FAAPI

Review of Triptico by David Riley

Triptico App

David Riley
Downloadable from http://www.triptico.co.uk/download
Price: Free. Individual or school subscriptions can be purchased for additional resources and bonus features.
Requirements: Adobe Air; Internet connection.

The main criticism levelled worldwide against IWBs (interactive whiteboards) is that they may reinforce traditional pedagogies by stimulating whole-class, teacher-centred teaching, particularly in the absence of initial educator training and textbook-independent teaching materials – see, for example, Koenraad (2008). With the rise in the use of IWBs in Argentina, many local teachers have felt the need to find IWB-compatible resources that will foster interactivity, creativity and contextualisation.

The *Triptico* suite sets out to provide teachers with tools to create "engaging interactive learning", as announced in their homepage. I first became acquainted with the "Word Magnets" resource in *Triptico Desktop Resources* (as it was then called) in 2011 through an online video demonstration by Russell Stannard. I was impressed by the range of classroom uses suggested, downloaded the app and started exploring the many other resources in this suite available free of charge.

In December 2012 *Triptico Plus* was launched. Many of the original (and some new) resources continue to be free to use in this version once the app is downloaded and installed, while individual or school subscriptions grant access to additional tools and features.

As I write (mid-January 2013) there are 12 free and 3 paid-up resources, classified and colour-coded into four groups: *tools*, *timers*, *selectors* and *quizzes* (Figure 1). Several can be run simultaneously in the classroom and, perhaps with the obvious exception of the timers, they allow for fast and easy customisation, through online input of data on the spot (which can be saved as a plain text file onto your hard drive), or upload of

a previously created file. The paid-up option enables the additional saving of materials on the "Triptico Cloud" for access from any computer after logging into your account.

Figure 1: Resources

Word Magnets is one of the most flexible of the resources, particularly when using the 42 backgrounds available, ranging from a split screen or Venn diagrams to geometrical shapes and flow charts. Text can be uploaded or keyed in, and then coloured, moved around the board or even deleted. Some classroom uses include colouring parts of speech, ordering words or sentences, creating timelines of events or mind maps, identifying (and correcting) mistakes and developing vocabulary. The *Triptico* website itself (Riley, 2013a) offers a detailed list.

Order Sorter is a resource to order words or sentences by dragging and dropping. While the class is ordering the items new ones can be added and existing ones can be deleted to reflect views put forward, and the final result can be saved as both an image and a text file. It seems a very good option to develop the speaking skill through supporting arguments to prioritise, and writing preparation for narratives through chronological arrangement of events, for instance. In Figure 2 the demo file has been used, illustrating the editing options.
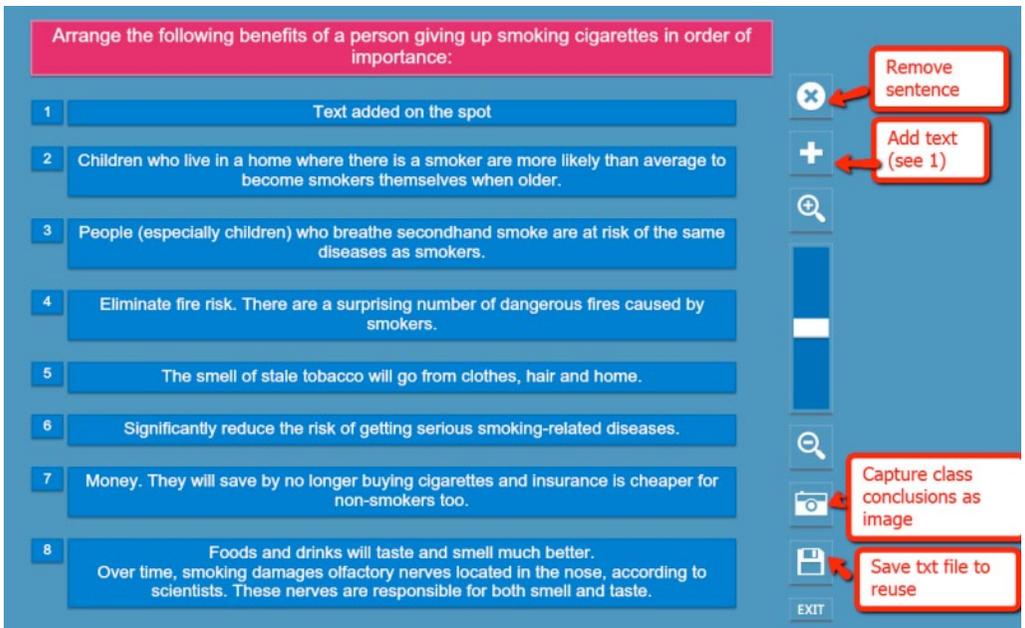

Figure 2: Order Sorter

The three *timers* available (Figure 3) can be used simultaneously with any of the other resources or during any classroom activity to add an extra challenge and build a game-like atmosphere. All of them have sound and the *Circle timer* offers a choice of colours as well as the option to show numbers, hear the tick and alarm sound or not.

Figure 3: Timers

Student Group (Figure 4) also contributes to creating a playful atmosphere. Type in or upload a class roster (txt file), delete absent students, decide how many groups you want and with one click on "Select groups" the program will randomly group the students in no time by colour-coding the names. You can save the result in image form.

Figure 4: Student Group

Flip Selector recreates swipe cards. Running the mouse (or pencil or finger on IWBs) downwards on the screen will set the cards flipping randomly until one is chosen (the settings allow you to decide whether duplicates are possible). The same roster used for *Student Group* can be applied to select one student at a time. Alternatively, questions can be typed in or uploaded for random selection in oral work (Figure 5).
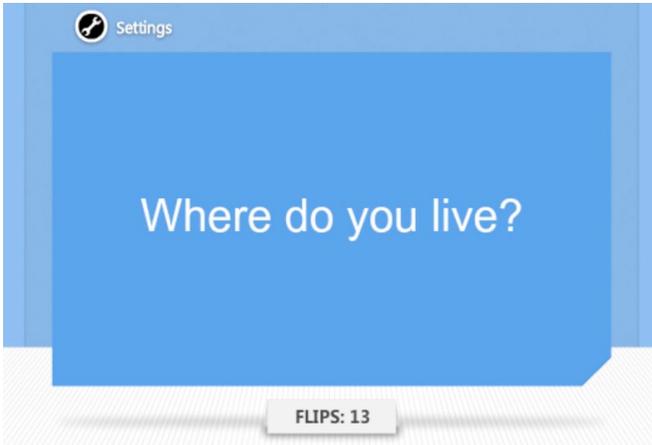

Figure 5: Flip Selector

Pin Board is another selector: tapping on the screen will send coloured balls rolling into labelled containers (both colours and labels are customisable). The author suggests using it to randomly decide on the activity to do next, to allocate points or to select groups. Yet it seems too time-consuming (the balls bounce rather slowly) to be effectively used in the classroom.
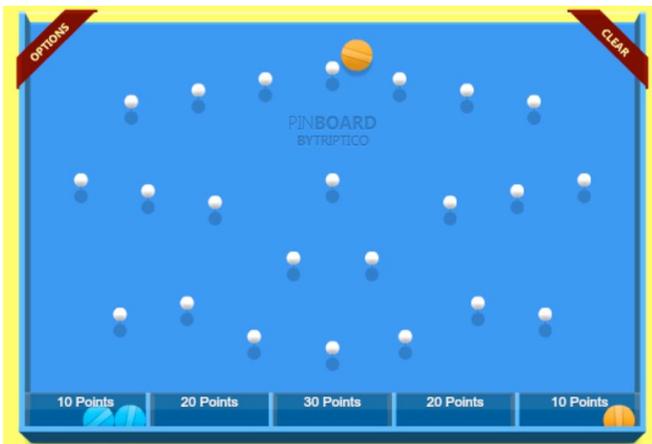

Figure 6: Pin Board

With *Text Spinner* you can create your own boards and draw circles on the screen to set the selector spinning. The label in each segment will be changed by pressing the "Refresh" button. Extra information can also be added to each segment. One activity I suggest for fluency (Figures 7a and 7b) is to write topics on the board. After spinning to get a topic, one student will deliver a one or two minute talk on it. If they are at a loss, they can click on "Info" to receive prompts (perhaps losing some points when they do if organized as a team competition).
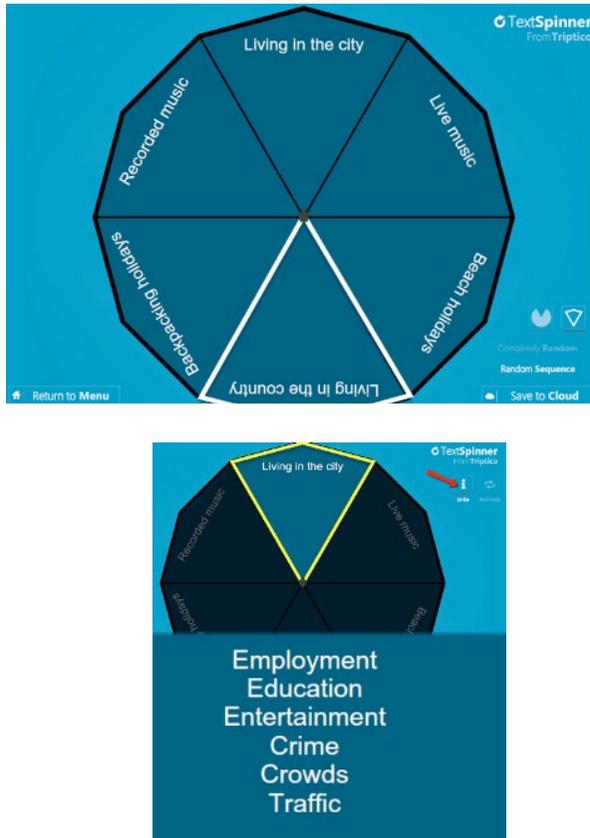
Figures 7a and 7b: Text Spinner

In *Find Ten* the board is created by typing the correct answers in the yellow squares and the incorrect ones in the purple ones: in both cases extra information can be added to be revealed after the choice has been made. The board can then be saved and uploaded at any time. The sound clips that accompany the right and wrong choices are typical of video games and are a real plus. In Figure 8 an activity has been designed to identify irregular verbs but the resource can be adapted for any topic and level.

Figure 8: Find Ten

Sliding Scores and *Score Tapper* allow you to choose the number of teams, assign them a colour and a name and decide the score values. The scores can be saved as a text file to resume the competition at a later date.
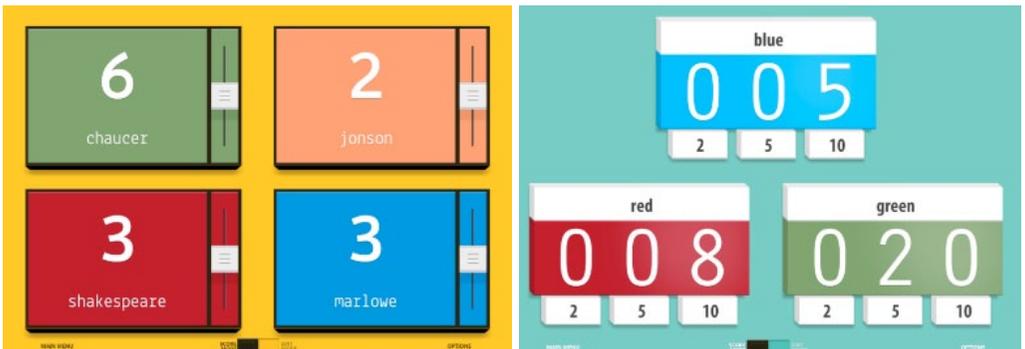

Figure 9: Sliding Scores and Score Tapper

In the *Triptico* website, author David Riley keeps a blog where he announces new elements and options available, including videos demonstrating the use of the resources and suggestions for classroom use. He also encourages feedback and requests from users via a contact form or Twitter and, judging from the case of "Hiragana Tiles" (Riley, 2013b), tries to respond to them quickly.

As this program runs on *Adobe Air*, it will work on both a *PC* and a *Mac* though not on an *iPad*. Yet the author promises to repackage the resources for tablet devices if his new commercial venture (*Triptico Plus*) is successful (Douch, 2013).

The only serious drawback I can find to this suite of resources is that it requires a permanent online connection to run, which may restrict its use in many countries and/or regions. As regards the fact that computer installation is necessary, which some teachers may not have administrator privileges to carry out, I expect this could be easily overcome since it is a one-time operation.

In sum, I consider *Triptico* would be a welcome addition to any EFL class, even without purchasing a subscription. It is straightforward in its use and control, requiring virtually no previous training for teachers other than a certain familiarity with the options available; it can be adapted to all levels, topics and ages; it enables advance preparation, reuse and sharing of materials (thus contributing to an eventual reduction of workload) and can contribute to the four roles of IWBs which Kennewell (2006) outlines: consultant, organiser, repository and facilitator. Moreover, even though *Triptico* is meant for the kinaesthetic options of an IWB, most of its functions will also work with a computer and a beamer, and will allow teachers to display their creativity in the design of interactive activities suited to their own individual contexts.

Mariel Amez

IES Olga Cossettini and ISPI San Bartolomé , Rosario, Argentina

mamez2222@gmail.com

Notes
1. New resources added by mid-February 2013.
2. Peachey (2009) and Stannard (2011) provide an extensive discussion of the applications of an earlier version of Triptico Word Magnets.
3. Paid-up features not included in this description.

References

Douch, A. (2013, January 03). Turn your Class into a Game Show: Triptico (new version today). Douchy's Blog. Comment by David Riley. Retrieved January 15, 2013 from http://andrewdouch.wordpress.com/2013/01/03/new-version-of-triptico-a-really-cool-box-of-classroom-gadgets/#comment-4389

Kennewell, S. (2006). Reflections on the Interactive Whiteboard phenomenon: Synthesis of research from the UK, paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, Adelaide, November 2006. Retrieved January 15, 2013 from http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/ken06138.pdf

Koenraad, A.L.M. (2008). Interactive Whiteboards in educational practice: the research literature reviewed. elearningeuropa.info portal . European Commission. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media24055.pdf

Peachey, N. (2009, October 01). Revising Short Texts and Syntax on IWB. Nik's Learning Technology Blog. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from http://nikpeachey.blogspot.com.ar/2009/10/revising-short-texts-and-syntax-on-iwb.html

Riley, D. (2013a). Word Magnets – Inspiration. Triptico. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from http://app.triptico.co.uk/index.php?pg=13

Riley, D. (2013b). HIRAGANA and Wooden Tiles. Triptico. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from http://www.triptico.co.uk/wordpress/2013/01/3093/

Stannard, R. (2011). Word Magnets. TTV 2007. Retrieved January 15, 2013, from http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com/magnets/index.html