



## Using Web 2.0 Tools for Professional Development

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### Abstract

*As the world is shifting towards a course in which ICT (Information and communications technology) blankets all fields of work, the world of education is not an exception. It is an undeniable fact that teachers are the cornerstones of education, and they need to be updated in line with the standards required by their professional development. The INSET (In Service Teacher Training) programs to revise the teachers' PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) [1] need to gain a new dimension to meet the contemporary needs of the teachers; namely ICT literacy. The application in this study aims to show the process which has improved ICT literacy skills of 50 language teachers, who participated in the professional development program designed by the researcher. The program involved the integration of web 2.0 tools into the daily practices of the teachers. Firstly, the teachers were provided with a guide for using these tools for the delivery of the content knowledge, particularly the instruction of grammar as the form [2], [3] and the lexicon or lexico-grammar [4]. Then, the participants of the research began to create lessons to use in their classrooms. These lessons were compiled in a platform where all the participants were able to have access, and share their material as well as their teaching experiences. At the end of the application, teachers wrote comments on the program, which provided a feedback for the researcher.*

### 1. Introduction

As the world is shifting towards a course in which ICT blankets all fields of work, the world of education is not an exception. The momentum gained in recent years obviously reveals that such an innovation was long waited thanks to the practicality and ease it offers to users, particularly by bodies involved in education. The new generation syllabus designs include components that require ICT literacy of the teachers. This brings about the need to be updated in line with the standards required by their professional development. However, this is not so easy to realize as the teachers are engaged in their daily routines, which prevents them from keeping pace with the new improvements in technology.

Therefore, it can be said that INSET (In Service Teacher Training) programs to revise the teachers' PCK (Pedagogical Content Knowledge) [1] need to gain a new dimension to meet the contemporary needs of the teachers; namely ICT literacy. The contemporary teacher is the one who can be labelled as the "reflective teacher" [5] [6] and this life-long process can be achieved by becoming constructivist teachers who combine the teacher cognition with the profession [6]. The philosophy of constructivism can be achieved through reflecting on the process of one's experiences [5] and through collaboration. This requirement can be met in virtual environments, where many teachers can join thanks to the internet. Therefore, successful implementation of internet use would let teachers learn from and exchange ideas and look for chances for future collaboration [7].

With the teacher training in a virtual environment on the agenda, this study aims to show the stages of a professional development program application which has improved ICT literacy skills of 50 voluntary language teachers.

### 2. The Application

The ultimate aim of this application is to develop teachers' sense of teaching through reflections [5]. While achieving this aim, teachers are expected to develop their ICT competencies as the application has two basic components in the sense of content knowledge. Borg [8] classifies the content knowledge into seven sub fields as subject matter content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, curricular knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of education contexts and knowledge of educational ends (p.19).

With its limitations to this study, the content knowledge has been minimized to subject matter, the teachers' knowledge about a foreign language, particularly the instruction of grammar as the form [2], [3] and the lexicon, or lexico-grammar [4]. Moreover, as the second component of content knowledge,



PCK (pedagogical content knowledge) with its new extension, TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) as it is introduced by (Mishra& Koehler, 2006; cited in Archambault et al. [9]) has been included.

### **Stages of the application**

Since this study aims to indicate that professional development programs for ICT literacy can be held in virtual environments, the model application that has been conducted is as follows:

#### ***The first stage***

As the program involves the integration of Web 2.0 tools into the daily practices of the teachers; firstly, the teachers have been provided with a guide showing how to use the web based collaborative environment so that they could participate in the courses provided by the trainer.

#### ***The second stage***

The trainer has opened discussions and forums to ask what teachers needed most in the name of training, also asking them to narrate their experiences and to talk about their cases to trigger the mechanisms in their belief systems, and to 'provide a bridge between theory and practice' [10]. Subsequently, the trainer has gone through the accounts of the participants to shape the course content.

#### ***The third stage***

In the application, the subject matter content knowledge has been limited to the 'what' of the teaching practice while pedagogical content knowledge has referred to the 'how' of the teaching. Lastly, the 'which instrument' issue has been raised with the introduction of web 2.0 tools in the fashion of technological pedagogical content knowledge. The trainer has offered modules to the participants on three sequential bases, where the ground for the application has been established.

On the first base, where the basic aim is to equip teachers with subject matter content knowledge, the trainer has provided courses in a series of instructions, which basically supplied background knowledge for language teaching. Issues related to FLA (First Language Acquisition) and SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research have been included in the course content. The other instructional concerns such as the age factor, learner readiness [11] and learning styles and strategies [12] have also been included in the first base to serve as the background knowledge for the teachers while applying the procedures of the second base.

On the second base, where the main aim has been to provide PCK and TPACK, the trainer has invited the teachers to participate in a virtual INSET platform to share their practical applications. The base has served as the cycle where teachers collect their beliefs through attending professional environments such as teacher education courses, workshops or other collaborative activities with their colleagues [13]. However, this time teachers 'constructed' or 'picked up' [13] these beliefs through attending the discussions and other interactive environments on the collaborative web-based platform. As the basic concern of the second base has been to show how to teach an item in language, and cross-linguistic challenges have been highlighted supported by the techniques such as "Focus on Form" (Long [14], [15], [16]) and "Input Enhancement" [17].

On the third base, the trainer has introduced the Web 2.0 tools to the teachers, most of whom were already familiar with as users, but not as course creators. The links to visit these sites (see the references for sample links) accompanied by some courses already created for them (see Appendix 1 & 2) have been given, and the steps to follow to log in for a course have been identified. The teachers have been reminded to create their courses in line with the challenges in order to cope with the problems emerging as a result of cross-linguistic factors.

#### ***The fourth stage***

At this stage, the participants have begun to create lessons to use in their classrooms and develop their own materials to use during their instructions unlike those that they can find, not specifically designed for their learners.

The lessons prepared have been stored in a pool accessible to everybody. At the end of the application, teachers have written reflections and comments on the program, which provided a feedback for the researcher.

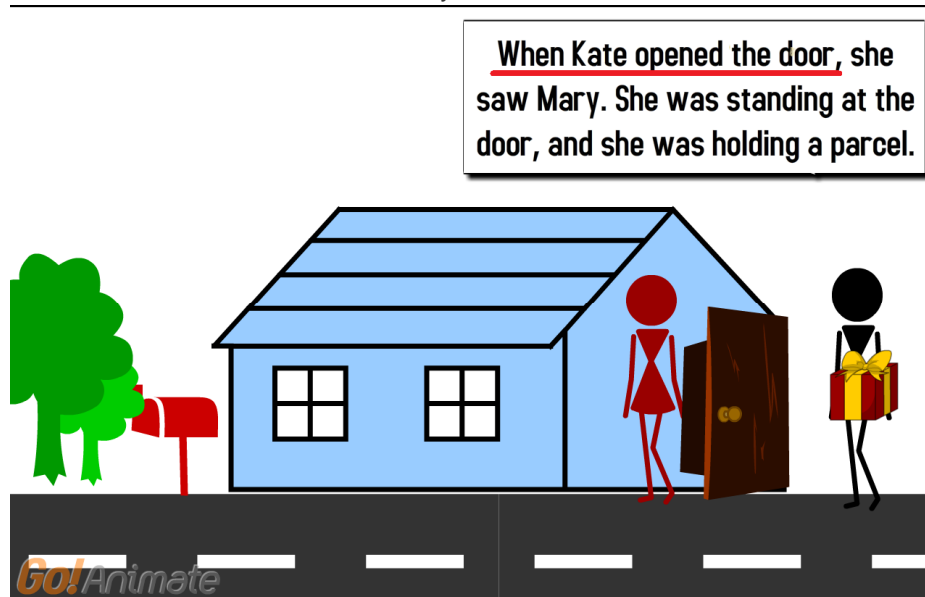


The stages having been completed, the teachers' opinions have been elicited through an open ended question, asking what they thought of the program. The great majority of the teachers have put forward positive feedback, stating that they are in need of such a guidance to be able to keep up with the recent improvements in technology, and to present more visual materials to their students rather than classical paper-pencil-board triangle. Moreover, the teachers have stated that thanks to the web 2.0 tools, they have been able to arouse the interest of more students as well as achieving an observable increase in the motivation of their students.

### 3. Conclusion

When the participant teachers' views of the training have been evaluated, it has been observed that teachers need such drip feed programs as well as one shot applications. Therefore, as a complementary support to teacher training and professional development programs, such procedures could work as effective contributions to the professional life of the teachers. Moreover, teachers who join such programs resume their careers refreshed and updated, which is a desirable component in the sense of professional development. Considering the long lasting impact of the web based applications, one would not be make an exaggeration to state that the need for a more frequent training has received a warm welcome for the teachers who need to keep pace with the giant steps of technology. Finally, it would be appropriate to remark that teachers should receive their training on the basis of teacher competencies at regular periods, in a pack of modules, out of which they can choose in line with their needs.

Appendix 1. The Screenshot from Kate's Birthday





Appendix 2. The screenshot from Grandma's Tales

by donercandonuk

Tini-Mini: Grandma, do you remember?  
When I was a little child, you told me a story  
every night.

Grandma: Sure, I remember. Before I  
finished it, you felt asleep.

Tini-Mini: Grandma, can you tell me a story  
tonight again?

Grandma: Ok, honey.

Tini-Mini: But a new story, please.



< 2/12 >

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