THE ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TOWARDS USING WEB 2.0 TOOLS IN EFL CLASS

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ABSTRACT

An important goal of the language learning process is to develop the student's interest in looking for opportunities for communication and the willingness to communicate in them. This will depend on many factors such as the student's personality, social situation, communicative competence, the desire to communicate with particular peer, etc. (Chapelle, 2001, p.50). Considering these factors, Web 2.0 tools can provide learners with realistic reasons to communicate and develop their communicative competence which is one of the main goals of the communicative language teaching applied in EFL settings in Turkish state university English prep schools. Since the learners in such schools do not have the opportunity to use English outside the classroom context except the internet facilities. Therefore, implementing Web 2.0 tools into English language teaching curriculum in such contexts should seriously be taken into consideration to consider students with realistic reasons to communicate in English to develop their communicative competence. Thus, this paper aims to find out the attitudes of the teachers and students in Bülent Ecevit University Incirharmanı Prep School. The implications of this study may provide teachers who are to teach in a communicative language teaching based program and fail to provide their students with real aims and contexts to use the target language with some ideas on how to and why to implement Web 2.0 materials into their syllabus.
Keywords: Web 2.0, teacher attitudes, communicative language teaching

INTRODUCTION

The fact that the world has become a global village and the young generation here is Digital Natives has led the educators find ways to integrate technology into traditional classroom with hard-copy course books and materials as they

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enjoy computer and Internet based activities. These activities which are labeled as Web tools might be useful especially in countries such as Turkey where students do not have the opportunity to use English outside the classroom. For such students, the social nature of these tools can provide realistic reasons to communicate which is the target of most of the published hard-copy course books which are based on improvement of communicative competence.

Communicative competence is defined as the ability to interpret and enact appropriate social

behaviors, and it requires the active involvement of the learner in the production of the target language (Canale and Swain, 1980; Celce, 1995). The definitions of communicative competence indicate that it is to know how to use language to communicate in various forms and contexts as in real life contexts.

As in language learning process, opportunities for communication are one of the most important issues. Students' interest and willingness to communicate depends on many factors such as "the student's personality, social situation, communicative competence, the desire to communicate with particular peer, etc." (Chapelle, 2001, p.50). Taking these factors into consideration, implementing Web 2.0 tools into English language teaching curriculum in such contexts should seriously be evaluated to provide students with realistic reasons to communicate in English to develop their communicative competence. Thus, this paper aims to find out the attitudes of the teachers and students in Bülent Ecevit University Incirharmanı Prep School towards implementing Web 2.0 tools into classroom. The implications of this study may provide teachers who are to teach English, but fail to provide their students with real aims and contexts to use the target language with some ideas on how to and why to implement Web 2.0 materials into their syllabus.

Computers and smart phones are increasingly viewed as doors to social spaces (Oblinger, 2005), and many believe that the social nature of Web 2.0 technologies supports collaboration (Godwin-Jones, 2003). Zorko (2009) states that online environments can provide learners with opportunities for collaborative interactions. Collaborative technology is any application that "enables and scaffolds the construction of communal ways of seeing, acting and knowing and production of shared knowledge and new practices for successful future action" (Lipponen & Lallimo, 2004, p.436). Research in this field suggests that there are certain advantages of collaborating online. A list of the advantages can be seen as follows:

- Emotional support, sociability, information, and instructional aid can be provided in online communities (Hiltz, 1998).
- Such environments have become habitats for *Net Generation* (digital natives or N-Geners).
- They search for interactivity (Thorne & Payne, 2005).
- They read, reflect, and post a reply anytime, anywhere (Arnold & Ducate, 2006).

The related research on Web 2.0 tools such as wikis, blogs and facebook have put forward their potential to provide educational environment for autonomous language learning process and environments for online collaboration: thus, real communication in the target language.

Wikis are "a collection of interlinked webpages that can be easily edited and freely expanded by any user" (Zorko, 2009, p. 4). They are appropriate for educational purposes since they are user friendly (Zorko, 2009), flexible (Augar et al., 2004; Nicole et al., 2005), and have low cost (Zorko, 2009). According to Choy & Ng (2007), wikis might be suitable for "storing different types of digital information and sharing it, monitoring students' group or individual progress, promoting democratic participation, empowering students and interacting socially and collaborating".

Facebook has become a part of the daily routine of university students (Stuzman, 2006). Vander Veer (2008) defines it as "hip, hot and happening site" (p. 158) where members can witness others' "life-in-progress". Facebook users can like, share photos or videos, exchange private messages, poke their friends, get informed about their friends' status and stay in touch with them. A class can create a link to exchange messages, to share information, to announce or to ask for help. It has become a "marketplace" for students with second-hand textbooks, for the ones looking for roommates or a job.

As Blattner & Fiori (2009) also suggest, instructors and language students need to be aware of the real aims for communication that the facilities facebook creates. Since it has become an item in the e-routine list of these learners, the only thing to do is to find ways to use it for autonomous learning. Blatter & Fiori (2009) stated that the Facebook website is cost effective and presents L2 learners with opportunities for intercultural communication with authentic native speakers of comparable age.

Blogs are "part web site, part journal, part free-form writing spaces stylized form of expression" (Kennedy, 2003, p.4). According to Kennedy (2003), "Blogs combine the best elements of technology where work is collected, edited and assessed with the immediacy of publishing for a virtual audience (p.7). Blogs are "especially effective at supporting … reflection … more so than other technologies would be" (West, Wright & Graham, 2005, p.1656).

Blogs may promote reflective practice among educational users (Fiedler, 2003; Shoffner, 2005; Suzuki, 2004; West et al., 2005). In their study, Ray and Coulter (2008) found that "a majority of entries examined demonstrate some level of reflective writing". Like meta-reflection, blogs can promote self- directed thinking and decision making among users (Richardson, 2006). As with the Wikis and facebook, blogs can create real contexts for language learning that would proceed beyond language learning process in an individual language classroom experience. Lee (2011) supports the positive effect of blogs on learning, stating that blogs as a mediated tool for intercultural learning outside of class have the potential to create a stimulating online learning community that is conducive to collaborative learning and reflective thinking.

Taking into consideration the Web tools in providing pragmatic input which texts might not offer with their limited amount of knowledge, learning outcomes in the area of pragmatics are substantially enhanced when language learners are embedded in a larger context of significant relationships, such as the various ones provided by Internet- mediated partnerships may enhance students pragmatic competence as Thorne (2003) stated. Moreover, as Dornyei & Csizer (2005) suggested integrating technology into syllabus provided students to have meaningful interactions with individuals of different cultural backgrounds. The research in this field suggests that the teachers and the students hold positive beliefs about using Web 2.0 tools in EFL class. For example, Külekçi (2009) investigated the attitudes of pre-service English teachers towards the use of the internet. She found out that most student teachers are eager to use Internet applications and hold positive beliefs about the use of Internet. Similarly, Usluel, Mazman and Arikan (2009) investigated ELT student teachers' awareness of collaborative Web 2.0 tools specifically on wikis, blogs and podcasts in language learning, the study concluded that prospective teachers are not mostly aware of Web 2.0 tools that can be used in language learning. However, it became clear that pre-service language teachers need training in using Internet applications for language learning/ teaching purposes. Cephe and Balcıkanlı

(2012) suggested that most participants find the use of Web 2.0 technologies essential for the effectiveness of language learning and should be employed in language classrooms since they provide learners with opportunities of authentic language, they capture students' interest, they offer constructivist instruction opportunities and they address the needs of 'digital natives' of 21th century.

Al-Ali and Gunn (2013) in their study on web 2.0 in the ESL classroom with teachers and students found out that most of the teachers do not 'recognize the educational potential of Web 2.0 for their students, so their uses of these services mainly fall under the category of probably "warm up" tools that are limited to introducing ideas or starting the class. Teachers seem to limit the use of Web 2.0 services in classrooms and not extend it to allow students interact with classroom material outside the class. Students seem to be more familiar with services that were introduced early on in the Web 2.0 development phase, like YouTube and Facebook, and they are open to trying them and finding their zone of comfort in each one of them.

THE STUDY

Russell, Bebell and O'Dwyer (2005) note that "despite widespread use of computers by teachers outside of the classroom, instructional practices and school culture have not incorporated computer-based Technologies into regular instructional practices" (p. 298). However, as the related literature suggests, (Al-Ali and Gunn, 2013; Cephe and Balcıkanlı, 2012; Usluel, Mazman and Arikan, 2009), teachers and students hold positive beliefs about using Web 2.0 tools in EFL class. Thus, this study aims to find out the attitudes of teachers and students in Bulent Ecevit University English prep school towards the use of Web 2.0 tools in their classes. The quantitative data was gathered via a questionnaire prepared by the researcher. The items were related to the use of Web 2.0 tools and the attitudes towards using them in their classroom.

The results of the student questionnaire

Table 1. How long do you use Web 2.0 tools?

How long do you use Web 2.0 tools?	Frequency %	Mean	Std D
1-3 hours	57.8	1.57	.780
3-6 hours	31.1		
6-9 hours	7.8		
9- …. hours	3.3		

The results in Table 1 show that many students use Web 2.0 tools for about two hours. They use especially wikis and social web sites to interact friends. While they use Web 2.0 tools mostly to search, they also use them to prepare presentation and learn vocabulary. Most of the students reported that their teachers generally write on the board in the classroom. Some stated that their teachers used films, videos, clips, and recordings. The students think that their teachers should have exercises on website rather than blogs or using website efficiently.

Table 2. Why do you use technology?

	Yes	No		
	Frequency %	%	Mean	Std D
To learn vocabulary	58.9	41.1	1.41	.495
To search	73.3	26.7	1.27	.445
To present	64.4	35.6	1.36	.481
To practice English	32.2	67.8	1.68	.470
To interact people speaking English	16.7	83.3	1.83	.375

Table 3. What does your teacher use in the classroom?

What does your teacher use in the classroom?	Yes			No
	Frequency %	Mean	Std D	Frequency %
Slides	43.3	56.7	1.57	.498
Pictures	42.2	57.8	1.58	.497
Shows	16.7	83.3	1.83	.375
He writes notes on the board.	87.8	12.2	1.12	.329
He shows web sites.	23.3	76.7	1.77	.425

He shows notes on OHP.	28.9	71.1	1.71	.456
Group discussions	18.9	81.1	1.81	.394
Films/ videos	51.1	48.9	1.49	.503
Simulations	7.8	92.2	1.92	.269
Clips/ recordings	52.2	47.8	1.48	.502

Table 4. What should your teacher use?

What should your teacher use?	Yes	No	Mean	Std D
	Frequency %			
Blogs allowing student participation	27.8	72.2	1.72	.450
Podcasts like "You tube"	42.2	57.8	1.58	.497
Tasks posted on class websites	31.1	68.9	1.69	.466
Lesson plan posted on class website	25.6	74.4	1.74	.439
Teacher blog	23.3	76.7	1.77	.425
Exercises on website	56.7	43.3	1.43	.498
Mailed homework	28.9	71.1	1.71	.456
Class e-mail list	17.8	82.2	1.82	.384
Texting the teacher	24.4	75.6	1.76	.432
Chat on twitter	10	90	1.90	.302

The results of the teacher questionnaire

The teachers reported that they also use Web 2.0 tools about two hours for professional development, to prepare exercises and to interact with students. Many teachers consider themselves about average; that is, they have enough skills to complete the management and communication tasks expected of them and will occasionally choose to use technology to accomplish something they choose. Many teachers are prepared to use content management systems/websites and classroom voice amplification systems. The teachers believe that using Web 2.0 can surely increase student motivation to learn, it may also respond to a variety of learning styles and provide additional practice to struggling learners/students. Almost all the teachers think that kids today are digital natives; they need their classrooms to embrace a 21st century curriculum. Also, they think that technology is a motivating and useful tool but should not be overly relied upon. Almost all teachers have access to handhelds; most of them have access to projectors, TVs, DVR, personal computers, and laptops in their classrooms. Half of the

teachers wish they had a special department whose sole job is to help support them on technology since it helps them collaborate as a professional with other teachers. Almost all teachers reported that the barriers they face to spending more time using technology in the classroom are mainly lack of hardware at school and loss of class time due to technical issues. The fact that they have not found good apps or other digital resources, and Internet/ bandwidth issues at school and lack of student access to online resources at home are other barriers for most of them.

The results of the student questionnaire

The results indicate that many students use Web 2.0 tools for about two hours. They use especially wikis and social web sites to interact friends. While they use Web 2.0 tools mostly to search, they also use them to prepare presentation and learn vocabulary. Most of the students reported that their teachers generally write on the board in the classroom. Some stated that their teachers used films, videos, clips, and recordings. The students think that their teachers should have exercises on website rather than blogs or using website efficiently.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The students of this century, namely the "Digital Natives" are very competent in using computers and the internet. Facebook, the popular social community website, is a part of their daily routines. As Blattner and Fiori (2009) state, "If educators decide to provide guidance to the students to use such a site it will be an invaluable asset to their educational experience", we should not underestimate the value of facebook to provide opportunities for EFL students. Also, as Richardson (2006) states blogs are authentic and meaningful technology tools that provide an opportunity to use real- world, real- time resources to think, and communicate. Thus, it can be a great support for EFL settings such as the ones in Turkey where the only opportunity to use the target language to communicate is most of the time via Web 2.0. The research provides sufficient evidence that shows the advantages and the effectiveness of Web 2.0 tools such as wikis, facebook and blogs. EFL settings in which English, the target language, is not used in public life or social life, students lack the opportunities to use the language for realistic purposes. Since wikis, facebook and blogs have become a part of our students' daily routine; we should try to take advantage of these tools to provide realistic reasons to communicate.

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