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A web 2.0 tool for language teaching with flash content

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Abstract

The contemporary advances in technology have been affecting the societies in many different aspects. There is no doubt that one very intensely affected side of social structure is education. There is a growing interest in online classroom settings in second language teaching. Using Web 2.0 tools to have students create their own settings of learning provides several opportunities for the teacher and the learner. In this study, the core objective is to set an online classroom activity to the students and assess their beliefs and approaches towards vocabulary learning through this newly set content.

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1. Introduction

Via the recent developments in technology, websites have become the most popular information and communication tool. People talk, share and socialize in websites. Singhal [1] suggests that World Wide Web and the Internet allow students to become the generators of content instead of the consumers of the content. That property is of great help in terms of developing self confidence among the students.

According to Kong [2], websites are parts of a powerful interaction when compared with the textbooks with their strategies of involvement, imperative structures and modals. Learners have a chance to be involved in their own learning processes as a moderator; however, there is not any chance of that kind in the textbooks. Moreover, Kong [2] also compared textbooks and websites and he stated that websites have got lots of properties like the density of clauses and lexicon, the usage of personal pronouns like "I" and "you" unlike the textbooks that often use "we".

In Küfi&Özgür's study [3], students stated that they enjoyed using the Web 2.0 tools while learning English and they didn't get bored. Also, Tanyeli [4] states that a higher level learning can take place in web assisted learning environments.

As websites are of great value in our age, the aim of this study is to create "wix" which has got flash property for pre-intermediate level (high school) students. While learning languages, students will also be technology masters [5]. We should make our learners "technology masters" who can use it as a part of the communication, the production of the knowledge and the research [5].

Flash content is an effective property that will attract students to join the learning process with its attractive properties. Öner&Gedikoğlu [6] stated that high anxiety level of the students affect their success of English lessons. Due to that reason, an environment with flash content can lessen their anxiety level and upgrade the ratio of success among the students.

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Felix [7] classifies add-on activities as one form of online learning and defines them as an addition to the classroom environment or as a distance education communication device. This website is totally designed to act as an add-on activity to the classroom language teaching.

2. Methodology

2.1. Method

The model was introduced to the learners, and the qualitative research method was supported by the quantitative method and both of them were used to collect data for data analysis.

2.2. Setting and Participants

The research has been conducted in a private English course in Turkey. The participants of this research were pre-intermediate level high school students. The total number of the participants was 29.

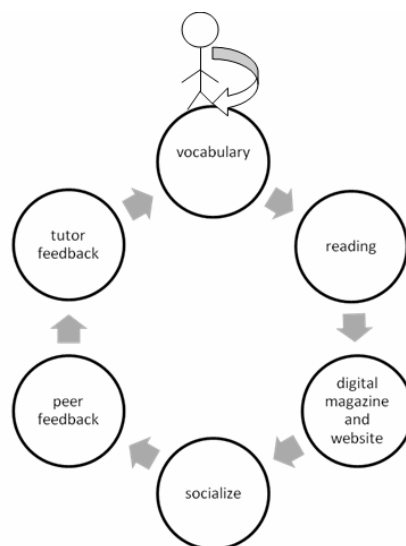
2.3. Instruments

In order to achieve the aims, "www.wix.com" has been used to create flash websites. With this web tool, students have "wix", and they also enrolled in the "Class Wix". The aim of this study is to enhance vocabulary acquisition among the students. That's why they have task topics like "pastime, leisure, music, art, sports etc.", and they are expected to create their own websites with the common word list given in the classroom website according to that task topic. They have a chance to create digital magazines, storybooks, texts; add pictures, music and videos; and share all of these materials with a link in even social softwares like Facebook. In addition, "SPSS 13.0" has been used in order to analyze the data via descriptive statistics.

2.4. Procedure

The study has been conducted in a computer laboratory. 29 participants of the study got acquainted with "wix". 9 of them created "wix", and the rest of them contributed to the study with their responses to the questionnaire.

Fig. 1. The procedure of the study



According to the cycle in "Fig. 1", students achieve the vocabulary in the Class Wix (see Fig. 2) once they have read the passage of the week. When they click on the task (see Fig. 3), they start their way to learning. Weston et al. [8] suggests that we should think about the choice of vocabulary at first while we are preparing for online contexts. Hence, special attention was attached on vocabulary choice.

Fig. 2. The home page of the "Class Wix"

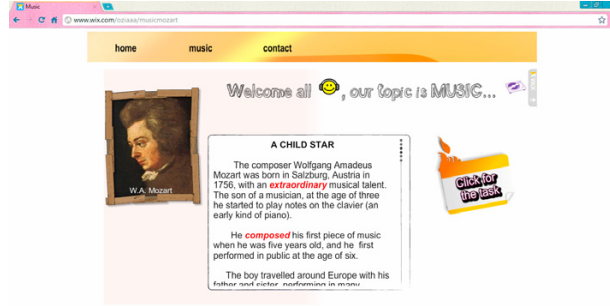
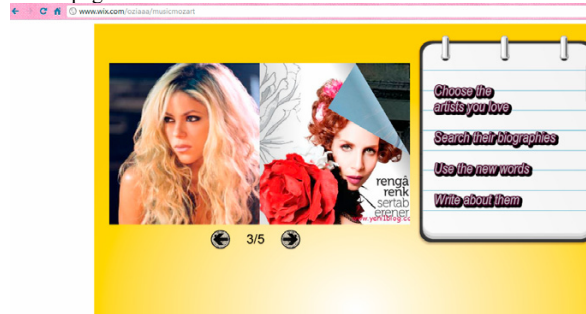


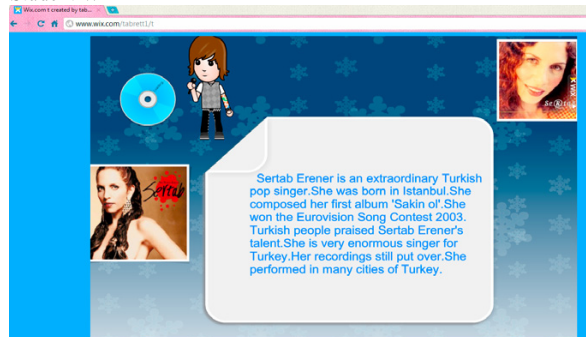
Fig. 3. The screenshot from the task page



From the topic of the week, they searched for the photos, information and unknown words of the week through the Internet. The aim here is to serve for the development of the reading skill. With the information about the topic which they found on the internet, they created their own digital magazines within their own "wix" to illustrate their abilities of writing skill.

Upon creating their websites (see Fig. 4); students shared it with a link or on Facebook with their friends. Once they socialized their own studies on Facebook or with a link, they started to write comments on each others' work. In this way, their writing performance was checked via peer feedback. Lastly, the tutor read all the digital magazines and gave tutor feedback.

Fig. 4. The screenshot from a "Student Wix"



2. 5. Data Analysis and Findings

The data was gathered via a questionnaire about the attitudes of the students to the “wix” and the use of electronic tools in language teaching. According to the responses of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics has been used to analyze frequencies via “SPSS 13.0”. The results are given at Table 1.

Table 1. The frequencies and ratio of the student responses

	Yes (Frequency-Ratio)	No (Frequency-Ratio)
1. I enjoy using the computer for daily purposes.	27(93.1%)	2 (6.9%)
2. I enjoy learning a new language by using a computer.	24(82.8%)	5 (17.2%)
3. I have used a web site to learn English before.	18(62.91%)	11(37.9%)
4. I believe that language teaching via the Internet is beneficial.	27(93.1%)	2 (6.9%)
5. I understand English lessons better when the teacher teaches in a classroom context.	26(89.7)	3(10.3%)
6. I understand English lessons better when it is taught via computer programs.	19(65.5%)	10 (34.5%)
7. I hope to use more computer programs in the English lessons.	17(58.66%)	12 (41.4%)
8. Using a computer in the English lessons confuses me.	5(17.2%)	24 (82.8%)
9. Using the website www.wix.com is beneficial for me to learn English.	27(93.1%)	2 (6.9%)

3. Discussion and Conclusion

As the statistics illustrate, the majority of the students are pleased to integrate their computer use skills with their language learning process. In today’s educational settings face to face teaching has been found necessary to gain learning competence. This belief has also come out in the 5th question given, the 26 of the students out of 29 have responded by saying “YES” when they have been asked to compare both of the teaching techniques. This ratio may have come out as a consequence of the common belief that the students feel safer when they have a teacher to mediate them while they are going through the learning process. Although there is a common belief that face to face teaching has been preferred by traditional classroom settings, the responses that have been gained from the students outweigh this belief with a ratio of 65.5 % to 34.5 %. The two of the questions given to the students were not quite descriptive when the nature of the questions was handled individually.

As pragmatics is concerned, language cannot be isolated from the social culture. Thus, the use of web sites and the internet should be considered as a major part of the current teaching models. As Burns&Richards [9] suggests, advances in technology have provided new opportunities for both traditional forms of campus –based teaching (e.g., Internet based resources) as well as for distance teaching through online learning. The students, more or less, have a notion of the Internet and they are acquainted with many websites such as Facebook or Twitter. Therefore, they will not be troubled when they are expected to create “wix”; even, they will be pleased to integrate their computer skills with their school related tasks. Such a model is expected to be successful with the high school students who enjoy creating their own ways as well as socializing with other people.

4. Implications

There is a crucial argument that needs to be highlighted when we think of classroom based teaching and the Internet based one. Burns&Richards [9] mentions that the classroom is also viewed as a site for social participation structures that can enhance or inhibit the learning opportunity. As for this type of task setting, the teacher can use laboratories as his/her setting to enhance learning for the students. That is, having classroom activities not necessarily mean that the students should only be using the traditional forms of tasks and participate in only assignments in which the learner automatically completes the assigned tasks from the course book.

Learning through the Internet not only presents a form of attraction to the students but also it gives them the chance to express their own preferences, construct their own settings, and present their identities. Thus, setting the Internet based tasks will make the teachers’ job easier by giving them the opportunity to get their students know

better by monitoring their actions , the way they feel and think during the process of creating their own web sites. In other words, the assignment owns a reflective purpose as well.

Burns&Richards [9] makes a summary of the advantages stating what online classroom settings offer by mentioning the responses in the literature (Hammond [10]; Kamhi-Stein [11]; Pachler&Daly [12]).

- . their ‘egalitarian’ nature, allowing space for everyone’s voice
- . the opportunity for teachers and learners to construct an online identity, which may not be possible for them to adopt in face-to-face contexts.
- . exposure for both learners and teachers to ‘more voices’ than they get to hear in a face-to-face environment.
- . the provision of a forum for collaborative learning and reflection, and peer feedback
- . flexibility for learners and teachers to log on in their own time, and read and write at their own pace.
- . time for teachers to compose a considered response

Creating a website of their own may not only give students the chance to express themselves, but also help them to step forward in the process of gaining autonomy. The students will not only be the creators of the web site, but also they will have the role of a feedback provider, which means they need to assess and provide peer feedback for their friends. Thus, the students will be in a circle of creation and correction. They have to be engaged in the task and observe what the others are doing at the same time.

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