

WEB 2.0 – THE WEB OF INTELLECT

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the meaning and use of Web 2.0 tools for English language learning among present students by innovation in and off the classroom. As professional educators, professors seek new and innovative ways to integrate technology into coursework and class assignments to engross their students into the subjects. Especially when working with technical candidates, it is important to encourage the application and utilization of current technologies and Web 2.0 tools. The relevant use and “practice” within the classroom assists in gaining skills and knowledge needed to effectively infuse technology into teaching and learning in the K-12 environment. The technologies involved in the Web 2.0 classroom must be adapted to the language-learning classroom. In some cases, it is difficult to make that adaptation as teachers tend to fall back on what works effectively and what feels most comfortable for longer practice with interest. But, the teachers must also be aware that the second language learners have distinctly different needs than their English-speaking counterparts and may not be able to utilize the technology in the same manner. This is where the teacher’s prepared coursework comes into play by integrating the use of technology tools into easy assignments for English medium students as well as second language learners. However, what Web 2.0 means and what these tools entail is important before they can be effectively integrated into classroom practice. This illustrative study has been made in solving the queries in the minds of the technology enthusiastic teachers who want to play a pivotal role in this digital generation.

Keywords: Internet, Web 2.0, English language teaching, Teacher Preparation Programs.

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 is the term given to describe a second generation of the World Wide Web that is focused on the ability for people to collaborate and share information online. Web 2.0 basically refers to the transition from static HTML Web pages to a more dynamic Web that

is more organized and is based on serving Web applications to users. Other improved functionality of Web 2.0 includes open communication with an emphasis on Web-based communities of users, and more open sharing of information. Blogs, wikis, and Web services are all seen as components of Web 2.0. (Tim O'Reilly).

As to connect with the modern world the teachers should plan for specific strategies for language learners while assisting students with cultural tools present within the new learning environment as well as within society. In today's world, the cultural tools and artifacts we use on a daily basis include technology, computers, and related Web 2.0 applications. Based on this premise, coursework that includes a well-designed blend of information regarding applications of technological tools better assist practicing teachers who are preparing to transition from the regular education classroom to the smart classroom.

As mentioned, Web 2.0 tools are common and are being used by many in classrooms as well as in the home environment. Although familiar to most English speaking students, there are many second language learners with minimal experience using Web 1.0 tools and minimal knowledge and experience working with Web 2.0 applications. Web 1.0 is considered to be the first version of the web because it enabled a small number of users to create content for a larger number. For example, teachers as well as students view internet sites created by web designers; however, they may little experience designing a web site of their own. Web 2.0 and related tools engage users and encourage active communication and collaboration. Web 2.0 includes blogs, podcasts, iBooks, Wikis, YouTube, Teacher Tube, and social networking sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Web 2.0 tools are the second-generation Internet applications and include the following characteristics: They are used as productive materials where we can get, share and access to numerous referential materials from the other professionals in and around the world , also facilitate interactive information sharing and collaboration like by forming into different clubs and communities they share and exchange idea with the experts of their own professionals.

Almost all the people in the modern world know what and where World Wide Web is. People can make use of it to learn languages anytime anywhere. For students, Intensive Language Learning Center probably is the place they can go and learn whatever they choose. The learning materials both in the web and in the center include videos, audios, and written texts and can engage learners to do listening, speaking, reading and writing in some way. It is the world biggest community of sharing Powerpoint presentations too. It can become a data bank for you to learn things. Like students in a classroom or participants in a conference, people can learn things in Slideshare. Web 2.0 tools may provide an additional insight into literacy practice. Web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook and Twitter help us to connect and reconnect with old friends, colleagues, and relatives. Many practicing teachers are already using these web applications as tools for professional development, homework assignments, class schedules, and parent information. They are connected to many other multi facet teachers around the world whom it might not have been possible otherwise to get connected other than this platform.

These tools in particular promote the creation of content and easily allow for communication and interaction. It is the Web 2.0 tools that work especially well with second language learners because of the skills involved in use. For example, blogging encourages writing, reviewing, and responding. Wikis enable students to use language learning strategies and

skills in conducting research and creating entries. By using the social networking sites the teachers can plan for short assignments and enrich their lesson plan by reference and also they can share if any innovative idea occurs to them. They can ask for feedback from others about their materials. In this tool Individual participation and posting of individual contribution in the forum is the primary effort which comes into existence.

The most striking issues of Web 2.0 is namely facilitating cooperative/collaborative work, providing learning opportunities via learner-centered modes outside the class, increasing student participation, enhancing motivation, sharing knowledge, developing awareness of digital literacy, helping student, teachers teach better in the future and expanding their professional repertoire. It confirms that teachers as well as the students believe that the use of Web 2.0 technologies at the service of language learning/teaching support the applications of trends in language learning/teaching such as informal learning, social constructivism, learner involvement and cooperative learning. One of the most effective learning theories today, co-operative learning can be described as “a set of processes which help people interact together in order to accomplish a specific goal or develop an end product which is usually content specific” (Panitz, 1996, p. 2). As an inevitable consequence of the shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner centered instruction, teachers tend to share the authority with their own learners. This obviously fosters the development of collaboration and cooperation between learners and the teacher. In this connection, the use of web technologies at the service of education allows learners to access any kind of information, ideas, documents, and experiences regardless of the border and the time. This, without a doubt, triggers collaborative learning among learners (Frederick, Lillie, Gordon, Watt, & Carter, 1999). The second-generation net tools like blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS (Really Simple Syndication) and social networking sites have a great contribution to collaborative learning environments where learners co-work on different kinds of projects (Selwyn, 2007). The concept of informal learning is all that is learned throughout life in day-to-day processes at home, work and leisure (Mason & Rennie, 2007). Employing two main categories namely intentionality and consciousness, Schugurensky (2000, p. 2) offers three various forms of informal learning, namely self-directed learning, incidental learning, and socialization. Once the characteristics of informal learning are considered, it is evident that Web 2.0 technologies create great opportunities for learners to experience this kind of learning. New technologies facilitate the design of online communication and information exchanges to empower the learners and create an enriched social learning landscape (Bartlett-Bragg, 2006). Language learners are reported to mostly spend most of their time online doing a lot of language learning tasks outside the classroom. Student and teachers also report that Web 2.0 tools can increase students’ involvement in the learning.

In today’s world, Web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook and Twitter help us to connect and reconnect with old friends, colleagues, and relatives. Many practicing teachers are already using these web applications as tools for professional development, homework assignments, class schedules, and parent information. However, when working with second language learners there are additional factors that must be considered. These include: a) access to technology, b) connectivity, c) language diversity and proficiency, and e) prior experience.

The technologies involved in the Web 2.0 classroom must be adapted to the language-learning classroom. In some cases, it is difficult to make that adaptation especially when a

regular education teacher is transitioning to the second language classroom. Teachers tend to fall back on what works effectively and what feels most comfortable. But, second language learners have distinctly different needs than their English-speaking counterparts and may not be able to utilize the technology in the same manner. This is where teacher preparation coursework comes into play. By integrating the use of technology tools into assignments, teachers who are preparing to work with second language learners are encouraged to explore their own practice as they build skills and acquire knowledge regarding how to incorporate Web 2.0 tools into the ESL environment. However, a brief examination of what the term, Web 2.0 means and what these tools entail is important before they can be effectively integrated into classroom practice.

What can be done with Web 2.0?

Listening

In countries where English is a second language the learners do not get access to the English language as it is, more so in semi urban and rural areas. The teacher can use the you tube videos on the internet which provide both the video and the audio content. The video can be downloaded and the teacher could use this for teaching listening comprehension. At the same time the proper pronunciation of the language, tone and rhythm also will be known to the student. The student can also download it and listen to it regularly at his own pace, time and place. Moreover the student can also listen to different accents and can learn to respond and differentiate between them. The opportunities available in Web 2.0 make the learner-centered acquisition of skills in listening comprehension in a technology-mediated environment a reality for the first time. The opportunities are there that students are able to hear the original communication and speeches of different speakers and also able to hear the clear accent of the native speakers through webinar, youtube and through the post in their blogs.

Speaking

Language is primarily speech. Students can see the videos of dialogues or clippings for movies and learn the expressions. Video clippings make the students to grasp the impact of setting, culture, body language which has a strong impact on communication.

In the learning of pronunciation too, the computer is very useful. The student can practice repeatedly to acquire the right pronunciation; it would be very tedious for the teacher to do this repeatedly. The students have to pronounce or type in exactly the answer the computer expects because the computer can only accept the answers it has been programmed to accept. This limitation is very useful in practice because it provides motivation for the students to use the language as accurately as possible.

Reading

In the process of searching for information and chatting or surfing the web, computers provide an opportunity for incidental reading. The computer can also be used to design reading comprehension exercises using the multiple choices to fill in the blanks exercises. Software is yet to be developed to evaluate a written paragraph. Some sites are provided specifically for comprehension so if the students get into those sites they can read some materials with proper accent and pronunciation as per their own standards also.

Writing

The mechanics of writing can be practiced well using the computer. It is easy to type and later to edit a document without rewriting the entire document. In this process, online dictionaries, thesaurus can be used with ease and efficiency which help to better ones writing. We have software that corrects the written work of the learners – Spell check, identification of errors of grammar and vocabulary are done by the software itself. Vocabulary stocks can be increased by reading more and more from different people and also the social networking sites which gives the opportunity to post one's own thought in their own words and read the other's post and tweet where they might have written with good English phrases.

Grammar and Vocabulary

CALT can be used to design the material to introduce the concepts and also materials for practice. Multiple choice questions, fill in the blanks are the traditional ways of practice and evaluation that can be used on computers also. But learning can be made much more interactive and creative using images and audio.

Vocabulary training software is making the acquiring of vocabulary very interesting and creative, Vocabulary games, and hangman, do it your self dictionaries, word building, and many more activities pay a crucial role in vocabulary enrichment. The dictionary, thesaurus, games, idioms, collocations -- all are available at a single click.

With the web 2.0 there are lot of things to be done with listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary in a creative manner with the mentioned different websites:

With Wordle, Tagxedo, and Tagul students type in their stories or word patterns and create word clouds. If your group is working on high frequency words, type their story into one of these Web sites and create a cloud that shows the frequency with which the words appear. The more the words are used, the bigger they are in your word cloud.

Yodio is a tool I have just discovered, but have not used yet. It is a quick way to give your photos voice. I can imagine the students making digital flashcards for their new vocabulary words in their stories.

Voicethread is an amazing collaborative work tool, and can also be used by students to create digital flashcards to illustrate words or collect their classmates' thoughts on words from their story.

Mind42.com and SpicyNodes are online mind mapping tools. If your students are working on synonyms, homophones, or any other types of words, these tools will visually show the meaning of the words or create a digital thesaurus. With these 2 tools, students can map out story elements in a story web. Voxli is a tool that can host an audio chat with your class. A group of students can use this to host a class discussion about their book or a topic they are studying.

Animoto is an exciting new tool for students as well as teachers. In this site the people can upload digital photos or video clips and add text, and the Web site will use them to create a trailer similar to a movie trailer. This tool is attracting the students attention very quickly as

it is used in many ways, such as retelling a story and showing the story elements, including character, setting, problem, and solution.

Photo Story 3 is another wonderful tool that the educators as well as the learners will be very interested to use in literacy many times. Students can easily create a Photo Story to retell or interpret their stories. They can even ask for a feedback from others and others can share their opinions and suggestions for such creative stories.

The educators can make their students compare and contrast their study by creating an online Venn diagram with ClassTools.net.

Now the educators are very often encouraging the students for poster and paper presentations on different ideas to different places for increasing their creativity but the students are unable to attend in every seminars due to the lack of their time and hectic academic routine so here are a few websites which can be referred to the students for engaging themselves with the above mentioned activities.

So Glogster EDU is an online multimedia poster Web site students use to create posters to illustrate their stories.

While we train the students for communication through different medium we consider fluency as one of the most eminent factor in communication. So there are different websites through which they can not only listen to the exact pronunciation but also they can check their pronunciation whether its correct or not. Likewise we have the following sites facilitating in appropriate pronunciation.

Yodio and Photo Story 3 can also be used for fluency practice since the students add their voices to photos illustrating the story.

With Blabberize students can record their voices and make a photo talk. Even some can use a similar paid program called CrazyTalk. The students have used this to record themselves reading a portion of their book with good fluency.

CuePrompter is a fun way for students to practice their reading. Although it doesn't record the students' voices, it will make the text move on the teleprompter. It's just like the script news anchors use.

Using Vocaroo and AudioPal, students can quickly record their reading, evaluate the results, and rerecord as needed. These Web sites also make it easy to share the recordings on blogs or Web sites. They can even email the link to parents and teachers so they can hear their little ones read and even enjoying giving feedback.

CONCLUSION

There are so much to do with web 2.0 and make use of it in your teaching and come out with excellent innovation and most importantly with lots of entertainment and interest by not being restricted to classroom but allowing the digital minds to act and execute outside the normal boundary of the classroom. Today's employers look for individuals with effective communication skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. After graduation students will realize that these basic communication skills are essential in attaining their life's goals. In the Classroom students communicate daily by texting and posting on Facebook pages and other social media avenues to stay in touch with friends. Teachers can

help students make the connections between their recreational writing and the kinds of writing they need to become successful beyond the classroom. It's important to stay aware of the digital world students live in as we design learning experiences to cultivate important skills. The diverse variety of Web 2.0 tools allow students to create products, such as videos, podcasts, interactive posters, cartoons, and share them online with others to see. To build effective communication skills, students must learn to communicate using digital media and environments to support personal and group learning, share information efficiently and effectively using appropriate digital media and environments. The students should be able to communicate their thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively to different audiences using various media and formats. These skills are at the core of every organization. It is crucial that the present teachers help students build this vital set of 21st century skills. Web 2.0 tools can provide authentic audiences for students' writing. Time have come for expertising own self not only with the "Old School" tradition of written reports and essays read only by the teacher but being a little versatile in sharing everything with other readers too and impart feedback to attain perfection. The teachers should lead to an environment where students write for their peers, sharing information online, discussing and commenting with one another – a community of actively engaged readers and writers.

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