

Report on Teacher Training in Cambridge -- Online Resources

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It's an honor for me to get the opportunity to take the training course in UK. There are lectures and workshops in various aspects of language teaching and learning. Some of them are thought-provoking and some are debatable. In this report, I am going to introduce part of what I have learned in my training in Cambridge, which is about online resources. How I used some of the materials will be discussed and reflections will be shared as well.

As we are in the era of technology, making the best use of online resources can enhance our learners' motivation and also provide authentic input to them. Many of the websites we discuss here provide useful ideas for language teachers to use and most important of all, they are free of charge. Most of the websites we discuss here are British-based.

📖 Website #1: LearnEnglish Kids www.learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en



This is a British Council's website, which provides free resources on games, activities for listening and reading, even writing. In addition, there are video clips and some arts and crafts for teachers to use. There are five main sections. In each main section, there are more sub-sections for teachers to explore. They are as follows,

1. The game section: Various language games and interesting jokes about different

topics can be found and learners can play with friends.

2. The listen and watch section: Teachers can find animated songs and short stories, a good way to help our learners practice listening. There are Kids Talk, Kids News and tongue twisters sections.
3. The read and write section: It includes subsection of your turn for students to express their thoughts, word of the week and worksheets.
4. The make section: The Make Your Own section invites learners to make their own version on each activity, such as story maker. Teachers can download crafts here.
5. The explore section: A section to help learners explore English and the web.

On the homepage of this website, there are many topics listed on the right-bottom column. I chose a topic first, such as food or money. After I chose a topic, all the related resources about the topic would be listed. All I need to do is check whether they are suitable for my students.

I like the video clips in Kids Talk section and Kids News section, in which some lovely kids talk about their opinions and experience about different topics, such as their favorite food or whether they have school lunch or not. This helps my students have more understanding of what their counterparts have or do in other countries.

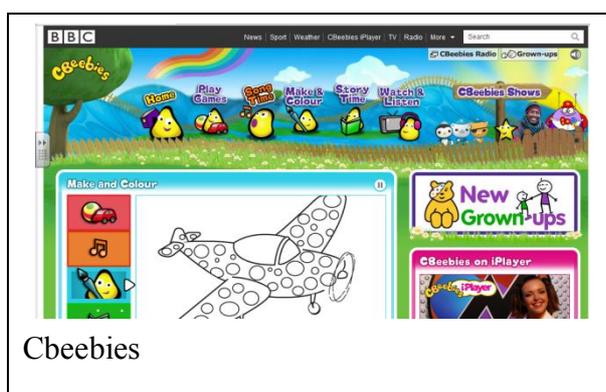
Here are the procedures on how I use the video clip in class. First I chose video clips related to the topic we are learning now. Then I played the film several times for students to listen and watch only. After that, I had students talk about what they heard and provided vocabulary if necessary. After the discussion, we watched the video again.

I also found that the section of tongue twisters is very useful for phonics practice. Students can listen to tongue twisters online and then record their voice and listen to it

immediately. The section of word of the week is good for students to get a general idea when to use the word because they create different situations in which the target word is used, sometimes various intonations of saying the word help understand the meaning.

The Trolley Dash in the section of games is very interactive as well. For example, in the exercise for the topic of money, students need to listen to how much it is and respond with correct amount of money. This really provides context for the language to be used. Moreover, the animated film could be played with or without subtitles. I could even talk about the exchange rate between currencies, which is suitable for higher graders.

📖 Website #2: BBC – Cbeebies www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies



This website is originally designed for children of six and under. However, it could be a good resource of learning input for our students as foreign language learners. All the materials are very authentic and the topics are children-oriented. For native speakers, they may learn some cognitive concepts here; whereas for our students in Taiwan, they could learn how to use English in context.

BBC Cbeebies also includes five sections: play games, song time, make & color, story time, and watch & listen. They classify all the materials by theme or by a-z. In the play games section, some of the games could be played by kids alone or with friends. Some of the clips in the story time section are interactive and printable, such as the weather story, the three bears and Rapunzel.

I like “I Can Cook Game” section because it provides clear step-to-step instructions on how to make sweet treats, meals and snacks. Learners are invited to participate during the explanation of how to make it. After the explanation, there’s a video which shows the process of some little kids cooking. Though the title of each story and video look very interesting, some of the videos in this website are not available in Taiwan.

📖 Website #3: One Stop English www.onestopenglish.com

This website contains resources of a wide range of learning support for learners from children to adults. For elementary school students, the section of Grammar, Skills, Children and Games are useful. Part of the website is free, but for further access to more information, subscription to the website is needed.



Some of the worksheets for grammar practice are photocopyable. Some games are free and fun for practicing reading and spelling. For example, HelloGoodbyeclank, a listen-and-spell game similar to the traditional Hangman game. The Street Cat game is to practice the correct order of sentences.

I think this website is very useful especially for its lesson plans. Teachers can gain some teaching ideas and adapt them into classroom instruction.

📖 Website #4: Primary Resources www.primaryresources.co.uk

It is fantastic for all kinds of back up materials are organized by subject. Free lesson plans, activity ideas and resources are available for elementary teachers.

📖 Website #5: <http://www.puzzlemaker.com>

This site is cool for providing free tools for teachers to create suitable puzzles for classroom use. It contains word search, criss-cross, double puzzles, fallen phrases, math squares, mazes, letter tiles, cryptograms, number blocks, and hidden message. Some puzzles are language-based, and some are math-based.



Discovery Education

I personally like word search, double puzzles and letter tiles. In double puzzles, students need to come up with the hidden word after figuring out the answers. Word clues are provided in the form of scrambled letters. See the example below.

Food

PAZZI	<input type="checkbox"/>						
LADSA	<input type="checkbox"/>						
ISSUH	<input type="checkbox"/>						
MEATL	<input type="checkbox"/>						
HTO GOSB	<input type="checkbox"/>						
	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Unscramble each of the clue words.
Take the letters that appear in boxes and unscramble them for the final message.

As for “letter tile,” teachers can have students work as a group to guess the secret sentence and write the sentence down to check the answer and conventional written forms. It

could be a good warm-up activity as well. Below is a sample for letter tile. Could you guess the sentence? (Please read backwards to see the answer:..dalas tae ot sekil ehS)

Food

O E A . E S T L A D T S A L I K S H E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Unscramble the tiles to reveal a message.

📖 Website #6: Isabel's ESL site www.isabelperez.com

It's a site for subject teachers and webquests. The designers use tools, such as Hot Potato, to design exercises for grammar, sentences, and reading comprehension in forms of gap-filling, multiple choices, rearrange the sentences, making sentences, etc.

📖 Website #7: PrimaryGames www.primarygames.com

This website is fantastic. It has materials for different subjects and various games for language practice. I like the games in language arts. One is Alphattack, to practice recognize the alphabet automatically. Another one is Alphabet Zoo, in which the sequence of the alphabet is practiced in a fun way. Both of these are suitable for beginners or a good way to motivate those who need remedial teaching.

📖 Website #8: Spin and Spell www.spinandspell.com

This is an excellent site for listening and spelling. There are words for what we wear, what we eat, how we get there, the animal kingdom, and in and around home. There are picture clues for students to learn more related words if they like.

My reflections

When we explore the websites, one question to think about is “What can we do with these websites?” Since we have textbooks in school, what we can do is to use these materials as supplementary activities or as homework. The above introduction is for your references, it would be better to explore them on your own.

It’s recommended that teachers find materials related to what their students are learning at the moment, use the websites as opportunities for students to hear “Englishes” and give students some time to explore the websites if there’s a language lab in the school. Making the best use of website resources may help differentiate students’ learning. Moreover, appropriate use of website materials could enhance students’ motivation as well.

However, no matter how convenient the technology can be, we as teachers should always bear in mind that the interaction between teachers and students still plays a vital role in language learning, especially to learners in the elementary schools. After all, language is for communication.

In addition, technology should always be a supplementary tool. Do not use technology for its own sake. Teachers should incorporate it with learners’ learning objectives and the topics they are learning. Using multi-media appropriately may help our learners pick up some of the concepts in English easily since students’ learning styles vary a lot.

Nowadays, one question being asked frequently is “What English do we speak?” This question highlights the phenomenon of World Englishes. Therefore, online resources can provide our students opportunities to get access to different accents, especially for advanced learners.

Appendix: Other online resources for teachers to explore.

1. www.scholastic.com-resource: For methodology and “how to teach” areas

2. www.geffrye-museum.org.uk: An example of a London Museum, British History, houses
3. www.e-cards.com: To send postcards on line –writing and art and design practice
4. www.bestbritishfood.co.uk/select/kids: Good for recipes for food/ recipes for children
5. www.abcteach.com: A site for reading, writing and literacy skills and subject areas
6. <http://www.languagegames.org>: Try hangman/word searches/ crosswords-all subjects
7. www.cambridge.org/elt/resources: Look at the Young Learners for on line stories
8. <http://www.kindersite.org/index.html>: A wealth of interactive games and stories in class
9. <http://www.canteach.ca/>: Elementary resources on a wide range of subjects
10. <http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en/schools/primary.html>
11. <http://www.amazon.co.uk/>: To order books
12. www.dfes.gov.uk: UK government site about learning for teachers/ curriculum/ guidance/ assessment
13. www.teachers.tv: Film clips from UK schools
14. www.eslpod.com: Podcasts for us teachers to help our own language development