

Business English 2.0 : A Survey of Useful, Effective & Free Business English Resources from the Internet

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Abstract

ウェブ2.0は人々のフィールドを平等にし、ユーザーは自身のコンテンツを作り、企業は低価格化や一部の無料提供を強いられた。ビジネスマンがウェブ2.0を使って企業努力をしている間、一般人はインターネットからの無限なる無料情報とリソースの恩恵を受けてきた。この論文の目的は、インターネットでの膨大な数のビジネス英語リソースについて調べ、高等専門学校生に最大の利益をもたらすものを指し示すことである。特に、ニュースウェブサイト、他の教育ウェブサイト、ブログ、ウィキ、RPG（ロールプレイングゲーム）、株式市場シミュレータ、およびポッドキャストを取り上げる。さらに、教育場面における有用性、研究への有効性、および費用の3点についても考察する。

Introduction

Web 1.0 introduced us to websites and e-commerce, companies generated most of the content and we (the consumers) often paid a hefty price for the services. Web 2.0 leveled the playing field, we (the users) could now generate our own content, and companies were forced to lower their prices or provide them for free. While those in business are still struggling with how to make money from Web 2.0, those studying business and language are blessed with an endless supply of information and resources.

The purpose of this paper is to survey the Internet's vast number of business English resources, and highlight those which will be of the most benefit to students at the Toyama National College of Maritime Technology. The survey looks at news websites, language-learning websites, blogs, wikis, RPGs [role-playing games], stock market simulators and podcasts. Focus will be on three points: their usefulness in an educational setting, their effectiveness for study and their cost (nothing).

Traditional News sources

Almost all major newspapers and magazines offer both partial [free] and full [usually requires a paid subscription] online access to their information. Those of particular relevance to business are *The New York Times*¹, *The International Herald Tribune*², *The Wall Street Journal*³, *Nikkei Shimbun*⁴, the *Financial Times*⁵ and *Forbes*⁶.

However, these regular websites are often a difficult read for even English native-speakers. A few ex-

tra clicks sometimes reveal sites especially tailored for youth and the classroom. The *NY Times* student site⁷ offers summaries of daily news along with activities such as Word of the Day, Daily News Quiz and Crossword Puzzle. The *Wall Street Journal* offers a classroom edition⁸ with separate login screens for teachers and students. While the student resources are free, teachers must subscribe to access value-added services such as teacher's manuals and quizzes.

The TV networks are slightly friendlier to education. *CNN* has a Student News section⁹ which offers video with transcripts, questions, quizzes, learning activities and one-page prints. MSNBC has developed an educational site called *Hotchalk*¹⁰ which incorporates the news into an e-learning management site which has a vast library of educational content and provides administrative tools for teachers.

Less- Traditional Sources

While there is a debate¹¹ over whether or not the information found on blogs is reliable, there can be no doubt that they are an important source of information. Not too long ago, many major news sources dismissed their relevance. But now most of these same companies incorporate blogs into their very own websites. The fact that anybody can blog does make it difficult to verify their credibility. On the other hand, it is this openness that allows readers the chance to access unrestricted insight into just about anything one could possibly think of. It goes without saying that it is near-to-impossible to review every blog and report on the best as there appear to be about 70,000,000 on the

Internet¹². Here are some that focus on business and Japan:

- **Ampontan:** <http://ampontan.wordpress.com/about/>
- **Asiajin:** <http://asiajin.com/blog/>
- **Japan Economy Watch:** <http://japanjapan.blogspot.com/>
- **Japan Marketing News:** <http://www.japan-marketingnews.com/>
- **Observing Japan:** <http://www.observingjapan.com/>

Wikis, like blogs, have become very popular despite attacks from the established print industry¹³. *Wikipedia*¹⁴ is available in 266 languages, with over 3.3 million entries in English and Japanese alone¹⁵. It is often the first point of reference for both students and teachers. While it does not specialize in business, it is highly likely that any term you are searching can be found. A Wiki that does specialize in business and finance is called *wikinvest*¹⁶. It contains a lot of information about current business news, the stock market and also has a tab called Money School where one can learn about personal finance and things like that. Finally, the *FreeDictionary.com*, which is very similarly structured to *Wikipedia*, offers a financial section¹⁷ with thousands of terms and links.

Improving Language Skills

To make full use of the available resources on the Internet, it is important to have a firm grasp of the required vocabulary and listening skills. There are many sites that can be accessed to help improve your business English ability. Most of these require a quick free registration or no registration at all. Please be careful though, these sites are usually supported by advertisements, and clicking on external site links takes you to signup sites that usually require money.

The TOEIC test is primarily targeted to assess the language skills needed for the global workplace¹⁸. Therefore, studying for TOEIC means you are studying business English. One of the more attractive sites for studying business English is *Smart.fm*¹⁹. This site is available in both an English and Japanese interface and contains more than 250 business English lists and close to 1000 TOEIC references. *Smart.fm* tracks your progress and tests your knowledge with a variety of lis-

tening, dictation and flash-card type activities.

Open English World is a site that will help you learn idioms and business jargon²⁰. *Better English Lessons*²¹ provides resources and quizzes for a variety of business situations and offers free English lessons by e-mail. *English-Test.net*²² offers close to 700 free tests using over 3400 words necessary for the TOEIC test. *English Grammar Online*²³ presents their business resources in 3 sections: communication, grammar and business English info. It features situational wordlists and a very unique Business Letter Generator in which you can complete a generic business letter just by choosing from options in drop-boxes.

*Nonstop English*²⁴ is comprised of a large number of quizzes and exercises for learning vocabulary. The *BBC*²⁵ has some excellent resources specializing in British English at their site, as does *Linguarama*. They are a company which specializes in professional language training, and they provide learners with a free online magazine named *Postscript*.²⁶ *About.com*²⁷ provides wordlists, sample conversations, and more from the business, commercial, financial, and legal sector. Finally, Eva Easton has compiled a comprehensive site²⁸ with links to business English, as well as topics such as countries, currency and economics.

Podcasts

Podcasts are different from the previous resources listed simply because they are not websites. Podcasts are audio and/or video files that can be downloaded from a website via an Internet connection. Depending on the type of mp3 player or iPod that you have, you may not even need a computer to do this. Alternatively, podcasts can also be enjoyed without a regular computer. A common mistake is to think that podcasts can only be played on an iPod; this is not the case. But, if you do have some type of portable music/video player then podcasts are great for learning on the go.

Again there a variety of podcasts with language resources, but here the focus will be on two types: business and academic. With *Business English Pod* users can both listen and view podcasts. Recent podcasts have focused on business English for meetings and negotiations, traveling, and accounting. *Business News*

Asia provides short video clips selected from Reuters Asia. *CNN Student News* promises *10 minutes, without commercials*, with focus on understanding current events and encouraging student participation.

Beginners who are searching for something a little more basic, then *Weblish* produces two bilingual podcasts. *Idiomania* focuses on idioms and *Vocabulary Generator* presents thematically related vocab. Advanced learners have many more options to choose from, possibly the most important of these can be accessed through *iTunes University*. Here you can find academic podcasts such as beginner's micro- and macroeconomics courses, MBA and other leadership courses, lectures from world-leading authorities and much, much more. These podcasts are provided by some of the better universities in the world, including MIT, UC Berkeley, Yale, The Duke School of Business, Wharton, Oxford and the National University of Singapore.



created at <http://www.wordle.net>

Putting it into Practice

Before you go out into the business world, you might want to practice what you learned. And while you are practicing, you can have a bit of fun too. *Free Online Games*²⁹ hosts a site where you can access many business and managing simulation flash games which require no download. One of these is *Sim Lemonade 30 Days*, a game which places you as the sole owner of a lemonade stand. Your job is to make the most profit you can from selling lemonade over a period of 30 days. While fun and addictive, in this game you will also learn the value of price-setting, profit margins, and minimizing costs.

Ore No Ryomi is a game which is little more complex, and requires a download. In this game you are a restaurant owner, where you have to do everything from washing dishes, serving customers and even catching thieves. This game focuses on entrepreneurship, business strategy, and customer service. *Food Force* is a 30 minute game produced by the World Food Organization which enhances project management, strategic thinking, and decision-making skills. *Virtual Stock Exchange* tests your skills as a player on the American stock market. You are given some money, with the goal of making more. You choose your stocks and the resulting gains and losses are derived from the actual performance of the market.

Conclusion

Web 2.0 has been a blessing for students and educators. While there is a struggle to create a profitable business model, those in academia can benefit from a vast number of useful, free and effective resources. In this paper, I have attempted to list websites, podcasts and downloads which I feel would be of great benefit to students at TNCMT. But this list is not complete. And by the time of publication may even be a little out of date, after all according to Technocrati 1.4 blogs are created per second, or 120,000 per day.³⁰ Use the resources here as a base to build upon, and if you do indeed find something out-of-date or you stumble across a website, podcast or game which you think is very interesting, please send the link to the author at cooper.td@toyama-cmt.ac.jp.

List of Sites in Alphabetical Order

eleaston.com	www.ft.com
edition.cnn.com	www.hotchalk.com
esl.about.com	www.iht.com
www.nytimes.com	www.nni.nikkei.co.jp
online.wsj.com	www.nytimes.com
thefreedictionary.com	www.wikipedia.org
www.bbc.co.uk	www.wikinest.com
www.business-english.com	www.nonstopenglish.com
www.ego4u.com	www.openenglishworld.com
www.english-test.net	www.smart.fm
www.forbes.com	www.toeic.org

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- Lombardi, Candace. "Belatedly, Britannica lambastes Wikipedia findings." CNet., 24 March 2006. <http://news.cnet.com/Belatedly,-Britannica-lambastes-Wikipedia-findings/>2100-1025_3-6053754.html>
- "Lists of Wikipedias" Meta-Wiki, 17 March 2009, <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias>

1	The URL is http://www.nytimes.com	16	http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias
2	The URL is http://www.iht.com	17	The URL is www.wikinest.com/
3	The URL is online.wsj.com	18	The URL is financial-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/
4	The URL is www.nni.nikkei.co.jp	19	The URL is www.toeic.org
5	The URL is www.ft.com	20	The URL is www.smart.fm previously known as iKnow [www.iknow.co.jp]
6	The URL is www.forbes.com	21	The URL is www.openenglishworld.com/business-jargon/
7	The URL is www.nytimes.com/learning/students/	22	The URL is www.business-english.com/index.html
8	The URL is classroomedition.com/cre/students.html	23	The URL is www.english-test.net/toeic/
9	The URL is edition.cnn.com/studentnews	24	The URL is www.ego4u.com/en/business-english/communication
10	The URL is www.hotchalk.com	25	The URL is www.nonstopenglish.com/allexercises/business_english/
11	Trevor Chappell. "Blogs as reliable as mainstream media - ACCC.", News.com.au, 16 October 2007, < http://www.news.com.au/business/story/0,23636,22596284-31037,00.html >	26	The URL is www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/general/
12	David Sifry. "The State of the Live Web." Sifry's Musings, 5 April 2007, < http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000493.html >	27	The URL is www.linguarama.com/ps/index.html
13	Candace Lombardi. "Belatedly, Britannica lambastes Wikipedia findings." 24 March 2006. < 2100-1025_3-6053754.html">http://news.cnet.com/Belatedly,-Britannica-lambastes-Wikipedia-findings/>2100-1025_3-6053754.html >	28	The URL is esl.about.com/od/englishforbusinesswork/English_for_Business_Work_and_other_Special_Purposes.htm
14	The URL is www.wikipedia.org	29	The URL is http://www.eleaston.com/biz/home.html
15	"Lists of Wikipedias" Meta-Wiki, 17 March 2009, < http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/List_of_Wikipedias >	30	The URL is http://www.feeonlinegames.com/tag/Business-Games
			Sifry, 5 April 2007