


## Chapter 7

# A Proposal of Evaluation Criteria for the Quality of ESL/EFL Websites for Autonomous Learning

**Natividad Aguayo-Arrabal**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6066-6515>

*Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, Spain*

**Cristina de las Montañas Ramírez-Delgado**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9731-4484>

*Universidad Pablo de Olavide, Sevilla, Spain*

### ABSTRACT

*In the current digital era, autonomous learning outside formal education has become a significant context for languages. In view of the huge number of websites for the study of foreign languages and their popularity due to the advantages of autonomous online learning, the authors' main goal is to evaluate the technical quality of a free online resource for the self-study of English: ESOL courses. For this purpose, this chapter presents the design of the evaluation tool: a checklist through which aspects concerning functionality and usability have been analyzed as essential characteristics of the technical dimension of a website, based on an extensive literature review and the initial technical analysis within LinguApp. The results show that non-compliance with the evaluated items leads to a deficient experience for independent users, unable to exploit all possibilities of the website due to the technical limitations they may encounter.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Undoubtedly, the potential of the computer network has opened up a world of opportunities for foreign language learners, who now have access to a greater quantity of authentic and up-to-date materials, direct contact with people from the target culture and the possibility of learning in a multimedia environment (Lim & Lee, 2007, p. 67). Indeed, learning English through the Internet is acquiring an increasingly important role in modern language learning (Islam, 2011, p.1080).

It goes without saying, therefore, that today the Internet offers an infinite number of resources for learning English online, but in this proliferation of web pages, the authors detected that many of them present a deficient design in as far as technology and pedagogy are concerned (Lim & Lee, 2007, p. 67). In this sense, the need to analyze the “debatable” quality of these educational websites (Martínez, 2015, p. 24) is unavoidable, in order for the users’ experience to be satisfactory enough to be able to achieve the expected learning outcomes. It is in this context that the present study —framed within the LinguApp research project— is conducted. The LinguApp research project (with the support from the Fundación Pública Andaluza Centro de Estudios Andaluces) aims to design an app and an accessible and free web service that provides formative tools specifically selected and evaluated for the learning of the Spanish and English languages.

It should be noted that the process of evaluation of websites within this project consisted of a two-pronged analysis: an analysis of the quality of the content and the most relevant technical aspects. Nonetheless, according to the literature reviewed, there is an apparent scarcity of works with a technical evaluation approach on websites for foreign language learning. Instead, they generally aim at addressing the educational possibilities of Web 2.0 for language teaching (González, 2012), the experience of learning in language portals (Berdugo & Pedraza, 2008) or the quality of the content and its suitability for achieving learning outcomes (Díaz & Moncada, 2014).

That is why, in this study, the authors seek to analyze the technical dimension of the website as a product, fundamentally on the basis of functionality and usability criteria, as they are the two essential components in achieving usefulness of a system (Nielsen, 1993): functionality (functional utility, the functions of the product with respect to the user’s needs) and usability (relating to the ability or the way in which users utilize these functions) (Hassan & Li, 2008). So, in order to proceed to the technical evaluation of online ESOL Courses website for the autonomous learning of English, the authors will design a checklist based on the ISO 9126 standard as a main reference, which will be duly described in the methodology section. The authors will present the main results reported from the application of the checklist in the analysis phase, followed by the conclusions.

## **THE EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF WEBSITES**

Web genres are essentially composed of three elements interrelated: content, form and functionality (Shepherd & Watters, 1998), the latter being an inherent property of these genres (Jiménez-Crespo, 2013). Web functionality is based, in turn, on the technology that supports web design and architecture, and that gives web content its own characteristics, such as the absence of linearity or multimodality.

The many existing studies and methods that address the evaluation of website quality and that are cited throughout this study, despite presenting differences in the design of assessment instruments, provide an insight into a series of common dimensions or criteria that coincide or can be related to the

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-proposal-of-evaluation-criteria-for-the-quality-of-eslefl-websites-for-autonomous-learning/242300](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-proposal-of-evaluation-criteria-for-the-quality-of-eslefl-websites-for-autonomous-learning/242300)

## Related Content

---

### Implementing Digital Multimodal Composing in L2 Writing: A Focus on English Learner Engagement With Feedback

Fan Xujie (2023). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-12). [www.irma-international.org/article/implementing-digital-multimodal-composing-in-l2-writing/322103](http://www.irma-international.org/article/implementing-digital-multimodal-composing-in-l2-writing/322103)

### Politeness, Intercultural Communication, E-Mails: Principles and Practices

Elisabetta Pavan (2019). *Intercultural Foreign Language Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Contexts* (pp. 45-70). [www.irma-international.org/chapter/politeness-intercultural-communication-e-mails/222561](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/politeness-intercultural-communication-e-mails/222561)

### Factors Related to EFL/ESL Readers' Reading Strategy Use: A Literature Review

Jia Lin (2019). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-12). [www.irma-international.org/article/factors-related-to-eflesl-readers-reading-strategy-use/222825](http://www.irma-international.org/article/factors-related-to-eflesl-readers-reading-strategy-use/222825)

### Paratext Analysis of Patronage Factors: An Exploration of Howard Goldblatt's Translation of Mo Yan's *Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out*

Hu Liu (2021). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 30-44). [www.irma-international.org/article/paratext-analysis-of-patronage-factors/266314](http://www.irma-international.org/article/paratext-analysis-of-patronage-factors/266314)

### Impacts of Directionality on Disfluency of English-Chinese Two-Way Sight Translation

Fan Yang, Fen Gao and Kexin Zhang (2023). *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics* (pp. 1-15). [www.irma-international.org/article/impacts-of-directionality-on-disfluency-of-english-chinese-two-way-sight-translation/323448](http://www.irma-international.org/article/impacts-of-directionality-on-disfluency-of-english-chinese-two-way-sight-translation/323448)