

A VARIETY OF WEB 2.0 TOOLS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Tetiana Maslova

National Technical University of Ukraine “Kyiv Polytechnic Institute”

The paper considers using Web 2.0 tools for educational purposes, extending the boundaries of the classroom into virtual space, providing the learners with opportunities for communication, collaboration and creativity. The author gives the definition of Web 2.0 technology, and discusses what Web 2.0 applications can be made use of in the modern English language learning environment, allowing a better interaction between the those involved, and a higher efficiency of foreign language skills development.

In the first decades of 1990s World Wide Web was in its earliest stages of evolution. Those who were involved in developing web content had a lot of specialist knowledge, for example about HTML or hyper text, and skills of working with expensive hardware connected to the internet. Now we can call that web content Web 1.0 so as to contrast it to Web 2.0 tools. Web 1.0 flowed in one direction, namely from a few webpage creators, who controlled the content and amount of information displayed online, down to many users who read web-pages connected through hyperlinks. In the course of time things started to change, however. Technological breakthroughs of the early 2000s made the internet and the ability to develop content more accessible. As a result, a new generation of web-based tools appeared. These tools, known today as Web 2.0 tools, allowed anyone with an internet connection to create and upload content to the web at a very low cost, if any. Now there is no need to learn hypertext markup languages and buy a server in order to create on-line content, share it and collaborate with others, whom you may never meet face-to-face. Web 2.0 is more democratic because is bottom-top controlled and users decide, for example by voting, what they would like to read and watch, and very dynamic as users themselves can upload files and write on web-pages. Due to such tools as blogs, podcasts and wikis Web 2.0 information is very dynamic and full of multimedia – the pages change extremely fast, sometimes even while you're viewing them. The well-known Wikipedia, a multilingual free access internet encyclopaedia, now hosts 20 million articles in 287 languages created by a vast community of collaborators around the world. Another example of Web 2.0 technology is social sites such as Facebook and You Tube, where users are welcome to interact with the content creators and other users, post comments and share the content with their friends.

It is obvious that Web 2.0 tools can be effectively used in the classroom, engaging students to collaborate, and empowering them to become creators of the content of a wide range of forms, features, and functionalities. In fact, regardless of the previous experience in using technology for educational purposes Web 2.0 enables teachers to create virtual classroom environment, which can connect learners to a community so that they could learn from a vast network of multimedia resources and get in touch with each other whenever necessary.

Although Web 2.0 applications are quite multifunctional they can be grouped according to the primary educational purposes they are used for. In the English language classroom they help promote communication, collaboration, and creativity of the learners.

Communication between learners and the teacher as well as between learners themselves is an important factor making students be motivated and involved, which is especially critical for a language learning process. In the traditional classroom, communication is time-delayed, requiring hours or even days to get a feedback. For example, the teacher gives a home assignment and students have to submit it in a few days. However, it may well be the case that students have some questions concerning the work they have to fulfil, and if they could get a reply from the teacher prior to the deadline for the home assignment it would certainly help them do the task more properly, and probably get a higher grade. The teachers in their turn may like to share some additional useful resources, thus needing to contact students outside the classroom. The following Web 2.0 tools provide opportunities for interaction in virtual space.

Eyejot (<http://corp.eyejot.com/>) creates and sends video messages using any web browser as well as directly from mobile devices.

Jing (<http://www.techsmith.com/jing>) captures images or animations on computer and add voice narratives.

Disqus (<http://disqus.com/>) adds comments to a website or blog.

Kahoot (<https://getkahoot.com>) is a web-based feedback tool in the form of game-based classroom response system.

ClassPager (<http://www.classpager.com>) allows a teacher to communicate with students via text messaging through a cell phone while simultaneously keeping cell phone numbers private.

DotSub (<http://dotsub.com/>) creates and view subtitles for videos in multiple languages across all platforms and mobile devices.

Vialouge (<https://vialogues.com/>) is a free web based educational tool to create video conversations.

Paltalk (<http://www.paltalk.com/>) sends video, voice, and text chat for free with people around the world.

OoVoo (<http://www.oovoo.com/home.aspx>) is a video conference tool that can support up to 12 people.

Collaboration between learners in pairs and groups is essential for acquiring foreign language communicative skills; however, the time allocated for collaboration in the classroom is often insufficient for every learner to take the best advantage of it. Thus, supporting web-based project work, which extends beyond the classroom and joins students when they are not physically together, is a key to achieving desired language learning outcomes. Here are some of the Web 2.0 project management tools and platforms.

Doodle (<http://doodle.com/>) is suited for collaboratively schedule group meetings online.

Trello (<https://trello.com/>) is a flexible and visual way to collaborate and organize tasks by using card-like interfaces.

Zoho Docs (<https://www.zoho.com/docs/>) is a workspace for creating, storing and editing documents and files.

Wikispaces (<http://www.wikispaces.com/content/classroom>) is a platform for creating a classroom workspace where teachers and students can communicate and work on writing projects alone or in teams.

Mega (<https://mega.co.nz/>) is an online storage service that can securely share files.

Wunderlist (<https://www.wunderlist.com/>) can help finish tasks by organizing a list with a friend or a team.

Papaly (<https://www.papaly.com/>) is a tool for sharing bookmarks for groups or teams.

MindMeister (<http://www.mindmeister.com/>) enables real-time group brainstorming sessions using diagrams or mind maps.

Taskworld (<https://www.taskworld.com/>) will track all your colleagues on a task-to-task basis and provide them with feedback on their performance.

PrimaryPad (<http://primarypad.com/>) is the online word processor that allows students and teachers to work together in real-time.

Creativity is one of the 21st century skills, required to deal with the challenges of today's society and workforce. Being creative means to develop, refine, analyze, evaluate, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively. Thus, for professional success in the global competitive market students need to learn how to be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives, and develop presentation, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills. In this connection Web 2.0 creativity tools are extremely varied, offering superb technical means of visualizing ideas, designing, composing, etc.

Storybird (<https://storybird.com/>) is an online tool for creating visual stories.

Tagul (<https://tagul.com/>) is an online tool that allows you to create gorgeous word clouds.

Weebly (<http://www.weebly.com/>) creates websites without typing any codes.

Pixlr (<https://pixlr.com/>) can edit pictures and creates sketches and drawings online.

piZap (<http://www.pizap.com/>) is a tool for editing photos and creating collages.

TwistedWave (<https://twistedwave.com/online/>) is a browser-based audio editor.

Graphix (<http://www.scholastic.com/graphix/createcomic.htm>) creates graphic novels or comic strips online.

YouTube Video Editor (<https://www.youtube.com/editor>) is an online video-editing tool by YouTube.

Projeqt (<https://projeqt.com/>) creates presentations with dynamic contents from social media sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter).

All in all, Web 2.0 tools can serve multiple purposes. The English teacher just needs to explore, and choose the one which is best in terms of the challenges of the language classroom, and user-friendliness.

References:

1. Light, D., Polin, D. "Integrating Web 2.0 Tools into the Classroom: Changing the Culture of Learning". EDC Center for Children and Technology, 2010, New York. p. 34
2. Preparing 21st Century Students for a Global Society: An Educator's Guide to the "Four Cs". National Education Association. p. 37
3. New technologies of 21st century skills [Accessible online]. Retrieved from <http://newtech.coe.uh.edu/>
4. Web 2.0 tools. Discovery education [Accessible online]. Retrieved from <http://web2014.discoveryeducation.com/web20tools.cfm>
5. Windows software and Apps [Accessible online]. Retrieved from <http://kingscomputingcpd.weebly.com/software.html>