

All that glitters is not gold

Practical evaluation of web-based language learning resources

Git Jonare, Khosrow Razavi, Esther Blasi

Department of Humanities, Mid Sweden University

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1. Introduction

The following report deals with the LingoNet project, financed by the Swedish Agency for Distance Education (DISTUM), seen from the perspective of the subject matter and of the user. It discusses the thoughts and problems that arose during the project and describes the background to the final product LingoLina, a virtual library where students and teachers can find resources for language training in English, French and German. Reference materials and links to other libraries and language learning resources are also included.

Working on the web to search for materials or simply to surf can lead to constructive intellectual encounters but also to a great deal of frustration. Where am I? Who is this site suitable for? Where can I find alternative material? This article describes the process leading to the production of the instrument LingoLina which, when it has reached its final version, we hope will be helpful to everyone working with or involved in language education in Sweden. For those wishing to know more about the background to the LingoNet project, we would like to refer to the report *Separating the Chaff from the Wheat* (Borin & Gustavsson).

Language learning is a subject demanding practical skills. The learner needs continual training in order to improve. Up to now, this has mostly taken place in the artificial environment provided by the classroom. Few have been

granted the privilege of travelling to the target language country to train in an authentic environment. Computers, with their capacity for simulation and feedback, should be a clear asset in language teaching. If we look at language education from a traditional perspective, as consisting of the four skills of *reading, writing, listening and speaking*, we can observe that *reading* and *writing* were the activities that could be trained earliest by means of computers, initially by means of computer programs/software applications and later using CD-ROMs and Internet. Concurrent with the increased selection of CD-ROMs and ever expanding Internet capacity, the opportunity to practice the third skill of *listening* has greatly increased. On the other hand, to speak with a computer – and receive sensible answers is still a future scenario for most people.

We are of course aware of those areas where the computer is sadly lacking, for example concerning interaction; the basis of linguistic communication. The curriculum for modern languages at upper-secondary level states that the pupil shall develop “his/her ability to communicate and *interact*” in the foreign language (authors’ italics). The concept of interaction¹ can be interpreted in many ways. Some mean that interaction takes place if the user can exert an influence on the application by means of his/her choice of answers or action. A language teacher quickly notices the limitations of the computer where response is concerned. It is only possible to feed in a small number of all the possible variations into a program containing for example translation exercises. Even a grammar program, with its seemingly more ordered content, most probably encapsulates less than 50% of the possible incorrect answers. In the FriDa-project, which is concerned with training French grammar using computers (Stockholm 1998), the students’ answers were collected and analysed. The possible answers that had been fed into the program from the beginning covered 41% of the actual wrong answers. By means of the insight provided into the mistakes actually made by the students, the error analysis could be improved to 77% after only a few trial runs. We believe however, that it is extremely unusual for a programmer to be able to put so much time and effort into error analysis as was the case in this project.

In an introductory phase of the LingoNet project, a relatively comprehensive inventory of language sites on the web was carried out for the three languages concerned. The inventory contained no other evaluation than that the web sites could be interesting to examine more closely. A simple database was established, where we as content experts could then continue with a closer examination of the web sites. The database allowed us to sort the web sites according to language. We were able to retrieve the web sites from the data base and carry out further investigation in order to, at best, sort them into

¹ The term *interactivity* is also often used synonymously

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levels preliminarily termed A, B and C. The evaluation criteria used were: *very interesting, could be interesting, save for specific purpose, uninteresting*. Each web site could also be tagged and a free text commentary added. The modules for sorting sites included in the database soon proved to be inadequate. At a very early stage we created a list of “requests”, desirable resources that we wanted the portal to contain. We examined our own needs and also asked students and colleagues at both upper-secondary and university level for suggestions.

During the working process three main questions became apparent. The first concerned the levels A, B and C. What do they really stand for? Are they arbitrary? Are the different languages comparable, i.e. is the English level A comparable with the French and German level A? Do the different levels correspond to university courses and in that case, how do we categorize material for beginners?

The second question that we were very quickly forced to solve in order to be able to continue constitutes one of the main purposes of the whole project: What criteria should we use in our evaluation of web sites? The criteria used should be concordant, easily analysed and well founded.

The third but not least important question was how to handle the abundance of web sites available? This was not simply a question of separating the chaff from the wheat, or kissing a frog to discover a prince, which in itself can be problematical, but more a purely practical question. How can you separate a particular web site from its portal? How specific should the selection of dictionaries be? How many links to web sites should be included at the same level? Some of these questions are likely to remain unanswered even after the conclusion of the project.

Our work led us to the creation of an instrument for analysis, “*VVV-EKG*” (EKG is the Swedish acronym for electrocardiogram, ECG)

Who (Sw. *Vem*) is the resource aimed for?

What (Sw. *Vad*) is it about?

Where (Sw. *Var*) can I find it?

Aesthetics (Sw. *Estetik*) – attractiveness, ease of use

Quality (Sw. *Kvalitet*) – suitability and value for language learning

Feasibility (Sw. *Genomförbarhet*) – are plug-ins and specialized computer equipment needed?

It is our experience that not even the three V's are easy to find, and that it is absolutely necessary to perform an "EKG" on web sites that we wish to use in our teaching or to recommend to our students.²

2. Request list

Which elements of language learning can the student/pupil train independently with the help of web-based material and what are the tools needed by a language student or teacher? Two separate areas very soon took shape: skills training and reference materials.

The headings below were the point of departure for further categorization and searches for suitable web sites. Even if much of this work remains to be carried out, we can already establish that Internet provides us with an abundance of material in certain areas while others have not attracted any production at all, at least not freely available. As an example we can mention the opportunity to practice pronunciation. It was our ambition to provide a solution to this problem by creating a prototype program for pronunciation practice that would be freely available. We also wanted to make it possible to exchange sound files in the virtual library LingoLina. Unfortunately there was not enough time to develop our own product, but we have been able to include a smaller commercial module in the project that demonstrates pronunciation practice and which allows sound files to be sent and received. Under the heading skills training are to be found:

Vocabulary training

Grammar exercises

Reading comprehension

Essay-writing

Pronunciation

Translation

Under the heading reference material we have assembled:

Grammar

Corpora

Culture

Dictionaries

Library

As well as the skills training and reference material, we initially planned to include a *warehouse or store room* where those who administer LingoLina would be able to place unclassified links or material that was judged interesting but which did not fit into the project framework. We also wanted

² In Swedish, *estetik* (aesthetics), *Kavalitet* (quality) and *genomförbarhet* (feasibility) are abbreviated as E.K.G which is an acronym for electrocardiogram (ECG).

to include links to other libraries, e.g. to those financed by European Community funds, e.g. Ling@net³

At the beginning of the project we had no perception of what the different exercises would look like, other than that they would be easily accessible under the different headings. Vocabulary on the shelf for word lists and grammar on the shelf for grammar! One of the problems associated with searching on the Internet is the fact that it is easy to get lost following the threads of the web. Furthermore, it became apparent that it is not always easy to isolate the individual activities into categories as we had initially hoped.

With regard to reading comprehension and the library, we searched both for materials that could be used in skills training to improve the students'/pupils' reading comprehension, and also for complete works or excerpts which could be read for pleasure. We placed these in a "reading corner" among the reference books. We imagined how the users of the LingoNet site would curl up in a corner of the sofa or sink down into a comfortable armchair in the virtual library LingoLina! We discussed in detail exactly where the *history of literature* belonged. At university level this module has such an important position in language studies that we felt that it should be given its own "shelf" in the library. However, as on so many other occasions during the course of the project, the discussion was never concluded and this feature has been placed under the broader concept of culture, where it has remained thus far.

Much remains to be dealt with in the project. The *essay writing* section should, in our opinion, contain guidelines and suggestions on how to plan and formulate an essay. Particularly in English, there are many examples of finished essays available on the Internet, placed there by kind students/friends to be copied and used. The difficulty lies in knowing where the borderline is between referring to an essay that we think can serve as a good example of form and content and providing an invitation to copy? We have already touched on the degree of specification with regard to e.g. dictionaries. It is possible to limit the selection to the large encyclopaedias available on Internet, but if we also aim to satisfy the more "narrow" users it is advantageous to include both technical terms and tips for the fly-fisher! The problem lies in judging the reliability and quality of "specialist" dictionaries that lie outside our own field of competence.

The areas included in the "request list" are those deemed to be most important by our colleagues and ourselves. This does not automatically mean that these resources are available on the web site. We have already mentioned the desire for pronunciation exercises and how we solved this within the framework of

³ <http://www.linguanet-europa.org/y2/> (accessed 01/03/2002)

the project. *Translation* is another objective where we at the present stage have been unable to find a suitable solution. The web sites available are monolingual and the pedagogical vogue of the last decade advocates communicative competency, with extensive use of the target language in preference to contrastive analysis. It is also the case that many of the web sites initially assembled have not yet been classified. This classification work presupposes a levels and evaluation structure which must be developed and constructed before a more homogeneous survey of the web sites can be carried out. This, together with discussions on the structure of the digital environment, has absorbed much of the subject experts' time.

The concept of *culture* needs further discussion. Culture can include everything, from truffle growing in southern France, neo-Nazism in Eastern Germany to Shakespeare and his epoch or the importance of comic strips in French adult education. Within the framework of the project we have not been able to find a satisfactory solution as to how we can manage this multiplicity in a clear and lucid manner. By way of conclusion, we can note that grammars are not included in LingoLina's digital reference library at present and that if the project is to continue then it is of vital concern to work with corpora. Corpora are tremendously interesting sources which can serve both as dictionaries and grammar.

3. Identification of levels and target groups

One of the first questions we asked ourselves when we began to evaluate the web sites collected was which target group they were most suitable for. The target groups for the project were "teachers and students/pupils at university, college, upper-secondary school or other educational institutions". With such a broad selection of target groups we needed to find an unambiguous sorting instrument. The first tool used was the division of the database into levels: A, B and C.

To begin with it was difficult to find a common denominator for the levels. Level A tended to become "elementary", B "intermediate" and C "advanced". But did this correspond to the French classification into levels, and what level do "Grundstufe", "Mittelstufe" and "Oberstufe" represent? How can the different terms be identified so that the reader or user can unambiguously interpret them? That level A, our initially arbitrary designation (elementary, élémentaire and Grundstufe) does not necessarily correspond to the A level in Swedish universities and colleges, did not make things easier.

All too often we equated the arbitrarily chosen levels A, B and C with the target groups of students on courses with corresponding designations. According to LingoNet's project description, the target group should, however, also include upper-secondary schools and other educational

institutions. It was therefore necessary to create designations for levels which included all the target groups to be included in the project i.e. from upper-secondary to university, from beginner to advanced learner at C or D level! Which target groups are hidden behind the question *who* in VVV-EKG ? That the question *who* refers to the target group was self-evident for us but for others, e.g. Robert Ronau, Steve Ryan and Beth Stroble (1999) who work with a model for criteria similar to ours, the question *who* is concerned with the author of the web site.

The Council of Europe has for many years worked actively with questions concerning language, engaging language experts and other interested parties from the member countries. This work has greatly influenced the writing of curricula and language manuals throughout Europe. The first major language publication on “threshold levels”⁴ is now available for 20 languages and the council has also been a driving force in the adaptation of the portfolio concept for languages (Schärer 2000). In its work with new curricula for languages⁵, the National Swedish Agency for Education was largely inspired by a landmark publication initiated by the Council of Europe, *Modern languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. A Common European Framework of reference* (1996). The Council’s goal, seen against the backdrop of increased mobility and life long learning, is to contribute to an increased understanding for and greater flexibility in the national educational systems of Europe. Especially where national qualifications are concerned. The latter work is an instrument for planning which constitutes a common base for goals, methods and assessment in language education in Europe. More importantly for the needs of the LingoNet project, it also defines skills and knowledge in terms of levels. Using these as a starting point, *Framework* makes it possible to describe where on the scale a learner is situated and it also serves as a foundation from which to measure the students’/pupils’ progress.

From this point of departure it became interesting to examine the levels, with the Swedish educational system at both school and university level as a background.⁶ We have concentrated on finding correlation with the universities’ A, B and C levels and have for the time being disregarded the schools’ levels. As mentioned previously, the current national curriculum for languages has its point of departure in ‘*Framework*’. Since the Swedish curricula are to be adapted to already existing levels, it is not possible to entirely equate the Swedish system and the European model. Thus, the highest and lowest levels are not to be found in Sweden. We look forward

⁴ Threshold level describes the lowest language level that a person needs to manage the everyday situations that arise when travelling abroad.

⁵ *Language 2000*

⁶ See the Council of Europe’s *Self-assessment Grid*, appendix 1

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with eager anticipation to the results of the work now in progress by the National Agency for Education, to align the Swedish *stages* with the European framework.

With regard to German and French and the academic levels A and B, or basic course and continuation course as they are often called, it is difficult to set a distinct boundary between the skills of basic level and those of the continuation course. Certain basic knowledge must be reached during the A course but a continuous and ongoing process of learning continues well into the following course. Many academic language teachers are of the opinion that the difference is more a question of content than level. We mean to say that the basic course in both languages spans the *Frameworks* B1 to B2 and that the advanced course to some extent reaches C1. In our assessment model for the project, we have refined the model and placed the academic basic course in German and French at level B1, the continuation course at B2. The advanced course and masters course will then be placed at C1 and C2 respectively.

For English, the C course at upper-secondary is placed at the level of B2. C1 and C2 are regarded as being the equivalent to the A and B courses at university level, while the C and D university course are above the levels covered by the '*Framework*' model.

4. Criteria for evaluation – VVV-EKG

To separate the Chaff from the Wheat was one of the most important aims of the project and what distinguished it from similar earlier ventures. It was our aim that the evaluation of web-based resources should be relatively easy to carry out – time is valuable – and the criteria should be easily identifiable for the user. This proved to be easier said than done! Many different factors and questions arose during execution, and given the fact that the web-resources are constantly increasing in number, the process will continue indefinitely. Even if we suggest a model that is easy to remember and initially to apply, when we perform the “VVV-EKG” test, there still remains much to think about. The first two V's have already been considered in sections two and three; below are some additional reflections.

Who (Sw. Vem) is the web site intended for? - Target group

We have previously described the process that led us to our decision to use *Modern languages: Learning, Teaching, and Assessment. A Common European Framework of reference* (1996). It is our opinion that the students'/pupils' expected knowledge at a given level of the different skills is thoroughly and capably described. We are aware that our suggested coupling of the academic levels to the *Framework* is subjective, but we are of the opinion that it provides an excellent point of departure for discussion. The

main advantage of using the *Framework* is that the material is well known and respected in language teaching circles at all levels throughout Europe.

What (Sw. Vad) is the web site about? - Content

As we have already mentioned in the second section, *request list*, we quickly ascertained that there is a distinct lack of balance in the selection of web sites available. Different types of grammatical exercises are common, frequently at a relatively basic level. The question is if it is advisable to limit the number of sites made available to prevent the user being confronted with a confusing multiplicity, which was in fact the main point of the project. This would involve a qualitative overhaul of already existing web sites, which in its turn requires resources... The same goes for the culture bookshelf, which is rather “broad” and would require continual updating. Plausibly, the wheat should increase in quality. The seed that was initially judged to be useful may in the end prove to be just chaff!

There is also a qualitative aspect to the terms *who* and *what*. Is the information on the site relevant, is it suited to the intended purpose? Does the description correctly describe the content? *What* does the web site *really* contain? It is conceivable that the content is biased and conveys a totally different message to the user than that stated. The author of the site perhaps regards the user (*who*) as a target for political propaganda or as a potential customer rather than a student or someone interested in language studies. We have mentioned earlier that *who* could also mean the author of the site, and in this context we became aware of how significant this is. We have, however, not concentrated on identifying the author in this project, even if we do try to retain a critical attitude towards the sources. On the other hand, it has been our ambition that the web sites included on LingoLina’s shelves should have the correct content for the specific target group.

Where (Sw. Var) is the web site? - Address on the Internet

The most natural observation in this context is: “where on the Internet can I find this site”. This is what we mean by the third w. Ronau, Ryan and Stroble state in their evaluation model that “*where* addresses the stability of the information and the included links” (1999, s.261). We have chosen however to follow this line of argument under the heading *Accessibility*, since it is a prerequisite for web searches that the web site is reliable over time. It is certainly extremely related to *where* and in *what environment* the web site is situated. It will remain available for a longer period of time if it is situated in a stable, linguistic, academic environment than if it is situated in a commercial portal which is in a constant state of development and change.

Aesthetics (Sw. Estetik)- the design of the web site

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What does a *good* web site look like? Most people emphasize the fact that it should be clear and simple. It should be easy to find the information sought for, perhaps with an eye-catcher at the top of the page and clear headings. There should be clear and simple instructions as to how to proceed. A lot of text on the page makes it harder to search for information. A structure with references to other pages is preferable if all the proposed information does not fit on the start page. In this case the route should be direct, without time-consuming deviations.

The importance of colours is also often emphasized. They should be pale, restful to the eye and the text should be clearly discernable. White text on a black background is not a good combination for most people. Some, however, consider that strong colours can be used to emphasize certain areas of information, that it on the contrary facilitates reading. A poor expression of this is a confused, jumbled page where everything and nothing catches the eye, for example where there is a patterned background or continually blinking banner! The user will quickly move on to another page.

LingoNet's own virtual environment, the link library LingoLina does not follow this line of thought. The subject experts wished to use the resources of the medium to create a room where it is possible to search for desired web material in peace and quiet – a library in other words. This gave rise to many discussions between the members of the project during LingoLina's creation. Construction is not yet finished, but we hope that we have found a model that with the aid of graphics conveys the image of a library. Additionally, this is combined with the clear principals of the card index system. Unfortunately, the picture takes unnecessarily long to download when using a slow connection!

Quality (Sw. Kvalitet) – an evaluation of the web site

At the beginning of the project we spoke only in terms of *quality*. We tried to create a structure from both *general* and *specific* quality criteria. Among the general criteria for web sites we can mention access, structure and lay-out, the amount of information per page, if it was necessary to scroll down, the download time for graphics, easily accessible search functions etc.

We did not examine the *specific* criteria closely, since we were of the opinion that they differed from area to area. For example, for *vocabulary practice* the context, (though not *fill in the gaps*), subject area, illustrations etc., should all be taken into consideration. For *pronunciation* it should be important to be able to alter speed of speech. At the close of the project we can conclude that these specific quality criteria are still seen as being important, but that we have not been able to thoroughly identify them for LingoLina's users.

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Throughout the project we have often used imagery; everything from *separating the chaff from the wheat* to *all that glitters is not gold*. Where is the image that allowed us to quickly run through the criteria for good and bad web sites? To run an **EKG** test (take an **ECG**) of the web sites gave us the necessary structure. To be able to do it in a **www** environment settled the matter. It helped us to break down the concept of quality into a manageable number of factors.

The most important quality requirement from a learning/training perspective, which is the purpose of the Lingonet project, is that the site can provide the user with knowledge at the correct level. Here however, a deeper discussion taking into consideration the criteria mentioned above is desirable.

The concepts of *authenticity*, *opportunities for discussion* and *variation* will be considered.

Authentic teaching material has existed in traditional language teaching in the form of newspapers, brochures, restaurant menus, interviews and videos etc., for a long time. This material has a motivating effect on language students, who feel that the exercises are “for real”. Internet provides unique opportunities to increase these features. Newspapers can be read online, radio programs can be listened to even after broadcasting time and the medium of TV provides similar opportunities. It can be presumed that the motivational effect will disappear as these features become more common, but the value of being able to use sources that directly reflect the culture of a country will remain.

Some web sites contain *discussion forums*, which if used effectively can contribute to an increased interest in and use of the web site.

By *variation* we mean the construction of the web site. It can simply consist of text, it can be complemented with explanatory graphics or it can also feature elements of both authentic audio and video files. Such variation can contribute positively to learning since it appeals to different aspects of the users’ learning profile. It can, however, also create irritation if it is impossible for some learners to download all the applications.

Feasibility (Sw. Genomförbarhet) – is it easy or difficult to use the web site.

The concept of accessibility is of a practical nature. The web site should:

- be easy to download,
- be easy to print out; too many graphics can make printing difficult,
- contain links to e-mail and other relevant web tools,

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- be presumed to have a reasonable lifespan, be stable, preferably contain information on date of creation/last update,
- contain information on support.

5. All that glitters – the infinite link list

At the time of writing, work is proceeding to construct the virtual environment. This will provide the conditions necessary to be able to easily find the web sites desired. Space for comments to accompany the individual links will also be provided. They will also be classed according to quality with a number of lingon berries (1-5) in a similar fashion to films and books in the media. When the environment is finished, we hope that it will be tolerably simple to insert the links in a suitable place.

One problem during the course of work on the project was that the creation of the *database* was not in phase with the inventory of web sites. With reference to German, for example, the levels are divided into Grundstufe, Mittelstufe and Oberstufe, a division that often already exists for the web sites concerned. It is unfortunately not possible within the framework of the project to compare these levels with the levels of the ‘*Framework*,’ although this is most probably a relatively simple task since Germany actively took part in the work to create the European standard model. The term *reference material* is also mentioned in the database, since when the sorting of links into subjects was carried out, a final inventory of needs had not been performed

Evaluation was also difficult to perform since, to begin with, we had agreed upon quite vague appraisals; *interesting*, *very interesting* or *can be interesting*. As this can be very subjective, much of the material was classed as *can be interesting*. Working alone as opposed to being a member of a team was also difficult. To be able to discuss ideas and values with colleagues is invaluable. There is a great risk of subjectivity for the solitary evaluator and the necessity of common, universally applicable measuring instruments became clear. This was discussed at a workshop in Sweden, organized within the project, and guidelines for co-operation were drawn up. This however, presupposed that a new project application be submitted, for which there was neither the time nor did the participants consider the timing to be suitable. The present scope of the project did not make possible a process whereby the links/web sites collected could be evaluated and classified according to the model finally drawn up.

One difficulty that cannot be regarded as only an initial, teething problem are the frequently wide-ranging worlds that the web pages are situated in. This is not only the case with the portals described below. How is it possible to find your way in these digital worlds, even if they are limited to language learning? And how can you isolate the particular page that you are interested

in? We have not followed a uniform path. In some cases we have quite simply isolated the individual page and stated the actual web address; in other cases we have left it to the user to find the information they desire. Perhaps there is a common thread leading through the site; the author may have had a special purpose that would be destroyed if you abridge it to an individual link. It was not easy to decide and we were in a constant dilemma.

An enormous amount of the material is at the same level. As an example we can mention lists of French verb inflections, supplemented by exercises. However, even in this case where the material is richly varied and there is a vast selection, it can be difficult to limit and select due to the different methods of structuring the material. There is a growing awareness of the variety of learning styles used by learners. If a further revision and expansion of the material were carried out, one aim would be to be able to differentiate within the selection in order to be able to satisfy the needs of different types of learners.

From the previous discussion it is easy to understand that most authors prefer simply to post their links without offering an evaluation (for example simple link lists etc). Sometimes you get the impression that it is a case of the more links the better. Hopefully our project is a step in the right direction, away from simple enumeration, with a clear and straightforward description of the contents of the web site.

During work with the web sites retrieved from the database, or sites that we had previous knowledge of, we could establish that there are different types of web sites and that they are more or less easily managed and comprehensible. A presentation of the different types of links/web sites that we have come across follows, although we are well aware that the dividing lines are blurred. In our search, and in our commentaries presented below, we of course limit ourselves to such material that concerns the project, in other words, exercises and reference material in English, German and French. We also allow the classification to be followed by web addresses that are at the time of publishing fully functional. We can of course not safeguard against the fact that some of the links will eventually become inactive. The examples are taken from the German inventory. We would also like to point out that there are no value judgements in the following information.

5.1. Portals

Portals are the most difficult source to handle when searching for links. It is true that you can find an infinite amount of information; however they are very difficult to navigate through, and it is easy to get lost, though not necessarily literally. It could be that you find something interesting that was not necessarily what you were looking for, and lose track of time! With

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language learning as the point of departure, both exercises and a great deal of reference material can be found. *German for Travellers* <http://www.germanfortravellers.com> is an example of a portal where you can find much information with the emphasis on travel (travel bookings, traditions, food, culture, language learning with exercises). You can also order books and videos. The information is aimed at the English-speaking world.

5.2. Specified web sites

These are aimed at schools, students or teachers and often contain an abundance of information. It is however necessary to penetrate past the initial homepage, which often contains a rich variety of other material. The web sites of *The College of William and Mary* <http://www.wm.edu> and *Studienkolleg für ausländische Studierende* vid *Technische Universität Darmstad* <http://www.stk.tu-darmstadt.de/jcal/index.htm> are examples of such sites but we have chosen to present two other sites in more detail. The first of these, *InterDeutsch* <http://www.interdeutsch.de> shows that it is possible to learn a language in an enjoyable and amusing manner and still be effective! It contains a vast selection of exercises – grammar, semantics, phonetics, language games etc. These exercises are already divided into the German system's Grundstufe, Mittelstufe, Oberstufe which makes them eminently suitable for self-study even before they are included in LingoLinus library!

Even *Deutsch-Online* <http://www.deutsch-online.com> is suitable for self-study. There is a writing workshop there where students can learn how and in how many different ways a text can be created by for example, narrating the main points, adapting original texts, fantasy stories etc. Students can send in their own stories and have them corrected and commented on by other students. In this way they can continue the writing process themselves. You can also find short video films there, with the most unexpected content that can generate reflection and creative thinking. There are tests for self-evaluation, feedback, chat/ exchange with other students, tandem learning etc. Teachers can develop their own courses and exercises by means of a data bank of information.

The Goethe-Institute's <http://www.goethe.de> links are interesting in that they have “dual” pages. The same page addresses both teachers and students but of course with a different design. There is for example, a text containing hints for the teacher on how he or she should prepare the task in question. The student can see questions on the text. This material presupposes that the teacher and the student work together on the Internet.

5.3. Pure link lists

You can search for desired web sites yourself. It could be any type of exercise but also what we call reference material. Link lists of this type can be quite

different from each other in appearance. Some quite simply list all the links while others provide comments about the web sites. There are even lists that divide links into different subject areas without commenting on content. Finally, there is the fourth category of link lists that help the user by providing both introduction and comments on the sites.

5.4. Information sites

This type of web site provides us with exercises or reference material. However, if you are searching purely for information about for example, official institutions, newspapers and TV, are looking for a weather forecast, or perhaps need some kind of tourist information etc., there are specialised web sites created by the organisations responsible like *Die Bundesregierung* <http://www.bundesregierung.de>, *Die Zeit* <http://www.zeti.de> *tagesschau.de* <http://www.tagesschau.de> *Arte* <http://www.arte-tv.com> *PersonalR@dio* (radio listening) <http://gmd.de> *Juma* (newspaper for teenagers), <http://www.juma.de> *Das Projekt Gutenberg-DE* (literature, where whole works are available with information on the authors) <http://www.gutenberg2000.de>. This type of site is of course eminently suitable for teaching and training. The only limitation is the teachers' creativity! News programs are an excellent point of departure for diverse exercises. Listening comprehension can be combined with reading comprehension; a particular theme can be followed over time. The greatest advantage that Internet provides in this case, is that the information is always up to date.

It is important to emphasize the usability of these sites. Even if they are not directly intended for teaching, they are a rich source to be utilized. Let the good web sites containing exercises serve as inspiration for how to use the purely informational sites!

5.5. Contrastive language sites

One type of web site is interesting from a special viewpoint, namely contrastive language sites; sites created by e.g. Frenchmen who have German as a foreign language as their goal. You can find contrastive exercises which are glaringly absent from the majority of web sites previously listed. One example is the web pages about *Grammar of German* from *The College of William and Mary* <http://www.wm.edu/CAS/modlang/gasmit/grammar/grammnu.htm>. As well as English/German there is also English/Czech. You can also find German as a foreign language, at beginner's level both in Italian *Istituto comprensivo di Tavagnacco* <http://www.bdp.it/ictavagnacco> and in Turkish, *Karl Kirst - Homepage* <http://www.karl-kirst.de/tuerkei>. These sites are perhaps not as important for our purposes but they should be included in an overview of the different types of foreign language web sites available.

Tier 2 – case study - All that glitters is not gold

It is our hope that LingoNet's virtual seeding LingoLina will into a tall, healthy and productive tree, green and flowering in every season.

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		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can understand familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided. I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

