IMPLEMENTING WEB 2.0 TOOLS IN LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY: AN IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE

Reza khany¹, Mahnaz Boghayeri²
Faculty of Humanity
Ilam University
khani_reza@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT
The growing interest in using technology and its related tools has had a great impact on societies in recent decades. One of the affected structures of the society is education in general, and language pedagogy in particular. Despite the effectiveness of using these tools in language learning and teaching, there exist many practical constraints. Accordingly, the present study investigated 1. Iranian teachers’ attitudes toward implementing Web 2.0 tools in language classrooms, and 2. practical constraints on the use of Web 2.0 tools in language pedagogy. In so doing, a questionnaire was distributed among 112 Iranian EFL teachers. The main focus of the questionnaire was on the five most important Web 2.0 tools, namely Blogs, Podcasts, Social networks, Vodcasts, and Wikis. The results of the study demonstrated that on the contrary to the popular belief that these tools are useful in language pedagogy, they are bed rocks, not the materials. The findings further showed that Iranian EFL teachers had little if any idea of how to use such tools, which turned out to be along some other constraints the main obstacle in using such tools in the classrooms.

Field of Research: Language pedagogy; Web 2.0 tools; Practical constraints; EFL teachers’ attitudes.

1. Introduction
ICT-based technology has evolved from web 1.0 into Web 2.0. Today, Web 2.0 technologies have been integrated into people’s everyday lives. Web 2.0 encompasses different tools that allow individuals to interact and collaborate effectively, publish content collectively, share images, audio and video files. Consequently, Web 2.0 tools have been widely used in education in order to provide an authentic and collaborative educational context.

During the past decade several studies have been done on the use of Web 2.0 tools in education in general (Halic et. al, 2010; Uzunboylu et. al, 2010; Chandra & Watters, 2011), microblogging (Grosseck & Holotesco, 2010; Ebner & Lienhardt & Rohs & Meyer, 2010; Lomicka & Lord, 2012), social networking (Palfreyman, 2006; Conole & Culver, 2010; Arnold & Paulus, 2010; Uzunboylu & Bicen & Cavus, 2011; ), wikis (Ertmer, 2011; Gokcearslan & Ozcan, 2011; Lai & Eugenia, 2011), podcasting and vodcasting (Abdous & Facer & Yen, 2011), websites (Chandra & Watters, 2011), NT-based language learning (Pop, 2010), flash websites (Girgin, 2011), Web learning environments (Roberts, 2010; Peredo & Canales & MENCHACA & Peredo, 2011), and online multimedia authoring tools (Gimeno & Siez & Macario de Siqueira & Martinez, 2010).
2011; Ertmer, 2011; Lai & Eugenia, 2011;), and in language pedagogy in particular(Palfreyman, 2006; Yang & Chen, 2007; Bran, 2009; Pop, 2010; Amir et. al, 2010; Gimeno et. al, 2010; Abdous et. al, 2011; Girgin, 2011). According to Yang & Chen (2007), a Web 2.0 based language learning program could enhance student’s knowledge of computer and other fields, improve their English language abilities, increase their interest in learning, and provide a broad learning range and possibilities. Bran (2009) believed that learners could benefit from using Web 2.0 technology in learning, creating, collaborating, and connecting them with people all around the world with no time or age limit. He argued that learners could practice their knowledge of English, collaboratively, in authentic contexts; and this could be beneficial, especially for the ESP students. In a different study, Pop (2010) referred to Motivation, Confidence, and Disposition as crucial factors for communicative foreign language learning which were higher in the students educated with the use of web 2.0 tools. By referring to some advantages of Web 2.0 based language learning program such as authentic interaction with peers outside the class, developing listening skills, exercising reflective thinking skills and giving feedback, no limitation of time and place, etc., he concluded that Web 2.0 based language learning was superior to the classical communicative face-to-face learning.

2. EFL teachers’ attitudes towards implementing Web 2.0 tools in language pedagogy

Attitude toward implementing web 2.0 tools is one of the most important issues in language pedagogy with a large body of literature. Unlike student’s positive attitude toward interactive web environment use in learning English (Küfi & Özgür, 2009), Girgin (2011) found that although learners were pleased with using web 2.0 technologies in their English language learning classrooms, they agreed with the face to face teaching in gaining language competence.

Positive attitude of teachers toward using web 2.0 tools is also a crucial factor in implementing these tools in education. Baltaci-Goktalay & Özdílek (2010) in their study concluded that pre-service teachers had positive attitudes and high level of acceptance of web 2.0 tools in education. Eyyam & Meneviş & Doğruer (2011) found that teachers mostly used some well-known web 2.0 tools such as Wiki, Social Networks and Instant Messaging Software, in their classrooms, but some tools which could be very useful in academic life were less known to the teachers and they preferred not to use them in their classrooms. On the other hand, there existed some misperception about the Web 2.0 tools, just as “there are too many tools and not enough time to use them, and using too many tools just makes student confused” which Brown (2011) referred to.

Although much has been written on the effectiveness of Web 2.0 tools in language pedagogy, there still remain some constraints in using these tools in language classrooms (Yang & Chen, 2007; Bran, 2009; Küfi & Özgür, 2009). Yang & Chen (2007) found that students with low language proficiency may feel uncomfortable using Web 2.0 tools and remain in the stage of absorbing English input. According to Bran (2009), one of the problems faced with using Web 2.0 applications in classrooms could be the lack of enough technical stuff. Küfi & Özgür (2009 referred to the lack of certain facilities such as access to computer or internet at home or dormitory as the shortcomings of using Web 2.0 tools in language learning pedagogy. This study also
showed that some students may not feel comfortable with and interested in using web 2.0 technologies in language learning.

Due to social and cultural constraints, much needs to be done to see how such factors affect the success or failure of the use of such tools in different cultures and languages. To this end, this study is going to investigate;

1- How do Iranian EFL teachers view using web 2.0 applications in teaching various language skills in Iranian EFL context?
2- What are the main practical constraints facing language practitioners on Iranians EFL context using Web 2.0 applications?

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The questionnaire was distributed among 112 English language teachers teaching in different private language institutes and universities in Iran. The sample included 80 females and 32 males, with B.A and M.A degrees. Their age ranged between 26 to 46 years, with 1 to 27 years of experience.

3.2. Instrument

To achieve the objectives of this study a questionnaire was used. The main focus of the questionnaire was on five main Web 2.0 tools, namely blogs, podcasts, social networks, vodcasts, and wikis. It was divided into 4 parts on likert scale; to what extent teachers are familiar with Web 2.0 tools, to what extent they believe these tools to be effective, to what extent language components could be taught by the use of Web 2.0 tools, and potential constraints in using Web 2.0 tools in foreign language classrooms.

4. Results

The questionnaires were analyzed quantitatively for calculating the percentage of the degrees to recognize the participants’ attitudes, and the constraints felt toward implementing these tools in language teaching. The results are presented in tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4.

Table 3.1. The percentage of the participants’ familiarity with WEB 2.0 tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very little%</th>
<th>Little%</th>
<th>Average%</th>
<th>Much%</th>
<th>Very much%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodcasts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 3.1 shows, the participants were familiar with Social networks more than the other four tools. Blogs were also the least known Web 2.0 tools to the participants.
Wikis were recognized as the second most known Web 2.0 tool to the participants, followed by podcasts and vodcasts respectively.

Table 3.2. The percentage of the tools’ effectiveness from the participants point of view.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very little%</th>
<th>Little%</th>
<th>Average%</th>
<th>Much%</th>
<th>Very much%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodcasts</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>29.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 3.2 illustrates, social networks were believed to be the most effective Web 2.0 tool in language learning and teaching, and Blogs were the least. Podcasts, wikis, and vodcasts were in the second, third, and forth level of the participants priority.

Table 3.3. The degree to which Iranian EFL teachers assume English can be taught with the help of Web 2.0 tools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very little%</th>
<th>Little%</th>
<th>Average%</th>
<th>Much%</th>
<th>Very much%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networks</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodcasts</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it can be seen, almost 71% of the participants thought that English could be taught by the help of Social networks. Wikis, and podcasts ranked next. This percentage was reduced to 64.3% contribution of vodcasts in teaching English, and to 50% for the use of blogs in language classrooms.

Table 3.4. The percentage of EFL teachers’ attitudes towards the recognized constraints of using Web 2.0 tools in language classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree %</th>
<th>Disagree %</th>
<th>Neutral %</th>
<th>Agree %</th>
<th>Strongly agree %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is a lack of enough technical stuff using Web 2.0 tools in second language pedagogy.</td>
<td>.9</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Students with low language proficiency may feel uncomfortable using Web 2.0 tools and remain in the stage of</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
absorbing English input.

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Most teachers are not familiar with these tools.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>There is not enough appropriate Web 2.0 materials to use in language classrooms.</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>40.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>There are often technical problems with the use of Web 2.0 applications.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As table 3.4 demonstrates, unfamiliarity of the teachers with Web 2.0 tools was the most agreed constraint. Lack of enough technical stuff and appropriate language learning materials were also known as important constraints in using Web 2.0 tools and applications in language classrooms as felt by teachers. About 60% percent of the participants agreed that students with low level of language proficiency may feel uncomfortable in classes using Web 2.0 tools and would not show significant development in their language knowledge.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results from the first three tables (tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) showed that the participants were highly familiar with Web 2.0 tools. They also showed their positive attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools in language learning classrooms. Most of the participants believed that these tools could help them teach English to a great extent. As Bran (2009) found, Web 2.0 tools could contribute to a collaborative and authentic language learning environment, these tools can help language teachers through a Communicative Language Ability (CLA) approach in an authentic language learning and teaching context.

Among the five mentioned Web 2.0 tools, social networks were believed to be the most effective tools in language pedagogy. Social networks can provide authentic contextualized language input beyond the confines of the classroom. Students can establish meaningful interactions with peers and teachers to promote cultural, pragmatic and linguistic competence, since Social networks allow learners to use the language with native speakers or other learners. Moreover, Social networks consist of different features which can be easily tailored to different components of language competence, as referred to in Bachman’s (1990) Framework of Communicative Language Ability (CLA).

In Bachman’s CLA model, language competence is divided into two sub-categories; Organizational competence and Pragmatic competence. Organizational competence deals with linguistic components of language, and pragmatic competence deals with social and discoursical aspects of language. Technically speaking, different parts of Social networks, e.g. Facebook or Google+, enable the users to share their ideas, photos, videos, audio files with others, express their ideas in form of comments, or have text, audio, or video chats. Each of these features of Social networks can be effective in improving one of the four main skills of language learning, and is in line with the two competences in CLA model. On the other hand, Social networks can cover the other Web 2.0 tools’ functions assessed in this study, namely Podcasts, Vodcasts, and blogs, except for Wikis.
Wikis are highly collaborative, focused on content, frequently administered by a group, open to edit by anyone, and organized in various ways. They are believed to be potential sources for promoting reading and writing skills of learners (Forte & Bruckman, 2006; Lundin, 2008; Ma & Yuen, 2008; Mak & Coniam, 2008). As it was illustrated by the results, most of the participants were familiar with Wikis and considered it as an important tool in language pedagogy which can help teachers in teaching language components to a great extent. Regarding Wikis’ features, it can be argued that they can be more effective in promoting writing and reading comprehension skills (Emigh, & Herring, 2005), while they may have less contribution in improving learners’ speaking and listening skills, though they often contain audio files. In terms of language competence, Wikis can be helpful in teaching both organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Because some Wiki pages contain contents with which learners can improve their pragmatic competence.

Podcasts and Vodcasts as two other Web 2.0 tools investigated in this study, are believed to be effective in language classrooms by the participants of the study. Podcasts may result in improving students’ learning (Abdous, et al., 2012). They can be used to interact with peers and teachers beyond the walls of the classrooms and can be great facilitators to increase students engagement. Podcasting and vodcasting can help foster students creativity and provide them authentic activities. Student created podcasts and vodcasts give students the opportunity to enhance their organization and communication skills, which is in line with CLA framework. They can also improve students’ listening and speaking skills when used in language learning environments.

Though blogs were recognized as the least effective tools in language pedagogy in comparison to the four other tools, still half of the participants believed that English can be taught by the help of these tools to a great extent. Within L2 contexts, blogging provides an alternative to writing assignments that would normally be presented only to the instructor. The chronological ordering of blog entries creates for each student an archive of their personal work that they can, and do, revisit and reflect upon. Blogs contribute mostly in improving writing skill of the learners (Thorne & Weber & Bensinger, 2005). Due to the features included in the blogs, they can be effective both promoting learners’ organizational competence and their pragmatic competence.

The results attained from table 3.4 showed that beside all the positive attitudes towards the effectiveness of the Web 2.0 tools in foreign language learning and teaching, still there are many constraints on using these tools in EFL classrooms that cannot be ignored. “Teachers’ unfamiliarity with Web 2.0 tools” is the most important constraint recognized by the participants. While most of the young teachers are familiar with these tools, many experienced teachers are not, and do not even believe in the effectiveness of these tools. So they prefer the traditional methods and classes. On the other hand, despite the positive attitudes of the teachers towards using these tools, “lack of enough technical stuff” is referred to as the second major constraint in using Web 2.0 tools in language pedagogy, with the total agreement of 69.7%. The other constraints which teachers often face in the classrooms are “technical problems with the use of Web 2.0 applications” and “lack of enough appropriate Web 2.0 materials to use in language classrooms”, with the total agreement of 65.2% and 64.3%, respectively.

According to the results, it can be concluded that despite the positive attitude of EFL teachers towards the effectiveness of implementing Web 2.0 tools in language
classrooms, the field still lacks a unified and authorized curriculum in order to provide
the teachers with the trainings needed and enough and appropriate materials and
stuffs. Finally, as emphasized in previous sections, Web 2.0 tools each may enjoy
potentials more compatible for the development of certain language skills and
components. Under certain conditions and in certain contexts, these besides the
constraints outlined in table 3.4, should be taken into considerations in the justification,
development, and implementation of any tool, task, and activity for the language
classrooms.

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