

USING THE WEB 2.0 TO ENHANCE THE TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

The use of technology in the classroom setting has been used successfully throughout the years. Plenty of English as Second Language (ESL) students had benefitted from this in order to achieve fluency. Nowadays, ESL instructors are integrating the Web 2.0 in to the classroom setting. According to O'Reilly (2005), this type of technology empowers the end user. Based on this, educators use the Web 2.0 and it's core based on blogs, wikis and podcasts with plenty of opportunities for the learner. The Web 2.0 offers the learner with a variety of activities that enhance his learning and at the same time motivates him. Power tools are common in the Web 2.0 and enable the learning process because provide alternatives to the ESL learners to work with technology they know.

Keywords: Web 2.0; ESL; teaching; learning.

1 INTRODUCTION

The use of the web 2.0 in the ESL classroom has become familiarized with the phrase "successful teaching and learning". It's in part based that now with the read and write web on board, ESL instructors have more alternatives and tools to enhance the teaching and learning experience of the learners. Now the teacher, as a facilitator motivates the student by publishing his work in the web and giving the learner and authentic global audience for classroom participation. According to Langer de Ramirez (2011), students are able to work with problem solving skills and to judge the validity and the reliability of the source they find. This is in part thanks to the democratization of the Web. It's also important to understand that ESL students come to the teaching and learning encounter with previous positive relationships towards the web 2.0. This facilitates the content given and plenty of details addressed towards the goals of achieving fluency.

To understand the concept on how the Web 2.0 enhances the teaching and learning experience in the ESL classroom is important that everyone understands the evolution of CALL. The following article presents different aspects of working with the web 2.0 and ESL. In addition every teacher and learner needs to understand and participate in what is considered the core of the educational Web 2.0 and those are the Blogs, the Wikis and the Podcasts. The

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necessity of the Digital Native of sharing and being connected is especially necessary and social media has played an important part. But social networking and microblogging are tools that are necessary for ESL instruction these days. Finally, web 2.0 technologies continue to offer new interesting tools for the ESL teacher and the learner. Some of these tools combine the flexibility of combining video and text along with 3D imaging and are necessary for catching the reader's attention. The rhythm by which emergent technologies will enhance the ESL classroom will be based on the necessities of the digital native.

2 THE EVOLUTION OF EMERGENT TECHNOLOGIES IN ESL

In ESL, integrating technology has become essential and the integration of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has been instrumental for enhancing the teaching and learning experience in the classroom. This happened because of CALL's established presence in academia and it focuses on technology (HUBBARD & LEVY, 2006). According to Levy (1997), CALL is defined as the application of the computer in language teaching and learning. He establishes that it's an evolution of the strategy once called Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) and Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL). The use of CALL in ESL has move away from the Behavioristic CALL, which was a sub-component of CAI, of the 1950's and 60's. Behavioristic CALL focused on repetitions and language drills with grammatical explanations and translation tests. It is well remember for not being a user-friendly strategy and boring for the ESL learner.

Then Communicative CALL appeared following the cognitive theories of the 1970's and 1980's. Cognitive theorists focused on learning as a process of discovery, expression, and development. The type of strategy focused on computer-based activities instead on using forms themselves. The use of text reconstruction programs and stimulations provided the ESL students with the experience of working alone or in pairs. Finally, Integrative CALL appeared during the 1990's based on a socio-cognitive view and a focus on the use of language in authentic social contexts. This opened the door for a more diverse student centered use of technology in ESL. An integration during the teaching and learning started working with task based projects, project based approaches, and content based approaches. Integrative CALL implemented an approach toward ESL learners by which listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills where use in combination with the learning of technology tools as an ongoing process for language learning. This type of CALL opened the door for the use of the Web 2.0

and social media as a strategy for enhancing the teaching and learning process in the ESL classroom.

Nowadays, thanks to CALL, the second language (L2) learner has become an active participant and language explorer. Also the students recognize that to do several tasks they need to use various tools that will help them learn L2 easily and effectively (YBARRA & GREEN, 2003). On the other hand educators had understood that they are not the only source for language information and the need for training in emergent technologies is necessary in order to use multimedia appropriately and accurately.

3 THE WEB 2.0 REVOLUTION FOR ESL

The use of the Web 2.0 changed the educational world and the ESL teaching and learning was not the exception. This movement became a revolution, which was enable by different power sites and sharing folksonomies. Based on Richardson (2006), the traditional web was gone and now the read, think and write web has begun. According to O'Reilly (2005), the Web 2.0 are web applications that facilitates interactive information for sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. They are the evolution of traditional technologies into web applications focusing on the user. This end user vision helped the teaching and learning process dramatically in ESL basically in part for giving the opportunity to the learning of interacting in social networking and web based communities, along with expressing their opinions in blogs, doing collaborative work with wikis, and developing oral language skills with podcasts.

The strategy of using the Web 2.0 in ESL provided motivation for students who at a certain a period needed to empower their personality and sociocultural aspects in order to acquire fluency. In regards to the instructor, it gave power tools and novelties to enhance the teaching and learning experience.

Now the ESL instructor was able to create and share content with everyone in the classroom. Use virtual disk drives and promote cooperation between learners from different perspectives and moving away from the traditional classroom setting. The ESL instructors started to perceived the classroom environment as a blended learning one where the learners could be connected at a distance but at the same time be in the classroom.

4 BLOGS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

In order to enhance the teaching and learning experience, the educator needs to create an atmosphere where the learner, who is a digital native, feels comfortable. Plenty of second language (L2) learners are part of a generation that Prensky (2001) described as “Digital Natives”. These learners process the information differently and the educational system does not fit their needs. In order to accomplish success in the classroom the ESL learner needs to be motivated and the integration of the Web 2.0 in the classroom setting offers this opportunity.

One example is the use of blogging in the ESL classroom. A blog or as many scholars call it a weblog, is a type of website that is developed by an individual using easy-to-use software or a hosting platform for writing (SOLOMON & SCHRUM, 2010). It is a website where entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Blogs offer the ability for many readers to leave comments in an interactive format. Other aspects of blogs have to do with the publishing, which is instantaneous. Then the students show a certain type of responsiveness to one another opening the loop for discussion and the expansion of critical thinking.

By moving forward to the use of blogging in the ESL classroom, it is imperative to think that it will help in the engagement of ESL students with native speakers. In addition, educators will have the opportunity to assess the ESL learner's writing. Most of all it serves as a motivator and enhancer by empowering the learner and letting them integrate Internet resources as links. Plenty of educators use blogs in the ESL classroom as journals or diaries to promote critical thinking and process writing.

4.1 THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF BLOGS FOR THE ESL CLASSROOM

According to Campbell (2003), there are three types of weblogs for use in the ESL classroom. These are: the Tutor blog, the Learner blog and the Class blog. Each one has its own characteristics and objectives. For example, the tutor blog provides reading practice to learners along with exploration of English websites. It promotes the use of verbal exchange through the web by integrating comment buttons. In plenty of occasions it provides class outline or syllabus information along with resources posted as links for self-study purposes.

As for the learner blog, Campbell (2003), mentions that are ran by individual learners of by small collaborative groups of learners. In this type of blog the participant finds exercises such as reading assignments with blog postings. This type of blog focuses on writing practice and to let the learner develop a sense of ownership. Students can practice writing in regards to medical and legal issues along with further ideas exchange.

The last type of blog recommended by Campbell (2003) is the Class blog. He mentions that:

“This type of blog is the result if the collaborative effort of an entire class”.

In addition there are several possible uses for this type of blog that Campbell (2003) suggests including:

In conversation-based classes it could be used like a free-form bulletin board for learners to post messages, images, and links related to classroom discussion topics. It could also be a space for them to post thoughts on a common theme assigned for homework.

With intermediate and advanced learners, class blogs might also useful for facilitating project-based language learning, where learners can be given the opportunity to develop research and writing skills by being asked to create anonline resource for others.

Class blogs could also be used as a virtual space for an international classroom language exchange. In this scenario, learners from different countries would have joint access and publishing rights to the blog. The entire exchange would then be transparent to all readers and could be followed and commented on by other learners, tutors, parents and friends.

For reading and writing classes, it might also involve the use of knowledge management software, like Userland's Manila, that allows for a great deal of threaded discussion behind the scenes. Much like a publishing group, individual learners can be given varying amounts of responsibility to publish material arising from postings on the discussion list. The results of this effort are what is seen on a website by the public at large.

4.2 TEACHING IMPLICATIONS WITH BLOGS

As for my experiences with the use of blogs in the ESL classroom at the higher education level, I have to expressed that I've combined a couple of Campbell's (2003) suggestions. For example, I have created several class blogs using Google's Blogger. It's easy to do and students love it. I use the blog as a course platform where the students are able to gather all the necessary information related to my courses. In here the learner finds course outlines, activities, and they are able to answer different posts after reading selections. In

addition, they create different blogs where they practice writing as a reflexive model. By making them create a diary and share it with me I'm able to experience the learner's sense of mind and assess the writing.

In my courses students are able to share links toward videos and practice inserting images and data. Another strategy I use with blogs is the creation of student portfolios. Students are able develop their own portfolios in a very simple and easy way where they combine images, videos, and text along with their experiences. Most of the time they use this technique to transform the blog into a web page.

5 WIKIS IN THE ESL CLASSROOM

According to Jatkowski and Piipo (2012), a “wiki” is Web 2.0 software that allows collaboration among those chosen by the creator of the wiki. It allows users to easily create, edit, and link together. Wikis work with content as a priority and not the design. Another things is that Wikis are easy to read and follow up by learners. They combine video and audio and are used for creating collaborative websites and to empower communities.

The TESOL Technology standards (HEALEY, HANSON-SMITH, HUBBARD, IOANNOU-GEORGIU, KESSLER, & WARE, 2011) open the door for ESL professionals to enable the use of wikis appropriately. There are four goals where wikis could be seen as instructional tools for the ESL classroom.

“Goal1: Language learners demonstrate foundational knowledge and skills in technology for a multilingual world.” (Healey et al., 2011)

In order to achieve success towards this goal, the ESL learner needs to understand at least the basics or computer technology. This provides the opportunity to integrate wikis, because hypermedia is used as an enhancer towards typing skills. It's imperative that the ESL learner understands the use of technology to become integrated towards the function of the wiki.

“Goal 2: Language learners use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal, and ethical ways.” (HEALEY et al, 2011)

This goal provides the opportunity toward instruction, presentations and class discussions to avoid plagiarism. In addition it enables the student with valid content to use toward the form and style requested. Wikis have a tendency of providing copy and paste opportunities based on it's easy to work design, but letting the ESL learner to know the proper rules and ethics in regards to plagiarism is essential. “Goal 3: Language learners effectively use and critically

evaluate technology based tools as aids in the development of their language learning competence as part of formal instruction and for further learning.” (HEALEY et al, 2011)

By addressing this goal the ESL student is able to understand the proper use of technology. In this case, the wiki is able to provide wide opportunities towards collaboration and hand on activities. This is based on the wiki functions and widgets available for integrating text, images, and video. Wikis increase collaboration in and outside the classroom. “Goal 4: To use technology to improve communication, collaboration, and efficiency”. (HEALEY et al, 2011).

Wikis could be prepared in the teaching and learning process of the ESL student as a communication vehicle. In here the instructor could provide activities to enhance the oral, writing, and collaborative skills. Must important the instructor could monitor the work of every student and provide specific feedback.

5.1 WIKI STRATEGIES FOR THE ESL CLASSROOM

The use of wikis in the ESL classroom has become an exceptional tool. Most of all, it provides the ESL learner with plenty of possibilities to create and expand the learning experience of acquiring a second language (L2). In ESL courses the use of wikis could be seen in collaborative projects, classroom projects, web pages, discussion boards, and as online educational platforms. But, is essential to understand that working with wikis involves integrating an internet platform capable of letting the ESL learner explore and build. One platform with this characteristic is Wikispaces. Plenty of courses promote Wikispaces for its functionality. It’s fast, easy and free. But researchers such as Nakamura (2011) believe that the strength of using a Wiki in the ESL classroom could come from using it for collaboration and scaffolding. In addition, the wiki give the opportunity for the learner to write for an audience (HERRELL & JORDAN 2011, BARLEY & CONIAM, 2008).

5.2 TEACHING IMPLICATIONS WITH WIKIS

As part of the learning experience I provide my ESL learners they create collaborative wikis as a class project suing Wikispaces. As part of the class project they select a social justice topic to do research on it. They are able to integrate multimedia, which include videos and embedded presentations. In addition, they divide the areas creating a menu and adding

hyperlinks to the content. They create and edit their work in different settings creating a great classroom atmosphere. At the end of the wiki class project they present the wiki to the rest of the class and discuss their findings.

Another class project I tend to use with some of my students is to let them in groups select a country and explore it. Then they need to provide information about the culture, the folklore, the expenses to get there, the food, the nightlife, and the touristic locations, among other things. This type of experience benefit greatly the learners based on the research they do and the multimedia they use and integrate to their projects.

The most important part of this research activity is that it's subscribed to goal 2 of the TESOL Technology Standards (HEALEY et al, 2011). My ESL learners not only need to follow the instructions given but they must comply with the ethical standards. This includes not breaking any rules directed toward plagiarism. All learners receive training by my institution's research and writing specialists in order not to do plagiarism. This is part of the learning process and the benefits of the web 2.0 in the ESL classroom.

6 PODCASTS AND ESL

Oral communication presents a challenge for plenty of ESL learners. Most of all is here where most of the psychological factors that affect the L2 learning process appear as explained by Brown (1994). But just as great as blogs and wikis are to enhance the ESL learning experience, the same happens with podcasting. It's no secret, and according to Hasan and Hoon (2013), that the term podcast comes combining the words Apple's Ipod and broadcast. But, as it's define by Lafferty and Walch (2006), podcasts are a series of digital audio or video recordings, also called v-casts, uploaded on the web with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. It's also perceived as a collection of episodes that could be playback on mobile devices and personal computers, which enables the ESL learner to use oral communication to connect with students and bridge cultures. It also serves as a motivator and risk taking exercise because the ESL learner understands that a real audience exists. According to Mian (2008), the process of language learning is influenced by many factors but most of all the learner needs to have a positive attitude.

According to Hasan and Hoon (2013), findings by Edirisingha (2007) demonstrated the benefits within the use podcasting with freshman students of English Language and Communication at Kingston University. The research findings of the study indicated

that podcasts supported students' preparation for assessed work, and provided valuable advice on portfolio and presentations. Moreover, podcasts helped students in the preparation for workshops and seminars. Students' lack of familiarity with Web 2.0 technologies such as podcasts can be an explanatory reason for the low level of listening to podcasts (EDIRISHINGHA, 2007).

Another factor that needs to be taken into consideration is anxiety. As it was mentioned before, Brown (1994) presented several psychological aspects that affect L2 learning and anxiety is one of them. A study conducted by Chan and Lee (2005) determined that the use of podcasts reduces students' anxiety and create a sense of belonging to a learning community. In Hasan's and Hoon's (2013) review of recent studies they mention that podcasts provide students with a more authentic and personal experience to learn various skills of English language (LI, 2010). Participants of Li's (2010) study stated that they enjoyed listening to podcasts and showed willingness towards this new technology in developing their language skills.

The use of podcasts in the ESL classroom offers a variety of activities to engage the learner in a more diverse and atypical scenario that is used to. By integrating web 2.0 components like Podomatic instructors are able to record classes and have them divided as episodes for their learners. This will help the student retention ratio because if a learner misses the class the recording will be available. Another activity that could be done is the creation of a radio show. Not only it offers flexibility and playback to assess pronunciation but it open the mind of the learner to conduct research on a particular topic and provide feedback. Every show will be synchronized based on the podcast strategy that uses episodes.

6.1 TEACHING IMPLICATIONS WITH PODCASTS

I enjoy using podcasting a lot in my undergraduate and graduate courses. They offer me as an instructor a valuable way to assess oral pronunciation from my students. Most of all based on that every podcast is synchronized and based on following episodes the learner could be assessed frequently in real time and it's continuum development could be seen. As for the web 2.0 tools that I used is Podomatic. It's an easy and free web 2.0 system that offer the learner the opportunity to record and edit directly from the computer. In addition, the learner could upload recorded audio sessions. One activity that my undergraduate learners do is to select a topic and create a total of 6 episodes of five minutes each and post them online. Podomatic provides a web page and it also provides players that could easily be embedded in

a blog a wiki or a typical web page.

7 SOCIAL NETWORKING AND MICROBLOGGING

Social networking refers to the aspect of Web 2.0 that allows users to create links between their online presence such as a web page or a collection of photos (GREEN & HANNON, 2007). Nowadays, people tend to think that social networking is synonymous with Facebook. But plenty of educators use Ning as a social networking tool for the ESL classroom. With Ning the educator is able to create collaboration projects and students are able to post questions and concerns. This site is excellent for keeping all the instructor tools, which are notes, videos, podcasts, and other. Students who are absent have no excuse to catch up.

On the other hand, Edmodo is a private communication platform design specifically for teacher and students to share notes, links, and files (SOLOMON & SCHRUM, 2010). This platform is considered to be the first educational social networking platform. First, it's very eye appealing and friendly. Its colors and structure resembles Facebook. This in particular gives confidence to the ESL learner. Through Edmodo the instructors are able to send alerts, events, and assignments and chat with them.

By thinking about microblogging only one word comes to the mind and that is Twitter. One of the main functions of Twitter is to communicate in 140 characters. In order to generate information people have generated creative shortcuts. For educators is such a great tool because they can connect with each other to get advice or information quickly, share points of view, or just stay in touch. In regards to the ESL learners Twitter offers plenty of ways to enhance communication skills. Some of these strategies include: direct tweet, Get to know your classmates, collaborative projects, daily learning, take a poll. It's very suitable for class projects like: spread the news, practice brevity, and follow news stories.

8 EMERGENT WEB 2.0 POWER TOOLS FOR THE ESL CLASSROOM

Emergent technologies continue their development and education continues to benefit from them. This is the case of the Web 2.0. The read and write web continues its trademark of providing opportunities for the teaching and learning process and benefitting the ESL learner. New tools that integrate image, video and text in different formats along with

providing zooming presentations and strong 3D online templates have become some of the new tools used. Some of these tools include Movenote, Prezi, and Emaze.

Movenote is one excellent tool for enhancing the ESL teaching and learning experience. With this tool the learners can create video presentations online and on mobile devices. It is an excellent tool for providing a flipped classroom approach. In addition, ESL students are able to present online and present content that will be open for sharing towards relaxed and different atmosphere. Recording the presentations is very easy and Google drive along with other virtual disks can help store the content.

Prezi is well known by teachers as the zoomable presentation tool. It creates dynamic presentations thanks in part to the tools it provides. An instructor is able to download his power point presentations, create content and integrate video, audio, and text. The lesson could be completely mapped by class, unit, or share it in a web site or interactive white board. The zooming aspect provides a tridimensional easy to use format that ESL students could use in order to present.

On the other hand Emaze brings interactive presentations to another level. This multiplatform provides the teacher and the learner with plenty of tools to show their technology and content skills. It's very simple to use by only selecting the template and start working. The aspect of sharing is very simple and no plugins are necessary, by this means that runs on any device. This gives the teacher and learner great flexibility. The teacher or the learner could import ppt presentations. The tool has a liability that could become an asset for the ESL student. It's that the free account publishes everything public. This opens the door for the ESL teacher and the student to create together and produce process writing so that the final and saved presentation is perfect.

9 CONCLUSION

It's clear that more Web 2.0 tools are arriving to enhance the ESL classroom. They provide the necessary strength and reliability to let the ESL achieve fluency and the teacher to create different scenarios for learning. Every instructor needs to know the importance with the use of blogs, wikis, and podcasts. In addition, and as Langer de Ramirez (2011) establishes, by connecting Web 2.0 and ESL to the curriculum will develop the necessary connections between the TESOL technology standards and the ESL teachers and learners. Finally, it's important to consider that new trends like Gamification and Game Based

Learning are getting stronger and more convenient for the ESL learner in his quest for achieving fluency. These strategies could be implemented together with the use of the Web 2.0. There are plenty of web 2.0 tools waiting for ESL risk takers, teachers or students, to work with them.

USO DE LA WEB 2.0 PARA MEJORAR LA EXPERIENCIA DE ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE EN AULA DE ESL

RESUMEN

Las tecnologías emergentes en la sala de clases han sido usadas exitosamente al pasar de los años. Muchos estudiantes que utilizan el inglés como segundo idioma (ESL) se han beneficiado de ello para conseguir la fluidez. En estos momentos, los instructores de ESL integran la Web 2.0 en su ambiente educativo. Según, O'Reilly (2005), este tipo de tecnología le ofrece un apoderamiento al usuario y su tronco es basado en el uso de los blog, los wikis y los podcasts, proveyéndoles una infinidad de oportunidades a los estudiantes. La Web 2.0 le da la oportunidad al aprendiz de vivir una experiencia educativa diferente a través de un sinnúmero de actividades que lo motivan. Las herramientas de poder son muy comunes en la Web 2.0 y posibilitan el aprendizaje ya que permiten a los estudiantes de ESL la oportunidad de trabajar con tecnologías que ellos conocen.

Palabras clave: Web 2.0; ESL; Enseñanza; Aprendizaje

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