

## AN INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE STUDENT'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF ENGLISH IN WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

Web 2.0 changed the way people used Web in the field of education and especially in foreign language learning. Since its emergence in 2004, it has gained great attention of teenagers and university students. Educators regard Web 2.0. as a language learning/teaching tool. According to International Federation of Accounts (IFAC) report 2000 and beyond (1996) it has been informed that a key goal of accounting programs should be to teach students to learn on their own. The purpose of this research was to determine undergraduate and high school students' attitudes towards the use of English in Web. 2.0. technologies. This study was mainly based on quantitative design that involved 534 students out of randomly selected 550 participants from 6 different universities and 3 high schools in Turkey and Iraq. The potential of Web 2.0. was determined as creating formal and informal learning environments. Within the context of the study, the students' attitudes were revealed and recommendations were developed for language teachers and educators. It has been found that Web 2.0 technologies serve as a good learning tool in which the learners find the opportunity to practice language in a real-like atmosphere: **the new medium**.

**Keywords:** Web 2.0 technologies, foreign language learning, English language teaching.

### INTRODUCTION

English, "by far the most widely used of all living languages", is taught as foreign language at schools of most nations (Broughton, Brumfit & Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, Pincas, 2003), but it has been recently accepted that language students have started using communication tools via English. This attempt starting with CALL continues to be popular with Web 2.0 nowadays. The increasing popularity of Web 2.0 technologies in almost every field of daily and academic life has promoted researchers to consider whether and to what extent such educational tools can be benefitted from. The study conducted by İşman (2008) proves that the improvements in communication tools have had a direct influence upon education. Web 2.0 can be defined as Web based applications and services that provide users visual, textual, audial communication, interactive information, shared content, collaboration, authenticity and digital literacy ( Haythorhwaite & Kazme 2004; O' Reilly, 2005; Giustini, 2006; Maness, 2006; Miller, 2006; Price, 2006; Richardson, 2006; McLoughlin & Lee, 2007; Lankshear & Knobel 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Thomas, 2009; Motteram & Sharma, 2009). The types of Web 2.0 used in education include "blogs (Facebook, Twitter etc.), wikis, multimedia sharing services, content syndication, podcasting and content tagging services" (Anderson, 2007). Particularly in foreign language learning, many researchers have shown that Web 2.0 can be utilized as an effective educational tool since it enables a variety of collaboration, communication and interaction (Fullan, 1993; Pica, 1997; Jonassen, Peck and Wilson, 1999; Lee, 2005; Munoz, 2009, Warschauer, Shetzer, & Meloni, 2000; Sykes, Oskoz & Thorne, 2008; Kayri & Çakır, 2010). In addition to being collaborative, interactive and communicative tool in education, Web 2.0 also has an undeniable effect on the enhancement of writing skills for learners (Mason & Rennie, 2008, Vijayakumar, 2011). The more there is an emphasis on learner autonomy, the more Web 2.0 tools have gained significance by enabling facilities for independency (Crook, 2008, Cooker, 2010). Moreover, the study conducted by Lam (2000) revealed that Web 2.0 tools increased the motivation of learners. However, these tools may be disruptive if they aren't implemented carefully into classroom practice (Godwin-Jones, 2005, Mason & Rennie, 2008). On the contrary, they might be more disadvantageous because of exploitation, lack of confidence, privacy and control (Merchant, 2001; Livingstone, 2002; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010). The importance of Web 2.0 tools in education have been emphasized a lot in most studies. Even if there are few studies ( Chun and Plass, 1996 ; Warschauer and Kern, 2000) exploring the practices of Web 2.0 tools in foreign language education, there is almost no study focusing on students' perceptions upon the use of Web 2.0 tools in foreign language learning, though. Hence, this study tries to reveal the most recent perceptions and implications by investigating the roles of Web 2.0 tools in foreign language education. Furthermore, it gives some clues about how to make the efficient use of Web 2.0 tools by providing some practical implications for teacher education and training. In order to achieve these aims, the following are the research questions of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of foreign language learners in using Web 2.0 technologies?
2. Do students regard Web 2.0 as an opportunity for English language learning?
3. Do socio-cultural differences affect the students' views about the use of Web 2.0 in foreign language learning?
4. Can the use of Web 2.0 contribute significantly to English language learning?

## METHOD

In this study, a descriptive analysis was carried out. After the analysis of the questionnaires, semi-structured and focus group interviews were made. Ten students were chosen randomly from the institutions located in Turkey. The questionnaire allowed gathering information about students' perceptions of themselves in using English regarding the following items: using blocks, use of a different language except English, writing status messages, sharing videos, sharing writings, joining groups, creating groups, joining groups to learn English, playing games, learning vocabulary through games, using applications, linking to fun pages, commenting on photos, commenting on videos, commenting on status messages, making foreign friends, chatting on line, feeling confidence in courses, enhancing vocabulary knowledge, enhancing speaking skill, enhancing listening skill, enhancing reading skill, enhancing writing skill, using to learn vocabulary, wasting time on internet. The cronbach's alpha reliability factor of the pilot study was found to be .82 in the first application. Additionally, it was calculated as .89 in the second pilot study, that is quite reliable and valid for Likert-type attitude scales (Nunan, 1997). The items in the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). For every item, frequencies and percentages were calculated. Chi-square tests were applied in order to find the significance of the distribution of the answers.

## SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted at Adıyaman University(N=50, M=17, F=33, A=19-27), Gaziantep University (N=47, M=33, F=14, A=18-24), İnönü University (N=50, M=29, F=23, A=18-25), Erbil Ishik University at which students' mother tongues are Kurdish and Arabic (N=50, M=27, F=23, A=18-20), Gazikent University(N=50, M=32, F=18, A=18-24), Zirve University(N=30, M=17, F=13, A=18-21), Besni Vocational High School(N=50, M=18, F=32, A=17-35), Sabahattin Zaim Social Sciences High School(N=40, M=17, F=23, A=17), Ishik Hawler Secondary School in which students' native languages are Kurdish and Arabic (N=50, M=50, A=13-16) and Barak Primary School(N=54, M=26, F=28, A=13-14). The participants were placed at appropriate levels from beginner to pre-intermediate level at the beginning of the academic year. The age of the participants vary from 13 to 35 years old. 228 of the participants were female and 293 were male at total. For the identification of interview participants, criterion sampling was used (Patton, 1990).

## FINDINGS AND RESULTS

In Table 1. to analyze the data frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and chi-square results were employed. It was observed that the mean score of Gazikent University was the highest when compared with Adıyaman University and Gaziantep University. The socio-economical level of private university students' is higher than the government institutions. These findings were parallel to the data in Barak Primary School and Sabahattin Zaim Primary School when compared with private institutions at the same level. Chi-square results show that learning is increased by use of technology. In Barak Primary School all of the findings were significant at  $p < 0.1$  and  $0.5$  level. When findings were analyzed at Gaziantep University, except the items 16,21,23 and 25, all of the findings were significant at  $p < 0.1$  level. On the other hand, the findings related to the items 5,12,24 and 25 were significant at  $p < 0.5$  level in Gazikent University. Item 25 was significant at  $p < 0.5$  level in İnönü University. This finding was similar to Sabahattin Primary School in item 1 at  $p < 0.5$  level. The chi-square test results in Adıyaman University were significant at  $p < 0.1$  and  $p < 0.5$  level. For questions 11, 12, 14,16,17,18,19,20,21, 22and 23 were all found to be significant at  $p < 0.5$  level. All of the findings were similar except the college in Iraq which indicates the importance of culture. Items 1, 3,6,7,10,12,13,14,16 and 24were significant at  $p < 0.5$  level in this college. This preference is related with their family background and strict rules in schools. In Ishik University items 1,20,22,24 and 25 were significant at  $p < 0.5$  level. These findings suggest that one of the main roles of the EFL teacher is to motivate the learners to use English in different contexts.



and fifteenth items that are related to students' producing language on internet, 47 % of university students "usually" or "always" prefer commenting on photos, videos and status messages and using their native language in writing while only 74 % of high school students "never" or "seldom" prefer doing these. The process of globalization is important in educational, political, cultural, economic and environmental aspects makes learning English a vital need. The fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and sixteenth items that are sharing videos, writings, joining and creating groups and joining groups to learn English and making foreign friends on internet can be categorized as active participation of students. 49 % of all the university and high school students "never" or "seldom" use applications on the internet actively while a small portion of them "usually" or "always" prefer it. Learning is increased by use of technology. Through Web 2.0 tools foreign language learners develop motivation and increase the amount of national knowledge. (Claus-Ehlers 2006) As for the activities on the internet entertaining the students, the results of the ninth, eleventh, twelfth, seventeenth and twenty-fifth items that are related to it show that 39 % of all the students "never" or "seldom" play games, like fan pages, chat online and waste their time on internet while over half of the students "usually" or "always" entertain themselves on internet. Web 2.0 tools are effective on the performance of foreign language learners. (Pegrum, 2009) For the activities students do for improving themselves, the analysis of the tenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, twenty-first, twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth items about learning vocabulary through games, feeling confident in courses, enhancing vocabulary knowledge and skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and using internet to learn vocabulary, 60 % of all the students "never" or "seldom" use applications to improve themselves while only 25 % of the students benefit from it. The way the language is grammatically and meaningfully constructed can shape the way people think and use the language in certain contexts. (Deutscher, 2010; Halvorsen, 2009)

## DISCUSSION

While there are several studies in the literature indicating that Web 2.0 tools have a good impact on education, most all of these studies had limitations such as being held in one specific area, having only teachers' perspectives and not designed specifically for language education. Thus, conducting a study in public and private institutions in Turkey and Iraq would help us to answer some questions about the extent of applicability of Web 2.0 tools in language education in various socio-cultural environments. During the interviews conducted in Turkey, all the participants reported that they were familiar with the use of Web 2.0 tools. The results of both questionnaire and the interviews revealed that the need of the students will increase towards technology and English.

Results show that there are differences in students' perceptions about using Web 2.0 tools in language learning. No matter how various perceptions students have, the most important thing that may affect their perceptions is the implementation of these tools into classroom. Therefore, deficiencies in practice may hinder the beneficial wash back. There might be a lot of reasons for it. First of all, lack of awareness in both teachers and students reduces the efficacy of Web 2.0 tools. That students regard Web 2.0 tools as beyond game and free time activity could only be possible when teachers and students value Web 2.0 tools in foreign language education. However, when the classroom practices are evaluated, it can be easily said that the role of Web 2.0 tools has been underestimated. A recent and dramatic example of that is Dynet which is a Web-based program developed to teach English. But, English language teachers regard it time consuming and a big burden. As well as awareness, teachers need a good background knowledge about these tools to implement it effectively, which raises the question whether English language teaching departments provide good basis in teachers' education and technology courses fulfill theoretical and practical needs for application. It can be concluded that if teachers were educated in the field, the use of Web 2.0 could contribute significantly to English language learning. Thus, regarding Web2.0 tools as an opportunity for English Language learning will be inevitable for the learners of the 21st century: **the new medium**.

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