Press Conference on New Functions of "Cool English"

(Photo and article by Zhao-li, Haung Division of Junior High, Elementary School and Preschool Education)

To help students (age between nine to fifteen) in their self English learning, K-12 Education Administration, Ministry of Education launched "Cool English," an English learning online platform, on June, 25th, 2015.   Its new functions have been subsequently expanded and the Administration held a press conference to unveil these new functions recently. The comprehensive English learning platform boasts a wide range of functions: rudimentary lessons, context-based animations for listening and speaking exercise, speaking-oriented practice, reading with illustrations, thematic vocabulary exercise, grammar challenges, role playing game-oriented (RPG) exercises, and all sorts of English learning games. Its underlying design concept is: English becomes easier to learn, and students become more confident and motivated to learn.

There are a variety of resources on "Cool English," making it much easier for both teachers and students on the primary and junior levels to find the materials they are looking for.   The team who developed the website has uploaded the teaching resources on the platform based

on their careful examination of the content in textbooks, singling out highlights from each lesson, and consolidating each and every aforementioned learning functions under each lesson, so that both teachers and students can use the website as a supplementary tool to strengthen their English communication ability while following the textbook contents.

In addition, to facilitate English speaking in an interactive manner, the "Cool English" team developed the Automatic Speech Recognition, or ASR technology. Thus, through more than two thousand interactive English conversations, common English sentence practice, and vocabulary matching games that cover more than one hundred themes, student's speaking mistakes can be identified through the technology, which allows students to focus more on their mistakes they make in order to improve their speaking and pronunciation.

"Monsters" a RPG-based exercise, has been well received by students since the website was launched. Currently, the first four chapters have been developed and uploaded; students are required to accomplish all kinds of learning missions one after another before moving onto the next stage. In this way, students can memorize two thousand major words and main grammatical rules while enjoying much fun from coping with various game challenges. Also, to respond to the trend that more people nowadays are using mobile devices for learning, the team also launched the mobile version of "Monsters" that so far has only covered the first chapter. Students can have fun learning via Android tablets, and iOS tablet users need to wait until the next month.

To enhance the fun students are having when interacting with their peers, the team's newly developed game "Knowledge Is King" enables students to have their English ability improved and horizon broadened through solving English puzzles. Players can choose to play against the computer or compete against another peer; when many students are online, they will be automatically matched for competition. The questions were taken from twelve major fields, such as computer science, geography, math, arts and humanities. They are classified to different categories based on themes and difficulty. For those students who answer questions correctly, they can move up with their own speed and take on more difficult questions step by step without feeling overwhelmed. They will get familiarized with reading English on the screen along the process; ultimately, the fun and the sense of achievement students experience in the games can improve their English and foster their motivation to learn.

Apart from "Monsters" and "Knowledge Is King," "Cool English" has also around thirty fun and interesting website-based games on three different levels, i.e. primary, primary/junior, junior levels, that cater to the needs of individual students. On top of that, teachers can incorporate proper games into class, so students can also learn English through the games in school. In the future, forty English learning applications will be available for students.

To make it easier for junior high school students to review English on their own, "Cool English" has added a new section "test questions for the Comprehensive Assessment Program," that includes "reading" and "vocabulary" sections.   It covers all the potential test questions and articles for the English subject in the Comprehensive Assessment Program; what's more, it provides proper explanations for vocabulary, idiomatic expression, and grammar.

To encourage the usage of the website, K-12 Education Administration held a contest for lesson plans and a spelling bee in the academic year of 2015; the top three prizes and five honorable mentions were selected for their lesson plans and five top players were selected from the primary school group and junior high school group respectively in the spelling bee contest.   The Ministry of Education also invited them to share their thoughts and experiences and awarded them with prizes. So far, there have been twenty-three thousand people logging onto the platform that account for a total of eighty-one thousand accesses

The platform offers a rich variety of learning resources for primary and junior high school teachers and students. Hopefully, more teachers and students will join and make good uses of this website through the incoming regional promotion meetings, and contests. Information is available on the platform (http://www.coolenglish.edu.tw/) and the facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/coolenglush/). Students nationwide are most welcome to visit this website and explore the joy and possibilities of learning English together.