

Blending Learning in a Web 2.0 World

Gary Motteram and Pete Sharma. Gary Motteram is a Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Manchester in the UK. Pete Sharma is an Associate Lecturer at Oxford Brookes University, UK.

Abstract

This article explores the role that Web 2.0 technologies can play in enhancing language learning development in a blended world. It will argue that technologies are not enough on their own to make a difference, but that teachers bring a particular understanding of language and the needs of their learners to the creation of suitable activities. It will show that the use of technologies is also changing our understanding of the profession of language education and that sociocultural theory can help us understand why this is occurring. Blended learning as a type of classroom activity will be explored showing how different definitions may be interpreted in the classroom context. The types of blended activities that can be used are illustrated through three vignettes.

Keywords: Blended learning – Web 2.0 – sociocultural theory – teacher decision-making

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Introduction

This paper will explore what language educators need to know in order to make effective use of learning technologies, specifically Web 2.0 technologies. It will suggest that in the current stage of educational technology development that blended learning is the most appropriate solution for many teachers working in traditional classrooms who want to make use of digital technologies as an aspect of their practice. It will argue, as do Bayne and Ross (2007), against the claim that teachers are unable to effectively 'engage' their learners because they are "digital immigrants" and therefore incapable of using new technologies in their classrooms because even if they try to use technologies teachers are hampered by their non-digital cultural heritage (Prensky 2001). It will further argue that while technological artefacts can make a difference, there are other important mediating artefacts that need to be taken into account: an understanding of general learning theory and of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) make teachers ideally placed to blend practices, processes and technologies in the crafting of effective lessons for the learners in their charge. Our understanding of SLA has developed considerably in the last four decades and there is now a clear set of well-defined and stable perspectives that teachers can refer to. General learning theory also has a lot to offer as will be seen later. Three vignettes of classroom practice are offered at the end of this article to show how this theory works in practice (Lewin 1952: 169).

At the same time it does appear to be the case that at least some learners are excited by finding technologies in their classrooms (Pereira 2009) and considerable investments have been made by governments to make sure that the latest information and communication technologies (ICTs) are available for both teachers and learners to make use of (Twining 2002). In many countries access to the Internet is seen as a right on campus and, of course, many learners have access to the Internet at home, too. Where the Internet is not readily available in people's houses, or places of work, it can usually be found in Internet cafés and on mobile phones.

Mediating artefacts have been a fact of life in language and other classes for many years as Salaberry (2001) and Bates (2005) convincingly demonstrate, but with the advent of Web 2.0 we have seen a massive increase in the availability of tools that can potentially be used in a variety of different ways to blend regular classroom practice. These tools are argued to be much easier to implement than older Web 1.0 technologies. The growing range of technologies that we have available to us is aptly illustrated by the Web Trends Map (2009). This map, which makes use of the Tokyo underground as a framing tool, shows the relative merits and values of a range of technologies and technological providers with all, for example, of the key publishers appearing on one track with the most well known situated in the centre. Large technology corporations are to be found on another track, again with the ones seen as being most influential towards the middle and linked more comprehensively to other aspects of the digital world. The map gives a quick overview about what is popular at any given time. These are the most well-known and commonly used tools and companies, but, of course, these only represent a small fraction of what is available when it comes to what teachers might find access to.

Teachers need to make reasoned choices, not only about technology and language teaching methodology, but also to show awareness in their practice of insights into SLA and general

learning theory. They also need to take into account the needs and desires of the future learner.

The Language Learner of the Future

Four articles that appeared in *The Guardian Weekly* in 2006 considered what impact technology would have on the language learner of the future. Warschauer (2006) focuses on three divides and how these are breaking down. He argues that the notions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) are already becoming less relevant. He describes the way that learners in what have traditionally been termed EFL countries, who in the past would have had little or no access to the target language, now have the potential of considerable access, mediated by various Web-based technologies. This has been as a result of the growth of Web 2.0 technologies like blogs and wikis. In the article Warschauer tells the story of a group of Iranian medical students who discovered Warschauer's personal blog about his son. The Iranian students then contacted Warschauer to discuss his son's condition with him. They were able to make contact with someone in another country and have a real dialogue about a topic that was of interest to them in English. The notion that only ESL learners, that is, those studying within a target culture, can get regular access to target language is therefore questioned; the boundaries between EFL and ESL appear to be breaking down. The Internet, of course, continues to develop and with the advent of 3D virtual worlds like Second Life, for example, there is even more chance to participate in an international language community that resembles real world experiences without leaving your own home or classroom.

The next divide is between the digital haves and the have-nots. Warschauer suggests that although the Iranian medics who accessed his blog do not have personal access to the Internet, they all have a shared access of some kind either through work, or the extended family and he argues that this is true of many communities. In Africa farmers are now using mobile phones to access information about the value of their crops and before this had been able to access the Web in the local town to do similar research. There is also the offer of the \$100 laptop for the developing world, which is fast becoming a reality (One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) 2009).

Warschauer's third divide is that of language and technology in the classroom. Increasingly, Warschauer argues, it is difficult to separate the teaching of language from technology. If we want to write a paper, we inevitably make use of a computer; if we want to track down a reference we make use of the Internet. We also use tools like Skype to interview participants in research projects. The students need the kind of digital literacy skills that help them make effective use of these tools and that language on its own is no longer the object of study (Lankshear & Knobel 2003). Warschauer describes a student of his whose motivation for learning English is to make use of the Internet rather than an interest in language per se.

Motteram's (2006) contribution to this debate is focused on the way that technologies enable the traditional classroom to be connected to the real world. This is similar to Warschauer's points about EFL, but extends it to include genuine activity. This is then related to learner motivation and the fact that with Web 2.0 learners can increasingly choose what they can focus on in class. It also considers our increasing understanding of distributed learning reinforcing how we learn by engaging with others, either face-to-face or via digital artefacts (Dede 2006).

Graddol (2006) takes a much less sanguine view arguing that Web 1.0 failed to deliver much other than exercises where the instructions are often more complex linguistically than the

materials themselves and suggests that Web 2.0 might be more of the same. Graddol argues that a lot of time and investment was put into the development of software that was supposed to make a difference in the language classroom, but in many cases all that was created was a similar set of classroom exercises on a computer, little really new was being offered. Bax (2006), in the final article of the series, re-invokes the idea of the normalisation of technologies (Bax 2003). He points out that we do not talk about Pen Assisted Language Learning, but we do refer to Computer Assisted Language Learning, thus indicating that teachers still see computers as somehow different or separate from the other technologies that we make use of in class, like books or whiteboards. He argues that when we stop seeing such technologies as somehow extras and when they blend into the background, they will have become as accepted as books are now, as a part of the classroom furniture. Prensky would argue that for the learners this normalisation process has occurred, the problem is the teachers.

The lens of sociocultural theory and the role that tools/artefacts/means play in human development, help us to understand the arguments put forward in this set of articles. As has been said, particular tools (cultural artefacts) have always been central to the language teaching process and the introduction of Web 2.0 is only really a further step, but one which might have a significant impact on the learning process as other tools have done in the past. We do take books for granted now, but this has not always been the case and as Higgins and Johns (1984) argue, different technologies inevitably have an impact on pedagogical approaches. It has been argued (Prensky 2001; Tapscott 2008) that the brains of learners termed the Net Generation are wired differently; this new generation expect a constant stream of new media to stay alert and focused. They scan the news media online rather than reading articles in traditional newspapers. An extension of this view might argue that we no longer need to remember facts, as they are now literally stored at our finger tips on the mobile devices that we all carry, our relationship to knowledge changes and the way that learning takes place alters to suit the needs of this developing situation. However, others take issue with this viewpoint (Bauerlein 2007) and argue that by putting emphasis only on these media-rich processes harms concentration and makes it difficult for learners, when they need to, to focus on difficult and complex topics.

Sociocultural theory argues that, "All human activity is mediated by tools and signs" (Warschauer 2005: 41) and it is through tools and semiotic systems that humans have developed as a race over time. Humans differ from animals not in that we use tools and language and that animals do not, but it is the way that humans build on their tool use in phylogentic development. In the early stages of development humans made use of spoken language in education (the Socratic method), then manuscripts (early monastic education), then books (following Caxton), now we use computers. These mediating artefacts also altered the way that we learned. In a similar way mass produced books and the postal system of the nineteenth century allowed Pitman to start offering distance courses in shorthand, thus broadening the boundaries of the classroom for the first time, Web 2.0 appears to be changing not only the way that knowledge is constructed, but also its ownership. Students are now asked to use wikis to create their own database of information about a topic rather than being offered a set of lectures on a subject area. This alters both the nature of knowledge and the way that it is perceived and stored, as well as altering what the learners do with it and the way that they approach educational activity. Both teachers and learners question 'old' ideas and begin to reject them. However, there is an increasing understanding that this is not a good practice and that the paradigm shifts of the past are not what is required (Motteram 2009).

Second Language Acquisition

The field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has made an important contribution to our understanding of how languages are learned. Lightbown's ten generalisations (2000: 432) from SLA research give us a very useful summary of what teachers should know about SLA:

1. Adults and adolescents can 'acquire' a second language.
2. The learner creates a systematic interlanguage which is often characterised by the same systematic errors as the child learning the same language as the first language, as well as others which appear to be based on the learner's own native language.
3. There are predictable sequences in L2 acquisition such that certain structures have to be acquired before others can be integrated.
4. Practice does not make perfect.
5. Knowing a language rule does not mean one will be able to use it in communicative interaction.
6. Isolated explicit error correction is usually ineffective in changing language behaviour.
7. For most adult learners, acquisition stops before the learner has achieved native-like mastery of the target language.
8. One cannot achieve native-like (or near native-like) command of a second language in one hour a day.
9. The learner's task is enormous because language is complex.
10. A learner's ability to understand language in a meaningful context exceeds his/her ability to comprehend decontextualised language and to produce language of comparable complexity and accuracy.

These may appear to be commonsense views, but they are rarely taken heed of by educational policymakers and administrators. We can see from this list that everyone should be able to acquire a second language given time and opportunity and that most adults are not going to gain a full mastery, particularly not when they only have very limited time and limited access to a target language. We need to have conservative expectations and take learners' needs in a language into account when we plan language curricula. With the limited tools available in language classrooms and the often poorly trained teachers it is not surprising that language learning is not as successful as it could be. Add to this, the lack of motivation caused by learners failing to see the value of foreign languages in our lives and language learning can sometimes be a difficult task for all concerned.

Web 2.0 Technologies and their Value

The process of creating Web 2.0 materials involves the engagement of a community, consisting of developers who create tools and the users who produce the content using a range of digital technologies. Warschauer and Grimes (2007) discussing the question of what Web 2.0 is, talk about O'Reilly's "key distinction" between "publication and participation" (p. 2). Web 1.0 tools deliver information to people, Web 2.0 tools allow the active creation of information by users. In a Web 1.0 paradigm creation was possible, but there were a lot of barriers, with Web 2.0 the barriers are not set as high. Wesch proposes "an evolution from the *linking of information* to the *linking of people*" (Wesch cited in Warschauer & Grimes 2007: 2). This proposal fits well for a language learning paradigm where linking allows for communication and although "practice doesn't make perfect" (Lightbown 2000: 432) the possibility of acquisition is more likely if language can be tried out in meaningful ways.

Web 2.0 tools are very useful in this respect for language teachers for a number of reasons:

1. It has always been difficult to build the expected applications that were part of Web 1.0 (or earlier generations of computing), although it has been/is still being tried;
2. We have had exercises in various guises: *BASIC*, *Authorware*, *Flash*, *JavaScript – Hot Potatoes* is probably now the most widely known version; arguably a *Web 2.0* service;
3. The Internet does provide a useful resource of all kinds of authentic material, most of it is free at the point of delivery – Wikipedia; YouTube etc;
4. There is a range of tools that can enable us to be social in all sorts of ways:
 - a. Textually: This can be achieved with blogs and wikis, or with collaborative writing software, like Google Docs. Chat is also text and tools like MSN, or Google Talk, can be used to rehearse spoken language in writing. Other tools where text is very important are forums, which have formed the backbone of online education up until the recent past.
 - b. Orally: As well as being used for text chat a tool like MSN or Skype can be used for spoken communication. Until quite recently the communication was one-to-one, but now groups can speak together.
 - c. Visually: *MSN*, *Skype*, *Adobe Connect Professional*, *Elluminate*, *WizIQ* and other similar tools can be used for video conferencing exchanges. These tools add a visual dimension to the interaction.
 - d. Aurally: *Podcasting*.

However, what still has to be recognised for the time being is that the predominant site for learning is still the regular four-walled classroom with chairs and tables, although increasingly the fourth wall is a transparent one with a connection to the Internet. This brings us back

around to the point raised earlier that most effective uses of technology in the classroom will be focused on blended learning as Vaughan and Garrison (2005: 2) have argued:

Blended learning is on the cusp of transforming higher education. Blended learning is used here to describe an approach to the design of a course or program that integrates the best of face-to-face and online learning while significantly reducing traditional class contact hours. With the pressing need to address the quality of the learning experience in higher education, blended learning is attracting considerable attention to enable the integration of appropriate and meaningful online experiences.

Teachers then have available a sophisticated toolkit consisting of Web 2.0 technologies, their knowledge of SLA, their understanding of methodology and the needs and desires of their learners. They can bring all these together in blended learning.

Blended Learning

The term 'blended learning' is currently a buzz term in language teaching. Many workshops at conferences for language educators around the world incorporate the term: "Sustaining online communication during a blended learning Business English course", for example, was the title of a session at last year's BESIG¹ conference. However, as stated by Driscoll (2002: 1), the term blended learning means different things to different people. Moreover, it can vary in different cultures and countries. Within certain language teaching contexts, there are locally understood uses of the term, such as the blending of print and digital materials. Sharpe et al (2006) see the fact that no universally agreed definition exists as an advantage, since institutions can use it flexibly to devise and then promote their courses, whereas Oliver and Trigwell (2005) view this multiplicity of meaning as an essential weakness. While this paper will now establish a number of common definitions, it is important to note initially that it is very much a contested term.

The term has been in use for almost twenty years now and "has been constantly changing during this period" (Sharpe et al 2006:18). It is used in the corporate world to refer to professional development designed to allow workers to remain productively at work and to simultaneously take a training course, delivered through (for example) a mixture of self-study manuals, videos and more recently, web-based delivery. This type of course is adopted partly as a cost-saving measure, to avoid the loss of a productive employee taking time away from the workplace on an expensive seminar.

We will now describe four uses of the term relevant to language teaching; explore some of the dimensions of the term; and conclude with a series of vignettes illustrating blended learning in action. We will show how these blended approaches enable teachers to put into place the kind of activity that illustrates our earlier discussion of sociocultural theory and SLA.

¹ BESIG = Business English Special Interest Group. One of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language's (IATEFL) specialist subject groups: <http://www.iatefl.org>

Types of Blends

f2f plus online

The following definition (Oliver & Trigwell 2005: 17) is arguably the classic definition of blended learning and is commonly used within higher education contexts: “The integrated combination of traditional learning with web based on-line approaches”. One element in the blend is the ‘face-to-face’ training or language lessons; the other is the delivery of parts of the course through distance tools. This approach typically could involve using a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) such as *Blackboard* or *Moodle*. The distance delivery may involve the use of synchronous tools, such as chat, and asynchronous tools, such as bulletin boards. Consequently, a typical blend would involve the posting of materials to the VLE for study before and/or after the language class.

One of the main advantages of running such a blended learning course is that the course tutor is able to consider the ‘appropriacy’ of each medium of course delivery, and match the delivery type to the activity. It enables the face-to-face class to be extended in various kinds of ways and also extends the time that the students spend on tasks. Typically, the classroom is used for activities such as developing student fluency through discussion topics, or the clarification of ‘fuzzy’ areas of grammar, areas where immediate teacher clarification is useful. The VLE similarly can be used for appropriate tasks, such as the posting of pre-discussion questions, which can be read at any time before the class, anywhere, at different speeds (self-paced learning) and can be processed in different ways following individual learner preferences, such as whether or not to use a dictionary, and which type (bi-lingual or mono-lingual). Interactive language exercises housed on the VLE could address ‘crisp’ areas of language. On these black-and-white areas of language, a ‘yes/no’ answer is possible, so feedback can be given easily on computer. This would imply a use for such techniques as rote learning, as an aspect of a course, as argued by Bax (2003) and suggested earlier in this paper.

Critics of such a blended learning approach point out that in reality, students may favour one of the delivery modes (face-to-face or online) to the detriment of the other. There is a risk in running such a course that the combination of modes actually ends up pleasing no one.

Combination of technologies

“The combination of media and tools employed in an e-learning environment” (Oliver & Trigwell 2005: 17)

This definition could describe a purely distance learning course, where no face-to-face lessons occur. For example, a purely on-line writing course may use a wiki. Communication between the learner and e-tutor may take place through any number of combinations of technology, such as e-mail and Skype, a forum and a wiki, or Second Life and Moodle. White (2003: 3) describes a range of such courses; Salmon provides e-tivities, “frameworks for enhancing active and participative online learning” (2002: 3), which would help a tutor to exploit the use of such technologies in a meaningful way.

Beyond four walls

“The combination of a number of pedagogic approaches, irrespective of the learning technology used” (Oliver & Trigwell: 2005: 17).

A course which combines transmissive and constructivist approaches would fit into this descriptive category, as would one which combines a present-produce-practice (PPP)

methodology where guided practice of the target structure precedes freer practice and a TBL (task-based learning) approach, where the focus on form comes after the task cycle (Willis 1996: 135). You might also argue for an approach that includes both drill and practice elements alongside more communicative practice. This mix might well be determined by the level of the course as well as the specific needs of the learners. This definition is less relevant to the current paper as it does not make specific reference to the technologies employed by the teacher or learner.

Combination of real world plus virtual world

This model describes an approach taken by one language school in Germany. The teacher delivers a face-to-face, real world lesson, and then arranges to meet his or her students' in a virtual world such as Second Life for a follow-up lesson. This combination is recent, and shows that the term 'blended learning' is a fluid one, and is continuously open to new interpretations.

This paper now explores some of the dimensions associated with this term, specifically: types, breadth, and connotation.

Types of Courses

Blended learning courses within the language teaching sector may fall into distinct 'types'. A 'dual track' approach could involve the teacher-led part of the course running parallel with the self-study part, perhaps delivered on CD-ROM. These separate components could be stand-alone, or they could be made to work together more closely.

In an 'integrated approach', students are given work as consolidation or as a pre-class activity. Students are expected to use the appropriate technologies between each of the face-to-face classes. They may choose whether to do these tasks or not, rather like homework.

The technology could be 'embedded' in the classroom, as with the fixed interactive whiteboard which allows an always-on internet connection and access to web 2.0 tools such as blogs and wikis, CD-ROMs and other learning tools.

Breadth

A 'broad' definition states that blended learning is the combination of the face-to-face part of a course and the "appropriate use of technology" (Barrett & Sharma 2007: 7). Such a definition is somewhat loose, and might be applied to any course involving a bricks and mortar classroom where technology is employed, such as 100% face-to-face course with the use of an interactive whiteboard, which is not a tool normally associated with distance delivery. Both Salaberry (2001) and Claypole (2003: 169) have argued that blended learning is nothing new, and is indeed the logical development of what has gone before, suggesting language teaching has long employed technology. Thus, once teachers used audiocassettes, then CD-audio, and now podcasts. As learning technologies develop, teachers need to develop their knowledge and skills in order to keep up with trends such as 'podcasting'. However, what is also important is the way that they choose to use a particular technology and this needs to fit with our understanding as teachers of the needs of our learners as well as what we know about SLA and pedagogy in general.

A 'narrow' definition is evinced in a variant of the first definition given above, specifically 'blending f2f with web-based learning'. This excludes the use of DVD-ROMs and CD-ROM,

as they are not delivered over the web, and therefore could be seen as excessively restrictive.

Connotation

The connotation of the term blended learning varies. A positive connotation can be assumed with the '1+1 is more than 2' argument. By combining the best of the teacher, as someone who can clarify 'fuzzy' areas of language, and the best of the technology, such as the provider of an endless supply of practice activities in 'crisp' areas, a language course may deliver better outcomes than, say, a course where technology is not used, or a self-study course delivered through technology alone with no teacher interventions.

A negative connotation can be assumed where there may be no thought-through pedagogical relation between parts of the blend, so that the various parts of the course (class plus independent study) are connected together artificially in such a way that it may appear to the learner to lack coherence.

It is not clear as to how the use of the term 'blended learning' will develop. Westbrook (2008: 13) has noted the dilution of the term, so that it becomes almost redundant. Given that CALL has been described as "context-specific" (Levy & Stockwell 2006: 234), we can reasonably expect that local uses of the term will continue. Thus, within Higher Education it will most likely continue to denote a taught course supported through a VLE. In one context and culture, the term may initiate discussion over the optimum balance between taught teaching hours and autonomous learning on a course; in another, debate may centre around the blend of print and digital materials. If the goal of the integration of learning technologies is normalisation (Bax 2003), in a short period of time it may well be that the use of Web 2.0 technologies has become so commonplace that it is scarcely noticed, which is indeed already the case for many digital immigrants.

Vignettes

This article now examines three examples of blended learning in action within specific teaching contexts. Each vignette shows how today's language teacher has changed their 'approach' by integrating technology through 'blended learning'. They also show how the teacher has used learning theory and the principles of SLA to inform their decision-making. These examples focus on the skills of listening, speaking and writing.

1—Using a blended approach for practising listening skills

In the first class with a new group, the teacher sets up the course following a blended learning model by providing the students with learner training on the DVD-ROM that accompanies their course book (a normalised tool that gives the learner confidence and security). The disc contains all the listening material for the course in mp3 format. The teacher who once used to say: "I will play the tape twice" might now say: "We'll listen to the audio twice in the lesson. If anyone wishes to revisit the recording, they can do so at any time." The student can choose to listen to a recording as many times as they wish; with or without a transcript; re-do exercises in order to improve their score; and pause and replay sections whenever they like. They can listen at home, or in an Internet café, or on the move by transferring the audio files to their mp3 player. Students know that they can consolidate and improve their listening in an autonomous manner in addition to the classroom work. The teacher has given the learners choice, they can approach the listening in a variety of ways. If they wish to they can simply repeat the exercises from class, or they could even learn the

text by rote. The use of this particular tool changes the relationship of the learner to the material and gives the classroom a different function. Within the limited time available the teacher can open doors which the learner can make use of as they see fit. It gives opportunities for the length of time on task to be considerably extended and allows for considerable variation in the ways that the learners can approach their study.

Many students' course books are being made available for use on an interactive whiteboard (IWB). One popular feature of the latest generation of IWB software is that the audio transcript can be displayed and specific sections of the script can be played at the touch of the e-pen. This instant access to finding the place is an improvement on the cassette tape, in the pre-digital era, or the need to play the complete recording from the start on a CD-audio. These tools enable the teacher to show their mastery of the digital environment, perhaps making learners more aware of their teacher's digital credentials.

2—Using a blended approach for giving presentations

The content of a business skills course on giving effective presentations falls into two type of language: predictable and unpredictable. Predictable language includes formulaic phrases, such as "I've divided my presentation into three parts", and fixed phrases which comprise signposting language. Unpredictable language includes the actual content. Here the teacher is making use of their knowledge about language form and function to think critically about how a lesson might be constructed. The course delivery follows a blended approach, integrating independent study on a CD-ROM in between face-to-face lessons. The face-to-face component comprises an initial brainstorm of possible topics; student presentation practice in the form of dry-runs; and their final presentations. The technology delivered parts include guided practice of exponents using a CD-ROM on presentations, where students repeat expressions and compare their utterances with audio models in order to improve. A variant on a one-to-one course of a blended approach to presentations is to record the final presentations using a digital recorder, edit in feedback using the software Audacity, and mail the mp3 file to the student. The different tools here allow the learners to work independently, but also allow the teacher to provide effective feedback through audio files. Again, the nature of the lesson changes and the roles within the classroom change. The teacher provides tools and support to learners, who take a language framework, but provide their own content. The teacher is the so-called: 'guide-on the side', but also again showing their digital skills in both recording and editing the mp3 files.

3—Using a wiki for writing

The teacher has a limited number of hours on the course to develop students' writing skills. S/he sets up a course wiki, a good example of a Web 2.0 tool. This example of process writing involves both the collaboration and creativity mentioned earlier. In a blended approach, the teacher starts the course and also issues students with their log-on details to the class wiki. Class time is used to brainstorm features of writing. Homework assignments are set with learners writing short essays in pairs. They do this between classes, working collaboratively. The teacher looks at the 'history' to see how students arrive at their final product. Further opportunities for collaboration are provided by the wiki, such as inviting peer feedback from class members on student essays. This allows the emphasis to again to be very much on the learner. If wanted, this kind of activity can be extended to include people who are external from the class to comment on the writing.

In vignette 1, the face-to-face class has become not only a place where the listening skill is worked on, but also a place where learner training takes place. It is assumed that the

material in-class is also available outside of class, and that lessons contain an element of strategy training. In vignettes 2 and 3, the parts of the course which are best dealt with face-to-face are done so in class, and the technology is used in appropriate ways: for guided speaking practice in example 2, and for collaborative writing practice in example 3.

Conclusions

Our vignettes show that teachers are making useful and informed decisions about the technologies that they are going to use in their classrooms. The blend that is occurring works on many levels, but includes more than a simple understanding of the nature of Web 2.0 and belies the idea that teachers are not capable of making the kinds of choices that will keep the Net Generation engaged in the process of language learning. The teachers understand the need to connect between the physical space that is the four-walled classroom and the real world that lies beyond. This is particularly important for language learning because it is often difficult for learners to understand why a particular activity is occurring. A teacher can make use of Web 2.0 tools in similar ways to the way they have used other tools in the past to meet the requirements of second language development as well as showing that language has a function that is not simply that of being part of the curriculum. However, the nature of Web 2.0 tools make it more likely once a teacher has provided the necessary links, like in the example of our Iranian doctors, learners can also find ways of enhancing their learning, too. 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. The nature of the learning environments that most people inhabit – four physical walls with the possibility of one of these walls being expanded by connections to the Internet – and the enormous possibilities that Web 2.0 tools offer to both teachers and learners, make it inevitable that learning blends will be a feature of the language learning and more general educational landscape in the coming years. These blended classrooms will also inevitably have an impact on pedagogical processes and over time people's practices will change and potentially have a developmental impact on the ways that humans learn and learn languages in particular.

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