

CALICO 2015
Places and Spaces: Redefining Language Learning
University of Colorado, Boulder
May 26-30

**Cross-cultural Collaboration:
Learning from the Peers in the Cloud**

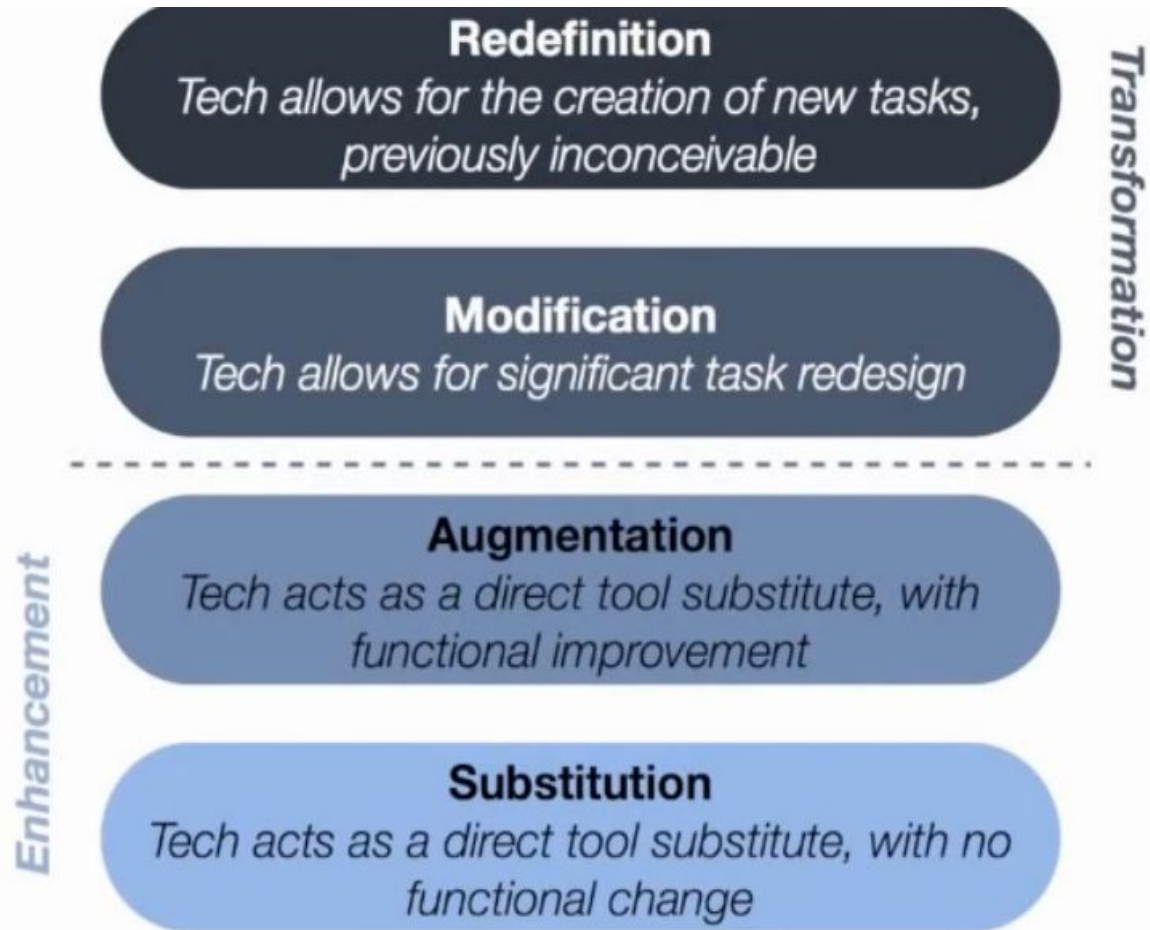
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Presentation Outline

- **Redefining Language Learning: The SMAR Model**
- **What is *VoiceThread* & Why use it for Class?**
- **Examples of Student Work**
- **Findings from Student Surveys**
- **Discussion**

The SMAR Model

Ruben Puentedura, 2006



Redefining Learning:

Connecting Students from the U.S. and Canada

Pedagogical Expectations

Collaborative learning activities in the cloud would

- **Engage students beyond the classroom**
- **Allow for inter-institutional collaboration**
- **Stimulate active learning**
- **Provide opportunities to internalize information**
- **Encourage more thoughtful reflection**
- **Inspire facilitative rather than didactic teaching**

What is *VoiceThread*?

- A cloud application for asynchronous communication
- Originally used by social and business groups
- Appropriated by educators for pedagogical purposes
- Follows the Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI) standard
- Allows for Integration with most Learning Management Systems (LMSs): Blackboard, Sakai, Angel, Canvas, Desire2Learn, and Moodle
- No software installation is necessary
- System requirements are simple: an up-to-date version of Adobe Flash

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

Main Features:

VT accepts input from users via five COMMENTING options:

- **Recording an audio comment (microphone)**
- **Recording a video comment (webcam)**
- **Typing (similar to text messaging)**
- **Uploading files (text, audio, video, images)**
- **Dialing in (phone)**

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

Main Features:

- VT captures and holds an entire group discussion (thread) on ONE page (screen):
- VT contains three SHARING options:
 - Keep private
 - Share with specific people
 - Open up to the entire world

Why use *VoiceThread* for Class?

Functionality: VT Allows to

- Zoom in and look around a specific artifact (e.g., an image)
- Leave or delete a comment
- Navigate through pages easily
(if more than one image is included)
- Write or annotate on a video/explain what might be happening: VIDEO DOODLING
- Provide feedback

Examples of Student Work

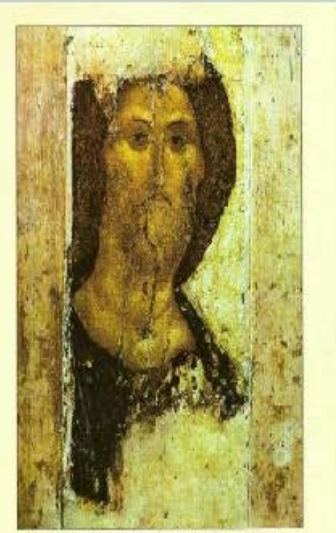
Russian Culture & Civilization:

The screenshot shows a digital interface for a discussion forum assignment. At the top, the title "Dicussion Forum Assignment: Icons (1/4)" is displayed in white text on a black background. To the right of the title are icons for a star, a share button, and a close button. The main content area is a white box with a black border. The title "Discussion Forum Assignment" is written in a large, orange, serif font. Below the title is a light blue rectangular area containing the assignment instructions in black, all-caps text: "FROM THE THREE IMAGES OF ICONS POSTED, SELECT ONE AND DESCRIBE IT. EXPLAIN YOUR CHOICE AND COMPARE TO THE OTHER ICONS. REFLECT ON PICTORIAL ELEMENTS AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ICON. COMMENT ON AT LEAST ONE OF YOUR PEER'S RESPONSES. PROVIDE YOUR RESPONSES IN AUDIO OR VIDEO FORMAT." A white speech bubble with a black border is overlaid on the left side of the assignment text, containing the text "Delete this comment?" and two options: "keep it" with a green checkmark icon and "delete it" with a red trash can icon. At the bottom of the interface, there is a navigation bar with a back arrow, a white chess piece icon, a "comment" button with a speech bubble icon, a play/pause button, a video gallery icon, and a forward arrow. A small white hand cursor icon is visible on the left side of the interface.

RUS-320 Russian Culture & Civilization

Discussion Forum Assignment: Icons (3/4)

Spas/The Savior by Andrei Rublev, 1420's



L. Andrei Rublev, Spas (The Savior), 1420s, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. An icon showing the savior with a halo, wearing a blue robe and a red sash. The background is gold leaf.

George

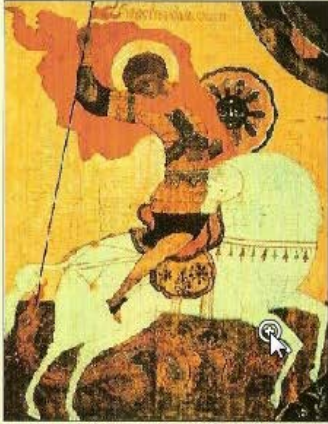
comment

10

RUS-320 Russian Culture & Civilization

Discussion Forum Assignment: Icons (4/4)

St. George and the Dragon: 15th century



6. St. George and the Dragon, early 15th century, Novgorod School, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Both the sun emitting rays on the shield and the anatomically exaggerated white horse show the continuing influence of the pre-Christian sun god in the Russian North.


comment

Navigation icons: back, home, forward, search, etc.

RUS-320 Russian Culture & Civilization

Assignment 2: East-West (1/11)

East-West



Assignment: Discussion Forum 3

Examine the still shots of selected scenes from the movie "East-West" in this PPT and then select one that you think is quintessential for our understanding of one of the important themes discussed in this film. Provide a brief explanation of why you chose that scene. Comment on or critique at least one of your peers' responses.

comment

Student Exit Survey

Judgments were made on a 5-point scale (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree); n = 14

Question	Mean	S D
1. Helped me express myself more creatively	3.57	0.82
2. Provided an additional way to interact with peers in class	3.79	0.41
3. Helped me spend more time thinking & discussing the topic	3.71	0.96
4. Was a “popularity contest” in class	2.07	0.88
5. Distracted me from learning the course content	2.07	0.88
6. Consumed too much time relative to other assignments	2.43	0.82
7. I was motivated, because my peers read and critiqued my posts	3.79	0.86
8. I was motivated, because my professor read and assessed my posts	4.07	0.70
9. My peers quickly reacted to and commented on my posts	3.43	0.73
10. I found commenting on my peers’ posts challenging	3.00	0.76

Student Exit Survey

Judgments were made on a descending 5-point scale

Question	Mean	Standard Deviations
11. I found participating in an online discussion challenging	3.07	0.88
12. Learning other students' opinions was useful for me	3.50	0.91
13. Overall, I found VT discussion useful for RUS-320	3.64	0.81
14. I'd like to continue using VT discussion in my other classes	3.36	0.81
15. I knew how to use VT after one demonstration	4.07	0.70
16. I found it interesting to comment on images in VT	3.93	0.88
19. I checked the posts from the University of Waterloo, Canada	3.36	1.04
20. I would like to continue using VT in other courses	3.14	0.74

Academic Benefits

Students:

- Participated more actively in digital discussions than in the classroom
- Stayed engaged by choosing a conversation strand that was of interest
- Participated in multiple strands simultaneously
- Thought about their comments beforehand- the sense of “safety”
- Provided comments that evolved into a thoughtful discussion
- Integrated other’s perspectives into their learning experience
- Developed critical thinking skills
- Were able to post comments from anywhere at any time
- Collaborated with peers from different schools in a single conversation

Technological Benefits

- **Free accounts on VT public site (basic features only)**
- **Subscriptions for advanced features are affordable**
- **Tutorials for newbies**
- **Numerous examples of class projects and activities**
- **Learning curve for students is minimal**
- **Universal in access (from microphone, to telephone, to text, or webcam commenting)**

Discussion: How can we use VT Effectively?

- Supplement a course designed in any LMS
- Use *VoiceThread* projects that can support course objectives

What might be useful for instructors?

- Consider designing tasks around images
- Develop brief tasks tied to topics covered in class
- Discuss upcoming projects and potential problems
- Specify expected quality and quantity of communication
- Provide guidance on how to comment effectively and thoughtfully
- Consider bringing up posted comments in class
- Ask students to evaluate what makes a good comment
- Instruct students to register for VT with their school email accounts

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