

Chapter 4: results

The last chapter gave a detailed description of the study that took place. The participants were four language teachers at university level (different *Common European Framework* of Reference for Languages (CEFR) levels) classes. The three English teachers and one Italian teacher carried out an activity for their class that involved the use of a Web 2.0 tool. Teachers had to choose the tool based on the theories' handout that was given to them, as well as the class' specific learning objectives, students' learning preferences etc. Teachers planned the lesson, and filled out the lesson plan template adapted from the "Technology-connected lesson plan" developed by *INtegrating TECHnology* of the Georgia Department of Education, Educational Technology Training Centers. After this step, teachers applied the Web 2.0 tool in their lessons and evaluated their students' responses. To end their participation, they evaluated the tool they used and reflected on their teaching practices with technology.

This particular chapter will explore what the teachers found when attempting to use Web 2.0 tools in their language classes. It will look at their choices of tools and the theoretical reasons that support those choices. It will also analyze their answers in the tool evaluation and will provide some examples on how the teachers used the instruments and incorporated Web 2.0 tools as an additional resource in their lessons.

4.1 Theories' handout

The teachers were given a handout that contained nine theoretical principles (input, output, interaction, learning styles, incidental and intentional learning etc.) so they could make a decision on the Web 2.0 tool that was the most suitable for their language classroom that was based on a theoretical framework. Teachers were provided with the basic ideas and authors that were related to the particular theory and then were presented with the following question "Does the activity with the web tool consider this?" Teachers answered this question by selecting *yes* or *no*.

The following are the principles that were included in the handout: The role of interaction/ the interaction Hypothesis, negotiation of meaning, comprehensible input, comprehensible output hypothesis, affective filter, ego permeability hypothesis, the importance of audience/speech accommodation theory, authentic audience and meaningful learning model. Out of the total nine, there were certain ones which teachers considered more important than others to select their Web 2.0 tool. The following are the results: all of the teachers considered the affective filter as the essential principle and characteristic to look for in a web 2.0 tool. The ego permeability theory, speech accommodation theory, meaningful learning model and authentic audience occupy the second place with two teachers mentioning their selection of web tool considered these principles and two that did not. The interaction hypothesis and comprehensible output hypothesis were only considered by one teacher for their selection of Web 2.0 tool. The negotiation of meaning and comprehensible input principles were not considered by any of the teachers participating in the study for the selection of their Web 2.0 tools. A possible explanation is that these were omitted because students are actively creating knowledge, not receiving it.

4.2 Lesson plan template and Web 2.0 tool evaluation

In the following section, the results of the lesson plan template and tool evaluation will be presented in a different form than the theories' handout; they will be discussed individually. This is to say that the feedback and participation of the teachers will be presented separately because they carried out dissimilar class activities and have diverse views on their experience. For each of the teachers, specific information of their classes will be provided, as well as the tool used, reasons for picking that tool, language focus of their lesson, comments of their students' reactions and a general assessment of the activity.

4.2.1 Teacher number one.

Teacher number one teaches English to a group of sixteen B2 (CEFR) level students. The objective of the activity was to prepare for their monthly oral examinations and focused primarily on fluency, and building up their confidence. The selected tool was *voxopop*, a voice based tool that promotes oral practice. This tool was selected because it fostered the ISTE's communication and collaboration standards and because it considered the affective filter, speech accommodation theory and the meaningful learning model. The task was to individually use *voxopop* to speak for three minutes about a topic student's decided upon, this was carried out as part of their homework grade. The students' speaking activity was assessed using the TOEFL IBT speaking section criteria; this includes organization of ideas, fluency (speaks with confidence, at an acceptable pace etc.), appropriate use of grammar structures and vocabulary and it has a comprehensible train of thought.

In regards to the technical aspects of the tool evaluation, the teacher mentions that the *voxopop* is free, -but requires registration- accessible for Mac and PCs, and can be viewed with the following browsers Internet Explorer, Safari, Google Chrome and Firefox. The professor finds that the tool loads within a reasonable timeframe and that the screen display has a high quality; also, it is easy to use, navigate and learn to use with a robust Help section. In order to use the tool, nothing needs to be downloaded or installed in the computer, but it does require Macromedia Flash to run and a microphone to record input. The tool allows users to restrict access to their work and protects personal data when the account is created.

In reference to the pedagogical aspects, she mentioned that the tool was engaging and motivated the students to participate, be creative and collaborate because it allowed peer comments. The professor does say that it was not easy to track students work for grading purposes because of the time invested on-line checking students' work. The teacher points out that the instructional goals for

the activity were completely met and that planning the task took no time, once she became familiar with the Web 2.0 tool.

Teacher number one commented that the response she received from her students was positive; she mentions that “the majority had never used a page like this. Some had never heard their voices before! Also, they could not resist listening to others’ recordings. They were even looking forward to do this homework!” (Sullivan, T. personal communication, March, 2011). On a scale from one to ten, (ten being the highest), she rated it at nine. She affirms that she is likely to use the tool in other lessons because she has many more ideas for implementation, it is easy to use and it creates a “cheery environment”. She enjoyed creating and carrying out the activity because it was “novel” and allowed her and her students to be creative. She states that “[the activity] revived the students’ interests and enthusiasm at a point when it could get slow or heavy”. Because of the good response she had, teacher number one feels motivated to try out new Web 2.0 tools and find ones that focus on other skills.

4.2.2 Teacher number two.

Teacher number two teaches an Academic Writing class in English to twenty, C1 (CEFR) level students. The writing activity took place individually as homework, but was presented by students in class. The lesson’s objective was to help students write an outline for a paper and write their topic sentence. The Web 2.0 tool selected by the teacher was *wordle.net* because “it helped students see key words in their free writing” (Kauffman, C., personal communication, February, 2011). The task consisted in writing one or two pages –single spaced- of any topic of their choice, then they put that document into *wordle.net* to make a word cloud. They were asked to closely look at the word cloud in order to construct a topic outline. Then, from the topic outline they were asked to write a sentence outline and build their topic sentence.

In regards to the technical considerations, this free tool works with both Mac and PC, and can be viewed with any browser. It does not require registration and is easy to learn to use and navigate. There is no need to download any plug ins or additional hardware. The teacher points out that there was no need to look at the help section as the tool is quite simple to use. Some issues arose when students tried to save their work to take to class; some were able to convert it in a PDF and others had to take screen shots of their word clouds.

Concerning the pedagogical implications of the implementation of the tool, teacher number three points out that he found the planning of the activity simple and that students enjoyed the task but did not find it useful. The instructional goals he had set for that particular lesson and task were partially met. The tool does not allow for peer commenting, so the feedback session was done in class. He points out that the activity was more useful to those visual students and works best for individual work. He also says that writing the topic outline and topic sentence would have been faster without *wordle.net*, but the tool helped enhance the learning. Teacher number two added that the tool did not allow him or his students to be creative in the learning process, nor in the final product. Although the task did not promote collaboration, students still gave positive feedback and found this activity motivating.

Teacher number two did not score *wordle. Net* and said “I think this tool was only good because it was a break from writing and was fun, but I don’t think it was particularly educational”. He adds that he is likely to include the tool in other lessons: “I think *wordle* is good for helping students see keywords in texts, kind of like a pretty corpus tool. I may use it again and have students put in academic articles so that they can see content words that are used a lot so they can build a vocabulary list”. He also mentioned that as a language teacher, he enjoyed using the tool in his classroom because it was a visual way to do an exercise that would have been purely linguistic. He reflected that if he were teaching a more basic class, these types of Web tools would be useful because students enjoy “playing around with

their target language”, but due the nature of his class –academic writing-, *wordle.net* was not very helpful. He mentioned that it was enjoyable but “it really didn’t add much to the lesson”.

4.2.3 Teacher number three.

Teacher number three teaches an English content class at a C1 (CEFR) level with seventeen students. This particular intercultural communication class focused on speaking, writing and the study and practice of cross-cultural taxonomies. The tool selected was *Dvolver movie maker* because “it allows students to create a dialogue through characters other than themselves” (Neild, F., personal communication with author, March 2011). The given reason can relate directly to the ego permeability hypothesis and the affective filter hypothesis. The task was to use the tool to create a short video where an intercultural conflict happened between two people. Students worked in pairs or groups of three to create a dialogue that included an issue regarding any of the taxonomies studied in class (e.g. power distance, time orientation) and then they were asked to make the video and upload it to the class’ website. They further had to watch three of their peers’ creations and comment on the conflict and the taxonomies involved. This activity was considered as part of their homework and the comments as their class participation. It was assessed by the correct use of grammar, spelling, creativity and the appropriate use of the taxonomies to create the conflict.

In regards to the technical aspects of the tool evaluation, the teacher pointed out that *Dvolver movie maker* can be accessed for free without registration on PC and Mac with Internet Explorer or Firefox. It requires an audio player and Macromedia Flash to run, but provides a download link in case the computer does not have it. It is a tool that is simple to use and navigate, loads within a reasonable timeframe, allows the user to restrict access to their work and offers options to embed on websites or email.

About the pedagogical implications of the Web tool, the teacher mentioned that it promoted student participation and could work efficiently individually, in pairs or in small groups. The teacher

added that the different learning styles were integrated (e.g. visual, kinesthetic, auditory etc.) and that students who usually participate less, were engaged in the activity. She adds that students were able to be creative and encouraged collaboration. The workload for implementing this tool was, according to the teacher, minimum; she mentions it took her around fifteen minutes after she was familiar with the tool, to plan the activity. She points out that the instructional goals for the lesson were fully met, that it was simple to assess the students' final product and that the learning task was enhanced by the use of the tool. The feedback she received from the students was mostly positive; there were a few that said it was a bit "childish" or "silly", but the most part used "fun" to describe the activity.

The educator rates this tool with a nine on a scale from one to ten (ten being the highest possible score) and she adds that although the lesson objectives could have easily been met without the use of this tool, they were enhanced. As a teaching experience she expresses that she was able to be creative and had fun watching the videos made by her students. She points out that she was surprised by the "colorful imagination" her students have and it was a part of them she had not seen, especially those who are quiet and keep to themselves in class. She expressed that with this experience with Web 2.0 tools, she is motivated to explore more because "they are new and they are so important nowadays. Students love technology", she added that "[the experience] was fun, useful and I would love to use it again".

Image 4.1 shows some stills of one of the videos created by the students and image 4.2 is the section destined for peer commentaries on the taxonomy being used and why. Image 4.1 demonstrates how the students put into practice their knowledge by inventing dialogues that included a cultural conflict that represented a taxonomy. Image 4.2 shows the collaboration that occurred between students by giving feedback to the video creators, guessing what the taxonomy was, why and giving them general comments on their work. The teacher also took part in this phase by adding some comments and congratulating students on their efforts.



Image 4.1. An example of a video created by students.

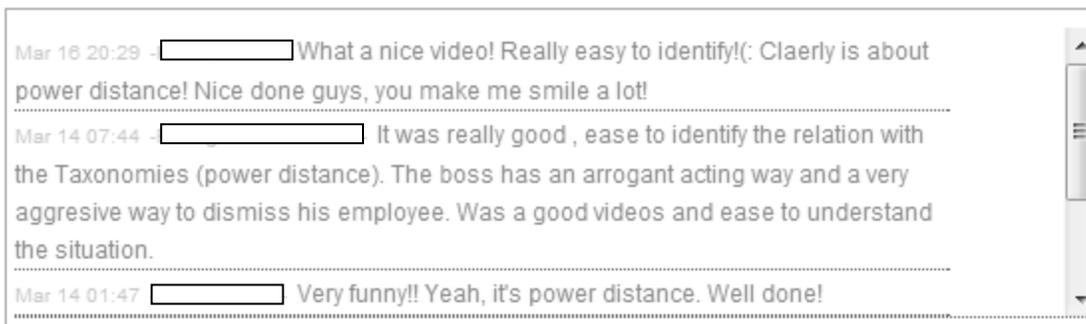


Image 4.2. An example of the comment section in the tool.

4.2.4 Teacher number four.

Teacher number four teaches Italian to thirteen A1 (CEFR) level students. The objectives of the lesson were to practice their writing skills; specifically to distinguish between simple past and past progressive, use adjectives to describe physical and personality traits, recycle vocabulary and use direct and indirect object pronouns. The web tool selected was *storybird.com* because “it offers a wide range of images and caters to different tastes”. In class, the task was to work in groups of 3 or 4 students to

write a fable, and then use *storybird.com* to illustrate the story. They were asked to pay attention to the use of structural elements being studied in class (e.g. adjectives), the story needed to be complex and adapted to the students' field of study. Students were given 20 minutes to work on their stories and afterwards, the students corrected their peer's stories with the help of the teacher. The following class, they presented their fables to the classroom and the rest voted on which story was the most moving, funny, tender, attractive etc.

With reference to the technological aspects of *storybird.com*, the teacher mentioned the tool is free, does not require registration, can be viewed with any browser and is easy to use and navigate. It has a complete help section and nothing needs to be downloaded or installed for the program to run appropriately, nor does it need additional hardware. The final product can be saved for archival purposes or can be embedded in other websites.

In relation to the pedagogical aspects, teacher number four comments that all the students participated and benefited from it. The professor mentioned that once she was familiar with the tool, it took from 15 to 20 min to plan the activity and that her instructional goals were fully met. The teacher pointed out that *storybird.com* was helpful for visual students and because of the class presentation, to the kinesthetic ones. She added that it can well function for individual and group work. She says that if the activity were to be done *without* the tool it would have taken longer and *storybird.com* facilitated the accomplishing of lesson objectives. She stated that throughout the course of the activity, students were more focused on the learning than on the actual tool and those students who do not participate often, were engaged in the task. The grade assigned to the story was based on content accuracy, originality and implementations of all the structures she requested.

In her final comments, teacher number four mentioned that this tool allowed her and her students to be creative during the learning process and in the final creation of the fable. It encouraged collaboration among peers. She points out that the feedback received from the students was positive

“they had fun interacting and creating a story”. They thoroughly enjoyed this activity, laughed among themselves and their stories were funny, tender, sad, romantic...” (Cervera, A., personal communication, March, 2011). On a scale from one to ten, (ten being the highest) she rates *storybird.com* with a ten. She states that she would use this Web 2.0 tool in other lessons “to foment creativity and to put theories into practice” and because “the production was the students responsibility”, this way they took charge of their own learning. She adds that she feels motivated to explore more Web 2.0 tools because “[the tools] foment critical thinking and language skills application on their own. She concludes by saying that the implementation of this Web 2.0 tool in her classroom “was fun, creative and it reached objectives set by teacher”.