Design of a Checklist for Evaluating Language Learning Websites

Elena Moreno Fuentes
Jesús J. Risueño Martínez
Centro Universitario SAFA Úbeda
(adscrito a la Universidad de Jaén)

ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the creation of an evaluation tool which provides a thorough assessment of EFL learning websites. After analysing different frameworks for assessing EFL sites, we will define a clear model based on a set of criteria committed to assess EFL learning websites. Finally, we will propose our own evaluation checklist for surveying the nature of such sites comprising some key items for analysis such as multimedia, interactivity, educational content and more especially those related communicative aspects included such as computer mediated communication (CMM).
Keywords: Websites evaluation, CALL, web-based language learning tools, evaluation tools, checklists

El diseño de una lista de comprobación para evaluar sitios web para el aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera

RESUMEN: El objetivo del presente trabajo es la creación de una herramienta que permita una evaluación exhaustiva de páginas web para el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera. Después de un profundo análisis de las distintas tendencias a la hora de evaluar sitios web, nos centraremos en definir un modelo claro basado en un conjunto de criterios que permita evaluar distintos sitios web para el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, para finalmente presentar nuestra propia propuesta de análisis de los elementos clave de una web diseñada para tal fin en la que se incluyen una serie de ítems clave tales como el uso de multimedia, interactividad, contenido educativo y en especial, aquellos estrechamente relacionados con aspectos comunicativos tales como la comunicación a través del ordenador.
Palabras clave: Evaluación de sitios web, ELAO, herramientas online, evaluación, checklists.

1. Introduction

The web use is a paramount issue in recent Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) research and application. Due to Internet's expansion, the amount of sites has quickly spread in a short time. In fact, there are a great number of sites for language learning and teaching, and an enormous amount of information available online. In this concern, it has become essential to distinguish between training and self-governing learning (Kartal, 2010). More

precisely, we can state that a wide range of training web applications is easily accessible, allowing learners to skip the imperatives of time, distance and limits. We can mention, for instance, learning gateways, e-learning stages (LMS: Learning Management System), online journals, learning item distribution centres, wikis, instructive interpersonal organizations and virtual groups. Consequently it has become problematic for language teachers and learners to find quality websites matching their needs. This last fact claims the necessity of a Web assessment framework, including a rundown of valuable websites, which teachers and learners can discover and use productively.

In this paper, we will deal with the use of language learning sites and try to present a model for language learning websites classification and assessment.

Alongside this research, we will deal with the analysis of different frameworks for assessing EFL sites. Our main focus in this study is to investigate and define a clear model by means of a checklist committed to assess websites available for learning English. To achieve this, we will analyse the literature on the issue and propose to characterize an assessment model, in light of an arrangement of criteria for surveying the nature of such sites.

There are many online tools for learning languages and many sites that have been developed exclusively for hosting reasons. However, there is short knowledge about evaluating websites for language teaching. When new technologies, such as the internet, are included in the classroom, its users should be aware of their prospects and limitations. Effective and adequate use of technology to be ensured in education requires adopting evaluation systems for computers, software, and activities. Tools for the evaluation of educational software have been produced, as well as a system for the assessment of English as a Second Language (ESL) web activities. On the contrary, very few systems have been created specifically for the assessment of online language-learning resources. In this sense, there is a need for clarifying an evaluation system for web-based material, in order for instructors and learners to easily and effectively assess its quality. Methodological approaches and evaluation criteria for online resources are closely related.

Recently, the need of websites assessment has been considered and experienced by a few analysts. Kung and Chuo (2002) researched the potential part of English-as-a-Second/Foreign-Language (ESL/EFL) sites to supplement in-class direction. Murray and Reagan (2003) examined assets for learners and instructors and gave a rundown of English-as-a-Second-Language reading material friendly sites. Rifkin (2003) displayed principles for evaluating language learning programming and Sites. Nicholas, Debski and Lagerberg (2004) conceived a framework for learners to work on spelling independently through an online apparatus, which tested the learners' execution on individual tenets of spelling. Also Smidt and Hegelheimer (2004) examined how credible web-conveyed video can advise ESL online direction and improve the increase of vocabulary and listening appreciation. Kongrith and Maddux (2005) concentrated on the web Learning and second-language procurement. Hampel and Stickler (2005) plot a structure for coach preparing, beginning with a brief outline of advantages and difficulties for online language mentors.

Hampel (2006) put forward a structure for the advancement of assignments in a synchronous online environment utilized for language learning and instructing. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) examined the ease of use of e-learning sites, concentrating on the case of

remote language learning. Son (2006) reported the after-effects of a study that inspected an online talk gathering built up for a CALL course and examined examples of collaborations created through online examination and also considered members' states of mind toward the computer mediated communication (CMC). Yip and Kwan (2006) reported a piece of research about internet amusements in vocabulary learning for some college learners. Zapata and Sagarra (2007) inspected the impacts of an online exercise manual and a paper exercise manual on L2 vocabulary acquisition. As we can see, there has been a wide framework for research on the issue of websites assessment although no clear tools have been developed assessing language learning websites.

2. Theoretical background

Many researchers have claimed the need of websites evaluation. In fact, Dragulanescu (2002) mentioned that it is paramount to assess the quality of web pages and to evaluate if those fulfil our requirements and Gottwald (2002) gathered the content of websites created for second language research and mentioned the sections requiring improvement.

Kung and Chuo (2002) concentrated on the main role of English-as-a-Second/Foreign-Language (ESL/EFL) webpages to help and give support in class whilst Rifkin (2003) presented standards for evaluating language-learning software and sites. It was in 2003 when Murray and Reagan (2003) provided teachers with a list of English-as-a-Second-Language textbook companion websites.

Several scholars concur that the Internet has significant potential in showing and learning languages (Kartal, 2005; Wang and Coleman, 2009). The Web specifically, offers a worldwide database of true materials that can improve language learning and showing (Son, 2005). Countless language learning sites are these days accessible on the web. Kartal (2005) has proposed a straightforward order that recognizes two sorts of language learning sites: those intended with the end goal of language skills (reading, writing and listening) and those that deal with language areas (grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, culture and civilization).

In fact, Ababtain and Khan (2017) defend that the usability plays a key role on the user satisfaction with the website. As we will later describe, there are many usability factors that need to be considered in the early stages of website design.

We however ought to consider that not all materials are just as equally valid or reliable (Son, 2005) and some language learning sites are not generally of good quality. On this, Kartal (2005) says that most language learning sites do exclude all the advantages provided by the Internet. He includes that these offer a restricted pedagogical methodology which is constantly decreased to simply presenting auxiliary self-correcting activities (for example, multiple choice questions, true or false items, and fill in the gaps). Still in accordance to Kartal, in these sites, pedagogical scenarios and learning theories are not reflected and goals, levels and the target audience are not mentioned (Kartal, 2005).

Subsequently, language learning sites evaluation, in light of suitable quality criteria, gets to be important to guide engineers in planning and making these sites, and to manage both instructors and learners in their mission of finding helpful and dependable sites that address their issues.

2.1. Three approaches to CALL evaluation

Levy and Stockwell (2006) have distinguished three distinctive sorts of CALL software assessment: assessment driven by checklists or forms, evaluation guided by methodological frameworks for language teaching, and evaluation linked to second language acquisition (SLA) theory and research-based criteria.

Regardless the fact that a methodological approach could not coincide with a checklist one, as indicated by Hubbard (1996) these methodologies are not similar in two points. Firstly, methodological frameworks are focused on characterizing as opposed to assessing in their form; they are entirely made to depict and evaluate viewpoints outside technology, more precisely, features identified with language learning and teaching.

In this sense, we can state that methodological frameworks allow teachers to make top to bottom assessment on a detailed analysis of items through description. Hubbard (1988) presents the main criteria for CALL assessment, creating three language teaching methods proposed by Richards and Rodgers (1982, 2001), to be specific approach, design, and methods, into "teacher fit," "learner fit," and "operational description" individually, and including "technical preview" to these three criteria that will be later described.

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out the issue that SLA-based approach is especially based on SLA theories and it exploits findings from non-CALL research to adjust them to CALL. In fact, Chapelle (2001) assesses and describes CALL software as well as she pinpoints activities and learners' improvement. More precisely, she describes the standards for assessing CALL material emphasising on concrete elements, similar to those present in any SLA theory. Some of these are: the purpose of the task, situation-specific argument, judgemental analysis of software and tasks, empirical analysis of learners' performance, and most importantly, language learning potential. Taking them into account, Chapelle (2001:55) suggests the following six criteria: (a) language learning potential, (b) learner fit, (c) meaning focus, (d) authenticity, (e) positive impact, and (f) practicality. Given the space limitation, this paper cannot take these in detail, but they are compatible with criteria both in checklist approaches and methodological frameworks in some respects; criteria (b), for example, seems to be consistent with the concept of "learner fit" in Hubbard's framework.

2.1.1 Checklists

Checklists have been available from the earliest phases of CALL and are extensively used. Commonly, a checklist introduces a progression of inquiries or categories for judgment so the evaluator should give a response as a reaction to all the information presented through the reviewing procedure. Numerous checklists essentially request a yes/no sign or a response along a Likert scale. Others, in spite of the "checklist" name, additionally incorporate space for open-ended remarks after particular prompts. Published checklists have been criticized for various reasons, including centring too intensely on innovation to the detriment of teaching method and for being biased and restrictive (Hubbard, 1988). Then again, Susser (2001) gives a reply to numerous of those reactions and constructs a persuading case for the value of CALL assessment checklists. The value of his support is that the issue is not with the idea of checklists but instead with specific instantiations of them. There are various illustrations of software checklists accessible online for those inspired by using this choice.

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has an exceptionally respected general software assessment structure for educators accessible for download. A sample of a checklist that shows a solid consideration of language learning research discoveries is one housed on the website of the National Foreign Language Resource Centre in Hawaii that was grown particularly for interactive media language learning programming. A checklist by a groups of students at Rice University (Barlow, Garrett, Nimri and Peterson, 2002) based on a methodological system is additionally accessible on the web.

Finally, as Susser (2001) notes, checklists do not need to be acknowledged in their present condition in any case, so those can be adjusted and redesigned for specific purposes. They have the limit to give educators a helpful instrument for perceiving the type of components that make up an adequate application and for activating reflection on some of their own assumptions about CALL. In this sense, among the numerous sources for designing items on a checklist, we can here distinguish between methodological frameworks and SLA-based approaches.

2.1.2 Methodological frameworks

Methodological frameworks are compatible with a few checklists yet vary in two noteworthy ways. To start with, methodological frameworks endeavour to be to a great extent descriptive rather than judgmental in their structure. Second, they try generally to join the language and learning implications that happen outside of innovation. As noted in Hubbard (1988: 52):

> The framework approach to courseware evaluation is different from others. … A framework in this context means an integrated description of the components of something—in this case CALL materials—with respect to a particular goal—in this case evaluation. Rather than asking a specific set of questions, a framework provides a tool through which an evaluator can create his or her own questions or develop some other evaluation scheme.

Until the mid-1980s, assessment had generally been conceptualized as far as checklists and methodology acquired from general instruction and was deficient with regards to a fitting language learning focus. In any case, in 1985, Phillips offered a structure that unequivocally connected to language teaching methodology. It included categories for the CALL software types but also portrayed dimensions such as language difficulty, learner focus (i.e., skill area—listening, speaking, reading and writing), and language centre (i.e., grammar, vocabulary and discourse) that were critical to the language learning character of the programme.

Hubbard (1988) extended Phillips' framework and incorporated it with one created autonomously by Richards and Rodgers (1982) for portraying and investigating language teaching methods. Richards and Rodgers characterized language teaching methods in terms of three illustrative classes:

(a) approach, or the hidden theories of linguistics and language learning accepted by the method;
(b) design, reliable with the assumptions of the method and including the syllabus

model, general and particular goals of the method, and the roles of learners, teachers and materials;

(c) procedure, or the classroom procedures and exercises through which the design is figured out.

Hubbard (1988) adjusted the approach, design and procedures into classifications depicting the key components of assessment and renamed them into learner fit, teacher fit and operational description. The subsequent framework turned into the evaluation module in a proposed methodological system that likewise included modules for courseware improvement and implementation (Hubbard, 1996). A variant of this framework stays at the centre of the audit procedure for the CALICO Journal (Burston, 2003).

2.1.3. SLA-based approaches

Given that teaching languages with software is a type of language teaching, another sensible technique for creating software assessment checklists is to construct them based on suggestions from theory or research in SLA. Thus, this approach takes discoveries from non-CALL areas and translates them into the CALL context.

Underwood (1984) displayed a case for a communicative approach to CALL taking into account generalizations from research and communicative theory of the time. In fact, the author displayed 13 criteria describing communicative CALL turned into an accepted assessment checklist. Egbert and Hanson-Smith (1999) organised the sections in an altered volume on CALL around eight speculations for ideal language learning situations, again giving field for a research-based evaluation design, despite the fact that their work was not particularly designed for evaluation itself.

The most ambitious venture in this field to date is represented by the work of Ditty Chapelle in the field of what she has called CASLA—computer applications in second language acquisition—which incorporates CALL as well as computer-based language testing and computer-based SLA research. Chapelle (2001) offers an arrangement of five standards for assessing CALL:

1. CALL evaluation is situation-specific;
2. CALL should be evaluated both judgmentally and empirically;
3. CALL evaluation criteria should come from instructed SLA theory and research;
4. the criteria should be applied relative to the purpose of the CALL task; and
5. the central consideration should be language learning potential.

In accordance with the previous standards, Chapelle proposes an arrangement of six general assessment criteria for deciding the adequacy of a given CALL undertaking for supporting language acquisition. These criteria show up at first in Chapelle (2001) furthermore, are repeated in a late assessment study by Jamieson, Chapelle, and Preiss (2004: 94).

1. Language learning potential: The degree of opportunity present for beneficial focus on form;
2. Learner fit: The amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate conditions given learner characteristics;

3.   Meaning focus: The extent to which learners' attention is directed toward the meaning of the language;
4.   Authenticity: The degree of correspondence between the learning activity and target language activities of interest to learners out of the classroom;
5.   Positive Impact: The positive effects of the CALL activity on those who participate in it; and
6.   Practicality: The adequacy of resources to support the use of the CALL activity

It is important to note that Chapelle's framework is compatible with the methodological system and checklist methodologies portrayed before. For instance, Chapelle's idea of learner fit can be identified with that of Hubbard (1988), and the greater part of her other criteria are illustrative of a task-based, interactionist language teaching approach that is liable to give a decent "teacher fit" for some present language instructors.

2.2. Assessing language learning sites

As we have just seen, quite a few studies have concentrated on assessing language learning sites. For that, they have characterized an arrangement of criteria to survey the nature of these websites. Nelson (1998) proposes a framework for assessing ESL sites which is separated into four sections: Purpose (intended goals, uses, and audiences), Pedagogy (instructions, aspects of multimedia, interactivity, communicativeness), Design/Construction (general web design principles such as appearance, navigation, load speed, etc.), and Description/Other (general description and relevant comments about the site).

On the other hand, Kelly (2000) proposes the accompanying rundown of focuses that ought to be considered when outlining a site for ESL students:

1.   usability by a wide audience as possible
2.   speed of loading and displaying
3.   ease of use (ease of navigation and reading)
4.   usefulness (the site should fulfil a need)
5.   integrity and professionalism (honesty, accuracy, respect of copyrights, indicating the date of last update, a contact address, …)
6.   wise and effective use of "cutting edge technology"

Kelly (2000) also recommends making the site friendly and fun to use, and worrying about the minority who use less powerful computers, older browsers and have slow Internet access.

Son (2005) presents a model for webpage classification and assessment by reporting the aftereffects of an evaluation of selected English as a second/remote language (ESL/EFL) sites utilizing this model. Son's model depends on 15 criteria covering:

1.   Purpose (is the purpose clear? is the content in line with the purpose?)
2.   Accuracy (is the content accurate?)
3.   Currency (is the Website current? is the Website updated regularly?)
4.   Authority (is there information on the author?)
5.   Loading speed

6. Usefulness (does the Website provide useful information and language activities?)
7. Organization (is the Website well organized and presented?)
8. Navigation (is the Website easy to navigate?)
9. Reliability (is the Website free of bugs, dead links, breaks?)
10. Authenticity (are the learning materials authentic?)
11. Interactivity
12. Feedback
13. Multimedia
14. Communication (can the user communicate with real people on-line through the Website?)
15. Integration (can the learning materials be integrated into a curriculum? does the content fit with curricular goals?).

The work exhibited by Kartal (2010) addresses developing outside language learning sites, and proposes an arrangement of attributes of an appropriate site:

– Physical characteristics that are predominantly identified with the site outline and constitute its general structure. They incorporate a proper decision of hues, an unmistakably sorted out parts and segments with simple move between them, the capacity to utilize online lexicons or some different projects in concordance with the webpage exercises and activities, the capacity to discover different materials identified with etymological subjects or abilities.
– Contextual characteristics that for the most part identify with the website's elements content. The writer (Kartal, 2010) claims that accessible materials ought to be of several types (composed, visual, sound), proper for the concerned level, subject, or type/sort. They ought to be forward and bona fide and bolstered by extraneous projects and devices, (for example, web indexes, daily papers, magazines …). Learners ought to have the capacity to get to tweaked assets and get feedback on their exercises.
– Pedagogical characteristics that add to the learning and showing procedure with respect to the utilization of instructive systems and methodologies.

With the end goal of breaking down and assessing a grammar site, Sabri (2010) proposes a blended assessment approach, that depends on both, a framework of assessment criteria and a pragmatic ease of use test of the site, alluding to two methods: heuristic and exact. The fundamental segments considered in this assessment methodology are: website description, website ergonomy (interface, navigation; learning path), usability test (type of difficulties encountered while running tasks), complementary tools (dictionaries, translators, etc.).

We should additionally take note of the fact that few appraisal networks of language learning sites were created and are accessible online. Among these grids, we can refer to the sample of Perrot (2001), who proposes to consider three viewpoints: site presentation (general features of the site), interface analysis (quality of content and quality of navigation) and pedagogical analysis (analysis of activities, types of exercises and error processing models).

The models here above presented are diverse. However, they converge on numerous viewpoints and share several features in common: they all contemplate every aspect in its way and with distinctive degrees of point of interest the fundamental standards of ergonomics and HCI (Human Computer Interaction), instructive angles and components of intelligence.

3. An evaluation model for assessing and designing english language learning websites

All the previous models reviewed above may supplement one another, and may likewise be improved by adding extra quality criteria. In the next section, we propose an evaluation model that we plan to use in the revision of a set of English language learning websites as a tool for students to select the most adequate resource.

3.1. Criteria for the development of a website evaluation checklist

As design and evaluation are complementary to each other, some design features can be applied to the evaluation of sites or pages. Bell (1998) suggests some guidelines for creating an effective web site:

1. Know your goals
2. Keep it simple
3. Borrow with honour;
4. Provide context;
5. Don't assume knowledge on the user's part;
6. Don't assume technology on the user's part;
7. Test your pages; and
8. Keep your pages up to date.

Kelly (2000) also suggests these instructions for designing an appropriate site for ESL students:

1. Make your site usable by everyone if possible;
2. Make your site as fast as possible;
3. Make your site easy to use;
4. Make your site useful;
5. Maintain Integrity. Be professional;
6. Make your site friendly and fun to use;
7. Use 'cutting edge technology' wisely and effectively;
8. Remember that what you think is true may not be true; and
9. Worry about the minority who use less powerful computers, use older browsers and have slow Internet access.

Apart from these pieces of advice, there is a wide range of sites indicating criteria for evaluating web resources. From critical analysis of this information, a list of evaluation criteria was made and incorporated into a language learning website review form (Son, 2005). Son's review form asks for general information such as the title of the site, its URL, language activities/skills and target audience and a brief description. The evaluation section of the form contains 15 criteria to which reviewers highlight the site to be "Very Unsatisfactory",

"Unsatisfactory", "Uncertain", "Satisfactory" or "Very Satisfactory". The criteria cover:

1. Purpose (i.e., Is the purpose clear? Is the content in line with the purpose? Is the Website appropriate for its targeted learner?)
2. Accuracy (i.e., Is the content accurate? Are spelling and grammar accurate?)
3. Currency (i.e., Is the Website current? Is the Website updated regularly?)
4. Authority (i.e., Is there information on the author? Is the author well-recognized for his or her work?)
5. Loading speed (i.e., Does the Website download fast? Do the content pages download efficiently?)
6. Usefulness (i.e., Does the Website provide useful information? Are the language activities or tasks useful?)
7. Organization (i.e., Is the Website well organised and presented? Is the Website interesting to look at and explore? Are screen displays effective?)
8. Navigation (i.e., Is the Website easy to navigate? Are on-screen instructions easy to follow? Is it easy to retrieve information? Are hyperlinks given properly?)
9. Reliability (i.e., Is the Website free of bugs and breaks? Is the Website free of dead links?)
10. Authenticity (i.e., Are the learning materials authentic? Are authentic materials provided in appropriate contexts?)
11. Interactivity (i.e., Is the Website interactive? Are methods for user input effectively employed?)
12. Feedback (i.e., Is feedback on learner responses encouraging? Is error handling meaningful and helpful?)
13. Multimedia (i.e., Does the Website make effective use of graphics, sound and colour? Is the level of audio quality, the scale of graphics or video display appropriate for language learning?)
14. Communication (i.e., Can the user communicate with real people on-line through the Website? Is on-line help available?)
15. Integration (i.e., Can the learning materials be integrated into a curriculum? Does the content fit with curricular goals?). (Son, 2005: 218-219)

The form also asks reviewers to give an overall rating, from five options: Very Poor (Not recommended at all), Poor (Not appropriate), Adequate (Acceptable with reservation), Good (Appropriate for use), and Excellent (Highly recommended). Finally, there is space for additional comments and the reviewers are asked to sign and date the form.

3.2. A proposal of an evaluation checklist for ESL websites

To create our evaluation model, we depended on both an exploratory examination of current language learning sites, and on the literature review as has been presented previously.

The checklist we have designed considers general standards such as ergonomics, linguistic and pedagogical viewpoints. In fact, we do not recognise differences among webs which are specifically devoted to foreign language learning (FL), second foreign language learning (SFL) or native speaker language (NSL) though we are aware that methodological approaches

vary from one circumstance to another. The proposed checklist is general and subsequently, can be utilized for evaluating diverse sorts of language learning sites. In a future work, we wish to specify the model and adjust it to distinctive learning circumstances relying upon whether the objective language is either FL or SFL or NSL.

The proposed model draws on works considered above and especially, on the works of Son (2005) and Kartal (2010). In this sense, some of the items have been modified, as presented next:

– We have reorganized the assessment criteria into a wider model that could be employed to assess any sort of language learning site.
– We have included some other criteria in relation to communication aspects such as the use of CMC (Computer Mediated communication) tools and any others helping the use of speaking skill through social interaction (forums, chats, videoconferencing, etc.)

Our model is in this way sorted out into nine areas, and it is presented below:

1. **General site information:** this area records an arrangement of important data that ought to be plainly determined on the learning webpage, for example: target audience (general/restricted), target level (elementary, intermediate, etc.), target language learning (FL/SFL/NSL), interface language (monolingual, bilingual, several languages), date of site creation, date of last update, designer details, contact address, information on users (number of guests/number of registered members, etc.), website rating by learners, website rating by teachers, internet users opinions.
2. **Language skills and components:** here, we determine the motivation behind the site regarding language abilities, exercises and areas of language: reading, listening, speaking, writing, integrated skills, grammar, phonetics, vocabulary and other elements.
3. **Educational material:** this area deals with instructive materials that are accessible on the site: lessons, downloadable files, games, interactive activities on flash, worksheets, tests, self- correcting exercises, etc.
4. **Multimedia use:** this area incorporates the diverse sorts of resources: audio, videos, songs, texts, images, mind maps, animation, flash, links, etc.
5. **Interactivity:** in this section, we include aspects permitting us to evaluate the interactivity of the site such as if there exists methodological or pedagogical guidance, if there are some guidance and clarifications, feedback, test feedback, etc.
6. **Communication:** this section deals with the diverse interchanges offered by the learning site: chats, CMC tools, videoconference, emails, forums, social networks, etc.
7. **Aid tools and linguistic resources:** in this area, we will analyse those elements related to the learning process that are helpful for students while using the website. For example, the existence of links to other sites, access to dictionaries (monolingual and bilingual), conjugators, translators, e-books, etc.

8. **Website ergonomics:** this area assesses the site's quality ergonomics. It incorporates a few criteria, for example, colours harmony, textual style (fonts) and readability, general structure and organisation, simplicity of access, loading speed, shapes, menus, etc.

9. **Content quality:** This area deals with assessing the site's content. It is formed by the next criteria: usefulness of content and activities, adequacy to level and type of learners, accuracy, design flexibility/modifiability by teachers, reliability (dead links, banners, bugs, etc.)

All these elements have been summarised so as to facilitate the evaluation of the items. Moreover, we have also elaborated an online tool including all the items for the evaluation. The purpose of creating this online checklist is mainly to facilitate later the data gathering. Thanks to this Google Drive form, after filling in all the fields the data is transformed into an Excel sheet where researchers can analyse responses. The checklist can be retrieved online in the following URL: https://docs.google.com/a/fundacionsafa. es/forms/d/1wTKovt3tdCJK4c2OHuskc6naR5afYGgHnBlngqquBtg/viewform.

Our checklist has been previously validated by expert judges (taking into account the general adequacy of the instrument with what it intends to measure, whether the range scale proposed to answer the questions is adequate, if the wording of the items is correct and if the number of items is sufficient, whether there is any question which is not necessary or if there is any question missing in each section or dimension).

4. Conclusion

The different criteria taken into the account in the design of the tool were assessed thanks to a checklist resulting from the literature search conducted by researchers. The different sections evaluated were: general site information, language skills and components use, educational material, multimedia use, interactivity, communication, aid tools and linguistic resources, website ergonomics and content quality. This checklist in its final form has been presented in detail. Using this model, we were able to make an evaluation of the current state of English language learning websites.

In connection to the creation of the checklist and specifically with the approach of the descriptors and their relation to the communicative approach, we can say that it was hard at the beginning to gather indicators that proved the validity of the websites according to methodological approach, linguistic accuracy and technological proficiency. In this sense, the literature on the topic was checked in order to define an appropriate tool able to measure the parameters required by this research.

Firstly, Kartal (2005) proposes a straightforward order that recognizes two sorts of language learning sites: those intended with the end goal of language skills (reading, writing and listening) and those that deal with language areas (grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, culture and civilization). Later, Son (2005) presents a model for webpages classification and assessment by reporting the aftereffects of an evaluation of selected English as a second/

remote language (ESL/EFL) sites using this model. With this in mind and following Son (2005) and Kartal (2010), we have created our evaluation checklist. What makes it significant is the reorganization of the assessment criteria into a wider model that could be used to assess any sort of language learning site. Moreover, we have also included some other criteria in relation to communication aspects such as the use of CMC tools and any other tools helping the use of the speaking skill through social interaction (forums, chats, videoconferencing, etc.).

In fact, we do consider that the application of this checklist to some of most used websites by language learners could be a key element so as to be able to classify those sites into different categories according to pedagogic needs. According to Cabrejas (2013), there is vast a number of language learning sites that need to be somehow assessed following not only technological criteria but also by means of a deep analysis on the field on applied linguistics.

Moreover, the application of the mentioned checklist could serve as a basis for creating a wider ranking with around fifty websites classified according to those parameters. In this sense, further research in the area will prove necessary so as to appreciate the limitations of the questionnaire and further implications.

The proposed checklist does not distinguish among websites which are specifically devoted to foreign language learning (FL), second foreign language learning (SFL) or native speaker language (NSL) learning, even though methodological approaches differ from a situation to another. Therefore, we have to improve this model, by assigning weights to criteria depending on whether the target language is either FL or SFL or NSL, in order to take into account that some specific criteria can be more significant (and thus have a major impact on the site quality) when the language is taught as a FL or SFL, whereas they are less important (and therefore significantly less affecting the site quality), if the language is taught as a NSL.

In relation to this latter idea, we also believe that a questionnaire could have been created for learners to evaluate some websites. In this sense, we could have checked if our perceptions from the checklist coincided with those regarding learners' perspective. Our future plan is to extend this evaluation to a wide set of learners asking them to evaluate websites using the 9 sections in the checklist.

Finally, recommendations for future research suggest the creation of a checklist that points to the evaluation of mobile learning apps facilitating the learning of English as a foreign language in the same way as we have done with websites.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX

An evaluation model for assessing English language learning websites (EXC=excellent; PROF.= proficient; PART. PROF.= partially proficient; SAT: satisfactory; PART. SAT.= partially satisfactory; UNSAT.= unsatisfactory.)

WEBSITE TITLE							
URL							
DATE OF REVISION							
	EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UNSAT (0)	SCORE
Target Audience							
Target Level							
Target Language Learning							
Multilingual Interface							
Date of creation and updating							
Author details							
Contact address							
Information on users							
Rating by learners							
Rating by teachers							
Opinions by users							
	EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UNSAT. (0)	SCORE
Reading focus							
Listening focus							
Speaking focus							
Writing focus							
Integrated skills							
Grammar							
Spelling							
Phonetics							
Vocabulary							
Culture related activities							
Other linguistic elements							

		EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UNSAT. (0)	SCORE
Lessons								
Downloadable materials								
Exercises	Multiple Choice							
	True/False							
	Fill in the blanks							
	Drop down menus							
	Click							
	Drag and drop							
	Text rewriting							
	Interactive							
	Other							
Learning games								
Self-correcting tests								
Worksheets								
Interactive activities on flash								
Other								
		EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UNSAT. (0)	SCORE
Audio								
Video								
Images								
Texts								
Mind maps								
Animation								
Flash								
Links								

	EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UN- SAT. (0)	SCORE
Pedagogical help and explanations							
Personalised guidance							
Exercises feedback							
Tests feedback							

		EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UN- SAT. (0)	SCORE
CMC tools	**Chats**							
	Email							
	Forums							
	Videoconference							
	Social networks							
	Other							

		EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UN- SAT. (0)	SCORE
Dictionaries	**Monolingual**							
	Bilingual							
	Multilingual							
	Synonyms							
Translators								
Conjugators								
E-books								
Tutorials								

	EXC. (5)	PROF. (4)	PART. PROF. (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UN-SAT. (0)	SCORE
Textual style (fonts)							
Color harmony							
Legibility							
Organisation							
Ease of access and navigation							
Ease of use							
Pages load							
Accessible menus							
Online help							
Navigation aids in place							
Balanced use of graphics and text							
	EXC (5)	PROF (4)	PART. PRO (3)	SAT. (2)	PART. SAT. (1)	UN-SAT. (0) SCO-RE	SCORE
Adequacy to level							
Usefulness							
Reliability	Dead links						
	Compatibility (browsers)						
	Bugs						
	Banners and ads						
	Spelling errors						
	Overusing external links						
Accuracy							
Design flexibility/modifiability by teachers							