



Using Web 2.0 Tools in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

The rapid advances in ICT in recent years have resulted in an extensive search for possible uses of ICT in educational settings. Many educators all around the world, including English language teachers, are now taking innovative steps to integrate technology into their teaching environments. In language teaching, language teachers have a wide variety of choices for integrating technology into their classes. One of these is the use of Web 2.0 tools. Although there is no consensus on exactly what Web 2.0 is, the term refers to a second generation of World Wide Web, making it available for people to collaborate and share information online easier. There are hundreds of these tools on the Internet, making it difficult for language teachers to determine the useful ones for language education. The aim of this study is to introduce some of the most useful Web 2.0 tools for teaching English as a foreign language, determined after a rigorous selection based on practical experiment and experience. Such an approach is useful for language teachers to be knowledgeable about the possible uses of Web 2.0 tools to enrich their teaching environments. Moreover, it is aimed to give creative and practical ideas to language teachers on the use of these tools in English Language Teaching.

Introduction

In recent years, we have witnessed unprecedented advances in ICT. Naturally, these advances have also affected the world of education and the field of language education is no exception. The use of technologies in educational settings has gained popularity [1-2]. In fact, in comparison with other disciplines in social sciences, language teaching requires the use of technology more [3]. The use of technology in educational settings has certain benefits. It “can increase motivation, decrease anxiety, foster more student-centered activities, provide students with authentic materials and audiences” [4]. In other words, educational technology can enrich learning in teaching environments [5-7]. When considered the field of language education, the potential of new technologies is limitless [8]. In line with *the limitless potential of technology for language education*, it is generally accepted that the use of technology becoming widespread all over the world has also brought about considerable changes on the part of both students and teachers. It is suggested that “the advancement in technology has been revolutionizing the way educators teach and students” [9].

English language teachers are now taking innovative steps to integrate technology into their teaching environments. Teachers have a wide variety of choices for integrating technology into their classes. One of these choices is the use of Web 2.0 tools. With these tools, if integrated properly into language lessons, teachers can create a more engaging, interactive and motivating learning environment in their lessons. However, there are hundreds of these tools on the Internet all of which are not promising for teaching and learning purposes. Therefore, it is important to determine appropriate ones for use in language teaching. Our aim in this paper is to introduce some of the most useful Web 2.0 tools for teaching English as a foreign language, determined after a rigorous selection based on practical experiment and experience. Such an approach is useful for language teachers to be knowledgeable about the possible uses of Web 2.0 tools to enrich their teaching environments. Moreover, it is aimed to give creative and practical ideas to language teachers on the use of these tools in English Language Teaching.

Web 2.0

Millions of people have been using the tools that are called Web 2.0. Although there is no consensus on exactly Web 2.0 is, the term refers to a second generation of World Wide Web, making it available for people to collaborate and share information online easier. Actually there are many definitions in the literature defining what Web 2.0 is. However, the definitions can display an extensive variety depending on how you approach Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is “a Web technology that aims to enhance creativity,



information sharing and collaboration among users" [10]. The key words in this definition *creativity, information sharing and collaboration* actually represent how they can be used in education, in this case, English language teaching.

Web 2.0 Tools

Materials used in traditional classrooms are mostly static text based materials [11]. These include main course books, workbooks, lecture notes and handouts. All these materials are to a great extent static in essence and language teachers have the responsibility of bringing interactivity and dynamism into their teaching environments. However, the use of Web 2.0 tools can add interactivity to language teaching and learning environments and materials used in these environments. There have been many studies conducted to explore the use of Web 2.0 tools in language teaching settings [eg: 12-17]. The number of these studies are continuously increasing since educators and scholars have been seeking to investigate different aspects of Web 2.0 tools. However, there is absolutely a need for experimental studies to investigate the use of Web 2.0 tools in language teaching in terms of many aspects. When considered the variety of Web 2.0 tools, the use of these tools mostly depends on the teachers' enthusiasm in integrating technology into their lessons. We believe that, if used appropriately, these tools will have a positive effect on the teaching and learning process.

On the Internet, language teachers can find a great many Web 2.0 tools that can be used in language teaching. These tools as aforementioned can bring dynamism and interactivity to the language teaching and learning environments. If Web 2.0 tools used properly by the teacher in line with the objectives of the language lesson, after a careful planning, it may support the language learning process of the students. The following list includes some of the Web 2.0 tools that can be used in language teaching for various purposes. The tools introduced briefly in this list are based on practical experiment and experience. However, any possible readers of this paper can visit the web page developed in relation with the tools introduced in this paper for practical ideas about using these tools in language learning

(<http://padlet.com/ahmetbasal/ao1x65v4u41m>). Readers of this paper can also contribute to the ideas presented in this web page. This opportunity can result in finding more creative ways to use Web 2.0 tools listed below.

List of Web 2.0 Tools for Language Teaching

www.blendspace.com :Blendspace is a kind of a content curation tool. It is an easy-to-use tools for creating lessons including multimedia elements in a few minutes. It allows teachers to create a lesson by combining a great variety of resources.

www.padlet.com :Padlet, a virtual notice board, can be used in a variety of ways depending on the creativity of the language teacher. Unlike real notice-boards, padlet allows students to post stickies with multimedia elements. Teachers and students can also export "the digital wall" they created in a variety of formats including pdf, image, csv., etc. and share it via social media sites.

scoop.it : Scoop.it is a content curation tool by which you can publish online publications like an online magazine. Language teachers can use this tool in a variety of ways including classroom projects. It is so simple to create a professional-look online magazine.

www.livebinders.com :Livebinders is a tool that is used for compiling internet resources. You can organize them in a variety of formats. Language teachers can determine different web pages and their content in multiple formats in line with the objectives of the lesson. In other words, teachers can prepare a guided tour on the internet related to the subject of the lesson.

google drive (forms, documents) : Google drive is a cloud-based storage service for storing all kinds of documents. Teachers can use form and document sections of google drive in a variety of ways. They can create quizzes and lessons including multimedia elements by using google forms. They can also use document section of google drive for collaborative projects.



vialogues.com : Vialogues is a tool for creating a video-based discussion. Language teachers can use this tool to create lessons around video. Teachers can also add polls and quizzes and comment on the video lesson. Students can post comments related with the video.

www.voxopop.com :Voxopop is a web based audio tool that allows users to record their speaking on a given topic. Teachers can use this tool especially for discussions. It is an engaging tool for developing speaking skills of the students using voice recorded answers of them on a given discussion topic. Other students can also listen to the these voice recorded answers of their classmates It can also contribute to participation of those students who are shy or unwilling to participate in the class discussions..

www.lessonwriter.com :Lessonwriter is a website for creating reading lessons. English language teachers can paste a text that they determine for use in class. This tool automatically generates vocabulary, pronunciation, word roots and grammar support to help students. Exercises and questions related with the given text can also be added. Teachers can also have full control in creating the reading lesson from scratch. Lesson writes also provides a lesson plan to the teacher.

Conclusion

Teachers, especially language teachers, are becoming more and more interested in and enthusiastic about integrating ICT into their teaching environments. Web 2.0 tools can create a more student-centered language learning environment since they allow students to become creators of their own knowledge rather than passive recipients. Language teachers have started to realize that Web 2.0 tools are providing opportunities to enrich and support their students' learning. However, they have to choose the most appropriate ones of these tools, most of which are freely available on the Internet. The tools may become beneficial for teaching a foreign language in the hands of creative and knowledgeable language teachers. It is therefore crucial to raise awareness of language teachers about choosing appropriate Web 2.0 tools and to guide them how to integrate these tools into their own language teaching environments.

Technology does not guarantee success in language learning. We have seen many unsuccessful results in the history of language teaching despite investing so much on equipping language learning environments with highly advanced technological devices in the expectation of success. Again, Web 2.0 tools can not be seen as a magic solution to the challenges encountered by language learners in the process of learning a foreign language. It is clear that. "... the key to successful use of technology in language teaching lies not in hardware or software but in "humanware" – our human capacity as teachers to plan, design and implement effective educational activity" [18]. Technology can only become effective and useful in language teaching and learning environments in hands of competent teachers. When it comes considering the use of Web 2.0 in language education, teachers should first decide whether these tools serves to achieve objectives of the language lesson and whether they meet the pedagogical needs of teaching situation. If these two criteria are taken seriously into consideration, Web 2.0 tools can aid to create a more communicative and collaborative language teaching and learning environment.

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