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"Teaching 'Writing 2.0' – The Impact of Web 2.0 Technologies on Teaching Writing in the EFL Classroom"

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1 Introduction

By the time this thesis is finished, we are already moving into the second decade of the new millennium. The last 10 years were characterised by many advances in technology and related fields. The amazing progress in Internet and Web technology has led to a change in the people's behaviour in the respective media forms. Being and working 'online' has become a normalised activity in everyday life. Around the turn of the millennium, however, having access to the Internet was still something special, and since modem connections were slow, surfing the Web was quite a time-consuming and also relatively cost-intensive matter. Therefore, the first steps of the average user in the World Wide Web were limited to information retrieval purposes. People who had the necessary technical skills to actually contribute to the information landscape were comparatively scarce, but in a quite powerful position, since they were able to spread content. Thus, in the early days of the Web, the productive activities of the normal user were confined to chatting and leaving comments on website guest books and probably on bulletin boards, but first and foremost, the average Web user was a reader of information provided by more or less authoritative websites.

Around the year 2004 it was officially recognised that the Web was in a phase of change and upheaval. In its shift towards the '2.0 phase' it moved away from providing information to offering services for self-expression and promotion. Emerging applications like weblogs, wikis, Facebook, Youtube or Twitter began to provide frames for content production and authoring. Being users in this Web 2.0 era enables people to become authors for a large Web audience. This is why the Web is claimed to have moved into the period of the so-called Read/Write Web, constituting a massive increase in (user-generated) content. Although the various Web 2.0 applications differ in their focus, popularity and pervasiveness, they share common functions, which afford communication, interaction, co-operation and negotiation. Thereby, the Web does not only link people to content and knowledge, but also enables the establishment of connections with other people. As a result, the Web, as it appears in its '2.0 phase', is often also labelled as the 'Social Web'.

The advances in Web technologies have assigned special importance to written communication and composition abilities. This is why the NCTE (2009: 4) sees "good writing as the quintessential 21st century skill". However, the basic concepts of writing have already begun to change with its appearance on the computer screen and even developed further within the digital environment of the Web 2.0. Due to its multimodal and increasingly image-oriented setup, the medium of the Web calls for new ways of composing, being based on an integration of various modes of meaning-making (i.e. writing, image, speech etc.) in a parallel manner. Language and skill-based models of composition are increasingly challenged, for new technologies necessitate an orientation towards a more semiotic understanding of meaning-making, based on the principles of 'Design' (New London Group 2003). This also involves the identification of new or multiple 'literacies', which integrate the mastery of meaningful and effective production as well as of critical consumption and processing of information in new technological environments.

Since one of the primary aims of schooling has always been to make people literate and, therefore, to prepare them as active and self-determined members of society, it is of major importance that an identification of new literacies goes hand in hand with educational change. New technologies like the Web 2.0 have a range of implications for the foreign language classroom, and as the Web is a medium that is primarily constituted by digital graphic meaning representation, changes should become most apparent in the space which traditionally was assigned to the teaching of writing. After all, writing has not only gained new relevance, it has also undergone a profound change in its social utilisation as well as in its constitutional elements, organisation and appearance in the new medium of the Web. Written communication and composition work differently from how they did 10-15 years ago, and the (foreign) language classrooms are the places, where those changes should be addressed, if teaching wants to stay relevant.

Being an active and enthusiastic user of Web technologies, I have been interested in and fascinated by the social and creative dynamics of the emerging environments of the Web 2.0 since its beginnings. However, during my time at grammar school, as well as at university, technology did not constitute an integral part of educational reality. In fact, although the Web has already evolved into a

major influence on my generation's behaviour in researching, knowledge retrieval and production, text composition as well as in the establishment of social contacts, all of that was clearly separated from the educational sphere. The Internet was mostly identified as something potentially negative and often contrasted with the academic field. Working with information from the Web, which does not stem from explicitly academic websites or scholarly online journals and databases, still seems to be stigmatised, regardless of its relevance and usefulness. Therefore, while writing e-mails, putting handouts onto e-learning platforms, and jazzing up power point presentations with pictures from the Web have become normalised activities, the new writing genres and communicational practices on the Web 2.0 have not raised special interest of the many of the language classrooms at school and linguistic research strands at university.

As a technophile teacher student of English, this long gave me the feeling that new technologies are something which should rather be confined to the private, informal sphere and can or should be ignored in EFL academics and education. However, in summer 2009 a guest seminar with Dr. Norbert Pachler introduced me to the fascinating world of research on new technologies and foreign language teaching. During this course I realised the opportunity to combine my interest in new media and digital environments with the knowledge on EFL teaching and learning I acquired throughout my studies. The fact that the 'real' world digital literacies and the conventional educational literacy concepts still largely remain separated, for me became most obvious in the sphere of written communication and composition. While educational institutions still adhere to teaching concepts designed for the rigid language-based structure of the typical academic writing genres, the multimodal and parallel meaning-construction on weblogs, which constitute the most popular Web writing genre, does not fit into traditional structures and is, therefore, largely ignored. This is why this thesis focuses on the teaching of writing in its relation to Web 2.0 applications and environments.

In order to discuss these issues, the thesis will start out with an overview of how writing was traditionally seen (i.e. in its relation to other skills and the concept of literacy) and will then compare and contrast that to the findings of new and multi-literacies studies by Gunther Kress and the New London Group. Chapter 2 will continue with giving a short overview of existing writing research and various

viewpoints of how writing is learned, together with the respective approaches to teaching. It will put special consideration on an EFL (English as a foreign language) perspective. As an opening to the new technology context it also contains a short discussion of Connectivism, which presents itself as a learning theory for the digital age, and, therefore, also could be influential for EFL teaching.

Chapter 3 will provide a brief summary of the roles that new technologies assume/d in the teaching of foreign languages. It will pay special attention to the characteristics, potentials and affordances that new technologies are claimed to possess, and to the implications for writing that were constituted already by the first encounters with the computer. In chapter 4 the roles that new technologies and the concept of writing assume in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the Austrian Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages will be presented and discussed also in relation to the findings and theories provided by the new literacies studies.

Chapter 5 will be concerned with a definition of the Web 2.0 and a discussion of its characteristics, potentials and affordances for educational uses. It will elaborate in more detail on the characteristics of weblogs, microblogging services, wikis, and real-time collaborative document editors, and their employment in educational settings. Furthermore, it will introduce the genre of Digital Storytelling in its broader sense as Web 2.0 Storytelling and its narrower sense as a specific kind of narrative technique within the new media. Chapter 6 will then go on with a discussion of how new literacies can be defined in Web 2.0 settings, by paying attention to the factors that constitute a new environment for writing, as well as the new writing practices that are developed in the paradigm shift. Finally, it will elaborate on the implications of those changes for teaching in an EFL setting, and on necessary pedagogical adaptations of the current teaching concepts.

Finally, after a short discussion of existing CALL and ICT resource evaluation methods, chapter 7 will establish a list of evaluation criteria for the teaching of 'writing 2.0'. This aims at presenting a broad guideline for determining the relevance and usefulness of different applications for teaching EFL writing in the digital age. These evaluation criteria will then be applied to a predictive evaluation and comparison of the application of weblogs and wikis as tools for the establishment of a 'writing 2.0' competence.

2 Writing Theories

2.1 Defining 'Writing'

Although in general knowledge, and especially in traditional educational settings, it seems to be quite clear what the term 'writing' means, there are actually many different definitions around, depending on the context in which the term occurs. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2005), for example, defines four basic meanings of the term:

- the activity or skill of writing
- a sequence of letters, words, or symbols marked on a surface
- the activity or occupation of composing text for publication
- written work, especially with regard to its style or quality

The *World Encylopedia* (2008) describes writing as a

[p]rocess or result of making a visual record for the purpose of communication by using symbols to represent the sounds or words of a language.

It also specifies that there are different writing systems which fall into different categories, which are:

ideographic (using signs or symbols that represent concepts or ideas directly rather than the sound of words for them); *pictographic* (in which a picture or sign represents the meaning of a word or phrase); *syllabic* (in which signs represent groups of consonants and vowels); and *alphabetic* (in which symbols stand for individual speech sounds or certain combinations of sounds)

Finally, the *Dictionary of World History* (2000) portrays writing in its relation to society as

a system of inscribed signs replacing or recording spoken language. Various writing systems worldwide have developed independently. Writing is closely associated with the appearance of civilization, since in simple societies speech and memory were sufficient and there was no need for writing. It was essential, however, for the administration on which civilized states depend.

These different definitions illustrate that writing is quite a broad and multi-facetted concept, which is influenced by historical as well as cultural aspects. Writing does not carry the same values and expectations in every society, and its significance as well as its organisation has changed over time. In their article *History of Reflection, Theory and Research on Writing* Paul Prior and Karen Lunsford (2008:

82) provide a relatively broad definition of writing, which stresses five basic meanings of the term:

> Writing can signify an artefact, an individual capacity to act, a situated activity, a technology, or a mode of social organization. Writing thus might refer to the inscriptions carved into stone or scratched onto paper; the capacity of a professional novelist or novice student to write texts; exchanges among developers, managers, marketers, and end-users as they compose an instruction manual; the use of print technologies; or the evolving system of genres through which an academic community organizes its work.

Together with the other definitions, this description of writing nicely demonstrates that 'writing' does not only refer to the formation of sentences and texts by stringing letters and punctuation marks together. This means that the concept moves away from seeing writing from a purely language-based point of view. By subsequently arguing that even the old inscriptions mix different modes e.g. visual and tactile, Prior and Lunsford (2008: 82) also make reference to the multimodal character of writing. They acknowledge that in today's age of technology this has been accelerated and expanded by electronic texts, which now can be visually and acoustically animated, resulting in a more film-like than frame-like experience.

This already points towards the major change that writing is experiencing within the rise of new media and technologies. Today other kinds of technologies and environments are used for producing written texts. Apart from writing with pen and paper and typewriters, people need to be able to create electronic texts, which mostly, already by their nature, comprise more than just the creation of strings of letters. Electronic texts and the new dominant medium of the screen, do not only stress matters of design by facilitating the inclusion of multimedia objects, they often also require the handling of knowledge connection and organisation by the integration of hypertext and hypermedia.

With regard to the changes of writing environments, the *Dictionary of World History* mentions the aspect that

> [t]he history of writing has been influenced by technological developments, such as the invention of paper and printing, and by increased literacy due to the expansion of formal education.

Technological developments have, therefore, always had an influence on writing practices. While the production of electronic written texts with the help of word

processors already turned some of the traditional concepts of the writing process upside down by the easy editing options and the included spell checkers, the rise of the Internet and the medium of the World Wide Web have again been unsettling the concept of writing within a change of communication in general. Due to its rise as an important (mass) medium for communication, it has not only changed how people communicate, but also how people think. Since the Web is a medium dominated by written communication, it has also shaped what people expect from writing. Many people, however, see these ongoing changes as a threat to culture and tradition. Especially in educational and academic settings the societal and economical paradigm shift is viewed very critically and new technologies and their implications are, therefore, often ignored within the classroom walls.

As Norbert Pachler (2007: 202) points out in the book chapter on *Technological Advances and Educational Change*, traditional educational structures are increasingly challenged by technological advances. This should also be reflected by the respective curricula. However, although we are moving towards an information society and knowledge economy, there has not been a substantial modification of schooling and education practices since the industrial age, which gave birth to the main concept of information transmission by the teacher and the corresponding retaining and reproduction of the received information by students. Although the value of this concept has already been questioned, it is still often taken as a granted approach to teaching and learning. Unfortunately, by its nature this traditional approach is not able to recognise the implications of technological changes in society. However, as an instructor of a technology and media based writing course, Barbara Vance (2010) phrases very well why it is important to see these implications for education:

> Teachers cannot ignore this communication shift. […] Writing and reading online is different than performing those same tasks on paper. We communicate differently on the Internet, and as more and more people read from their phones and portable e-readers, our understanding of communication will change further still.

To become more concrete, the following discusses Gunther Kress (2006: 19-20), who argues that technology has moved writing into completely new environments, since the medium and the mode of writing are always closely interconnected. For

a long time in history, the book and the page have served as media of dissemination for writing. This, of course, influenced the appearance and the conceptual shape of writing, its structure and organisation from sentences to paragraphs to chapters. At the same time, this logic of the mode of writing influenced the shape and the organisation of books and pages. The relationship between the mode and the medium, therefore, can be described as reciprocal. Now that the screen has emerged as a medium for dissemination, Kress (2004, 2006, 2010a, 2010b) points out that it in contrast to the book, which is shaped by the logic of writing, the screen is shaped by the logic of images, which have gained special importance in the new media age. Writing and image are different in their logic of sequence, since writing traditionally was seen as linear/spatial, based on the assumption of temporality and sequence in time, which relies on the temporal logic of speech. Images, on the other hand, constitute a spatial, simultaneous logic, since all the elements are present at the same time ordered in a 'display'.

According to Kress (2006: 21), the medium of the screen will increasingly reshape the appearance of writing in relation to the logic of the image. This, of course, has implications for the arrangement of knowledge, information and ideas in writing for the medium of the screen. In addition, on the screen the relationship between image and writing as two modes has become so interconnected that writing is "no longer a full carrier of all the meaning, or all types of meaning". Those changes are also visible in modern day print media and text books, the writing and image arrangements of which increasingly resemble the medium of the screen. Kress (2006: 21), therefore, points out that writing in general has undergone a profound change, since it is no longer "*the* part in communicational ensembles" (emphasis in original), and, therefore, it has to be decided, which information is best conveyed in writing and which in image. This in turn triggers changes in grammar and syntax, not only at the level of the sentence, but also at the level of the text and the message that is conveyed.

In his article *A Curriculum for the Future* Kress (2000: 145) stresses that the understanding of texts in a traditional sense and the corresponding older notions of written texts as valued literary objects can still be found in present language teaching curricula, are no longer appropriate for today's student needs. These concepts have also given rise to the traditional differentiation between two kinds of

writing, subsumed under the terms "popular" and "unpopular", which are described by Malcolm (1999: 124-135). Referring to Willinksy (1991: 256), he explains that in popular writing the primary focus is on the social experience and on sharing the written word. Therefore, an emphasis is laid on expression, performance and publication, and not on correctness. The latest developments in its appearance and technologies, therefore, clearly have turned the Web into a medium and platform of popular writing. While unpopular writing, which is usually associated with public schooling, is seen to be controlled by institutions and to be based on principles of exclusion, popular writing is regarded as being controlled by the participants and, therefore, based on the principles of inclusion. Since this dichotomy is still quite deeply rooted in educational systems, the rise of the Internet and particularly the emergence of the Web 2.0 as platform of popular writing are viewed very critically by many educators.

In addition, these quite contrary concepts illustrate that writing functions as a mode of social organisation. In fact, writing has often been used as an instrument of empowerment, since when a language is extended to written mode, a standardised orthography has to be determined. Usually the language of the more powerful group is set as the standard, which also implies that those who are (successful) writers have some power in society. This in turn, is reflected in schooling and especially higher educational institutions, which have promoted 'unpopular' traditional academic literacy skills in order to facilitate the entrance of domains associated with power and prestige. Correspondingly Malcolm (1999: 130) cites Roberts and Street (1995: 29) saying that reading and writing are not so much technical skills as "social practices embedded in power structures".

From an educational point of view, this raises the question, which kind of knowledge is needed for producing a meaningful unit of written text, be it popular or unpopular. In his influential book *Writing* Christopher Tribble (1996: 43) subsumes the most important traditional areas of knowledge as the following:

Figure 1: Areas of knowledge for writing (adapted from Tribble 1996: 43)

- **Content knowledge**:   The writer needs to know about concepts in the subject area.
- **Context knowledge**:   It is important for the writer to know about the context in which the text will be read.
- **Language system knowledge**: The writer needs to know certain aspects of the language system, which are necessary for the completion of the task.
- **Writing process knowledge**: It is useful for the writer to know about the most appropriate way of preparing for a certain writing task.

Referring back to Gunther Kress, in the age of new information technology and media, this list from 1996 seems to have become insufficient. Knowledge of the medium of dissemination is more important than ever, since e.g. the medium of the World Wide Web requires skills that are not directly linked to the production of words and sentences into a coherent text, but to the design of the text as interactive and dynamic Web content. Due to the medium of the screen, visual display has gained an important place in text production. Those new skills are often subsumed under terms like multiliteracies, new media literacies or Web literacies.

Kress (2010a: 6) himself summarises that in today's digital era writing is being affected by four factors:

- **Multimodality of texts:** Writing and image are increasingly combined, and images do not merely serve as decoration or for illustration purposes, but often displace writing where it usually has been dominant.

- **Screens as emerging dominant media**: In many domains books and with them the medium of the page are replaced.
- **Transformation of mode and medium constellations:** As a result of the increasing displacement of books by the screen also the long-established symbiotic constellation of the mode of writing and the medium of the book is displaced by a constellation of the mode of writing and the medium of the screen.
- **Changing social structures and relations:** Digital technologies also trigger changes with regard to structures of authority and gender formation in writing.
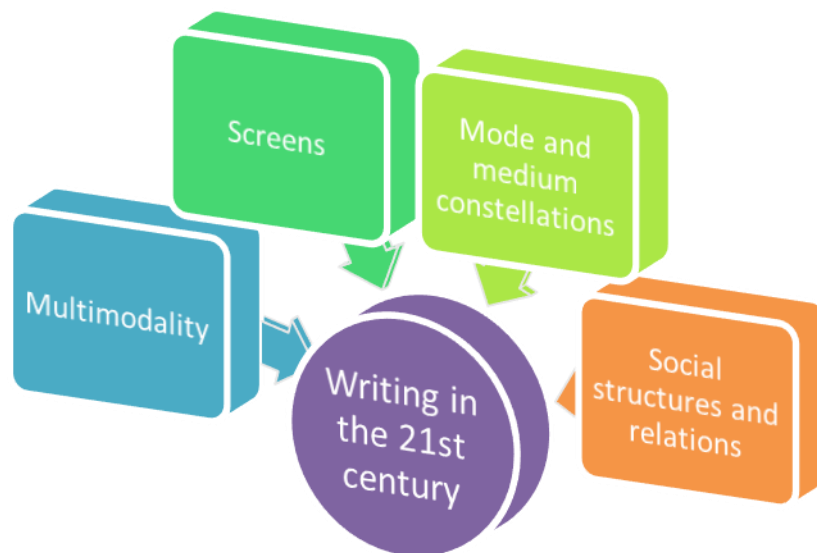

Figure 2: Factors affecting 21st century digital writing (adapted from Kress 2010a: 6)

As a result, reading and writing digital texts have become more demanding. Kress (2010a: 6) describes that

> writing now has to be considered in relation to audience, and in relation to the other modes which may be present in the textual ensemble, and their communicational functions

Therefore, Kress as well as the New London Group (2003: 19) refer to the 'Design' of meaning making as the heart of the concept of 'multiliteracies'. Due to the multimodal nature of digital texts different Design elements (Linguistic, Audio, Spatial, Gestural and Visual) interrelate as different modes of meaning, as can be seen in Figure 3 below:
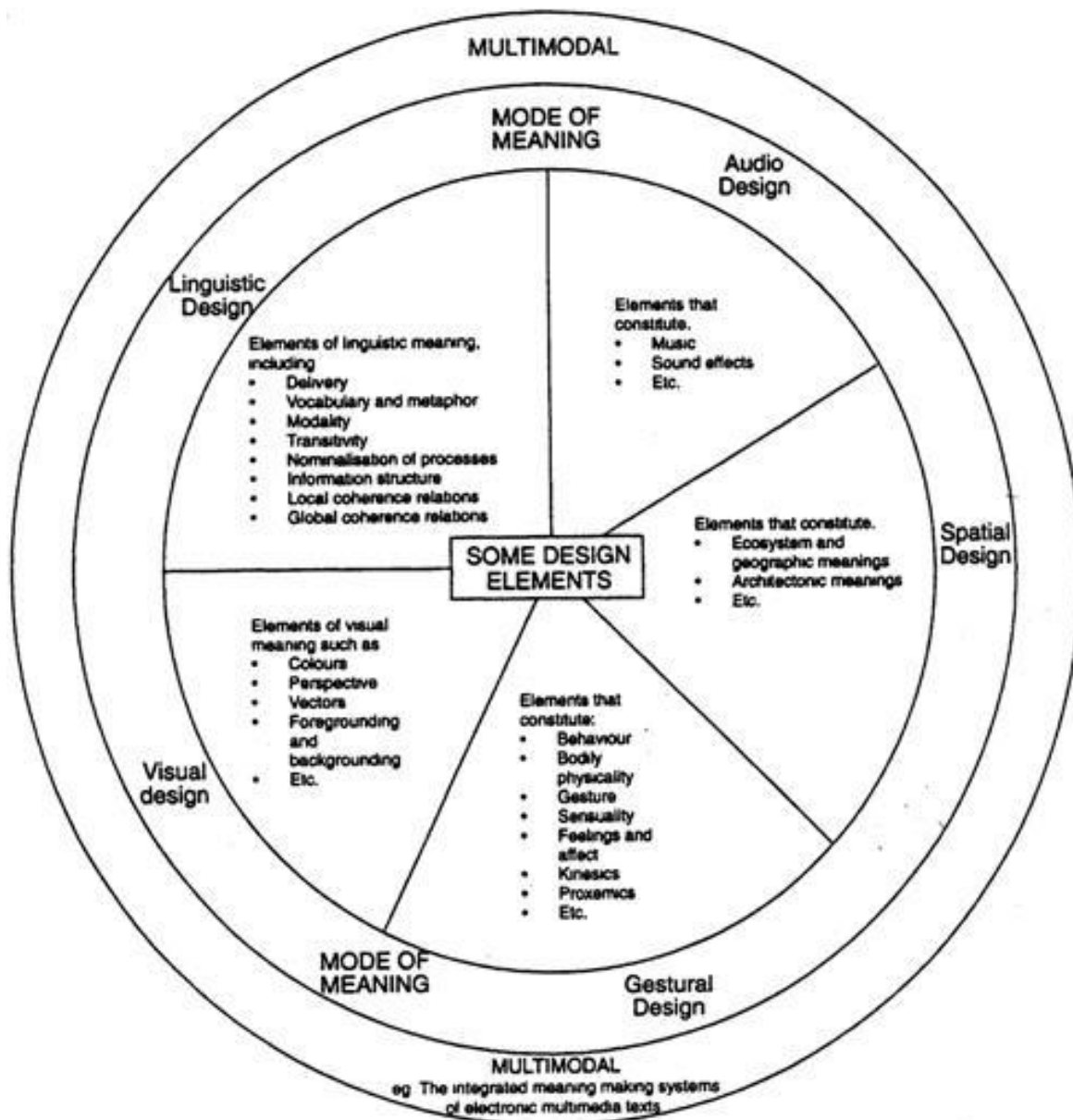
MULTIMODAL

MODE OF MEANING

Audio Design

Linguistic Design

Elements of linguistic meaning, including
• Delivery
• Vocabulary and metaphor
• Modality
• Transitivity
• Nominalisation of processes
• Information structure
• Local coherence relations
• Global coherence relations

Elements that constitute.
• Music
• Sound effects
• Etc.

SOME DESIGN ELEMENTS

Elements that constitute.
• Ecosystem and geographic meanings
• Architectonic meanings
• Etc.

Spatial Design

Elements of visual meaning such as
• Colours
• Perspective
• Vectors
• Foregrounding and backgrounding
• Etc.

Elements that constitute:
• Behaviour
• Bodily physicality
• Gesture
• Sensuality
• Feelings and affect
• Kinesics
• Proxemics
• Etc.

Visual design

MODE OF MEANING

Gestural Design

MULTIMODAL
eg The integrated meaning making systems of electronic multimedia texts

Figure 3: Design elements (New London Group 2003: 26)

Multimodal digital texts are not only regarded as being based on matters of Design in their production, but also in their reception. Whereas writing in the traditional medium of the book due to its page and chapter organisation gives a clear and strict order of how to be read, an organisation based on visual principles in multimodal texts offers various entry points and possibilities to construct the order of reading for oneself. That Design does, therefore, not end with the making of the text, but also continues in the reception, has to be kept in mind when writing a multimodal text.

To sum up, while traditional definitions of writing are mainly language-based, Kress and the New London Group promote a definition which is broader and sign-

based. All features of a text have to be regarded and presented as meaningful. The understanding of writing has, therefore, changed from a linguistic to a semiotic concept, which is shaped by its social use. This is also why Kress (2010b) proposes a "*social* semiotic approach to communication" [emphasis mine]. But what are the social implications of the change in writing?

In fact, digital technologies have not only led to a change in the organisation and elements of writing, but also to a change in written communication and interaction practices. The emergence of new Web writing genres, such as bulletin boards, weblogs or wikis, also change the writing process due to their interactive features. Meaning builds up through various user contributions, and written texts are increasingly created collaboratively. As a result, writing has lost its image as a purely academic and literary form of expression, and turned into a purposeful mode for meaning exchange and collaboration. It protruded into areas which traditionally were only occupied by the mode of speaking. Therefore, it is often argued, often with a reproachful undertone, that in digital environments writing increasingly resembles speaking. Thus, it may also be interesting to briefly point out how the two modes, writing and speaking, are generally seen as similar or different with regard to their characteristics.

2.1.1 Writing vs. Speaking

Traditionally, writing and speaking are both subsumed under the 'productive' skills. But, in how far are they different apart from being two completely dissimilar physical activities? Christopher Tribble (1996: 9) outlines that according to the social functions, speaking serves to build relationships between people, while writing is mainly used for recording things, completing tasks or developing arguments and ideas, which usually does not include a lot of personal interaction. He also points out that the language used naturally is of a different nature. Chafe (1982 cited in Malcolm 1999: 129) relates those language differences to the fact that there are discrepancies between basic processes of speaking and writing, like, for instance the speed of production, which is ten times slower in writing than in speaking. As a result, speech consists of smaller idea units and includes spurts and pauses, while devices employed in writing lead to the integration of more information per idea unit by the

> moulding of succession of ideas into an integrated whole, such as nominalisations, participles, attributive adjectives, sequences of prepositional phrases and various kinds of clauses. (Malcolm 1999: 129)

However, it would certainly be too simple to state that written language is of a well-planned nature and of formal and neutral tone, whereas spoken language is unplanned, informal and personal. Also Malcolm (1999: 129) points out that it may not be desirable to differentiate between "impersonal writing" and "interactive speech", since oral and literate modes are often characterised by overlap and interaction. In this respect, Tribble (1996: 16) suggests to see the distinctive features of spoken and written language along a continuum which ranges from "most typically spoken" to "most typically written".

This view is especially interesting when thinking of written communication via the Web. Although, for instance, writing in synchronous environments like chats, adopts many features of the spoken language, it is not possible to declare that written texts are just spoken texts written down. Also Gunther Kress (2006: 31) argues that speech and writing are deeply different and, therefore, criticises that speech and writing are still treated as "much the same" in linguistics and sociolinguistics in order to make theoretical abstractions about language in general. Therefore, since for him the two are clearly distinct modes, he does not share the viewpoint of speech and writing as easily distinguishable modes, existing on a continuum. He makes the interesting point of questioning the abstract concept of language as an umbrella term for what happens both in writing and in speech, and suggests investigating speech and its regularities on the one hand, and writing and its regularities on the other hand, instead. (Kress 2006: 32)

Kress thereby lays an emphasis on the materiality of meaning making with regard to the effects of temporality and space, and, correspondingly, defines the difference between speech and writing as "one exists as the materiality of sound in time, and the other as the materiality of graphic marks in two-dimensional space" (2006: 32). As Malcolm (1999: 122) points out when he talks about differences between oral and literate cultures, this fact may influence thought patterns, like literate ones favouring abstraction over particularism. He also cites Mühlhäusler (1996: 213) who claims that with the introduction of writing societal views of time change from cyclic concepts to the metaphor of time as an arrow.

Kress (2006: 33) also argues that writing and speech carry different social values within different cultures and societies, which in turn also influences the relationship between those two resources. While spoken language is more liable to ongoing changes, written language has a more stable nature. This is why societies often regard written language as a link to their past. Therefore, since people tend to identify with their valued past with written language, changes in that language are often seen as a threat to culture, even if they are only of an orthographical nature (Malcolm 1999: 123). Connected to this, in many literate societies, the written word tends to carry authority over the spoken word. A written agreement is usually seen as being more trustworthy and reliable than a spoken one. (Malcolm 1999: 129)

However, Malcolm (1999: 128) also explains that changes in a society, into which writing is introduced, are not only cultural. The linguistic system is changed as well, since devices are needed to overcome the absence of situational and paralinguistic cues. Relating this fact to the teaching context, Tribble (1996: 16) argues that it is not enough to make students aware of the different social roles that are connected to speaking or writing, but that it is important for them to understand how the different types of language are constructed. Writing has to compensate the loss of non-verbal aspects that are used for meaning making in a spoken conversation, like rhythm, phrasing or pauses. In addition, it has to make up for the non-existence of paralinguistic features, like the volume of speaking, facial expressions or physical gestures, all of which add meaning to what is said.

As regards traditional writing environments, punctuation and typographic features like bold, underlined or italicised text function as means to represent the non-verbal characteristics mentioned above. Particularly in Web 2.0 settings, written language has changed and expanded to account for such non-verbal and paralinguistic features by e.g. adding emoticons. In addition, the medium of the screen and the Web technologies have created new paralinguistic or rather 'paratextual' features, like the inclusion of (audio)visual (hyper)media and hypertext. A lot of meaning is added to the content by the arrangement of such non-verbal elements on the screen. Therefore, matters of design and organisation of both image and written language increasingly contribute to the way a text is consumed by the reader.

2.1.2 Writing as a Skill and the Concept of 'Literacy'

A view of writing and speaking as separate productive skills also implies an understanding of reading and listening as the opposed and corresponding receptive skills. A mere focus on writing, while contrasting it to speaking and referring to reading separately, finds its basis and justification in the so-called four-skills model of language teaching and learning, which differentiates between the language skills **reading**, **writing**, **speaking** and **listening**. Those are traditionally presented as the four basic skills that have to be practised in a certain order and in fairly equal amounts in the foreign language classroom. This four-skills approach is also introduced in the teacher education programme at the department of English at the University of Vienna, which, on the one hand, is clearly connected to the fact that the revised Austrian Curriculum for Foreign Languages differentiates between the four skills in its guidelines for language competence in the lower and upper secondary schools. On the other hand, this can be assigned to the major influence of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), according to which common language syllabuses, curricula and examinations in all member states of the European Union are adapted. The CEFR is based on a communicative, action-oriented and skill-based approach to language learning, and has been exerting a major influence on the revised Austrian curricula and the development of a standardised four-skills school leaving exam.

However, the traditional differentiation between four isolated skills has already been subject to much criticism. Although it is acknowledged that this model is still widely used for organising curricular and material design, Kumaravedivelu (1994: 38) points out that this happens "more for logistical than for logical reasons", since there is only little empirical and theoretical justification. He argues that separating the four different skills in teaching contradicts the parallel and interactive nature of language, stressing that language skills are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. This is backed up by classroom research conducted by Selinker and Tomlin in 1986, which showed that although working with material intended for moving gradually from one skill to the other, teachers were confronted with a parallel integration, meaning that learners do not focus on one skill at a time in predictable ways.

Kumaravadivelu (1994: 39) argues that the discontent with this "remnant of the audiolingual era" has led to attempts of grouping the skills into active and passive, and later on into productive and receptive skills. Widdowson (1984: 57) also expresses his doubts about this "convenient" way of describing the four language skills, by criticising those classification labels, which he represents in the following way:

	Productive/active	Receptive/passive
Aural medium	Speaking	Listening
Visual medium	Writing	Reading

Figure 4: Four skills classification (adapted from Widdowson 1984: 57)

He argues that the labels **aural**, **visual**, **productive/active** and **receptive/passive** can be misleading in the sense that they may refer to the way language is manifested, but not to the way it functions in communication. Also Savignon (1990: 207 cited in Kumaravadivelu 1994: 39) points out that "lost in this encode/decode, message-sending representation is the collaborative nature of meaning making".

While the separation of skills has already been subject to criticism in earlier times, in our days, Kress (2010a: 6) notes that especially the distinction between writing and reading is challenged in the environment of digital technologies. So do Gillen and Barton (2010: 4), who argue that factors, like the rapid evolution of digital technologies, the pervasiveness of multimodality in digital environments and the corresponding new practices of communication and interaction, are not compatible with a highly separable distinction between writing and reading. In fact, the notions of writing and reading are closely interconnected, since one cannot exist without the other. Therefore, also the focus on writing in this thesis shall not be seen as the attempt to separate the concept neatly from other skills. It should be viewed as a term that comprises everything which is needed for the production of written texts for a variety of different media of dissemination. When those change, also the required skills for writing change. After all, the ability to write and read are seen as the essential requirements for a person successfully taking part in everyday life, and, therefore, for being an active citizen. This is what is also comprised by the term 'literacy'. To refer to literacy when it comes to the blurred area of text-making and text-receiving is, therefore, increasingly favoured over the reference to separate skills.

However, the definitions of literacy clearly have changed over time. Traditionally, only the ability to read and to write was subsumed under the concept of literacy, since in earlier times those skills were the necessary requirements for actively taking part in the public life. Therefore, in its most narrow definition, being literate in a language means to be able to read and write. Nevertheless, already at the beginning of the 1990s, when probably no one could imagine the massive present-day omnipresence of new media and technologies, it was already stated that in the "technological culture" literacy does not merely consist of writing and reading in their traditional meaning (McKay 1993: 21). As the term 'writing', also the meaning of the term 'literacy' "depends greatly on who is defining the term and what their purpose is" (McKay 1993: 23).

McKay emphasises that in the Information Age, new media and technology clearly has lead to the evolution of new requirements for literacy. Also Gunther Kress argues that since today writing and reading are increasingly moving from page to screen, a big emphasis is also put on the relations between images and print text. For him literacy has, therefore, become a matter of multimedia design. Unsworth (2001: 8-9) agrees on this fact, stressing that it is no longer possible to speak of literacy, but that it is necessary to talk about multiliteracies, since the notion of 'being literate' today includes of a plurality of literacies, which are multidimensional and multimodal. However, he also mentions that writing has always been a multimodal practice, since written texts include factors like script or typeface, size, way of arrangement or quality of material (Unsworth 2001: 9). Therefore, the production as well as the reception of writing is defined as multimodal practice, which in our times has been expanded by computer technology and the new dynamic and interactive textual and visual properties it created.

Both Kress (2006: 1) and McKay (1993: 23-25) point out that literacy and definitions of it are related to a variety of factors, like social, technological and economic ones. The fact that literacy and together with literacy also writing, do not only consist of language knowledge, but also of social practices and conventions, of course, also has implications for teaching English as a foreign or second language, since

> [u]nless second language learners master such convention, they will not have access to the social and economic opportunities that familiarity with these conventions may bring. (McKay 1993: 24)

What is involved in the concept of literacy is, therefore, also related to cultural conventions. A discussion of literacy, therefore, ought to take into account what a culture makes available as means for making meaning (i.e. speech, writing, image, music, gesture etc.) and what it provides as means for distributing messages (i.e. book, computer-screen, magazine, video, chat etc.), summarised by Kress (2006: 22) under "representational modes" and "media of dissemination". When those modes or the media change the concept and requirements of literacy changes with them. Since today's Information Age society is moving into a new era of (electronic) communication, cultural notions of reading and writing, as well as the relations of language to thinking, imagination and to creativity have to be challenged. Therefore, Kress (2006: 22) indicates that the concept of literacy has to be rethought and reflected on, and most probably has to be expanded to a plurality of literacy practices or 'literacies'.

2.1.3 New Literacies/Multiliteracies

The spell check of word-processor still puts a red line under the plural form 'literacies' and thereby signalises that this word is traditionally not used in its plural form. However as, for instance, Norbert Pachler (2007: 210-211) points out, a singular notion of literacy is no longer adequate in a technological world, which needs to be read and interpreted in new and different ways. New technologies are embedded in everyday life, and the requirement of constantly dealing with them in order to function as an active citizen calls for a re-conceptualisation towards new and multiple or multi- or digital literacies. What kinds of literacies these plural forms comprise are listed by Pachler (2007: 211) as "information, critical, critical media, electronic, computer, computer-mediated communication, technical and visual literacy".

The requirement of new and multiple literacy forms is connected to the changing nature of texts published in electronic media. Those become more 'open' and more complex, and due to their multimodality they increasingly demand a more semiotic, sign-based understanding of communication. Therefore, Pachler (2007: 211-212) emphasises that visual literacy gains of particular relevance in the concept of new literacies. Unlike verbal literacy, which is characterised by letters and words, visual literacy includes components, like shape, direction, texture, dimensions, motion etc., and, of course, the ability to combine those elements to a

visual image. Visual literacy is regarded as an important key concept, since it is vital for the production as well as the reception of multimodal texts.

A similar view is also taken up by Ann Watts Pailliotet (2000), who due to the new digital media forms refers to our age as a "post-typographic" one, and accordingly defines new literacies as "reading and writing across varied symbol systems". Thereby she corresponds with other definitions of new literacies by acknowledging the co-existence of a variety of semiotic modes, which makes literacies "highly complex, synthetic, and synergetic in nature". Taking up the traditional writing/reading concept in her definition, she further elaborates on the meaning of 'reading' and 'writing', the former meaning the active construction of meanings "through varied interactions with diverse media", and latter constituting the generation of text "through multiple media forms and literacy processes". (Pailliotet 2000)

The New London Group, which was founded in 1994, was among the first to be concerned with this multiplicity of media forms and literacy processes in their elaboration on the concept of 'multiliteracies' and its pedagogical implications. At the heart of this understanding of literacies is the already above mentioned concept of Design, which includes a broader view of semiotic modes, and thereby substitutes the traditional language-based view on writing or 'authoring'. Hence, the notion of Desgin is already 'multi' by itself, since unlike the traditional purely linguistic meaning of 'writing', it includes all different apt resources (modes, genres, syntax, font, layout etc.), appropriate for the content and the audience of a specific text (Gillen&Barton 2010: 7). Since multimodal texts also engage the reader in designing activities, one important aspect of the new or multiliteracies concept is the more active view of reading and writing.

Reading and writing practices are also influenced by the appearance of multimodal texts on the medium of the screen. The resulting phenomenon of hypertextuality moved reading and writing away from the hierarchical structure of books to more lateral structures in information creation and retrieval. Kress argues that this, on the other hand, needs a form of "attention management", which was not that vital for handling traditional forms of media. Connected to this is also what Norbert Pachler (2007: 211) calls "information and critical media literacy". People are increasingly confronted with an information overload in digital environments, and,

therefore, need the ability to critically scan, analyse and interpret information sources. Also Gillen and Barton (2010:4) point out that human judgement and criticality are important factors in the concept of multiliteracies.

This is again very much related to the concept of Design, which recognises that in communication people have to make a lot of choices in the selection of suitable semiotic modes (i.e writing, speech, image, music etc.). Choosing presupposes the critical engagement with how the material is culturally shaped, since all of the Designs we work with are already loaded with cultural-specific meaning. By working with the material we reshape it and thereby create or design new meaning (Kress 2000: 142). The multiliteracies concept thereby strongly builds on the notion of Design, which on the other hand, is much influenced by work on multimodality of texts, as well as the constellations of modes, and the corresponding 'social semiotic' approach to communication by Gunther Kress, which unites new technological developments and their influence on "human creativity in shaping outcomes" (Gillen&Barton 2010: 8).

However, literacy requirements did not only change from a semiotic point of view, but also from a socio-cultural. New digital literacies can as well be viewed as a new set of social practices, which have changed due to the emergence of globalised, technologised and market-oriented information and knowledge societies. Gillen and Barton (2010: 9) indicate that out of these societal changes new ways emerged of how people write, acquire and evaluate knowledge and communicate. This has changed peoples' social activities in their working, public as well as personal lives, and the literacies that developed out of changing priorities and values have been described as being of a more collaborative, less individuated, more distributed and a participatory nature (Lankshear&Knobel 2006: 25). Therefore, Gillen and Barton (2010: 9) also propose a definition of digital literacies as "changing practices through which people make traceable meanings using digital technologies".

Educators could now, of course, ask why all of that should be of any special importance or relevance to EFL teaching. Since learning a new language is highly oriented towards purely linguistic aspects, one could argue that learning about new literacies is something that should be confined to the L1 classroom. However, as Kress (2000: 144) argues in his article *Curriculum for the Future*, teaching

about or according to the principles of Design and the new forms of communication is essential for the "understanding of life in a consumer (i.e. market dominated) society". For him the English language classroom is the only place, where those issues can be tackled in an appropriate way. After all, due to new media and technologies principles of representation and communication of texts change; two important issues of the language classroom, which are inherently not only essential for the respective L1, but for any language which is learned and taught with the aim of successful communication and reception. The new ways of meaning representation and consumption basically concern every language that is used for communicating via a range of different media and, therefore, should not be strictly confined to the L1 classroom. Design should be taken into account in the EFL (English as a foreign language) classroom in favour of a more holistic approach to teaching and learning, which corresponds to the needs of future generations.

2.2 The Role of EFL Writing

Since they concern graphic representations of texts, the new and emerging concepts of Design and communication are best located in what was traditionally subsumed under the teaching of writing. However, those principles have not really found their way into EFL so far. This raises the interest in what has been claimed to be of relevance concerning the role of writing in EFL teaching and learning, also in connection with new media and technologies such as the Web 2.0. In her article *Writing in a foreign language: teaching and learning* O'Brien (2004: 1) points out that the literature of second language (SL) writing clearly dominates compared with literature about foreign language (FL) writing. In order to explain this lack of research on foreign language writing, she refers to Reichelt (1999, 2001) who explains this fact with the identification of a unified sense of purpose within the curriculum of the foreign language. She explains that this is connected to the fact that foreign language students are usually not required to write in the target language outside the classroom, and also to the unclear role foreign language writing assumes in the classroom.

However, as also O'Brien (2004: 2) argues, the emergence of new technologies may trigger a shift from the traditional foreign language teaching focus on linguistic accuracy, to a new understanding, created by the many opportunities of

communicative and interactive writing, which are also important characteristics of the Web 2.0 concept. As have the Internet and the World Wide Web in general, Web 2.0 services and applications, like social networking platforms, have gained an important place in people's everyday life. Reichelt's above mentioned statement that foreign language students are usually not required to write in English outside the classroom does probably not hold in those days of global networking with English as the lingua franca, and the written interaction in the Web as a highly important means of establishing international contacts.

Correspondingly, in his comprehensive report *English Next* David Graddol (2006: Introduction) points out that English has become a near-universal basic skill, which in most European countries is already taught at primary school level. However, he also indicates that although the majority of Internet users are of English mother tongue, the proportion of users with English as L1 has decreased quite rapidly. This conclusion is drawn from data analyses by *Global Reach* and *Miniwatts International* between 2000 and 2005, as shown in Figure 5 and Figure 6 below.
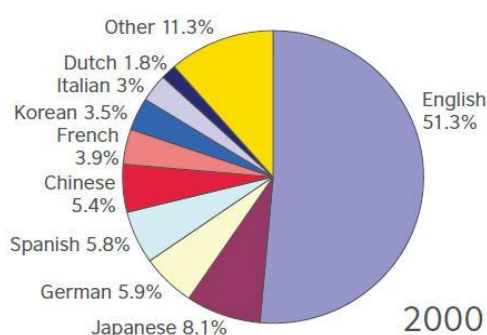
Figure 5: Demography of Internet users by their L1 in the year 2000 (Graddol 2006: 44)
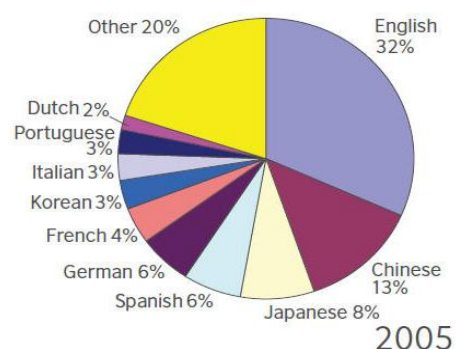
Figure 6: Demography of Internet users in the year 2005 (Graddol 2006: 44)

The same holds true for the proportion of English materials and resources on the Web. Those changes can be related to the fact that in the beginning, the Internet set out as an anglophone development. Since software nowadays supports many more languages and scripts, the proportions of non-English speaking Internet users have increased. However, a 2005 analysis by Byte Level Research (cited in Graddol 2006: 44) concludes that the growing importance of languages like Chinese, Russian, Spanish or Portuguese does not imply that English is becoming less important.

After all, those languages are argued to be mostly used for informal and local communication. Therefore, although in its improving setup the Internet increasingly

also caters local interests, the most essential uses for business and commerce are still predominantly in English. Graddol (2006: 10-11) argues that the English language has become a basic necessity for global communication, but that it is no longer in control of the anglophone countries. The new media and news spreading forms also serve as an example. Although the number of news channels in all kinds of world languages increase, "English […] remains the preferred language for global reach" (2006: 46). However, in order to achieve global reach, people also need to be able to use the Web as an important and democratic medium for international connections. As a result, together with the knowledge of how to use new technologies, English as a language of international reach enables the expression of a greater diversity of viewpoints from many different backgrounds (Graddol 2006: 48).

Hence, the ability to manage written communication effectively gives the EFL learners the opportunity to access roles in an international community, which mainly uses English for trades, business and other types of contact. This is what gives the ability to write effectively in English the notion of power, and the possibility of being heard and participating in the global community. Tribble (1996: 12), for instance, indicates that someone who does not have the opportunity to learn how to write, will not be able to take over certain social roles, and will especially fail in taking on roles in society which in industrialised countries are associated with power and prestige. Being only a reader, as opposed to being a reader and a writer, therefore, has an effect on a person's position in society (Tribble 1996: 11). This argument is especially interesting, when thinking about the shift in the medium of the Web from 'Read only' into the "Read/Write" Web during the last few years (Richardson 2009: 1). Today's Web technologies basically enable everyone to become a writer, and those who manage to write successfully are can operate in medium with a wide audience.

However, Tribble also notes that (good) writing is a language skill which is difficult to acquire and that while everybody learns to speak at least one language fluently, many people have problems to write with confidence. He argues that since people do not learn to write by just being exposed to written language, writing needs some kind of instruction (1996: 11). While this is a valid point Tribble makes about first language acquisition, it certainly has to be added that in a foreign and second

language context it is widely acknowledged that every 'skill' or competence and, therefore, also speaking needs some formal instruction to be mastered effectively. However, in this respect the difference between foreign and second language learning and teaching contexts is of fundamental relevance. While the term 'English as a second language' (ESL) implies that the learning and teaching takes place in a setting in which the learners are surrounded by the target language, 'English as a foreign language' (EFL) specifies that English is taught in a context where English does not play a substantial role in the learners' everyday lives, such as it is the case in Austria.[1]

This, of course, has had an effect on the role of writing in the classroom, as well as on the different second/foreign language learning theories and their corresponding approaches and methods. While the very traditional methods stemming from the teaching of Latin and Old Greek, like the grammar translation method, were very much based on writing (though not on its creative aspect), later approaches, like the Audilingual-Method with its drills deriving from Behaviourism, have a strong focus on the oral production of language. The approach of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed in the 1980s, but due to its very broad guidelines still is regarded as relevant, and hence proves influential for EFL teaching and teacher education, also in Austria. For the primary emphasis of CLT is put on communication and interaction as both the means and the goals of language learning, the focus on speaking as the traditional mode of communication prevails. However, with the emergence of new technologies and the Web 2.0, which defines itself through collaboration, communication and interaction, writing as a skill has gained increasing importance for domains that long have primarily been assigned to speaking.

Since this thesis will concentrate on the teaching situation in Austria, it has a focus on the teaching in an EFL context. However, the question which is still left open is: In how far is the teaching of writing in its traditional language-based definition different when being confronted with native speakers of a language than with foreign language learners? The most obvious difference, which also Christopher Tribble points out in his book *Writing,* is that literate adult learners already know

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[1] It has to be noted that those two terms and the corresponding concepts are not always distinguished in the relevant literature. Often information is given about 'L2' learning/teaching, as an umbrella term for both concepts.

how to write in formal settings. What they are probably missing is how to use the conventional organisational patterns typical of different kinds of writing in the target language. He also refers Widdowson (1984:65), who pointed out that the problem for FL learners is how to textualise discourse in a different language.

In Austria, English as a first foreign language is a compulsory subject from the lower secondary (year 5) onwards, and has even been integrated into primary school teaching. Therefore, it has to be taken into account that general ability of how to write effectively and how to structure discourse and 'design' texts in different settings and for different media has not been acquired fully in the pupils' native language at the time they are introduced to English. Therefore, the role of teaching writing is clearly different from the one in adult education, since in being confronted with young learners the EFL teacher is not only responsible for teaching how to textualise discourse but also for familiarising them with the "essential interactive abilities underlying discourse enactment and the ability to record it in text" as Widdowson (1984b: 65) puts it.

Since with the rise of new (Web) technologies completely new contexts and concepts for writing have been created, those essential abilities that underlie written discourse enactment have changed. This in turn, also alters the contexts and requirements for teaching and learning writing in a second or foreign language. Since the current methodologies in teaching find their bases in the existing (L2) research on how writing is learned, the following will provide a short overview of the research in this area.

2.3 L2 Writing Research

L2 writing research tries to explain the processes and factors underlying the acquisition of written fluency in second and foreign languages, which ultimately influence the existing teaching models. As a starting point, Tribble (1996: 12) describes learning to write as "learning a new set of cognitive and social relations". Correspondingly, in her overview of existing writing research O'Brien (2004: 3-5) defines the two categories of cognitive models and social approaches to the writing process. However, in the literature review on EFL/ESL writing Jones (2006: 22-32) also distinguishes between two different fields of writing research. Those are Composition studies, also referred to as Cognitive Rethoric, which are mainly concerned with Cognitive Science and its implications for writing and writing

pedagogy, and Applied Linguistics, which have evolved out of linguistic studies of writing.

2.3.1 Composition Studies

The cognitive theory of writing, which was brought into classrooms in the 1970s, developed out of the cognitive learning theory and, therefore, mainly focuses on the writer and on what writers actually do when they compose a piece of writing. Since writing is regarded as a cognitive activity, which is complex, recursive and directed towards a goal, the focus is on composing processes and strategies, but also on the metacognitive knowledge about how a good text should look like and how it can be created. Figure 7 below, for example, shows the well-known Flower and Hayes model from 1981, which defines three stages of writing: planning, translating and revising. Those are constantly monitored by metacognitive processes and interact both ways with the long-term memory including knowledge of topic of audience and of writing plans (Jones 2006: 25-26).
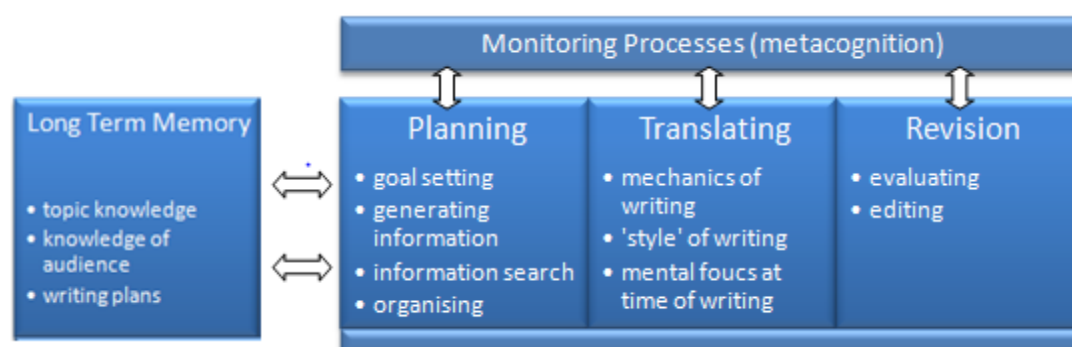
Figure 7: Cognitive process model (adapted from Flower and Hayes, 1981)

In 2001 Hayes together with Chenoweth proposed a model of text production, which due to its reference to L2 learning renders particularly interesting. The hypothesis concentrates on written fluency, which is seen as the rate of production of a text. This rate of production is described as being constituted by pauses and so-called language bursts, which are defined as word strings of about 6-10 words. The frequency of such bursts and the length of pauses are regarded as central contributors to fluency and depend on the capabilities and experience of the writer. Therefore, L2 writers tend to produce shorter bursts than those who write in their L1. In general, this model defines four internal processes, which partly build on the 1981 Flower and Hayes model, called **proposer**, **translator**, **reviser** and

transcriber. The proposer process consists of prelinguistic ideas, which are converted by the translator into strings of language with appropriate word order and grammar. Both the proposed and already written language is evaluated by the reviser, and the final process is defined as the transformation of the content of the articulatory buffer into written language (O'Brien 2004: 3).

In the 1980s the dimension of social context was integrated into writing theories, as a result of the emerging view of writing as both a social and cognitive process. Social Constructivist writing theories, which are based on the belief that writing is not a solitary act and includes negotiation and consensus, basically predominated in the 1990s. Writers were recognised as being members of a social and cultural group, which caused Hayes to broaden the 1981 Flower and Hayes model by integrating motivational and contextual factors as well as reading processes, and thereby to consider the concepts of task, audience and purpose for writing (Jones 2006: 26). Referring to Prawat and Floden (1994) and others, Jones (2006: 27) stresses that based on Social Constructivism this theory views language as the most important medium. Language knowledge is considered to be attained by using it, and, therefore, is seen as a social product learned through negotiation.

Regarding this social aspect of writing, also Vygotsky's findings concerning the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) have proven to be influential. The Zone of Proximal Development is defined as "the area where a person can learn when helped by a knowledgeable individual or supported by cultural resources" (Jones 2006: 27). Also a Neo-Vygotskyian concept has developed, which stresses the participatory character of knowledge construction through interaction in social learning environments. This is achieved by group collaborative activities in a meaningful context, and reflection on what has been learned through conversation within the group, which is seen as a collective body of e.g. knowledge and skills. In addition to those social models, also theories developed which stress the notion of audience and genre in writing and thereby focus on the importance of discourse communities (Jones 2006: 27 -28).

2.3.2 Applied Linguistics

In the Applied Linguistics field, research on foreign and second language writing and writing pedagogy has its roots in second language acquisition (SLA) research. L2 writing research and instruction are, therefore, based on theoretical findings

coming from Structuralism, Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis and Communicative Competence. Grabe & Kaplan (1996), for instance, developed a model of the writing processes, which is similar to Hayes' cognitive model but stems from Applied Linguistics. This model includes linguistic knowledge and the notion of communicative competence, as writing is seen as a communication activity (Jones 2006: 28).

When Structuralism found its way into linguistics, it was soon blended into the behaviourist learning theory, and also had a big impact on L2 writing. Writing was viewed as being learnable through reinforcement and habit formation by combining and substitution writing exercises, as well as by grammatically manipulating texts for learning grammar structures. However, later on researchers became aware of the fact that the cultural and linguistic backgrounds influence L2 writers when it comes to grammar structures as well as to the organisation and logical order of texts. According to Kaplan (1996 cited in Jones 2006: 28) this is connected to interferences from structures of the writers' first languages. He conducted a study of 600 international student essays, demonstrating that rhetorical and cultural preferences influence the organising and structuring of texts. This study was the beginning of the field of Contrastive Rhetoric (CR), which in the foreign language writing context implies that differences between discourse - level patterns in students' L1 and L2 make it difficult for L2 learners to acquire discourse-level patterns in their L2. This happens due to the principle of negative transfer from first to second or foreign languages (Casanave 2004: 27).

At the same time, Error Analysis emerged as a field of foreign and second language research. It primarily engages in the identification and classification of the learners' errors, investigating general errors which are systematic, in contrast to mistakes, which are not. According to S.P. Corder, who was among the first to explore this field of Error Analysis in the 1970s, errors occur in language competence, while mistakes occur in performance. The attention was drawn to the identification of possible sources of errors, which has implications for both teachers and learners. A lot of research has been dedicated to the treatment of errors in writing, which also included many debates on whether or not they should be corrected, and on how they should be corrected (Jones 2006: 30).

Also in the 1970s, Dell Hymes established a more sociocultural and functional view of learning a language. By introducing the aspect of Communicative Competence, he stressed the importance of being able to use a language appropriately in real situations so that communication is effective. As a result, language learners also need to know how members of a speech community use language to fulfil certain purposes (Canale&Swain 1980 cited in Jones 2006: 32). In L2 writing this concept has led to the emphasis of meaningful and authentic contexts, in which real language should be used (Jones 2006: 32).

2.4 Approaches to Teaching Writing

The expansive understanding of the term 'writing' as used in the definition section above has clearly inspired many different angles of writing research and of teaching. Since foreign and second language writing have developed both out of Composition Studies and research in Applied Linguistics, different research strands have made different contributions. Thereby EFL writing has become a multidisciplinary field (Jones 2006: 32). Christopher Tribble (1996: 37) points out that the different views of teaching how to write principally go back to three different focal points, which are the **form**, the **writer** and the **reader**. For Tribble these three perspectives are the starting points of the three most important movements in the teaching of writing. In the book *Controversies in Second Language Writing* Casanave (2004: 70) argues that different approaches to teaching writing to a big extent developed out of the fluency-accuracy debate. There has been much discussion on which of those two aspects of writing demand or deserve greater attention in teaching. To lay a focus on fluency also means to concentrate on the writers' processes, while shifting attention to accuracy goes hand in hand with having a focus on the products by which writers are evaluated (Casanave 2004: 75). Therefore, the approaches to teaching writing are often subsumed under the heading 'Product vs. Process'. This also implies that the later discussed genre approaches are seen as extension of the product approach and the socio-cultural approach as being closely connected to the process approaches, since they are also referred to as 'post-process'.

2.4.1 Product Approaches

Imagining the traditional way of dealing with written work in the classroom, one would most probably think of what is subsumed under the term 'product-based' or

'form-focused approach'. Basically, this addresses a view of writing, which stresses linguistic knowledge and the appropriate use of vocabulary, syntax and cohesive devices. The aim is to make students familiar with correct grammatical and rhetorical structures for their own text production (Badger&White 2000: 153). In such a product approach, which is e.g. presented by Pincas (1982), four stages can be defined that are important when teaching writing/ learning to write, which are depicted in Figure 8.
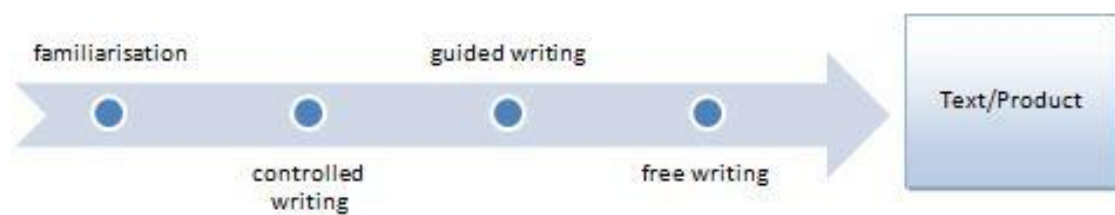
Figure 8: Product approach (adapted from Pincas 1982)

During the familiarisation stage students are introduced to certain linguistic features of a text. Those features are practised during the controlled and guided writing stages, which often include sentence-combining exercises and imitation of model texts. After that, students should be able to apply their acquired skills in order to write a genuine text themselves (Badger&White 2000: 153-154). In order to develop the required skills, teachers use techniques like substitution tables, which means that learners would have to respond to a provided stimulus. Although at the free writing stage students should also show some creativity, imitation is very important in product approaches. The teacher also provides model texts, which represent the input that has to be imitated by the students. Clearly, this focus on imitation is related to the fact that the form- focused or product based approaches were informed by American Linguistic Structuralism and behaviourist psychology. Therefore, in these approaches also the assumption is taken that habitualised writing skills can be developed through controlled drill-like exercises (Canagarajah 1999: 148).

In the practical handbook *How to teach writing* Jeremy Harmer (2005: 11) points out that such traditional product approaches often fail, since they only draw attention to the 'what' but not to the 'how' of text construction. The very traditional classroom situation of a student handing in a written text, getting the corrected work back and putting it into a folder rarely having looked at it, is presented as the

worst-case scenario that is triggered by form-focused approaches. This, of course, means that the whole process of writing is not taken into account, although it has important implications for the way writing is taught.

2.4.2 Process Approaches

Similar to the various product approaches, there is no such thing like a unified process approach. However, within the process-based approaches some core features can be identified. Tribble (1996: 37), for instance, states that process approaches stress "writing activities which move learners from the generation of ideas and the collection of data to the 'publication' of a finished text." Therefore, compared to product-based approaches, process approaches differ in their focus, which does not lie on linguistic knowledge, but on linguistic skills, like planning and drafting. Those are needed on the way from having an idea to the completion of piece of writing (Badger&White 2000: 154). This means that in teaching the attention is taken away from the written product and instead is drawn to the students' development of mental skills for composing a piece of writing. Again, different process models define different stages or label them differently (Canagarajah 1999: 148). Therefore, Tribble tries to describe the phases of a typical process model:

Figure 9: Process approach (adapted from Tribble 1996: 39)

In Figure 9 the stages are presented in a cyclical process, since writers do not have to follow a fixed sequence in their writing, but e.g. can go back to the prewriting stage also after they have already arrived at the revising or editing phase. A typical prewriting activity would, for instance, include brainstorming on the topic. The results of the brainstorming would then be chosen, structured, organised and written down as a first draft in the composing/drafting stage. In the following phase, typically a discussion of the draft would lead to its revision, before it would finally be proofread and edited. (Badger & White 2000: 154)

In contrast to the product approaches, providing input and stimuli are not considered as important in process approaches, since they are not informed by Behaviourism but by the Cognitive Process Theory. This proceeds on the assumption that writing cannot be consciously learned, but is rather developed in a similar way, in which young children develop their mother tongue (Badger&White 200:154). In contrast to the product approaches, which are very static, the process approaches see the composing of a text as a "dynamic cognitive activity that is recursive, generative, exploratory and goal-oriented" (Canagarajah 1999: 148). Therefore, the development of the process approach can also be related to Chomsky's transformational generative grammar and the development of humanistic psychology.

The teacher's most important role in such an approach would be as facilitator of the writing process by making students familiar and assisting them with the different stages they go through and the techniques that they need when creating a written text. O'Brien (2004: 7) refers to Susser (1994), who identified two fundamental components of process-based writing instruction, which are "awareness (of how successful writers write) and intervention (in the sense of feedback during the process)". A very monolithic process approach would ignore the content and the context of writing, since the writing process is always seen as being the same. As a result, the difference between certain text types would only be reflected in the amount of prewriting that is required. However, Badger and White (2000: 155) argue that a process approach, which ignores all contexts, is highly unusual. As an example, they refer to Tricia Hedge (1993: 15), who stresses four contextual elements of pre-writing activities: a) audience, b) generation of ideas, c) organisation of the text, d) purpose.

Also Teresa O'Brien (2004: 7) summarises that criticism on the process approaches often stems from the misconceptions that the product is ignored completely and that it is only relevant to "advanced 'creative' writing". She refers to Susser (1994) and Atkinson (2003), who argue that the process approaches are inherently also concerned with the product and that they do not exclude certain writing genres, like, for instance, academic writing.

2.4.3 Genre Approaches

The idea of different writing genres is what inspired the 'genre approaches', also referred to as 'reader-focused approaches'. Although the main focus is on the reader and not the product, the genre approach follows similar pedagogical practices, and often is said to be an "extension of product approaches" (Badger&White 2000: 155). Canagarajah (1999: 149) even argues that it is not very purposeful to regard the content-focused and the reader-focused approach as separate, since they both are strongly influenced by English for Special Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), but also by Writing across the Curriculum (WAC). Therefore, they are usually treated as related movements (Canagarajah 1999: 149). Indeed, writing development is seen as quite similar in genre and product approaches, both of which regard writing as mainly linguistic.

However, what is new in the genre approaches is the orientation towards the reader and the emphasis on the social context in which writing happens. This social aspect is also reflected in the widely used definition of genre by John Swales (1990:58):

> A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes.

By a communicative event, Swales basically refers to the fact that people agree on a certain use of language for certain purposes. The event is, therefore, determined by the discourse and its role, the participants, and the environment in which the discourse is produced. Hereby, purpose is the central aspect, since the communicative event is shaped by its needs. Different kinds of writing, like law reports, manuals or research proposals, distinguish themselves from each other by different structures, layouts and uses of language, as different aims need to be achieved. Clearly, these different language conventions first have to be established and accepted. Regarding this fact Swales states that the

[communicative] purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre.

Relating to Raimes, Canagarajah (1999: 149) describes the agenda of the reader-focused approach as introducing the students to the "values, expectations, and conventions of the disciplinary communities". This demonstrates the importance of the communities and especially the expert members, but at the same time raises questions of authority, and especially the issue of who has the authority to determine the practices of a discourse community. However, a focus on this aspect could lead to a wrong impression. Since genres change, they do not provide strict sets of rules for text production, and are more defined as social practices, which can be modified and challenged. The whole concept of genre does not aim at making prescriptions and, therefore, is much more dynamic than product-based approaches (Tribble 1996: 50-52).

However, although writing is defined by its close connection to a social purpose, it is in principle based on the analysis and imitation of model texts provided by the teacher, which resembles the behaviouristic tendencies of the product-based approaches. This impression prevails when looking at two different models of the genre approach, which also Badger and White (2000: 155-156) include in their account. The first one is presented by Cope and Kalantzis (1993:11) as a wheel model with three phases:
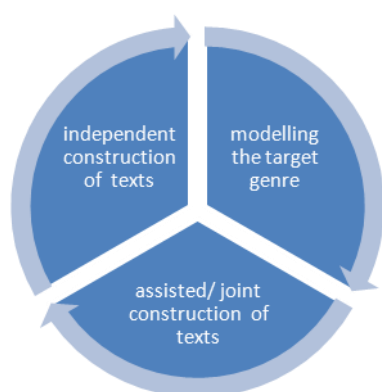
Figure 11: Genre approach model from Cope and Kalantzis (1993: 11, simplified)
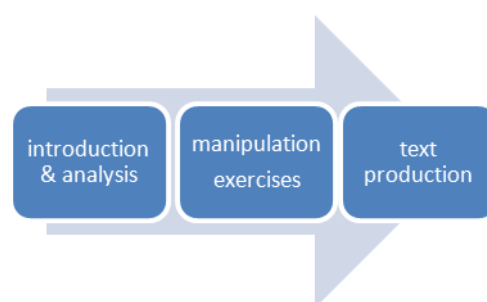
Figure 10: Genre approach model from Dudley-Evans (1997: 154, simplified)

At the first stage, the teacher would expose the students to sample texts of the genre, which would then be practised by constructing a text together with the students, who during the last phase would then write a text on their own. Since it

should be possible to go back to the first stage after having arrived at the third one, the model is presented in a wheel structure (Badger&White 2000: 155-156).

A relatively similar three-phased model (see Figure 10) was introduced by Dudley-Evans (1997: 154) for the ELT field. At the first stage this model stresses the element of analysis, which would often mean that with the help of a concordancing programme students analyse given model texts concerning grammatical and lexical patterns as well as with regard to the structure of the content by identifying certain moves. Since this analysis is quite challenging and the genre approach developed in connection to the academic writing sector it is, of course, mostly suitable for advanced students dealing with more sophisticated texts. However, Bhatia (1993) successfully expanded the genre approach with its move analysis to the field of ESP, in which it is now widely used also for less advanced levels of text production. The second and the third stage in the Dudley Evans model remind very much of the controlled to free writing stages in the product-based approaches, as the aim is to practise relevant language forms to finally apply them in an independently written text.

However, it is again stressed that during all of the stages of a genre based writing approach, the purpose and thus the reader of the text genre are of utmost importance. Therefore, while the product approaches may stress the correctness of linguistic forms from a traditional and prescriptive point of view, the genre approach seems to stress rather the efficiency of a text, not only linguistically and structurally, but e.g. also visually. Also Tribble (1996: 45-46) points out that grammatical and lexical correctness is not what constitutes the feeling of rightness or appropriateness. As an example he presents two letters of complaint, and argues that one of them is more acceptable than the other despite of a greater number of spelling, vocabulary and grammar mistakes. This issue, namely the effect on the reader, which is basically ignored by process approaches, is finally addressed by genre approaches.

2.4.4 Process vs. Product Approaches

In order to provide a practical example that can be compared and contrasted within other approaches to teaching writing, a teacher will be assumed, who strictly follows the product approach and wants to integrate Web 2.0 technologies into the EFL classroom by e.g. letting the students write a project report about their school

projects on a weblog. First of all, such a teacher would familiarise the students with correct models of project reports, which he or she already selected beforehand. Probably, during this stage there would be a focus on familiarising students with e.g. the use of linking words or the most important pieces of vocabulary. At the controlled writing stage, they would then have to do gap filling exercises or to create a part of a project report. Then, finally, they would write a complete review of their own project and put it on their weblog. Since the primary focus lies on the correct use of language, it is questionable whether such a teacher would pay a lot attention to the difference that is created by writing such a report into the exercise book and by publishing it on a weblog.

The genre approach, which is often only regarded as an extension of the traditional product approach, would lead to quite a similar teacher's proceeding. However, students would probably have a look at some authentic project report, being made aware of the purpose of such texts. With the help of a concordancer they would analyse the texts for important vocabulary or grammatical structures. In addition, there would be emphasis on the social context of such a report, which e.g. could be to show the quality and importance of one's project to an audience of other experts or to persuade the principal of the project that his money was well-invested. Since a genre approach stresses the reader, it is also always defined by the medium of publication. The teacher would, therefore, probably from the beginning onwards confront students with online project reports and the medium of the Web. Hence, also the enabled integration of pictures, tables or video and audio material, as well as the integration of links, would be of relevance. As a result the medium of the weblog would probably gain more importance than in a mere product approach.

Since process approaches emphasise the writing process a writer goes through and not the final product, the weblog as the medium of publication would probably only be relevant during the pre-writing and drafting stages, when brainstorming on the actual content of the project report and its structuring takes place. Then the first draft of the project report would be discussed and revised individually or in a group and finally be published on the weblog. Although the weblog as the publication place of the text may not be that relevant for the whole writing process, which basically stays the same for every kind of text, the blogging technology

could be very useful for conducting the different stages of the process approach. On a weblog brainstorming, discussion as well as revision of a text could take place in an effective way. This, however, would reduce the weblog to a mere assistive equipment to conduct an 'old' approach in a new medium.

After all, the actual power of a weblog and of various other Web 2.0 applications lies in the fact that they immediately generate a real purpose, since students can publish their written texts for a real audience. In addition, interactivity and collaboration are important pillars of Web 2.0 technologies. However, neither product nor process approaches seem to be able to integrate this potential that is created for learning and teaching to the extent in which it is enabled by the new possibilities of publishing and communication.

2.4.5 Sociocultural/Post-process Approach

This is a relatively new approach, which to some extent also addresses issues of writing for and with new media like the Web 2.0. In her book *Controversies in Second Language Writing* Casanave (2004: 84-85) refers to researchers like Atkinson (2003) and Kent (1999), who describe this sociocultural movement in writing as an extension of the process approaches and thereby label it 'post-process'. In addition, also Matsuda (2003: 78) indicates that post-process approaches are not a reaction against process approaches and do not reject process pedagogies and theories. They rather "reject the dominance of process at the expense of other aspects of writing and writing instruction" (Matsuda 2003: 78-79), since the process approaches are often seen to operate in a "sociocultural vacuum", as Silva (1987: 9) puts it. Therefore, scholars base this approach very much on the socioconstructivist learning theory and the concepts by Vygotsky, which say that individuals are social beings and, therefore, successful learning takes place if social and cultural interaction are included. With regard to writing, this approach stresses that writers should not only write for each other and the teacher as the academic audience. Instead, it is regarded as important that they can write for the public. In addition, it is argued that the students as writers should not work only alone, but rather they can learn from sharing their ideas with readers. (Jones 2006: 47)

Casanave (2004: 84-85) points out that the concept of this approach was introduced by Trimbur (1994: 108) who recognised a "social turn" and defined

post-process composition as a socially and culturally situated activity in first language writing. Also Vollmer (2002: 1) explains writing as a "contextually situated social and cultural practice". Researchers like Atkinson (2003) regard the different stages of the process approaches as very valuable for teaching second and foreign language writing, but add that social and cultural factors have an impact on language learning and writing, as it is a means of communicating ideas. From a practical teaching point of view this means that students should be provided with opportunities for a 'real' reading audience beyond the classroom and also outside academia. This implies that they also could get response and feedback on their drafts by those 'real' readers. An example for such a post-process approach is presented by the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement, which is described by John Bean (2001: 15) as a

> reaction against traditional writing instruction that associates good writing primarily with grammatical accuracy and correctness, and thus isolates writing instruction within English departments, the home of the grammar experts. The problem with traditional writing instruction is that it leads to a view of writing as a set of isolated skills unconnected to an authentic desire to converse with interested readers about real ideas.

It is stressed that writers in their writing activities should be given the opportunity to write for multiple audiences in various disciplines, since they should learn about the "public situated nature of discourse and their conflicting interpretations within communities" (Reiff 2002: 108). In post-process oriented approaches writing is, therefore, also presented as an interpretative act and as a vehicle of social and cultural affirmation. Thus, writing instruction in such approaches stresses interaction and collaboration. As a result, the teacher's task in such an approach would be to provide opportunities for getting in contact with 'real' readers and for receiving feedback on the students' writing not only from the classmates and the teacher. In a traditional classroom, which does not offer a lot of possibilities to interact with the outside world, working with such an approach would be quite a big challenge. However, new media and technologies can contribute to the formation of a 'Classroom 2.0' that connects students to the outside world. Still, just using the medium of the Web 2.0 does not automatically lead to interaction and collaboration with a broad and useful audience. The teacher would have to engage a lot in establishing valuable contacts and at the same time would be

responsible for protecting the students from/peparing the students for possible dangers that the mass medium of the Web creates.

2.5 Established Key Concepts in the Teaching of EFL Writing

Although outcomes of writing theories and the focal points of teaching approaches differ, there are some concepts that come up repeatedly. Even if they carry different values within different standpoints, they seem to be especially important for both the teaching and learning of writing. Since the labelling of these concepts is rather difficult and varies a lot in the literature, the following will shortly summarise what they refer to.

Purpose and audience

Here, the context, in which writing takes place, is addressed. It could be seen as the teacher's responsibility to put writing activities in a particular setting with certain goals and aims. Motivation comes in here as well, for writing in a 'vacuum', usually does not foster enthusiasm among learners. Knowing in which context writing is placed and who the potential readers are, is not only important since it is claimed to be a source for inspiration, but also because this is how writing takes place in the world outside the classroom.

Pre-writing and planning

This can refer to everything that happens before the actual writing takes place, like e.g. the generation of ideas and the activation of knowledge by plunging into a topic. Depending on how general or specific a topic may be, this can refer to the learner's cognitive processes that precede and to some extent also accompany the actual writing activity, as well as to the classroom practice of the teacher familiarising learners with how the discourse of an aimed-at text type is structured. Since this thesis focuses on an EFL context, such stages would typically comprise the act of introducing students to language-related issues that are needed for certain tasks.

Composing and drafting

This is a stage in writing, which can basically interact with all the other concepts that are listed here. In the creation process of the text, according to purpose and audience activated knowledge is integrated, ideas are connected and design-related or organisational measures are taken. All of that can also happen

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collaboratively and/or being accompanied by constant feedback from other learners or the teacher.

Revising and editing

Those are 'strategies' that learners should be able to apply already during the composing and drafting of texts, as well as after having received feedback and correction. The abilities of revising and editing refer to both the form (i.e. grammatical and lexical language issues) and the content (i.e. the logical sequencing of texts or the building of an argument), and are often regarded as crucial in order to perform as a successful writer.

Feedback and (error) correction

These concepts are very much related to the role the teacher assumes in the classroom. While feedback seems to carry a rather positive connotation, correction is often regarded as something negative. Traditionally, in his role as an evaluator and instructor, the teacher only corrects and gives feedback on the written text, when it is finished and handed in. However, the teacher could also assume the role of a facilitator, providing feedback and assistance with problems at different stages of the writing process. Also, it does not always have to be the teacher who assumes those roles. Some value is also attributed to correction and feedback by peers, as well as by experts in a certain field of writing. Interconnected with the role of feedback and correction, the handling of errors and mistakes in writing is an important concept in the teaching of writing. Here, it very much depends on whether the focus is on linguistic accuracy or on the overall effectiveness of a written product.

Summing up, it is apparent that writing research and the corresponding approaches to teaching heavily rely on the traditional linguistic view of writing. Although new technologies could make valuable contributions to the identified key concepts, and, therefore, are often exploited to teach in a rather traditional way, the actual changes in written communication and creation triggered by a medium like the Web are not taken account of at all. Although the sociocultural approaches and the Vygotskyan concepts anticipate the social context of meaning construction and learning as it takes place in digital environments, it is apparent that these approaches to teaching writing have not been devised with any specific thoughts about the medium of the screen. Although the models have different focal points

(product, process, social context etc.) they still seem to foreground a traditional language-based concept and do not follow a broader sign-based model as proposed by Gunther Kress. However, there have been attempts to create new theories about learning or approaches to teaching, which follow the impact and requirements of the digital age. A concept, which claims to be based on the contemporary emerging digital environments for teaching and learning, has been developed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes and is labelled *Connectivism.*

2.6 Connectivism

George Siemens calls Connectivism a learning theory alongside Behaviourism, Cognitivism and Constructivism. There has been some critique of the label 'learning theory', since the concept is quite new and has not found its way into established professional circles and has not yet been reviewed by experts. As a result, it is still viewed very critically. Pløn Verhagen (2006), for instance, refers to Connectivism as a "pedagogical view", since it addresses learning at the curriculum level. Other criticism concerns the view that existing learning theories are sufficient and Connectivism could rather be classed with a sub-branch of Constructivism, called Social Constructivism (Wikipedia 2010). However, as Inge de Waard (2010) points out in her weblog on *eLearning Techtales with Social Media in Low Resource and Mobile Settings* some educators have found it useful as a concept for contemporary learning. Therefore, although it clearly does not make any explicit reference to the teaching of writing, it might be useful to get an insight into this view of how contemporary learning takes place in general.

Whether seen a 'real' learning theory or not, Connectivism deals with how learning takes place in the digital age. Siemens (2004) points out that the utilisation of new tools leads to a shift in society and transforms the view of learning as an internal and merely individualistic activity. It is argued that for the networked learning as it takes place today, the traditional above mentioned theories are not sufficient. Connectivism, however, does not provide a completely new and different understanding of learning, but combines elements of a variety of learning theories, which are seen to be relevant for learning in the digital age. To explain why a new learning theory is needed, Siemens (2004) also presents various factors that are changing learning and trends which will affect it in the future (emphasis mine):

- Many learners will move into a variety of **different**, possibly unrelated **fields** over the course of their lifetime.

- Informal learning is a significant aspect of our learning experience. Formal education no longer comprises the majority of our learning. Learning now occurs in a variety of ways – through **communities of practice**, personal **networks**, and through completion of **work-related tasks**.

- Learning is a **continual process**, lasting for a lifetime. Learning and work related activities are no longer separate. In many situations, they are the same.

- **Technology** is altering (rewiring) our brains. The tools we use define and **shape our thinking**.

-The **organization** and the **individual** are both learning organisms. Increased attention to **knowledge management** highlights the need for a theory that attempts to explain the link between individual and organizational learning

- Many of the **processes** previously handled by learning theories (especially in cognitive information processing) can now be **off-loaded** to, or **supported** by, technology.

- Know-how and know-what is being supplemented with **know-where** (the understanding of where to find knowledge needed).

Siemens (2004) describes Connectivism as being based on principles of "chaos, network, and complexity and self-organization theories". As its name suggests, it foregrounds the connected nature of learning and knowledge. Learning is seen as the process of creating connections and developing a network. Siemens describes learning as actionable knowledge, which can also reside "outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database)". The ability to create connections is what enables a person to learn more and, therefore, is viewed as more important than the current state of knowing. Knowledge is seen as not being of a qualitative or quantitative nature, but as distributed. In his blog post *An Introduction to Connective Knowledge* John Downes (2005) describes this kind of knowledge as connective and argues that connective knowledge requires interaction. In general, he describes knowledge as being constructed, since it consists of interpretations and perceptions, which are the results of some mental or cognitive process. Knowledge is, therefore, not regarded as something that "comes delivered to us already assembled" (Downes 2005), but as a network phenomenon. Knowing

something is seen being organised in a certain manner, "to exhibit patterns of connectivity". Learning is correspondingly viewed as acquiring certain patterns.

On a less abstract level and with a direct relation to learning, Siemens (2004) describes that knowledge and, therefore, decision foundations are altering rapidly and new information is constantly being acquired. This in turn foregrounds the importance of the ability to differentiate between important and unimportant information. In addition, it emphasises the ability to recognise the alteration of the information landscape and the decisions based on this landscape by the emergence of new information. Those decision abilities are seen as learning processes themselves, since knowledge is not stable and the notions of 'right' and 'wrong' change with alterations in the information environment. Therefore, in general, the ability to learn more is viewed as more important than what is currently known. This has also lead to a shift of the importance of 'know-how' and 'know-what' to the increased significance of the 'know-where', the awareness of where to find knowledge when it is needed.

The principles of Connectivism are subsumed by Siemens (2004) as the following(emphasis mine):

- Learning and knowledge rests in **diversity** of opinions.
- Learning is a process of **connecting** specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in **non-human** appliances.
- **Capacity** to **know more** is more critical than what is currently known
- Nurturing and maintaining **connections** is needed to facilitate **continual learning**.
- Ability to see **connections between fields**, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- **Currency** (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- **Decision-making** is itself a learning process.

As a learning theory or at least a pedagogical model for teaching and learning in the digital age, Connectivism is, therefore, very much based on new technologies and their impact on people's lives and basic forms of knowledge and information structures. The Internet and the Web 2.0 movement are, however, only one of

many concerns of new technologies research. What is generally understood by the term 'new technologies' and how those have been influential for pedagogy and second or foreign language learning in particular, will, therefore be shortly summarised in the following chapter.

3 New Technologies and Foreign Language Teaching

There are various typologies of new technologies. A very interesting and useful one, which is also mentioned by Pachler (2007: 212), was developed by Laurillard (2002: 90), who differentiates between five basic functions of media forms (including traditional ones):

(New) media forms	
Narrative (linear presentational) media	- Lecture - Print - Audivision - Television - Video - Digital Versatile Disc
Interactive (presentational and user-responsive) media	- (Enhanced) Hypermedia - Web resources - Interactive television
Adaptive (modelling and user-responsive) media	- Simulations - Virtual environments - Tutorial programs - Tutorial simulations - Educational games
Communicative (discussion-oriented) media)	- Computer-mediated conferencing - Digital document discussion environment - Audio-conferencing - Video-conferencing - Student collaboration
Productive (student action-oriented) media	- (Collaborative) Microworlds - Modelling

Table 1: New media forms (adapted from Laurillard 2002: 90)

What really earns the term 'new', of course, always depends on the temporal reference point. Since digital computer technologies are developing further and further, the computer has been involved in creating various new media forms. Therefore, it is presented as *the* new technology until today, which, especially with the rise of the Internet, has been receiving consideration for learning and teaching in as well as outside the classroom. Already in the year 2000 Warschauer summarised three main phases in the use of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which are **structural**, **communicative** and **integrative** CALL.

Whereas structural CALL of the 1970s and 1980s was concerned with a structural view of language, based on drill and practice exercise as well as on linguistic accuracy within the grammar-translation and audio-lingual paradigm, communicative CALL started to use PCs in the 1990s to conduct communicative exercises, based on the principle fluency and a more cognitive view of language within the paradigm of Communicative Language Teaching. Finally, the integrative CALL of the 21st century is argued to be based on the principle of agency and a socio-cognitive view of language within the content-based/ ESP and EAP teaching paradigm, and to use multimedia and the Internet as sources for authentic discourse. (Bax 2003: 15)

This short overview shows a correlation between changing uses of new technologies to paradigm shifts in language teaching, which can be clearly viewed as indication of the fact that advances in technology lead to changes in society and, consequently also in language teaching paradigms. In this respect Bertram Bruce (1999) phrases very clearly that

> technology is not just 'technology', if by that we mean only silicon chips in a plastic box or a web browser. It is an expression of the ideologies, the cultural norms, and the value systems of a society. The changes in social practices associated with new technologies then become extensions of our current selves. As we modify practices we reshape both ourselves and the new technologies.

For Bruce (1999) this also means that in teaching with technology it is not enough to have knowledge about how the particular technology works. He points out that a discussion which focuses on the realm of the technical is "hopelessly inadequate" when talking about effects of technology. However, teachers largely seem to perceive technology as only 'technology'. Many foreign language educators, whose methods come from more traditional teaching paradigms, see the use of computer technology only as a possibility of teaching 'old things in new ways' and not as a responsibility for teaching 'new things'. Pachler (2009: 292), however, points out that this should not be the primary concern of online foreign language teaching, and cites Kern (2004: 254) who argues that foreign language learning in online environments should help "students enter into a new realm of collaborative inquiry and construction of knowledge, viewing their expanding repertoire of identities and communication strategies as resources in the process".

In literature about teaching in the digital age, it is often stressed that none of the different technologies or media can be referred to as the 'best' or most appropriate one for (EFL) teaching in general. In addition, none of them can create any pedagogical improvements by its mere use. In his book *Brave New Digital Classroom* Robert Blake (2008: 131), for instance, points out that it has to be decided which medium is most suitable for a specific purpose, and that there always have to be pedagogical considerations behind its application. In order to make decisions about pedagogical concepts, one, of course, has to be clear about the actual characteristics and potentials of new media and technologies. Blake (2008: 131) indicates that certain tools facilitate and encourage the performance of some activities over others. This fact is usually referred to as the 'affordance' of a technology or a type of media.

Characteristics, potentials and affordances

In the early encounters of language teaching with the rising Internet technology, a focus was put on the characteristics of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). In 1997 Warschauer (472) identified five basic potentials for CMC in L2 teaching and learning:

- Text-based and computer- mediated interaction
- Many-to-many communication
- Time- and place-independence
- Long distance exchanges
- Hypermedia links

In his account of CMC he mainly refers to asynchronous environments like e-mail correspondence or bulletin boards, and synchronous environments like chats, both of which contribute to different kinds of interactions and a new form of collaborative knowledge construction, which can take place online and, therefore, outside the classroom. However, with technological advances new environments for online communication have developed, and thereby have also created new challenges and opportunities for the L2 classroom. The potentials and characteristics that new media and technologies like the Internet have for the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages, expanded over the last decade, particularly especially in the shift towards the second generation of the Web. Norbert Pachler (2007: 213-220) emphasises that the new(er) technologies

can support reflective text-based interaction, which is of particular value to FL learners for the establishment of discourse competence. He also gives an up-to-date and comprehensive account of the characteristics and potential of new(er) technologies:

- **Flexibility**

  This refers to the possibility of learning to take place at any time and at any geographical location via technology, but also to the easy modification of digital resources according to different learner needs and styles.

- **Multimodality**

  New technologies offer the possibility of combining different semiotic means and modes for meaning-making and representation on the screen, which contributes to richer and authentic insights into target culture and foreign language discourse in context.

- **Interactivity**

  Pachler (2007: 216) uses the term not in its technical meaning (as the communication between a computer system and its operators), but to denote that new technologies enable interactivity as a reciprocal action in terms of co-operation and negotiation between people, which is valuable for FL language teaching and learning.

- **Non-linearity**

  This refers to the break down of the sequential order of information on pages and screens to a more lateral organisation of knowledge resources, which show a high level of interconnectedness through the hyperlinked nature of new technologies.

- **Distributed nature of information**

  Information is distributed in the sense that everyone can become an 'author' and make contributions, which adds to the democratic and non-centralised nature of new technologies, based on a variety of different viewpoints. Although resources are rather ephemeral and cannot claim accuracy, they could be exploited as sources for rich and authentic material for foreign language learning and teaching, as well as opportunity to eliminate boundaries and thereby to connect educational institutions to the real world.

- **Communicative potential**

   New technologies facilitate both real-time interactions in synchronous and time-delayed interaction in asynchronous environments, two types of written communication which pose different demands on foreign language learners. Although audio chats also provide the possibility of interacting in speech, writing is still much more common, which Pachler (2007: 217) identifies as an advantage for teenage learners who often feel more comfortable with writing in the target language.

New technologies and writing

The impact of new technologies on writing started with the rise of word processors and other text manipulation software, which enables the changing and altering of previously written text. Educators saw this as a chance for a variety of activities, some of which are listed by Sue Hewer (1997: 2) as sequencing, replacing and inserting of words sentences or paragraphs, gap filling, unscrambling words or reconstructing texts. With regard to their potential for teaching and learning, Hewer (1997: 12) argued that text manipulation could be valuable for the creation of tasks, which improve the learners' knowledge of structure and of form, and through which learners could improve and consolidate vocabulary, collocation as well as spelling and punctuation knowledge (Pachler 2009: 289).

Later on, within the rise of the Internet and CMC, Lapadat (2002) elaborates on written interaction in online learning environments, and identifies that online written contributions in such environments adopt some characteristics of spoken language in the sense that they are interactive, rather informal, personalised as well as audience-aware. Whereas written contributions in asynchronous communication tend to be more formal and conventional, synchronous chats are even more speech-like, contain abbreviations and symbols, and in general cause greater ambiguity as well as typographical errors due to the requirement of an increased typing speed. She also points out that writing in asynchronous online discussions, demands critical high-order thinking processes, which are enhanced by the online medium, since learners are engaged in constant confrontation with contextual material (i.e. postings by others) that has to be reflected on and incorporated in order to make a meaningful contribution. Therefore, they support reflection as well

as a social negotiation of meaning and the production of coherent discourse, all of which are important concepts in EFL teaching.

Finally, the rise of the Social Web has led to the development of online communities. Opening up the classrooms to such real world establishments, on the one hand, creates possibilities of getting into contact with experts in certain fields, and, on the other hand, also gives learners a real sense of audience for their written contributions, which writing inside the traditional EFL classroom was clearly lacking. Apart from that, the above mentioned issues of multimodality and non-linearity, triggered by the medium of the screen, have implications for what a learner needs in order to use and produce written online texts. It is vital for foreign language teaching and education in general to acknowledge such a shift in meaning-making and to engage in the implications of new technologies, if schooling wants to stay relevant (Pachler 2007: 214-218).

Since schooling practices are, of course, very much based on governmental regulations on education, in the following it will be analysed what the two influential governmental documents on foreign language teaching in Austria, namely the Austrian curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), state concerning the teaching of writing as well as with regard to the integration of new technologies.

4 Writing and the Use of Technology in the Austrian Curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

4.1 Writing in the CEFR

First of all, literacy as a concept, which does not strictly differentiate between reading and writing and which takes contemporary requirements for active meaning into account, is not present in the CEFR. The document is very much based on the four skills division, especially when it comes to assessment. However, the skills are subsumed under the more general heading *Communicative language activities* (4.4), where the CEFR specifies that only when producers are separated from receivers (e.g. in broadcasting or the publication of written text), communicative events can be categorised as speaking, writing, listening or reading of a text. Therefore, in general, the CEFR stresses skills as being integrated rather than isolated. Accordingly, it views most communicative activities as interactive, which means that participants alternate in being productive and receptive. The global scales are correspondingly based on the categories **reception**, **production**, **interaction** and **mediation**. The category 'mediation' includes translation and interpretation, but also periphrasis and simplification and other ways of getting meaning across in a language. All those types of activities are acknowledged to occur both in written and oral form.

The CEFR also specifies how it views communicative language processes in relation to the four skills. It defines that in order to write a learner has to engage in cognitive and linguistic processes for organising and formulating the message. In addition, the writer usually has to apply manual skills when hand-writing or typing a text. With regard to the processes involved, it is admitted that in contrast to the observable stages of the processes, the happenings in the central nervous system have not yet been satisfactorily explored. Therefore, at a general level, the CEFR identifies three stages in communicative language processes, which are **planning**, **execution** and **monitoring**. Execution is further subdivided into production, reception and interaction.

In section 4.6 and 4.6.1 the CEFR elaborates on the nature of a text as "piece of language, whether a spoken utterance or a piece of writing, which users/learners receive, produce or exchange" and its relation to the medium by which it is

transmitted. It is pointed out that different media and purposes also lead to differences in the organisation and presentation of the text. Thereby texts can be classified into text types, which in turn belong to different genres. For that reason the CEFR gives recommendations on the consideration of the medium and its relation to text, which are also directed towards the teaching of writing. They include the consideration of whether and how the differences in the medium and the psycholinguistic processes involved in writing are taken into account in productive, receptive and interactive activities. It is also recommended to consider the medium in the selection, adaptation or composition as well as in the evaluation of written texts. In addition, the CEFR suggests the consideration of textual characteristics of e.g. classroom discourse, instructional and reference materials.

Furthermore, it also proposes to take into account whether and how learners are encouraged to make their text more appropriate with regard to their communicative purpose, the context of use and also the media employed. Therefore, since the notions of medium, context and genre are considered as relevant, the CEFR also lists different text types as examples within the categories that are analysed in the following with regard to how writing and written communication is viewed.

Written production

This category refers to writing activities, in which the writer produces a text that is received by one or more readers. As example activities the CEFR cites writing articles, business letters, reports, completing forms, creative writing etc. In the illustrative scales all of that is subsumed under the categories 'overall written production', 'creative writing' and 'reports and essays'. [2] A sample illustrative scale for 'overall written production' is provided in Figure 12 below.

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[2] The CEFR defines levels of attainment in different aspects of its descriptive scheme with illustrative descriptor scales, in order to provide a basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications, thus facilitating educational and occupational mobility. The six reference levels are presented on a Global Scale from A1 to C2, and are widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. Their division can be illustrated in the following way:

    A) Basic user: A1 (breakthrough)
                                  A2 (waystage)
    B) Independent user: B1 (threshold)
                                  B2 (vantage)
    C) Proficient user: C1 (effective operational proficiency)
                                  C2 (mastery)

	OVERALL WRITTEN PRODUCTION
C2	*Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.*
C1	*Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.*
B2	*Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources.*
B1	*Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.*
A2	*Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'.*
A1	*Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.*

Figure 12: CEFR illustrative scale for 'Overall written production'

The CEFR also integrates production strategies that are needed for producing (written or spoken) texts. Those that are considered to be harnessed during the planning stage are labelled 'rehearsing', 'considering audience', 'locating resources', 'task adjustment' and 'message adjustment', and thereby relate to the learner's ability to adapt to the context. When it comes to the execution stage, strategies like compensating, building on previous knowledge and trying out are considered as important. Finally, for so-called evaluation and repair purposes strategies like monitoring success and self-correction are taken into account.

With regard to the language processes involved in the production, the CEFR identifies two components, which are formulation and articulation. In the case of writing the first one involves orthographic processes, transferring the outputs from the planning stage into linguistic form. The latter one refers to the physical actions involved in producing handwritten or typewritten text.

Written interaction & mediation

Here, the CEFR cites examples like passing notes and memos, letter and e-mail correspondence, negotiating the texts of agreements or contracts by e.g. proof corrections, and the participation in online or offline computer conferences. Although it is acknowledged that with the improvements and developments in computer technology

> interactive man-machine communication is coming to play an ever more important part in the public, occupational, educational and even personal domains (CEFR 4.4.3.4)

The CEFR does not include writing activities and corresponding illustrative scales that would mirror the possibilities the Web as medium for communication offers. While for spoken interaction, scales are provided that differentiate between casual conversations, informal discussions, formal discussions and goal-oriented co-operation, no such categories exist for written interaction, although new technologies and especially the innovative Web (2.0) applications enable people to engage in such conversations in a written form. The illustrative scales that are provided for written interaction only refer to 'overall written interaction', 'correspondence', and 'notes, messages and forms'.

Also with regard to the processes involved in interaction, writing is viewed somehow differently to speaking. While in spoken interaction productive and receptive processes are described as overlapping, they are said to be distinct in writing. However, a remark is included that electronic interaction, e.g. via the Internet, is becoming ever closer to 'real time' interaction. Still, although this fact is acknowledged, the categories for illustrative scales included in the CEFR do not mirror the new ways into which written interaction moves within the medium of the World Wide Web. Web applications like Twitter, Facebook or Google Documents and Google Wave advertise that they enable (near) real-time communication and/or collaboration, meaning that users receive information as soon as it is published by authors and, therefore, are not required to check periodically for updates.

Mediating activities are described as being applied when the language user acts as an "intermediary between interlocutors who are unable to understand each other directly" (CEFR 4.4.4). When it comes to writing the CEFR cites example activities, such as exact translation, literary translation, summarising gist (within L2 or between L1 and L2) or paraphrasing.

Non-verbal communication

The CEFR also includes information on practical actions that accompany language activities. Although those are said to occur normally in face-to-face oral activities, apart from paralinguistic features, also paratextual features are mentioned that are essential for writing. Devices like illustrations, charts, tables and typographic features, such as fonts, spacing, underlining, layout etc. are mentioned to play a role similar to paralinguistic features in written texts. In the age of new media and

technologies such features referred to as 'paratextual', however, gain increasing importance and, therefore, would have to be considered as equally important textual features within the new media.

4.2 Writing in the Austrian Curriculum for Foreign Languages

Just as the CEFR the Austrian curriculum for upper and lower secondary grammar school education does not provide a separate section dedicated to English as a foreign language, but provides guidelines and aims for first and second foreign learning and teaching in general.[3] It is also based on the four-skills model, stating aims and guidelines for reading, writing, speaking and listening. Apart from that, it gives information about general aims and didactic principles. Furthermore, it defines learning aims and outcomes that should be reached after certain years of language instruction, based on the six reference levels (A1-C2) of the CEFR.

For writing, the general aim is described as the productive application of the acquired language skills in a form adequate to the context and text type. The didactic principle underlying the curriculum is based on communicative competence as the superordinate learning aim. In particular, this means that communicative aspects of the four skills are foregrounded. Furthermore, it stresses that the four skills have to be practised in an equal and balanced amount and in an integrated manner. However, the curriculum also points out that at the beginners' level listening and oral communication skills should be practised more intensively. The desired learning outcomes for writing in the lower secondary are the following:

- Year 1:   **A1**
- Year 2:   **A2**
- Year 3 & Year 4:   **A2** and from **B1**: The learners can write coherent texts about topics that they are fanilar with or that they are interested in.

In the curriculum designed for (first) foreign languages in the upper secondary, emphasis is put on the fact that listening, reading, taking part in conversations, speaking coherently and writing should be practised in equal amounts. In addition,

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[3] There are different guidelines depending on whether it is the first or the second foreign language. The difference is in the number of years of learning. While the first foreign language is learned over a time span of eight years, the second foreign language is only learned for four. English is usually taught as a first foreign language and, therefore, dealt within the according guidelines.

there should be a strong focus on practical relevance and authenticity of language materials and activities. Teaching methods should be varied and include a broad repertoire of process, product and learner oriented activities. Furthermore, the range of topics and text types should be very wide in both reception and production. The desired reference levels for writing in the upper secondary are:

- Year 5:   **B1**
- Year 6:   **B1** + Extension and consolidation of communicative
                       events, topics and text types
- Year 7 & Year 8:   **B2**

As can be seen, learners are expected to have arrived at B2 in writing (but also in the other three skills) at the end of their secondary education. According to the Council of Europe, the level B2 in general refers to an 'Independent User', having achieved the following:

> Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options. (Council of Europe 2010)

4.3 Using New Technologies and the Web

In both the CEFR and the Austrian curriculum for modern foreign languages no concrete learning aims and outcomes concerning the use of new media and technologies are given. In the curriculum, however, the importance of the goal-oriented integration of information technology, like text processing, Internet and e-mail, is mentioned as a general learning aim beside the four traditional language skills. In addition, the curriculum recommends the use of audiovisual media and new technologies like e-mail and Internet in order to further authentic language contact and use.

In the CEFR the knowledge of how to manipulate audiovisual or computer media as learning resources is mentioned in the section 2.2.1 *The general competences of an individual*, as a combination between the 'ability to learn' and 'skills and know-how'. In addition, the ability to use new technologies, e.g. by searching for information in databases, hypertexts, etc. is presented as one of the heuristic skills

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in section 5.1.4.4 besides the ability to come to terms with new experiences and the ability to find, understand and convey new information. Furthermore, the use of new technologies is mentioned in the audio-visual reception section (4.4.2.2) besides watching TV or films. However, whereas illustrative scales are provided for the latter, such scales do not exist for e.g. using computer technology in general or the World Wide Web in particular.

In the section 4.6.1, *Texts and media*, the CEFR elaborates on the nature of text and its relation to the medium by which it is carried. In this respect, it is acknowledged that the medium influences the context, the organisation and the presentation of the texts, which thereby can be classified into different text types belonging to different genres. Electronic communication using a visual display unit is contrasted to stone inscriptions in the sense that texts for inscriptions usually are carefully planned, since the medium is durable and makes the creation of the text difficult and expensive. As regards electronic communication, on the other hand, it is pointed out that by the nature of the medium, texts do not necessarily develop into permanent artefacts, which in turn influences the nature of written content with regard to its organisation. Therefore, in the CEFR the computer with applications like e-mail is also mentioned as a medium besides print, radio broadcasts, telephone TV and cinema. Thereby it is also included in the general recommendation that

> [u]sers of the Framework may wish to consider and where appropriate state: which media the learner will need/be equipped/be required to handle a) receptively b) productively c) interactively d) in mediation. (CEFR 4.6.2)

However, text types that might be created by the medium of the computer and the WWW in particular are not included in the written text types mentioned in 4.6.3.

Computers and the participation in computer conferences are again mentioned in section 6.4.1, which summarises general approaches to learning a second or foreign language, as a way of direct exposure to authentic use of the L2. Finally, the computer is presented as instructional medium together with e.g. audio and video cassettes in section 6.4.2.4., which calls for consideration of the use and relative roles of media for e.g. whole class demonstrations, individual self-instruction, group work or international computer networking of schools or classes.

4.4 Summary and Critical Consideration

Summing up, it can be said that concerning the teaching of writing, both the CEFR and the Austrian L2 curriculum set a focus on the learners' ability to adapt their texts to the context and medium of communication concerning language use and organisation. Furthermore, also some emphasis is put on the familiarisation of learners with a variety of authentic texts and text types. However, although the emphasis on those issues may somehow reflect the principles of the more recent approaches in the teaching of writing, namely genre and socio-cultural, no explicit guidelines are given on how to teach writing that would fully reflect a certain approach. The production strategies, for example, show some similarities with the findings of process approaches. Both documents, therefore, seem to be located in a post-approach/method era and aim at the combination of different approaches in the teaching and learning writing in modern foreign languages.

Concerning the use of new media and technology, also both the Austrian L2 curriculum and the CEFR do not refer to the developments of the last few years. Although they apparently try to stress the importance of the integration of new technologies, by referring to 'computer technology' and 'electronic communication' they stay very general in their expressions and references. The only more concrete examples they give are the use of e-mail and CD-Roms, and thereby are far beyond what could be called 'up-to-datedness'. Referring to the focus of this thesis, there is no single mention of the World Wide Web (which, of course, means that the Web 2.0 technologies are not mentioned either). What is, however, mentioned is the use of the Internet, which today is often equalled with the World Wide Web, although, strictly speaking, this constitutes only one (though the most widely used) part of the Internet.

Although the CEFR makes promising remarks about the importance of considering the medium of text transmission in the production, there is no special consideration of the medium of the screen and its influence on the nature of (written) texts. In addition, the listing of "design competence" as a pragmatic competence in section 5.2.3 seems to carry the notion of the Design concept proposed by the New London Group. This "design competence" is described as the sequencing of a message "according to interactional and transactional schemata". However, although "text design" is again mentioned under 'discourse

competence' in section 5.2.3.1, this does not really seem to refer to the arrangement of multimodal Design elements, but rather to the linguistic and rhetoric structuring or sequencing of traditional text types, such as "essays, formal letters etc.". Thus, even though the CEFR sometimes alludes to concepts that have gained increasing relevance in the last few years, it stays far too unclear and suggestive about the role of new technologies and media for the digital age in which education is located today.

For the future of EFL teaching and learning of writing, it should be acknowledged that new technologies are not just something by which we are surrounded, but by which our lives are heavily influenced. It is probably not the right strategy to demand a "media education", on which e.g. the BMUKK elaborates in the separate document *Medienerziehung - Grundsatzerlass*, and thereby somehow suggests that media education stays separate from the actual or 'real' language teaching issues. In the future, it will not be necessary to integrate new technologies into the language classroom in order to make students only acquainted with their technical functionalities. A weblog should, therefore, not be used with the aim of making students familiar with the technology behind it, since as growing up as a digital generation they will quickly develop the necessary understanding for handling Web technologies from a technical point of view. It should be rather applied for showing students how texts are effectively composed for this medium and how the text composition in the Web is related to issues of research, active reading and participation, parallel knowledge processing and connection, networking and multimodal expression as well as the cultural meaning of various Design elements.

Although the concepts pointed out in chapter 2.5 are still valid for language-based EFL writing and therefore also constitute the bases for writing concepts in the CEFR and the Austrian FL curricula, they will not suffice for valuable education programmes that should prepare students for the increasingly digital future, into which we are moving. The CEFR was published in 2002 and stems from work of a time, in which new technologies were not nearly as pervasive and essential as today. As a result, it treats new technologies rather as an orphan with regard to the influence and importance for language teaching concerns. In its scrutiny in shedding light on the linguistic principles of the foreign language learning process, it bases its propositions mainly on a rather pre-technological world. Although the

CEFR as well as the Austrian curriculum aim at providing teachers with guidelines for equipping students with communicative skills in a foreign language, they to a large extent block out the communicative potentials of new technologies and the changes they pose on FL learning.

Hence, both documents lack the reaction to the bigger picture of a changing society and changing needs. This is particularly relevant for English, which according to David Graddol (2006: 72) steps out of its role as a "foreign language" that is attached to anglophone countries only, and rather adopts the notion of a global language that is widely used for international communication. As a result he sees the role of English teaching in a change, since the "'paradigm shift' away from conventional EFL modes" (2006: 15) requires English teachers to acquire additional skills. As a global language, English, according to Graddol (2006: 15), is less often taught as a subject on its own, and has become a basic skill in globalised communities, just as has the handling of information technology. Thereby, the two documents in question would have to acknowledge that (foreign) language teaching and the handling of ICT should be strongly interconnected in the provision of literacy education, particularly in the case of English.

Although disputed as a real learning theory, Connectivism highlights various valid points of how learning has changed and how this change is closely interwoven with technological developments. The principles of technology-enabled connectedness, networks and communities of practice should be examined in detail and ought to find their way into curricula and governmental regulations on the education system. New literacies and their implications for the teaching of writing should be adopted as concepts in the language curricula and regulations. The pervasiveness and flexibility of technologies, as well as their non-linear and interactive structures, as pointed out by Pachler (2007: 213-220) have a lot of implications for written communication and composition. However, due to the multimodal and distributed nature of information on the Web, writing cannot be seen as separate from other skills as it is still largely presented in the CEFR and Austrian FL curricula. The rather obsolete skill boundaries, which were drawn up particularly for comparison purposes and for regulating assessment, should be loosened in favour of a general orientation towards the teaching and assessing of multiliteracies.

Apparently, the integration of new technologies is a very dynamic and fast changing field, and it is very difficult to make predictions about the future in general and the learners' future needs in particular. This may be one of the reasons why governmental documents on education, such as school curricula and the CEFR, remain very vague when it comes to this topic. This vagueness, however, unfortunately also manifests itself in teacher education and the language classrooms, in which new media like the Web, do not play an essential role and are still regarded as something 'fancy'. In this respect, Will Richardson (2008: ix) points out that

> [w]hile fully 90 percent of our connected students use these social Web technologies in their personal lives, only a small fraction of classrooms have begun to understand fully what these networked learning environments mean.

Therefore, the following sections of this thesis aim to describe what these social Web technologies subsumed under the term Web 2.0 are, why they can be useful for teaching purposes and how they challenge and alter the conventional concepts of writing and thereby lead to changes in teaching as well.

5 The Emergence of the Web 2.0 and its Use for Education

5.1 The Web 2.0

5.1.1 Definition

The term 'Web 2.0' has been around since 2004, when it was coined at a media conference by Tim O'Reilly. The '2.0' is a reference to the version numbers that are given to software products in order to denote that a new, improved version has come out. Still, there is no single explicit definition for what it actually means. Basically, it can be said that 'Web 2.0' is a concept that has become a kind of an umbrella term for new developments and innovations in connection with the World Wide Web. Very often it is described by reference to applications like weblogs, wikis, Youtube, Flickr or Facebook. In order to give a short overview about common definitions, some results of a Google search using "define:Web2.0" are presented in the following:

> The term 'Web 2.0' is commonly associated with Web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design and collaboration on the World Wide Web. (Wikipedia contributors 2010c)

> The second generation of the World Wide Web, especially the movement away from static webpages to dynamic and shareable content and social networking. (Wikipedia contributors 2010d)

> Web 2.0 […] enables people with no specialized technical knowledge to create their own websites, to self-publish, create and upload audio and video files, share photos and information. (Young 2008)

> Web 2.0 does not refer to any specific change in the technology of the Internet, but rather the behaviour of how people use the Internet. (Twinity 2010)

These definitions already include many keywords and phrases that are typically connected and often used with reference to new Web applications, like 'information sharing', 'user-centered', 'collaboration', shareable content', social networking' etc. Tim O'Reilly (2005) describes the Web 2.0 as the "Web as a platform", in the sense that software applications are built on the Web and not on the desktop. However, since the term does not really denote a specific change in technology, it has often been criticised as just a buzzword for marketing purposes. Still, as one of the definitions above points out, there has definitely been a change

in the behaviour of people using the Web, which was triggered by a change in the nature of Web applications. Those developed from being products into personalised and communicative services, to which every user of the Web can make contributions. Therefore, people began to communicate, collaborate and interact via the Web, sharing and organising knowledge and resources in increasingly user-friendly environments. The emphasis of the Web 2.0 on user content and the connection of users, also stresses the social component. As a result, it is also often referred to as the 'Social Web'.

Web 1.0 vs Web 2.0

Clearly, the '2.0' implies that an older version of the Web, the Web 1.0, exists as well. In order to clarify what the Web 2.0 denotes, it is, therefore, interesting to contrast it to its 'older brother'. Although it was designed in 2006, Figure 13 nicely outlines the most obvious differences between the two generations of the Web. The most notable difference probably is in the role of the user. As Jack Maness (2006) points out, "the line between the creation and consumption of content in these environments was blurred", since users create the content of Web 2.0 applications as much as they consume it. This means that while in Web 1.0 environments users usually were mere consumers of content that was published by more or less official organisations, the Web 2.0 gave them the possibility of becoming contributors and producers of content as well. Keeping in mind that the printing press has often been referred to as one of the greatest inventions ever, since it enabled the representation of knowledge in permanent and mobile forms by making manuscripts increasingly available for the public, one understands that it paved the way to mass literacy. Taking up the formulation of Bertram Bruce (2000) when he refers to open-source writing, in the times of the Web 2.0 a similar process is going on, since literally "everybody becomes a printer".

Thereby, not only the amount of user-generated content has changed significantly, as Figure 13 shows, but with it also the number of users and the amount of content as a whole. In contrast to the nearly one-way communication and information exchange of the Web 1.0, the Web 2.0 thereby constitutes a two-way information-communication model. Thus the users' competences changed from being a mere reader to being a reader and a writer, which also lead to the

common distinction between the Web 1.0 as the Read-only Web and the Web 2.0 as the Read-Write Web.
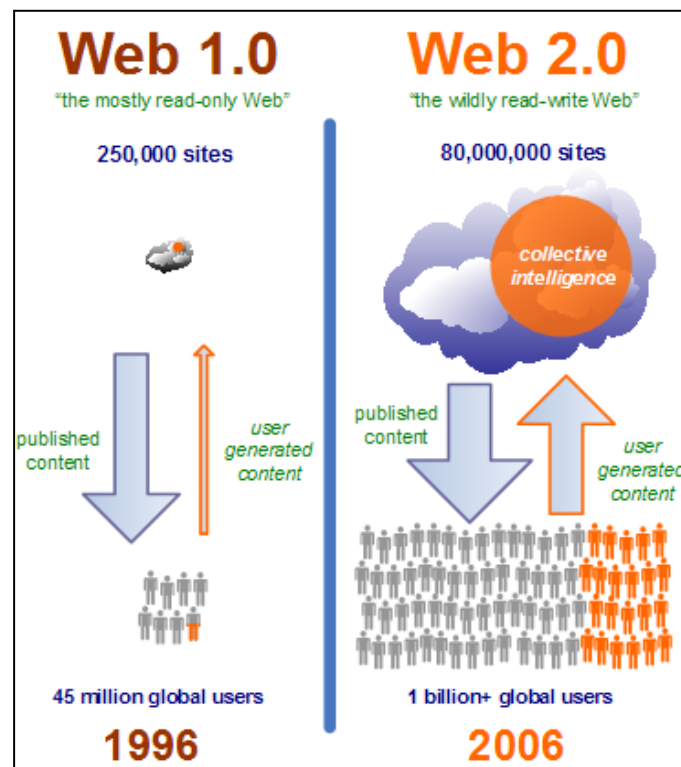
Figure 13: Web 1.0 vs. Web 2.0 (by Dion Hinchcliffe http://web2.socialcomputingjournal.com/)

The reason, why users gradually began to contribute and not only to consume lies in the nature of Web 2.0 applications. Adding content became possible without any special 'nerd' skills, like programming. Web 2.0 services e.g. provide user-friendly editors with WYSIWYG ('what you see is what you get') technology, which makes it relatively easy for people with no specialised knowledge to participate as well. But, obviously 'writing' in this sense does not only refer to written language. Applications like Youtube and Flickr primarily depend on (audio)visual user contributions, and blogs usually include pictures and videos, often in the form of hypermedia links, meaning that different Web 2.0 services are mashed together in one application.

5.1.2 Characteristics

On the level of technical features, the characteristics of the Web 2.0 have been defined with the acronym SLATES by Andrew McAffee (2006) for an "Enterprise 2.0":

- **Search**: The Web 2.0 is searchable for content more easily by keyword search, since the massive amount users meaningfully connects and structures information via linking and rating, which in turn is incorporated by search engines.

- **Links**: Via user-generated links information is grouped and connected meaningfully into an ecosystem, which is analysed by search-engines and therefore facilitates the search for information.

- **Authoring**: The user-friendly authoring tools have triggered a change, since content now mostly consists of the collective work of many people and not of an individual or an organisation. Wiki technology is iterative, which makes it possible to extend, undo or redo the work of other people. In Weblogs work is cumulative, which means that the posts and comments by different users build up over time.

- **Tags:** While in Web 1.0 settings content was arranged around pre-made categories, Web 2.0 services often rely on the users' categorisation of content by adding single-word keywords. Those collections of tags are referred to as 'folksonomies' (in contrast to taxonomies) and are often visually displayed in so-called tag clouds, such as in Figure 14 below.

- **Extensions:** Web 2.0 services often take categorisation one step further and build software extensions that use the information that they get from their users' behaviour in order to learn about their preferences and thereby making recommendations according to the information they get. A well-known example for such extensions is provided by the customer recommendations one gets on Amazon.

- **Signals:** Here McAffee (2006) relates to the use of syndication technology, which notifies the user when content is added, changed or updated. This is e.g. done automatically by RSS (really simple syndication) services, which generate short notices when content is changed. Users can then add the websites they are interested in to their so-called aggregator software, which automatically searches for updates and displays the short notices in chronological order.

Figure 14: Web 2.0 tag cloud (by Luca Cremonini http://www.railsonwave.com/assets/2006/12/25/ Web_2.0_Map.svg)

The tag cloud above outlines the most important or often mentioned concepts that surround the term Web 2.0. This includes technological background features like AJAX, OpenAPIs, XML and CSS, but also actual applications like blogs, wikis, aggregators, podcasting, RSS, as well as characteristics like usability, simplicity, user-centeredness, remixability and mobility. In addition, by referring to sharing, recommendation, collaboration and participation it also gives information on what users actually do with and in the Web 2.0. For educators the social component is probably what makes the Web 2.0 most interesting. The social characteristics regarding the actual user behaviour could be summarised as the following:

Active participation and modification

Since barriers have been lowered by user-friendly design, Web 2.0 applications enable users to participate in creating, changing and updating content, sharing media and knowledge etc. When doing that, they are visible to others and mark themselves as present in the online environment mostly in the form of their avatars, i.e. the online representations of users by usernames and/or pictures or even three dimensional models, such as in Second Life and computer games. In addition, Web 2.0 services are often modifiable in terms of their appearance and content. Blogs, for example, can be personalised in their design. Apart from that, content is mashable, which means that resources from different applications can be integrated into another application. Referring to a blog, this means that users

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would integrate podcasts, pictures from Flickr, as well as videos from Youtube. This stresses the multimodal and multisensory aspect of creating and consuming Web content.

Interaction and collaboration

Usually Web 2.0 services that are based on social participation depend on the users' interaction with each other by e.g. commenting, rating, ranking, giving feedback etc. Since interaction is made simple and unproblematic, getting into contact with like-minded people is facilitated. The setup of Web 2.0 applications makes it, therefore, interesting to communities of practice with professional as well as private interests to communicate, exchange opinions and share ideas. Apart from that, the setup of many Web 2.0 applications facilitates collaborative activities like working on projects. This is especially useful for business-life and education.

User-generated content

As already mentioned before, the content is typically added by the users themselves. This can happen either individually, e.g. by blog posts or collaboratively, by working on a wiki. In addition, the content is not limited to mere text, but ranges from picture uploads onto sites like Flickr to the presentation contributions to a site like Slideshare. Those applications, therefore, automatically offer space in which work can be published and presented to a wide audience, which can respond and give feedback. This already leads to the next point, which stresses the sharing abilities within the Web 2.0.

Knowledge and media sharing

Since the Web 2.0 is also defined by its openness, users share their ideas and knowledge, as well as various media products. Sites like Flickr and Youtube depend on the users' picture and video uploads. Blogging and microblogging rely on users sharing their own ideas, personal as well as public news. McLoughlin and Lee (2007: 666) see the reason, why people decide to share all of that, in the "architecture of participation", which "ensures that Web 2.0 is responsive to users". Furthermore, they point out that participation, knowledge sharing and working cooperatively result in the creation of collective intelligence, or as it is often called the 'wisdom of the crowds'. This is based on the principle that communities can be more productive than individual people who work in isolation. A famous example

for that is Wikipedia, the content of which is dynamic, expanding and increasingly valuable due to the power of the knowledge-sharing by the many contributors. (McLoughlin&Lee 2007: 666-667)

The following table gives an overview of the most widely used services and applications, categorised and grouped according to their main purposes:

Category	Description	Examples
Social networking	Facilitates finding and meeting people; Based on user generated content, the ‚power of the crowd' and networking effects	www.myspace.com www.facebook.com www.linkedin.com www.xing.com www.secondlife.com
Social media	- User generated content - Spreading news and information on a variety of topics	www.twitter.com www.blogger.com
Multimedia sharing	- Sharing of videos, pictures, presentations, works of art and documents - Often combined with rating, tagging and commenting functions	www.youtube.com www.flickr.com www.slideshare.com www.deviantart.com www.scribd.com
Social Bookmarking	- Distributed classification systems - Creation of „folksonomies" - Collection of bookmarks and Web resources that can be tagged and shared with others	www.delicious.com http://www.netvouz.com/ http://www.diigo.com/
Aggregation services	- New (updated) information (e-mail, news feeds) is gathered from various websites and published on one site; - RSS technology - Information mashups	http://www.google.com/ig www.netvibes.com www.digg.com http://www.blogbridge.com/
Data mash-ups	- Web application hybrid - Data and functionality from different sources is mashed together to create a new service - E.g. Wiki + Google maps	http://wikimapia.org/ http://chir.ps/ http://www.earthalbum.com/
Tracking and filtering content	- Filter and analyse the massive and steadily growing amount of Web 2.0 applications - Facilitate keeping track	www.technorati.com http://www.blogpulse.com http://blogsearch.google.com/ http://www.wikinside.com/ http://www.twazzup.com/

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	and searching of blog entries, wikis, Twitter posts, audio and video material etc.	http://www.blinkx.com/ http://elzr.com/imagery
Collaborating	▪ Collaborative reference works and publishing tools ▪ Built with wiki-like software	www.wikipedia.com http://www.squidoo.com/ http://www.wikia.com/wiki/Wikia
	▪ Web-based document tools that replicate desktop applications ▪ Office-style software in the browser ▪ Allow collaborative editing	http://www.zoho.com/ http://docs.google.com

Table 2: Categorising Web 2.0 applications (modified from Anderson 2007: 13)

5.2 Web 2.0 Applications and their Utilisation in the Classrom

Since some of these core concepts, like interaction and collaboration, have been buzzwords in education and especially in language pedagogy for quite a long time, the Web 2.0 is increasingly being explored as a medium for educational purposes. Many of the tools in Table 1 have already been used for educational purposes in a variety of subjects. For the language classroom, and especially for writing purposes, the use of blogs, microblogs as well as wikis and collaborative editing tools seem to be of special relevance, and, therefore, will be discussed in some more detail in the following.

5.2.1 Weblogs

Weblogs are often referred to as the tools around which the whole concept of the Web 2.0 with its participatory and collaborative nature developed. In addition, they are all about producing written content, and, therefore, constitute a valuable tool for teaching writing. Davies and Merchant (2009: 23) also refer to the blog as "one of the most well-established and well-known Web 2.0 applications". This certainly is connected to the fact that weblogs make publishing content very easy. In earlier times, one had to have knowledge of HTML editors or programming in order to create a website. The WYSIWYG ('what you see is what you get') editors that are used for blogs work in similar ways as word processors. Creating content for a blog, therefore, from a technical point of view, has become nearly as easy as writing an e-mail. This has lead to an enormous growth in the number of blogs. Technorati.com (2009) issued an impressive statistic about the 'blogosphere' in 2008, stating that since 2002 133 million blogs have been indexed, and that a blog is created every half-second.

These numbers of course raise the question who blogging works and why it has become so popular. Basically, a weblog can be described as a website that is usually maintained by an individual person as his or her private online journal. The owner of a blog, also referred to as 'blogger', usually updates content frequently by writing regular blog posts, which are often compared to diary entries. These are displayed in a reverse chronological order, meaning that the most recent post is always placed at the top of the page. In order to categorise content and to make information retrieval easier, every blog post is usually tagged with a few appropriate keywords. By clicking on such a keyword, the reader can find all blog

posts with similar content. This is necessary and useful since, due to their organisation, blogs only show the most recent blog posts and store the older ones in an archive according to their date of publication.

Another typical feature of a weblog is the title bar at the top of the site and the title line at the top of every blog post, which is also displayed in a feed reader when someone subscribes to the blog content. This means that it is possible to be notified of blog updates by the usually integrated RSS technology. Apart from the title bar at the top, blogs are usually framed by sidebars, which contain links to different websites or links to other (related) weblogs. Those link sections are also referred to as blogrolls, and serve the purpose of "public displays of connection", which is a social networking strategy for "showing allegiances as well as a way of forging new ones" (Davies & Merchant 2009: 29). In addition, blog posts usually contain hyperlinks in order to connect ideas and corresponding resources. The embedding of videos, images and audiofiles and other features from Web applications, like Youtube, Flickr or podcasting services, also denotes a frequent practice in weblogs. Due to advances in technology, multimedia incorporation has become easier and has led to the emergence of photo blogs and video blogs ('vlogs'), the material of which can also be uploaded via mobile phones. This practice is also called mob-blogging (Anderson 2007: 8).

Figure 15 below depicts and highlights parts of a more or less 'typical' weblog, which was created with blogspot.com software, and contains many of the features discussed beforehand.

Blog title

Title of the latest blog post

Reverse chronological order of posts

Web 2.0 Teaching Tools

This site lists Web 2.0 websites and webtools have potential for use college and university teaching. Please let me know of any additional tools that you think should be posted here. - Alan

RSS subscription to blog posts

Sunday, January 25, 2009

ClassTools.net - Free Flash for Online Teaching

Links

subscribe to this Blog's RSS

SUBSCRIBE

BOOKMARK

Bookmarking option

Embedded image

classtools.net

free flash templates for educators

home   samples   about   contact   tell a friend   flyer

Select a Template

overview

about

ClassTools.net allows you to create free educational games, activities and diagrams in a Flash! Host them on your own blog, website or intranet! No signup, no passwords, no charge!

ScreenCast: Saving your Template

ClassTools.net provides free, customizable Flash templates to embed into blogs, wikis and websites. There is no signup, no passwords, no charges... Read more...

most popular templates

faq

Arcade Game Generator!

Flashcard Generator

what am I doing...

What?!?! Landing at KUL, I saw an AirAsia jet with an Oakland Raiders shield on its tail and "RAIDERS" written across the plane's body.

1 day ago

follow alew at http://twitter.com

BLOGBURST

JOIN EFF TODAY

DIRECTORY

Visitor locations

Integration of other applications (e.g. Twitter)

So it has been quite a few months since I was last inspired enough to talk about something on this blog. However, I was going through my list of new Twitter followers today (again, something I

ClassTools.net

Venn Diagram

1

TEST

Alan

Test

Test 1

Test 1-3

Test 1-3

Test 1-2-3

Test 3

Test 2

Test 2-3

3

2

NEW Web2.0 Training Course February 12& 2009, Central London - BOOK NOW!

Flash Powerpoint Web-ready Flash from PowerPoint presentations & narration. Try free.

Interactive Lessons For all interactive Whiteboards and Slates by RM Easiteach.

Teacher Certification Earn your teacher's certification or licence online. Fast & flexible.

Make PowerPoint Graphics Great Graphics for Presentations See Examples. Free Trial!

Join the Community (provided by MyBlogLog)

Related Blogs and Podcasts

Podcasting, Teaching + Learning Blog

Adult Education + Technology Blog

Blogroll

Blog Archive

▼ 2009 (1)

▼ January (1)

ClassTools.net - Free Flash for Online Teaching

► 2008 (3)

► 2007 (27)

► 2006 (36)

Archive of blog posts

Hyperlinks to other websites

The current 17 templates are:

Arcade Game Generator!

Flashcard Generator

Countdown Timer

Random Name Picker

Dustbin Game

Post It

Contributors

Alan A. Lew

The Travel Geographer

'About' pages

Author's name and date of publication

This is a very useful teaching tool that I plan to try out in my online classes.

Posted by Alan A. Lew at 1/25/2009 11:41:00 AM 4 comments Links to this post

Labels: flash, games, online teaching, teach 2.0, teaching, web design

Tags to label the blog content

Blog post mailing service

Friday, May 23, 2008

Top 5 Quiz Generators for Online Educators

Next blog post

Number of comments to this post

Figure 15: Weblog on Web 2.0 teaching tools by Alan Lew (http://web20teach.blogspot.com/)

Blogs can, therefore, be described as kind of website, which can be easily created and update, and where an author can instantly publish on the World Wide Web from any Internet connection (Richardson 2009: 17). However, they are not only a publishing tool, but also a valuable platform for discussion. By their very nature, blogs are public, meaning that basically every Internet user can search for them, read them and make comments on them. In contrast to traditional websites, where comments can only be attached to the website as a whole, e.g. in form of an integrated guestbook or discussion board, in blogs discussion threads can be attached to each piece of content separately. Bryan Alexander (2006: 33) explains that the reverse chronological order of blogs constitutes a completely different rhetorical purpose than traditional webpages, which do not contain inherent timelines. Blogs tend to focus on "microcontent" and thereby "break away from the page metaphor" and the "notion of the Web as a book" (Alexander 2006: 33).

This organisation of microcontent facilitates interaction via discussions and exchanges of views, turning the nature of blogs into

> what Yale University Law professor, Yochai Benkler, calls a 'weighted conversation' between a primary author and a group of secondary comment contributors, who communicate to an unlimited number of readers (Anderson 2007: 7)

This also adds to the nature of the Web content itself, which is not totally static, but constantly updated by either new posts or by reflections and conversations based on older posts. The possibility of exchanging views easily and of referring to each others' opinions and findings on a certain topic soon led to the emergence of a variety of blogging communities, consisting of many individual bloggers interested in the same topic. The subject areas, around which a blog is built, differ greatly, just as the interests of people do. There are blogs about photography, gardening, as well as about linguistics or education, just to name a few examples. Therefore, weblogs as a genre cannot be defined by their semantic content, but rather by their similar textual layout pointed out above.

Davies and Merchant (2009: 25) summarise some of the most popular types of blogs as the following:

- Academic updates
- Community art projects
- Citizen journalism
- Corporate news

- Personal journals
- Fiction/creative writing
- Fan sites
- Gadget showcase
- Hobby/personal interests

An interesting fact about weblog authorship is identified by Warschauer and Grimes (2007: 8). As opposed to traditional Web documents and pages, where information about the author can be found only rarely, weblogs have a strong authorial voice, and personal ownership and authorship is highlighted. Usually at its bottom every blog post is identified with either the real name or a pseudonym of the author, and in most cases additional information is given in the 'Site information' or 'About' section. Hence, Warschauer and Grimes (2007: 8) point out that the so-called "death of the author", which was predicted by post-structuralists, seemed to have come true with the arrival of traditional Web 1.0 websites, but does no longer hold in the days of blogging.

In that respect, blogs also strongly differ from bulletin or discussion boards, the traditional discussion tools on the Web, since a weblog is "attached to an individual who has ownership of his or her discussions and reader contributions" (Jones 2006: 73). The notion of self-publishing thereby stresses ownership as well as responsibility for online content, which is not the case in discussion boards that can, for instance, be found on electronic learning management systems, like Blackboard, WebCT or Moodle. These belong to the course teacher and are often protected by passwords and thereby separated from the Internet community. The speciality of blogs is that they are usually open to the global Web community and, hence, that theoretically everyone could read the published content and respond to it. Thereby, blogs offer an immediate wide audience, constitute places for self-expression, foster the handling of multimodal text creation, and provide facilities for interaction and (quick) feedback. (Jones 2006: 73-74)

Weblogs in the classroom

Those characteristics and features of blogs did not only result in their becoming the flagship of the Web 2.0, but also unleashed an ever-growing amount of work by educators on how to use blogs as tools for the classroom. They were soon represented as an "ideal platform of student writing" (Jones 2006: 75), stressing that their commenting function is valuable for educational purposes, like feedback

provision, reflection, participation, discussion, as well as collaboration. Jones (2006:12) summarises the possible classroom applications that have been suggested by educators using blogs as the following:

> (a) learning journals, (b) learning logs or thinking journals, (c) reflective journals, (d) audio learning logs, (e) reflective writing journals, (f) visual learning logs, (g) group discussion and collaborative writing spaces, (h) knowledge mangagement, (i) dialogue for group work, (j) e-portfolios

Adapted from Will Richardson (2009: 20-26) the most popular uses of weblogs in schools could be categorised as the following:

- **Classroom management:**

  Some educators use weblogs as a kind of a class portal, which allows efficient updating, posting and archiving of course material, such as handouts, homework assignments, presentations, but also resources like class rules, the curriculum or the syllabus. This makes it also transparent for others to see what is happening in the class, and, therefore, could also be interesting for parents or the school community as a whole.

- **Online filling space:**

  Richardson (2009: 22) points out that by posting work on a blog, a class could go paperless, and in addition make all the work available for teacher as well as peer response. He talks of a "digital filling cabinet", where work can be archived. This has some obvious advantages: it is organised in one place and, therefore, enables reflective activities; it can be shared with others and thereby makes the student's work also visible for parents; it is searchable and trackable for both students and the teacher, and altogether provides a kind of record of learning, which can be very useful.

- **E-portfolio:**

  All of those opportunities already point towards the usage of a blog as a kind of e-portfolio, where a learners can collect the work they have done, and select and highlight what they regard as their best work. Through the commenting function they can also easily reflect on the choices, and publish everything immediately to a virtual audience. For teachers that would facilitate keeping track on the student's progress and could also provide a valuable means for assessment purposes.

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- **Collaboration & discussion:**

  According to Richardson (2009:23) weblogs have great potential in offering a space where students can collaborate with each other in the building of content/knowledge. Since blogs are open to the public, collaboration could even take place with professionals and experts, as well with other students from all over the world. This follows the concepts of 'communities of practice', peer review and cooperative learning, which have been already identified as relevant issues by genre and post-process approaches to teaching writing. At the same time, weblogs can be used for classroom discussion activities. As democratic tools, they also give a voice to shy learners, who are afraid to participate in oral classroom discussions.

Richardson (2009: 29) also identifies weblogs as a new writing genre, since they demand and foster a particular kind of writing, which he calls "connective writing". This is constituted by a process, which starts with critical and careful reading, in order to identify ideas for writing. In this process bloggers also have to consider purpose and audience, which requires critical thinking skills. A blog post is often created by the synthesis of the reading of many texts. Therefore, bloggers must identify connections and point out the significance of those connections. During that process bloggers are engaged in complex editorial decisions, since they are writing to a wide audience. In addition, connective writing does not end with the publication of the post. Since readers can respond and give feedback, they interact with existing posts, which means that blogging continues and "a true blog post is never really finished" (Richardson 2009: 30).

The fact that an open blog immediately has a wide audience that can potentially interact with the content also has a lot of implications for teaching, since the work becomes relevant in the world outside the classroom door. Many educators see this as a great motivational factor for students, as it may change the way they think about their work. Especially in the EFL/ESL field, scholars argue that the use of weblogs offers many reading and writing incentives. It is also often pointed out that the knowledge of having an audience leads students to produce higher quality work (Jones 2006: 12). Blogging for ESL/EFL purposes was first introduced by Campell (2003), who differentiates between three types of blogs:

- the **tutor** blog, which e.g. gives reading practice, promotes exploration of websites, encourages written discussion by posting questions or riddles, provides syllabus or general class information and gives resource links for self-study.
- the **learner** blog, which is said to be best suited for reading and writing EFL/ESL classes, can either be maintained by an individual or a group of learners, as writing journals or as templates for personal expression.
- the **class** blog, which is "the result of the collaborative effort of an entire class", can be used for project work and/or international classroom language exchange.

With regard to the potential of blogs for ESL/EFL teaching and learning, Jones (2006: 13) points out that blogging is often argued to increase the production of language and augment proficiency through writing and dialog. In addition, she refers to findings of scholars, stating that blogs encourage students to write more and to publish their work with confidence. Apart from that, writing and reading are practised in an integrated manner. Also Campbell (2003) points out that EFL/ESL learner blogs have great potential to enhance their second/foreign language and literacy skills. Jones (2006: 79) indicates that blogging can be used as a means to contribute to different writing approaches, like process writing (through representing and expressing self and identity forming), post-process writing (through collaboration and interaction, community building ad disseminating of information), as well as to product writing (through the building of greater correctness in grammar and expression) and genre writing (through the recognition of audience, context and purpose).

Therefore, with regard to EFL writing, blogs do not only serve to increase motivation and purpose. They are also regarded as helpful for learners who struggle with reading and writing skills, for students can work on small chunks of texts that are archived and increase in difficulty over time (Kajder & Bull 2003: 32-33). Moreover, the possibility of using blogs as collaborative writing tools for small groups, as well as the confrontation with a real audience, also adds to an understanding of writing as a social activity and to more responsibility for written works. This is one of the reasons why scholars recurringly argue that writing

regularly on personal blogs improve the students' writing skills. (Fernheimer & Nelson 2003: 5-6)

However, although there is great enthusiasm about the use of blogs for promoting all kind of skills and competences, Davies and Merchant (2009: 31) point out that blogs in themselves do not promote new kinds of learning through social participation and that they also do not automatically involve new literacy practices. Through their social and technical affordances they only present opportunities for this kind of work, but as with every educational tool the important factor is what teachers actually do with it.

5.2.2 Microblogging/Twitter

Twitter is a relatively simple application, which allows real-time publishing and communication. In its functions it unites features of a blog, a newsreader, a social networking site and a cell phone or an IM tool. It was officially launched in 2006 and by now has become the most popular microblogging system, which it is also officially referred to. In contrast to a normal blog, you only have a limited number of characters for each post in a microblog. In Twitter, the posts are usually referred to as 'tweets' and must not exceed 140 characters. Still, it shares some similarities with a blog, as every user has his or her own log, where the postings are published in a reverse chronological order. Figure 16 below shows a sample Twitter page setup and highlights its functions.

If you want to receive real-time updates of the postings by other twitterers automatically, you can become their so-called 'follower'. This is quite similar to subscribing to a blog by using a newsreader, as you will receive their status-updates in your personal timeline in reverse chronological order. Following someone does not imply that the person or organisation has to follow you as well. Although it is also possible to prevent other twitterers from following you by blocking them, this means that you do not necessarily have to create a formal friendship to see the updates from other people, as it is often the case on social networking sites like Facebook. However, Twitter also shares similarities with those, as every twitterer is encouraged to share some basic information about himself on his own Twitter log, as well as a photo, which appears next to the person's tweets. Apart from that, the application aims at establishing networks with

family, friends, colleagues, and also with professionals from the same field or with people who just share the same interests from across the whole world.

One special thing about Twitter is the possibility of using the text messaging function of a mobile phone to send tweets to a certain number, from which they will then be published on your account. The fact that twittering also works without Internet connection, enables cell phone owners to stay in touch with their network of followers wherever they are. Statistics say that twitterers only rarely use the actual Twitter website, which is shown in Figure 16 below, to read and write tweets, as it is relatively slow and often is claimed not to have an appealing user interface. However, there are numerous external applications, like, for instance, *Tweetdeck* or *Echofon*, which integrate Twitter into the browser, and let the new tweets pop up in the bottom for a few seconds. In connection to the briefness of the posts this somehow reminds of an instant messaging system.

After having signed up to Twitter, in the beginning everything seemed to be based on the question 'What are you doing?'. This, however, was a bit misleading and also fostered relatively trivial tweets of the type 'I am eating an apple'. Since it has evolved into a vital tool for spreading information and sharing resources quickly, and, therefore, is increasingly used also by organisations, companies and news services, this question was not that appropriate any more. This is probably why in November 2009 the question was suddenly changed to 'What's happening?'.

Regarding the opportunities of its use, Grosseck and Holotescu (2008: 3) point out that Twitter is new in the sense that it combines personal publishing and communication. They summarise that Twitter is used "to communicate, to ask questions, to ask for directions, support, advice, and to validate open-ended interpretations or ideas by discussing with the others". Being a text-based application, Twitter gives its users the possibility of sharing various Web resources and also links to uploaded photos, for instance, via the *Twitpic* application. As the space is very limited, URLs are usually shortened before they are published. By placing @ in front of his or her name, you can address another twitterer directly. Still, everyone else who has a look at your personal timeline will be able to read this tweet, and it will pop up in their timeline if they are following the addressed person as well. This could be avoided by sending someone a direct message, for which 'DM' has to be placed in front of the username.

It also has to be mentioned that Twitter has a full text search. However, with the intention of bringing some order into the massive amount of published tweets, the system of hashtagging was developed. This tries to mirror the common practice of tagging content, which Twitter misses. After following the Twitter user @hashtags, everyone can group their tweets by adding the hash symbol (#) in front of the keywords. This allows searching for tweets on certain topics like #EFL or #teaching, which facilitates following a matter of interest, provided that people use the same hashtag for the same topic. However, for private purposes this practice has also developed into a way of adding irony to statements.
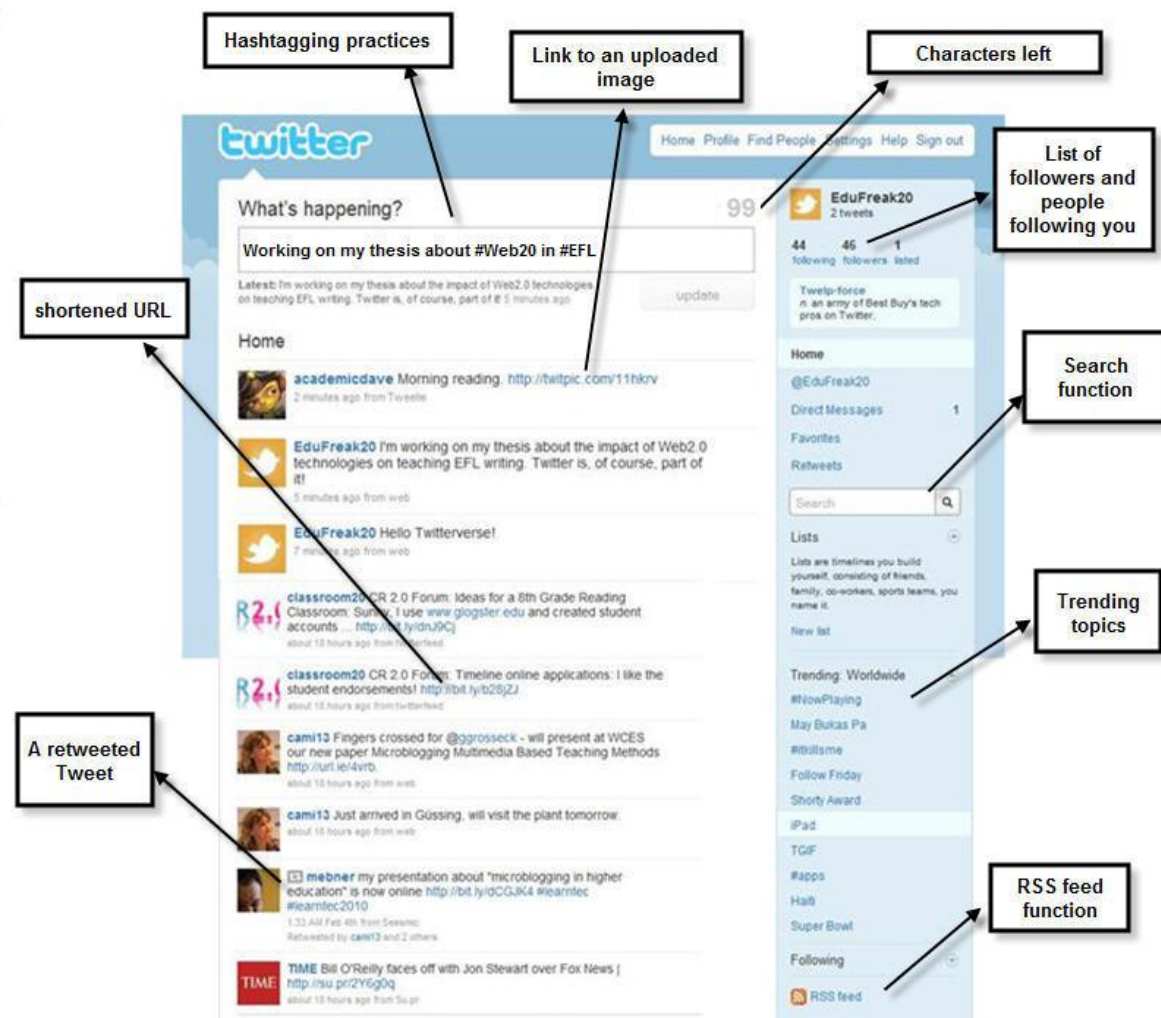
Figure 16: Sample Twitter page

Apart from the many private users, Twitter is increasingly discovered by politicians and parties from all over the world to inform about election events, or by newspapers and services, like the New York Times or CNN, to give mini-news updates. Often there are whole organisations or companies behind one Twitter account, who use Twitter for PR and marketing purposes. In addition, many (professional) bloggers found their way to Twitter in order to promote their blogs and thereby to attract new readers. Twitter is also well-known for the growing number of twittering celebrities, like Ashton Kutcher (the first twitterer with more than 1 000000 followers), who at least seem to share a bit of their private life with their fans. Due to the possibility of accessing it via cell phone, the application has also developed into a powerful tool for organising and informing about political uprisings, like the opposition protests in Iran after the 2009 elections.

Twitter in the classroom

Twitter has already been used as a teaching tool for various subjects at different levels. However, the enthusiasm of educators regarding the use of Twitter is not nearly as big as with blogs, about which a lot has been published and for which even own pedagogies have been devised. This is probably connected to the fact that Twitter can be quite messy and has a high amount of 'noise'. It does not offer nice archiving and organising options such as can be found in blogs. Will Richardson (2009: 87) points out that "Twitter is a bit too Wild West for most school situations". This is why educators felt the urge to create alternatives like e.g. *YouthTwitter.com*, which has been devised for educational settings. There, students can post their updates in an environment that can only be accessed with permission. However, the question is whether it is sensible to use a tool like that and at the same time isolate the students from the real world and the interesting dynamics of the 'Twitterverse'. After all, there are educators who use(d) Twitter in the classroom successfully. In the following, I will briefly summarise three different teaching scenarios, in which Twitter has been employed in an educational setting for different purposes.

- **Collaborative writing tool**

  It was, for instance, used as a collaborative writing tool by George Mayo, an eighth grade English teacher at Silver Spring International Middle School in Maryland. Via his *manyvoices* Twitter account he invited his own students, but

also other students from around the world to tweet contributions to an ongoing story. After six weeks of tweeting, the collaboratively written story, which contained contributions by more than 100 students from six different countries, was finished (Ash 2008). This teaching project shows that Twitter has a strong interactive component and can be valuable for stimulating group work, in this case even with students from all over the globe. Due to its setup, which is all based on collaboration, it is probably most suitable for group work activities. It has special implications for the use in big groups, as the postings must be kept short so that the participants do not end up with page long contributions by every group member.

- **Background tool for written discussion**

In order to "combat student apathy" (Kirkpatrick 2009), Monica Rankin, a history professor at the University of Texas, uses Twitter during her lectures as a background tool for written discussion. By adding a set weekly hashtag, students comment, ask questions and even give feedback on the lecture. This happens via laptops and mobile phones, but students can also write their comments on a sheet of paper, and they will be published on Twitter later on. During the lecture, the tweets are even projected on the wall, and Rankin suggests that the students should refer back to them when studying. She claims that now more students are participating in classroom discussions than they used to. Taking this 'conference use' of Twitter as a role model, it could also be valuable for input-oriented classroom sessions that are based on a longer teacher talking time. Of course, this would lead to a kind of underground discussion beneath the actual classroom happenings, which can also be regarded as a distracting element. The teacher would have to be able to tolerate that students use their mobile phones or laptops for tweeting.

- **Organisation and reflection**

The third example illustrates how Twitter can be employed as a tool for organisational as well as reflective activities. In his blog, H. Songhai (2009), a media literacy instructor at the Hope Charter School in Philadelphia, describes that in his classroom Twitter is used by the students to mark themselves present. He also posts class news, announcements and project updates on Twitter, and encourages his students to follow noted bloggers, politicians and

news services. In addition, students use Twitter as a tool for reflection, listing what they accomplished in class every day. This was established as a regular part of classroom routine. In the *7 things you should know* article about Twitter, Educause (2007b: 2) points out that being used as a tool for thinking and reflecting on the learning process in a short and written form, Twitter fosters metacognition. The use of Twitter in the classroom but also e.g. during homework assignments is part of an active learning strategy, which can effectively contribute to comprehension and retention.

For such a purpose the restriction to 140 character postings can be an advantage, since students will not feel the pressure to fill pages with their reflective thoughts, and, therefore, might feel more motivated to use it. In general, concerning its use for the language classroom this limitation may be regarded as Twitter's biggest strength and biggest weakness at the same time. In contrast to a blog, where students can elaborate on a topic in more depth and in as much detail as they want, Twitter updates are argued to be of a quite superficial nature. This, of course, limits its possibilities of use. For reflective and metacognitive activities, as well as for organisational updates by the teacher, the restriction may be quite useful. Also as a tool for group work discussion, sharing online resources and activities like brainstorming, the restriction in length provides an advantage. Brainstorming in a class blog, for instance, may lead to the students writing lengthy contributions, which probably no one else will read due to the phenomenon of having a kind of a reading blockade at the sight of a long text.

From a language specific point of view, this restriction, however, of course, influences grammatical accuracy and correct spelling, which (have to) suffer in favour of content. Therefore, most of the language that can be found in Twitter tweets may not meet the usual EFL classroom requirements of accuracy. Due to the restriction in length it has developed its own discursive grammar. Whether this is seen as a disadvantage or as an advantage in EFL teaching clearly depends on one's point of view of language learning. Twitter certainly does not serve as a role model for 'good' and 'correct' language, but it serves as a model for language use in Twitter itself, as well as in chatting, instant messaging and text messaging. Thereby it can be used to make students aware of the fact that different settings require different choices of language, not only in their native language but also in

English. Therefore, in Twitter students are confronted with content that is reliable in the sense that it is authentic language for this particular genre of writing.

In contrast to blogging, where connections have to be found and established first, students' joining of Twitter will connected to the 'real' world communities more immediately, since they can have a look at the public timeline or the Twitter 'trending topics', which mirror the most widely discussed keywords for either the whole Twitter community or for a certain country/area, which can be chosen. This information might be interesting as a stimulus for classroom discussion. Concerning the use of tweets for language purposes, the Twitter search function could be interesting, since a search for a certain vocabulary, phrase or grammatical construction would provide a lot of short and authentic example sentences. Thereby Twitter would function as a kind of corpus.

It, however, has to be taken into account that the content appears unfiltered, meaning that students could be confronted with sexually explicit, violence-glorifying and other content that is regarded as inappropriate for teaching purposes. Another critique concerning the content is that it is often of a trivial or inane nature, and does not have any real informational value. As a result of the former dominating question 'What are you doing?', many statements are similar to 'I'm watching TV', 'I'm eating nuts' etc. However, here the question could be raised whether for the EFL classroom even such statements could be relevant with regard to language use and also even with regard to culture learning.

Since Twitter is a text-based application, its primary and most apparent value lies in practising writing and, in connection, also reading skills. The application has given rise to a new form of communication across the globe, which is limited to 140 characters. This means that the system itself demands from students to be brief and to the point. Good summarising skills are very important and certainly not only useful for Twitter itself. However, what always has to be kept in mind is that Twitter is of a very short-lived and ephemeral nature, since it does not provide easy storing and retrieving options in its architecture.

This is often regarded as a big disadvantage, compared to other tools like weblogs or discussion boards. Although the latter do not connect the students to the 'real' world as directly as Twitter does, Terry Freedman (2007) points out that they are probably more fruitful when it comes to asking questions and searching for

interaction. The reason for that does not only lie in the fact that a tweet reaches only the circle of followers (unless someone searches for a certain keyword or hashtag). It will most probably only be read by people who are online at the time the tweet is published, since the chances that a person will scroll through and read all the tweets since his or her last log-in are not that high, especially if their 'following' list is long. A weblog entry or a thread in a discussion board will be visible for a longer time, and can be retrieved quite easily.

5.2.3 Wikis

Although wikis are not as popular Web 2.0 applications as blogs, one of the most famous Web 2.0 flagships concerning collaboration and user-generated content, Wikipedia, is based on wiki technology. This is already revealed by the first part of its name, which is said to be a short form of the Hawaian *wiki-wiki*, meaning 'quick'. This online open-source encyclopaedia is one of the ten most visited Web sites in the world and about 15 times as big as the as the next largest English language encyclopedia, the Encyclopedia Britannica (Warschauer&Grimes 2007: 9-10). It contains millions of entries in over 200 languages. In contrast to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Wikipedia is not created in the context of scholarly expertise, since the authors are not identifiable and not necessarily experts in their fields. The information in the Encyclopedia Britannica is known to have been checked, verified and professionally edited, which adds to its textual authority and makes people regard it as a trusted text with a valuable source of knowledge that is often regarded as "permanent, lasting and immutable" (Davies&Merchant 2009: 90).

Wikipedia is different, since it is a free open-source application, the content of which is collaboratively created by all the people who want to contribute to it. Since this could be experts as well as novices and lay persons, Wikipedia is claimed not to be a trustworthy source. Basically, anybody could publish anything, and the principal author of the text cannot be identified. As with many Web 2.0 applications the line between audience and author is blurred. Davies and Merchant (2009: 93) explain that

> not being able to establish a specific author goes against the academic tradition of clear citation and the educational emphasis on individual contribution.

The shared authorship and collaborative creation of text, therefore, adds to the 'death of the author', in contrast to blogging practices. Since scholarliness of the writer cannot be proven, people assume that they cannot trust what they read. This distrust in Wikipedia, however, does not seem to be justified. Warschauer and Grimes (2007: 10) summarise the findings of some studies about Wikipedia's accuracy, stating that in terms of content and linguistic features the two encyclopaedias (Britannica and Wikipedia) are roughly comparable.

But how is that possible, if basically everyone can add content, even deliberately false one? Wikipedia is a perfect example of harnessing the power of the wisdom of crowds. A great number of people build up a great corpus of knowledge, which is edited over and over again and, therefore, becomes increasingly valuable, since mistakes and false content are soon eradicated. Also unreferenced texts and those that are highly opinionated are claimed to be quickly deleted. The opportunity to repeatedly change and edit content, also provides a big advantage over traditional encyclopaedias, the monolithic and permanent characteristics of which leads to the content to become easily out of date. They often contain obsolete or disproved facts, since they cannot be kept up-to-date as easily as Wikipedia. This is, for instance, problematic when it comes to statistical information. (Davies&Merchant 2009: 90)

Since Wikipedia is open-source and everybody is free to add and edit content, its repertoire is ever-expanding and can never be regarded as complete. While for many this is a reason to distrust its content, Davies and Merchant (2009: 91) argue that "what may seem like textual and factual vulnerability to some simply reflects our world that is forever changing". As Wikipedia articles consist of a huge number of hyperlinks it also reflects the parallel character of knowledge construction in our technological age. The way the published content is negotiated by many contributors also reflects the democratic and social constructivist nature of collaboration, which can be easily retrieved by the 'discussion' and 'history' view of a certain article. Examples for a revision history and a discussion section of two different Wikipedia articles are shown in Figure 17 and 18 below.

Figure 17: Revision history of the "EFL" entry on Wikipedia

Figure 18: Discussion section on the "Web 2.0" article on Wikipedia

This discussion of Wikipedia, as an example of wikis, already contains a few important issues of how wiki technology and the creation of content within wikis work. Wikipedia (2010b) itself is probably the best source to give a definition of what a wiki actually is:

> A **wiki** (pronounced /ˈwɪki/ *WIK-ee*) is a website that allows the easy[1] creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language or a

WYSIWYG text editor.[2][3] Wikis are typically powered by wiki software and are often used to create collaborative websites, to power community websites, for personal note taking, in corporate intranets, and in knowledge management systems.

This citation already demonstrates the high amount of interlinked content. All the underlined words lead to new wiki pages that contain information on the topic. The fact that a wiki consists of many hyperlinked pages that refer to each other makes the content navigable. Since it consists of many different pages, a wiki seems to have a more book-like setup than weblogs. However, the hyperlinking of content also nicely mirrors how information is presented, structured and retrieved not in a sequenced but a parallel way.

Wikis are by their nature collaborative tools which facilitate group work and the immediate publishing of content. Usually every wiki page has an edit function, with which every user can change, delete and add content within a text editor. This level of openness is also subject to much criticism, since it can lead to problems with malicious editing and vandalism. In the case of Wikipedia itself, it is argued that such acts of vandalism are usually eradicated quite quickly. Still, many people prefer to create wikis with restricted access for registered users, especially when it comes to professional work groups. (Anderson 2007: 8-9)

Since also within restricted access environments every group member can change and add anything, one would expect wikis to be quite messy. However, they are still popular for group work and retain their usefulness thanks to the generally integrated history function, which tracks and lists the changes that have been made to the content, together with the username and the date. In addition, they usually have a rollback function, which then also restores previous versions of the page in question (Anderson 2007:8-9). Well developed wiki software also includes a discussion function, in which changes of and contributions to content can be discussed and negotiated between the users. Therefore, although authorship is shared, this must not automatically lead to the ultimate death of the author. It is possible to look behind wiki texts and thereby to trace who made contributions as well as who participated in the discussion about the composition. (Davies&Merchant 2009: 94)

A very popular wiki software for educators is provided by *wikispaces.com*. Apart from all the already mentioned typical characteristics of a wiki (history, discussion,

page interlinking etc.), which are relatively easy to handle, it further enables the interation of audio, video, document files or RSS in a wiki page, as well as of widgets like, for instance, a calendar. The creator of the wiki can give away membership invitations. This means that people have to login before they edit content, which makes apparent who made which contribution. An example for a wiki created with wikspaces.com is the *Voicethread EFL&ESL* wiki shown in Figure 19 below. Another popular wiki software, the target groups of which are educators/academics, businesses and law firms, is *pbwiki.com*, which provides different kinds of wiki setups for each of the before mentioned. The service works very similar to *wikispaces.com*, and is also user-friendly in its setup (Richardson 2009: 67-68). Not to forget, both of those wiki software applications are customisable in their appearance and provide ready-made templates, as well as a full text search.
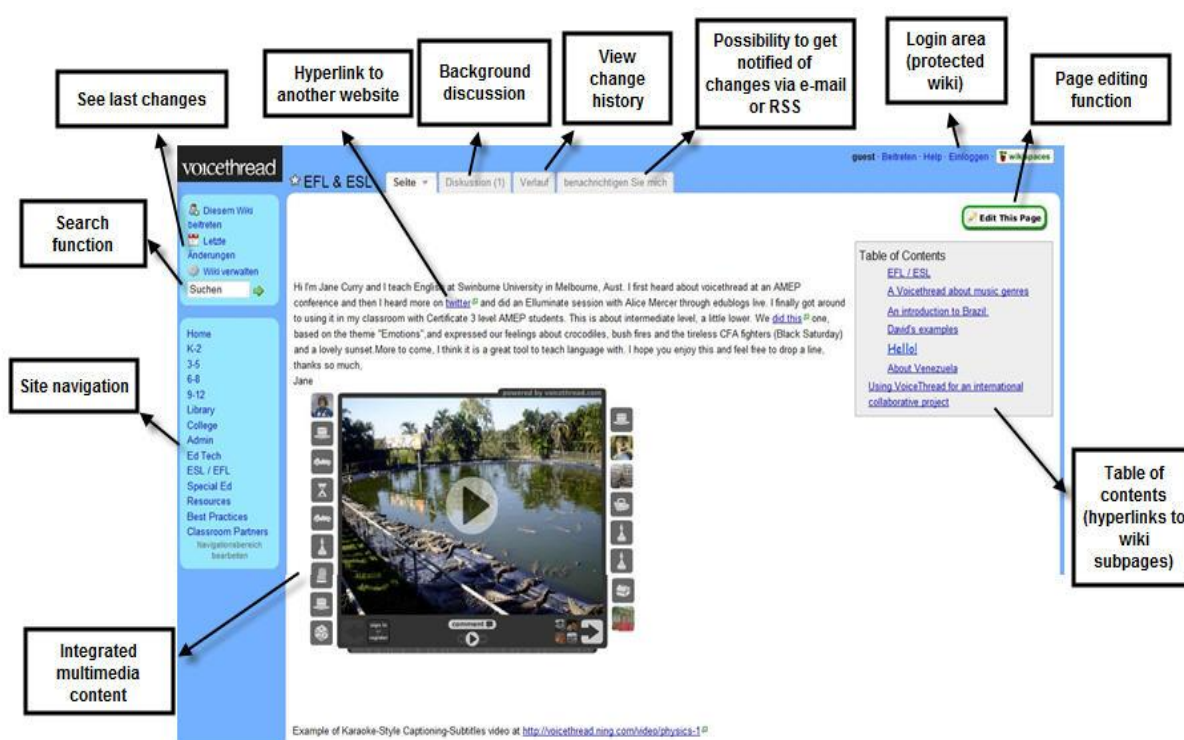
Figure 19: Voicethread wiki page (http://voicethread4education.wikispaces.com/EFL+%26+ESL)

Wikis in the classroom

Davies and Merchant (2009: 97-98) provide a useful summary of the characteristics of wiki usage in the following checklist:

- The text can be edited by anyone who is registered on the site.
- Individuals who set up the site can set out specific rubric, guidelines and community values for others to follow.
- Authorship is shared and distributed.
- Editing discussions and histories can be archived and consulted.
- Openness is valued.
- Collaboration is valued and individualism is less valued.
- Wikis are in a constant state of flux.
- Text can easily incorporate links to other sites, to entries on it own site and to profiles of contributors.
- Referencing is highly valued.
- Incorporation of texts and items from other sites is endorsed – as long as legally adopted and sources are cited.

This list already contains many concepts which make apparent why educators could be interested in using wikis for classroom activities. A wiki can facilitate group work and collaborative creation of a written product, engage students in hyperlinking activities and multimedia integration as well as in the search for valuable sources and their referencing. Warschauer and Grimes (2007: 12) point out that wikis are powerful tools for knowledge development and found that content creation within the wiki format is especially motivating for students. From an EFL writing point of view, wikis are interesting not only with regard to the possibility of collaboratively editing and adding content, but also concerning the discussion function behind the published text. Being conducted in the target language, the discussion about the content, but also about the style of writing, as well as about grammatical and lexical issues, could not only contribute to a greater awareness of the use of the target language, the integration and arrangement of information and multimedia, but to learning about written interaction, negotiation and discussion in English.

Just as blogs, wikis are defined as a genre by their setup, appearance and functions, but not by any specific content they provide. Since their format is quite flexible, they can be used in various ways for many different purposes. Based on Franklin and Van Harmelen (2007: 5) as well as on Richardson (2009: 61-66) the following provides some possible uses for wikis in educational settings:

- **Class portal / Resource sharing**

The use of wikis as class portals is mentioned by Richardson (2009: 63), when he refers to Vicki Davis' class wiki (westwood.wikispaces.com), where assignments are posted, projects are completed and relevant links to sources are given. There, the wiki is both used for co-construction and as a resource. He also alleges the example of creating an online text for a class curriculum, to which both the teacher and the students can contribute, and, thereby create a personalised and specific curriculum for a particular class. In a similar way, the class wiki could become a space for amassing and publishing resources relevant to various teaching topics in a collaborative way. The class could thereby create their own tailor-made teaching and learning resource, which resembles textbook manufacturing. This could be continued by the same class over more levels or taken up and edited by a different class of the same level in the following year. In a similar way, also an own class encyclopaedia or dictionary like wiki on key terms and concepts of a certain subject can be built (Warschauer&Grimes 2007: 12).

- **Collaborative project work**

The use of wikis for a collaboratively created class curriculum or for resource building could already be classified as collaborative project work. As already mentioned, wikis make the collaborative working on content easy, since each other's work can be edited and added seamlessly in the same environment. At the same time, the results can immediately be shared and published to a wide audience. Therefore, wikis are beneficial collaborative settings for international projects with students from different parts of the world. Such international project work was also conducted by Vicki Davis in her *Flat Classroom* project wiki, in which her students were connected to students from Bangladesh for a period of two weeks. The results of this culture-learning encounter were collaboratively produced and then published to the wiki (flatclassroomproject.wikispaces.com) by the groups of students from those two remote areas. (Richardson 2009: 63)

Other collaborative projects that have already been conducted with wikis, are book studies. Such a book study was conducted by Shelley Paul, a teacher in Georgia, whose students built a class project wiki (http://wiki.woodward.edu/

hannalee/doku.php?id=hannalee) for *Turn Homeward, Hannalee* by Patricia Beatty. This serves as an excellent example of what results can be achieved with a wiki, since it does not only include traditional elements like chapter summaries, but also a 'reader's theatre' where scenes can be listened to. Furthermore, it integrates timelines and maps, as well as idiom and figures of speech dictionaries, which also contain integrated slide shows etc.

The page organisation of wikis can also be exploited for narrative-writing projects, such as Andy Cave conducted with 8-year old children. According to Davies and Merchant (2009: 101), he made them familiar with elements of science-fiction stories and then set up a collaborative writing project on a wiki, for which students had to work in groups to compose chapters of their own book, always based on the previous chapters that they had to read first. Student groups could also give each other feedback and helped one another with new ideas. The public access to the wiki made it possible to share the work with parents and family as well. Every year another collaborative story writing project called *1001 Flat World Tales* is set up internationally on http://es1001tales2009.wikispaces.com/ for elementary schools and on http://ms1001tales2009.wikispaces.com/ for middle schools. This is a narrative writing project, which can be joined by every school around the globe. Students can make contributions to a tale, which is said to be based on 1001 Nights, since thousands of stories are embedded in one overarching story.

▪ **Scaffolding for writing activities**

Franklin and Van Harmelen (2007: 5) indicate that teachers could create wikis as scaffolding for all kind of writing activities by supplying a certain page structure and by giving hints to valuable and desirable content, as well as by providing final feedback on the content that was created by the students. This kind of use is probably worth to be noted separately, since it constitutes an especially guided application of a wiki. In general, however, it is often pointed out that the best wiki projects are created when the teacher lets the students manage the content on the site and thereby gives them editorial control. This is said to make the students develop a sense of responsibility and ownership. During the process of knowledge gathering and creation they can develop a number of important collaborative skills. This contributes to an environment

where students teach other students in the negotiation processes about correctness, meaning or relevance of content (Richardson 2009: 61).

However, despite of all the possible applications and pedagogical implications for the use of wikis, a study conducted at the University of Graz by Ebner, Kickmeier-Rust and Holzinger (2008) demonstrates that wikis utilised in higher education with neither enforcement nor reward for student contribution, led to the result that none of the 287 students created new entries or edited already existing ones. This nicely illustrates that the technology alone does not lead to success. Accompanying pedagogical concepts are as important with Web 2.0 tools as with any other teaching medium or material.

5.2.4 Collaborative Real-Time Document Editors

Apart from wikis, there are also other collaborative writing tools available on the Web. They facilitate the collaborative work on all kind of document types that people already know from their desktop office applications. Examples of such tools would be *Google Docs and Spreadsheets* or *Zoho Writer*, which allow the web-based creation of documents, presentations and spreadsheets in multiple author environments. Just as wikis those tools have an integrated document revision history and authors cannot only be notified of changes, but work on the same document simultaneously and insert comments (ETS Hot Team: 1).

Although such online document editors are often argued to work similar to wikis when it comes to the collaborative creation of content, there are quite a few differences. While wikis are places for immediate publication of content to a wider audience, this is not so much the case with an application like Google Docs, which is much more designed with the „print output in mind" (Thomson 2009). Therefore, unlike a wiki, which would probably not be printed out, Google Docs has the basic functions (like pagination or footnotes) that one would expect from a desktop word processor for creating a document. An example for such a Google Docs document is shown in Figure 20 below. Apart from word-style documents also spreadsheets and presentations can be produced. The files are created and stored online, and can be accessed from every computer with an Internet connection. This proves beneficial for easy editing and sharing purposes. The Google Docs (2010) guide for educators comments this advantage in the following way:

Instead of emailing around files and having to deal with the confusion and extra work involved in managing different file versions and manually aggregating input from others, anyone in the group can edit the document online from anywhere -- all you need is a Web browser.

While in wikis it is also possible to edit content collaboratively, the speciality of Google Docs is that this happens in real-time. People can see what their collaborators edit and add to the document at exactly the moment they do it, with the consequence that they do not have to wait for other contributors to update their respective section of the document. Different simultaneously working editors can be displayed by different colours and their names, which also appear at the top of the document while they view it or make changes. This differentiation by names and colours is then also maintained in the integrated revision history, an example of which is shown in Figure 21. However, in contrast to a wiki, Google Docs does not contain a seperate utility for written discussion alongside the collaborative creation of the document. At least for spreadsheets a chat function is available.
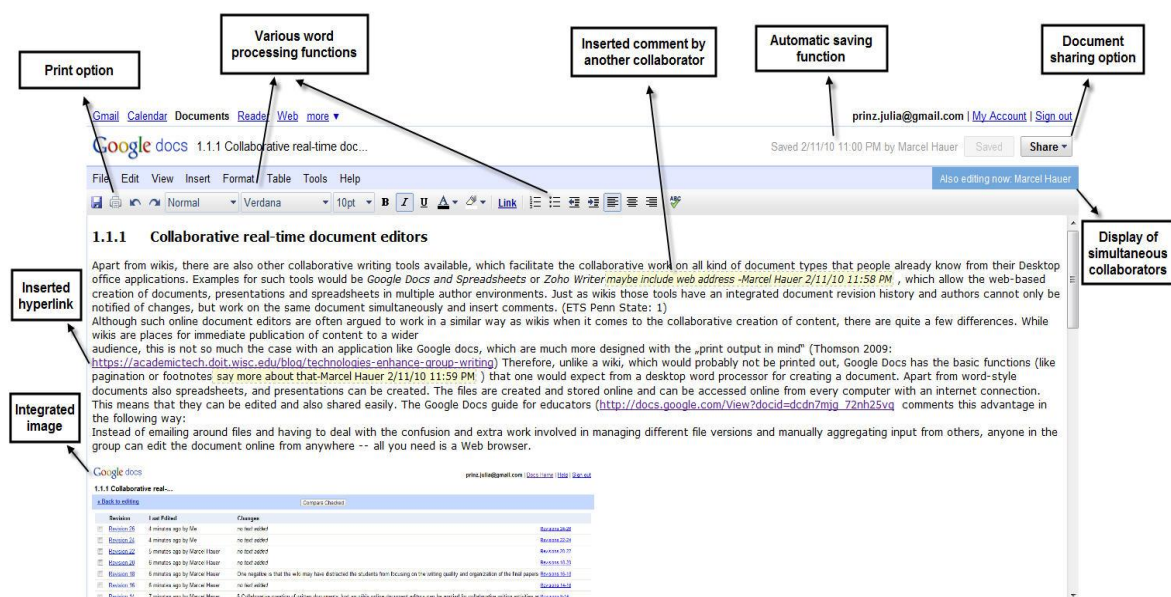
Figure 20: Sample Google Docs document

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Figure 21: Sample Google Docs revision history

A wiki is instantly created as a website with an interlinked page setup, which can be either accessed publicly or via registration. Furthermore, multimedia content and widgets can be integrated, and ongoing changes are published immediately. Therefore, a wiki is often presented as online content, which is never really finished and subject to constant changes. Google Docs is different in the way that it allows to (collaboratively) work on a document before it is published either as a document itself, which can be retrieved under a certain Web address; or it could also be posted as a blog entry via the *Blogger* software, also provided by Google. Since Google Docs enables the printing of the collaboratively produced document pages, it also allows putting a stronger focus on the finishing of a written product before making it available for public viewing.

Google Docs, however, does not include all the features that are provided by traditional word processors. In reviews it is repeatedly pointed out that for the 'fine-tuning' of a document, particularly with regard to formatting, a desktop office application would still be necessary. Furthermore, it has to be noted that there are limitations according to the file size and the number of documents that can be created by a user, although this number is relatively high. When users construct documents or spreadsheets they can choose who is able to view them and who has the right to edit them by sending invitations. Existing document files can also be uploaded for sharing and editing purposes, and those that were created online with Google Docs can be saved to the local disc in a variety of formats.

Alternatives to Google Docs would be *Zoho* and *Buzzword* (by Adobe). Although not as well known as its Google counterpart, also Zoho Writer contains a great

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range of features of a traditional word processor, and is part of a huge conglomerate of online productivity tools. Though it is based on flash technology and not on HTML, Buzzword is also very similar to Google Docs and Zoho, and has an especially neat and appealing interface.

Collaborative real-time document editors in the classroom

The values of collaboration and cooperative creation of content for education have already been discussed in some detail within the wiki section. Just as wikis online document editors can facilitate collaborative writing activities, as well as the sharing and publishing of the collaboratively created products. Google Docs and its equivalents, however, seem to serve as applications for more conventional writing approaches, since in the creation of a document that can be printed out, the focus lies on writing in its more traditional sense (McLoughlin & Lee 2007: 671). The integration of other applications, widgets, and multimedia, as well as the hyperlinking of sub-pages, is not possible within such online document editors. Sample educational applications of such tools are, however, relatively similar to those of wikis. Since the results of the classroom use of such online document editors are rarely published, the following points will illustrate hypothetical uses that were outlined by David Wetzel (2009), the National Writing Project (2008) and Google (2010) itself in its guide for educators:

▪ **Collaborative creation of written documents**

Just as wikis, online document editors can be applied for collaborative writing activities and projects. They provide a useful environment for multiple author editing, even if it happens at the same time. The students are not only aware of who else is working on the document by the display of the names of the other collaborators, but they can even see the changes others make in 'real-time'. Of course, it still could be quite confusing and disorganised if students work on the same paragraph at the same time. Although comments can be attached to the content of a document, a drawback seems to be that the coordination of the editing activity has to be supported by other applications (Franklin&VanHarmelen 2007: 7). In contrast to a wiki, publication to a wider audience and collaborative editing do not happen simultaneously. Therefore, online document editors e.g. can be used for the production of written project reports and written assignments that have a stronger emphasis on the creation

of a final version. Thomson (2009) cites an instructor from the DoIT-Engage Group Collaboration, referring to the advantage of an editor over a wiki in this respect:

> One negative thing is that the wiki may have distracted the students from focusing on the writing quality and organization of the final papers. The students who used Google docs more than the wiki had a much better final written draft than the students who were using the wiki more. (Thomson 2009)

Joint creation of documents in groups is clearly facilitated when the document is stored online and left open for editing purposes. Students can, therefore, also collaborate on the production of a written document, such as an essay, as a homework assignment. The contributions that were made by each group member can be monitored by the teacher. Apart from that, the teacher can also give feedback during the creation process by inserting comments. The publication of the finished document for a wider audience on a blog or on a wiki/website (e.g. Google Sites) is also relatively unproblematic. It is, therefore, a useful tool for L2 teachers who want to put a stronger focus on the written language and the more traditional structuring of a written document.

- **Shared online workspace & personal learning environment**

  Students could also use such online document editors as personal learning spaces for taking notes and writing assignments, which are stored online and can be retrieved from every machine with Internet access. As a result, students would not have to take their own laptops or data sticks to school, since all the documents are stored online. Class notes could be shared with classmates and collaboratively turned into scripts with input by many students.

  In addition, Google Docs could be used as a shared online workspace for the whole class, similar to class wikis or blogs, shared by both teachers and students. This workspace could either serve as a means for the distribution and collection of resources, handouts and assignments, which could save a lot of paper, or it could also as function as a kind of online whiteboard with simultaneous editing possibilities.

- **Space for written assignments and peer review**

  Online document editors such as Google Docs cannot only be used to create written assignments but also to submit them online. The student can grant the

teacher access to the document when he or she wants it. In turn, the teacher can insert comments for revision or insert links to additional resources. In addition, students can be motivated to share their individually or collaboratively written documents with peers in order to get peer feedback via the commenting function.

Within its 'Google Teacher' programme Google itself presents how Google Docs has been used for various educational activities e.g. in journalism and social studies classes. The document, which was created by Esther Wojcicki (2007), a highschool teacher, also reports that the application can be exploited for various ELT/ESL writing activities, like collaborative book-reports, essay writing, vocabulary work, creative writing, poetry portfolios and even group discussions. Of course, this report was also produced for marketing purposes and, therefore, should be treated with care, since online document editors would probably not constitute the ideal environment for all of these activities. Their relevance as educational applications always depends on the pedagogical planning and purposes that accompany the activities.

5.2.5 Web 2.0 and Digital Storytelling

In contrast to the above mentioned Web 2.0 applications, Digital Storytelling is not a tool, but a new genre that was formed by the integration of Web technologies into storytelling. This term could, for instance, be interpreted in its wider sense, meaning the creation of stories with the help of all kinds of digital technologies, like web-based stories with interactive, multimedia and hyperlinking elements. This is what Alexander and Levine (2008) refer to as "Web 2.0 storytelling". They argue that the Web 2.0 with its basic characteristics of social media and microcontent, provides new ways of telling stories, both of a fictional and a non-fictional nature. Web 2.0 storytelling is, therefore, connected and tied to Web 2.0 practices, meaning that it is easy to contribute different Web (micro)content and that social connections are enabled around and attached to story materials.

The graphic representation of Web 2.0 storytelling influences in Figure 22 below shows what different kinds of media forms (like fan cultures, Web 2.0 publication, games, TV etc.) and other aspects (like mobile devices or hypertext) contribute to the formation of Web 2.0 stories.

Figure 22: Web 2.0 story telling (Alexander & Levine 2008: 47)

In the previous chapters it was described that blogging, wiki technology and Twitter have been exploited to create collaborative narratives as educational activities for students. Projects like *1001 Flat World Tales*, which has already been mentioned in the wiki section, show that Web 2.0 narratives do not have to follow a certain timeline and can break with the traditional linear way of storytelling due to the integration of hyperlinking practices. In addition, since the social media genres, within which these stories are told, are responsive and interactive, comments and reponses to the content (e.g. in Youtube) can be provided. Citing the example of a weblog project called *9th Btn Y & L War Diaries* (http://yldiaries.blogspot.com/ 2008_06_01_archive.html), which posts diary entries from a World War I veteran, Alexander and Levine (2008: 47) describe how the comments on the blog provide fore-shadowing, explanations and context to the story.

In its multilinearity, Web 2.0 storytelling can also be distributed among various applications. This is facilitated by the integration of microcontent, such as Youtube videos or slideshares into weblogs or wikis. The principle of user-generated content, which is a core feature of Web 2.0 itself, of course, also moves into Web 2.0 story-telling, resulting in readers adding content to the story platforms directly by e.g. editing a wiki page, making a comment on a blog, replying to a Twitter

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feed, or even by posting a video response in YouTube. All of that adds to the development, to the content and the meaning of the story, which is shaped by the perspectives of the readers. Web 2.0 stories are, therefore, of a distributed nature; distributed along various channels and among various contributors.

As a result, the creator does not have immediate control of the story, which develops its own dynamics. Problems with content as well as version control could arise. However, opening up to the creative world can harvest energies of the crowd. As a result, Web 2.0 storytelling blurs the boundaries between reality and fiction, frequently also deliberately. Stories are often not clearly labelled as stories, which puts the reader in the position of determining whether they are real or not. An example for that would be the *Flickr Stories Pool* (http://www.flickr.com/groups/visualstory/), which in its simple setup also builds on its "'tricky truth' status" (Alexander& Levine 2008: 48).

With regard to popular tools for Web 2.0 storytelling Alexander and Levine (2008: 51) also bring examples of stories created with the above mentioned applications (blogs, wikis, Twitter). Blog fiction, for example, could consist of stories in a journal format, like the *Orwell Diaries* (http://orwelldiaries.wordpress.com/). Since a blog is used for character self-representation, even personal blogs, which contain all kind of information about people's lives, could be seen as a form of storytelling. Furthermore, entries in the most famous wiki application, Wikipedia, could be regarded as mini-narratives. Wikis have also been used for other narrative activities, such as the creation of a collaboratively written novel in the *A Million Penguins project* (http://www.amillionpenguins.com). Twitter enabels an interesting way of storytelling in small portions due to its 140 character limitation. An example for such a Twitter narrative is *Zombie Attack* (http://twitter.com/zombieattack), a science fiction story created in Twitter tweets, which repeatedly builds up over a couple of weeks, but is never really finished.

Alexander and Levine (2008: 52) also indicate how Web 2.0 storytelling could be used for educational purposes. They define two main applications for higher education, namely as composition platforms and as curricular objects. The latter refers to the discussion of Web 2.0 storytelling as a genre within media or narrative studies. Of course, the primary value for the language classroom lies in its possibilities for conducting creative writing activities in multimodal and

multilinear environments. Stories could either be complete Web 2.0 stories or just integrate practices of Web 2.0 storytelling. This application as a composition platform is a fruitful opportunity to bring more motivation as well as a greater variety of ways for creative expression into the foreign language classroom.

Digital Storytelling

In its narrower sense digital storytelling refers to a particular genre of storytelling, which combines "a narrative with digital content, including images, sound, and video, to create a short movie, typically with a strong emotional component" (Educause 2007a: 1). On a more sophisticated level this could be interactive movies with audio and visual effects, but in its most basic form also a combination of slides with music and/or narration would count as digital storytelling. Compared to the broader concept of Web 2.0 storytelling, digital storytelling in its video format is based on a singular flow and a linear narrative with a unilinear timeline, a characteristic it shares with traditional storytelling (Alexander&Levine 2008: 47).

The *7 things you should know* article about Digital Storytelling (Educause 2007a: 1) describes that a typical story would begin with the creation of a script. Afterwards multimedia material (images, animations, music, audio effects, video clips etc.) that supports the storyline would be gathered. Depending on what should be included in the story, equipment like recording devices, tools for picture and video making, as well as manipulation hardware and software could be required. Then, digital storytelling applications (available in various levels of sophistication) would help to combine the material into a short movie. Typical digital stories would be about 2-10 minutes long, and concerning their content can range from

> personal tales to the recounting of historical events, from exploring life in one's own community to the search for life in other corners of the universe, and literally, everything in between (University of Houston 2010)

Robin (2006: 2-3), however, tries to pin down three main types of digital stories, namely:

- Personal narratives
- Digital stories that examine historical events
- Stories that inform or instruct

The most popular use of digital storytelling is constituted by the creation of a personal narrative, since this story type usually includes a strong emotional component. The personal narrative has strong implications for its use in the (foreign) language classroom. However, as a way to create stories that inform or instruct ,storytelling can be applied to every subject, since the construction of the narrative and the effective communication it requires, engage the storyteller in a great amount of thinking about the topic (Educause 2007a: 1).

Figure 23: Seven elements of digital storytelling

Regardless of the story's content, there are seven elements of digital storytelling, which have been defined by Robin (2006), as well as by the Center for Digital Storytelling (2010) in its tutorial. Those are depicted in Figure 23 above.

According to these elements, a digital story typically emerges around a particular point of view/perspective of the author and often includes a dramatic question, which will be answered at the end of the story. The content is usually emotional and tackles serious issues presented in a very personal and powerful way. A voice recording adds very much to the personalisation of content and can help to convey the context in an engaging way. In addition, music or sound effects can support the storyline. The point "economy" refers to the ability to convey just as much as it is required to tell the story, and not to overload it with content. Similarly, the pace at which the story progresses, is important and should be well chosen (Robin 2006: 2).

In general, digital storytelling has long been regarded as a genre, which has implications for teaching and learning in a variety of fields, for it has the power to unite a variety of different literacies and language skills in an integrated way. Although the creation of a digital story can constitute a very time-consuming task, it has special implications for EFL teaching, since it combines multimedia researching, production and presentation skills with more traditional activities like script writing and oral narration recording. In addition, since digital stories are produced for Web publication, students will be confronted with an audience for their works, who can give feedback. At the same time, the creation and publishing of their works also confronts them with copyright issues on the Web. All of that leads to the conclusion that digital storytelling is an engaging and motivating way of producing creative work for the medium of the Web, which at the same time can be beneficial for foreign language and technology learning in an integrated manner. However, this also leads to the conclusion that because of its relatively demanding nature this narrowly defined genre of digital storytelling is more appropriate for advanced learners.

5.3 Summarising Educational Affordances of the Web 2.0

As already pointed out, the mere use of the Web 2.0 applications or genres that were discussed above does not ensure that effective learning takes place. Accordingly, in his article *Speaking the Unspeakable about 21st Century Technologies* also Bertram Bruce (1999) argues that although knowing how multimedia computer technologies work is a useful skill for teachers, since this opens up a variety of options for supporting learning, the knowledge of technical possibilities is clearly not enough for successful teaching with new technologies. After all, the technical benchmark data lists do not inform about their pedagogical values and the appropriateness of their usage with particular students in certain contexts.

In order to identify how an application or tool can be effectively employed for pedagogical purposes, an educator has to become clear about what is often referred to as its 'affordances'. Only a few of the Web 2.0 tools were designed with educational thoughts in mind, and McLoughlin and Lee (2007: 3) emphasise that the actual pedagogical usefulness is not defined through particular functionalities or the design of applications. Therefore, the concept of affordances is particularly

relevant for exploring which educationally relevant action can be performed by using a certain tool. Being defined as such "can do statements" in terms of learning and teaching, affordances of a blog are e.g. described as idea sharing and interaction, but not as typing or editing posts, which are regarded as mere functionalities. In addition, just knowing about the affordances is not a safe ticket to successful teaching and learning either. A thorough knowledge of the dynamics of affordances should be integrated in careful pedagogical planning for creating effective learning activities (McLoughlin & Lee 2007: 666; Burden & Atkinson 2008: 122).

The potential and characteristics of new technologies, which were summarised in chapter 3 according to the findings of Norbert Pachler, already reflect and integrate to a great extent the pedagogical affordances of the Web 2.0. However, the shift in applications towards the concept of the Web 2.0 applications might foreground other kinds of affordances than the former generation of the Web, or other kinds of new technologies. McLoughlin and Lee (2007: 667) identify four different categories of affordances related to the Web 2.0 and its "social software":

- **Connectivity and social rapport:**
  Due to its participatory nature, the Web 2.0 enables the emergence of people networks in social networking sites like Facebook. In such "affinity spaces", which require social and communicative skills, students can engage in informal learning, which foregrounds creative and expressive behaviour as well as the development of digital literacies.

- **Collaborative information discovery and sharing**
  Applications like weblogs facilitate the sharing of data and content by both experts and novices. Together with the possibility of organising and tagging Web resources in social bookmarking tools, this adds to the evolution of 'folksonomy' practices, which enable people with similar interests to learn from each other's Web content collections.

- **Content creation**
  The Web 2.0 clearly puts an emphasis on content creation over consumption, and offers the possibility of creating and organising content in a way that serves the own needs or those of others. This is possible due to the openness

of user-generated content, which also enables collaboration in the generation of new knowledge, such as in wikis.

- **Knowledge and information aggregation and content modification**

   The rise of RSS and similar technologies like podcasting has increased the possibility of collecting a range of (multimedia) material from many sources to modify and 'mash them up' according to personal needs. This has led to the emergence of a participatory culture and social connections in the knowledge aggregation process.

Relating social and technical affordances for educational purposes more specifically to applications like weblogs, Davies and Merchant (2009: 31-34) identify that blogs facilitate opening up classroom learning as well as individual information production to a wider audience. In addition, blogs offer the possibility of learning about and of applying practices of new literacies, like the selection and combination of different modes in meaning making and text production, or the co-construction of meaning through social participation in communities via active reading and the interlinking of resources. Also wikis introduce learners to a culture of participation and knowledge sharing, but have special affordances in the area of shared and distributed authorship and the corresponding collaborative text creation.

Like all the tools that are mentioned above, in their discussion function wikis provide the affordance of facilitating a more interactive kind of writing. Additionally, applications like Twitter or weblogs can be used to foster reflective text-based interaction and reflective writing activities in general, as well as immediate feedback and comments by the audience, including peers and teachers. These points are regarded as very valuable for foreign language teaching and learning. However, all of these potentials can only be recognised as affordances in an education system which goes beyond the didactic paradigm that focuses on mere information acquisition by the students. A pedagogy based on Web 2.0 principles would have to support learner autonomy as well as new ways of knowledge creation.

6 New Literacies and the Web 2.0

The concept of new literacies or multiliteracies has already been addressed in some detail in chapter 2.1.3. Many researchers in those fields argue that literacy practices and requirements have changed with the advances in digital technologies. This is why the NCTE (2009) worked on a definition of 21st century literacies, which is strongly based on the new Web environments. This definition demonstrates that reading and writing cannot be strictly separated in those environments. Production and reception are intertwined when engaging in research activities. Therefore, it lists technical as well as social requirements that both readers and writers need to handle:

- The development of proficiency with different tools.
- The building of relationships with other people in order to identify and solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally.
- The ability to design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes.
- The skills to manage, analyse, and synthesise multiple streams of simultaneous information.
- The necessary knowledge to create, critique, analyse and evaluate multimedia texts.
- The attendance to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

(NCTE 2009: 4)

6.1 The Web 2.0 as a New Environment for Writing

The technological advances of the last two decades have moved writing into new environments. These are first and foremost influenced and characterised by the rise of the **screen** as a new and increasingly important medium of dissemination. With the use of word processing programs for text production, writing was changed with regard to its linear and stable nature. The screen has made it possible to alter, delete and edit already existing texts in a convenient way, and thereby put a new emphasis on revision and improvement practices. In addition, word processing programs also encourage writing practices like drafting and free associative writing, since the possibility of changing the text is always given.

However, the setup of word processing programs is very much based on the medium of the book with its organisation into pages. After all, they are oriented towards the printing of text in pages.

This is not the case with online environments, the development of which is clearly influenced by the possibilities the screen offers. First of all, websites deviate from the sequenced page orientation and exploit the **hyperlinking** possibilities for the organisation of content. Therefore, online written content is not linear, an aspect which has to be considered during its production, since the non-linear organisation of content also influence the way it is read. Often there is no clear entry point and no pre-given sequence, which means that while reading, the reader establishes his own path through the material and assumes a more active role in meaning-making. As a result of such hyperlinking practices the organisation and connection of knowledge and arguments is altered.

As pointed out by Kress in his various publications, the medium of the screen began to develop its own organisational principles, which moved towards the concept of visual Design and the logic of **image representation**. The screen and the setup of the World Wide Web have enabled the integration of images and audiovisual material. This has resulted in an increasingly multimodal nature of meaning representation, in which written language is not more important than other modes for the creation of a text. Whereas the conventional book page was dominated by written text and its organisation into paragraphs and chapters, for which layout and design only were of relatively minor relevance, webpages developed into a more image than text-like environment, which recognises all modes as equally important for the construction of meaning. Together with the breaking away from the traditional page structure of a book, writing for the web, therefore, has become an issue of Design and the combination of **multiple media forms**.

In the era of the first Web generation, these issues were mostly gained relevance for software developers, programmers and Web designers, but not for the average user. The shift towards the Web 2.0 or Read/Write Web did not only give everyone the chance to become a writer, but also turned everyone into a potential 'designer' without requiring expert knowledge. The Web 2.0 is special in the sense that it does not only enables people to make contributions of written text, but also

provides the facilities to combine different types of (multimodal) **microcontent** for creating one's own design. Kress (2006) argues that this new orientation towards visual design has also found its way into the traditional medium of the book, and that pages in educational textbooks, hence, increasingly resemble Web pages. Altogether it can be said that due to the emergence of the medium of the screen authoring poses completely new cognitive and creative demands.

Another change in the environments for writing is caused by the **ubiquity** of the Internet. People now write for a medium, which is available everywhere and at any time, from home, from work, from a restaurant or from a train station. The growing number of WLAN (wireless local area network) hotspots and the use of increasingly advanced smartphones enable a constant connection to the Web. As a result, people can e.g. post Twitter updates and comment on blogs from virtually everywhere. Together with the changing applications that are oriented towards **user-generated** content this ubiquity has had the effect of a massive growth of content. With this large accumulation of written content, writing has also lost its exclusiveness. It has protruded into new genres, and is now used for new forms of (informal) communication. Whereas, before the rise of the Internet, writing for the public or for a larger audience, was confined to influential persons, publication of content has lost its special status in today's digital age. In the Web 2.0 era a lot of people have become writers/designers and their own publishers. Regardless of their effectiveness or success in this endeavour, it has turned into a relatively normalised activity for people to write for or via the Web. Therefore, the continuous growth of content is not surprising. However, possibly as a result of these ever-growing quantities, Web content is rather **ephemeral** and can disappear quite quickly. As a result, writing also loses its stable nature and its notion of a valued unchanged artefact.

6.2 Web 2.0 Writing Practices

A changing writing environment also requires changing writing practices. Whereas, due to its stable and linear nature, writing in the pre-technological era mostly was an individual endeavour, the emergence of word-processing and web-based writing applications, such as wikis or collaborative document editors made it possible to turn it into a **collaborative** undertaking, as well. People collaborate in the creation as well as in the editing and improvement of texts. The fact that texts

are no longer necessarily regarded as finished at the time of their publication to an audience, gave rise to a new **drafting** and **feedback** culture in writing. On the Web people acknowledge the fact that the 'wisdom of crowds' can be a helpful factor for improving their work, and giving and receiving feedback and comments on e.g. each other's blog posts is a common practice in blogging communities. Wikis even provide a space where the content can be negotiated by the collaborators and thereby they foster **meta-communication** and **reflection** on and in writing.

In addition, written communication has expanded from a relatively formal genre, as e.g. in letters, to a variety of rather informal settings, such as social networking sites, discussion boards or chats. This, of course, also has had an effect on written language, which is now often claimed to be more speech like, since in rapid written communication, people do not spend time on planning and structuring their written contributions. As a result, people also started to use abbreviations and acronyms, such as *thx* (thanks), *afak* (as far as I know), *imo* (in my opinion), *omg* (oh my god), *lol* (laughing out loud), and emoticons or smileys like ;-) :-) :-D or :-(in order to add additional meaning like irony, happiness, laughter or sadness, which gets lost due to the absence of facial expression, gestures and voice in written online communication.

Although this change in language primarily occurs in synchronous chat environments and on informal social networking sites, it has also found its way into asynchronous environments like discussion boards or weblogs. However, especially on weblogs, written communication tends to be of a more formal, well-planned and structured nature. Will Richardson (2009: 28-29) claims that blogging constitutes a different writing practice, which he calls **connective writing**. This refers to a writing process, which is characterised by active reading and the connection of knowledge and information gained from different sources. During writing the author is involved in critical reading and thinking, commenting and hyperlinking. Therefore, Richardson (2009: 28-29) points out that in connective writing people are engaged in a "read-write-think-link" process. This is not only constituted by the possibility of connecting knowledge, but also can be regarded a result of the Web 2.0's potential of connecting people. In blogging they interact via posts, comments and feedback, and thereby also interact with each other in the

co-construction of meaning. As a result, writers are always confronted with a readership, an audience. This is also relevant for Web writing genres other than blogging. Writing on the Web takes place with an audience in mind, the reaction and response of which is tried to be anticipated by the writer.

In writing for an audience, the writer also interacts with various sources of meaning. Due to the changing writing environment in the Web, these sources do not only have to be language-based. Writing practices on the Web move into an era of acknowledging all semiotic modes as equally important for meaning construction. Images, for instance, do not only serve mere adornments, but tend to carry the same expressionist values as a written text. Therefore, writing means to be aware of which content is best conveyed in writing and which is more suitable to be conveyed in image or in audiovisual form. This means that creating content for the Web is not so much a matter of writing in its traditional sense, with the building up of meaning in paragraphs and chapters to create a finished unchangeable document in a purely linguistic way, but turns it into an issue of **multimodal designing**, which recognises the value of openness and the unfinished nature of content.

6.3 Implications for EFL Teaching: Towards New Pedagogical Concepts

The changing writing practices clearly also pose challenges and demands on the EFL classroom. Writing and written communication are not seen as purely linguistic concepts any more, and the changing literacy practices that are required due to the technological advances, therefore, should be seen as being confined to the L1 classroom. However, the foreign language classroom has probably even a stronger affiliation to seeing teaching and learning as a mere linguistic endeavour, and therefore might be afraid of contexts which alter language and conventional writing practices. Still, teaching from a purely linguistic perspective might only be relevant to 'dead' languages like Latin and Old Greek. Since the shift towards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) teaching and learning a modern foreign language to a great extent ideally is oriented towards communication. Nowadays, the Web 2.0 constitutes a new communicative 'battleground' of increasing importance and pervasiveness. EFL teaching and learning is often presented as essential for preparing students for their participation in a world where English is

the global language for (professional) communication. The preparation of students for successfully using the Web as the global medium for communication should therefore not be neglected.

However, this does not mean that the traditional means of teaching and learning should be completely banned. A teacher has to be clear about the affordances of the material and the media he or she uses. At this time not everything can and should be attained with the help of new technologies. Traditional means of communication still have their values. Nonetheless, it is probably dangerous to present them as 'sacred' and to correspondingly regard new technologies as a threat to language and culture. As Norbert Pachler (2007: 214-218) points out, if education wants to stay relevant it must not ignore what has already been established as important part of reality. But within EFL teaching, where is the place to learn about new media literacy and literacy practices in general? Although pedagogy should probably move into a more holistic understanding of education, the place and time, which have been assigned to the concept of 'writing' in a skill-based teaching methodology, is probably the best position to start teaching and learning about new literacies in technological environments.

6.3.1 From the Teaching of Writing to the Teaching of Design

In their account of multiliteracies the New London Group (2003: 30-37) presents a new pedagogical approach, which basically relies on a change in teaching writing. Instead of teaching writing, this approach aims to teach multimodal desgining in the production of content for digital environments. This is an approach, which goes away from a view of teaching as direct abstract knowledge transmission from teacher to student. It is based on the understanding that the human mind does not learn by decontextualised abstractions, but rather learns contextual learning in sociocultural settings, and thereby acts as a kind of "pattern recogniser". Therefore, it first and foremost stresses learning as a situated practice.

Situated Practice

This aspect is based on the experience of meaning-making in everyday life, the public sphere and in workplaces. Learning about new literacy practices is viewed to take place through immersion in an environment, where a community of experts and learners practises the new ways of meaning-making. Learners should

experience with guidance how they can use and contribute to the whole range of resources available. In this stage learners should be safe and free in experimenting and risk-taking, which means that an evaluation of learning should not be tied to judgement, but should help to develop further. However, also the limitations of a literacy immersion are recognised. It is acknowledged that pedagogy of immersion does not work unless it is supported by other components.

Overt Instruction

Such a component would be overt instruction. This should not be misunderstood in its narrowest sense as direct transmission and memorisation practices or drills. The term rather refers to the fact that certain forms of overt instruction are needed for learners to become consciously aware of what they actually acquire during the immersion process. In the teaching of Design this means that learners should be equipped with the intra-systematic relations of the respective domain. This in turn requires an explicit meta-language of design in order to describe and reflect about design processes and design elements, as well as how learning about those literary practices takes place.

Critical Framing

Whereas Situated Practice aims at growing mastery in design practices and Overt Instruction at a conscious control and a clear understanding of those practices, Critical Framing aims at the interpretation of the social context and the purpose of meaning Designs. Here, the teacher should guide the learners through a denaturalisation of the previously acquired, and help them to develop a theoretical distance, which is needed to understand the historical, social, cultural, political, ideological and value-centred systems of knowledge and practice. They should be able to step back from existing Designs and view them critically in relation to their context. This also constitutes the basis for the next component.

Transformed Practice

The understanding of the socio-cultural, political and ideological 'loadedness' of Designs is necessary for using, extending and applying them in new and old contexts. This is regarded as a phase in which learners become meaning-makers and designers, and in which discourse is re-created and meaning is transformed according to their own purposes. Therefore, this also constitutes a phase, in which

the learning process they have gone through can be evaluated, since in Transformed Practice they are challenged to simultaneously apply and revise what they have learned during the other stages.

On a less theoretical level and specifically related to Web 2.0 settings, this approach points towards the integration of the Web technologies for writing activities, also in more open environments in order to confront students with 'real' literacy and Design practices in this expanding medium of communication. In addition to this immersion in linguistic, visual, audio and multimodal Designs and writing practices, the teacher should equip them with the necessary meta-language of the elements and the practices, so that students can describe and thereby become more consciously aware of what kinds of writing/designing elements exist and how writing/designing takes place. Furthermore, the learners should be led towards a critical understanding of the cultural, historical and ideological background of multimodal writing elements and the meanings those linguistic or visual Designs inherently carry. They need this knowledge in order to become successful Web 2.0 writers themselves, since they are challenged to successfully combine already existing writing/Design elements for meaning-making in their own production of digital texts. Why this teaching writing as design is of relevance, can be summarised with the words of Gunther Kress (2004):

> The question of rhetoric – how to make communication most effective in relation to its audience, here and now – has moved newly urgent into the center. Rhetoric has become a major issue of Design.

6.3.2 Pedagogy 2.0

Clearly, in the long run educational changes in the digital age should neither be only confined to the teaching of writing nor only to the EFL classroom. The systems of learning and teaching have to be re-imagined and schools should be opened up to the real-world. It is essential that education is not seen as something which ends with the classroom walls. Many educators have recognised this as important concept for a transformation from mere teaching to a focus on learning for a long time. New technologies finally facilitate the breaking down of barriers between schooling and the public/work life in a low-cost and effective way.
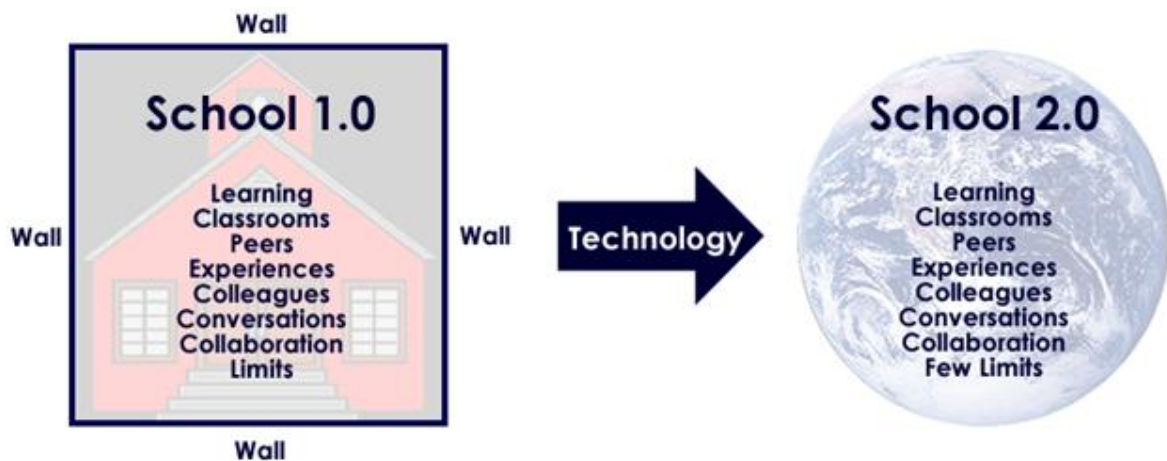
Figure 24: School 1.0 vs. School 2.0 (presentation on www.slideshare.com)

As Figure 24 shows in its illustrations, the concept of a 'school 2.0' is not as constrained as the traditional school due to the affordances of new technologies. However, a school 2.0 does not transform learning only because new technologies like the Web 'are there'. This reminds of the statement by the New London Group that immersion alone is not enough, and has to be backed up by other components. Also Norbert Pachler (2007: 223-224) strongly argues that in addition to a general shift in the understanding of schools and the making of technology integral to the whole education system, educational thoughts and pedagogical considerations have to be taken as a first step. Therefore, pedagogy has to move on and meet new challenges in knowledge and meaning construction, which do not fit into traditional and widely used education patterns.

First of all, the **transformation of knowledge,** which also is a central point of the Connectivist learning theory, has to be recognised. Nowadays knowledge is of a fragmented and distributed nature, and basically available everywhere. Due to the Web and its ubiquitous nature, which is increasingly fostered by mobile devices, knowledge is not confined to schools or to libraries (Kress 2000: 140). Knowledge is socially constructed and negotiated in new (Web) environments with new practices of parallel meaning creation through hyperlinking. Richardson (2009: 7) points out that children who grew up with the computer and early engaged in digital environments, also learn differently and have undergone a different cognitive development. Children are said to have "hyperlinked minds". The linear way of knowledge transmission, which is presented in schools is, therefore, not seen as suitable any more, as are the old notions of knowledge authority.

A pedagogy 2.0 should recognise that because of its pervasiveness, knowledge can no longer be seen as something which is taught by the teacher, acquired by the students and then replicated. Knowledge has become ubiquitous, and so has learning. This transformation of knowledge is also a central point in Connectivist theory (Siemens 2004), which stresses that in the technological age the capacity to know more is more important than what is currently known. The knowing-where should be treated as an equally important issue as the knowing-what and the knowing-how. Correspondingly, in valuable pedagogical concepts for 21st century literacies there should always be an emphasis on teaching and learning how to learn.

Also Kress (2000: 140) points out that learning should no longer be seen as a mere replication of authoritative knowledge. Instead, there should be a focus on individual agency in the **creative reshaping** of knowledge as a result of successful learning. This, of course, also has implications for evaluation. Since knowledge is available everywhere, the fostering of the criticality of students in the engagement with information and representation sources has to be seen as an important issue. Learners should, therefore, be guided towards **self-directed learning** through conversation and sharing in interactive spaces like the Web 2.0 (McLoughlin&Lee 2007: 671). This, of course, also has implications for the role of learners in general. If they should become active critical participants in new technological environments, they can no longer be seen as mere consumers of knowledge provided by the teacher in a hierarchical education system. They should rather have the possibility of assuming the roles of partners, colleagues and members of communities, who co-operate and participate in meaning and knowledge construction.

Such a rather social-constructivist based view of learning and teaching also changes the role of the teacher, who would have to act as a facilitator of learning by providing scaffolding and giving feedback. The teacher would have to be able to guide learners towards learning and not to act as the sole proprietor of knowledge, but as a co-constructor. This would also mean that teaching and learning becomes less teacher-centred and more **student-centred** with a different feedback and evaluation culture. Teaching (with) the Web 2.0 would have to be based on a great amount of **learner autonomy**, both in terms of how they use it

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as well as when they use it. As a result, due to the greater self-determination of students and the pervasiveness and ubiquity of knowledge and information, models of learning and teaching would have to become an increasingly mobile and informal endeavour. As also pointed out by George Siemens (2004) learning should be presented as something that is no longer confined to educational settings. Students should be prepared for life-long-learning, which does no longer carry the institutional and authoritative character of traditional education.

The connection to the real world, of course, bears problems and fears. Authentic content and communication practices for a long time have been praised as powerful for education, especially for the (foreign) language classroom. 'Authentic' is understood in the sense that material is not particularly filtered or prepared for educational purposes, and therefore mirrors real-world practices. 'Authentic' engagement in the Web 2.0, where content is floating rapidly, means that the teacher does not have the possibility of controlling and pre-selecting which content appears on the learners' screens. This is why many educators have a lot of concerns about the use such technologies and regard them as danger. However, the question is, how students can become successful and responsible users of digital environments if school blocks out this part of reality. It cannot be taken for granted that since they are surrounded by new technologies from the earliest childhood on, students will discover and learn all the skills they need for using digital media effectively and responsibly by themselves. Admittedly, for children in Western globalised economies the use of digital technologies has become normalised, and they have probably developed a much deeper natural understanding of how to use technical devices and applications than most of today's teachers. However, if all of this happens in the private sphere without guidance, it cannot be granted that they learn about issues like criticality and responsibility, as well as effective ways to harness the Web for learning and authoring purposes.

This is also the reason why simply "signing students up to a service is not enough" as Davies & Merchant (2009: 106) put it. They point out that for the development of an authentic Web 2.0 practice, an educator should consider the four components of the diagram in Figure 25 below:

Figure 25: Pedagogical considerations for successful Web 2.0 teaching and learning (Davies&Merchant 2009: 106)

First of all, the educator needs to be aware for what purposes a particular Web 2.0 tool is actually used, since employing a wiki or a blog for conducting traditional literacy practices would not be sensible. Then, it is necessary to consider how participation is established and how learning communities can be extended and teachers or parents can be involved. Connected to this is the identification and establishment of partnerships, which means students are not only confronted with an apparent audience, but also with co-producers and participants to comment and to give feedback in the process of content creation. Finally this model identifies careful planning as particularly relevant. This planning should include thoughts about the strengths and weaknesses of applications and about how creativity can be fostered and the students' existing knowledge and experiences can be integrated. In addition, the actual scheduling and sequencing of learning activities has to be established. (Davies&Merchant 2009: 106-107)

6.3.3 Web-Centricness vs. Shovelware

The usage of Web 2.0 technologies in the foreign language classroom is probably a more delicate manner than in L1 teaching. Teachers do not only feel responsible for protecting learners from negative influences and inappropriate content on the Web, but also for the constant provision of correct and good language resources. Incorrect or informal language use (e.g. abbreviations and vernacular expressions) is often seen as a danger to learning a foreign language, since it is often believed to be soaked up by learners immediately. Opening up the learners to the Web 2.0,

therefore, for many teachers means taking a risk. This is why applications like wikis, blogs or discussion boards are often re-built in safe and protected environments either as protected Web applications themselves or on e-learning platforms like Moodle or Blackboard. However, it is questionable whether such a use is really sensible, since it cuts off learners from 'real world' practices and the wide audience that the various Web 2.0 applications offer.

This somehow raises the 'Shovelware vs. Web-centricness' discussion introduced by Fraser (1999), which apparently has already been a highly controversial topic when the Web still was in its infancy years. The concept of 'shovelware' is presented as something negative, meaning that materials are transferred (shovelled) to a new medium without paying attention to its relevance, appearance and the possibilites the new medium offers. Susser and Rob (2004: 287) contrast this to the concept of Web-centricness, which is "the extent to which [a site] breaks free from the traditional learning experience and becomes apparent to the principles of the Web". They point out that the two concepts are not in total opposition, but are a matter of degree, since shovelware may also have some Web-centric features like, for instance, hypertext or interactivity but then lacks other important features like community and scalability.

In the teaching of EFL with the Web 2.0 a shovelware oriented usage could result in two controversial and disputed forms. Either the teacher decides to use the basic functionality of a Web 2.0 application and cuts it off its usual environment by using it with comprehensive security and protection measures (such as in its re-modelled form on a access-restricted platform) or he/she uses a Web 2.0 application for teaching and learning activities that are not based on the actual functionalities of the service. Susser and Robb (2004: 287) indicate that whether such shovelware oriented usage is seen as something negative depends on the standpoint. There is a discussion going on between the viewpoint that it is perfectly alright to e.g. make traditional materials available on the Web, and the position that there is no sense in using technology if it is not taken advantage of its affordances and potential.

However, the central point in such a discussion may not be the question whether it is bad or negative for learners if new technologies are harnessed for teaching in a traditional way, but rather the understanding that the mere employment of

technologies in a 'shovelware' manner will neither help learners develop the necessary '2.0' skills, nor prepare them for their function as responsible and critical users of the increasingly digital environments. After all, shovelware usage constitutes the easiest way of an educational integration of new technologies, and since many teachers miss clear pedagogical concepts for teaching the digital age, they tend to adhere to such uses.

To assure that teachers become aware of the difference, the official documents on education (i.e. the foreign language curricula and the CEFR) would have to become more precise in terms of technology usage. Just stressing the importance of the integration of new technologies without being clear about the various implications for foreign language teaching will make the majority of teachers feel up-to-date and media literate by e.g. uploading their handouts to e-learning platforms. Teaching and learning about new literacies, digital composition and communication practices, however, need a lot more effort and considerations. This is why the next part of the thesis focuses on establishing a criteria framework for the evaluation of the functionalities as well as pedagogical implications of Web 2.0 applications for the teaching of a 'writing 2.0' competence.

7   Evaluating Web 2.0 Applications for Teaching 'Writing 2.0'

In its '2.0' shift the Web has undergone a massive growth in content and services. New Web 2.0 applications are coming out every day and it is difficult and nearly impossible to keep track with the changes, alterations and fluctuations in the Web 2.0 landscape. In order to be clear about whether a Web service is relevant, teachers, therefore, need to have some knowledge of scopes and limitations of applications in digital environments. In addition, however, educators always need to be clear about pedagogical and didactical principles that should accompany all material, resource or service applications in teaching. Although there have been considerable advances in technology, a classroom, where successful learning is guided and developed by the artificial intelligence of new technologies is still a utopia. Therefore, it is an important and necessary task of the teacher to use pedagogical knowledge in order to evaluate and select materials, resources and in the case of the Web, also services and applications for conducting educational activities. This is why the following tries to establish criteria for the evaluation of Web 2.0 applications for the teaching of 21st century written communication and composition practices.

In the investigation of existing evaluation criteria catalogues that are related to (language) teaching with the help of the Web, it becomes apparent that most of them refer either to the identification of valuable Web information services or the evaluation of educational resources that have already been designed with some pedagogical considerations in mind. The 'writing 2.0' criteria are different in the sense that they mainly aim at an evaluation of 'just' the framework that can be used for the teaching of new writing and literacy skills. Therefore, the established criteria are not so much based on traditional EFL material design and evaluation principles, as first proposed by Cunnigsworth in 1984. The more than 70 checklist criteria he provides are based on the following areas:

- Language content
- Selection and grading
- Presentation and practice
- Developing language skills and communicative abilities
- Supporting materials

- Motivation and the learner
- Overall evaluation

Those principles also come into consideration, when ready-made CALL software for the EFL context is evaluated. Since such software packages are usually quite cost-intensive, an evaluation is of particular importance, as it has to be established whether the outcomes of their use are not only worth the effort by the teacher, but also the price of the package. Often educational software is already based on certain underlying assumptions of how people learn (e.g. via drills in behaviouristic learning environments). Those have to be determined and evaluated against the teacher's own assumptions concerning the planning of learning environments and the pedagogical embedding of educational activities. This evaluation principle can, for instance, be found in the criteria for EFL CALL software evaluation proposed by Lee (2001). His criteria are based on the following areas:

- Purpose of CALL software programme purchase
- Teacher readiness
- Financial concerns
- Content and methodology
- Design
- After-sales service
- Others, e.g. reviews for the programme

Since the vast majority of Web 2.0 applications and services are available for free, questions of financial concerns or after-sales services will in most cases not be relevant for the evaluation. The same is true for questions about proposed methodologies and underlying pedagogical principles, since only a few Web 2.0 tools are designed with educational thoughts in mind. The services that are, do usually not gain particular popularity and cut off the learners from real Web 2.0 audiences, communities and authentic wide-ranging communication practices.

With the 'social turn' and the concepts of CLT in EFL teaching, issues of authenticity and up-to-datedness/current relevance increasingly found their ways into material and resource evaluation. In the days of the Internet, authentic content can be retrieved with just a few clicks. Since online content does not have to undergo the principles that underlie the traditional publishing process, the massive growth of the Web led evaluation towards stressing notions of authority and

correctness. Guides to the evaluation of Web content for teaching and learning, therefore, are often very strongly based on issues like the determination of an author, the provision of the author's authority on the subject, the time of the latest content update etc. Of course, these are relevant guidelines for students as well as teachers, when it comes to research activities or the actual usage of information content. However, since Web 2.0 tools that could be relevant for teaching writing are mainly defined by providing a valuable framework for composition and communication, such factors might not gain much relevance. Taking blogging as an example, it is apparent that content is created by many users, leading to the evolution of blogging communities and the development of a whole 'blogosphere', which consists of a huge amount of user-generated content. This content is not reviewed and can stem from experts, novices or lay persons who are interested in a certain topic, which in turn means that the content itself cannot and does not make any claims of completeness, correctness or thoroughness.

As a result, there is always the potential 'danger' that students are confronted with wrong, inaccurate or inappropriate content, as well as with language that does not meet school requirements of correctness, appropriacy or accuracy. Since this fact is often identified as a major problem in the use of Web 2.0 applications, e-learning platforms (also often referred to as Content Management Systems or Virtual Learning Environments) with similar functionalities are built. Such eLearning platforms (like e.g. Moodle or Blackboard) are described by Kurilovas (2007: 73) to include a) controlled access; b) student tracking; c) resources and materials; d) communications; e) links and f) customisation. They often try to mirror and rebuild the popular communication, collaboration and publishing services of the real world Web within a safe and therefore relatively isolated environment.

However, as already pointed out above, the value of such a recreation of Web 2.0 applications like wikis, weblogs in a cut-off environment is questionable, since students are thereby also cut off from real world communities of practice and the value and usefulness of certain applications may remain irrelevant and opaque. Of course, such systems also have their advantages. They are safe zones, where potential threats and interferences from outside do not play a role. At the same

time they provide the teacher with tools for assessment purposes and student management. However, as practical as they may be for administrative and student managing purposes, it is questionable whether for the teaching of new literacies and Web 2.0 writing practices they are really suitable. They, for instance, cut the student's off a wider real-world audience for their compositions. As a result the evaluation of such e-learning platforms will be based on different criteria than the evaluation of real Web 2.0 services.

Kurilovas (2007: 73-75) summarises a variety of evaluation criteria for such eLearning platforms/VLEs. He mentions **technical criteria** like a) overall architecture and implementation, b) interoperability, c) cost of ownership, d) strength of the development community, e) licensing, f) internationalisation and localisation, g) accessibility and h) document transformation alongside **organisational criteria** like a) resource negotiation; b) adaptation; c) self organisation; d) monitoring and e) individualisation, as well as **pedagogical criteria**: a) discursive tools; c) adaptability; d) interactivity and e) reflection.

A quite comprehensive list of evaluation criteria is provided by Pachler (2009: 298-299) in the book chapter about *The Use of ICT in MFL Teaching and Learning*. This list contains basic concepts that have to be taken into consideration when it comes to the use of a variety of ICT resources for modern foreign language teaching and learning. The criteria are valuable for the evaluation of learning platforms, CALL software and resources, as well as for authentic Web resources and to some extent also for Web 2.0 applications. Basic criteria from this list, which should also be taken into account when looking at Web 2.0 applications, are the following:

- Are the scope and the aims of the resource explicit?
- Is the resource user-friendly and interactive?
- Does it have the potential for differentiated access?
- Does the concept work and is functionality given, i.e. do all the 'buttons' work?
- Is the resource comparable with similar resources, e.g. what does it do a book doesn't/can't do?
- Is online help available and are error messages clear?
- Are there technical/compatibility problems?
- Can links with existing learning objectives/schemes of work be easily established?

- Is there an appropriate indication as to the possible contexts of use?
- When do I use it? What aspects of the Programme of Study and the Attainment Targets of the National Curriculum does this resource cover?
- What skills/knowledge/understanding are being developed by using this resource?
- How do I use this resource? In what socio-cultural context is learning situated?
- What types of pupil–teacher, pupil–pupil and teacher–pupil interactions are facilitated? How flexible is it, i.e. does it stimulate individual work, pair work and/or group work?
- What are the implications for the role of the teacher?
- What ICT skills are prerequisite to the use of this resource?

A few of those are stressed again in the following evaluation criteria list, since they gain particular importance in the area of concern. The other criteria are based on concepts, which are of special relevance for the teaching and learning of writing.

7.1 Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria list is based on questions, which are arranged around four basic areas (content creation, communication, connection, collaboration), and the integration of applications into the actual teaching process. Although classroom/curriculum integration is presented as a separated area in the forthcoming list, this should probably be the most essential of the educators' concerns, which also constitutes the basis of the other evaluation areas. Hence, in Figure 26 this aspect is also shown as overlapping with the other parts, and is placed the heart of the evaluation.
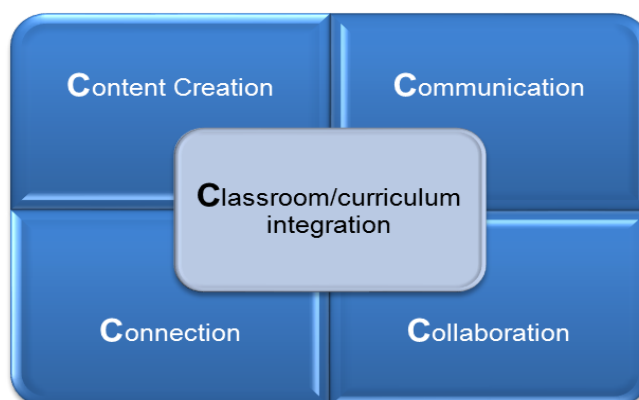
Figure 26: Evaluation areas for the establishment of a 'writing 2.0' competence

Since it tries to give a rather comprehensive description, the subsequent list is relatively long and tries to account for characteristics and attributes that can possibly be provided by a variety of Web 2.0 services. Therefore, not all of the questions are equally relevant for every Web application that can be used for the teaching of written composition and communication. After all, different applications may particularly differ in their focus on one or more of the four basic areas, and thereby foreground different criteria. As a result, despite its length the criteria list will not be comprehensive.

Content creation

- Does the tool provide content by itself, or does it only give a framework for production? Are learners automatically confronted with content generated by other users?

- What kind of content can be produced? Does it constitute an environment for engaging in 'new literacies' practices (i.e. by being given the possibility of combining various semiotic modes/Design elements for content creation)?

- Can learners and teachers keep track of (their own) contributions and content changes (i.e. via notification services, labelling or archiving options) so that e.g. reflection on content can take place at a later stage?

Communication

- Which forms of communication are enabled (i.e. one-to-one, many-to-many, synchronous, asynchronous, public, private etc.)

- Does its structure provide effective facilities for meta-communication (i.e. for giving and receiving feedback by peers/ the teacher/ communities of practice)?

Connection (i.e. publication & audience)

- Does the application offer differentiated/restricted access options or is it completely open to the public?

- How 'popular' is the application (i.e. are there any communities of practice/user groups to connect with)?

- What are the audience and user groups like (age groups, lay people, learners, professionals etc.) and how and for what purpose do they use the application (i.e. news spreading, professional expertise, self-expression, socialising, leisure/just for fun activities etc.)?

Collaboration

- Where/at which stage is it possible to collaborate (i.e. in the actual composing process of a (multimodal) text, on a meta-level in negotiating or discussing the content etc.)?

- Does the application structure provide the facilities to collaborate on content with many users or smaller groups?

Classroom/curriculum integration:

- What kinds of writing activities are supported by the application (i.e. creative writing, Web 2.0 narration, written negotiation and communication practices, metacognitive/reflective writing activities etc.)?

- What kinds of '2.0' skills/knowledge/understanding are being developed by using this application (i.e. learner autonomy, multimodal designing, connective writing, parallel knowledge/information construction)?

- How much technical and language expertise is required for using the application effectively? For which learner level/age group would the use of the application be sensible?

7.2 Evaluation: Weblogs and Wikis

In this final chapter the criteria established above will be applied in a 'predictive' evaluation, which according to Cunningsworth (1995) and Ellis (1997: 36) is the most common form of material/resource evaluation, alongside other forms like the 'in-use' and the 'retrospective' (reflective) evaluation. 'Predictive' signifies that the evaluation tries to predict and assess the quality and potential of an application before it is used with students for a certain purpose. According to Susser and Robb (2004: 280) such a predictive evaluation applies equally to software applications and web-based materials. Although the evaluation will be backed up with a few examples of EFL weblogs and wikis, it will not be directed towards a (retrospective) project evaluation, since valuable bigger and long-scale EFL blogging or wiki projects are very rare and usually not conducted with the explicit aim of the teaching of 21st century writing skills. As a result, the evaluation will mainly be conducted on a meta-level, and thereby will extend the descriptive account of the basic functionalities and example educational uses of weblogs and

wikis in chapter 5.2 to a close analysis of the affordances for the teaching of a 'writing 2.0' competence.

Clearly, the setups of the two different applications afford some of the above defined areas more than others, and thereby to some extent already determine the focal points of the evaluation. In their organisation and content management structures blogs, for instance, put a stronger emphasis on the areas of publication/audience, whereas wikis foreground collaboration. Hence, the following will focus on four criteria per application, also in order to achieve the necessary analytical depth. However, the evaluation will also draw comparisons between the two applications, and thereby briefly touches on the majority of the above defined criteria.

Weblogs

- *Does the tool provide content by itself or does it only give a framework for production? Are learners automatically confronted with content generated by other users?*

Signing up to a blogging service means that a Web user is provided with a framework for publication by being given webspace in a more or less predefined format with respective administrative rights, and a web address from which the blog can be retrieved also by other people. This means that although creating a blog is a relatively easy endeavour, learners will basically be confronted with an empty space that needs to be filled, and they will not be automatically connected with the knowledge and information landscape created by the so-called blogosphere. This concept is something that still remains opaque during the initial steps in blogging. Whereas microblogging services such as Twitter give an immediate overview of who is there and what happens via the public timeline and the friend search function, weblogs are not socialising tools per se. On Twitter, the concept of 'following' people provides a user with updates and thereby with content created by other people. The only possibility of receiving content updates by other bloggers is to subscribe to their blogs via the RSS function, which means that updates from various applications can be gathered in a newsreader.

This poses the question, whether bulletin boards would be more suitable tools for the purpose of being connected to other people and to content they produce. Of

course, this always depends on the intention behind the usage of an application. Blogs and discussion boards differ inherently in the fact that a blog is a space for expression and creation, which is mostly attached to an individual who is responsible for the content. Discussion boards do not belong to an individual but are a space for many people to pose questions and initiate discussions. In addition, bulletin boards have a relatively rigid structure, which does not allow for multimodal text construction. Therefore, although learners would be confronted with content and audience when joining a bulletin board, it is not an ideal place for individual publication that is open to every reader in the Web.

The lack of immediate content (user-generated as well as from the application itself) means that weblogs are relatively 'non distractive' Web 2.0 applications, especially in contrast to microblogging, which has a high amount of 'noise'. This is, of course, related to the nature of content produced on microblogging services such as Twitter. Since Twitter is restricted to 140 characters per posting, it adopts features of instant messaging or text messaging, meaning that a large number of these 140 character 'micro chunks' will frequently pop up on one's news feed main page. In contrast to blogging, microblogging platforms are, therefore, not suitable for individual text composition purposes. In addition, it is purely based on written language, and does not enable the use of various semiotic modes for meaning-making. Due to the very limited space it is primarily useful for revealing personal updates, knowledge sharing and news spreading purposes, also via the hyperlinking of resources.

That such an inherent social platform is missing in blogging may be less distractive for the learners, but it also has implications for the learners' own blogs, since the content they produce will not appear automatically for other bloggers either. In order to actually get into contact with a wider audience, the learners would have to take promotion measures, like linking their blogs on other applications and websites (like Facebook, Twitter, the school's or the teacher's website) and to establish contacts in a like-minded blogging community of e.g. other EFL learners, or even experts in a certain area. Hence, learners would have to do research on relevant blogs, by e.g. searching on a blog search engine like *technorati.com* and by having a look at the blogrolls of appropriate blogs. Social contacts in blogging are then best established through commenting on other people's blog posts. All of

that is, of course, a relatively time consuming matter, and realistically can only be accomplished with experienced EFL learners. For less experienced learners, the establishment of such audience contacts could also be conducted by the teacher before a blogging project. If such a blog promotion does not take place at all, this means that the learner or classroom blogs would most probably only be responsive from the audience of peers and the teacher.

▪ *What are the audience and user groups like (age groups, lay people, learners, professionals etc.) and how and for what purpose do they use the application (i.e. news spreading, professional expertise, self-expression, socialising, leisure/just for fun activities etc.)?*

As a weblog is usually maintained by one person, the collaborative and interactive aspects are created by the fact that blogging communities emerge around certain topics or practices of use. The great popularity of blogging can, therefore, be mostly ascribed to the social dynamics of the blogosphere, which evolved out of the fact that bloggers do not only concentrate on the creation of content on their own blogs, but actively participate in the discussions on other blogs. In her article on *Writing with Web Logs* Kristen Kennedy (2003) points out that

> unlike most websites, which generally combine static and dynamic features, a blog is produced with an active writer in mind, one who creates in an online writing space designed to communicate an identity, a personality, and most importantly, a point of view.

This 'activeness' of bloggers also means that they typically communicate their knowledge, identities and standpoints not only on their individual writing spaces, but also actively participate in the communication and discussion practices on other weblogs. This has the effect that on a typical weblog knowledge and information is built up collaboratively, but not in the actual collaborative writing on a piece of text (like in a wiki), but by engaging in conversations and discussions around pieces of content (i.e. individual blog posts). As a result, blogging would not have gained any relevance in the Web 2.0 movement without the sense of audience and participation it creates.

In its *State of the blogosphere 2008* technorati.com published some interesting information about who actually blogs and for what purposes. This report reveals that the majority of bloggers is between 25-34 years old and that most of the

bloggers live in North America, having the effect the vast majority of blogs (72%) are published in English.
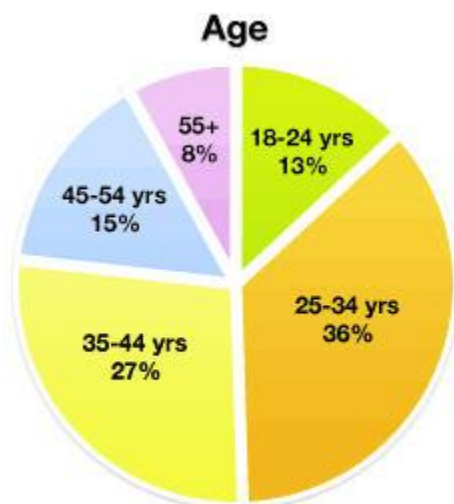
Figure 27: How old are bloggers? (technorati.com)   **Figure 28: Where do bloggers come from? (technorati.com)**
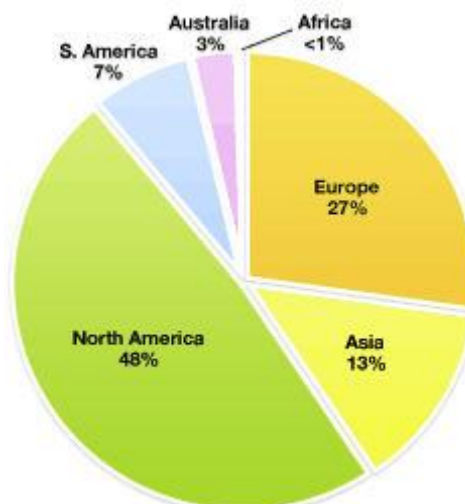
Apart from that, the report also reveals information about what blogs are mainly used for. About half of the bloggers are professional bloggers, 12 % are corporate bloggers, and about 80% of blogs are used for personal blogging, the percentage of which implies that also professional and corporate bloggers are also engaged in personal blogging activities.

It is, however, difficult to pin down any special uses of blogs. Many people use them to engage in so-called citizen journalism, by spreading news and blogging about current affairs. Others blog for sharing their professional expertise or their privately acquired knowledge about certain topics of interest. There are also people who use blogs to share their creative work or to keep a kind of online diary. Altogether, blogs are extremely versatile applications. This can be also be assigned to the fact that blog content usually is not confined to written language, and people can design, provide and share different kinds of multimedia constructs, as well as embed information from other applications (e.g. Twitter updates).

How are these facts relevant for EFL teaching and learning? First of all, the fact that such statistics actually exist, reveal the popularity of the application. Blogging has become a major genre of Web writing, the significance of which ought not to be neglected in the language classroom. Furthermore, blogging communities are relatively young, and since the areas of personal and professional blogging open up a great variety of topics, the whole setup could be very motivating and foster

student writing. In addition, learners are confronted with the importance of English as a global language for blogging, which constitutes a global publication and communication practice. A blog in English has the potential to be noticed and read by a great number of people from all over the world, and thereby makes writing even more purposeful. Many experts argue that blogging creates a sense of purpose and audience, which is not only motivating, but also makes learners more form-focused in their compositions.

Whereas the increased form-focusedness is something that would afford long established principles of traditional language-based writing approaches, the blogging audience and communities can also be relevant for 21st century literacy education through the immersion in what the New London Group (2003: 32) identifies as Situated Practice. Since weblogs have been identified as the most popular Web 2.0 application, the practices that developed in this writing genre have been very influential for the creation of other applications as well. The mere existence of the blogosphere makes it possible to confront learners with an environment of blogging experts, where they can immerse in blogging practices in order to learn about how new literacies are developed and applied in this real world Web 2.0 application. Throughout the active reading of 'expert' weblogs, learners can get an idea of how new ways of meaning-making are established effectively by the utilisation of various media forms, hyperlinked knowledge connections and Design principles.

- *Does its structure provide effective facilities for meta-communication (i.e. for giving and receiving feedback by peers/ the teacher/ communities of practice)?*

The emergence of such (blogging) communities of practice as well as the increased form-focusedness of student writing can mainly be assigned to the communicative structure surrounding blog posts. Similar to bulletin boards, discussion and interaction are enabled by the possibility of making comments. In contrast to traditional webpages and wikis, the commenting function is not separated from the actual publication space, i.e not bundled under a special menu item. It is attached to each individual blog post, giving readers the chance to react to chunks of so-called micro-content and not only to the website as a whole. This setup feature has facilitated the development of blogging communities, which are able to express their consent or critique directly after the respective posts, or add

their own knowledge (e.g. in connection with links to additional resources on the topic). As a result of these interactional components, people with similar interests can find and converse with each other, and thereby collaborate in knowledge production.

This communicational structure, of course, also has valuable implications for the exchange of feedback, which is an important concept not only in EFL teaching. Teachers can place the feedback directly to the respective pieces of content, but since it is not possible to correct the texts with a virtual red pencil, the feedback has to be formulated and the teacher does not have to assume the traditional role of the corrector and emendator. In addition, the actual power of blogging for EFL purposes is argued to lie in the fact that feedback cannot only be received by the teacher, but also by peers and basically by everyone who visits the blog. This gives the learners a real sense of audience and makes a good compositional construct seem more important.

An interesting class blogging project, which drew on this public nature of weblogs in a very effective way, was developed by Will Richardson at Hunterdon Central Regional High School. He decided to use a weblog for conducting a very in-depth book study, or rather a reader's guide, on the book *Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd. On this blog (http://weblogs.hcrhs.k12.nj.us/bees/) students created chapter summaries, discussed characters, symbols and themes, engaged in discussions around questions that were posted by the teacher, and posted pictures, self-made drawings and additional valuable Web links that fitted the topic. A fascinating aspect of this blogging project is that apart from developing into a frequently visited reference source for everyone interested in this book, at some point even the author of the book accepted the invitation to step into the blog, followed the students' work, and provided some feedback as well as further information about her book (Richardson 2009: 23-24).

It should, however, always be kept in mind that all the feedback is as public as the blog itself. Usually blogs do not provide straightforward facilities to send private messages to the blogger, especially about a particular blog post. However, this public character of feedback also gives learners the opportunity to benefit from the comments on the blog posts by peers. Altogether, working with blogs is a good way of breaking with the traditional and rather ineffective habit of students handing

in written works only to the teacher and receiving them with mere textual corrections, which probably will not even be looked at by the respective learner, and certainly not by peers. With the help of the communicative structure of weblogs, however, student communities can be created and interaction is fostered to a greater extent than in traditional classroom settings. Campbell (2003) points out that blogging practices thereby build stronger classroom communities, and further classroom discussion. He also argues that the continuous posting on various student blogs can be a document of the learner's ongoing process, as well as a resource for other learners. Campbell also established a model of a Student-community blogging interaction, which shows the interconnectedness of student blogs, with the moderator in the centre, and outside participants at the margins:
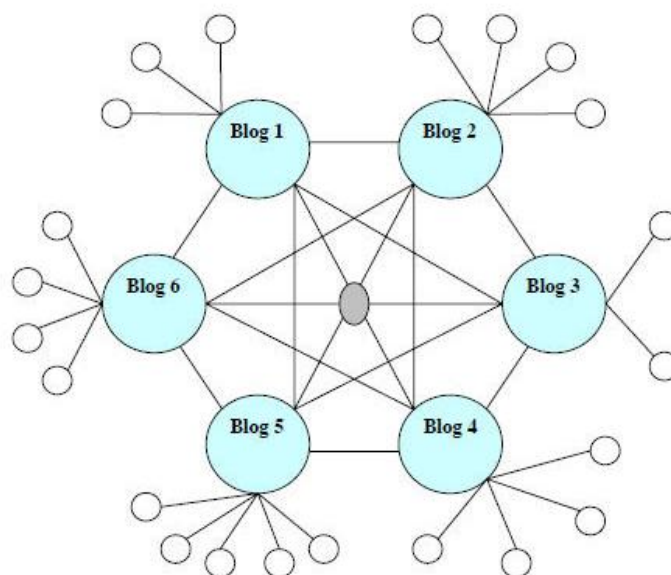
Figure 29: Student-community blogging interaction model by Campbell (2003) taken from Jones (2006: 77)

- *What kinds of '2.0' skills/knowledge/understanding are being developed by using this application (i.e. learner autonomy, multimodal designing, connective writing, parallel knowledge/information construction)?*

The communicative structure also contributes to the formation of skills that are relevant for written communication and interaction practices in the target language. This means that by active blogging practices not only (multimodal) composition is fostered. In making and receiving comments, learners are engaged in using English for clarification, negotiation and feedback purposes, which is also identified by sociocultural approaches to teaching writing and EFL as valuable for

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developing and increasing language competence. However, since learners are confronted with a completely different medium, also new ways of connecting and presenting knowledge can be pursued. In the composition of a weblog entry it is possible to underpin and clarify points by the integration of hyperlinks and hypermedia. In addition, different multimodal resources like images or videos can be combined with language to create a text.

Davies and Merchant (2009: 31) point out that the most interesting blogs are a judicious combination of different modes. Therefore, blogs are a helpful application to foster learners' engagement in the principles of Design by harnessing the various modes that are of equal importance in the medium of the Web. As a result, weblogs are also valuable applications for engaging learners in what the New London Group (2003: 33) defines as the Transformed Practice stage in the teaching of new literacies. Blogging is not only a genre, which allows for immersion in new literacy practices, but also provides teachers and learners with the necessary filling space for combining a variety of Design elements in a meaningful way. Thereby, for teaching purposes blogging is not only a genre which contributes to the transformation of 21st century multiliteracies, but also paves the way towards developing and practising them in an authentic 'real world' environment.
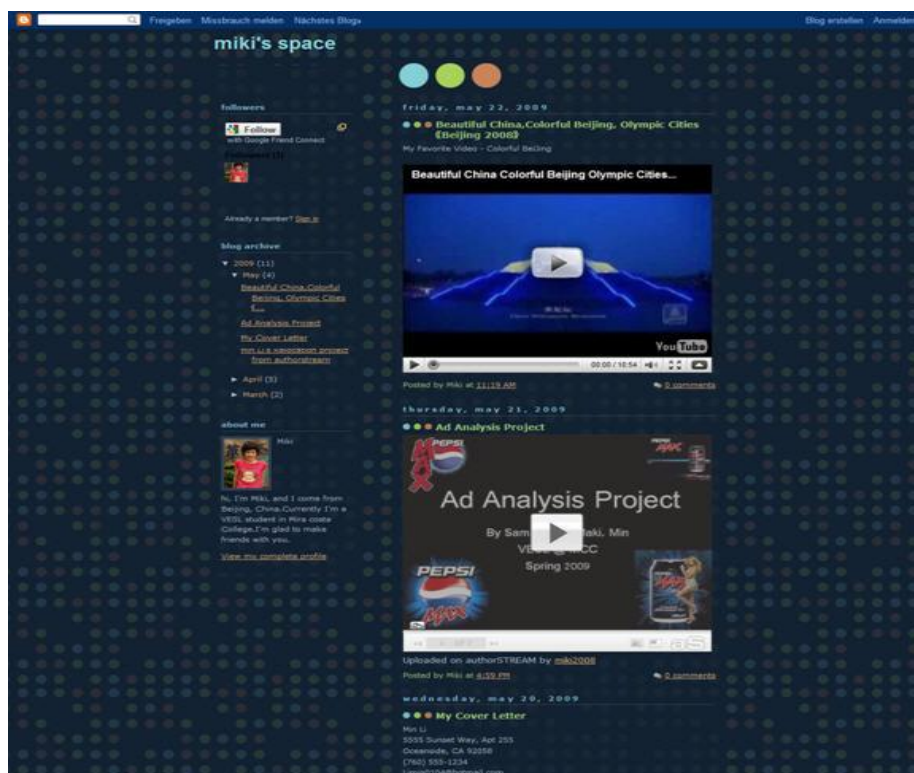
Figure 30: ESL learner blog (http://mikimiki2009.blogspot.com/)

The weblog in Figure 30, for example, was created by a student from a vocational ESL class by Kristi Reyes from Miracosta College. The students' blogs, which are gathered on her class blog, are not primarily language based, but also include various multimodal Web 2.0 elements, like embedded video resumes, Youtube videos and online power point presentations (Peters 2009).

Such Design measures as well as the internal hyperlinking to relevant sources involve the learners in making a lot of choices on their own. Whereas the traditional medium of the page does not allow for a lot of creative text shaping, the medium of the screen and especially the medium of the Web allow deviating from the language-oriented structure and permit moving towards a rather image-oriented organisation. For each blog post, learners can choose which information is best conveyed in text, image or video, and which points should be linked to their sources or to additional information. As a result, blogging can develop various skills in a very integrated manner, since active reading and researching are substantial elements of the writing and designing process. The whole concept of 'connective writing' was developed by Will Richardson (2009: 28-29) in relation to blogs, meaning that in the writing of/commenting on a blog post a learner has to engage in a lot of reading and critical thinking in order to decide on what to write about and how to convey the message to establish connections and make them clear for the respective audience.

These decisions give learners much more autonomy in text construction. In browsing through the Web and other weblogs when searching for information, learners are confronted with a huge amount of multimodal material. The teacher can impossibly guide them through all of the encountered material and therefore, students have to be led towards understanding, finding and establishing effective ways of coping with the parallel information and knowledge structures on the Web.

Wikis

Similar to blogs, wikis are tools which have a strong focus on content creation. Although they are also publishing tools, which usually make changes visible immediately, they have a stronger focus on collaboration than on individual publication for a wider responsive audience. This may be related to the lower popularity of the tool (except for Wikipedia itself) and the fact that a real 'wikisphere', as compared to the blogosphere, does not exist, since a wiki

community is usually confined to the number of collaborators that were invited to join a certain wiki. Therefore, wikis are far less responsive and communicative when it comes to the discussion of the actual subject matter of the text. Wikis are much more focused on the text itself in its creation process. This is why they afford the development of different kinds of 'writing 2.0' skills than weblogs do.

- *What kind of content can be produced? Does it constitute an environment for engaging in 'new literacies' practices (i.e. by being given the possibility of combining various semiotic modes/Design elements for content creation)?*

Just as weblogs, wiki services usually support the combination of written language with images and videos etc. into a multimodal text construction. They also provide the possibility of hyperlinking content to internal as well as external sources. This means that also wikis provide learners with a setting, in which multimodal Design-oriented text production can take place. As a result, also wikis are environments, which can be exploited for guiding learners towards the Transformed Practice stage. Most wiki services, particularly *wikispaces.com* and *pbwiki.com* constitute settings, in which students are free in the combination of various Design elements (visual, acoustic, linguistic) for meaning making.
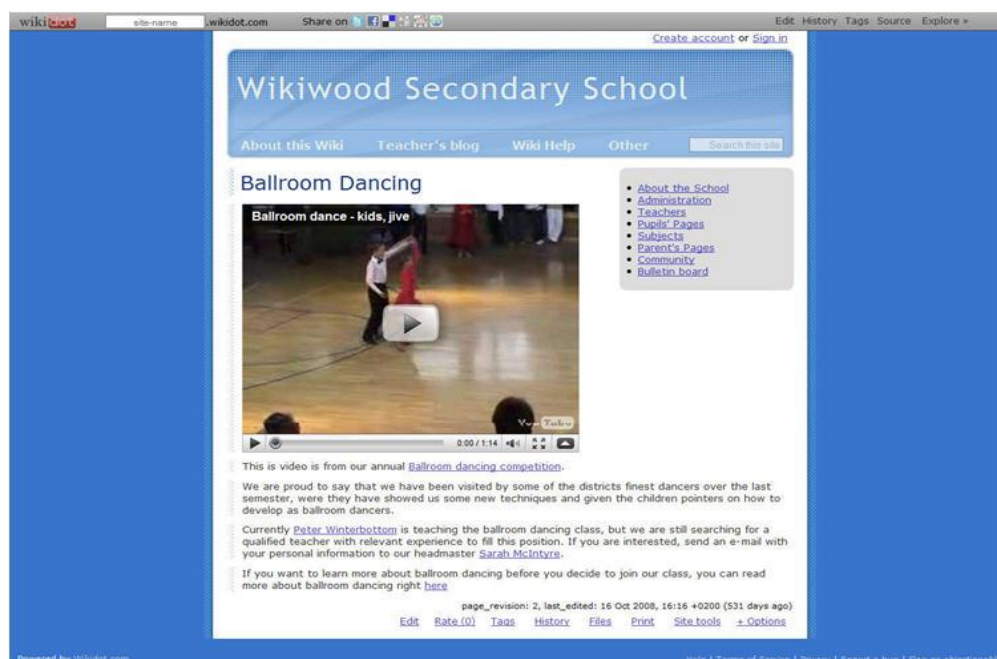
Figure 31: Digital Storyline: Wikiwood Secondary School (Tromsø University College:
http://wikiwoodsec.wikidot.com/)

A very interesting EFL wiki project was created by a teacher at Tromsø University College, Norway. She decided to create a digital storyline about the imaginary Wikiwood Secondary School. This made the English learners create and provide

information about this non-existent school in a very creative way. As can be seen in Figure 31 above, in the wiki the learners also drew on various modes and Design elements for meaning making. Interestingly, the teacher who initiated this wiki project decided to complement the wiki with an interlinked teacher's blog (http://hildesteachingblog.wordpress.com/), which according to her own words was created for "the purpose of assisting students in developing the wiki, as well as being a place for feedback, comments and questions". The teacher thereby effectively harnessed and combined the different pedagogical and organisational affordances of the two different tools.

To understand why a wiki seemed not to be 'enough' in this project it has to be noted that in contrast to blogs, which consist of singular blog posts that build up over time in a chronological order, wikis are organised similarly to traditional Web 1.0 webpages. They contain a start page and a table of contents, which leads to various subpages that are interlinked to one another. This means that wikis allow building whole webpage constructs around certain topics or projects, whereas blogs are more oriented towards the gathering of individual blog posts/pieces of microcontent over time. As a result, a wiki clearly misses is the communicational structure that is directly attached to the content. The included discussion function does not allow placing the comments where they belong to.

As mentioned above, a wiki is a collaborative tool, providing a discussion place for discussing and negotiating actual changes on the text itself, but it does not foster discussion about the subject matter and it is not really suitable for exchanging feedback on the content or for discussing organisational matters. This is also connected to the fact that content on a wiki is of a very unstable nature. In the collaborative creation process, content can be altered, revised, added and deleted any time. In contrast to a weblog, where blog posts and comments remain unaltered after publishing, wiki content is in a constant state of flux and fosters the notion that Web writing is never really finished and always has to be kept up-to-date.

Learners who collaborate on a wiki are usually confronted with two different 'streams' of content. These are the actual site content, on the one hand, and the discussions about the creation of content, on the other hand. Both of them would have to be read closely before contributions and alterations can take place. For

language teaching purposes not only the contribution to the site text itself can be valuable, but also the contributions to the discussion thread, since this setup can foster the development of important meta-language and knowledge about linguistic as well as Design matters. As learners need to collaborate, it is very likely that they need to discuss the Design of meaning-making, as well as language concerns (i.e. correct use of grammar, vocabulary etc.).

Hence, the topic-centeredness and collaborative interaction about content on a meta-level could also be valuable for engaging learners in the principles outlined in the Overt Instruction phase defined by the New London Group (2003: 32). At this stage learners should acquire some meta-language of Design, visually as well as linguistically in order to become consciously aware of the systematic relations in a certain domain. With the help of a wiki, learners can be located in an environment, in which such meta-language and meta-knowledge are required, and have to be applied naturally and purposefully for the negotiation and discussion of meaning-making and content production. Referring back to weblogs, conscious awareness of various Design elements and processes can and should also be fostered effectively by pertinent reflective activities, for which blogging applications provide more efficient facilities than wikis.

- *Does the application offer differentiated/restricted access options or is it completely open to the public?*

Whereas an average weblog is open for everyone to read and post comments, wikis are usually not open for everyone to participate as an author, except from the most popular wiki, Wikipedia. People can be invited to join the collaborative process in a wiki, and for classroom purposes it would be rather unusual if random people from the Web join a learners' wiki and make changes on the content. This, of course, is also connected to the use of wikis in the 'real' Web. Wikispaces.com provides wiki setups for businesses, educational purposes and various kinds of organisations that need spaces for collaborative working and publishing. Most of them aim for a particular group of people to contribute to their wikis, and do not aim at harnessing the power of the crowds. That is also the reason why wikis are not very responsive and not as popular as blogs, since their setup does not foster social dynamics in the way other Web 2.0 applications do. This restricted access setup also has effects on the feedback culture. Whereas on weblogs feedback

from outside the classroom, e.g. by members of real blogging communities, is easily possible, a wiki does not provide feedback facilities for people who have no access to altering the content. As wikis usually can be read by anyone, at least the sense of audience - though not of a responsive one - is still there and makes writing more purposeful than in the traditional classroom.

However, wikis are certainly useful tools for collaborative work of a restricted circle of people, who want the outcomes of this work to be published. Most wiki applications that provide restricted access will require people to be invited, to register via e-mail and to log in before content can be changed. This gives an educator the chance to keep track of who made which contribution and who conducted which alteration. Clearly, although wikis constitute applications, which are suitable for the collaboration of many people, the more collaborators the 'messier' a wiki gets and the more difficult it becomes for the teacher to monitor the content changes. After all, on wikis it is not possible to edit content collaboratively in real time, such as it is in Google Docs & Spreadsheets. Therefore, even in a restricted wiki it would render essential to assign certain tasks or work areas, especially when using it with younger learners. For more experienced learner groups a wiki does not only constitute an application to foster autonomous media choice and sensible knowledge management, but also a way of promoting autonomous group management with the self-determined assignment of roles and tasks. In this respect, also Will Richardson (2009: 61) claims that wiki projects produce the best outcomes, when the teacher steps back a little and lets the students manage the content on the site.

▪ *Where/at which stage is it possible to collaborate (i.e. in the actual composing process of a (multimodal) text, on a meta-level in negotiating or discussing the content etc.)?*

The whole organisation of a wiki is directed towards collaboration and shared authorship, whereas weblogs would typically be maintained by an individual author. In contrast to a wiki, a weblog misses the necessary structure for content to be produced and edited collaboratively. Once a blog post is published, there is no possibility of conducting changes and alterations. Collaboration on a blog happens in the construction of knowledge on a topic by people sharing and discussing their individual standpoints, but there is no collaborative writing

possibility in the actual production of the texts. A wiki, however, enables collaboration at the text level, as well as above the text level (i.e. meta-communication) in discussing and negotiating content choices and adaptations. Accordingly, also Warschauer and Grimes (2007: 12) argue that a wiki is more topic centered and of a rather de-personalised nature. In weblogs, on the other hand, there is a strong authorial voice and the formulation of individual standpoints is highly valued.

Davies and Merchant (2009: 101-102) regard the facilities a wiki offers for collaboration, and shared and distributed authorship as beneficial. They highlight the pedagogical value of collaborative text making, which can break with the traditional view that individualised learning and text production are the best ways of creating scholarly expertise. In addition, they regard wiki collaboration on content creation as a great opportunity to establish social participation and online interactivity, which according to their words can "widen students' repertoires as readers and writers", and show them "the value of editing and refining".

The two different kinds of collaboration threads promote the development of a variety of writing skills, which cannot be fostered as effectively in traditional non-technological environments. The conventional non-technological classroom does hardly provide similar valuable and purposeful facilities for conducting collaborative writing activities or for fostering written negotiation and discussion practices. Richardson (2009: 61) notes that all sorts of collaborative skills are developed in the process of negotiating on correctness, meaning, relevance etc., and that in that process students basically begin to teach each other. Hence, collaborative writing and content production, as taking place on wikis, do not only prove beneficial for the development of linguistic or Design-oriented meta-language, but also help to increase language and text sensibility and awareness. In contrast to weblogs, which put a stronger focus on the finished text, the adaptations and alterations on a wiki put the writing process and the concepts of editing and revision, as well as of composing and drafting, in the foreground. As identified in chapter 2.5 those have been claimed by various (mainly process) approaches to contribute to text production skills as well as to general foreign language awareness and competence.

- *What kinds of writing activities are supported by the application (i.e. creative writing, Web 2.0 narration, written negotiation and communication practices, metacognitive/reflective writing activities etc.)?*

Since they provide a relatively flexible setup, both weblogs and wikis are suitable for various kinds of activities. Due to the more stable nature of content, the diary like setup and archiving functions, blogs are best used for reflective and metacognitive writing that, for instance, accompany classroom or homework activities. In general, blogs constitute helpful tools for gathering and collecting individual work over time, and therefore have implications for their use as e-portfolios, the various contributions of which can be reflected and commented on. Since wikis are not based on the stability of content, but on the changeability and rather ephemeral and unsteady nature of digital text, they are rather not qualified for such reflective or content archiving purposes.

In addition, it is relatively apparent that while blogs are places for individual activities, wikis would rather render a waste of effort and time if not used for collaborative activities. Such activities could involve creative writing or even Web 2.0 narrations, such as in the *1001 Flat World Tales* collaboratively written story, which has already been touched upon in section 5.2.3 and 5.2.5, as well as all kind of project reports, organisational activities and basically every kind of activity that can effectively be conducted in a collaborative and iterative manner. As collaborative writing spaces wikis could also support so-called pre-writing activities like brainstorming, idea and resource gathering. In a wiki these are not confined to the traditional blackboard-oriented manner of noting down keywords; as a digital editable space wikis facilitate the collection, hyperlinking and direct integration of multimodal material and resources, as well as the constant and seamless improvement and adjustment of the findings.

Whereas teacher blogs are suitable for initiating written discussion activities on certain topics, to which learners can contribute via commenting on the teachers' blog posts, a similar use would not be supported effectively by the wiki setup. However, by building up a basic wiki structure with links to resources and predefined spaces to be filled, a teacher could employ it for providing learners with a kind of scaffolding for writing activities, such as pointed out by Franklin and Van Harmelen (2007: 5). This use, of course, takes away autonomy and choosing

possibilities from the students, and thereby makes it particularly valuable for younger, less-experienced learners. However, as Richardson (2009: 61) points out, "the more autonomy teachers give to students in terms of negotiating the scope and quality of content they are creating the better", since "teachers who impose a lot of right and wrong on that process can undermine the effectiveness of the tool". As with digital 21st century education in general, also in wikis the teacher's role and tasks would move into the direction of coordinating the work, i.e. by designing rich and effective learning experiences, and by establishing and encouraging student interaction and participation (Davies&Merchant 2009: 99).

8 Conclusion

What has been established

The evaluation and the exploration of Web 2.0 tools in sections 5 and 7 clearly demonstrate that the use of the 'real' Web for education needs careful and thorough pedagogical planning and consideration. Although the opportunities that they provide seem to be endless and very promising, just signing students up to the various services cannot guarantee valuable educational outcomes. This is why many educators warn about too much enthusiasm concerning the use of new technologies for language teaching. The question is, whether the current education system should be worried about too much enthusiasm. Although the world around us is clearly changing due to new technologies and emerging environments like the Web 2.0, EFL classrooms still tend to block out this part of reality. At the moment this is related to the fact that in foreign language teaching technology is largely regarded as a mere implemental means for conducting their traditional approaches.

However, particularly the Web 2.0 constitutes a completely new and ever-expanding setting for private and professional communication and interaction. Since it is a medium that it is mainly - but certainly not completely - based on graphic meaning representation, it has special implications for EFL writing. Therefore, this thesis gave an account of traditional writing concepts and their challenging by the increasingly interactive and image-oriented setup of the World Wide Web. This means that the Web 2.0 is not primarily presented as a medium in which traditional teaching and learning activities can be conducted, but as a medium, for the participation in which students have to be prepared.

In its focus on the concept of writing, this thesis tried to link to and merge into more conventional pedagogies and methodologies as well. However, the pedagogical findings of the New London Group (2003), as well as of Gunther Kress (2000, 2004, 2006, 2010a, 2010b), Julia Davies and Guy Merchant (2009), as well as George Siemens (2004) demonstrate that (foreign) language education would have to move into more holistic conceptual frameworks, which should no longer differentiate between traditional purely language-based skills. This is why this thesis also aimed at showing how writing stepped out of its traditional

conception and has been particularly challenged by the 'Web 2.0' movement. The identified pillars (i.e active participation, user-friendliness, modification, interaction etc.) of the Web 2.0 provide educators with the opportunity to participate in the authentic writing practices without problems of financing or particular ICT expertise. However, since Web 2.0 applications are fast-changing, developing and call for special pedagogical considerations and concepts, this thesis also established some basic criteria that have to be taken into consideration before using an application for engaging students in 'real' Web 2.0 communication and composition environments and practices.

Further issues and implications

In its emphasis on new technologies, this thesis also touched on broader issues that are neither confined to the teaching of writing nor to the EFL classroom. Language teachers would have to become open-minded about the cultural and social spheres and environments that are created through the changing and advancing technologies. In order to see the implications and affordances of new technologies, teachers would have to begin to participate in the practices that are subsumed under the term 'new literacies'. However, such an encouragement of the educators' participation clearly has to go hand in hand with greater and more explicit awareness raising in official documents on education and curriculum planning, such as the above discussed CEFR and the foreign language curricula. In order to stay relevant in our transforming societies, language pedagogies, particularly in the EFL field, would have to adapt to and cater for the imposed challenges by the new media environments. Correspondingly, also Kathleen Blake Yancey (2009: 1) identifies the following three challenges for 21st century writing:

- developing new models of composing
- designing a new curriculum supporting those models, and
- creating new pedagogies enacting that curriculum

Yet, in order to prepare students for their successful participation in the digital communication and composition structures, new technologies and the accompanying (multi)literacies would have to become part of teacher education programmes. Referring to the Austrian EFL educational context, it is a rather worrying sign that at the English Department of the University of Vienna there is no

research branch, which is concerned with new media and technologies. Nor are those topics regarded as inherent constituents of the (applied) linguistics and/or teaching methodology branches. Obviously, if the "'paradigm shift' away from conventional EFL models" (Graddol 2006:15), is ignored at university level research and in teacher education programmes, teachers will find themselves unprepared for teaching EFL effectively in an increasingly technologised environment. Hence, also students will lack the necessary skills for an active and effective participation in a globalised information technology economy.

Where is it all going?

Education and learning are clearly different from what they were 10-15 years ago and they will develop further. If, however, language pedagogies stagnate at the same level and do not recognise the changes in knowledge acquisition, thinking and learning structures that are, for instance, pointed out in the principles of Connectivism, they will lose their relevance. Graddol (2006: 72) argues that the role of education is now "to provide the generic skills needed to acquire new knowledge and specialist skills in the future: learning how to learn". As such generic skills he does not only identify literacy in the national language, but in globalised economies this also concerns the utilisation of information technology, and the command of English as a 'global language' as equally important and basic skills. This is why he speaks of "the end of 'English as a foreign language'" (2006: 15) and calls for a retraining of English specialists, who will need to acquire additional skills.

Although there have been some attempts to develop new pedagogies and learning theories, the question arises, how a more holistic and technology-integrating 21st century foreign language curriculum should look like. This is connected to the question where technology is going in the future. It is, of course, always difficult to make predictions about that. At the moment people are already talking about a shift to the so-called Semantic Web (sometimes also referred to Web 3.0), which means that Web content will be defined according to its meaning (semantics) in a way that it can be read, analysed and processed not only by users themselves, but also by machines, which thereby will be able to learn about, 'understand', satisfy and handle requests, which formerly only have been conducted by users.

In addition, already in the near future personal computers and laptops will no longer be the most important devices to stay connected. The increasing advances in smartphone technologies, lead to an increasing mobility of learners and an expanding ubiquity of technology, knowledge and information. Devices such as mobile phones are already discussed as the new 'battleground' for online participation and information retrieval. This, in turn, will pose challenges and create implications for mobile learning and literacy teaching scenarios, in which the classroom walls will even be further eliminated. The issues of learner autonomy, student-centeredness and informal learning will become even more relevant, and the roles of the teachers will increasingly lose their traditional notions, while calling for a stronger transformation to those of mediators and facilitators of learning experiences. It, therefore, seems that teaching and learning are already at the beginning of their next paradigm shift, which, however, does not start from a 'tabula rasa', but builds on the concepts and issues that are also pointed out in this thesis.

No matter into which direction technology moves, in the near future the EFL teachers' task will not be to develop into absolute technology specialists and computer nerds. New technologies will not obviate the need of pedagogical background knowledge and educational concepts. Those, however, will have to be transformed and adapted according to the new literacy requirements of our technological age. This is why this thesis will be closed with a citation by Bertram Bruce (1999) who pointed out that the a teacher's major responsibility is

> [...] to develop critical awareness. [Teachers] are faced again and again with immediate, practical situations in which they have to decide whether to use a particular technology, and if so, how, and with whom. If it is to be used, how does it fit with all the other aspects of learning [...] and with a larger conception of teaching and learning? Answering these questions is a central part of everyday teaching.

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Twitter

Manyvoices http://twitter.com/manyvoices (Collaboratively written Twitter story)

Zombie Attack http://twitter.com/zombieattack (Twitter narrative)

Wikis

1001 Flat World Tales. Elementary schools:
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Herzig Debbie; Henkel, Ansley; Shelley, Paul. *Class project wiki on Turn
Homeward, Hannalee by Patricia Beatty*
http://wiki.woodward.edu/hannalee/doku.php?id=hannalee (Wiki-based
book study).

Tromsø University College. *Wikiwood Secondary School* by
http://wikiwoodsec.wikidot.com/ (Digital storyline).

Blogs

9th Btn Y & L War Diaries. The official War Diary of the 9th Battalion of York &
Lancaster Regiment.
http://yldiaries.blogspot.com/2008_06_01_archive.html (Blog fiction)

A Million Penguins project. http://www.amillionpenguins.com (Wiki-based
collaboratively written novel).

ESL learner blog. http://mikimiki2009.blogspot.com/

Orwell Diaries. http://orwelldiaries.wordpress.com/ (Blog fiction).

Richardson, Will. *Secret Life of Bees* http://weblogs.hcrhs.k12.nj.us/bees/ (Class
blogging project on the book by Sue Monk Kidd).

Tromsø University College. *Teacher blog.*
http://hildesteachingblog.wordpress.com/ (accompanying the Wikiwood
Secondary School project).

Other

Flickr Stories Pool. http://www.flickr.com/groups/visualstory/

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12 German abstract

Diese Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Web 2.0 Bewegung, als Ausdruck für die Phänomene der sozialen Netzwerke und des User-Generated Contents, seiner Auswirkung auf das Wesen der Schreibkomptenz und der schriftlichen Kommunikation (‚Writing'), und dessen Implikationen für den Fremdsprachenunterricht Englisch. Nach einer Begriffsdefinition von ‚Writing' geht diese Arbeit auf die Verknüpfung verschiedener Fähigkeiten in dem Konzept von ‚Literacy' ein, das in seiner heutigen Bedeutung weit über die traditionelle Lese- und Schreibkompetenz hinausgeht, und deshalb von mehreren Quellen bereits nur als Mehrzahlform geführt wird (‚New Literacies' oder ‚Multiliteracies'). Diese neuen ‚Literacies' Fähigkeiten definieren sich im digitalen Zeitalter vor allem durch das Medium des Bildschirms, das die traditionell rigiden und textlastigen Strukturen in Büchern und Schriftdokumenten aufbricht, und sich zunehmend am Bildhaften und der Kombination von multimodalen Inhalten (Text, Bild, Video, Audio) orientiert. Weiters tragen die sozialen und interaktiven Strukturen von Web 2.0 Applikationen zu einem enormen Anstieg der schriftlichen Web Kommunikation bei.

Um diese Entwicklungen, die eine erfolgreiche Teilnahme am globalen Geschehen ermöglichen, erfolgreich mit dem Unterricht in der mittlerweile globalen Sprache Englisch zu verbinden, geht diese Arbeit zunächst auf traditionelle Lernmodelle und Konzeptionen für die Vermittlung der Schreibkompetenz ein. Nach einem kurzen Überblick über die sogenannten ‚neuen' Technologien und ihre Implikationen und Auswirkungen auf den Fremdsprachenunterricht, sowie einer Beschreibung des Connectivism als Lerntheorie für das digitale Zeitalter, werden der GERS (Gemeinsamer Europäischer Referenzrahmen für Sprachen) und die österreichischen AHS Lehrpläne für Fremdsprachen im Bezug auf ihre Inhalte zur Schreibkompetenz und zu neuen Technologien analysiert und kritisch betrachtet. Der nächste Teil der Arbeit erklärt die Besonderheiten des Web 2.0 und beschreibt vier Applikationen (Weblogs, Twitter, Wikis und Collaborative Real Time Document Editors) in ihrer Funktionalität sowie ihrer Einsätze für Unterrichtszwecke. Im weiteren werden die Veränderungen der Umgebung des Schriftlichen sowie die neuen schriftlichen Kommunikationspraktiken zusammengefasst.

Weiters geht die Arbeit auch kurz auf ein didaktisches Modell der New London Group ein, das sich von der traditionellen Konzeption der Vermittlung von einzelnen Sprachfertigkeiten löst, und sich an der Verknüpfung von verschiedenen Design Elementen in der Komposition von Texten orientiert. Dies wird ergänzt durch Überlegungen zu einer Pädagogik 2.0, die sich durch Prinzipien wie selbstbestimmtes informelles Lernen, Lerner-Autonomie und lernerzentrierten Unterricht, mit dem Lehrer als Moderator und wengier als Wissensvermittler, definiert. Es wird auch auf die Wichtigkeit hingewiesen, das Web 2.0 nicht bloß als Medium für die Umsetzung traditioneller Lehrkonzepte zu verwenden, sondern von den Angeboten und Funktionalitäten des Web 2.0 in seinem Unterrichtseinsatz Gebrauch zu machen.

Abschließend werden Evaluierungskriterien für die Bereiche Content Creation, Communication, Connection und Collaboration, sowie für die Integration dieser Aspekte in den Unterricht und den Lehrplan, zur Vermittlung einer ‚Writing 2.0' Kompetenz durch verschiedene Applikationen, definiert, und in einer prospektiven Evaluierung von Wikis und Weblogs angewendet.

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