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My name is Sarah Braun Hamilton, and I am a Teacher / Community Coordinator at Central Vermont Adult Basic Education in Montpelier, Vermont. I've made this presentation to tell you about a lesson I developed as part of the Technology Integration Project sponsored by the New England Literacy Resource Center. I'm taking this opportunity to try out the new features of PowerPoint 2013. Please enjoy!

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I teach an English Vocabulary class for non-native speakers. We meet for one and a half hours once a week, and we cover topics like how to find new words to learn, what it means to know a word, and how to identify and decode parts of words like prefixes and suffixes.

We have four regular students with a range of low to high intermediate level skills in English, three of whom were in class the day of the lesson I'm going to tell you about.

Xavier, Hanh, and Mia

For this class, we had a new student, Ezana, from Bosnia, who works with a tutor out of our Waterbury office and decided to come by and check out our class. Luckily our fourth regular student couldn't make it, so we still had enough computers and space for everyone. AND Ezana's tutor, Lisa, attended with her and was able to observe the lesson, assist Ezana, and give me some valuable feedback.

Just for the record, these are not the students' real names.

Oh, and me.

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The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards strongly emphasize vocabulary development as a key to academic success.

English language learners need to be able to extract unknown words from the speech they hear, remember those words, and determine their meaning. This skill can help them immensely in conversation. It's also essential for college and career.

<puppet>: Excuse me, Sarah?

<Sarah>: Yes, Sammy?

<puppet>: I don't know the word "extract." What does it mean?

<Sarah>: Oh, sure. Extract means "pull out." So if you extract an unknown word, it means you pull it out, or separate it from the rest of the talking. Like you just did!

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I wanted to help my students practice this skill. I could do this by speaking to them myself and having them take notes, or by dictating sentences. But I wanted to give them a way to practice on their own at home, and I want them to learn to access English vocabulary in a wide variety of accents on a wide variety of topics. I want them to listen to people talking who aren't me, and who aren't automatically using the clear diction and limited vocabulary of "English Teacher Speak." So I went to TED Talks. And here's what we did.

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I gave the students a handout with instructions and space to make notes about the words they caught from the video at each step. I also gave them space to write down what they learned about meaning and usage, and I asked them to summarize the main idea of the talk.

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<screencast>

The TED Talks website has thousands of video lectures in English by speakers from around the world. They are engaging and high interest, often accompanied by excellent visuals, and many of them are short. There are two important features that serve as scaffolding for students: subtitles (in English and many other languages), and interactive transcripts.

I used my computer and a projector to introduce the students to the TED Talks website.

I very briefly showed them around and demonstrated the search functionality by replicating the search that had led me to the talk I planned to show them.

Under duration, I chose 0-6 minutes because I wanted a talk we could watch several times over the course of the class. And under topic I chose Language, because that's what I like. I found this four and a half minute video by a man with an American accent who speaks nice and slowly, and I figured that would be a good place to start.

Then I showed them the video, and I asked them to try to "catch" all the new words that they could and write them down so that they could remember them. I'm not going to show you the whole video.

Next, I showed them how to turn on subtitles. For the purpose of our lesson we used subtitles in English, but I made sure they saw that they could use subtitles in other languages as an intermediary step if they repeated this process at home. And we watched the video again with the subtitles. They tried to "catch" their same words and correct the spelling, and also to catch another word or two if they could.

Then we went to the transcript. For this part each student worked on their own computer, which I had already set up with the website and headphones. They listened to the video while reading along on the transcript. The transcripts are interactive, so you can click on a certain word in the transcript and the video will jump to that point. You can replay a particular section again and again to get clear on the pronunciation and context of a particular word or phrase.

Some students did this, and some students took the opportunity to click away and check out some of the other videos on the site. I didn't try too hard to rein them in to the task, because I loved seeing them discovering talks that were more interesting to them and also more challenging.

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Xavier, who is interested in war and the effects of war, watched a talk by Eman Mohammed about her work as a woman photojournalist in Palestine, and Mia started watching Monica Lewinsky's recent talk about The Price of Shame.

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At the time of the lesson those videos were featured on the main Ted page. There are also a variety of playlists on different topics, and the opportunity to create your own. I'm consistently impressed with how easy this website is to use, and how easy it is to get sucked in to watching videos of people talking for hours, even for me, who would swear up and down that I "can't stand video."

There's also a great discovery tool here - the default is to sort by newest, but you can also choose to sort by "Most-viewed," "ingenious," or "beautiful." This list could be an excellent vocabulary study for another lesson.

When the watching and clicking and note-taking seemed to be winding down, I called the class back together and started to work with the words we had found.

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When the students had their list of new words that they'd discovered from the talk, I asked them to look them up using all the tools at their disposal, which ranged from Hanh's smartphone translation app to our center's hard copy dictionaries, and to write down what they learned.

I then asked each student to give the class one of their words, their favorite word, and I wrote them on the board for discussion. We got awesome words: mania, unimaginable, hysterical, witness, opportunity, harnessing, grueling, excruciating, pandemonium, humiliation, and dire.

By the time all those words were listed and briefly discussed, it was time to end the class. The students took home their worksheets full of words, and a supplement from me listing a few other specific short talks that I had watched and found interesting.

They also completed a short formative assessment so I could get some feedback on how the lesson went and where to go next.

The next week, the students had all watched several more videos on their own and wanted to tell me about them.

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I chose a formative assessment format seemingly at random. Of course I assessed the students' understanding of the assignment as I went around the room while they were working individually, and I adjusted my instruction accordingly. But it was nice to have some concrete feedback at the end of the day, both from the students and from Lisa, the volunteer tutor who observed me.

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I should have taken more time to model the process I expected – our new student, Ezana, really missed the step where she should have identified the correct spelling of the vocabulary words she'd written down by using the subtitles and the transcripts. So she was confused when it came time to look up her words in a dictionary and she only had her phonetic spellings. Next time I will have each student model one word at each step, and I'll write them on the board. This would help keep the students on task in each section of the lesson, as well.

More space: The room was not really big enough for me, the four students, their computers, and the projector. We couldn't project and compute at the same time, and I kept having to squeeze behind them to get to the board and back. That made it difficult for me to walk around and assist them as they worked individually, as well. Next time I would definitely use the larger room, or project in one room and work individually on the laptops in the other.

The students were able to use the technology well - they are familiar with playing videos, and once I showed them the transcripts and subtitles they were able to use them well, although the transcripts didn't work as well as I had hoped – I think the demand on our wifi with four students simultaneously jumping around in streaming video was a little bit much. When that wasn't working well, or when it wasn't needed because the language in the video I chose was

not that challenging, it was easy for the students to go on to explore other videos, and I would like to incorporate that into a follow-up lesson.

We also didn't have much time to give to the content of this video, which was pretty interesting, and I wasn't able to fully check the students' comprehension of the speaker's message about the importance of English language learning for global communication and problem solving. I'd like to try a content discussion either before watching the video at all, or after the first viewing, before we got into the details of vocabulary.

All in all, I was pleased with how this lesson went, and the use of technology definitely enhanced not only their learning during class time, but also their ability to practice extracting vocabulary from fluent speech at home.

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Thank you very much, it's been a pleasure.

<puppet> Thank you, and good night.

<Sarah> Good night, Sammy.