

Web 2.0: The Influence of the Cloud in the 21st Century Classroom

Silvia Giovanardi Byer
Park University, USA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Web 2.0 technologies are changing the way we do things at home, in business, and of course, in teaching a world language. In addition to enhancing your understanding of how cloud-based technologies will strengthen your classroom activities, this article will also provide an example of how you can integrate two popular platforms to support communicative world language teaching activities.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Technologies influence nearly all aspects of our lives. But few things provide more compelling evidence of the incredible pace and value of technological advancement than the worldwide web. Since emerging in the early 1990's from the laboratories at Cern, Switzerland, the worldwide web has evolved from a "static" search tool to a global, interactive platform that supports applications and drives their improvement through use. Now popularly referred to as Web 2.0, the worldwide web's power to engage and interact is particularly valuable to educators, especially for those who teach world languages.

There are many web-based instructional platforms that enhance and support language learning through application of communicative teaching strategies and this article focuses on the applicability of several interactive, web-based learning platforms that are beneficial for any classroom and across disciplines.

BACKGROUND: WEB 2.0 AND EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

In Re-Envisioning the Professional Educator Continuum, the author(s) argue that innovation is reliant upon “empowerment to transform today’s traditional schools into places of dynamic learning. The framework for this is to present a holistic view of 21st century teaching and learning that combines a focus on 21st century student outcomes with innovative support systems to help students master the multi-dimensional abilities required of them in the 21st century.” (Partnership for 21st Century Skills: <http://www.p21.org/overview>). ¹

CASE DESCRIPTION: IDEAL INTEGRATION: THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AND WEB 2.0

The Communicative Approach to the teaching of second languages (L2) emphasizes the interaction among learners and instructor when the main goal is learning a second language. As such, the Communicative Approach (CA) is ideal for Web 2.0., because it supports the five essential teaching characteristics of the Communicative Approach:

1. Create or use opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the Learning Management process.
2. Teach learners to communicate through interaction in the target language.
3. Use authentic situations and texts as way to teach the target language.
4. Use learner’s own experiences as elements of learning in the teaching environment.
5. Use links between the teaching environment and the outside world as a link and or tool to provide language learning and activities. (David Nunam 2005, p.79)

CHALLENGES: SUPPORTING THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH: THE PARTNERSHIP FOR 21ST CENTURY SKILLS AND AMERICAN COUNCIL ON THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES (ACTFL)

The acceptance of the communicative approach signals a movement away from language teaching as the transmission of a rule-based code in which attention is focused almost exclusively on language as a ‘virtual system’ toward a more

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