

EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON WEB 2.0 APPLICATIONS

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Abstract. The present article aims to investigate the role that Web 2.0 tools can play in enhancing the productive and receptive language skills of students who learn English as a foreign language. Nowadays, Web 2.0 is becoming the preferred environment for communication, collaboration, and sharing information, especially among the young population. Web 2.0 tools are handy, simpler to deploy, free or not expensive, and ready to be used in different contexts. This pushes many educators around the world to study the possible ways of applying these technologies in the educational field. This study adapted the quantitative research approach by using a questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions of using Web 2.0 applications as a method for teaching English as a foreign language. The results showed a high self-perception of teachers toward Web2.0 and its use for improving students' language skills, which can be attributed to their awareness of Web2.0's importance and benefit in education.

Key words: Web 2.0 tools, language skills, English as a foreign language (EFL).

Introduction. Nowadays, modern technology plays a vital role in our lives. Frankly speaking, in comparison with other subjects in the social sciences, language training needs the use of technology more. There are many benefits to using technology in a foreign language classroom. It "can increase motivation, decrease anxiety, develop more student-centered activities, and provide students with authentic audio and visual materials. We can say that educational technology enriches learning in the teaching environment [1, p. 25]. According to Christine Canning Wilson, in language education, where we develop four skills of language such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the power of new technologies is limitless. It is becoming more widespread to use Audi and visual E-Tools in a foreign language classroom. English language teachers are now taking innovative steps to integrate technology into their teaching environments. Teachers have a

wide variety of choices for integrating technology into their classes [2]. One of these choices is the use of Web 2.0 services. By integrating traditional methods of teaching with modern Web 2.0 technologies, we can create a more engaging, interactive, and motivating learning environment in our lessons. However, it is important to be able to choose appropriate teaching e-tools from the internet among the hundreds of other online services. The aim of this article is to introduce the term "Web 2.0," show the differences from Web 1.0, and provide some of the most useful Web 2.0 services for teaching English as a foreign language based on practical experience. In this article, we will discuss some of the best Web 2.0 tools for teaching English as a foreign language. Language teachers might benefit from an understanding of the potential applications of Web 2.0 tools to enhance their learning settings. Additionally, it aims to provide language teachers with innovative and useful ideas for using these technologies in English language teaching. Our aim in this paper is to introduce some of the most useful Web 2.0 tools for teaching English as a foreign language, determined after a rigorous selection based on practical experimentation and experience. Such an approach is useful for language teachers to be knowledgeable about the possible uses of Web 2.0 tools to enrich their teaching environments. Moreover, it is aimed at giving creative and practical ideas to language teachers on the use of these tools in English language teaching. Nowadays, Web 2.0 services play a vital role in all aspects of life. Web 2.0 services are a set of web-based, user-centered online applications. They allow us to communicate and enhance our knowledge with other people on a global scale. These popular devices were designed to facilitate usage and save time, effort, and energy. Tim O'Reilly (2005), who introduced the concept of "Web 2.0," offers this definition: "Web 1.0 was about connecting computers and making technology more efficient for computers. Web 2.0 is about connecting people and making technology more efficient for people." While decreasing the significance of the computer itself as a platform for

information delivery, Web 2.0 continues to develop new ways for huge groups of people to interact and exchange information [3].

Problem statement. In Kazakhstan, learning English can be challenging for students of all ages. Even some teachers can struggle to explain the nuances of English grammar and pronunciation to Kazakh and Russian-speaking students. We live in a non-English-speaking country, and we both teach and learn English as a foreign language. Knowing the basic grammar and right pronunciation of words does not mean that learners can express their own ideas, thoughts, or sentences clearly in the English language. Comparing teaching Russian to Kazakh-speaking learners and Kazakh to Russian-speaking learners, teaching English to both types of learners consists of obstacles that are more challenging. Students can be disinterested in learning English. It happens for different reasons. Young learners can have difficulties finding and meeting native speakers from English-speaking countries in order to have small talks or conversations with them. They may struggle to understand content in the English language, whether it is a book, text, or video material. The English they learned from secondary schools, universities, or maybe some courses may differ from natural spoken English. We usually teach British English to our students. However, there are so many accents and dialects of English that when our students meet foreigners, they can get lost in the conversation. Another weakness of our teaching method is that we teach overused word construction, collocations, and sentence structures. As a result, the English in textbooks can vary from the English of native speakers. The aim of using Web 2.0 tools is to overcome these struggles in order to create more interesting and involving methods of teaching English for Kazakhstani learners. Materials used in traditional classrooms are mostly static text-based materials. These include main course books, workbooks, lecture notes, and handouts. All of these resources are largely static, so it is the duty of EFL teachers to bring life and involvement into their classroom settings. Web 2.0 applications have been greatly used in both teaching and learning. Web2.0 tools influence the interaction

between teachers and students by providing more opportunities to collaborate with each other [4]. In 2022, Web 2.0 will be a platform for meeting new people, exchanging ideas, and displaying creativity in front of an audience [1, p. 40]. Using e-tools can be the most convenient way to make lessons more productive and interesting by integrating Web2.0 services with traditional methods of teaching [5, p. 2].

Purpose of study. The current study focuses on the use of Web 2.0 services in the EFL classroom and the personal factors influencing their use in different countries. Although the integration of Web2.0 tools into the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language makes it crucial to investigate the use of Web2.0 applications in a rigorous way.

Research questions. This study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do EFL teachers use Web 2.0 applications?
2. Is there a significant difference in the usage of Web 2.0 tools by EFL teachers in these countries: Kazakhstan, Russia, the USA, Indonesia, South Africa, Canada, and Afghanistan?
3. Is there a significant difference between male and female users of Web 2.0 applications?
4. Is there a significant difference between Web 2.0 users due to their work experience and academic degree?

Methodology

Design. This study adopted a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey for data collection. For this purpose, the survey was conducted online, and the instrument used was an anonymous questionnaire that was developed to investigate EFL teachers' perceptions of using Web2.0 services and their impact on learners as an effective method for teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

Participants. The participants were composed of 32 EFL teachers from 7 countries (Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Afghanistan, the USA, Canada, South Africa,

and Russia). They included both male (33.3%) and female (66.7%) participants with at least 1-2 years of work experience and academic degrees in the field of education in this survey. The participants' ages ranged from 18–24 to 45–54. Moreover, it was necessary to ensure that the participants were aware of Web 2.0 applications and had some experience using them in teaching and learning.

Instrument. A comprehensive questionnaire was developed based on the literature review. The questionnaire consisted of two sections and was posted online in English. Section 1 focused on collecting demographic data, including gender, working experience, and frequency of using Web 2.0 services in their everyday classrooms. Section 2 contained five questions examining four indicators: teachers' perception of Web 2.0 tools and services, the impact of Web 2.0 applications on learners' performance, the extent to which teachers want to use Web 2.0 tools and services, and the actual usage of Web 2.0 tools and services. For the last question, a ten-point Likert scale was used to measure the questionnaire item. The items for the first and second indicators were ranked from strongly agree (10) to strongly disagree (1). Undecided was used as the middle point (5). Items for the third and fourth indicators were ranked from always (10) to never (1), and neutral was used as the middle point (5).

Data collection. The study used a questionnaire developed specially to answer the four research questions. Data were collected from 33 participants using random sampling. The participants consisted of pre-service and in-service EFL teachers from various secondary schools and universities. As the questionnaire was deployed online using Google Forms, the link was sent to randomly selected participants. Recipients were requested to fill out the questionnaire and were informed that participation in the study was voluntary and that they were under no obligation to participate.

Data analysis. Using the summary from the Google Forms, descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics were used for the overall mean scores of the different

investigated variables. The independent sample t-tests were used to compare male and female participants, in addition to comparing the use of Web 2.0 applications based on years of experience and country of origin in using computers and the internet.

Results. Figure 1 provides us with the information that 68.8% of them (22 participants) teach secondary school students. 15.6% (5 participants) teach undergraduates, and 9.4% (3 participants) teach postgraduate students. Only one female participant in the age group 45–54 from the USA, from Lanesboro, Massachusetts, has written that she teaches K–12 and college students.

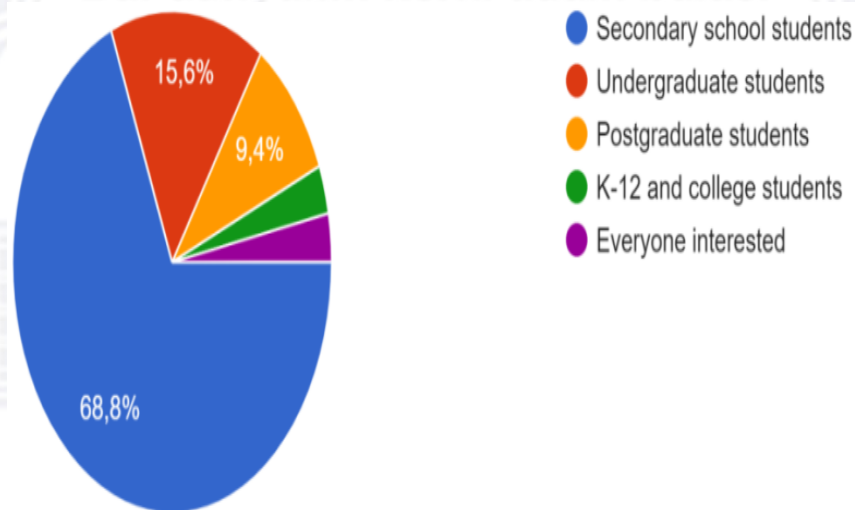


Figure 1: EFL teachers' students

Figure 2 provides information about the frequency of use of Web 2.0 tools by EFL teachers in their classroom. From the responses to the questionnaire, we see that 62.5% (20 participants) of EFL teachers use Web2.0 tolls almost every lesson. 21.9% (7 participants) prefer to use Web2.0 applications once a week, 9.4% (3 participants) once a month, and 1 participant never uses any E-tools in her classroom; another participant uses E-tools depending on the contract.

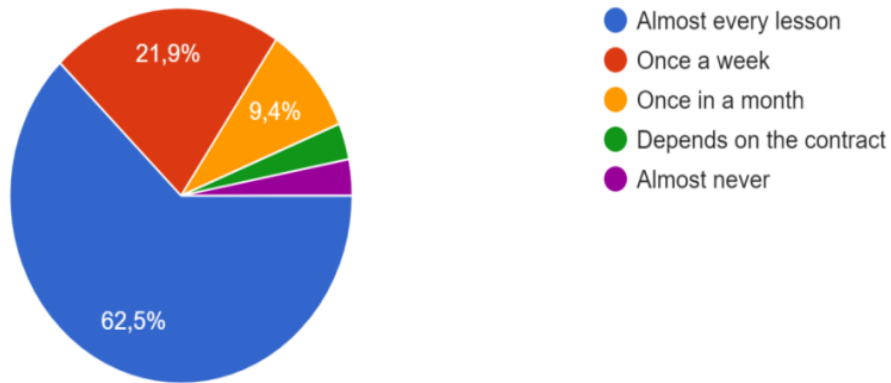


Figure 2: The frequency of usage of Web 2.0 applications in the EFL classrooms

Figure 3 illustrates the types of Web 2.0 applications that are well known among EFL teachers from seven countries. YouTube is the most popular e-tool among EFL teachers; almost all participants use it in their EFL classroom to teach English to their students. In second place stands Kahoot. In the conclusions, Zoom and Google Forms apps take third place.

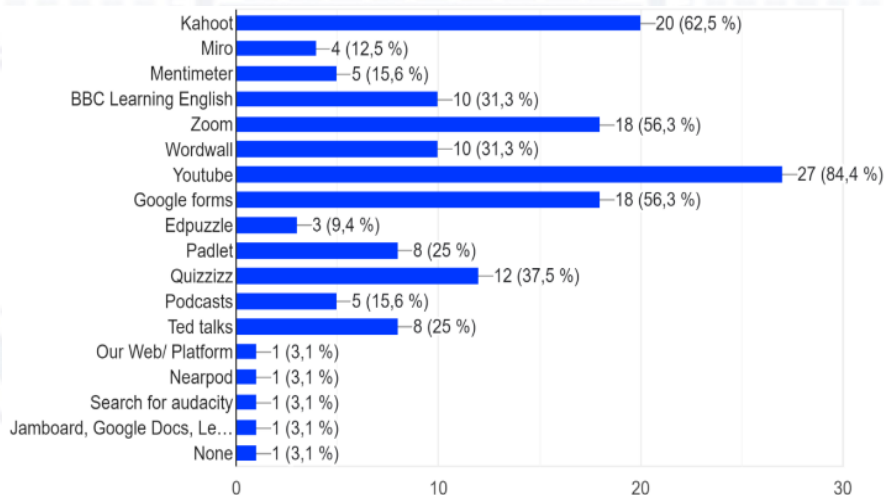


Figure 3: The rate of usage of the most common Web 2.0 tools by EFL teachers

Figure 4, results of the Likert scale, illustrate that 25% (8 EFL teachers) of participants strongly agree that the usage of Web2.0 applications in the EFL classroom can help them develop more interesting and involving lessons rather than using traditional methods of teaching. 43% (20 participants) of EFL teachers agree that the usage of Web2.0 applications in the EFL classroom can help them

develop more interesting and involving lessons rather than using traditional methods of teaching. 1 participant strongly disagrees with this statement, and 4 participants hesitate to answer.

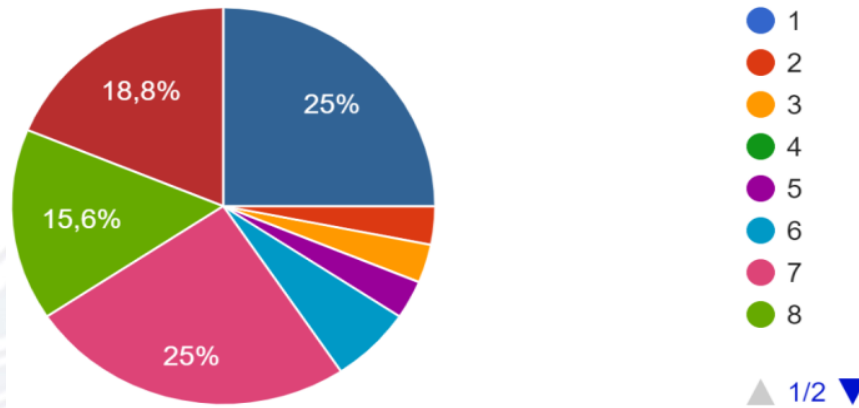


Figure 4: Results of the Likert scale of EFL teachers' perception of Web2.0 applications

Discussion. Based on the results presented above, this section discusses the findings of the study. The results show that teachers in the age group between 18 and 24 use more Web 2.0 technologies in their EFL classrooms. From the responses to the questionnaire, we see that teachers with less work experience use Web 2.0 applications almost every lesson. Teachers who have obstacles to using computers and modern technology in their classrooms due to the fact that organizations cannot provide them with enough computers in every classroom use fewer Web2.0 tools in their classrooms. Well-experienced teachers from foreign countries and local cities prefer to use e-tools once a week. Both genders prefer to use e-tools at least once a week in their EFL classrooms. However, there is a huge difference in the usage of Web 2.0 applications between Kazakhstani, Russian, Afghan, Indonesian, Canadian, South African, and American teachers. The first group of teachers strongly believes that using any e-tools can immediately make their lessons more engaging and interesting for students. There are some responses from Kazakhstani and Russian teachers to the question: Do you believe that using E-Tools in the EFL classroom can be an effective way to teach English to students in your country? A female participant, in the age group 35–44 years

old with a bachelor's degree, teaches general English to undergraduate students with 5-7 years of work experience, from Russia, Kamensk-Uralskiy: Yes, I completely believe e-tools help keep students' interest in the subject.

Let's have a look at responses from teachers from the USA and South Africa. Both of them worked in Kazakhstan to teach Kazakhstani students offline and online. A female participant in the age group 45–54 from Lanesboro, Massachusetts, USA, with a doctorate degree who has been teaching English as a foreign language for more than 11 years responds that it can be effective depending on who's using it and how they exploit the methodology to make sure that the skills-based lesson is taught. I have seen people use the technology for just that, without any substance or content, and I don't think that's okay. There has to be a reason why the tool is being used to the best benefit of the learner. A female participant in the age group 45–54 from South Africa now works in Astana with a doctorate degree, teaching academic writing and scholarly practices to graduate students with work experience of more than 11 years. She agrees that if you use the tools to facilitate student engagement, extend their learning, and consolidate their understanding. However, if you use it only because it creates interest, then it is not a pedagogical tool. Not all e-tools can be pedagogical, and it is important for teachers to understand the difference.

Conclusion and recommendations. In conclusion, this study was conducted to investigate the teachers' perceptions of Web 2.0 applications in teaching English as a foreign language. It also assessed the extent of teachers' use of Web 2.0 applications in seven countries. In addition, this study explored the differences in using Web 2.0 applications between male and female users as well as their work experience and academic degrees. The participants in this study were composed of 32 EFL teachers from Kazakhstan and other countries. Over the past few years, Web 2.0 technologies have been developing, affecting the way people access information as well as the way they interact and exchange knowledge in various areas, like education. Both teachers and students are

already using these technologies in their personal lives and are also feeling pressure to use them in their educational environments. Teachers and technology have important roles to play in education. However, the right methodology for teaching English as a foreign language through Web2.0 applications should be mandatory for EFL teachers all over the world.

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