

# **INTEGRATING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INTO TEACHING ENGLISH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*A hands-on presentation about how to integrate Information Technology into teaching English will be given by a group of five English teachers from different gifted high schools in the Central Highland. After spending one year learning in the University of Kansas, USA, we would like to share the useful knowledge of Information Technology with other teachers. The presentation will be divided into two main parts. In the first part, we will talk about the digital citizenship, the flipped learning (new lessons are learned at home and homework is in class), and the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. The main part of the presentation will be about how to use some IT tools which are very useful in teaching and learning English. These are IT tools that we choose to present: (1) for storing information: Pinterest, Evernote, Dropbox, and Diigo; (2) for presentations: Blendspace, Thinglink, Padlet, and Prezi; and (3) for learning and testing: Quizlet, VoiceThread, Tagxedo, Wevideo and Trace Effects. We hope that mastering these IT tools will help teachers teach English better and students will find learning English more fun and effective.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

As English teachers, we always look for ways to enrich classroom experience, engage or motivate students, and make our lessons memorable and enjoyable. One of the methods is using IT tools when teaching English. Believe it or not, most of us started our teaching career as a technophobe. After finishing the two IT courses in the University of Kansas, we recognize the great benefits of integrating IT into teaching English. As can be seen from the Framework for 21st Century Learning which was developed with input from teachers, education experts, and business leaders to define and illustrate the skills and knowledge students need, IT skill is one of the crucial skills to help students succeed in work, life and citizenship. Therefore, teachers of English should foster the use of IT tools in learning and teaching so that students can improve both language and information technology skills. Via lessons taught with the help of IT tools, students also have a chance to learn about their digital citizenship to behave more properly online and be aware of the security of their personal information. In addition, teachers can apply the flipped learning method which is popular in Western countries. In this teaching approach, new lessons will be learned at home, and homework is solved in class. Students will have the chance to understand deeply about a matter, discuss the solution with their friends and their teachers, so they can experience more active learning ways. In the following part of this paper, we will introduce some IT tools which teachers can integrate into their lessons to lead their students beyond the limitations of textbooks and examinations.

## CONTENT

### 1. IT Tools for storing and organizing information

#### 1.1. Pinterest

##### 1.1.1 *What is Pinterest?*

Pinterest, a visual discovery, collection, sharing, and storage tool, is useful in teaching and learning English. Teachers and students can create and share their own Pinterest with one another. If you know how to use Facebook, you will know how to use Pinterest, which is very simple.

##### 1.1.2 *How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.pinterest.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account or Facebook account
- Sign in and start to create boards

##### 1.1.3 *How To Integrate Pinterest Into Teaching And Learning*

We can upload pictures, info graphs, and links to other websites. It is a tool to share ideas or to collect ideas from others. It can also be used for warm - up activities, explanation, and homework of all skills of teaching and learning English. Pinterest is also a source of inspiration of teaching as well as self-learning. Teachers are able to learn many new things about teaching methods, English skills, and how to display ideas in a beautiful way with pictures and colors. English learners will be never get bored with Pinterest. Students will find Pinterest fun and helpful because they can show their creativity in categorizing their collections. Using Pinterest in the classroom enables teachers to save time and energy as well as help teaching English effectively. For example, if a teacher would like to teach flap “T” in American accent, she or he will open the Pinterest and play the video about using flap “T” presented by a native speaker. It will be more effective than h or she explains that to the students. Therefore, integrating technology in the classroom is necessary in teaching and learning in information era.

#### 1.2. Dropbox

##### 1.2.1. *What is Dropbox?*

Dropbox is home for all your photos, docs, videos, and files. Anything you save in Dropbox will automatically show up on all your computers or phones, so you can access your stuff from anywhere.

##### 1.2.2. *How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.dropbox.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to store your materials

##### 1.2.3. *How To Integrate Dropbox Into Teaching And Learning*

Dropbox is really convenient and fast. It is like your online USB, which makes your materials available everywhere. You also never worry about losing or forgetting to bring a hard drive containing your necessary files. Teachers and students can create their own Dropbox account with their email account. It will save their money because they do not need to buy a USB or other hard drives. The application runs in the background and automatically keeps your files in sync and backed up online. It is like having the same folder on all of your computers and mobile devices at the same time. Therefore, it is a useful tool for both teachers and students.

#### 1.3. Evernote

##### 1.3.1. *What is Evernote?*

Evernote is a useful tool designed for notetaking and archiving. It allows users to create a "note" which can be a piece of formatted text, a full webpage or webpage excerpt, a photograph, a voice memo, or a handwritten "ink" note. Notes can also have file attachments. Notes can be sorted into folders, tagged, annotated, edited, given comments, searched, and exported as part of a notebook.

#### *1.3.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.evernote.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to take notes

#### *1.3.3. How To Integrate Evernote Into Teaching And Learning*

Evernote is a great application for educators. Its usefulness can range from planning a course to delivering a lesson plan to capturing feedback after class. It proved to be an excellent classroom companion. You can plan and organize the classes with tags; keep all notes, resources, lessons and new ideas learned in Evernote. When we attend conferences, workshops and seminars, take notes using Evernote instead of the notebook. We also can share lesson plans, worksheets, answer keys and examples of completed work with others using Evernote's shared notebooks feature. Teachers can keep handouts, worksheets, templates, study guides and assignments in Evernote, where they are easily searchable and accessible. The more you add, the more useful Evernote becomes.

### **1.4. Diigo**

#### *1.4.1. What is Diigo?*

Diigo is a tool which allows users to bookmark and tag web-pages. In addition, it allows users to highlight any part of a webpage and attach sticky notes to specific highlights or to a whole page. We also can share the annotations we made with others.

#### *1.4.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.diigo.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to use.

#### *1.4.3. How To Integrate Diigo Into Teaching And Learning*

Diigo can be used in many ways. Teachers and students can bookmark important websites and access them on any computer. Students can use Diigo to create annotations on useful websites, and save the websites to groups or lists, and share with others. Students can even comment and respond to others. Diigo can help enrich or extend learning about a topic. Students can research websites about a class topic and post their findings to Diigo lists or groups. Teachers can start a topic of study with an information search to preview the content, and supplement the textbook with information from the web. Additionally, teachers could use annotations to gauge student thinking.

## **2. IT Tools for new ways of presentation and flipped learning**

### **2.1. Blendspace**

#### *2.1.1. What is Blendspace?*

Blendspace is a free web tool for teachers to collect resources in one place to form an interactive lesson for students or colleagues.

#### *2.1.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.blendspace.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account

- Sign in and start to make a lesson

### 2.1.3. *How To Integrate Blendspace Into Teaching And Learning*

Teachers collect and organize resources in one place and share them with students. Teachers can also measure students' understanding with built-in quizzes along the way, and track their progress. Blendspace is ideal for flipping the classroom – students can research a topic at home and use lesson time more effectively. Teachers can even check to see if their students have actually viewed the resources they have shared with them. Blendspace is a great tool for project based learning.

## **2.2. Thinglink**

### 2.2.1. *What is Thinglink?*

Thinglink is a free platform for creating interactive images and videos. This fantastic tool is very useful for students and teachers to make presentations, introduce a new topic to a class, or create a school project. The images will come alive with video, text, images, shops, music and more.

### 2.2.2. *How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.thinglink.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to create your own Thinglink

### 2.2.3. *How To Integrate Thinglink Into Teaching And Learning*

Here are some examples to use Thinglink in the classroom:

- Students get to know each other. Ask students to take photos of one another. Each student should upload his/her image and add tags to help others get to know him or her. For example, create a tag or link to a photo, video, or audio file to describe his/her favorite subjects, hobbies or sports, map with places they've lived or visited, favorite song, band or group Favorite TV show, website, or game.

- Students conduct a Mapping Data Project. Using an appropriate map as a base image, add data via links to photos, web pages or audio recordings such as local attractions, location of historic, significance, upcoming events, survey data.

There are many other ways to use Thinglink in teaching and learning English. Be creative! You will find your learning or teaching fun and effective with Thinglink.

## **2.3. Padlet**

### 2.3.1. *What is Padlet?*

Padlet is a virtual wall that allows people to express their thoughts on a common topic easily. It works like an online sheet of paper where people can put any content such as images, videos, documents, or text anywhere on the page, together with anyone, from any device.

### 2.3.2. *How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.padlet.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account.
- Sign in and start to use Padlet.

### 2.3.3. *How To Integrate Padlet Into Teaching And Learning*

Padlet offers a great venue for students to share their thoughts. Using Padlet, they can brainstorm and type their ideas on this online sheet of paper together. Teachers can then take the page and present it in class to spark continued face-to-face discussion. Padlet can help teachers summarize a large amount of information and present it in a visually pleasing way. Educators can put in text, photos, graphs and other learning tools and share the image with students before a big test or

discussion. Teachers can post a particular topic or issue, and students can post their opinions on the subject.

## **2.4. Prezi**

### *2.4.1. What is Prezi?*

Prezi is a presentation tool that can be used as an alternative to traditional slide making programs such as PowerPoint. Instead of slides, Prezi makes use of one large canvas that allows you to pan and zoom to various parts of the canvas and emphasize the ideas presented there.

### *2.4.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.prezi.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to make presentations.

### *2.4.3. How To Integrate Prezi Into Teaching And Learning*

Prezi allows teachers and students to create exciting and interactive presentations. It also helps save a lot of time because users can insert pictures directly from the Internet.

## **3. IT Tools for learning and testing English**

### **3.1. Quizlet**

#### *3.1.1. What is Quizlet?*

Quizlet is an online learning tool which enables users learn vocabulary effectively and in an enjoyable way. The modes of Quizlet include Flash Cards, Learn, Speller, Scatter, Space Race, and Gravity.

#### *3.1.2. How to sign up*

- Go to <http://www.quizlet.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start make a set of vocabulary

#### *3.1.3. How To Integrate Quizlet Into Teaching And Learning*

Quizlet is a fantastic IT tool for both teachers and students. The different modes are effective ways to help students learn and make test easy to handle. Also, Quizlet is not only useful in classroom but also for self-study. Students will never feel bored with learning new words using Quizlet. This amazing tool should be utilized by teachers and students all over the world.

### **3.2. VoiceThread**

#### *3.2.1. What is VoiceThread?*

VoiceThread is an interactive collaboration and sharing tool that enables users to add images, documents, and videos, and to which other users can add voice, text, audio file, or video comments.

#### *3.2.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.voicethread.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to use

#### *3.2.3. How To Integrate Voicethread Into Teaching And Learning*

VoiceThread is a useful tool for teachers to assess students' language skills. Teachers can assess students' Listening, Speaking, Vocabulary, and even Grammar as long as their requirement is clear. Students can share ideas and learn from each others while

commenting their friends' work. VoiceThread helps teachers save a lot of time in class when assessing students' speaking skills and giving feedback to each student.

### **3.3. Tagxedo**

#### *3.3.1. What is Tagxedo?*

Tagxedo is an exciting tool which turns words - famous speeches, news articles, slogans and themes - into a visually stunning word cloud.

#### *3.3.2. How To Use Tagxedo*

- Go to <http://www.tagxedo.com/>
- Click "Create"
- Click "Load"
- Type the words you want to create a word cloud
- Summit
- Choose shape and color or theme
- Save and share

#### *3.3.3. How To Integrate It Into Teaching And Learning*

Making word cloud with Tagxedo is really fun. You can constrain the word cloud to selected shapes such as heart, star, animals or use images as custom shapes like a portrait or an animal silhouette. It is easy to make word clouds with Tagxedo and share what you create using Facebook, Twitter or Pinterest. You can also download or print it out. Teachers can use word clouds as a vocabulary game for pre and post reading activities in class. Students can create their own word clouds using Tagxedo tool. They can learn and play with language at the same time. Creating word clouds with Tagxedo is very easy and simple. It provides teachers a new way to introduce new words for students. Tagxedo should be used in classroom to make learning English fun and effective.

### **3.4. Wevideo**

#### *3.4.1. What is Wevideo?*

WeVideo is a powerful, yet easy-to-use, cloud-based collaborative video creation platform.

#### *3.4.2. How To Sign Up*

- Go to <http://www.wevideo.com/>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to make videos

#### *3.4.3. How To Integrate Wevideo Into Teaching And Learning*

Teachers and students can use WeVideo to capture, edit and distribute content for a variety of school activities, including classroom presentations, project reports and extracurricular documentaries. With Wevideo, teachers can easily navigate and manage projects, while students can collaborate with more classmates. After creating a video, students can share the work with others. Wevideo offers a new ways to assess students' language skills through doing projects so teachers should apply the great potentials of this tool in their classroom.

### **3.5. Trace Effects**

#### *3.5.1. What is Trace Effects?*

Trace Effects is the well designed 3D game developed by the U.S. Department of State. Geared toward players at the age of 16, this innovative language learning video game will complement students' classroom English language instruction through interactive 3-D multimedia learning adventures. Trace Effects exposes users to

American society and explores themes related to entrepreneurship, community activism, empowering women, science and innovation, environmental conservation, and conflict resolution. Trace Effects also enables students to virtually visit locations like Kansas, New Orleans, New York City, the Grand Canyon and Washington D.C.

3.5.2. *How to sign up*

- Go to <http://americanenglish.state.gov/trace-effects>
- Sign up with Gmail account
- Sign in and start to play the game

3.5.3. *How to integrate Trace Effects into teaching and learning*

After students play the game, teachers can conduct various extension activities. For example, in “Task 3- Get a new student ID”, after students finish the game, teachers can ask them to find the similarities and differences between US Universities and Vietnam Universities, including:

- The campus
- Student union
- Libraries
- Museums
- Health Centers

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully, this presentation provides audience with useful knowledge of some IT tools which they can use later either in their teaching or learning English. The limited time to present makes it difficult for us to introduce all of the IT tools we know, so we are pleased to attend other TESOL Conferences to share more about what we have just learned during one year in the US.

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