. Still yet another challenge to newspapers is that of disintermediation: people can now go directly to portal sites (such as <<http://www.yahoo.com/>>) and get their news pretty much as the news services present it (or they can even go straight to the news services, <<http://www.reuters.com/>>).

### Some ESL-specific sites

As a language teacher, I find it tempting to use the text-rich sources of major newspapers online. And everyone has their online favorites (mine is the Christian Science Monitor <<http://www.csmonitor.com/>>). However, what if you do not teach students with sufficient language levels to deal with such authentic texts?

One approach is to pour as much top-down schema processing and language support tasks as possible into the lesson. That is, don't grade the text, rather grade the task and provide lots of cognitive and linguistic support to students. One problem with over-using such strategies, however, is that authentic texts always then become objects of language study, but never as means of getting information and revising knowledge. This often results in doing just about everything possible with a text BUT READING IT!

The other strategy is to grade the text and keep the language building tasks brief enough so that they do not distract from sustained reading. The following are some news sites that can be used as sources of graded texts.

Keynews.org

<<http://www.keynews.org/>>

This site presents news articles in newspaper form, but written in simple English. I estimate the readability to be much easier than even USA Today. Content, though, is pretty much limited to US news; updates do not look all that frequent, at least during the summer months.

English to Go.com

<http://www.english-to-go.com/>

This one was reviewed in the Wringer and Dycus article, but I think it is so good it is worth listing here again. It makes free weekly lessons available, and a reminder of what and how to access comes in an e-mail. The \$20.00 individual subscription is well worth it if you have to put together a reading (or reading-writing connections) class quickly or a lesson on the fly. Another nice thing about English to Go is that they have kept things as streamlined as possible, which helps download times if you have slow access to the Web, and it also helps keep printing up materials neat and clean.

## Portal Sites

Portal Sites such as Yahoo have significantly replaced newspapers and TV's CNN as some people's most immediate source of breaking news. However, there are portal sites that specialize just in news. For example:

Moreover.com

<<http://w.moreover.com/>>

<<http://www.moreover.com/news>>

That first is not a typo, but a new type of WWW address. This is somewhat like the Ananova site <<http://www.ananova.com>> reviewed in the previous issue of *LAC*. From its news portal site, you can access newspapers from around the world. You have to fill out a subscription form if you wish to upgrade to a professional business service which gives you access to a portal that includes business and financial news. One problem with news portals is that a lot of articles at various publications change location, but the portals don't know this, so I have always experienced a lot dead links, especially when trying to access archived articles.

## Make Your Own News Page

Quickbrowse.com

<<http://www.quickbrowse.com>>

This site lets you put together your own online newspaper from any online source that it can link to. You have to fill out an account form, though the service is free. Quickbrowse directs you to a menu of US newspapers from which to build your news page, but then you can add any URL of your own. You can also later edit— delete and add to — your page. Or, you can create a different page for different purposes. Also, another nice feature is that you can then have your page sent to your e-mail address. The pedagogical potential for this is enormous. Suppose you wanted students to compare how your country's leading newspaper reported an event compared to a newspaper in the US or UK? How about a bi-lingual news page? Or how about a news page that only links to coverage of a specific theme or topic? This site is well worth looking into.