Role of Technology in the Present Scenario of English Teaching.

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Abstract:

Teaching is a task that is expected to be creative, innovative and interesting which, in this, 21st Century of technological advancements can be achieved thourgh multiple ways. These ways may very from a person to person. In this age of technically-savvy students, technology as an umbrealla can enhance not only teaching but also the communication and collaboration among the facilitatators and learners. This paper is an attempt to explore the potential of using technology in classrooms through web 2.0. in different forms like blogs, podcasts, social networks, Google docs, e-books, online maps, virtual field trips etc. and their use to make the preocess of teaching more enriching.

What do we mean by Web 2.0?

O'Reilly (2005) coined the term, web 2.0, to refer to web-based technology that facilitates and promotes communication and sharing among users worldwide. This concept encompasses blogs, wikis, podcasts, RSS feeds, aggregators, social networking sites and bookmarks, which all are rapidly accepted by the e-learning community.Authentic resources, those that have not been created for language teaching are difficult to find. Now they are available online with just a click of the mouse. Theme-bassed articles, news and books can be found in written and spoken form, and even through videos.

Why web 2.0 tools?

Present age of tecnology have witnessed drastic shifts in the terms of utilizig resources by the facilitatators as well as the acceptance of those changes by the learners. In this 21st Century of Digital Era, education is one of those feilds which is highly influenced with technolgoy and have adopted many new ways to deal with classroom conditions, not only to make teaching interesting but also to make it highly learners' centered. The main reason behind this is our highly technologically savvy students. Use of Web 2.0 provides students great opportunities to do meaning ful language-learning activities in their own comort zone. Students can connect themselves with theri classmates online and work collaborative projects on a wiki. These provides them an opportunity to be creative, innovative and productive though different sources available like, blogging, video downloading/uploading as well as commenting on a classmate's work. This makes them an avtive participants in the process of language-learning leaving behind those conditionas

when they used to be passive recivers in the yester years. Web 2.0 tools are particularly helpful during the beginners stage of language aquisition as it provides not only the safer and anonymous space but also opportunities to learners to produce work in a controlled setting. Web 2.0 tools engagges the students in activities which can enhance their problem-solving skills as they are required to find not only information but also to judge its worth and accuracy. A study by Johns and Torrez in 2001 found that "the new technologies offer many possibilities to the second language-learner"(p.11). The technology or a broader form of it, web 2.0 tools enhance a number of skills in the studetns, mainly, their creativity and innovation skills, problem solving skills, communication and collaboration skills, initiativeness and self-direction, social skills, productive skills and the leadership qualities. Apart from this, there are enormous advantages for teachers in terms of material development in the use of web 2.0 tools, like,

- They are user-friendly.
- Most of these web 2.0 tools can be edited from any computer. Teachers can add, edit and delete information.
- There are plenty of free web tools to create and resources needed for almost every activity of any level.
- Students learn to be autonoumous in theri learning process.
- Web 2.0 tools entice students to create, communicate, and publish online content.

Web 2.0 Tools:

There are more than 2000 web 2.0 tools are available in this era of technical sophestication. Many of the web 2.0 tools have direct applicability for teachers. Most resources are intended to be used by students, primarily in an online enviornment. The following are a few out of them.

Blogging: It is the most recognized example of web 2.0. They will use English to communicate in social settings and participate in social interactions. Eg. Blogging to share information about favorite music,families, interests.

Stu.dicio.us: Student organizer and social notetaking tool where students can create a schedule, track their grades, manage a to do list, store files for classes, and write public notes in an outline-like format. Stu.dicio.us also allows students to connect with friends and soon will include Facebook integration.

Youtube:

With millions of YouTube videos, there's bound to be something that's relatable to your lesson. There are step-by-step tutorials, news clips, editorials, short documentaries and more. Recently, YouTube launched an education-specific version of the website called YouTube for Teachers.

Google Video: Similar to YouTube, Google Video allows users to search, upload, and share videos online for free. I'm a fan of YouTube, but Google comes on top when it comes to quality educational videos. Google Video even has an educational category providing hour long videos and caption/subtitled videos.

Flickr:

To Explore, upload, and share photos online. Includes commenting and neat note functionality where users can add blocks of notes on the photos themselves for others to see.

Eyespot:

It is a neat site where users can actually create video mixes online and share them with others. You can add up to 100 clips or photos to a movie as well as add transition effects and video effects.

Schoopy:

It helps to Built and strengthen community communication, Schoopy provides a system in which teachers can manage participating teachers, students, and parents and send messages, ask questions, keep up with assignments and even take quizes. Communities/Schools also can create a public website making it easy for students and parents to keep up with recent updates.

Board games:

This series of board games for the classroom to help students with spelling and phonetics.

Gap-fill generator:

It is to make worksheets for classes in seconds, using authentic online texts from newspapers, searchable by topic and level.

Forums:

Ask and answer teaching questions with colleagues around the world.

Video discussion:

Students can watch interviews with teachers from around the world and can add their voice.

Facebook: While Facebook is a social utility that can connect learners with friends as well as with people outside there in the wolrld. One can also use this tools to bookmark Web sites and specific Internet pages.

Twitter:

Twitter is a service for friends, family, and co–workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of answers that can be no longer than 140 characters and spaces per post. Students can use this tool to keep up-to-date, as a teacher could advertise a Twitter address that students could use to learn about school projects, reading assignments, and other announcements. One can also use this tool as a bookmark manager for research.

Dokeos:

Dokeos is a learning management system used in more than 600 companies and public administrations to manage e-learning and blended learning programs. This is open source software.

Drupal:

Drupal is an open source project that offers a flexible framework to set up a social learning environment or a more traditional learning environment.

eFront:

It is easy to use, visually attractive, SCORM compatible, open source e-learning and human capital development platform.

LAMS:

LAMS (Learning Activity Management System) provides teachers with a highly intuitive visual authoring environment for creating sequences of learning activities. These activities can include a range of individual tasks, small group work and whole class activities based on both content and collaboration.

Google Sites:

Google Sites is a free and easy way to create and share webpages and wikis.

Gmail:

Gmail is one of the most versatile free email programs out there. It's really easy to use and you can access it from any computer with an internet connection. Most smartphones also have an app that allows you to check your email while you're on the go. This is really great if you give your students your email address.

TeacherTube:

TeacherTube is exactly what it sounds like—YouTube for teachers. A colleague of mine introduced me to TeacherTube last year and it's been a favorite ever since. The design of the website is getting a little outdated but there are many educational videos to choose from. Plus, students love it because a) they're watching videos, and b) it reminds them of where they find clips of ceiling cat.

Google Docs:

Google has managed to replicate Excel, Word, and PowerPoint with Google Spreadsheets, Docs, and Presentations, respectively. You can upload, create, and store all these files online, and then download them to other office applications and save them on your hard drive or share your work with others online. Google surrounds these tools with their famous search application, access to

online books, and a scholars' search for online documents. The tools for teaching are virtually endless.

KOffice:

KOffice is a free, integrated office suite for KDE, the K Desktop Environment for Linux and Unix workstations. KOffice features a full set of applications that work together seamlessly to provide the best user experience possible, including a word program, spreadsheets, a presentation tool, and more.

Open Office:

Download this free office suite to replace Microsoft Office tools. OpenOffice.org is a multiplatform and multilingual office suite and an open-source project that includes key desktop applications such as a word processor, spreadsheet, presentation manager, and drawing program with a user interface and feature set similar to other office suites. OpenOffice.org also works transparently with a variety of file formats, including those of Microsoft Office, and the vendor-neutral OpenDocument standard from OASIS. You can also save files in PDF format.

ThinkFree:

This beta system offers Word, Excel, and PowerPoint clones that run in any browser for free. These are java applications, so they take a moment to 'warm up' before you run them, but once you have the program running the process runs smoothly and quickly. ThinkFree opens and saves to standard Microsoft Office formats such as .doc, .xls, and .ppt on your hard drive. They can also save documents to PDF, something you can't do with Microsoft. If you want to save files on ThinkFree's servers, you have 30 megs of storage space to use for free. This is a truly intuitive tool, especially if you're already familiar with Microsoft Office.

ZOHO:

Zoho is an office productivity suite that works much like Google Docs in that you have access to spreadsheet, word, and an online presentation tool. You can upload, save online, download, and share. Plus you have access to other tools such as mail, project management software, and more that make this suite perfect for classroom projects.

Wordle:

It is antoher tool that ask students to list the words they've just learned, create posters for different categories.

Vocarro:

Vocarro is the tool that gives students a topic and ask them to speak about it.

Audacity:

It is free, open source software that allows users to record audio from any basic microphone, edit multiple audio tracks together, enhance audio, create podcasts, etc. It is a very easy-to-use tool that is compatible with Mac,PC, Linux, etc., and requires very little operating power or disk space. Students can create special effects, add background/intro music to podcasts and edit out narration mistakes, for example.

Flickr:

It offers social photo sharing. There are literally millions of photos available to view and, in most cases, use extensively in an educational setting. Teachers can establish banks of thousands of photos, very easily categorized by topic and need, so that students pull from these photos for various classroom projects.

The Library 2.0 ning:

It was built with librarians and media specialists in mind, who are working to integrate web 2.0 tools into the library experience. Participants chat, share files, lead ongoing discussions about how best to incorporate these new tools, and which tools are most appropriate for the library setting.

Meebo :

Teachers use tools like Meebo for group discussions, help desks, virtual office hours and collaborative discussions. These features of the application perticulary helps learners to enhance their descriptive skills in English Language.

VoiceThread:

It is a program that incorporates the best of traditional photo slideshows, PowerPoint presentations and podcasts and combines them into one powerful, digital storytelling tool. Typically, users upload photos and then groups collaborate to tell the story behind these photos.

Today's students live in a media-rich environment. They are engaged in electronic communications using a variety of technologies such as email, instant messaging, chatting, personal blogs, and short text messages. Today's students expect learning to take place using modern digital communication tools (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Chen, 2005). The recent development of Web 2.0 tools including blogs, wikis, podcasts, and RSS have created a new generation of websites that are centered around user participation.

Hidden Potentials of Web 2.0:

The hidden potentials of web 2.0 is now known to alsmost each individual involved in the e-learning concept. According to Solomon and Schrum (2007), technology alone does not necessarily

enhance education, yet a mix of teaching strategies and technology innovations can create unique and successful learning environments. Web 2.0 tools offer promising tools to enhance education. Fadel and Lemke (2006) explained that effective use of technology in the classroom can lead to higher levels of learning.

Conclusion:

As a facilitator we are expected to address our students' needs by changing our teaching practices which can help our studetns to be more positive and productive. Today's students live in a media-rich environment. They are engaged in electronic communications using a variety of technologies such as email, instant messaging, chatting, personal blogs, and short text messages. Today's students expect learning to take place using modern digital communication tools (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Chen, 2005). Today's students have access to global, interactive, and multimedia rich electronic resources. They are the "Net Generation" (McNeely, 2005). Current Web 2.0 technologies, including blogs, wikis, podcasts, and RSS have created a *Read/Write* web that is ideal for student collaboration. Thus, at the end we, as the teachers of 21st Century are hightly expected to experiment in our practicies to achive the desirable goal of language teaching as well as learning.

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