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The Use of Web 2.0 Tools: Revisiting the Pre-Pandemic Status of ESL Teachers

Bai Salam Macapia Ibrahim 👤 🆔

English Department, Mindanao State University, Marawi City, Philippines

✉ **Corresponding Author**: Bai Salam Macapia Ibrahim, **E-mail**: baisalam.ibrahim@msumain.edu.ph

ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
	The coming of the cyber age for the past years has been a great challenge to teachers and learners in all fields of the academe. Web 2.0 has found its path to ESL classrooms as one of the challenges of ICT. Practically both teachers and students are well engaged to Web 2.0 tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, video conferencing, online classroom setting, etc. However, the real challenge is set on how engagement is embraced in the learning-teaching process. This study aimed to revisit the status of our ESL learners on the use of Web 2.0 tools in their classrooms before the pandemic brought by Covid-19. This study also aims to uncover and share the attitudes of the ESL teachers of the Mindanao State University Marawi Campus towards the use of such tool. This study is qualitative-quantitative in nature. Instruments used were AKAP (Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) survey questionnaire, voice recorders and notes from interviews conducted with the respondents. Results showed a higher level of awareness, knowledge, positive attitude towards Web 2.0 tools and a greater level on the practical use and application of such tools in the ESL classrooms. The results also showed a number of factors affecting the perception and attitude of the respondents towards the use of Web 2.0 tools in the classroom such as privacy, financial conditions of both the learner and the teacher, availability of facilities and the poor internet connection.

1. Introduction

> **"Students think materials are new
> and fresh, if they are presented on computers,
> and they are often interested even in routine
> tasks such as learning to type. They seem to be willing
> to spend more hours and do more exercise
> on a computer than by hand"**
>
> **-***Dr.S.Mercy Gnana Gandhi, M.A.M.Phil.B.Ed. PhD,*

Communication media virtually take over every major activity of children and youth from play to leisure, family relations to schooling, socialization to education. The impact of media has become so forceful that they became a great influence on one's attitudes, beliefs, values and lifestyle.

Today, the communication media landscape includes print, radio, television, video games, computers and the online technology of e-mail and various Internet applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

The 2006 McCann-Erickson Intergenerational Youth Study corroborates the increased popularity of activities relating to virtual connectivity. The study showed that top leisure activities for teens after school remain traditional media, that is, watching TV and listening to the radio. However, there is an emerging prominence of technology-related activities like the use of cell phones and the Internet, indicating greater interest and participation in the so-called technocentric life.

In the Philippines, the coming of the cyber age is very evident. In a survey on Internet access and use by Filipino schoolchildren submitted by the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication to UNICEF, Filipino schoolchildren are computer literate as almost three-fourths (74%) have access to the Internet. But schoolchildren in the Visayas and Metro Manila have greater access than their counterparts in the Cordilleras and Mindanao as approximately 9 out of 10 schoolchildren in these areas are Internet users.

In fact, the use of the internet has been seen as one factor influencing students' attitudes toward schooling. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, Podcasts, chatting, video conferencing etc., had vastly captured students' interest resulting in tardiness and less interest in attending physical classes.
However, this problem has been taken positively by scholars and teaching practitioners. They believe that the internet can be the catalyst to gain back students' interest in schooling. This can be a motivating factor for students to be more participative and active in the learning process.

This has raised the notion of the use of Web 2.0 as an approach in language learning. Web 2.0 is an umbrella term for developing social software applications such as social bookmarking, podcasting, blogging, etc., which facilitates creativity, collaboration and sharing between users. Web 2.0 is a read and write web. It is a real-time and live connection between users and a good revolution of Web 1.0. It enhances creativity, communication and collaboration.

While most of the Universities in the Philippines are prospering with Web 2.0 in TESL, there are some who see this approach to be impractical. In a survey on internet access and Use by Filipino, schoolchildren noted that school teachers also need media and information literacy training. This will equip them with skills needed in making their students critical media producers and consumers and, at the same time, provide teachers with competencies in using media as teaching-learning tools. UNESCO has produced a model curriculum on Media and Information Literacy for Secondary School Teachers, which can be adapted in a local setting. The Internet has emerged as an important teaching-learning tool as learners better appreciate the learning process when it is mediated. Teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to help them model effective use of the Internet as a tool for students' learning, including integrating Internet learning with regular classroom learning. Schools should encourage blogging among students since it enhances creativity and writing skills.

This study aims to know the case of Mindanao State University TESL practitioners in using Web 2.0 as an approach in TESL. This aims to know how far our TESL practitioners have gone regarding teaching approaches, methods or pedagogy. This also aims to gather information about the different factors stopping these teachers from exposing themselves and their students to Web 2.0.

Moreover, this paper aims to revisit the status of our ESL practitioners before the pandemic and the sudden shift to online learning. This aims to recapitulate how online classes has been before the present struggles of ESL teachers and learners as they abruptly shifted to a new form of the classroom setting.

2. Literature Review
2.1 Computer Assisted Language Learning
Computers have become so prevalent in schools and homes, and their uses have spread out so dramatically that most language teachers now think about the implications. The use of the computer in and of itself does not constitute a teaching method, but rather the computer forces pedagogy to think in new ways to exploit the benefits of the computer and work around its limitations. To exploit computers' potential, we need language teaching specialists who can promote a complementary relationship between computer technology and appropriate pedagogic programs (http://psychology.wikia.com/wiki/Computer-assisted_language_learning).

Davil Little (1996), in his Computer Assisted Language Learning Theory (CALL) sets out the reasons for using information systems such as an Internet site for promoting autonomy in language learning. He argues that:

> *"Information systems and information technologies can promote the development of learner autonomy to the extent that they can stimulate, mediate, and extend the range and scope of the social and psychological interaction on which all learning depends."*
> --Little (1996: 203)

In using the Internet, learners may assume that it is normal to work alone. This impression might be reinforced by the idea of 'independent language learning. However, language learning is about learning to communicate with others. Little (1996: 203) puts this in theoretical perspective when he says, "that autonomy (as the freedom to learn) combines with dependence (as biological imperative to interact) to generate communicative processes". Thus, working alone might not be the best way to learn

autonomously and may not suit the learners' style or preferred strategies. Learning alone might also not be conducive to deep learning, according to Tang (1996: 196). Benson (1995: 9) highlights the importance of collaboration when he says that, "Whether technologies in self-access inhibit or promote autonomy may therefore be, in part, a question of whether they are used collaboratively or not."

2.2 Socio-Cultural Theory

Another theory supporting this paper is the Sociocultural Theory deriving in part from the concepts of Vygotsky (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). The sociocultural theory states that learning is a process of becoming part of the desired community and learning that communities rules of behaviour. This illuminates the role of social interaction in creating an environment to learn the language, learn about language, and learn "through" language. According to Vygotsky, human learning and development are bound up in activity, purposeful action mediated by various tools (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1979). The most important of these tools is language, the semiotic system that is the basis of human intellect (Halliday, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978). He also stressed that collaborative learning, either among students or between students and a teacher, is essential for assisting each student in advancing through his or her own zone of proximal development, that is, the gap between what the learner could accomplish alone and what he or she could accomplish in cooperation with others who are more skilled or experienced (see Nyikos & Hashimoto in this special issue).

Thus, the computer provides an opportunity for students to be less dependent on a teacher and have more freedom to experiment on their own with natural language in natural or semi-natural settings.

2.3 World Wide Web

Badrul Khan, in his article Web-based Instruction (WBI): What is it? And Why is it? In his book, Web-based Instruction stated that now, we are blessed with the emergence of the World Wide Web, commonly known as the Web, as one of the most important economic and democratic mediums of teaching and learning at a distance. As the Internet is rapidly emerging, the Web has become an increasingly powerful, global, interactive and dynamic medium for sharing information. The Web provides an opportunity to provide new learning experiences for students not possible previously (Alexander, 1995). As a result, students around the globe can enjoy equal access to the many learning resources available on the Web. He also stated the notion that as the Information Age evolves, our society is undergoing massive changes that have a tremendous effect on our educational systems. Advances in educational technology coupled with the changes in society are creating new paradigms for education. Participants in this new educational paradigm require rich learning environments supported by well design resources. The Web as a medium of learning and instruction has the potential to support these new designed resources.

Another very interesting book is Beverley Abbey entitled "Instructional and Cognitive Impacts of Web-based Education". This book represents a compendium of current international thought and issues on assessing, designing, delivering instruction via the Web. Many books and articles are providing quick fixes on the mechanics of how to put your classes on the Web and ignore or omit matters of instructional import. A major concern of many professional educators is the quality and efficacy of instructions being delivered in this manner. Public schools are required to use textbooks and other instructional materials that have been stamped with a "seal of approval" regarding content and pedagogy. However, at all grade levels, an increasing number of instructors are using internet sites as both content sources and delivery mechanisms.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study was to find out the perceptions of Mindanao State University teachers and English Language Teaching practitioners in the use of Web 2.0 in the classroom.

This study sought to answer the following questions.
1. What is the profile of each respondent according to:
   a. Age
   b. Highest educational attainment
2. What is the status of the teachers on the use of Web 2.0 based on awareness, knowledge, attitude and practice?

3. What are the factors that influence the perceptions of these teachers?

The study is qualitative in nature. Survey questionnaires were given to respondents. To strengthen the reliability of the study, interviews were also conducted.

The respondents are Thirty-one (31) ESL teachers from Mindanao State University Marawi Campus English Department. The study was conducted in November 2014.

The instruments used in this study were the following:

1. Survey Questionnaire. This instrument was used to determine the perceptions of the ESL teachers of Mindanao State University using the AKAP (Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude and Practice) survey guidelines and criteria.

2. Tape recorders were also used for the interview to be conducted with the respondents.

To accomplish the collected qualitative data, meaning condensation, which involves abridging free-form questionnaires, responses and interview transcripts into shorter formulations were used. Long statements were compressed into briefer statements in which the main sense of what is said is rephrased in a few words. With this process, condensed statements were then subjected to further analysis.

4. Results and Discussions

This study aimed to find out the perceptions of ESL teachers on the use of Web 2.0 tools. It attempted to find out the following: (1) a. Demographic profile of the respondents; b. Media exposure profile of the respondents (2) The perceptions of the respondents towards the use of web 2.0 tools following the criteria for AKAP questions: Awareness, Knowledge, Attitude and Practice; (3) Factors affecting the perceptions of the respondents on the use of Web 2.0 tools in the classrooms.

The following are the findings revealed in this study:

1. Out of 31 respondents, seventeen (17) were 19-30 years old, two were 31-40 years old and twelve (12) were 41 and above. Most of the respondents were those from the age bracket 19-30 years old.

2. All of the 31 respondents are internet users.

3. On internet accessibility, eighteen (18) of the respondents have internet access at home. Thirteen (13) of the respondents access the Internet through cybercafes or other settings open to public, while nine (9) were dependent on the Internet access that the school or their workplace could offer.

4. On the respondents' frequency of Internet use, nine (2) use the internet twice a month, eight (8) use the internet twice a week, seven (7) use the Internet several times a week, Ten (10) used the internet several times a day.

5. When the respondents are connected to the Internet, Twenty-three (23) of them use the World Wide Web for school or work purposes. Twenty-two (22) use the internet for entertainment, Fifteen (15) also use the Internet for games.

6. Among the three (3) most visited websites were www.facebook.com, www.yahoomail and www.gmail.com. Evidently, Facebook ranked as the most visited website of the respondents. This shows the impact of social media sites on Internet users.

7. On the awareness level. The results showed great evidence that the respondents are very aware of the Web 2.0 features and applications. Some rarely hear about podcasting and bookmarking.

8. On the respondents' level of knowledge, most of the respondents are very knowledgeable about chatting with their online friends and sharing ideas by uploading and downloading. They were moderately knowledgeable about sharing and opening themselves to others through social networking sites, tagging someone on personal photos, and sharing links to e-groups, leaving messages on friends walls, uploading journals and personal diaries through blogging and creating discussion venues through Wikis and Google plus.

9. Based on the findings, the respondents generally have a positive attitude towards the use of Web 2.0 The respondents strongly agree in the following: I like Web 2.0 tools; Web 2.0 has helped me personally; social networking is very effective in building relationships with others, Blogs are a good learning tool for thinking, arguing, and discussing; Web 2.0 provides learning opportunities that were never tried in traditional classrooms; sharing videos to students helps in the learning process. Moreover, the respondents at the scale of five (5) somewhat agree that is is easier to voice out opinions through blogs that convey it face to face and using Facebook as part of the lesson plan would surely motivate students to participate in the discussion. The respondents with a scale of six (6) agree that using blogs is not a waste of time for learning and teachers should use Web 2.0 tools in the classroom.

10. On the level of their practice, 21 of the respondents are practising the use of Web 2.0 tools in the classrooms. From the findings, seldom do the respondents use Web 2.0 in the classrooms, particularly on giving assignments using blogs, creation of Wiki page where the teacher and the students could meet, requiring students to post blogs, posting and sharing links to students, and sharing interesting topics for discussion though Facebook and other SNS sites. The respondents sometimes practice preparing lesson plans incorporating the use of Web 2.0 tools and sharing educational photos and videos with students. The respondents also believed that sometimes students become active when given

tasks using Web 2.0. Very often, the respondents use chat rooms to encourage the use of English as the language of communication.

11. From the findings, several factors are affecting the respondents' perceptions of the use of Web 2.0 tools. Listed factors are the lack of facilities and media equipment in the university, poor internet connection, student's financial condition, skills in the use of Web 2.0 tools and personal and private purposes.

Generally, most respondents are active users of the Internet. Web 2.0 tool is not a new idea to them. Most are aware, are knowledgeable about this media form. Despite the different factors affecting the manipulation of such tools, it was apparent, as drawn from the findings, that these respondents have a positive attitude towards the use of Web 2.0 in their classrooms.

5. Conclusions
Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn by the researcher.

1. The Internet is not new among the respondents. Younger ones are more engaged in the use of the Web 2.0 tools. It is true that the 21st century generations are active citizens of the Internet or as how they are popular name, "netizens'.

2. The respondents are fully aware and are knowledgeable on the use and functions of Web 2.0.

3. Respondents generally have positive attitudes towards the use of Web 2.0 tools. As ESL practitioners, the respondents see a great and positive impact on the use of such tools in their lives.

4. While some of the respondents do not overly use Web 2.0 in their classroom, important reasons and factors are also considered. Thus, seminars, training and other media exposures should be conducted for these ESL teachers. The contribution of the University administration in providing media equipment and internet connection should also be raised and given attention.

5. Students should also be given the same seminar, training, and exposure and should also be given access to the Internet so financial problems would not hinder them and their teachers from using such tool.

Furthermore, our vignettes show that teachers are making useful and informed decisions on the role of the Internet in their classrooms. The blend that is occurring includes more than a simple understanding of the nature of Web 2.0 and belies the idea that learning facilitators are not capable of making the kinds of choices that would keep the Net generation engaged in the process of language learning. The language facilitators understand the need to connect between the physical space that is the four-walled classroom and the real world that lies beyond.

A language facilitator can use the Web 2.0 tools in ways similar to how they used other practical tools to meet the requirements of language learning and development. However, the nature of Web 2.0 tools makes it more likely. Once a teacher has provided the necessary links for learners to also find ways of enhancing their learning. It is too simplistic a view to see learners as the guardians of the digital landscape and that teachers are excluded simply because they have not grown up handling these tools from a very early age.

It is also very important to note the progress of language facilitators as they continue to learn and enhance their skills and potentials along with society's changes, including that of the digital landscape.

Furthermore, this study has given us a wider view of the status of blended learning and or online learning before the pandemic, the sudden shift from the physical language learning to exclusive online language learning. Considering 2014, when this data was gathered, we can conclude that the shift was not too difficult for the respondents as language teachers because they already know the use of Web 2.0 and have already started integrating Web 2.0 in their lesson plans a few years back.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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