

Tools for Teaching English

Language Magazine's selection of products that incorporate technology into the ESL classroom

Alloy Multimedia

ESL ReadingSmart is a web-based English language learning environment founded on a unique instructional design. It is easily implemented as a student-centered, stand-alone application or a blended learning environment, integrating online student work and classroom instruction. The program offers individualized, content-based instruction to develop English language proficiency with emphasis on literacy and cross-curricular vocabulary development for newcomers, beginners, intermediate, early advanced, and advanced English learners.

It monitors student progress, and tracks students' readability and grade gains based on The Lexile Framework for Reading, providing daily, weekly, and on-demand student reports. Tracking is at individual, class, school and district level.

Several independent studies have shown that ESL ReadingSmart is an effective intervention program that raises students' reading and language scores. This year's independent study was presented in the National Forum of Teacher Education Journal in April. The authors stated, "by working with culturally appropriate text at their functional reading level, students were able to demonstrate gains while experiencing literature that may not otherwise have been available to them."

The program's user friendly interface is backed by a team of professionals always available to answer questions and provide support. New content is regularly added so students and teachers are never saddled with static software.

Califone

Podcasts provide new ways for students to interact with the content matter as well as to demonstrate their learning. By creating podcasts, students can display and extend their creativity using audio as a means of self-expression. In addition, teachers can use podcasts to communicate regularly with parents by posting school updates on their web site. They can also publish lesson guides in a podcast format to help students who many have missed sections, or who simply need reinforcement when completing homework assignments.

MP3 players are especially useful in language learning and ELL classrooms, where students may need additional reinforcement or teacher guidance outside the classroom. Recording a podcast in a language learning environment can illustrate to the teacher how well a student's pronunciation, diction and understanding have progressed over time. Plus, it allows teachers to keep a digital file of each student's progress, which is helpful for long-term assessment.

The easy-to-use MP3 player includes a built-in microphone and dual headphone jacks — both industry firsts — making it ideal for learning centers, language labs and libraries. The playback volume is also capped at 85dB for hearing safety.

English Computerized Learning Pronunciation Power

Pronunciation Power products are user-friendly, interactive programs for beginner to advanced English learners of all ages. They are excellent tools for students to learn correct English pronunciation. The easy, effective design has numerous lessons and exercises for practice using visual and auditory feedback.

Pronunciation Power 1 and 2 include lessons for individual sound work and speech recognition. The lessons include animated, graphic side views to teach how each sound is made. There are extensive practice exercises in: listening, comparative words, and in word and sentence pronunciation including intonation for syllable or word stress.

The 8 in 1 Interactive English Dictionary teaches the meaning and pronunciation of words using pictures and sentences and has several unique searches, such as "search by word ending."

All instructions and lessons for both programs are available in 12 different languages.

Pronunciation Power also offers: Introductory English Grammar and Vocabulary with Color Key. This program uses a unique Color Key to help you learn and remember the English grammar and vocabulary that need for basic communication in English. After completing the Lesson, you can test yourself by trying the exercises for the lesson. Their score is automatically given when you complete the exercise.

The Idiom program uses memorable and unique pictures and exercises to aid the student in remembering idioms.

All products are available by CD, download or online membership.

ETA/Cuisenaire SunSprouts Interactive

Delightful characters, funny stories, and fascinating leveled nonfiction give K-3 students compelling reasons to read, write and explore text with SunSprouts Interactive, the literacy software system from ETA/Cuisenaire. Whether the child is new to English or fluent in the language, this interactive CD-ROM offers targeted activities that require little preparation by the teacher, and make it easy to tailor instruction to proficiency levels. The flexible and engaging program creates a complete interactive literacy learning station with activities for building comprehension, fluency, vocabulary skills, and writing. SunSprouts Interactive focuses on aspects of the English language that are often difficult for children reading in a second language, including development of vocabulary awareness, grammatical forms, and idiomatic expressions. The lessons are filled with alliteration, rhymes, and other repetitive structures that familiarize ESL students with English.

The program immerses students in developing sight-word recognition and vocabulary as they follow along while text is read aloud, then record their own oral reading and play it back to hear their voices. SunSprouts Interactive also allows students to create and illustrate original texts that can be "published" and shared. The software records students' scores for teacher review, and assessments track development of literal, inferential, and visual comprehension skills. Reports can be generated by student or for the entire class. The flexibility of this program allows teachers to assign specific individual lessons, or group students with similar skills and needs. SunSprouts Interactive can be used as a supplemental resource with any reading program to reinforce skills and track progress.

Franklin Electronic Publishers 12 Language Speaking Global Translator

The Speaking Global Translator contains over 450,000 words (including 335,000 inflections) and 12,000 phrases, and speaks 115,000 words in recorded human voice. Students can translate to and from English into Chinese (Mandarin), Dutch, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Students just enter a word in their native language and the device will speak and show the translation in their language and English. A voice recording feature allows users to record custom words and phrases. The spell correction feature finds even misspelled words, and the seven line screen aids visibility.

Features Include:

- An MP3 Player to download and play MP3 files to enjoy music and more while looking up words and phrases
- Chinese, Japanese and Korean are displayed phonetically using the Roman alphabet and in Asian characters
- Organizer, local/world clock, calculator, currency and metric converter
- Five games
- USB connection

Global Language Education Services Online Mini-Courses for Language Teachers

Global Language Education Services (GLES) offers a suite of online mini-courses that introduce language teachers to innovative instructional techniques. Each technique is designed to employ authentic materials in ways that are both engaging and effective. Currently available mini-courses cover "Movie Talk," a technique for employing feature-length movies in beginning and low-intermediate language classrooms; "Co-Author," a cyclic pattern of interaction in which a language teacher guides intermediate students toward more proficient writing in their second language; and "Reading Club," a multi-faceted technique for using authentic materials to boost the reading proficiency of intermediate language students. All of the techniques covered in GLES mini-courses are research-based and have been extensively field-tested.

The GLES online mini-courses include discussion boards and optional hands-on activities that develop mastery of the techniques. Participants can choose to take these courses in audit mode, which provides access to materials and discussion boards but no instructor feedback, or graded mode, which (for an additional fee) offers feedback, evaluation, and certificates for Continuing Education Units. The mini-courses are offered every month, and there are special group rates for cohorts.

The GLES online mini-courses were created by Dr. Ashley Hastings, Professor Emeritus of TESOL (Shenandoah University). Dr. Hastings is known internationally as the originator of the FOCAL SKILLS approach to language teaching, and has been a pioneer in the development of online language teacher training.

MindPlay FLRT — a Fluent Reading Trainer

MindPlay offers educators working with English Language Learners a solution that will help students enjoy reading by dramatically improving their reading fluency rate as they become confident in speaking and reading English. FLRT — a fluent reading trainer works to increase reading speed while ensuring comprehension in any student

who can decode. Students conduct a number of technology-driven activities to train their eyes to read more efficiently. One FLRT activity trains the eyes to move from left to right and to sweep in one movement enhancing visual memory, silent reading skills, speed and reading comprehension.

As students move into reading passages, the stories in the program are either delivered randomly or they can be selected by teachers. Each passage is designed to be read in six minutes or less, allowing most students to complete three stories or more in a class period.

Accompanying questions test 18 different reading comprehension skills.

The program aims to keep students challenged while reading at their own pace by providing assignments that are individualized to match each student's unique abilities. It can be used for classroom instruction or as remedial help.

FLRT also provides teachers and administrators with easy management and tracking. Reports can gauge a student or an entire class performance. Success can be broken down by question type, improvement statistics from initial testing date to current date, effective words-per-minute rate, and sight/high-frequency words for students who are struggling. Reports are available in PDF format so they can be emailed to parents or they can be printed out in color or grayscale for improved data visualization.

PhonicsTutor

PhonicsTutor is a research proven, multi-sensory reading method for all ages and reading settings. Its independent instruction in orthography enables ESL students to learn to read reflexively and spell accurately at a rate that keeps pace with the vocabulary and comprehension they are gaining in English. This performance of a reading program is amazing considering the ambiguous and extensive orthography of English. Students who complete the program can pronounce, read, and spell 93 percent of all words in print, e.g., machinery, prodigious, picturesque, azure. It covers all patterns of English orthography that occur at least once in a million words in print.

At TESL '97 in Toronto, PhonicsTutor was one of only four products (out of 189 products) that received the designation of "Excellent." This computerized Orton-Gillingham program is a synthetic-analytic reading method that is recognized around the world for its efficacy in the remediation of dyslexia and for its ability to assist both native and non-native speakers of English in learning how to read and spell. The expanded curriculum includes software, coordinated books, and flashcards, and provides self-teaching instruction so that ESL/EFL learners are prepared for the vocabulary and reading expectations of college and professional careers.

Protea Textware Issues in English 2

Issues in English 2 is an effective, innovative, and comprehensive software program for English language and literacy learners. With four levels from beginning to advanced, students learn a wide range of English language skills within meaningful contexts. The issues — Sport, Media, Technology, Fame, Education, Immigration, Wilderness, and Languages — are relevant and engaging.

The program is content-rich, with over 700 interactive exercises based on the stimulus videos. These include reading and listening

comprehension, grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, and writing.

Scientific Learning

Scientific Learning develops software products that increase brain power—exercising areas of the brain to help it process more efficiently, the way physical workouts train the body to be more fit and strong. The products are used in thousands of schools nationwide, helping ELL, struggling readers and at-risk learners in grades PreK-12. The Fast ForWord program has proven results in schools throughout the country, where students have made dramatic and enduring gains in eight to twelve weeks. The products build on cumulative breakthroughs in neuroscience research revealing that the human brain can continue to develop and improve the efficiency of its processing throughout life. Processing efficiency is how the brain functions to support learning and intellectual activity, including memory, attention, processing rate, and sequencing. Scientific Learning Reading Assistant provides guided oral reading using advanced speech recognition technology with scientifically-based courseware to help students strengthen fluency, vocabulary and comprehension to become proficient, lifelong readers. It provides each student with an active one-on-one reading tutor that acts as a patient, non-judgmental listener and provides the much needed reading practice that benefits them. Progress Tracker is an online accountability tool that allows educators to monitor student progress and results, and Reading Progress Indicator is an easy-to-use computerized assessment for quick evaluations of student performance. When students can process more effectively, all other learning activities get accomplished more efficiently. It is then the dedication of teachers and the investment in other learning programs yield better results. Importantly, students are more motivated to learn and have better self-esteem. **ix**