

Web 2.0 Scenarios In Language Learning: Sharing Experiences

Perifanou A. Maria, Costa Cristina

E-mail: mariaperif@gmail.com, c.mendesdacosta@salford.ac.uk

Kapodistrian University of Athens (Greece), University of Salford (United Kingdom)

Abstract

"New technologies are the perfect aid to assist teachers in their "need to broaden their scope for creative pedagogical initiatives." (Little et al, 1989) The Learning and teaching of a foreign language has always had a close relationship with technology. In the early days of digital media, foreign language pedagogy was one of the first areas to adopt computers. They turned out to be an excellent tool for language drills, as Edwige points out (2008). The potential of the Internet for the teaching and learning of foreign languages has grown spectacularly, especially in the recent years with the advent of the new phase of the read and write Web, also known as web 2.0 (o'Reilly, 2005). Web 2.0 applications have an incredible educational potential for foreign language instruction as they basically prompt open communication and social learning opportunities in contextual and less formal environments. Although many language teachers may still be reluctant to use technologies in the area of foreign languages - be it for the lack of ICT skills or fear of being replaced by the 'machine' - the fact is that teaching and learning are evolving exponentially with the wider access to technologies. Educators should thus take note of their students' daily digital practices, as ignore such facts is no longer an option. Embedding technology effectively in their teaching activities might be a answer to continue to give meaning to the classroom.

It is important to understand that integrating technology into teaching requires the combination of adequate technical skills and a sound pedagogical foundation. Using technology does not mean that one knows intuitively how to use it as a teaching tool. That is where the role of the teacher, as a mentor is mostly important. While students may dominate the latest technology, the knowledgeable presence of the teacher in guiding students' learning is still crucial. The combination of these two sets of skills (technical and didactic) is what ultimately makes technology an effective strategy. Adequate, innovative training can enable educators to develop a deeper understanding and effective practice regarding the use of Learning Technologies, being their ultimate goal to assist learners in the development of information processing and knowledge maturing strategies. In the present knowledge Society, the traditional learning models have been replaced with other approaches in which the learner has a central role as an active constructor of knowledge (Bernd Rüschoff and Andreas Lund, 2003).

This paper considers several web 2.0 learning and teaching approaches currently being integrated in Foreign Language Curricula, or used to support informal Language learning. Two Practical web 2.0 language learning scenarios be presented in context. The case studies will help withdraw instances of innovative practice in the light of the 21st century. Finally, the authors will discuss the advantages and implications of web 2.0 tools and approaches in providing learner autonomy, supporting collaboration, and promoting the acquisition of a foreign language in a connected environment.