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Web 2.0: Connecting the Local and the Global

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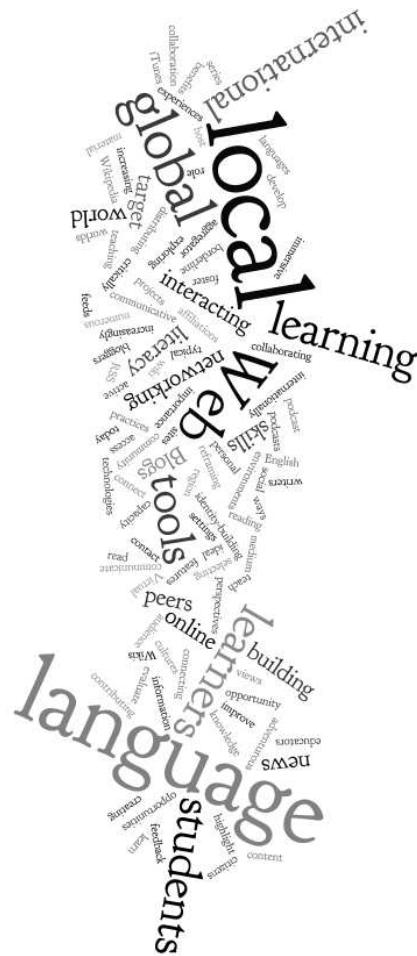
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Summary

Web 2.0 technologies, which foster communicative collaboration, social networking and online community building, are ideal tools for connecting the local and the global through the medium of language. There are numerous ways language educators can use these tools to improve their students' learning experiences as well as increasing their own contact with the languages they teach.

This paper examines four typical web 2.0 tools, asking how the capacity of each to connect the local and the global may be exploited in language teaching and learning. Students can read **blogs** from around the world, interacting with their authors through inbuilt feedback features. Learners can also become bloggers themselves, developing language and multiliteracy skills as they communicate their local knowledge and personal views to an international audience. **Wikis** offer students the chance to develop information literacy skills alongside more general reading skills, as they learn to critically evaluate the material they find online. Learners can also take an active role, contributing to sites such as Simple English Wikipedia, or collaborating with peers – in the local area, in the region, or around the world – in the building of their own wiki projects. **RSS** can bring international news into local settings as well as distributing local news internationally, with students selecting and reframing feeds and content. The iTunes aggregator allows easy access to a host of language learning podcasts, while more adventurous learners can hone their speaking skills in the process of creating their own podcasts. **Virtual worlds**, on the borderline between web 2.0 and web 3.0, provide some of the richest opportunities for exploring local and global cultures, entering immersive target language environments, and interacting with peers on a variety of levels.

Thus, web 2.0 tools offer many benefits for language learning. At the same time, they highlight to learners the importance of language and literacy in the identity-building and networking practices of today's citizens, who increasingly have both local and global affiliations.



Contact

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Quotes & References

CMC has the potential to provide a means for the **weaving together of ideas and information from many peoples' [sic] minds ...**

Kaye, A. (1989). Computer-mediated communication and distance education. In R. Mason & A. Kaye (Eds.), *Mindweave: Communication, computers and distance education* (pp.3-21). Oxford: Pergamon. [p.3]

[T]he Internet – and Wikipedia in particular – is **not a culturally neutral space**, but [...] differences in behavior across cultures can be observed.

Pfeil, U., Zaphiris, P., & Ang, C.S. (2006). Cultural differences in collaborative authoring of Wikipedia. *JCMC*, 12(1). <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue1/pfeil.html>

A huge part of identity development is performing for the public in order to experience reactions. [...] **Blogs let people work through identity issues by [...] giving them a mirror in which to reflect on their own performance.**

boyd, d. (2005). *Bloggng outloud: Shifts in public voice*. Paper presented at LITA Conference, 1 Oct. <http://www.danah.org/papers/LITA.html>

[Wikipedia] is the **product not of collectivism but of unending argumentation**. The articles grow not from harmonious thought but from constant scrutiny and emendation.

Shirky, C. (2008). *Here comes everybody*. New York: Allen Lane. [p.139]

ICT can be thought of in prosthetic terms, as **an extension of the body and the senses.**

Locke, T., & Daly, N. (2006). Politeness and face in digitally reconfigured e-learning spaces. *Studies About Languages*, 8, 39-49. [with reference to Sjøby (2005)] [p.39]

[S]uccessful role identification helps students escape the grip of contemporary norms and beliefs. Whether they project themselves into the role of an Athenian politician or a patient suffering from chronic pain, they are forced to shift perspective and **imagine the world through different eyes**.

Delwiche, A. (2006). Massively multiplayer online games (MMOs) in the new media classroom. *Educational Technology & Society*, 9(3), 160-172. http://www.ifets.info/journals/9_3/14.pdf [with reference to Luff (2000)] [p.162]

We are part of the **greatest unplanned collaboration** in human history; and (at least potentially) an enterprise that will eventually touch *all* humanity.

Moulthrop, S. (2004). *No more literacies!* Paper presented at Computers and Writing Conference, 11 June. <http://iat.ubalt.edu/moulthrop/talks/cw04/>