

TESL 507
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Suggested Reading/Writing Apps/Sites for Adult Intermediate ELLs

ePals Corporation. (2013). ePals Global Learning Network [Website]. Retrieved November 17, 2013 from www.epals.com

This site has great value for teachers as a source of fresh, inventive ideas, effective resources and, perhaps most importantly, like-minded professionals who are willing and eager to share their knowledge, perspectives and experiences. Since joining, I have expressed interest in working on a cross-cultural project between an ESL class in Rhode Island and one in another part of the world. My idea is to take a subject from one culture and explore the way its traditions can be adapted and evolve in other cultures - how the Celtic tradition of Halloween was transformed by immigrants to America, for example, or how certain foods (consider cold strip pizza or New York System Wieners in Rhode Island) evolve from one culture's tradition into another's. In the meantime, the site has provided me with some terrific themes and lesson plan possibilities to aid with reading and writing skill development. The Global Folklore Storybook initiative, for example, is a superb opportunity for teachers and students to actively participate in a meaningful, cross-cultural and global project while working on literacy goals. Myriad ideas from teachers can be adapted to suit the proficiency level and language and literacy demands of specific learners. Examples include online scavenger hunts, with students creating riddles to showcase their local landmarks, or creating a global cookbook of traditional recipes focusing on a theme, such as indigenous pot luck dishes (jambalaya, paella, chowder, stew, gumbo, etc.). The site is inspiring and full of creative ideas for engaging ELLs in active, participatory learning. [intermediate]

Additional resources for families, teachers:

ePals links to a variety of partners that expand learning opportunities, among them:

Smithsonian. http://encommunity.epals.com/smithsonian_on_epals/default.aspx#.
November themes included "new species," "folk festivals," "a video visit to the National Zoo," and explorations of American Indian Heritage Month and Aviation Month.

McGraw-Hill. http://en.community.epals.com/mcgraw-hill_education_on_epals/default.aspx.

Features include explanations and examples of collaborative learning and how to use geocaching treasure hunts as a classroom activity.

National Geographic. http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/?ar_a=1
November features include identifying Big Cats and their role in conservation, accompanying adventurers on a walk around the Earth, defining and exploring the world's isthmuses, explaining modes of power that sustain communities and teaming with Verizon urging students to collaborate on an app design challenge.

PBLU. <http://www.pblu.org>.

Features include how to launch a class project, create a project calendar, manage the project and assess it.

European partners. <http://www.epals.com/p/gglobal>

November focuses on Berlin, with special features on the Berlin Wall, museums and galleries, and the scarcity of coffee in the GDR.

Vocabulary Development for Reading



Just Mobile Programs. (2013). Words-A-Fall (Version 2.11) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/word-a-fall/id543141187?mt=8>

This app is a wordplay game that can help ELLs work on vocabulary proficiency, speed and creative thinking, which should improve their skills in reading text. The premise involves three beaver brothers who return to their home in the pond one evening only to find their dam washed away by a waterfall. The player chooses letters on drops of water, pieces of wood and leaves to combine into words that help the beavers rebuild their home. There are three possible ways to play: Create as many words as you can in two minutes; create as many words as you can with at least four letters in two minutes; or play a game in which the letters float down faster the more words that you complete. The game is good practice for sight words, but students at increased levels of proficiency will also enjoy the various word-building challenges since, as in popular games such as Scrabble or Boggle, the letter combinations offer innumerable opportunities to build more complex words. The app requires iOS 6.1 or later. It is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [intermediate]
Cost: Free.

Vocabulary Development for Writing



Mobile Education Store, LLC. (2013). Sentence Builder (Version 1.9) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/sentencebuilder-for-ipad/id364197515?mt=8>

The 2010 IEAR Language Arts App of the Year, Sentence Builder is an effective way for ELLs at all levels of proficiency to build grammatically correct sentences. Special emphasis is placed on the “connector words” that, according to the site, makes up 80 percent of the English language. Features include 100 pictures as prompts to build sentences around; three levels of play; animation and audio clips that offer encouragement; and a statistical way to track student progress. Demonstration videos can be found on YouTube and edshelf.com. The app requires iOS 3.1.3 or later and is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [high beginner]
Cost: \$5.99.

Reading Comprehension and Vocabulary Development



App of Approval, LLC. (2012). Compare A Twist (Version 2.2) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/compare-a-twist/id510922341?mt=8>

Compare a Twist is a wonderful tool for teachers, but it also allows learners to create their own lesson plans (based on the compare-contrast model) and share them with other learners. Many ELLs could find it productive, since the interactive application helps build vocabulary and hones the skill of grouping like or dissimilar terms. It is available through Apple (requiring iOS 4.2 or later) and is compatible with iPad. [high intermediate]
Cost: Free.



Hitcents.com, Inc. (2013). Draw a Stickman (Version 1.2) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/draw-a-stickman/id467614894?mt=8>

A truly fun site/app and way to explore English for ELLs, who are prompted to act through written instructions. Users are given statements in English about what to do and when, and they actively participate in the creation of the visual narrative. It is helpful for ELLs in recognizing and comprehending handwritten English. Online reviews indicate that the app has proven popular in many ELL classes, particularly those who are beyond the beginning stages of literacy, as it helps students to lower anxiety and boost confidence by completing an enjoyable activity. The program can be accessed online directly (at www.drawastickman.com) or as an app, where it requires iOS5 or later and is designed for both iPhone and iPad. [intermediate]

Cost: Free.

Reading Practice



Goodreads, Inc. (2013). Goodreads (Version 2.2.5) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/goodreads-see-what-your-friends/id355833469?mt=8>

Goodreads is a worthwhile app for readers of every level of proficiency, since it provides a social network of readers (and the books they love), allowing users to customize their own library according to their tastes and interests. The reviews are invaluable. For ELLs, they also provide another form of reading practice. As users learn what they love to read, they can continue to explore, read about and discuss their favorite genres, subjects and authors with peers. Goodreads represents the largest single community of readers in the world, and the app includes such features as 2,000 free books and regular announcements about literary events in your area. Easier books are listed under the categories of “children’s” and “picture books.” There’s even a leveling function. Type <https://www.goodreads.com/shelf/show/ar-level-7> to get a selection of books at the 7th

grade reading level, for example. (Just change the last number to adjust the reading level.) It requires iOS 5.0 or later for all Apple products (including iPhone, iPad and iPod touch) and is also available as an app on Android. [high intermediate]

Cost: Free.

Additional resources for teachers:

<http://www.freetech4teachers.com/2011/05/goodreads-makes-great-readers.html>

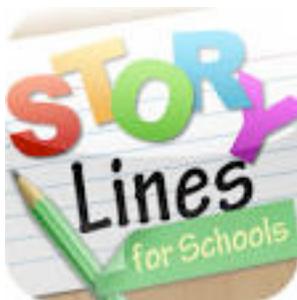


comiXology. (2013). Comics (Version 3.4.3) [Web application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/comics/id303491945>

Critically acclaimed by publications such as Time and Wired as the best comic book app on the market, Comics offers access to more than 40,000 comics and graphic novels in multiple genres. The presentation is clean and vivid. The comics range from classics to popular foreign-language publications. New titles are added regularly and are available on the same as the print editions. Because of explicit content in some of the stories, readers must be at least 17 years of age to download the app. Adult ELLs could benefit from using this app in a number of ways. The visuals reinforce the language and storytelling. The variety of genres should appeal to a wide range of reading interests, and increase student motivation in the act of reading. Access to foreign comics could be helpful as well, giving some students a chance to compare storytelling practices and possibly transfer vocabulary as a consequence of their reading. It requires iOS 5.0 or later for all Apple products (including iPhone, iPad and iPod touch) and is available as an app on Android. [intermediate]

Cost: Free.

Reading and Writing Practice



Root-1, Inc. (2013) StoryLines (Version 5.6) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/storylines/id464977336?mt=8>

An award-winning game of “telephone” with pictures, StoryLines is an ideal app for ELLs, allowing them to practice their word-building, grammar, vocabulary, storytelling and creative thinking skills in a fun activity. Someone begins with a common expression. A friend illustrates the saying. Another friend titles the drawing without seeing the original saying. Another friend illustrates that saying, and so on. It is available through Apple (requiring iOS 5.0 or later) and is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [high intermediate]

Cost: Free.



Story Robe, LLC. (2013). Storyrobe (Version 2.0) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/storyrobe/id337670615?mt=8>

Storyrobe lets users create stories (with photography and narration) and share them with a community of storytellers around the world. People use this app as an interactive scrapbook to tell their stories of travels, memories, family and events. For ELLs, it is a way to study and practice the elements and arc of storytelling, which is a universal form of human communication that stimulates deep thinking and creativity while honing basic literacy. It is available in multiple languages, allowing some ELLs the ability to practice storytelling techniques in their first and second languages. It can be purchased through Apple (requires iOS 6.0 or later) and is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [high intermediate]

Languages available: English, Korean, Portuguese, Simplified Chinese, Spanish and Traditional Chinese.

Cost: 99 cents.

Writing Practice



Bloom Built, LLC. (2013). Day One (Journal/Diary) (Version 1.11.4) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/day-one-journal-diary/id421706526>

The 2012 Mac App of the Year, Day One (Journal/Diary) is a beautiful, user-friendly journaling application that encourages daily writing. It's not free, but is so superior to the other journal writing applications that if one concession to cost could be made when budgeting for apps, this is the one I'd recommend. The app is designed so that the daily recording of thoughts, memories, ideas and events can be easily enhanced by images and tech tools, to provide an interactive, multimedia diary. For ELLs this app is an ideal way to practice writing, organizing thoughts and building fluency. Sold by Bloom Built, LLC, it requires iOS 6.0 or later and is compatible with iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [intermediate]
Cost: \$4.99.



Thinglink Oy. (2013). ThingLink (Version 1.7) [Mobile application software]. Retrieved from <https://itunes.apple.com/us/thinglink/id647304300>

ThingLink is a webtool that can help ELLs develop reading and writing skills through the word-picture association method. It lets you upload or grab images or video on the web and annotate items next to or embedded in them. Teachers can use ThingLink images as interactive learning models to provide a creative and engaging classroom experience. Students can use it to pair visual and verbal-linguistic ideas, turning photos into interactive images. They can practice labeling, captioning, descriptive writing, comparison-contrast, listing, even creative writing inspired by the images. It is available as a download on the ThingLink website (www.thinglink.com) or as an app (iOS 6.0 or later) for the iPhone, iPad and iPod touch. [high intermediate]
Cost: Free.

