Technology-Enhanced Task Engagement in English Language Instruction

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Goals of Session

1. To increase understanding of characteristics of engaging language tasks

2. To raise awareness of how technology use can support engagement

3. To provide sample engaging technology-supported language tasks

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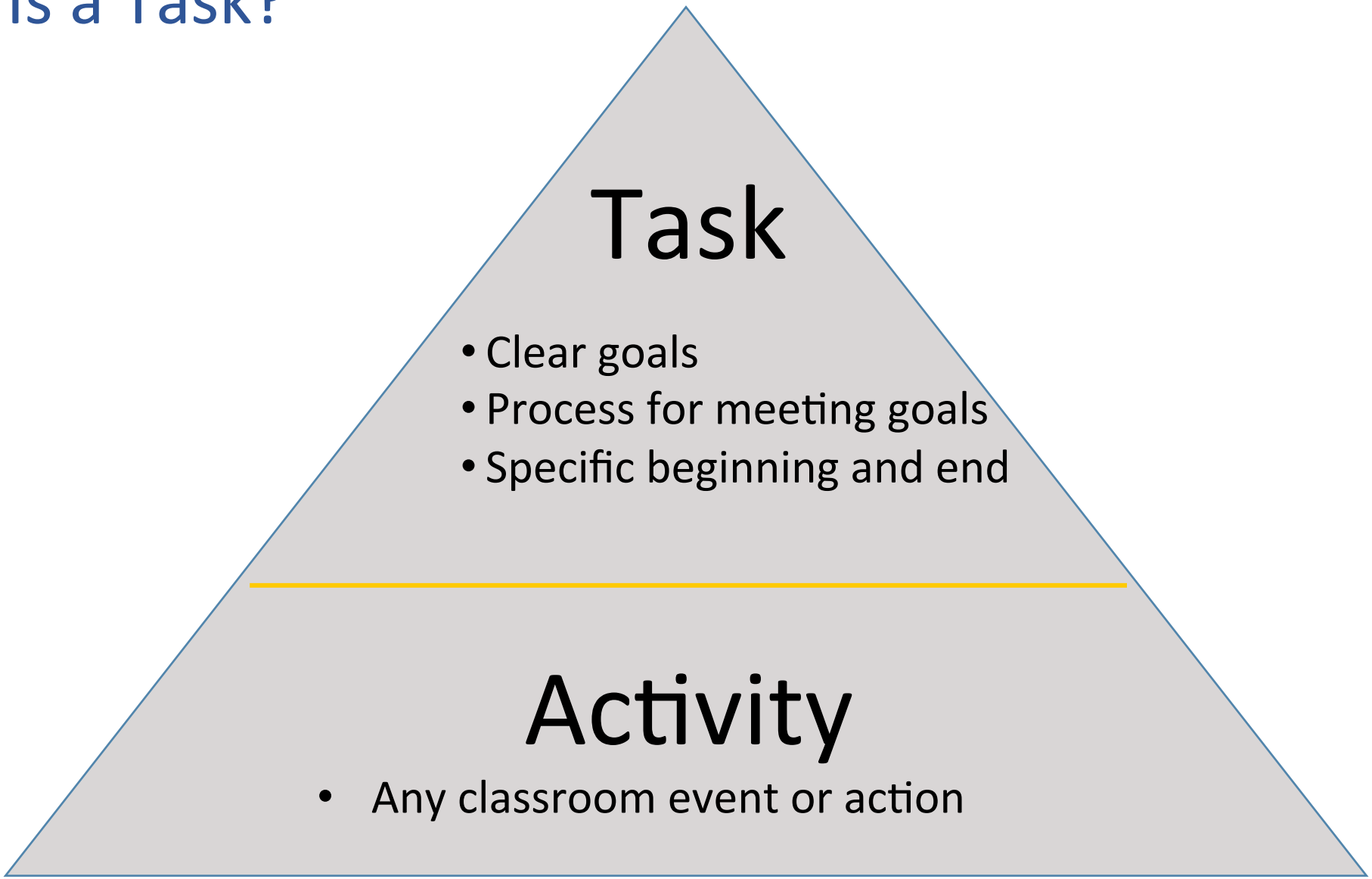
What Is a Task?



Reflect

Have you ever felt **bored** or **frustrated** in language class? Why or why not?

If yes, what could your teacher have done to involve or help you?

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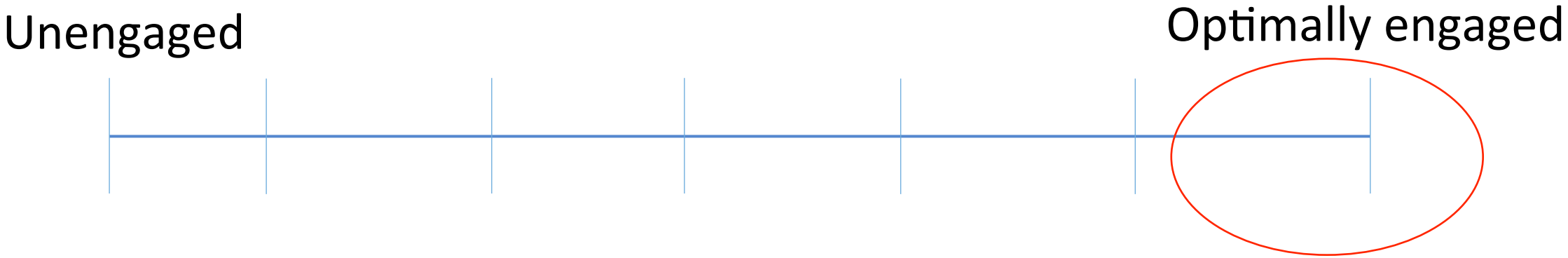
What is Engagement?



Engagement is the level of involvement in a task, ranging from not involved at all to experiencing deep involvement.

This involvement can be behavioral, cognitive, and/or emotional.

Why Focus on Task Engagement?

1. Task engagement can decrease the effect of variables like not having breakfast or getting enough sleep on student outcomes.

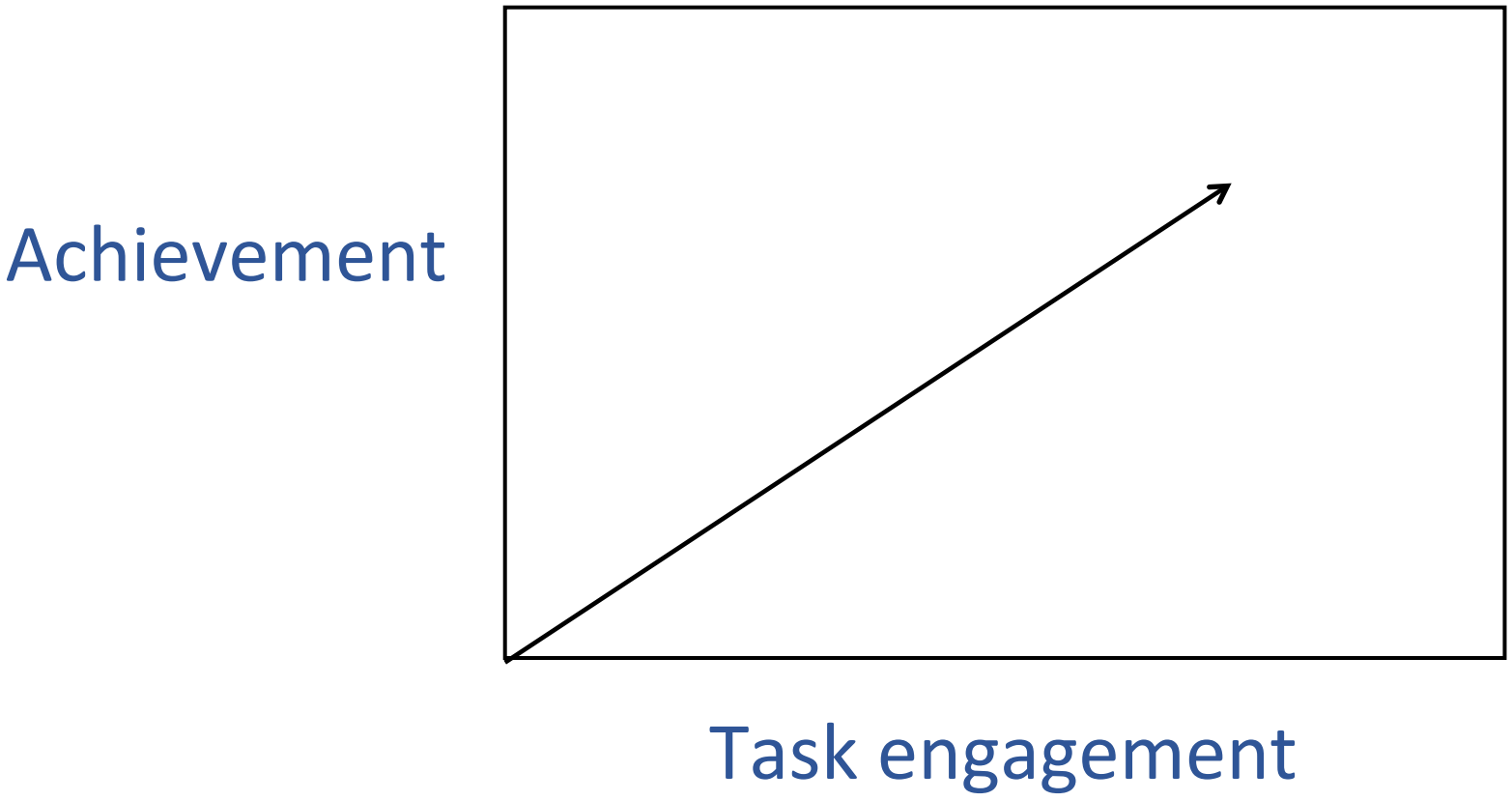
"March 21, 2018" by osseous is licensed under CC BY 2.0

"sleepyhead - March 10th" by lisibo is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

(Christenson & Reschly, 2013; Fraser, 1986)

Why Focus on Task Engagement?

2. Task engagement can lead to greater learner achievement.



(Christenson & Reschly, 2013; Csikszentmihályi, 2014)

Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks

- Based on the literature
- Change with student, task, and context
- Supported by technology

"Levi at computer" by kathleenleavitt is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks (and How Technology Can Support Them)

1. The task is **interesting**.
   (excites curiosity, is appealing)

2. The task is **authentic** to learners.
   (has real life value)

3. There are opportunities for **social interaction**.
   (communication with other people)

Six Characteristics of Engaging Tasks (continued)

4. There is a **challenge/skills balance.**
   (the task is neither too difficult nor too easy)

5. **Autonomy and structure** are balanced.
   (learners have as much freedom as they need; they can make choices)

6. **Support** and **feedback** are immediate and useful.
   (include resources, peer and expert feedback)

Reflect

What are some technologies that you have used or would like to use in your classroom to promote student task engagement?

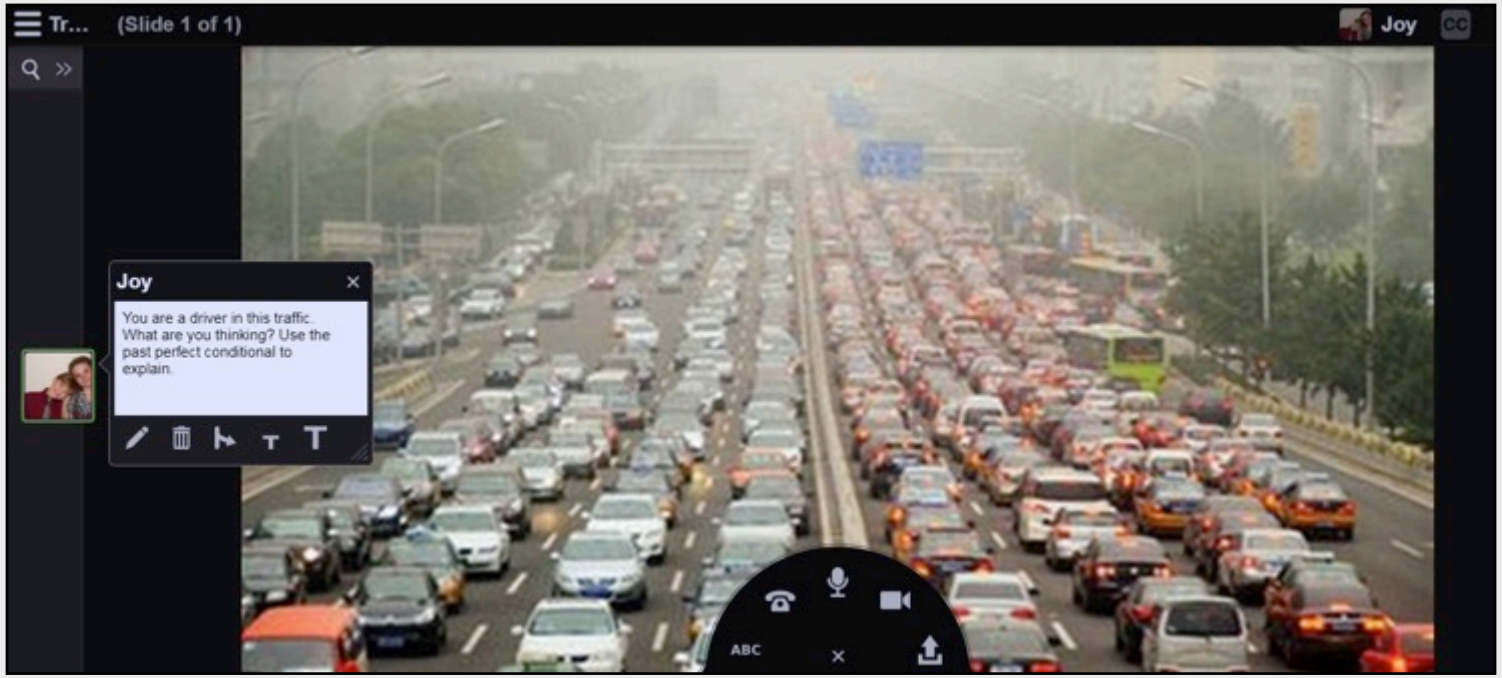
"Digital Technology Expo 2007" by xpanta is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Sample Technology-Enhanced Tasks

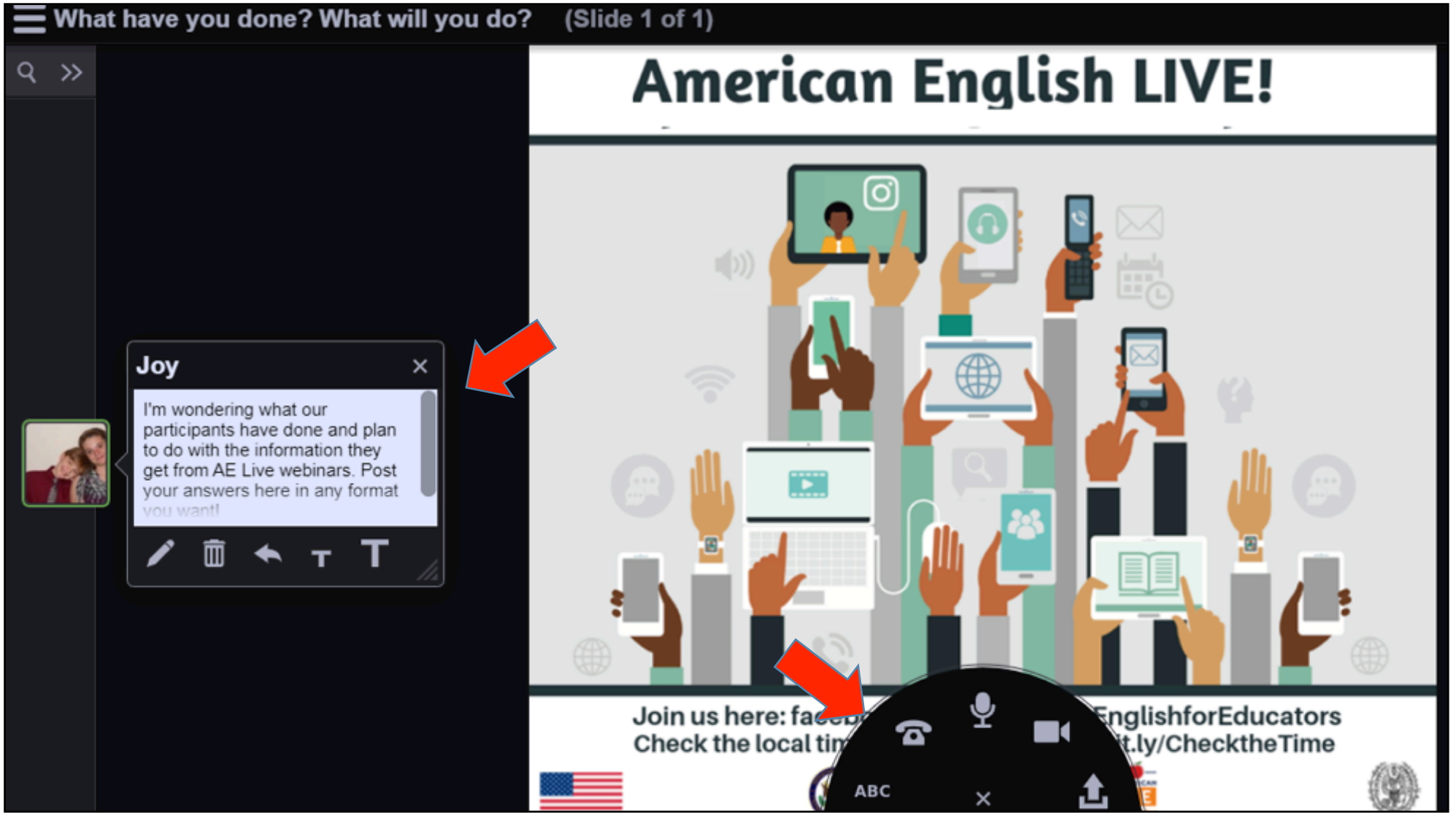
"Pledge and MOS" by Old Shoe Woman is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Voicethread

Voicethread is a collaborative online space that uses a video, podcast, graphic, or text to start a discussion or presentation.



Using a *Voicethread*



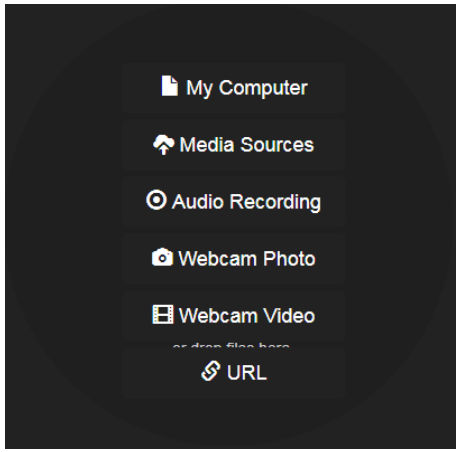
https://wsu.voicethread.com/share/12972367/

Creating a *Voicethread*

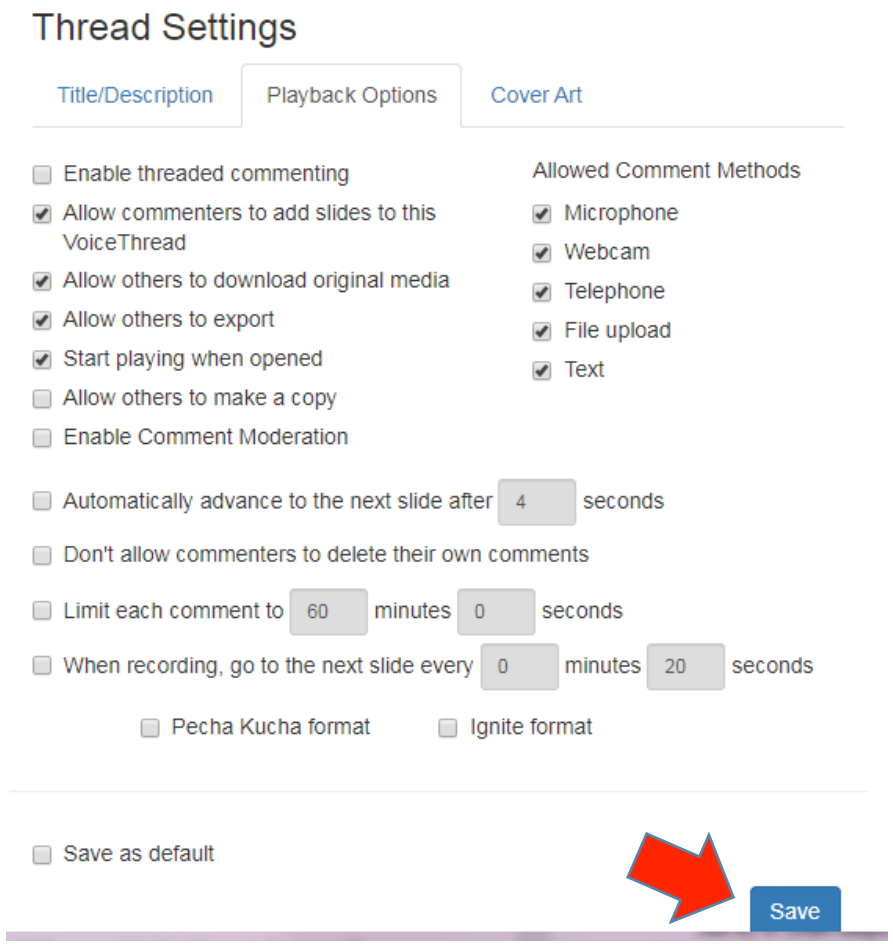
1. Register or login at voicethread.com

2. On the top menu, click “Browse” to use a Voicethread created by someone else, or click “Create” to make your own.

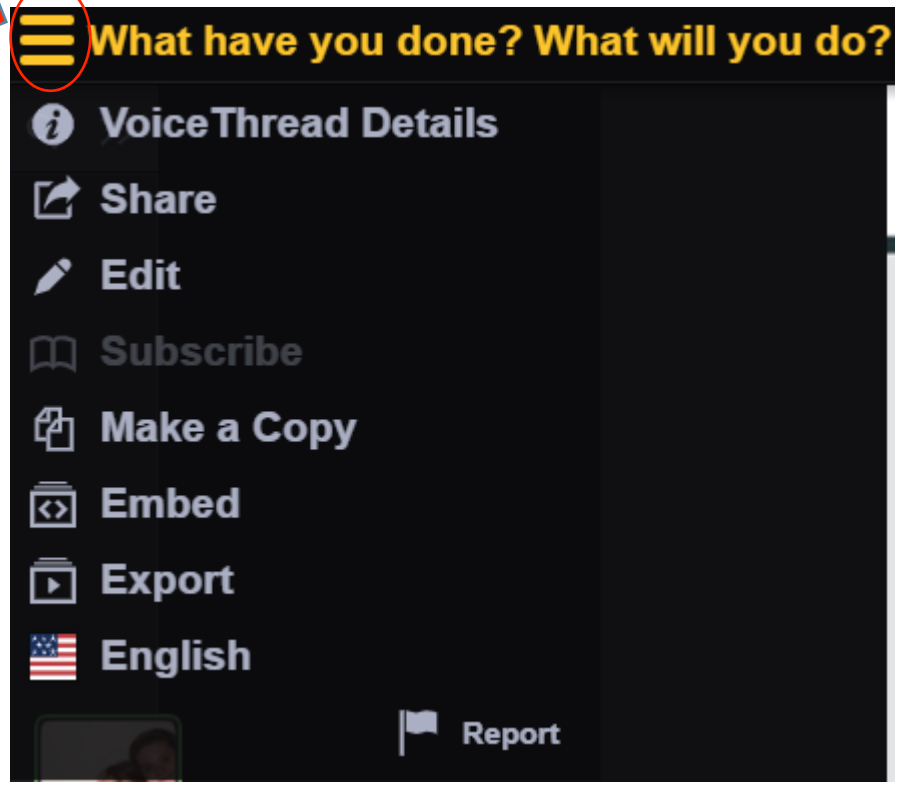
3. Add your media by choosing one of the options that will pop up.



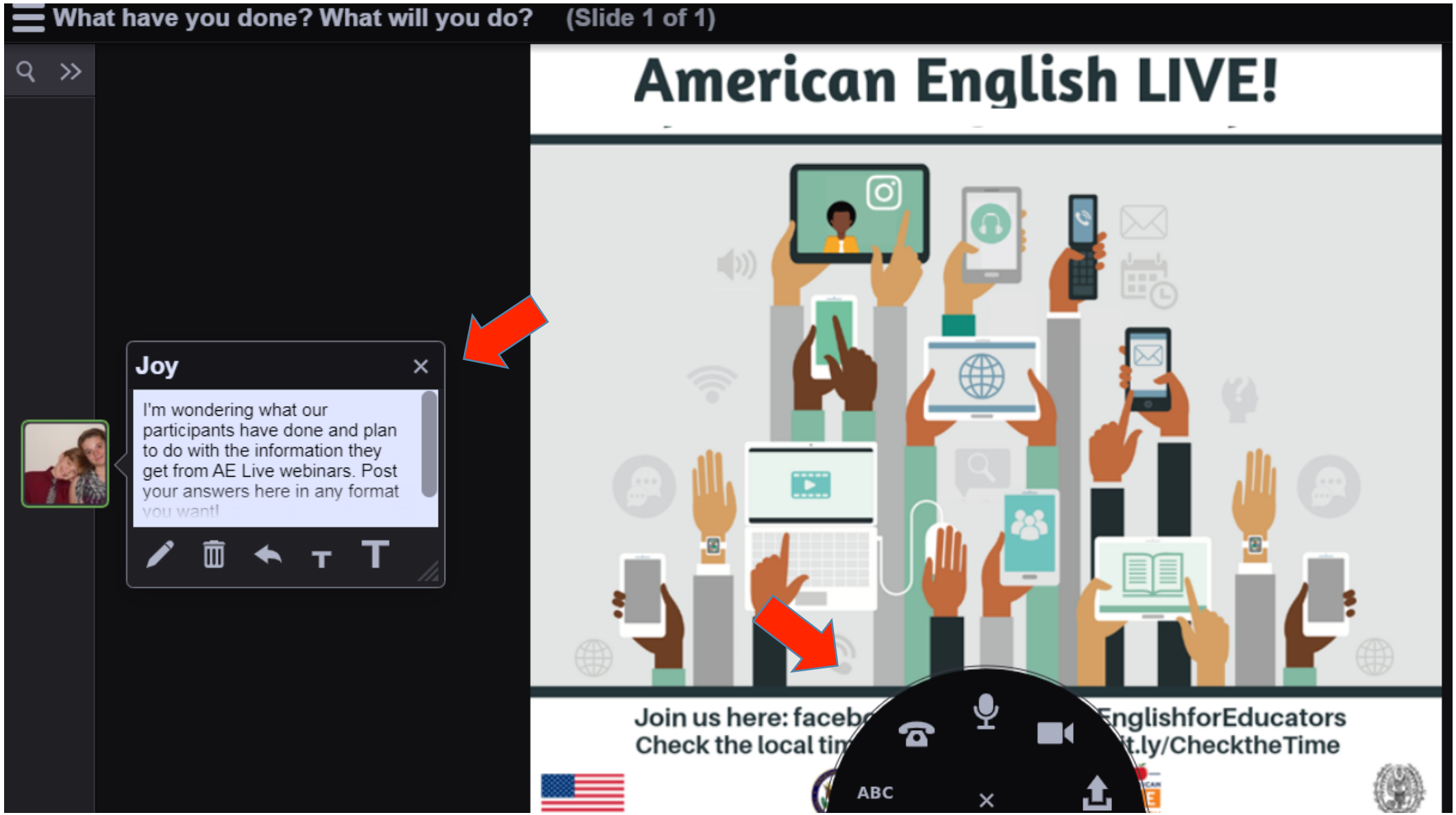
4. Choose settings.



5. Click on the 3-line icon to share, edit, or move.



Final Product



Alternatives

Focused *WeChat* or *WhatsApp* Group

"Language" by Stanislav_b7000 is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Bulletin Board with Notes

"2005_0611Image0003" by Sarah Mae is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Engagement Characteristics of a *Voicethread* Task

Which characteristics do these tasks meet?

- Interesting
- Authentic
- Social interaction
- Challenge/skills balance
- Autonomy/structure balance
- Support and feedback

Reflect

For what task(s) might you use *Voicethread* in your classroom to engage your students?

What might some challenges be?

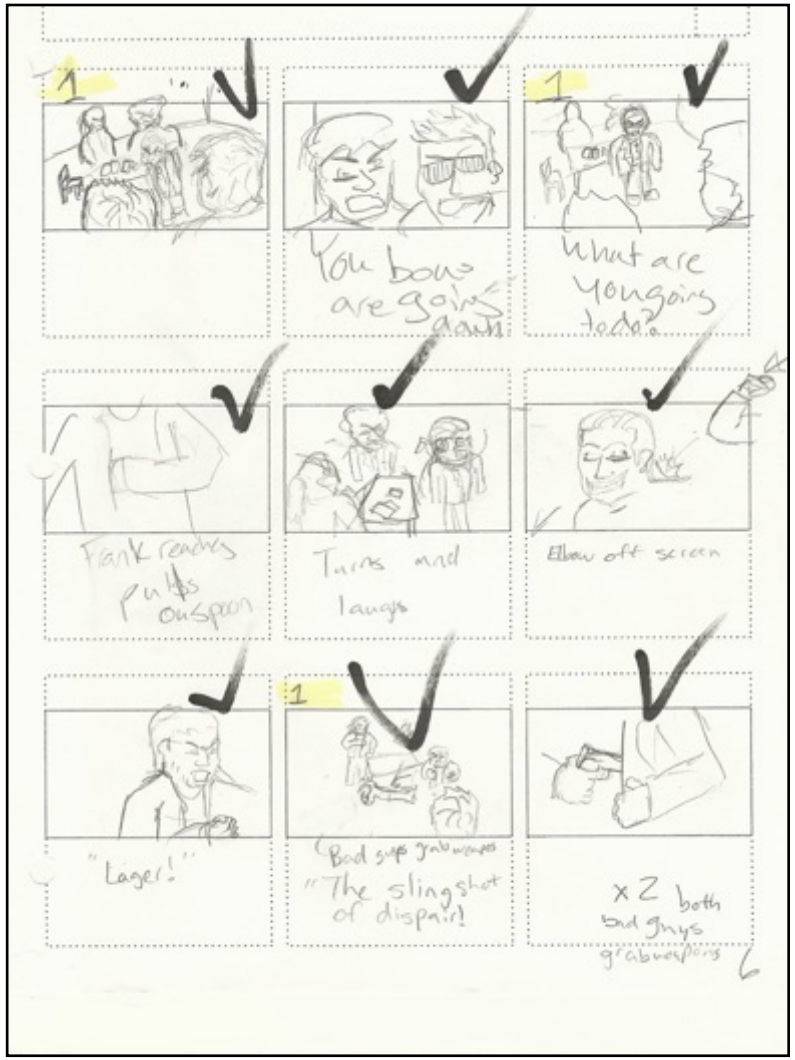
Green Screen Videos

Green screen technology allows teachers to use, or students to present, in fictional environments.

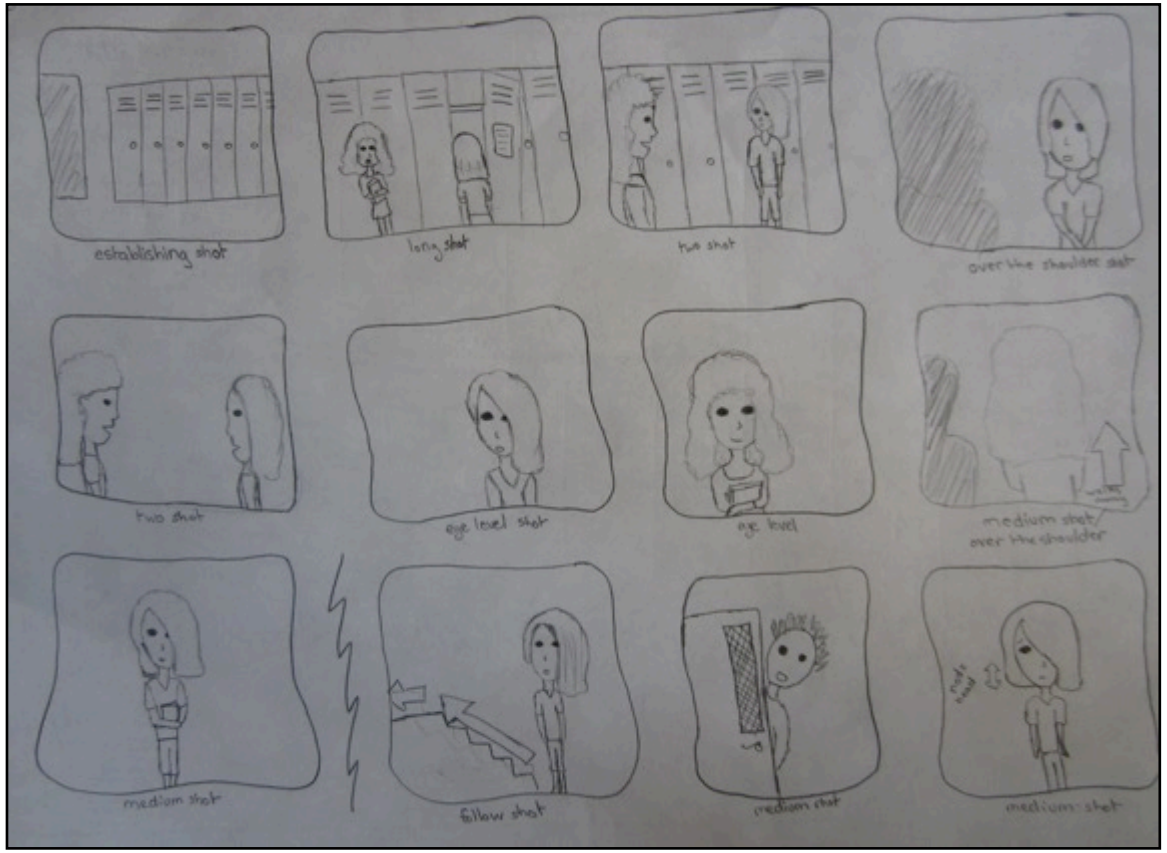
Learners can use their tablets, phones, or a digital video camera to film.

Three steps: plan, create, publish

Planning with Storyboards



"Storyboards" by Indy Trendy Skits is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0



"Student Storyboard" by mrmayo is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0

Creating the Video

Green screen videos are filmed in front of a green background

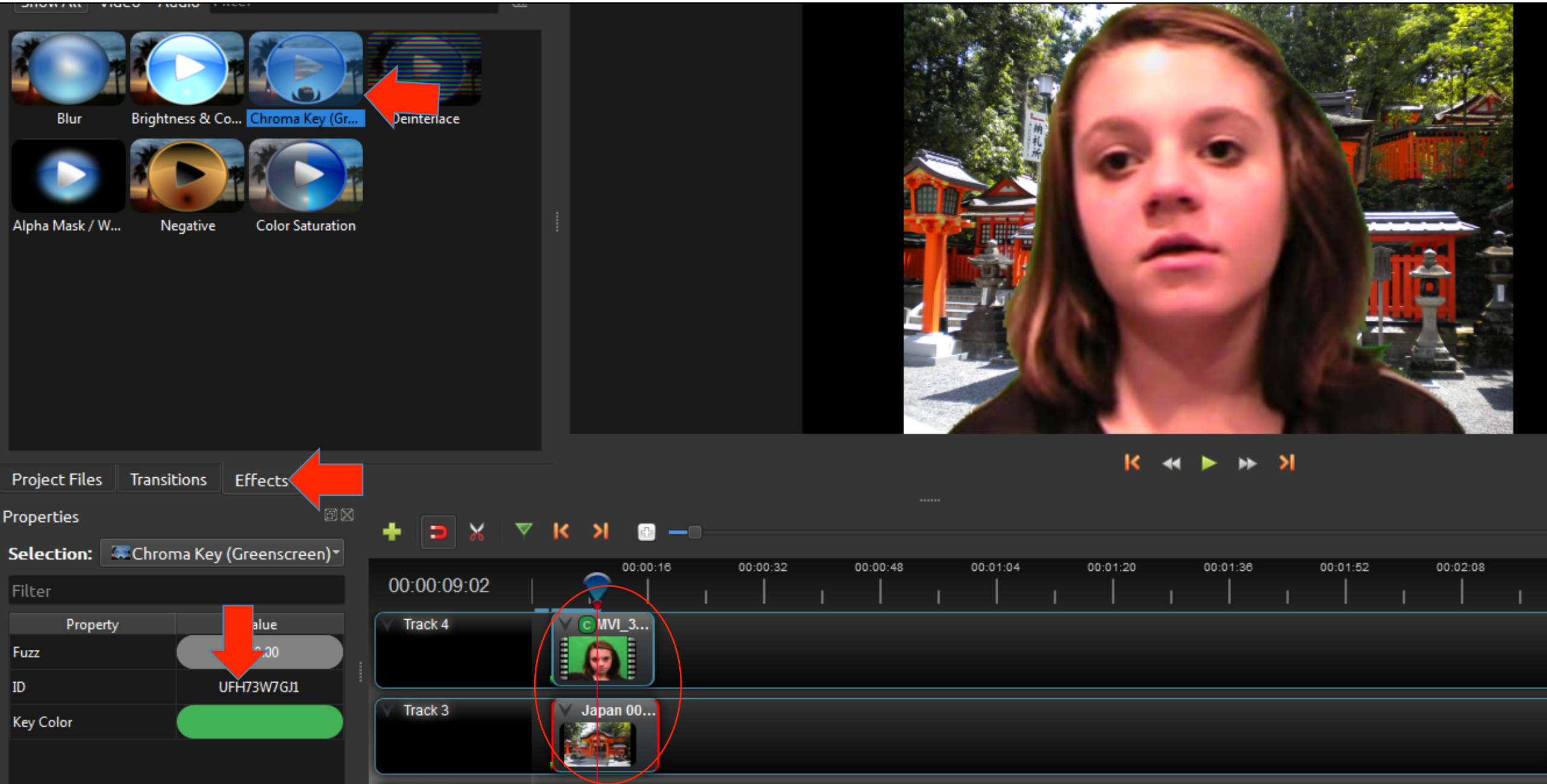
("Actors" shouldn't wear green!).

Editing

Using software such as the **free *OpenShot Video Editor***, the green background is replaced with a photo or video.

Find step by step instructions for using *OpenShot* at: https://americanenglish.state.gov/resources/teachers-corner-technology-tools-students-and-teachers

Details


Blur
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Chroma Key (Gr...
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Project Files
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Chroma Key (Greenscreen)
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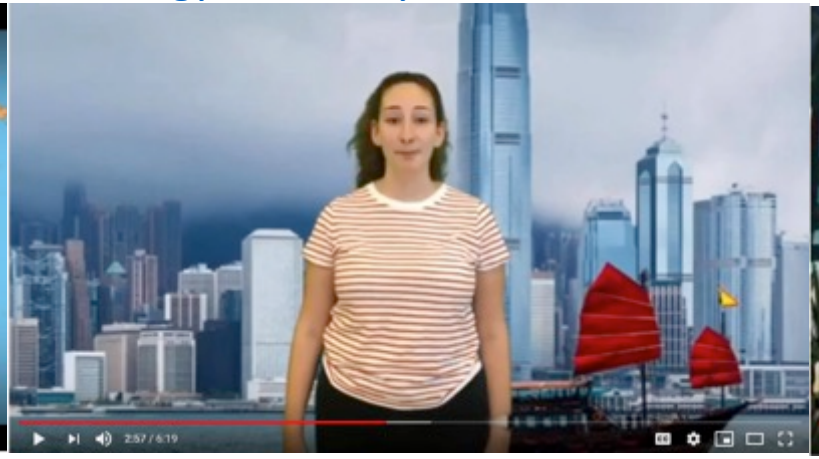
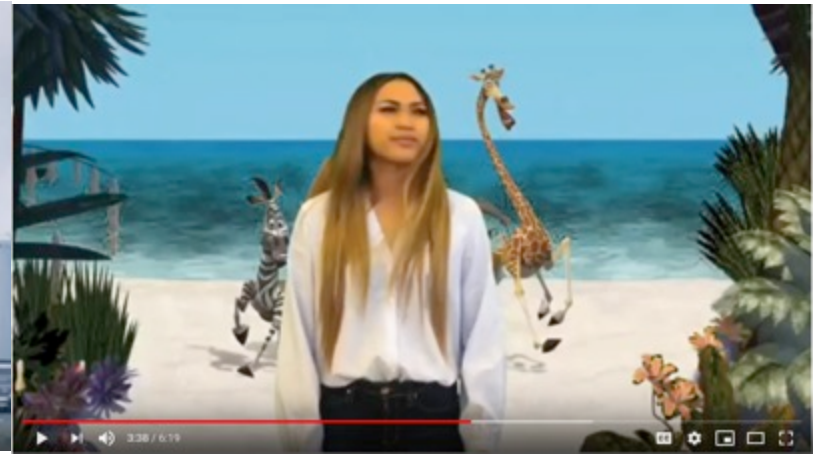
Superstar Singer

Green Screen in Teacher Education

http://technologyed.weebly.com/class-video-fall-2018.html



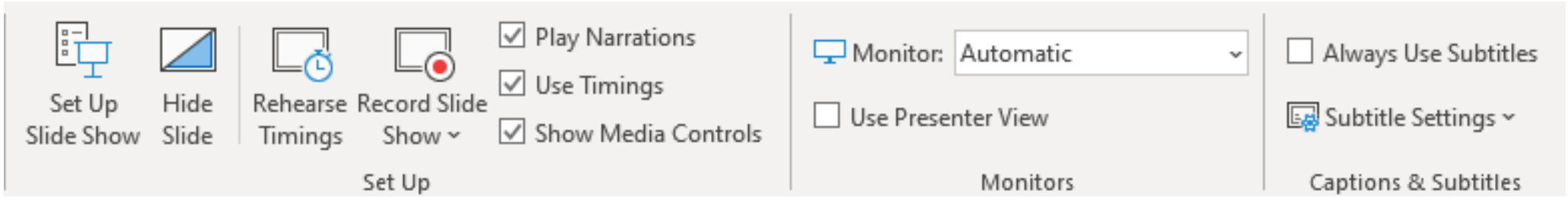


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RzvDrU9QOvM&feature=youtu.be

Alternatives

Simple cell phone video with narration

Slides with timing



For free office software, try OpenOffice: https://www.openoffice.org/

Engagement Characteristics of Green Screen Tasks

Which does it meet?

- Interesting
- Authentic
- Social interaction
- Challenge/skills balance
- Autonomy/structure balance
- Support and feedback

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Reflect

Would you use green screen video with your students?

For what types of tasks?

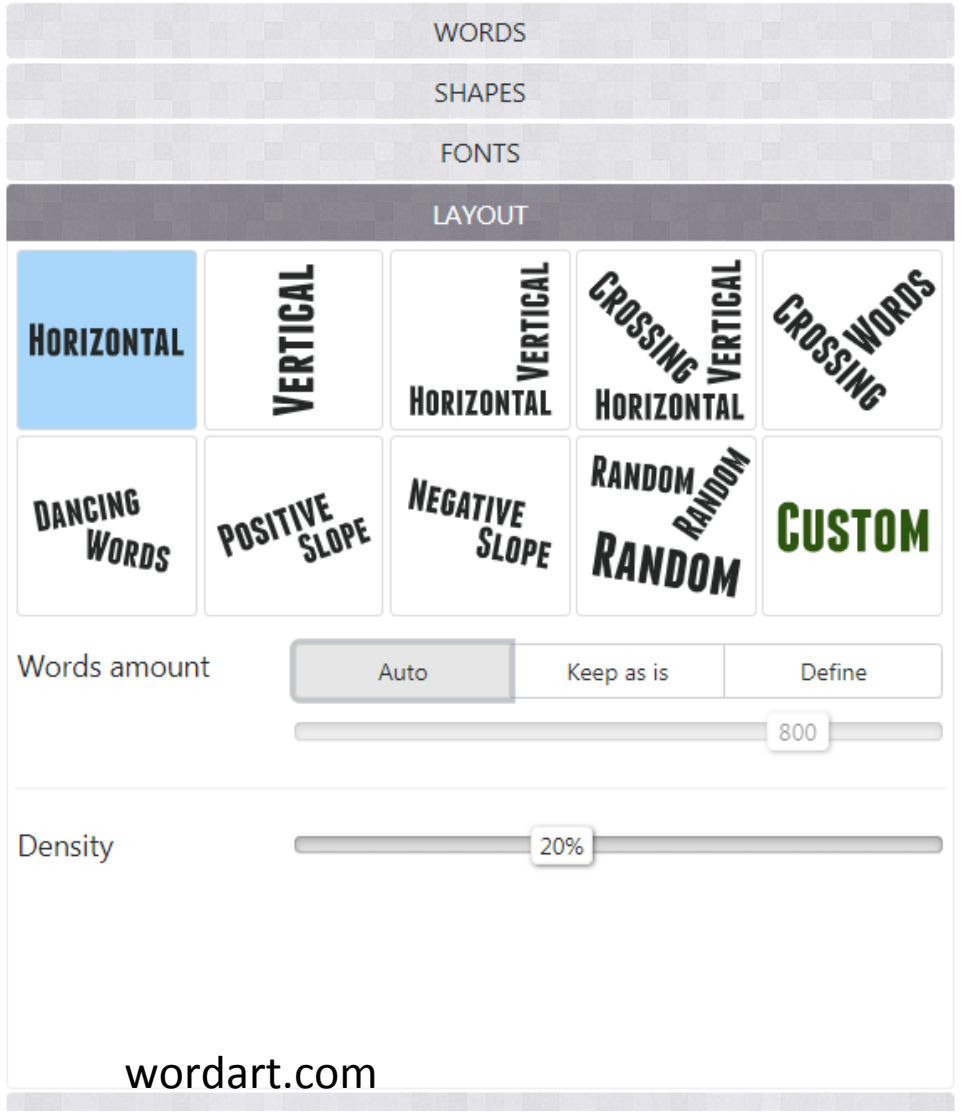
Word Clouds

A **word cloud** is an image made from a text.

To make a word cloud,

1. Decide which text you will use.
2. Paste or upload the text to the cloud maker (try wordart.com).
3. Click “visualize.”
4. Customize it any way you want.

Task 1: What can you learn about me?



wordart.com

Task 2: What will this passage be about?

5 Difficult Words I Definitely Know	Words I Think I Know	Words I Don't Yet Know

Task 3: Which famous play is this from?

Find three words that describe people/ the setting/ the mood/ the theme.

More Ways to Use Word Clouds

- Discover ways to convey a learned concept or idea.
- Analyze frequency of word usage in a writing.
- Compare/ contrast word clouds made from fiction and nonfiction.
- Copy and paste various authors' and writers' styles to see what can be learned.
- Identify parts of speech to see numbers of adverbs, adjectives, etc.
- Compare and contrast persuasive writing using word clouds.

Adapted from 108 ways to use word clouds in the classroom

Reflect

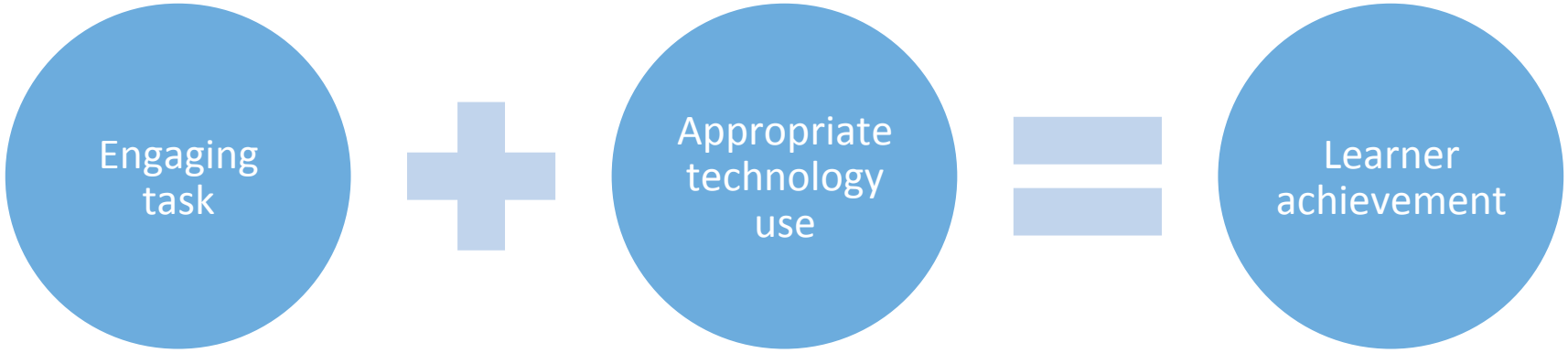
How might you use a word cloud task to engage your students?

Additional Thoughts about Engaging Learners with Technology

- You don’t have to know it all; let learners teach you.
- Focus on tool use, not just the tool.
- Don’t be afraid to explore simple, innovative tools like virtual reality and other tools to engage language learners.
- Don’t use it if its use isn’t warranted.

Conclusion

Characteristics of engaging tasks, integrated throughout the language task and supported by appropriate technology use, can lead to learner achievement.



References

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Csikszentmihályi, M. (2014). *Flow and the foundations of positive psychology*: *The collected works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.* New York, NY: Springer.

Fraser, B. (1986). *Classroom environment*. London: Croom Helm.