

The use of new technologies among in-service Colombian ELT teachers*

El uso de las nuevas tecnologías por parte de profesores colombianos de inglés

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Abstract

This study reports on the impact of the Masters in English Language Teaching with an Emphasis on Autonomous Learning Environments from the Universidad de La Sabana. The report highlights how graduates from 12 cities from 9 departments throughout Colombia are using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for English language learning in order to promote autonomy. The data that has been gathered thus far reveals that teachers are becoming much more comfortable in evaluating ICT tools in accordance with their teaching context, the strengths and opportunities of ICT tools and their consequent improvement on language teaching, while promoting the development of autonomous learners.

Keywords: ICT & Language Learning, Web 2.0 Tools, ICT Competence, ICT integration into Language Learning, Self-Directed learners

Resumen

Se trata de un informe preliminar sobre el impacto de la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo de la Universidad de La Sabana. El informe resalta cómo los egresados de 12 ciudades de 9 departamentos en Colombia están utilizando las TIC para el aprendizaje del inglés con el fin de promover la autonomía. La información que se ha recopilado hasta ahora revela que los docentes están mucho más cómodos en la evaluación de las herramientas TIC de acuerdo con su contexto de enseñanza, las fortalezas y las oportunidades de las herramientas TIC y su consecuente mejora en la enseñanza de idiomas, así como fomentar el desarrollo de aprendices autónomos.

Palabras Claves: TIC y el aprendizaje de idioma, herramientas de Web 2.0, Competencias en TIC, Integración de las TIC en el aprendizaje de idiomas, estudio autodirigido

Résumé

Ce rapport préliminaire sur l'impact du Master en didactique de l'anglais met l'accent sur les environnements d'apprentissage autonome à l'université de la Sabana. Il souligne comment les diplômés du master de 12 villes et 9 départements de la Colombie utilisent les Tic dans l'apprentissage de l'anglais pour développer l'autonomie chez les apprenants. L'information recueillie jusqu'à ce jour montre que les enseignants sont chaque fois plus à l'aise au moment d'évaluer un outil Tic dans les différents contextes d'apprentissage, les nombreux avantages et possibilités de ce type de ressources et une amélioration de l'enseignement des langues en encourageant l'apprentissage autonome.

Mots-clés: Tic et apprentissage des langues, outils Web 2.0, Compétences en Tic, Intégration des Tic dans l'apprentissage des langues, apprentissage autonome.

* This is a report on the impact of the Masters in English Language Teaching with an Emphasis on Autonomous Learning Environments from the Universidad de La Sabana



Introduction

The use of Information and Communications and Technologies (ICT) is becoming more common practice in Colombian educational institutions as a way to enhance the teaching and learning process in English while promoting autonomous learners (McDougald, 2009). With the rapidly increasing popularity of the Internet and Web 2.0 tools in recent years, the diversity of learning programs continue to shift and change according to the demands of society. The use of ICT's has changed our conventional ways of learning and proposes the need to rethink education in terms of a more current context (White, 2010). Similarly the internet is on the forefront of language teaching offering teachers and students a like the opportunity to explore and even exploit English in ways that were not possible before. ICT for a long time has been regarded only as a support tool in language learning (McDougald, 2009); nevertheless it is becoming the preferred selection for many teachers in the language learning classroom, providing alternative possibilities for education (Casal, 2007). The educational context in Colombia is very diverse leaving teachers to face challenges where ICT has enabled them to overcome some of these obstacles. Providing students the opportunity to able to use English with ICT in a very natural, realistic environment, enabling them to communicate more effectively in the new language.

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into course offerings from the Department of Foreign Languages and Culture's Masters Programs in English Language Teaching at the Universidad de La Sabana is part of a broader strategy to develop lifelong autonomous learners. ICTs can have a significant and positive effect on the language teaching and learning processes when used and this preliminary report highlights how graduates from the aforementioned programs in 12 cities from 9 departments throughout Colombia are using ICTs for language learning. The data that has been gathered thus far reveals that teachers are becoming

much more comfortable in using and selecting the appropriate ICT tools in accordance with their teaching context; the strengths and opportunities of ICT tools and their consequent improvement on language teaching.

«The Internet is an amazing tool that has great potential in the language classroom; nevertheless, its effectiveness in practice depends largely on the way in which it used by teachers and students» (McDougald, 2009, p. 25). Therefore, special attention will be given to the different ICT / Web 2.0 tools used in various departments throughout Colombia, as well as how the promotion and integration of ICT is changing teaching methods in these areas. This preliminary report further highlights the developing role of autonomy and the preparation required so that in-service teachers participating in the master's program are able to appropriately and effectively use ICT; thereby empowering them with the skills developed within the Masters in ELT program to initiate changes in their teaching practices as well as possible ways of integrating ICT fully into language learning course. The core skills that are developed in the program consist of blending the latest technological developments with English teaching practice, developing competences for the creation, development and improvement of autonomous learning environments as well as developing competences for the management and optimization of language learning resource centers.

Background of the Study

There are many different reasons for using information and communications technologies (ICT) tools in order to aid in increasing autonomy in English Language Learners (ELL). English teachers are in need of preparation on how to properly use ICT's in their classrooms so that they are able to understand the rationale behind the use of ICT's in language learning. It is important to emphasize that when using or implementing these types of tools in the classroom, they should all cater to the needs of each one of the



students, providing them with different opportunities, adhering to multiple intelligence as well as different learning styles.

The main objective of the study was to explore impact of the Master's in English Language Teaching with an Emphasis on Autonomous Learning Environments program from the Universidad de La Sabana; more specifically the study sought to determine the extent to which the graduates from the Master's Program in English Language Teaching in Autonomous Environments continue to use ICT / Web 2.0 tools to promote autonomous learning after completing the Master's program in order. The idea for the project arose from a need to evaluate the overall impact of the Master's program in order to assess the relative benefits to the teaching and learning process of including ICT in the curriculum. The intention behind the inclusion of ICT in the Master's program was to train in-service teachers in the latest trends in English Language Teaching (ELT) so that they would be equipped not only with the knowledge of how to employ ICTs effectively for their personal use but also with the knowledge of how to implement these tools in their classrooms to support their teaching.

Additionally, the study aimed to identify the ICT tools being used for ELL after the completion of the action research project that the students had to present as part of the graduation requirement.

Literature review

ICT and Language Learning

ICT and Web 2.0 tools provide a variety of different approaches as well as learning styles that might reinforce the material delivered in other formats. Not to mention that enjoyment is very much a part of effective learning, thereby captivating learners' interest, increasing personal discovery, generating enthusiasm and the desire to learn thereby instilling an interest from within to improve the learners' motivation (McDougald, 2009). Furthermore, there are a number of tasks that can be done with the use

of ICT in language teaching; time and time again, new innovative ideas arise as to how using ICT are being created especially to improve English Language Learners in the development of autonomous learners. Due to the fact that these tools are appealing to ELL, captivating their interest which in turn increases their use outside of the language classroom, thereby allowing learners to become aware of their language level. Needless to say that these tools provide ELL with real-world skills that are not always present in static learning tools.

The Web offers an endless amount of authentic material for language learning, allowing teachers and learners to cross borders without ever having to leave their country. Shetzer and Warschauer, (2000) state that with a variety of hyperlinked multimedia documents and computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools, the web can support language teachers to integrate Web resources into the language classroom. Moreover, the multimedia nature of the Web is essential for the delivery of authentic materials, including texts, images, sound recordings, video clips, virtual reality worlds and dynamic, interactive presentations (Dogoriti, 2010). The above mentioned information on the Web and CMC tools all provide ELL with more opportunities so as to take charge of their own learning process, thus promoting autonomous learners.

ICT has brought about the innovative use of Web-based learning in second-language learning and teaching, particularly in the area of English as a second language (ESL) (Albirini, 2006). Baylor and Ritchie (2002) state, that "regardless of the amount of technology and its sophistication, technology will not be used unless instructors have the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary to infuse it into the curriculum" (p. 398). Nowadays in-service teachers are not up to date with the latest trends in ICT tools nor are they familiar with how to use them personally or even incorporate them in their classes. Which is why the training and support those teachers receive in the Masters in ELT program is essential so that while using ICT tools they are enabled to:



- Analyze and evaluate ICT tools and resources,
- Create their own language learning sites in accordance with their teaching context,
- Properly use resources according to the purpose, context and the learners

These core competences in turn will aid teachers in becoming much more proficient users in ICT as well as develop life-long learning skills in ICT all the while providing teachers with the competencies necessary and needed in order to be successful in a 21st Century ELL classroom. This in turn can allow these in-service teachers the opportunity to help their students in becoming better learners and users of ICT and improve their learning process in English. These skills are taught throughout the program allowing the Master's candidates the opportunity to use a variety of tools as a way to foster autonomous learners in new learning environments mediated by technology. Nevertheless, the use of online materials and the use of blended learning as a complement to existing classes require certain skills on the part of the teacher (Reinders, 2010 in Darasawang and Reinders, 2010). However, this support is initially provided in the following courses:

- Learning Autonomy and Self-Access Materials,
- Setting up and Optimizing Language Resource Centers,
- Autonomy and Hybrid Learning Environments,
- Autonomy and Virtual Learning Environments

In the study, *Impact of a Web 2.0 mediated course in the professional development of a group of future English teachers* conducted by Arias (2012) among a group of 18 sixth semester pre-service English teachers in the Teacher Licensure Program in Education with an emphasis in Humanities: Spanish & English, in public University in Colombia focused on the possible impact that Web 2.0 tools would have on the professional development of in-service English teachers. The study included Blogs, Podcasts, Wikis and Microbloggings more specifically Twitter as a

complement to their English classes. The results revealed that there was a need for improvement in teacher professional development so that the demands of ICT mediated language teaching could be met. Additionally, the study also discussed how the pre-service English teachers improved their knowledge and use of ICT tools as well as their attitude and perceptions towards them. Furthermore, the study showed that these teachers also improved their oral and written English skills.

Incorporation of ICT into the teaching curricula

In accordance to the curriculum for the Master's Program in English Language Teaching, Technological Environments, one of the competences, is a crucial part of the Program which facilitates the creation of autonomous learning environments by using information and communications technology (ICT), so that each candidate in the Master's Program will have the "know how" to use new ICT tools based on the requirements of the context, propose strategies in order to respond to the learning needs of their students in order to support them with the technological tools at hand and understand the major challenges posed by meeting the changing educational needs of society.

Furthermore, the Program is designed so that candidates will know how to design educational materials for autonomous learning according to the characteristics of the context and the needs of the learners and properly use ICT tools so as to integrate them into the teaching and learning process. This is closely related to Weaver, (2006) where she emphasizes the need to have a "new learning environment", this new learning environment means including ICT as part of the curriculum.

In the study conducted by Weaver (2006) *Exploring conceptions of learning and teaching through the creation of flexible learning spaces: The learning gateway - A case study*, where the objective of the study was to explore the relationship between the creation of a physical learning space and the changing



conceptions of learning and teaching. The study also focused on how ICT infrastructure was used in order to support active learning. The author claimed that the inclusion of ICT in the College's curriculum was to "provide flexible learning spaces so that longevity is considered alongside the technology" (p. 4) and to "build an integrated support environment that gives learners more choice and control over their own learning" (p.4).

On another note, Liang et al. (2005) points out, that the 'one-to-one' digital classroom contains an array of educational computing devices and it has been said that this trend will continue:

(...) in approximately 10 years, more and more students will bring a range of computing devices into the classroom for learning. Ultimately these devices will become indispensable educational tools like pens, papers or chalkboards.

(Liang, et al., 2005, p181)

With that being said the inclusion of ICT into the Master's Program is a way to train in-service teachers on how to take advantage of these computing devices that are being used by students nowadays, allowing them to take a much more active role in regards to ICT use.

Including ICT as an institutional policy, corresponds to a variety of strategic and operational elements concerning the integration of ICT in teaching and learning. (van Braak 2003; Frazier & Bailey 2004 in Vanderlinde, et al., 2010). This coincides directly with Universidad de La Sabana's strategic plan to enhance training through ICT in all academic processes throughout the university. The university has done this by way of a digitized university consisting of technological infrastructure (high connectivity, access to networks, new devices and mobile technology). The university has adopted an ICT policy in conjunction with the strategic planning that corresponds to 2006-2015, expanding to 2019. ... ICTs are not the center of the training but without them the professionals

of tomorrow cannot be formed. (Universidad de La Sabana, 2011, p. 6)

Furthermore in another study carried out by Baylor and Ritchie (2002) *What factors facilitate teacher skill, teacher morale, and perceived student learning in technology-using classrooms?*- involving a comprehensive study of 94 classrooms from four states in different geographic regions in the United States. The authors claim that technology alone does not directly change teaching or training, however it is of importance as to "how technology is incorporated into instruction" (p. 7). The authors state that an ICT policy within the institution also describes the overall philosophy of ICT use and explores how ICT will improve teaching and learning.

In a teacher training program at Universidad de Murcia, School of Education in Spain, ICT was also included in the curriculum so as to offer pre-service teachers technical competences in ICT. According to Castañeda, Prendes and Castañeda (2010) in order for a pre-service teacher to be competent in the use of ICT, they should be competent in at least five related areas: education, knowledge of social, ethical and legal issues associated with the use of ICT in teaching, school management skills supported by ICT, ICT for teacher professional development in their area of expertise. These competences are equally important for in-service teachers who have yet to have these ICT competences developed.

Web 2.0 Opportunities

Web 1.0 is contrasted with Web 2.0 in which general users consume, create, and edit content while easily collaborating with other users (McLoughlin & Lee, 2007). Web 2.0 tools provide users with the opportunity to play a more active role of potential author, contributor, editor or specialist, thereby allowing language learners once again opportunities for them to be in charge of their own learning. The most frequently cited advantage of online learning is that it can take place anywhere and at any time, supporting different learning styles and encouraging



independent learning. (Shotlekov, 2008) This alone is a huge advantage to the teaching and learning process, all the while enabling ELLs the opportunity to extend their learning outside of the F2F classroom. This in turn providing these learners with more opportunities to gain new knowledge, test against old knowledge and apply new information in an environment that is conducive to their learning style.

In a study titled, *The virtual forum as an alternative way, to enhance foreign language learning* conducted by Clavijo, Hine & Quintero (2008) between students in Colombia, Canada and Scotland demonstrated that the use of technology encouraged the Colombian students to use the target language (English) in order to communicate for real purposes, enabling these pre-service students to write and share their own stories by way of blogs, theme-based wikis, social forums and online debates to other Canadian and Scottish students of the same age. The researchers also noted that this type of learning community needs to be “nurtured and supported with activities that both encourage learning and motivate participation.” (p. 15). The study also revealed that the pre-service teachers in their attempt to communicate looked for strategies to help them overcome their language difficulties all the while gaining more understanding of the English language.

According to Light and Polin, (2010) some studies use the term “Web 2.0”, others use the term “social computing” (Redecker, 2009) or simply the phrase “digital age,” (Greenhow et al. 2009). Nevertheless, there are authors in the ICT field who talk about new media practices (Ito et al., 2009) but they all seem to be talking about tools ranging from blogs, Facebook and media-sharing sites to platforms such as virtual worlds or virtual learning environments and even Web-based applications like VoiceThread or Google Earth.

Methodology

In this study a questionnaire was employed to collect data. The questionnaire used in this study

was titled, “Use of Web 2.0 tools in the classroom” (Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of two parts including twenty-six items used to measure the type of ICT / Web 2.0 tool used in the classroom as a way to promote English language learning. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of sixteen questions focusing on the demographic situation of the graduates from the Masters in English Language Teaching with an Emphasis in Autonomous Learning Environments, their current teaching situation, type of educational institution, grade level of students, use of technology in the classroom, level of comfort when including ICT as part of the class, use of chat, forums and learning management systems (LMS). The second part consists of ten multiple choice questions divided into nine different categories relating to the different types of categories of Web 2.0 tools as described below:

1. Blogging
2. Games & Quizzes
3. Social Networking
4. Mind Mapping
5. Bookmarking and/or Collaboration Tools
6. Audio / Video Editing Tools
7. Instructional Video
8. Presentation and / or Slideshows
9. Animation and / or Comic Strips

A brief description of each one of the tools mentioned in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B – Glossary.

Data collection and analysis

In this preliminary report, data was collected from multiple sources in order to enhance data triangulation. First, a questionnaire was administered to collect data from teachers regarding the type of ICT / Web 2.0 tool used in the classroom as a way to promote English language learning. Then semi-structured interviews were conducted with alumni from the Master's Program in order to validate the information received from the questionnaire.



The interviews took place after they had filled the out the questionnaires. Only graduate students who had already successfully graduated from the program were selected to participate in the study. Furthermore, different documents were studied, e.g. the philosophy behind the Master's Program, the curriculum, individual thesis of participants as well as their research emphasis and interest. Field notes from the researcher as a participant observer was collected during the study.

The data collection was limited to the teachers who voluntarily participated in the study from both public (42%) and private (58%) educational institutions. The total number of participants in this study was 27. The study employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative approaches by way of using a questionnaire that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions and semi-structured interviews. The research design was chosen in order to accommodate the overall objectives proposed which were addressed in the current study. Furthermore the analysis of qualitative data from a series of open-ended questions along with the semi-structured interviews would further elaborate the findings from the quantitative data.

Participants

The study was conducted at Universidad de La Sabana, a private university located in Chia, Colombia with 27 students, all graduates from the Masters in English Language Teaching with Emphasis in Autonomous Learning Environments. As part of the graduation requirements, students had to conduct an action research project related to strategies to promote autonomous learners. Based on the topics of these completed action research projects, students were selected in order to participate in the study. The students are located in 12 different cities from 9 departments in Colombia varying between public and private institutions (Table 2). Colombia is formed by 32 departments where each department has a governor.

Table 1. Departments where teachers participated

Department	City / Town
Cundinamarca	Bogotá D.C., Chía, Funza, Cajica
Santander	Bucaramanga
Quindío	Armenia
Bolívar	Cartagena
Tolima	Ibague
Huila	La Plata, Neiva
Risaralda	Santuario

Findings and Discussion

There were 15 men and 12 women (mean age 27 years old). All of the teachers who participated in this study use technology in their in English classes and all had computer access at their homes as well as their institutions. The majority of the teachers worked in private institutions (64%). There were 36% of teachers who reported working in higher educational institutions and (32%) working in secondary education. The findings thus far revealed that the teaching context where ICT is used the most was in Secondary and Higher education institutions and a very low percentage of language teachers reported using ICT in primary schools. A minority amount (26%) of teachers use some form of chat programs in their English classes. Nevertheless, 67% of the teachers reported using chat programs to "keep their students informed" with information about the class whereas only 22% used chat programs for "teacher-student communication". The majority (46%) of the students claimed to use programs other than Google Talk (23%), Hotmail (23%) and Yahoo (8%). However programs such as Skype™ and instant messenger software for mobile phones appeared to be the most popular amongst the participants. Due to the fact chats can be used with groups, this alone encourages collaborative learning and team work, while helping to develop group skills. Additionally, using synchronous communication develops the learners' communication skills as well as their socialization skills, bringing everyday activities



such as conversation, negotiating meaning, making choices, greetings, introductions and expression of ideas among others into the ELL classroom.

When asked about using a discussion forum as part of their classrooms, only 39% of the teachers responded positively to using forums as part of their classroom. However 27% use forums in order to look for opinions on a given topic, 20% to promote student-student interaction, 17% to send assignments to students and only 13% used forums as a way to continue classroom discussions. Online discussion forums provide ELL the opportunity to actively participate in class, without fears, anxiety or unnecessary stress. These preliminary results coincide with Cantor's (2009) study that revealed that discussion forums promoted autonomy, increased the sense of responsibility and encouraged students to do their best to communicate more efficiently while taking control of their own learning. These types of tools are especially useful for those shy or timid learners who find themselves intimidated in a face-to-face class. Moreover, participation from the learner is higher than normal and is done in a way that is more thoughtful than if would have taken place in a face-to-face environment, especially in large classes. Furthermore, Cantor (2009) suggested as a result of the study that asynchronous tools and especially the discussion board should be used more since it could be a key mediator between teacher-student and student-student interaction, fostering collaborative work, autonomy and interaction.

Electronic platforms and / or Learning Management Systems (LMS) were used by 52% of the participants, where Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate and EdModo were among the favorites. The majority of the teachers (74%) have received training on using the aforementioned LMSs, and 39% received training directly from the Moodle / Virtual learning environment platform administrator.

The results that were revealed from the second part of the questionnaire "What Web 2.0 tools are

you using in your classroom?"; concerned the most commonly used ICT / Web 2.0 tool in class for English Language Learners are presented in **Table 2**. These results represent how often teachers are using these tools in order to improve English and promote autonomy in their classrooms.

Table 2. Overall percentage of usage

ITEM	%
Blogging	28%
Games & Quizzes	20%
Social Networking	14.4%
Mind Mapping	20%
Bookmarking and/or Collaboration Tools	19.8%
Audio / Video Editing Tools	16.7%
Instructional Video	25%
Presentation and / or Slideshows	16.7%
Animation and / or Comic Strips	25%

According to these results, 22% of the participants use Blogger (www.blogger.com) in their classrooms in order to strengthen written and critical thinking skills. Similarly, an action research project, carried out by Quintero (2008, p. 37) evidenced that students were able to "freely express and say what the world is for them" thereby encouraging and motivating the students to write, where Blogs acted as an alternative writing environment mediated by technology. Only 19% of the participants actively use Voicethread conversations in the clouds (www.voicethread.com) claiming that Voicethread gave students additional opportunities to use English outside of the classroom realistically. Furthermore, it allowed the students to "speak" about the topic of discussion, without having to worry about accuracy, while saving time. Not only does Voicethread provide learners with opportunities to practice their English outside of class, but by using this tool it could be considered as a complement to self-directed learning because learners choose to use this tool outside of the classroom, where they have made a choice in their learning process, where they start to take ownership and learning goes beyond the



school's curriculum. Not to mention that students enjoy using the tool when not in the presence of the teacher, thereby making the learning process much easier. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000), highlight the fact that CALL has the potential to empower learners, which is to give them more control of their learning and in doing so, aid in the development of metacognitive skills and self-regulation. When learners are in charge of their own learning process there is a possibility for learning to take place by including metacognitive strategies. As Cantor (2009) evidenced in her study that students could develop autonomy; the strategies students used while participating in discussion boards, their sense of responsibility, organization of time and effort to effectively communicate, all done without guidance from the program or teacher. For example, informing students regarding the resources available will aid them as well in becoming self-regulated, along with them having knowledge of the lesson objectives as well as prior knowledge on the subject matter.

Regarding the category of Games and Quizzes, 40% of the participants reported using Hot Potatoes (www.hotpot.uvic.ca) as a tool to create interactive tasks, which is a very user friendly program that integrates with other LMS or it could be used separately. Hot Potatoes is not just a testing tool but a self-access learning tool that allows teachers to include feedback prompts to guide students with incorrect responses or add useful information when the answer is correct (Pérez & Sanchez, 2003).

The results reported that 38% of the participants actively used Facebook (www.facebook.com) as a part of their classrooms, 16% use Edmodo and 13% use Voxopop (www.voxopop.com). Participants reported that including social networking tools into the classroom allowed students to see the connection between their English instruction and their real life, thereby motivating students to actively participate in class and promoting autonomy. Recent investigations have pointed out that Facebook can have a positive

effect on the student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationship (Mazer, et al., 2007). Mazer and his colleagues also noted that by accessing a social networking website, students may see similarities with peers and instructor's personal interest which can lead to more comfortable communication and learning outcomes. In this study it was also found that teacher self-disclosure has a positive influence on important variables such as teacher clarity, student participation and affective learning.

In terms of audio / video editing tools, 45% of the participants actively used Audacity (www.audacity.sourceforge.net/?lang=en) audio editor and recorder in order to improve speaking skills, and 26% used Animoto (www.animoto.com) video slide shows as a way to improve speaking and increase autonomy as well. Terantino (2011) claimed that the concept of utilizing videos in the foreign language classroom is not novel by any means. However, the opportunity for student-created videos and social networking provided by YouTube presents a radical new approach to providing linguistic input and encouraging students to engage in the target language. Therefore it is no surprise that in the category of instructional video, 73% of the participants agreed that using YouTube (www.youtube.com) was very much a part of their English classes. Participants expressed that YouTube is used in a variety of ways from following instructions [listening] to signing Karaoke [speaking and pronunciation]. The participants also reported that this tool aided in increasing cultural awareness, due to the fact that it gave their students access to authentic materials, where they had an opportunity to learn about other people, places among others outside of Colombia. As well as increased student motivation by allowing them to show their results in English recordings, thereby making them much more conscious of what they are doing. This in turn is directly related to what can be considered the stage of raising awareness, from which Scharle and Szabó (2000, p. 9) propose three stages in the development of autonomy in learners:



Table 3. Development stages of autonomy

Stage 1	Raising awareness
Stage 2	Changing attitudes
Stage 3	Transferring roles

These learners can be considered as “responsible learners”, since they are accepting the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning and therefore behave accordingly (Scharle & Szabó, 2000, p. 3)

Nevertheless, in the Presentation / Slideshow category, 44% of the participants reported using Prezi (www.prezi.com) in the classroom as a way to explain and or highlight key concepts, pinpoint specific information making the learning process much easier for the English Language Learner (ELL). While 31% of the participants’ revealed that SKYPE (www.skype.com) aided their learners in improving speaking skills tremendously and allowing for real opportunities outside of the classroom to use English.

Regarding animation and comic strips, the majority (52%) of the participants use Voki (www.voki.com) where they reported using this as a way to increase motivation and improve speaking. Furthermore 19% of participants reported using Xtranormal (www.xtranormal.com) as a part of their English classes in order to promote speaking amongst their students, especially for those who are normally shy students and do not have sufficient opportunities in class to speak in English. The participants reported that these learners are much more enthusiastic about using these types of tools because they are starting to realize what they are able to do in English. These particular tools have allowed them to repeat tasks as desired as well as give them the opportunity to see their progress in English. This leads me to believe that teachers have shown initiatives and are carrying out actions in order to engage their learners in new ways of learning mediated by technology.

Conclusions

The preliminary findings revealed that the use of ICT and or Web 2.0 tools varied among the participants. However, the preliminary results also revealed that more and more teachers are using non-traditional ways such as including the use of ICT tools in their classrooms as an opportunity to build autonomy among their English language learners. This corresponds to Williams and Kingsley’s (2004) study claimed that teachers are more likely to incorporate ICT use in their classroom if they see the relevance to language instruction and is convinced that the design of the educational software is compatible with educational goals and the individual learning needs of the students. Furthermore Godwin-Jones (2005) cite specific examples of teachers using the Web 2.0 in the classroom to facilitate language learning; instant messaging tools are being incorporated for text-based interaction with native speakers and downloadable podcasts are being made available to students for listening skills and word recognition.

All of the teachers reported using ICT / Web 2.0 tools on a regular basis in their classrooms and the majority of them reported being extremely comfortable using technology and reported that their students were enthusiastic and excited about the inclusion of ICT tools in their classes. This coincides with Arias (2012) study where pre-service teachers not only improved their ICT skills but also their attitude and perceptions towards using them.

There were few participants using discussion forums in their classes, nevertheless half of the participants reported using platforms such as MOODLE and Blackboard Collaborate as part of delivering their English classes, which corresponds to Blended Learning. However, the results thus far indicated that the majority of the teachers have an extremely positive attitude towards using ICT / Web Based tools in order to aid their students in their overall performance as English Language Learners. Consequently, this positive attitude is a product of the Master’s Program where they are taught how to properly select, use and adapt resources as well as increase their confidence in using ICT with their ELL in accordance to their teaching context.



This is a study that is still in the process of examining the use of ICT / Web 2.0 tools in the classroom among graduate students in the Master's Program in English Language Teaching for Autonomous Learning Environments. Teachers have reported using Web 2.0 tools in a number of ways in their classrooms, thereby resulting in improvements in their language skills, similar to studies conducted by Arias (2012), Cantor (2009), Clavijo, Hine & Quintero (2008) and Quintero (2008) where they reported an improved command of English both orally and written.

Due to the different strategies that were implemented using ICT / Web 2.0 tools, the participants were able to help their students improve their pronunciation, accuracy, fluency, while increasing self-esteem when speaking in English. However the participant-teachers also expressed the need for more training on using ICT / Web 2.0 tools to provide opportunities for ELL in their specific educational institutions. Given that the use of ICT / Web 2.0 tools is starting to become much more common place when teaching a second or foreign language, these preliminary results provide insights as to the role that they have in English language teaching as well as the types of tools that are being used more often in by in-service Colombian teachers. More research is needed in order to determine the effectiveness of these tools as well as to see in the long run in different learning environments; formal, informal, blended or hybrid, face-to-face or virtual. Nevertheless, a further look in order to examine the particular strategies, or purposes for, which in-service teachers are using these tools, as well as to measure the relative performance of their students; after using such tools through said strategies. Additionally, there is still a need to examine how the usage of these tools has impacted the ELL's performance or even explore the integration of technology in the English curriculum.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire Use of Web 2.0 Tools in the classroom

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this questionnaire. This is an independent academic survey conducted by the Department of Foreign Languages Cultures' Masters' Program in English Language Teaching at Universidad de La Sabana in order to discover how teachers use technology in order to enhance the teaching & learning process in English while promoting autonomous learning.

Your participation in this online questionnaire will help us to better understand how you incorporate ICT / Web 2.0 tools in your classrooms to promote autonomous English language learners!
Your participation is entirely voluntary and the questionnaire is completely anonymous. The overall purpose of this questionnaire is to discover the usefulness and potential of online web-based 2.0 tools for foreign language learning.

Do you agree to have the anonymous results of this questionnaire be part of our research on discovering the usefulness and potential of online web-based 2.0 tools in order to promote autonomous English language learners? *

Yes

No

PART I

YOUR STATUS IS

1ST SEMESTER

2ND SEMESTER

3RD SEMESTER

4TH SEMESTER

ALUMNI

1ST YEAR VIRTUAL

2ND YEAR VIRTUAL

Other:

NAME OF INSTITUTION WHERE YOU TEACH

CITY

TYPE OF INSTITUTION

Public

Private

YOUR STUDENTS ARE IN

PK

PRIMARY

SECONDARY

HIGHER EDUCATION

LANGUAGE INSTITUTION

PRIVATE LESSONS

Other:

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE YOU USING A COMPUTER? * *(1- Not comfortable at all) - (5 - Very comfortable)*

Select a value from a range of 1 to 5.

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

DO YOU USE TECHNOLOGY IN YOUR CLASSES? *

Yes | No |

DO USE "CHAT" AS PART OF YOUR CLASS? *

Yes

No

If so please indicate in which situations:

Communication teacher-student

To keep your students informed

To create discussion groups

Other:

WHICH "CHAT" PROGRAM DO YOU USE?

Google Talk



Hotmail

Yahoo

Other:

Have you used “Discussion Forums” as part of your class?

Yes

No

If yes, please indicate in which situations:

Discussion Forums

To send assignment to students

To continue with class discussions

To promote student-student interaction

To communicate with fellow co-workers

To create learning networks

To look for opinions on a given topic

Other:

Have you used electronic platforms in your classes?

(Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate, WebCT, etc.)

Yes

No

If yes, please specify which one and how long you have been using it?

Have you received training on how to use the electronic platforms?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify in which situation: (You may select more than 1 option)

Training provided by a specific teacher in the Master's Program at Universidad de la Sabana

Training provided by the virtual platform administrator

Training provided by other institution

Other:

PART II - WHAT WEB 2.0 TOOLS ARE YOU USING IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

WEB 2.0 TOOLS USED IN YOUR CLASSROOM

[BLOGGING]

More than one option can selected

Audioboo

Blogger

Podomatic

VoiceThread

Vocaroo

Wikispaces

Other:

[GAMES & QUIZZES]

Hot Potatoes

JCLic

Quizlet

Kerproof (Disney)

Other:

[SOCIAL NETWORKING]

99 Chats

Edmodo

Voxopop

WiZiQ

Mahara

Twitter

Facebook

Other:

[MINDMAPPING]

Bubbl.us

Spider Scribe

Xmind

Slatebox

Other:



[BOOKMARKING ONLINE / COLLABORATION]

Delicious
 Sync.in
 Stixy
 Scribblar
 Other:

Screentoaster
 Prezi
 Scratch
 VuVox
 Skype
 Other:

[AUDIO / VIDEO EDITING TOOLS]

Audacity
 Jamendo
 Animoto
 DotSub
 Masher
 Other:

[ANIMATION / COMIC STRIPS]

Voki
 Xtranormal
 Stripgenerator
 Smashgenerator
 SmashMash.tv
 Go!Animate
 Other:

[INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO]

Jing
 YouTube
 Tubechop
 Other:

What ICT / Web 2.0 tool (s) are you using / have you used as part of your research project?

Please specify the tool and the skill to be improved.

[PRESENTATION / SLIDESHOW]

Appendix B.

Glossary

The descriptions below have been taken or extracted from the webpages where the tools are officially hosted.

BLOGGING

Blogger	Web 2.0 blog writing tool (Free) URL: www.blogger.com
Audioboo	An audio-blogging site where you can send updates through the web, phone or the iPhone, Android, Blackberry or Windows app. (Free) URL: http://audioboo.fm/
Voicethread	A web-based tool that allows learners to work collaboratively using multimedia slide shows with voice (conversations) while storing images, documents, videos and audio files (Various Licensing Options) URL: http://voicethread.com/
Wikispaces	It is a social writing platform for education, allowing you to create, edit or contribute to pages. Works great on modern browsers, tablets, and phones An excellent collaborative tool. (Free) URL: http://www.wikispaces.com/



GAMES AND QUIZZES

- Hot Potatoes** Six applications that allows you to create interactive multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises for the World Wide Web (Free)
URL: <http://hotpot.uvic.ca/index.php>
- JClic** A platform that enables you to create and play interactive exercises as well as multimedia activities using Java (Free)
URL: <http://clic.xtec.cat/en/jclic/>
- Quizlet** Create and share flashcards with personalized terms and definitions. Excellent tool for language learners. (Free)
URL: <http://quizlet.com/>

SOCIAL NETWORKING

- Edmodo** A social learning network for teachers, students and schools in a closed environment by way of micro blogging. (Free)
URL: www.edmodo.com
- Voxopop** It is a lot like message boards but voice is used rather than text. Private talk groups can be set up while helping students to develop their speaking skills. (Free)
URL: www.voxopop.com
- Twitter** Twitter is a real-time micro-blogging service that connects millions of people. It's a great way for educators to share information, ideas and experiences. (Free)
URL: www.twitter.com
- Facebook** A social networking service allowing people to connect with friends and family as well as people who live or work around them in real-time. Allowing everyone to stay in touch, share photos, links, videos activities and information with people in their network.
URL: www.facebook.com

MIND MAPPING

- Bubbl.us** A web 2.0 tool where users can either work individually or collaboratively to create mind maps online. (Free)
URL: <https://bubbl.us/>
- Xmind** A software tool used to help learners visually organize their thoughts and ideas. An excellent mind mapping desktop application (Free)
URL: www.xmind.net

BOOKMARKING ONLINE COLLABORATION

- Delicious** A social bookmarking tool online that enables you to save your internet bookmarks online and share them with colleagues, students and friends, allowing you access from any web browser with an internet connection. (Free)
URL: <https://delicious.com/>
- Sync.in** A web-based word processor for people to collaborate in real-time. (Free)
URL: <http://sync.in/>

AUDIO EDITING TOOLS

- Audacity** Audio software that is easy to use, a multi-track audio editor and recorder, enabling you to install sounds to your PC & edit them. Great for the language classroom. (Free)
URL: <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>



Animoto	<p>An easy to use platform in order to create & share videos from uploaded photos and videos in addition to being an online video maker for your uploaded photos, video clips or music.</p> <p>(Free, with 30 second limitation)</p> <p>URL: http://animoto.com/</p>
Masher	<p>An online video creation and sharing application that allows you to create videos using uploaded photos, video clips and music in addition to the library of resources available to each user. (Free)</p> <p>URL: http://www.masher.com/</p>
DotSub	<p>A browser based system for creating and viewing subtitles for videos in multiple languages that can be used in different platforms. Just upload a video and create your own subtitles. (Free)</p> <p>URL: http://dotsub.com/</p>
INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEO	
YouTube	<p>A video-sharing website where people can connect and share originally created videos. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.youtube.com</p>
Tubechop	<p>Allows you to easily cut (chop) any YouTube video and share only the part that you find interesting (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.tubechop.com</p>
Teacher Tube	<p>A video sharing site that is based on YouTube, however catered for educators where you can find resources such as video, audio, documents, photos, groups and blogs. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.teachertube.com</p>
PRESENTATION AND SLIDESHOWS	
Screen Toaster	<p>A web-based screen recorder designed to capture screen activity in real-time and rapidly share. Can be used for tutorials, demos, training and lectures. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.screentoaster.com</p>
Prezi	<p>A cloud-based presentation software tool used to present ideas on a virtual canvas. Users can zoom in, out and around to create flashy looking presentations. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.prezi.com</p>
Scratch	<p>A software application designed for educators to create and share interactive stories, games and animation. (Free)</p> <p>URL: http://www.scratch.mit.edu/</p>
VuVox	<p>An easy to use web-based tool that allows to you instantly allowing you to mix, create and blend your personal media – video, photos and music into interactive stories. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.vuvox.com</p>
ANIMATION AND COMIC STRIPS	
Voki	<p>An educational tool that allows you to create your own talking character (avatar) which can be in the form of historical figures, cartoons, animals, and even yourself. (Free)</p> <p>URL: www.voki.com</p>



Xtranormal	An easy to use web-based tool and desktop application to make movies using virtual characters along with text to speech capabilities. (Free) URL: www.xtranormal.com
Go Animate	A do-in-yourself animated video website, allowing you to easily create videos with animated characters and even cartoons. (Free) URL: www.goanimate.com

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