# USING WEB 2.0 TOOLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

# ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ ВЕБ 2.0 У ВИКЛАДАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ ЯК ІНОЗЕМНОЇ

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*In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in integrating technology into the process of foreign language teaching. The rapid development of the new wave of Information Technology (IT) and the Internet made these technologies really useful in the lives of people. Portable devices, such as smartphones and laptops, changed the field of language teaching. English is being considered as one of the most important foreign languages to speak, so it is understandable that the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) has undergone various improvements in the last decade.*

*The importance of using technology in education is best shown through Web 2.0 technologies. The most useful Web 2.0 technologies include wikis, blogs, social networking sites, video sharing websites, online dictionaries, and nearly everything which is connected to the Internet and has an online nature. These technologies have many advantages that can help people to learn a new language. However, a major problem with these advantages is that they are not being recognised by many teachers. It is a well-known fact that a good teacher continuously develops his or her teaching strategies and adapts to the new methods to provide his or her pupils as much information as possible. Therefore, it would be one of the most important things to integrate Web technologies and electronical devices into the classroom, so pupils can learn in an interesting and self-centred environment. Teachers have to adapt to today's technology-driven world and they cannot be afraid of changes. The Internet has some drawbacks, but it has much more advantages and is able to revolutionise foreign language learning. The aim of this study is to evaluate and validate the importance of Web technologies and the Internet in both teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Based on the findings, teachers need to adapt to the latest methods of foreign language teaching in order to enable their learners to perform better in the English lessons. Nearly all pupils use the Internet to communicate in English with foreign friends or to learn the language either consciously or unconsciously.*

**Key words:** *English language teaching, Web 2.0, technology, Internet, ICT.*

*В останні роки зростає інтерес до інтеграції технологій у процес навчання іноземної мови. Швидкий розвиток нової хвилі інформаційних технологій (ІТ) та Інтернету зробив ці технології дійсно корисними в житті людей. Портативні пристрої, такі як смартфони та ноутбуки, змінили сферу викладання мови. Англійська мова вважається однією з найважливіших іноземних мов, тому цілком зрозуміло, що за останнє десятиліття викладання англійської як іноземної (EFL) зазнало різноманітних удосконалень.*

*Важливість використання технологій в освіті найкраще показано через технології Веб 2.0. Найкорисніші технології Веб 2.0 включають вікі, блоги, сайти соціальних мереж, веб-сайти для обміну відео, онлайн словники та майже все, що підключено до Інтернету та має онлайн характер. Ці технології мають багато переваг, які можуть допомогти людям вивчити нову мову. Однак основною проблемою цих переваг є те, що вони не визнаються багатьма вчителями. Загальновідомо, що хороший учитель постійно вдосконалює свої стратегії навчання та адаптується до нових методів, щоб надати своїм учням якомога більше інформації. Таким чином, було б однією з найважливіших речей інтегрувати Веб-технології та електронні пристрої в клас, щоб учні могли навчатися в цікавому та самоцентричному середовищі. Вчителі повинні адаптуватися до сучасного технологічного світу, і вони не можуть боятися змін. Інтернет має деякі недоліки, але він має набагато більше переваг і здатний зробити революцію у вивченні іноземних мов. Метою цього дослідження є оцінка та підтвердження важливості Веб-технологій та Інтернету як для викладання, так і для вивчення англійської мови як іноземної. Виходячи з висновків, вчителі повинні адаптувати новітні методи до своїх стратегій навчання, щоб учні могли краще навчатися в школі. Майже всі учні використовують Інтернет для вивчення мови, і вони часто використовують англійську мову для спілкування в Інтернеті або мають друзів-іноземців.*

**Ключові слова:** *навчання англійської мови, Веб 2.0, технологія, Інтернет, ІКТ.*

**Introduction and problem statement.** Great changes have been made in all aspects of our lives, including education, thanks to the rapidly emerging and developing information and communication technologies (ICT). The Internet today functions as an inevitable medium for communication and source of information. Classroom environments had also been changed because of the extensive use of digital technologies in education. Technology-enhanced learning environments such as computer laboratories, digital libraries and ICT-equipped classrooms are common parts of schools and universities nowadays.

Technology offers a great amount of advantages both for the learners and the teachers. With recent ICT technologies and Internet access, an extensive amount of multimedia learning materials and information sources are available for every learner at any part of the world. Learning is much easier and faster this way, especially with wireless devices such as smartphones, tablet PCs and MP3 players [1].

Teachers' attitudes and personal beliefs concerning technology have a great influence on the use of computers and other devices in the classroom. This means that using such equipment can function either as a facilitating or an inhibiting factor, depending on the educators' beliefs. Studies show that teachers often encounter unexpected difficulties when they conduct Web-based lessons because of reasons like

computer anxiety, lack of IT skills, inflexible curricula, lack of financial support and insufficient time [7].

Pupils increasingly use technology and they expect teachers to integrate it to their teaching strategies. Learners bring their mobile phones into the classroom, but teachers need to consider different issues to effectively utilize technology in their teaching strategies. Firstly, teachers have to know clearly what will be the outcomes of their lesson, and what are the aims they want to achieve with the use of any kind of technology. Secondly, we have to make sure that using the technology will enhance the learning process. Other important considerations include the effectiveness of the technology, the amount of time and effort required to effectively learn how to handle these digital devices, the technologies' compatibility with the syllabus, etc. With the help of Web 2.0 tools, language learners are able to produce their own online materials, videos, blogs, so they are not just consumers anymore, but also creators, and teachers need to recognize these changes [4].

**Literature background**. Web 2.0 technology alongside with mobile devices can be used in foreign language learning and teaching. As a result, a more learner-centered environment will be established with new opportunities, increasing motivation, and more interaction between the learners. With these technologies, language learners can interact and communicate with each other and with native speakers. Language learning is much more comfortable and autonomous in this way. Web 2.0 technologies include different types of blogs, wikis, social networking websites like Facebook, Twitter and more. Their potential can be seen especially in blended learning environments, where classes meet both online and offline, or in distance learning, where classes meet only online with their teachers [5].

Blogs or weblogs function like an online journal in which any individual can share his or her own thoughts and ideas. They work as interactive websites or open journals, because readers can make comments and discussions about any topic using blogs. Weblogs can be used not only for personal, journalistic or commercial, but for educational purposes too. There are three main types of weblogs that can be used in ESL classrooms: tutor blogs in which teacher give daily tasks to learners, learner blogs where they share their knowledge, and class blogs where an entire class collaborates to discuss ideas [2].

Wikis are used as information or knowledge sources, and as tools for collaborative authoring. The content of a wiki can be edited by the visitors of the website. Everyone can take part in creating and editing the information that can be found in wikis [8]. During group projects pupils are able to build on each other's ideas and thoughts to make a complete piece of writing. Using wikis, a topic can be described or studied based on the knowledge of all language learners.

Interaction between participants is really important because pupils can learn from each other [5].

YouTube has great educational potential because of the fact that audiovisual input is an effective educational tool which can motivate pupils to actively participate in the learning process. Different kind of videos are being used by teachers as an aid for their English courses. Instructional video is just one example, but the pupils can also make their own works. There are some strategies for playing YouTube videos to the pupils in classes. They can take notes, then rewatch the video again and check their notes. Teachers can pause the video and ask the pupils to make predictions what will come next [3]. YouTube is also a motivational tool because pupils want to develop better English speaking and listening skills in order to understand the content of different online videos. In this case, self-directed learning will take place, where the learner is responsible for his or her own learning. Using YouTube in class can create a positive environment and increase creativity [6].

Social networking sites allow users to communicate with individuals and share their ideas, interests, opinions on the web. Using these services, pupils can acquire information in a comfortable way, while their writing skills are also being developed, and of course, the social benefits are also important [9]. Online discussions, chatting, informal communication with friends or native speakers can improve EFL learners' language skills. Teachers of EFL have acknowledged the benefits of social networking, especially in developing writing skills [5].

**Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem.** Throughout history, there were different kinds of methods used by teachers of EFL. The method which is developing now is under the influence of technology. The concept of effective teaching was considerably changed in the last decade, and these rapid changes are producing an undeniable effect both on learners and teachers. First of all, 21st century learners are highly dependent on the Internet and different electronic devices. Teachers need to consider this fact in order to make their lessons more effective and interesting for their learners.

**The purpose of the study.** This research is aimed at emphasizing the importance of Web 2.0 technologies and the Internet in teaching and learning EFL. Web 2.0 technologies are the future for teaching EFL, and through the perspectives of pupils, the advantages of these technologies will be understood clearly. Being able to speak English or any other foreign language is the biggest advantage that a person can have and we, as future teachers, have to focus on making the process of language acquisition faster and easier. With the help of Web 2.0 technologies, this is not an impossible task. A more interactive language learning environment can be created for the learners, in which they are able to use

the Internet to communicate in English and produce content by themselves in the target language.

**Methodology and participants.** The study was conducted in the form of a questionnaire, which was made both in paper and online forms. The questions were addressed to pupils studying in secondary education. First of all, the paper form of the questionnaire was completed in a secondary school in Berehove, in the 7th and 8th classes, by 45 pupils. The study is centred around the use of technology in the EFL classroom, so it was evident to conduct the questionnaire in a secondary school. 24 pupils were from the 7th class and 21 pupils were from the 8th class. The age of the pupils was varying between 12 and 14 years.

An online form of the actual questionnaire was also published on the Internet. The questions were the same as in the paper form of the survey. This part of the research was conducted in order to get information from a wider range of respondents. Altogether, the questionnaire was completed by 48 respondents, who belong to the age group of 14–18 years.

**Discussion and interpretation of the results.** From the first part of the research, we could get the opinions of 45 secondary school pupils aged between 12 and 14 years. The most widely used wireless device was the smartphone among the pupils, nearly all of them use it at home, and 71% use it in school. Furthermore, desktop PCs and laptops were also widely used at home with tablet PCs, but only a few pupils use these devices in school. MP3 players are not so popular as compared to the previous devices. Naturally, the most often used device was the smartphone, while MP3 players were regarded as the least used. New technologies such as tablet PCs or laptops are not used by nearly half of the pupils, even desktop PCs are not as popular as they would have been expected. This may be because of the relatively high prices of these devices.

Most pupils spend less than 3 hours surfing on the Internet on a regular weekday. Only 9% spend more than 4 hours online. 97% of the pupils use the Internet for language learning, so it has a really great educational potential. Pupils are also very actively using social networking sites such as YouTube, Facebook

and Instagram. Moreover, 29% of the pupils have foreign language friends online and nearly all of them use or have used English to communicate on the Internet. Web technologies are also considered capable of language learning by 93% of the respondents.

The most widely used websites or Web technologies were wikis and YouTube, but many pupils use social networking sites and online dictionaries too for their studies. These technologies are being used often or very often by 71% of the pupils. They would like to use laptops, interactive whiteboards and smartphones in the classroom to make the learning process easier. Desktops PCs and overhead projectors were also mentioned.

Many pupils use both Google and printed books when they need to search for information, and they consider both of these options very useful. However, more pupils consider Google much more helpful in this case. The most useful Web technologies are online dictionaries and wikis, while the least useful ones are blogs and social networking sites.

It is also visible that pupils consider the new technologies as a good opportunity for language learning and for making the learning process easier and more interesting. They strongly agree that the technologies have to be used in the classroom more often by the teachers and they should adapt them more carefully. However, pupils do not really agree with the statement that they would not perform so well in the English lessons without the help of the Internet.

Another interesting finding is that pupils are encouraged to use technologies by most of their teachers, but not by all of them. Most of the pupils were also given an online task previously by their teachers, mainly online tests, presentations or projects which had to be done on the Internet. When pupils had to evaluate their own and their teachers' skills in the field of using these new technologies, they gave higher numbers for their own skills (usually 8 or 9) than they gave for their teachers' technological competence (usually 6 or 7).

There are a great number of interesting and important findings that the online form of the research has provided. Based on the opinions of the 48 online
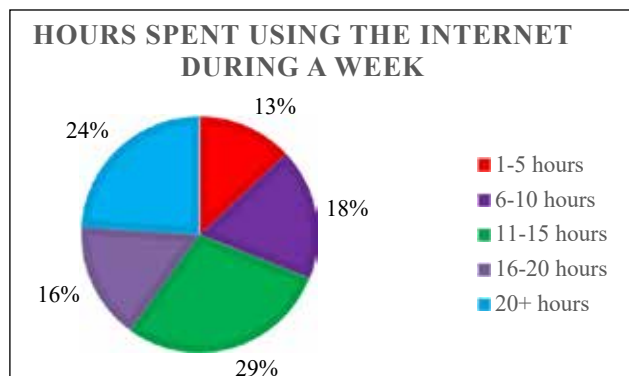
**HOURS SPENT USING THE INTERNET DURING A WEEK**

13%
24%
18%
16%
29%

- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- 20+ hours

Fig. 1. The amount of time spent on the Internet

**HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE WEB TECHNOLOGIES DURING YOUR STUDIES?**

2% 2%
27%
24%
45%
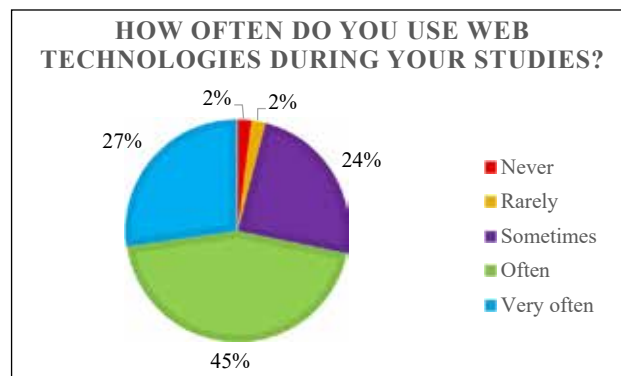
- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very often

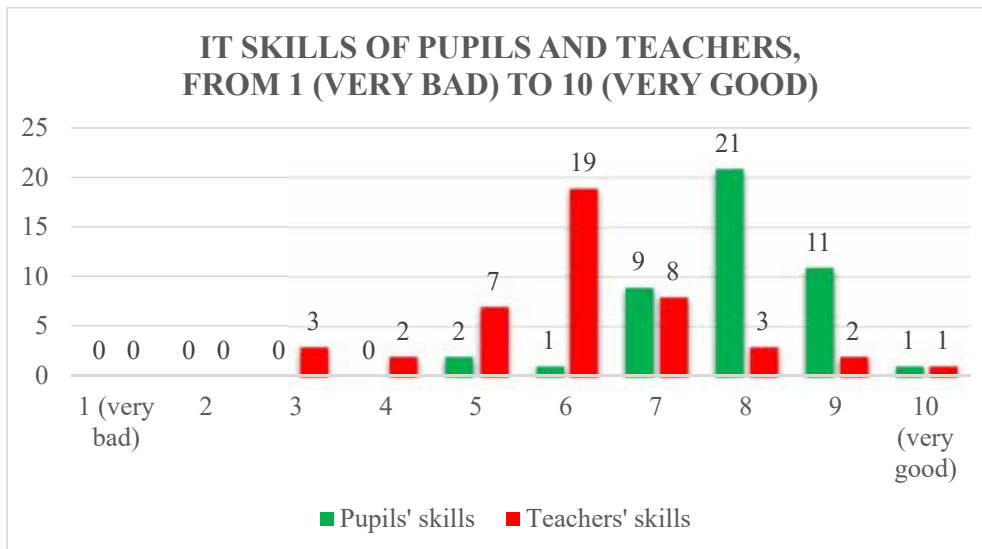Fig. 2. Frequency of using Web technologies

**Fig. 3. Skills required to use new technologies**

respondents, smartphones are being used by every pupil nowadays. These devices are the most widely used both at home and in school. Laptops and desktop PCs are also widely used, mainly at home but sometimes in school too. MP3 players are not being used by most of the pupils. Smartphones are used nearly twice as often as laptops and desktop PCs by the respondents, while Tablet PCs are rarely used.

Participants also spend a lot of hours surfing on the Internet, around 4 hours on average during a regular weekday. If we take the whole week, they spend more than 20 hours using the Internet. Again, it is a very important finding that the Internet is used by the 94% of the online respondents for language learning purposes. Furthermore, with the advancement of technology and the widespread use of portable devices such as smartphones, these numbers are telling us that it is getting easier and easier to be online anywhere and anytime.

It was predictable that Facebook, Instagram and YouTube would be the most popular social networking sites. Respondents also mentioned other websites, mainly ones that are based on sharing pictures. When we consider learning through the Internet, social networking sites are inevitable, as it can be seen. An interesting finding is that the half of the respondent pupils use the English language often in communication through the Internet or they have foreign language friends.

Pupils tend to use more websites combined during their studies, but the main ones are wikis, YouTube and social networking sites. Other language learning websites and applications were mentioned, like Busuu, Memrise and BBC News. The Internet and these websites are being used often or very often by pupils to help them facilitate their learning. Another interesting finding that proves the popularity and importance of the Internet in learning is that 94% of the respondents like to use Google instead of traditional books to search for information. They like to find everything they want quickly and comfortably with many additional information online.

In the classroom, the best devices to use would be laptops, tablet PCs and smartphones. E-readers,
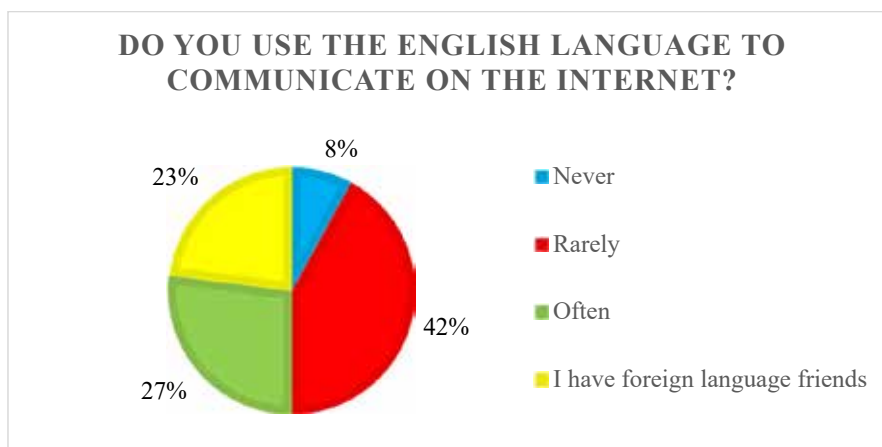


**Fig. 4. Using English to communicate on the Internet**

projectors and interactive whiteboards were also mentioned. It can be seen that portable devices are needed in the classroom to help the pupils, so the technological development is unstoppable and soon these devices will be used in nearly every classroom.

The most useful Web technologies are wikis, online dictionaries and YouTube videos, while blogs were seen as not so useful. Mainly those technologies are seen advantageous that contain the most information about everything and are easy to use. Also, traditional paperback dictionaries were marked as not so useful by most people, and online dictionaries are more widely used and more helpful than traditional ones.

Four out of five teachers usually encourage pupils to use the Internet for their studies. The importance of this digital technology is being recognised by more and more teachers nowadays. Another fact that proves this is that 72% of the respondents were given an online task previously to complete by their teachers. These tasks were mainly online tests, blogging and searching for information.

When we are talking about the skills required to use technologies, pupils seem to be more skillful than their teachers. Most learners marked their teachers' skills not as good as their own. However, the general view is that there is no big difference because teachers can handle the new technologies nearly as good as their pupils nowadays.

It is undeniable that the new technologies make the learning process easier and more interesting. Teachers should also adapt to these new technologies and use them more often during their lessons. The mostly agreed fact was that the Internet provides a good opportunity for language learning, as this was proven several times during the research. Teachers are not really opposed to use new technologies, pupils think that they like to use and they also need to use these new opportunities to make their lessons

more interesting. The statement with the most disagreement was that using technologies in the classroom is not important.

**Conclusions.** Pupils are more and more engaged with portable devices such as smartphones and laptops, and they like to use these digital technologies for learning through the use of Web 2.0 tools and online learning websites. The Internet has an effect on today's educational system, this should be understood by all teachers. There are several devices which are capable of enhancing the learning process and creating a more convenient learning environment for the pupils. The results of this study show the importance and usefulness of Web technologies in the field of language learning.

The widespread use of portable devices, mainly smartphones, both at home and in school should be acknowledged. Pupils spend a considerable amount of time online, using the Internet to help them during their studies. Most pupils consider Google as a more effective way of searching for information than traditional books. Web 2.0 technologies have to be used by the teachers, they are considered as the perfect opportunity for language learning. The Internet also has a great potential in the field of foreign language learning. With the use of wikis and online dictionaries, pupils are able to get information quicker and easier.

Teachers have to integrate the new technologies into their lessons and use them as many times as possible. The teaching process is getting more and more dependent on technology, interactive whiteboards and overhead projectors are necessary teaching aids nowadays. According to pupils, smartphones and laptops would also be helpful to use in the classroom. Furthermore, the usefulness of these technologies is shown through the opposition of paperback and online dictionaries. The latter one
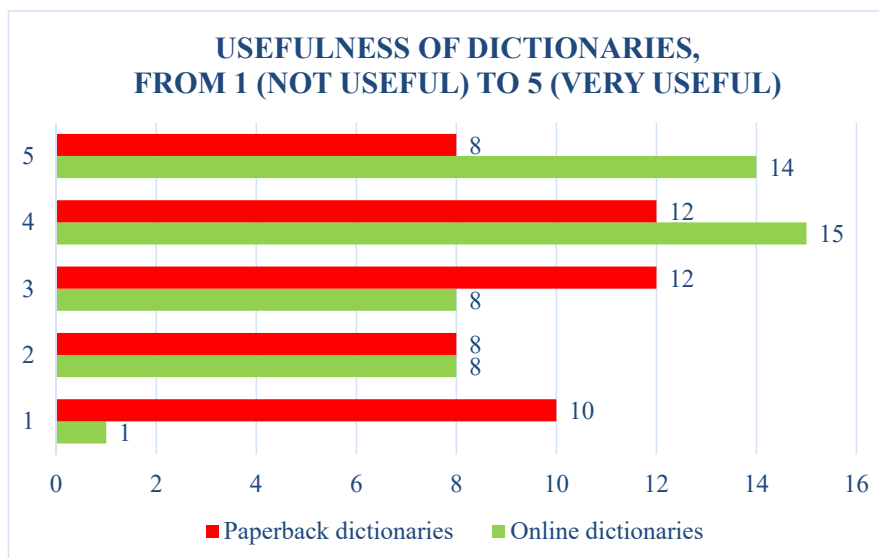


**Fig. 5. Usefulness of online and paperback dictionaries**

is said to be much more convenient and useful, alongside with smartphones.

Another important finding is that teachers' skills are not as developed as pupils' skills in the field of using new technologies. Teachers have to adapt the newest methods into their teaching strategies, so pupils will be able to perform better in school. Nearly all pupils use the Internet for language learning and they often use the English language to communicate on the Internet or have foreign language friends. For this reason, social networking sites also have to be considered useful in language learning, mainly unconsciously.

The findings of this research support the idea of increasing the online nature of language teaching with different Web technologies and programmes. In this way, a pupil-centred environment can be created in order to help learners to acquire the necessary language skills faster. The significance of the Internet in language learning is undoubtedly proved to be an existing phenomenon. Further investigation and experimentation into the best ways of integrating technology into the EFL classroom is strongly recommended. Different language learning software should be explored and used in the classrooms as additions to the traditional teaching methods. Using technology in language teaching and learning is indispensable for teachers and learners too.

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