WEB 2.0 IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL LANDMARKS

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Abstract:*Formal or non-formal Web 2.0 is or should be part of all programmes, starting from the school programmes to the higher education ones, whose aim is that kind of teaching seen as "that happiness of rising creative and intellective expressions" (Enstein). Web 2.0 may be considered an element oriented to the students, who are no longer the passive receivers, but creators of their own materials and knowledge.*

Apart from other subject matters, as the specialists consider, when teaching a foreign language, we need the new technologies in order to rise the motivation, stimulate the student-centered learning and provide a different and wide range of materials.

Thus, this article presents, in the first part - called Theoretical Landmarks-, the learning theories which form the base of the teaching process which involves the use of new technologies. The second part- Practical Landmarks- tries to provide the teachers of all ages with the wide range of applications which are generically called Web 2.0, which is also necessary for the training of the 21st century generation.

The designed Web 2.0 brief handbook sustains and encourages foreign langauges learning which goes beyond the memorized grammar rules. The students must be involved in developing their vocabulary and understanding the respective language culture.

Keywords*:Web 2.0, teaching foreign languages, electronic tools.*

1. Theoretical landmarks

We start from the teaching process which was summarized by Baumgartner in three ways:

a) The first teaching model refers to the **knwoledge transfer** (it is based on factual knowledge, transfering it through sentences, producing correct answers, memorizing, verbal explanations);
b) The second teaching model is realised by means of the **tutoring model** (it consists in procedural knowledge, how something is done, how something is practiced, in determining the right solutions and using them; its base is formed by obersvation and demonstration);
c) The third model is known as **the coach model** (it is based on teaching by means of real situations, cooperation and support) (Baumgartner, 2004: 4).

We may observe that the last model is the one who seems to correspond to the ideal teaching-learning foreign languages process, because it is the representative of the nowadays generation- Homo Zappiens – (as Wim Veen and Ben Vrakking called it) is used to learn by means of games, permanent communication 24/7, a continuous incoming of text or audio-visual (compulsory) information. Hereafter, we start from their opinion: Homo Zappiens represents "an opportunity to contribute to the future restructuring of education" (Veen, Vrakking, 2006:6).

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In order to highlight how the new technologies are supported by the new learning theories, we will summarize the theories which advanced or crossed with technology.

But, as the progress means little changes which are based on already known principles, we may say that the old theories progressed and transformed in a new one, called *connectivism*. We may not criticize the old theories, as George Siemens (the parent of connectivism) does in his paper *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for Digital Age*, because behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism elements are included in the teaching-learning process, even if in a quite small percent.

Siemens said that the central dogma of the old theories is that learning happens in the inner side of the individual, even the socio-constructivim focuses on the way of thinking, despite the fact that learning is achieved in the collectivity (Siemens, 2004). As we got used to, any theory has its supporters and opposers. In the last category we may find Plon W. Verhagen from University of Twente – Netherlands, who supports the fact that we actually do not have a theory but a pedagogic phenomenon (*Connectivism: a new learning theory?*), even if Siemens demonstrated step by step and according to the definitions, that it is a theory.

It is definitely accepted that this new theory/ trend contains principles regarding learning depending on network working, on using the new technologies. Thus, we are able to consider that it is the base of the eLearning phenomenon. The great variety of evidence which support this fact are the opinions and the serious scientific demonstations about *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for Digital Age*.

G. Lowrinson, R. Côté, P.C. Abrami şi M.C. Lavoire in the article *Revisiting Learning theory for e-Learning*, presents the connectivism as a theory for the digital era, where the individual works in a network environment. We should mention here the principles which have to be respected in order to develop the eLearning materials: the learning actors must know how to get to the new information, how to become independent and autonomous in order to build up an effective knowledge; using the Internet is an ideal way of learning in a network environment; the learning actors should have the ability to identify the important information and to take it from a variety of sources, in order to illustrate the network thinking (Lowrinson, Côté, Abrami şi Lavoire in the paper The *E-Learning Handbooks: Past Promises, Present Challenge)* (Lowrinson et alii, 2008: 433).

George Siemens considers that "the nowadays learning theories must justify the richness, dynamics, interconnection and the complexity of the systems in which the knowledge is created and shared". We may observe that Siemens also uses the term *learning ecology*. It appears in the article *Connectivism: Creating a learning ecology in distributed environments:* "metaphors of *learning ecologies* and *learning networks* provides the basis of the future educational models, more connected to the nowadays context and knowledge – randomly, with crossing disciplines, ascending, non-hierachical as it is reflected by the present approach of designing the courses and the curriculum". *Ecologies* is defined as "an environment which promotes and sustains the creation of a community", in other words a flexible Web 2.0 environment (software, platform, program etc.) which helps the individual to learn and to not stop him because of a difficulties encounterd when accessing or searching for information. It refers to a rethinking of the two basic aspects for the teaching-learning process: of the learning

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environment “moving from the class to an ecologic place” and of the learning structures “from a hierarchical content to one which is adapted to the networks)” (Siemens, 2003).

Web 2.0 encouranges the student-centered approach and encourages the teacher, motivating and provoking the students to search for additional information. These statements are supported by many Web 2.0 environment researchers from China (Liu, 2012), Italy (Pieri, Diamantini, 2014), France (Duthoit, 2012), Czech Republic (Hubackova, 2015), Malaysia (Shabudin, Aisyah, Darus, Mimiko, 2014).

2. Practical landmarks

Web 2.0 contains a variety of applications. For a structured vision of the elements this environment provides, we should remind the classification realized by Ban and Summers (adaped from McGee and Diaz): communicative (blogs, instant messaging tools), collaborative (wikis, VCoP), documentative (blogs,e-portofolios), generative (virtual worlds, gaming), interactive (social networking) (Ban, Summers, 2011). We should add that the applications which build-up the Web 2.0 may be classified by the support they provide (visual, auditory, audio-video, or just text), by the type of the provided applications (for beginners, advanced users of the respective langauges), by the type of content the websites provide (formal or non-formal), by the animation degree, interactivity, by the objectives which are pursued (learning grammar, learning vocabulary) or by the applications availability (online, offline) etc.

2.1. Web 2.0 application biref handbook

The selected resources, which we consider to be the most relevant and the teacher may use during the foreign language teaching-learning or evaluation lessons, are:

- FilmEducation (Filmeducation.org- it contains movie sequences which are used as teaching materials, accompanied by pdf documents which guide the teacher in his activity during the classes);
- VisuWords (visuwords.com- it is a wonderful sofware which quickly realizes a mind map for the requested word, letting us know its synonyms, anthonyms by means of graphic design);
- Fun English (funenglishgames.com- it contains games, activities, worksheets, quizzez, videos and fun stuff for children);
- Pinterest (pinterest.com- an international catalogue containg useful, innovative, practical ideas, a proper source for the activities which are run with children/students);
- Tes (tes.com- it helps you to design your own lessons having a Web support; it is useful because it organizes the information as different windows containing questions, texts or movies etc.);
- ToonDoo (tondoo.com- you may learn everything through comics which are created by yourself or by the others);
- Prezi (prezi.com- one of the very useful tools for teachers, tools of lesson presentation, which helps to catch the attention; thus, the lesson is accomplished in perfect conditions).

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2.2. Advantages and limits of the Web 2.0 applications

The Web 2.0 environment is composed by programs which allows the users to do a series of things such as teaching the curricular content, saving the information in text or film form, editing the information, sending it and collaborating with persons who share the same interest. If the available tools are properly integrated in the lesson, then we may get to a maximal efficiency. There is also the risk that the individual could not control the electronic devices which are useful for the learning environment, using them with fear or could not present/ integrate them properly in the lesson, leading to the decrease of the educational effect. It means that it does not repesent a real support for teachers anymore.

In this way, in order to benefit and educate the digital native in the schools, faculties, the teacher should countinuously train themselves regarding the new technologies, control their tutoring role during the lessons based on technology and should not avoid the electronic tools even in the daily life.

3. Conclusions

The economic, technological changes lead the teaching-learning-evaluation process to new approaches. Learning and teaching in a connected environment undoubtedly draw a permanent/ continuous training for the educators, no matter their level.

Nowadays teachers have access to Web 2.0 (soon Web 3.0), by means of which they train and lead their students to reliable learning experiences, stimulate their creativity and support them in solving their own targets.

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