WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY TOOLS TO SUPPORT TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

A ROUNDTABLE PRESENTATION

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Teachers take advantage of technology to prepare students with the experience and knowledge of learning with computers. Web 2.0 technology tools could present opportunities for delivering transformative learning experiences anytime, anywhere, in several formats with nearly complete control. In different ways, it could deliver comprehensive self-directed learning experiences. Gikas and Grant (2013) acknowledged that these tools facilitate the creation of content while it eases communication and interaction among learners. They work well with language learners because they encourage the use of several skills that are necessary when learning a new language. Blogging pushes the learners to write, review and respond to the work of others. The threaded discussion tool helps students develop coherent collaboration and practice while assuring peer support and the creation of learning communities. Wikis requires students to integrate language-learning skills that are important to conduct research and to write new entries. Based on those observations, Gikas and Grant concluded that those tools could be integrated in the language classroom.

Instructors must find ways to enhance the authenticity of students' learning with tasks that engage their personal backgrounds and help them connect personal experiences to the real world using available technological resources and effective teaching pedagogies. The paper describes a project developed and implemented by the author with an intensive small language learning class. The objective of the project was to use a tool available in the Sakai environment to practice the target language and increase language proficiency in a collaborative setting. Sakai is a flexible open source learning management system with customizable tools that encourage collaboration among students. The goal was to evaluate Sakai's capabilities and tools and to determine how to best integrate this technology tool into the language program to promote higher proficiency levels.

The activity consisted of collaboratively writing a story in the Sakai environment. The activity involved regular contributions to the story that was collaboratively created by the students. Students made comments about the plot, included references, corrected errors, and provided transcriptions and translations when appropriate. Students read the contributions made by classmates, made improvements and wrote their own contributions as instructed. The learning objective of this activity was writing. However, students could also make contributions by posting images and self-recordings. Students could add images, tables and links as appropriate. Students could use the "Comments" space provided to summarize the story, suggest and agree on a creative title and discuss the story's plot. Students were reminded of appropriate and courteous cyber behavior.

Higher-level thinking skills are expected from students as language is used to critique, evaluate, and synthesize, and not for memorization. Instructors must find ways to enhance the authenticity of students' learning with technological resources at their disposal using effective teaching pedagogies that engage their personal backgrounds and help them connect personal experiences to the real world. From the students' perspective, the project had an impact on their motivation to learn and it triggered a positive perception of language learning, possibly because of the low social anxiety environment.   Also, students

commented on their appreciation to read, assess and review each other's contributions. From the team teachers' perspective, the activity demonstrated the effectiveness of wikis in developing transformative learning opportunities and improving the amount, quality and accuracy of learners' writings. Learners identified several other topics that could be explored in similar task-based projects using wikis. Such projects could be used as basis for future research.

SELECT REFERENCES

Gikas, J., & Grant, M. M. (2013). Mobile computing devices in higher education: Student perspectives on learning with cellphones, smartphones & social media. *The internet and higher education*, *19,* 18-26. doi: 10.1016/j.iheduc.2013.06.002

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