

# English Language Learning Interaction through Web 2.0 Technologies

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper aims to review current research on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the teaching – learning of the English language, theoretical foreign language underpinnings and pedagogical implications. The objective of this work was to search theoretical perspectives that ground this topic to determine how Web 2.0 technologies improve interaction in the ELL classroom and the most useful technological resources. Due to the myriad of research studies conducted on using these technologies for English learning and teaching, the method applied for this purpose was a strict selection criteria to identify eligible studies applying time frame on the publication date to restrict the number of up-to-date reviewed studies to be analyzed. This literature review made evident that Web 2.0 technologies foster a favorable learning environment and that interaction is promoted through the adequate selection of resources; otherwise, a wrong selection misleads a target language communication.

**KEYWORDS:** PERSPECTIVES, INTERACTION, TECHNOLOGIES, COMMUNICATION, ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING, WEB 2.0

## RESUMEN

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### **Interacción en el aprendizaje del idioma Inglés mediante el uso de las tecnologías Web 2.0**

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar investigaciones recientes acerca del uso de las tecnologías Web 2.0 en la enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés, los fundamentos teóricos de la lengua extranjera y sus implicaciones pedagógicas. Este estudio busca perspectivas teóricas que fundamenten este tema a fin de determinar cómo las tecnologías Web 2.0 mejoran la interacción en el aula y los recursos tecnológicos más útiles. Debido a la gran cantidad de investigaciones sobre el uso de estas tecnologías para el aprendizaje y la enseñanza de inglés, el método aplicado para este propósito fue un criterio de selección minucioso para identificar estudios elegibles estableciendo un límite en la actualidad de las referencias que se determinan en la fecha de publicación para restringir selectivamente el número de estudios revisados. Esta revisión bibliográfica evidenció que las tecnologías Web 2.0 fomentan un ambiente de aprendizaje favorable y que la interacción se promueve a través de una elección adecuada de recursos; de lo contrario, una comunicación efectiva no existirá en el idioma aprendido.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** PERSPECTIVAS, INTERACCIÓN, TECNOLOGÍAS, COMUNICACIÓN, APRENDIZAJE DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS, WEB 2.0

## Introduction

At present, our life is extremely influenced with the use of new technologies. These new tools are involved in every aspect of our daily life, playing an important role in today's human society development. In the 21st century the choice of technologies existing for use in language learning and teaching has become very varied. Thus, it is pivotal, that English foreign language teachers take advantage of the modern technological facilities and make them central to language practice (Nomass, 2013). From a pedagogical point of view, Luo (2013) points out that a teacher should integrate technology based on different degrees in alignment with students' levels of technology literacy. It is because under the assumption that today most students are digital natives who automatically fit into the technology-supported learning environment cannot be taken for granted.

During the last decades, Web 2.0 technologies have been subject to study in different educational areas in search of improving academic performance, such is the case of English language learning ELL. Guevara-Betancourt and Caldeiro-Pedreira (2016) state that the evolution of information and communication technology ICT has promoted important chan-

ges in the pedagogical field because they foster interaction and communication among students and teachers. This implies teachers going from only being knowledge transmitters to become guides and mediators in the learning process. As far as new interaction spaces within the field of ELL, Web 2.0 encompasses different resources that allow teachers and students to communicate and work together effectively, publish content rapidly, share images, audio and video files (Khany & Boghayeri, 2013).

Due to their different backgrounds and contexts, English language instructors have different opinions on to which extent Web 2.0 technologies ought to be implemented in the classrooms. This literature review aims to delve into research on Web 2.0 technologies and their integration with English language learning ELL in a non-native speaking setting by language educators. It has also been designed to shed light on this language teaching-learning process to propose possible directions for future research. The specific research questions that guided this study are: 1. Which theoretical frameworks ground the current research? 2. How does Web 2.0 improve interaction in the ELL classroom? 3. What Web 2.0 technology resources can be used in the ELL classroom?

## Methodology

This literature review included papers published related to Web 2.0 technologies and the effects they may have on interaction in EFL contexts. Most references include information of authors who specifically conducted studies in this field and the use of the referred technologies. The analysis of the information was done considering general areas such as technology but it mainly focused on the pros and cons of using Web 2.0 tools in the ELL and its impact in interaction. The bibliographic material for this study was selected via search on specialized databases. The keywords to conduct the search were perspectives, interaction, technologies, communication, English language learning and Web 2.0. Finally, to determine the impacts of Web 2.0 in interaction and the implications for future studies, the analysis of the information was principally done on empirical research, non-empirical studies was also considered for the analysis. The analysis also included three books in the area of Language Learning and Technology. Table 1 shows the distributions of books, whereas tables 2 and 3 show the distribution of empirical and non - empirical works chosen in this literature review.

**Table 1. Distribution of books**

| No | Book   | No. of chapters |                     |
|----|--|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1  | Carrasco, & Á. E, (2015) La Red y sus aplicaciones en la enseñanza-aprendizaje del español como lengua extranjera. Valladolid: Asociación para la Enseñanza del Español como Lengua Extranjera | 1               | Carrasco, N. (2015) |
| 2  | Jacoby, S., & Ochs, E. (1995). Co-Construction: An Introduction. Research on Language and Social Interaction.  | 1               | Jacoby, S. (1995)   |

|       |   |   |                                    |
|-------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 3     | Jo, Y.& Williams, K. (2010). Teaching with Web 2.0 Technologies: Benefits, Barriers and Lessons Learned. International Conference on e-Learning'14 19 Web 2.0 Technologies: The Risks and Benefits to Consider when Expanding the Classroom Walls. Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth | 1 | Roumiana Peytcheva-Forsyth. (2010) |
| TOTAL |   |   | 3                                  |

Source: The authors

**Table 2. Distribution of empirical research**

| No.   | Journal Title  | No. of articles | Empirical study                                       |
|-------|--|-----------------|---|
| 1     | Issues in Teachers' profesional development                              | 1               | Cantor, D. (2009)                                     |
| 2     | International journal of instructional technology and distance learning  | 1               | Khany, R & Boghayeri, M.(2013)                        |
| 3     | Computer Assisted Language Learning                                      | 1               | Lee, L. (2009)  |
| 4     | Recherche et pratiques pédagogiques en langues de spécialité,            | 1               | Mc Dermott, G. (2013)                                 |
| 5     | English Language and Literature Studies                                  | 1               | Nomass, B. B. (2013)                                  |
| 6     | International Journal of Languages and Literatures                       | 1               | Rahman, M. M. (2014)                                  |
| 7     | CALICO   | 1               | Rosell-Aguilar, F. (2009)                             |
| 8     | Advances in Environment, Computational Chemistry and Bioscience Benefits | 1               | Yunus, M. M., Kwan, L., Li, S., & Ishak, N. M. (2006) |
| TOTAL |  |                 | 8   |

Source: The authors

**Table 3.** *Distribution of non – empirical research*

| Category                                  | Format   | No |
|---|----------|----|
| Conceptual discussions                    | Articles | 10 |
| Potential benefit discussions             | Articles | 4  |
| Project descriptions / Anecdotal accounts | Articles | 1  |
| Total                                     |          | 15 |

Source: The authors

## Literature Review

Current research has shown that prospective English teachers' education has included ICT as a main component of the curricula because technology and English language education are related to each other (Nomass, 2013). Nevertheless, that is not only the case for language learning but also for constant language teachers' education and training. Regarding the significant benefits of technology for teachers and learners, Solanki and Phil (2012) state that the use of technology cultivates students' interest in language and culture learning, promotes their communication capacity, improves teacher and student interaction and creates a meaningful context for language teaching. In his work, Discussion Boards as Tools in Blended, EFL Learning Programs, Cantor (2009) suggests that because of the desynchronizations of web tools, they can function as mediators in the interaction between teacher – student, student – students and promote autonomy and collaborative work through the discussion, negotiation of meaning and argumentation.

From a pedagogical perspective, technology has become a must in terms of teaching tools to inspire and motivate learners. Warschauer (2009) mentions that technology should not be regarded as “a magic bullet to solve educational problems, but rather as a powerful tool that can have both positive and negative impacts, and that must be carefully exploited” (p. 20). A concept that is corroborated by Yun (2010) who points out that fully relying on technologies is not advisable because

technical problems can arise at any time when using Web 2.0 tools. He also mentioned that some of them as old computers are “still a little primitive,” and might not work appropriately with current course management systems. Another barrier is time and even though Web 2.0 tools are easy-to-use, it still takes time to learn and manage new technologies and not all universities provide the necessary technical support for teachers who are not well familiarized with Web 2.0 technologies.

As far as the positive side of technology in the learning process, educators and researchers in general are becoming gradually aware of all their educational pros. They consider that social media plays an important role in young people's life, specially, and in informal learning which leads to the development of new approaches to integrate them in the context of formal education. Vaqueiro (2011) presents a positive view about interactive discussion and informational web sites such as web blogs which are taken as instruments of great educational value. Blogs serve of support for e – learning establishing a less formal communication channel between teacher and students promoting social interaction and consequently providing the students with a personal environment in which they can experiment with their own learning.

Regarding education matters, motivation plays an important role in learning, current literature on English language learning has a growing concern to address motivation as a pivotal element to help students to achieve an advanced level in a foreign language. In the specialized bibliography, it is found numerous definitions for the term motivation. Although, they are stated from different perspectives: psychology, pedagogy, language teaching to mention a few, currently none of them is considered totally satisfactory. Researching motivation in language learning is complex and multifaceted. In his study, about Web 2.0 for language learning, its benefits and challenges for educators,

Luo (2013) concluded that the interactive social and collaborative resources that the Web 2.0 technologies offer gives the learning environment a more engaging, collaborative and motivating atmosphere. In this regard, motivation is an implicit element that comes along with technology use.

The studies analyzed in this literature review suggest that the integration of Web 2.0 tools holds great potential to benefit language learning and teaching through multiple means. Activities designed with these Web 2.0 tools may help students develop important skills in addition to language learning skills such as communication, collaboration, and problem solving, which are the skills needed in education contexts in the 21st century. These skills are developed and strengthened by classroom language interaction which measures the student's approximate level and amount of language usage, also it allows teachers to record the learners' usage of basic interpersonal communicative skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. Then, classroom language interaction is recommended not only as part of the initial information gathering but as a core aspect of all the learning-teaching process.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Language learning and teaching process have suffered an important paradigm shift as an outcome of educational research and classroom experiences that have enhanced the scientific and theoretical knowledge. It has been based on the different students learning styles when learning and acquiring a second or foreign language. Traditionally, learning a foreign language was thought to be a process that just involved the repetition and imitation of vocabulary and grammatical structures (Moeller & Catalano, 2015). The teacher has long been considered the unique and true owner of knowledge, and whose function was only to be a knowledge transmitter (Hernández & Valdez, 2010).

Due to the advances in science and technology the traditional role of teachers has changed from having an authoritarian role to an approachable one that complies the function of being guides and mediators in the learning process by applying Web 2.0 tools that aim at developing the communicative skills of the student (Guevara, 2000). In this respect, Guevara-Bentancourt (2015) points out that the teacher has now become the language channel who selects the appropriate tools based on the learners' context. Currently, an effective English teaching requires teachers who are trained in both, methodology suitable to develop language skills, and the use of Web 2.0 tools which support the process by addressing students' learning styles and needs (Juan & García, 2012).

In this respect, Stevenson and Liu (2010) also pointed out that when using Web 2.0 tools in the ELL classroom, students produce genuine products, in an extensive variety and combination of media to English language international standards. Since the assignments, students do and the people they connect with are real, students are encouraged to share their products and learn from each other. In this study, the authors have selected the following free Web 2.0 technology resources to be used in the ELL classroom.

## **What is interaction?**

There are several authors who define the term interaction. Here, as umbrella term, it has been taken the definition given by Wagner (1994) cited by Raman (2014) in his work *Learning English Through Interaction in an EFL Classroom*, who states that "reciprocal events that require at least two objects and two actions. Interaction occurs when these objects and events naturally influence one another" (p.8). Therefore, this implies that for communication to take place it is necessary that at least two parties not only give and receive messages but that this process influences the two of them.

## Classroom interaction

During the learning and teaching process many interactions take place. Some of these occur, at different stages of the process, between the teacher and learners, vice versa or among learners. Some other interactions take place between the learners and the subject and, of course, between the learners and the resources, which may be technological tools, the teacher uses as a pedagogical material to carry out his / her teaching practice (Duchesne University TEIR Center, 2004). The effectiveness of the learning and teaching process will depend to a large extent the quality and how these interactions take place (Rahman, 2014). From what has been said above it can be deduced that the different interactions that take place in the classroom can be classified in the following way:

1. Teacher – Learner (s) / Learner (s) – Teacher
2. Learner (s) – learners(s)
3. Learner (s) – subject (content)
4. Learner (s) – resources (technology)

As Web 2.0 technology is the subject to study in this work, the researchers focus on the last item of the list above.

### Components of classroom interaction in ELL contexts

Yu (2008) considers collaborative dialogue, negotiation and co – construction as indispensable components of classroom interaction in language learning. The first is defined by Swain (2000) as “a knowledge of building dialogue, in which language use and language learning can co-occur. It is language use mediating language learning. It is cognitive activity and it is social activity” (p. 97). The second is considered by Yu (2008) as the way in which two or more parties come to an agreement through discussion. This will lead to consider that if teachers generate enough op-

portunities for learners to negotiate with peers and teachers the problems they have as they learn, they could get to a better and more successful learning experience. The third is defined by Jacoby and Ochs (1995) “the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion or other culturally-related meaning reality”(p.171). This suggests that all the parties involved in the learning and teaching process are responsible of the interactions they have in the classroom to get negotiated and socially contextualized meaning of the target language.

What has been said so far clearly determines that to effectively work in the ELL classroom, interaction should encompass its different types as well as its the basic components. In this work, the researchers focus on how the use of the resources Web 2.0 technology offers to improve interaction.

### How does Web 2.0 improve interaction in the ELL classroom?

To answer the question, aspects like the materials available on the internet, the tools Web 2.0 offer, the kinds of interaction they may provoke and of course how they articulate to the components effective interaction requires must be considered.

As far as the materials available on the internet, it is expected, even not compulsory, that teachers use real life resources in the activities they plan to do with their students so that the communication that take place in the classroom resembles what is to happen in learners’ real life (Mingzhi, 2005). From this perspective, there are some considerations to be made. First, even though there are concerns about the appropriateness of some of the material available on the internet, Web 2.0 technology opens the possibility for learners to be exposed to the target language in real contexts (Yunus, Kwan, Li, & Ishak, 2006). Therefore, an improvement this technology offers and that can be noted here

refers to the interaction learners have with real material and that rises their level of exposure to the target language.

Regarding the possibilities Web 2.0 tools offer teachers to improve interaction in the classroom there may be considered aspects like the access to software resources that not necessary need to be downloaded and that are available on the internet for free, platform based services like YouTube or Blogger, user generated content, rich media content and complex social interactions (Peachey, 2015). Then, can be noted that with Web 2.0 technology creative teachers can plan and execute in their classes activities that promote interactions between themselves and their learners, between and among learners, and with the content of the subject that enable the three above cited components of interaction collaborative dialogue, negotiation and co – construction to help learners better learn a second or foreign language.

Additionally, there have been several studies on the kinds of interaction Web 2.0 can foster as well as how they articulate with its basic components. However, it is important to situate the findings they have come to in a theoretical context. From the sociocultural approach, learning is an active process in which collaboration and social interactions in meaningful contexts among all the participants in the learning and teaching process take place with the aim to construct a system of linguistic constructs (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). This theoretical foundation played an important role in the study conducted by Lee on intercultural exchanges using with blogs and podcasting. The above cited author concluded that learners who participated in her study took part in dialogues with their peers on cultural and linguistic concerns that they did not have in in person discussions (Lee, 2009). Therefore, and considering the sociocultural theory as well as the finding of previous studies as the above cited it may be said that the use of Web 2.0 tools helps learners to learn a second or foreign language as they actively

collaborate, negotiate and co construct with their peers meaningful knowledge.

### **Web 2.0 technology resources for the ELL classroom**

#### *Penzu*

It is an easy to use free tool to create private notebooks or virtual journals which may be published and shared. First, students and teachers must register in Penzu with their email address to save their entries. It allows to create a journal containing various pages whose interface is like the pages of a notebook. This tool might be used to assign written homework tasks which may be reviewed as a kind of writing portfolio and shared with classmates, parents or authorities. It is a helpful resource for action research feedback by using the anonymous message feature students reflect on aspects of the teaching process as well. It allows students to interact with peers, teachers and parents by creating text which can be shared with a real audience. It provides students with propitious settings to practice the target language daily (Peachey, 2015).

#### *Voxopop*

It is a tool to record with microphones, answer to questions raised by other users, be part of spoken forums. It permits teachers and students to build up academic online audio discussions like those on a text based bulletin board. By the creation of this conversation groups the students talk interactively while in a regular class setting, it is difficult to engage timid students to participate actively, becoming a feasible solution to boost students' interaction helping reluctant students overcome shyness and build confidence. Mc Dermott (2013) mentions that "Pedagogical tools such as Bloom's digital taxonomy can assist educators in choosing the right social media tool for the learning they wish to encourage" (pág.145). This works as a social media network where students to

register using a valid email address, some personal information will be required to create a profile and an introductory message, and then they start adding messages to other groups. However, students and teachers can listen to most messages without joining.

#### *Tokbox*

This tool allows to create rooms for audio and video conferencing of up to 20 users with free accounts. TokBox is associated with Facebook and it enables communication including 1 to 1 live conferencing, many to many live conferencing, and recorded video email messages. It is also partnering with EtherPad for creating and editing text. Students can also use TokBox for live communications or to upload video messages to other services like YouTube. As an interactive Web tool, students can create a learning video journal containing a summary of what they feel they have learned, to share with peers and teachers. Students and teachers would be able to look back at them at any time to notice how both improvement. Additionally, this tool it could be used to promote creativity while interacting among peers, a video could be sent to students containing the first line to build up a story between the groups over a period (Peachey, 2015).

#### *Lyrics Training*

The ability to communicate through a language composed of a complex system of both phonetic and written symbols and the ability to produce, interpret and understand music are unique abilities of the human being. Several authors affirm that both abilities have diverse characteristics in common concerning their structure and functions (Mithen, 2005; Patel, 2003). Lyrics Training is a user-friendly and enjoyable method to learn and improve language skills through music videos and its lyrics. Currently, it offers ten languages to learn such English, German and Spanish to mention a few. It also provides a special Karaoke mode with which students

can sing to practice the Suprasegmentals of the language including but not limited to stress rhythm and intonation. It is also a useful tool for students to learn new vocabulary, and expressions, and for teachers to reinforce grammatical structures through the continued exercise of writing the missing words in the songs' lyrics. It has four levels of difficulty based on the number of gaps, from beginner to expert. This Web 2.0 resource allows to drastically boost students' listening skill by the almost unconsciously acknowledgment of the various sounds and words of a foreign language in a reduced span of time. This is very different from regular class settings where pronunciation practice could not be entirely practical in a real environment. In order to use this web tool it is not necessary to register or have an account.

## **Results and Discussion**

It is undeniable that technology plays a relevant role in Education as everyday new and more resources that can be used in the classroom by teachers and students are created. Several of these resources have been subject of study in the field of foreign language teaching and learning such is the case of blog, wikis and podcasts to mention a few. These studies have yielded to positive and negative results which some of them are synthesized in the next paragraphs.

On the one hand, Solanki and Phil (2012) state that the use of technology cultivates students' interest in culture and language learning, improves teacher and student interaction promotes their communication capacity and creates a meaningful context for language teaching and learning. As far as culture and language learning, Lee (2009) concluded that learners who participated in her study took part in dialogues with their peers on cultural and linguistic concerns which were not took place in discussions in other settings. Additionally, Vaqueiro (2011) presents a positive view about informational web si-



tes such as web blogs which are taken as instruments of great educational value that allows interactive discussion among all the participants in the educational process. Regarding the possibilities that Web 2.0 offers to improve students communicative skills, aspects like the access to software resources that not necessary need to be downloaded and that are available on the internet for free, platform based, services like You Tube or Blogger, user generated content, rich media content and complex social interactions should be considered at the moment of making the choice of the tools to be used. (Peachey, 2015). Web 2.0 technology opens the possibility for learners to be exposed to the target language in real contexts (Yunus et al, 2006).

Additionally, as Stevenson & Liu (2010) also pointed out when using Web 2.0 tools in the ELL classroom, students produce genuine products, in an extensive variety and combination of media to English language international standards. Since the assignments, students do and the people they connect with are real, students are encouraged to share their products and learn from each other. In this study, the authors have selected the following free Web 2.0 technology resources to be used in the ELL classroom.

On the other hand, Warschauer (2009) mentions that technology should not be regarded as “a magic bullet to solve educational problems, but rather as a powerful tool that can have both positive and negative impact, and that must be carefully exploited” (p. 20). Yun (2010) points out that fully relying on technologies is not advisable because technical problems can arise at any time when using Web 2.0 tools. These problems can somehow reduce the potential benefits of technology. It is also the point that as Luo (2013) states a teacher should integrate technology based on different degrees in alignment with students’ levels of technology literacy. It is because the assumption that today most students are digital natives who automatically fit into the technology-supported learning

environment cannot be taken for granted. Another barrier is time and even though most Web 2.0 tools are easy-to-use, it still takes time to learn and manage new technologies and not all education institutions provide the necessary technical support for teachers who are not well familiarized with Web 2.0 technologies.

To sum up, the criteria for the selection and evaluation of technological tools designed for teaching must overcome the theoretical-conceptual assumptions and the specific knowledge of the area that is taught. Although, what is noticeable in the learning and teaching process is the approach, method or technique the teacher used, the emphasis must be on what to teach, who is taught, what is learned, and how is it learned? In other words, the content, the students and their different learning styles and the environment provide


## Conclusions

At delving into research on Web 2.0 technologies and their integration with English language learning ELL in a non-native speaking setting by language educators, it can be concluded that the use of these technologies for foreign language instruction have some positive implications in terms of the different kinds of interaction regarding to teacher – learners, learners – learners, learner (s) – subject (content) and learners – resources (technology).

This literature review was designed to shed light on the English language teaching-learning process and to propose possible directions for future research because languages educators should be constantly updating their linguistic, cultural and methodological knowledge and that is why, it is essential now to analyze their current teaching paradigms and how they might be improved or supplanted by new Web 2.0 technology trends in a not so distant future. Its purpose is to be ready to face the new era challenges ELL classrooms embrace as far as teachers and students too.

In relation to the theoretical frameworks that ground the current research, interaction promotes a more authentic communication in the target language regardless of the teachers and learners' location, leaving aside the concept of language learning through boring repetitive activities, oral language drills and writing exercises. The interaction fostered by Web 2.0 technologies is ideal for learners who are afraid to speak in the target language due to be shy or afraid of not being understood. A student can record himself and self-correct mistakes in pronunciation thanks to the help of online dictionaries of pronunciation as first step, and as second, he is getting ready to get easily engaged in a dialogue using the classroom target language.

The criteria for the selection and evaluation of technological tools designed for teaching must overcome the theoretical-

conceptual assumptions and the specific knowledge of the area that is taught. Although, what is noticeable in the learning and teaching process is the approach, method or technique the teacher uses, the emphasis must be on what to teach, who is taught, what is learned, and how is it learned. In other words, the content, the students and their different learning styles and the environment provided. About the Web 2.0 technology resources that can be used in the ELL classroom, there was a rigorous selection of the ones that make the teachers job more didactic and easily manageable without the need of special training in the use of those resources. Interaction was one pivotal element when choosing the Web 2.0 technology resources for this study. Also, considering what elements students would enjoy the most while learning; for instance, programs that have the same essence that social networks and music videos. 

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