WEB 2.0 AND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' MOTIVATION: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT
Based on the observation that most of my students use computer-based technology (CBT) in their daily activities, I used computer assisted language learning (CALL) as an intervention in this action research study, carried out at a university in Bangladesh. This CALL curriculum was focused on Web 2.0 and its applications for educational purposes. The main objective of the study was to understand the effects of a CALL curriculum on the participants' learning motivation. To meet this objective, I designed CALL and non-CALL lessons to teach English to a class of first-year undergraduate students. Throughout this course, I observed students' behaviours and attitudes and collected data from different artifacts and student responses. Comparison between student behaviours during the CALL and non-CALL lessons and analysis of the triangulated data indicated that the use of Web 2.0 in the CALL curriculum contributed to an increase in students’ motivation as well as their learning of the target language.

INTRODUCTION
Motivation as a theoretical construct helps us understand why and how individuals learn something. While learner motivation is a key variable in any field of education, it is particularly important for learning a second or foreign language, both referred to as L2 (Gardner, 1985; Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Ushioda, 2011). For example, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) have shown that motivation is highly related to L2 achievement and it supports successful learning of the target language. Theorists generally agree that fostering students’ motivation is one of the most important factors that contribute to successful language learning. When students are motivated, they are less likely to display work
avoidance behaviours (Engin, 2009), and teachers find it easier to facilitate language learning activities (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Ushioda, 2011). Grounded in these theories of learning motivation, my action research project examined how integrating computer-based technology (CBT)—with a special focus on Web 2.0—into my curriculum might increase students’ motivation to learn English as a foreign language (EFL).

CBTs have great potentials for L2 education. For example, Pitler, Hubbell, Kuhn, and Malenoski (2007) have shown that “technology allows teachers to differentiate instruction more efficiently by providing a wider variety of avenues for learning that reach students of divergent readiness levels, interests, and learning styles” (p. 3). Conducting an extensive review of the literature, Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, and Freynik (2012) summarize that when appropriately used, “technological innovations can increase learner interest and motivation; provide students with increased access to target language (TL) input, interaction opportunities, and feedback; and provide instructors with an efficient means for organizing course content and interacting with multiple students” (pp. 1-2). Many agree that appropriate uses of technology increases not only students’ motivation level, but also their academic performance (Schacter & Fagnano, 1999; Snowman, McCown, & Biehler, 2009).

In line with these studies, my action research project involved two components: action and research. The action component of the project included the use of Web 2.0 technology to teach English to my students, and the research component involved creating new knowledge by systematically analyzing my actions so that I could better facilitate my students’ learning. Although the use of technology in L2 education is not a new concept, this action research study is unique in two ways. First, I used Web 2.0 technology in a context where the “chalk and talk” approach to classroom instruction dominates the pedagogy (Shohel & Power, 2010). Grammar-translation methods are extensively used in the classroom in spite of the government’s decision to use communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches to English language instruction. Second, this study revealed how my students exercised their agency (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) through accessing and utilizing available resources to their advantage. This awareness of learner agency helped me design student-centred curricula and thus contributed to their learning of English.

**Literature Review**

Many educational scholars have emphasized the importance of integrating CBT into school curriculum. They believe that CBT has “the potential to transform education if teachers reform their instructional practices to engage students in meaningful learning and use of 21st-century knowledge and skills” (Morrison & Lowther, 2010, p. 4). As in other fields of education, there has been a turn towards using computer and web-based technologies in the field of L2 education. For example, Levy (1990) argued that “our language teaching philosophy, method, or approach needs to be broadened to encompass new technologies, and the inter-relationship between language teaching and computing needs to be carefully explored” (p. 5). Today, the widespread use of technology in L2 education is well
documented in the literature (Golonka et al., 2012). The theory and practice of using computer-based technologies in language education is frequently referred to as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which may be defined as “learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies” (Egbert, 2005, p. 4).

Warschauer and Healey (1998) have divided the history of CALL into three stages: behaviouristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Behaviouristic CALL, practiced mainly in the 1960s and 1970s, was informed by the behaviouristic learning models such as repetitive language drills. This paradigm viewed the computer “as a mechanical tutor which never grew tired or judgmental and allowed students to work at an individual pace” (p. 57). The next stage—communicative CALL—emerged in the late 1970s when computers were being customized for individual use, and when theorists and practitioners were rejecting behaviouristic approaches to language learning and teaching. Proponents of this paradigm stressed that CALL “should focus more on using forms than on the forms themselves, teach grammar implicitly rather than explicitly, allow and encourage students to generate original utterances rather than just manipulate prefabricated language” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57). The third stage—integrative CALL—grew out of a criticism of communicative CALL that it was being used in a disconnected way. Critics argued that CALL activities needed to engage learners in authentic tasks and to help them learn to use technologies as a continuous process of learning. Thus, the integrative CALL sought “to integrate various skills (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and also integrate technology more fully into the language learning process” (p. 58). I argue that the underlying principles of CALL were closely intertwined with what would later be called the Web 2.0 technologies.

Web 2.0 may be described as the second phase of internet usage. The first phase, or Web 1.0, only presented information with almost no user control. In contrast, Web 2.0 not only presents information, but also enables users to share information and actively participate in the global knowledge community. Web 1.0 can be compared to a “one-way communication, a lecture or a monologue” whereas Web 2.0 “to a dialogue, an engaging class discussion or two-way communication” (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008, p. 260). An important feature of Web 2.0 is that it requires very little technical knowledge to write and share information on the web. Thus, those who were only consumers of information in the Web 1.0 period can now actively generate and share information. Most Web 2.0 applications have three common features: “(1) user-initiated publishing of information, (2) social-sharing options with privacy controls that allow users to choose with whom information is shared, ranging from one-to-one to small, controlled groups to large-scale public sharing, and (3) social networking options” (Rosen & Nelson, 2008, p. 213). Thus, Web 2.0 has potentials for teachers and learners of L2 to create collaborative and communicative learning environments.

Although most educators agree that Web 2.0-based social sharing can be an effective teaching and learning tool, many of them do not utilize this opportunity. Teachers’ lack of time, training, and interest are among the main barriers with respect to integrating web-based technology into teaching (Kleiner, Thomas, & Lewis, 2007). Most students, on the
other hand, welcome the use of Web 2.0 technologies for educational purposes. One key reason for this may be the fact that they spend a large amount of their time using various technologies on a daily basis. According to a UK-based survey, teenagers spent an average of 31 hours online per week. The survey cited social networking and watching videos on YouTube as the most common activities (Whitehouse, 2011). Another survey conducted by Microsoft found that 82% students aged between 16 and 18 years used Facebook every day (Coughlan, 2011). Unfortunately, most of them do not get an opportunity to translate their skills of using these Web 2.0 technologies into their educational experiences.

Many empirical studies within the tradition of New Literacy Studies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) have examined students’ use of Web 2.0 technologies within and beyond academic settings. They have demonstrated how learning can occur on and with interest-driven social networking sites such as Facebook (Mills, 2010). Others have shown how Web 2.0 may foster students’ critical literacy development (McLeod & Vasinda, 2008). However, there is a lack of empirical evidence in the area of foreign language education regarding the effects of Web 2.0 applications such as:

social networking on language learning and the implications for instruction and curriculum development are as yet unknown. In reviewing the literature, we did not find any studies on the use of social networking for language learning that included data on language use (e.g. number of contributions per user, length of contribution, types and distributions of negotiations and feedback). (Golonka et al., 2012, p. 15)

My action research study attempted to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the effects of Web 2.0 tools on my students’ language learning motivation. Understanding language learners’ motivation is important because previous research has shown that “motivation directly influences how often students use L2 learning strategies..., how well they do on curriculum-related achievement tests..., and how long they persevere and maintain L2 skills after language study is over”(Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 12).

To shed light on the core of my inquiry, I shall briefly discuss two important constructs: learning and motivation. First, my approach to learning is based on the sociocultural theory, which posits that learning occurs through participation in social activities. For this conceptualization of learning, I draw heavily on the works of Vygotsky (1978), who believes that individuals learn by internalizing various cultural aspects such as language, physical tools, and symbols. They transform their practices by negotiating meaning with others and situating their individual action within collective activity. This sociocultural perspective views learning as embedded within social events in which individuals interact with other individuals, objects, and events. One of the key principles of sociocultural theory of learning is “the idea that the cultural tools and artifacts that people encounter as they participate in the activities of daily life are critical to the nature of the learning and development that arises” (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 461). To further explicate this perspective, I use Bullivant’s (1993) conceptualization of culture as a group’s survival devices needed to adapt to various environments. A social group adapts to or modifies
environment “through its technology; this constitutes the tools, skills, and knowledge used to achieve practical results” (Bullivant, 1993, p. 30). If we consider today’s students as a social group, the primary tools they use to adapt to their environment are various applications of Web 2.0. Bullivant (1993) also believes that due to the dynamic nature of culture, any social group constantly changes its cultural tools. In this sense, I argue that the younger generations always keep their tools up-to-date (e.g., using the latest technologies) in order to meet what Bullivant calls “new adaption pressures” (p. 33). Therefore, to understand learning, I pay attention to how individuals draw on cultural artifacts and tools to participate in social activities or to solve problems. This sociocultural perspective focuses our attention on the situated nature of learning, i.e., various tools used for learning and the context in which it takes place.

The second construct is motivation, which denotes an internal state that arouses, directs, and maintains certain behaviours. In educational literature, motivation refers to an individual’s willingness “to expend a certain amount of effort to achieve a particular goal under a particular set of circumstances” (Snowman et al., 2009, p. 406). When applied to the classroom context, motivation indicates “the degree to which students invest attention and effort in various pursuits....motivation is rooted in students’ subjective experiences, especially those connected to their willingness to engage in learning activities and their reasons for doing so” (Brophy, 2010, p. 3). In the field of L2 education, one of the best known theories of motivation is Gardner’s (1985) differentiation between instrumental and integrative motivation. An instrumental orientation to motivation refers to “the practical advantages of learning” a target language such as passing examinations or securing well-paying jobs. On the other hand, “an integrative orientation is identified when learners state that they want to learn a foreign language because they are attracted to the target language culture or group or the language itself” (Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996, p. 12). It should be noted that these two types of motivation are not always oppositional; in fact, there are many individuals who are both instrumentally and integratively motivated to learn a TL.

In addition to the Vygotskyian sociocultural theory of learning and Gardner’s (1985) theory of motivation, I used Gardner’s (2001) conceptualization of motivation as a framework to collect and analyze empirical materials. According to Gardner (2001), motivation to learn a L2 has three elements: desire, effort, and affect. Motivated learners display a strong desire to achieve their goals by learning a language. They also expend all possible efforts persistently and consistently to learn the TL. Finally, the motivated language learners show a positive attitude towards learning the language and enjoy all activities that lead to a successful accomplishment of the target. Therefore, truly motivated language learners have a balanced combination of all three components—desire, effort, and affect.

**Methodology**

I took an action research approach to my inquiry. What distinguishes action research from other types of research is that it is based on the researcher’s own experience, and that the researcher takes certain action(s) to improve his/her practice. In other words, “action
research is about two things: action (what you do) and research (how you learn about and explain what you do). The action aspect of action research is improving practice. The research aspect is about creating knowledge about practice” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010, p. 5). In this sense, action research provides teachers with an opportunity to actively participate in knowledge generation, which may be contrasted with teachers’ role as the object of academic research and as passive consumers of knowledge produced by university-based researchers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993).

Studies have found that “teachers who engaged in teacher research wrote more honestly about classroom problems, became more self-assured, [and] began to see teaching more as a learning process” (Pine, 2009, p. 35). Moreover, action research encourages teachers to try new ways of teaching as they became increasingly sensitive to classroom variables. Another reason for choosing action research is that it involves an informed, purposeful action and puts the researcher at the centre of research. As McNiff and Whitehead (2010) said, “You use ‘I’ as the author of your report, and it takes the form of your personal research story. Your report is an explanatory account, not just a descriptive account, in which you give your reasons and purposes for your actions” (p. 38). This emphasis on ‘I’ suggests that as a researcher one takes responsibility to improve his/her own practice. For these reasons, I chose action research to understand the studying phenomenon, i.e., the relationships between the use of Web 2.0 technology and students’ learning motivation.

**Context of Research**

The study took place at North South University (NSU) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. NSU was founded in 1992 as the first private university in the country. It offers undergraduate and graduate programmes in various disciplines in four schools: School of Business, School of Arts and Social Sciences, School of Engineering and Computer Science, and School of Life Sciences. In order to prepare students to compete in the global knowledge economy, the university has chosen English as the medium of instruction. It is, however, important to note that students’ competency in English significantly vary as they come from different educational and social backgrounds. Although all schools across the country offer English as a mandatory foreign language course in grades 1-12, very few of them use English as the medium of instruction. I have noticed that many of my students who have limited proficiency in English suffer from an inferiority complex, comparing themselves negatively with those who are fluent users of English. They identify their lack of communicative skills in English as a major weakness due to which they often grapple with the university academic culture. In order to improve students’ English language skills and prepare them for the global knowledge economy, NSU requires that all undergraduate students complete at least two English language courses.

**Participants**

I chose one section of my ENG 102 class for this action research project. The group comprised of 33 students. Twenty seven of them came from schools where the medium of instruction was Bengali, and the remaining six from English medium schools. All six
students who came from English medium schools grew up in urban areas, whereas many of
the students who came from Bengali medium schools grew up either in small towns or in
rural areas. The sample comprised of 18 male and 15 female students with varying socio-
economic status, but all of them used computer-based technologies for communication and
entertainment. Most of these students were enrolled in the School of Business, and were
expected to earn a Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) degree. The study spanned
over a semester, and during this period I taught two 1.5-hour class sessions per week. The
main course objective of ENG 102 was to improve students’ college-level composition skills
with special emphasis on writing coherent and well-developed paragraphs.

**CALL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

During the study period, I used both CALL and non-CALL lessons to teach my students. As
part of my CALL instructional design, I created a website for class use. On this site, I
uploaded reading materials, additional resources, and exercises for students. This gave
them an easy access to and flexibility in using the learning materials. The website had a
section for blogging where students were able to post their comments and ask questions to
their peers. Moreover, I directed them to other online resources where they could engage
in interactive learning activities. I also designed online tests and quizzes for my students.
Following is a page of my website:

In addition to creating this website, I designed collaborative learning activities in which
students worked in small groups and shared their work with peers on a social networking
site called Facebook. The Facebook groups were restricted, i.e., only the members could see
and comment on each other’s posts. One example of the collaborative tasks was a unit on writing “process paragraphs.” I asked the participants to post their writings on their Facebook group page, then to read at least two other group-member’s posts and write comments on them. Following is a screenshot of the Facebook group page used for this collaborative learning activity:

![Image 2: Students’ Collaborative Writing Project on Facebook](image)

**DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS**

I used naturalistic observations to collect data from students’ behaviours during the CALL and non-CALL lessons. I also recorded their class attendance, punctuality, and attentiveness in order to analyze their learning motivation. At the end of the semester, I asked them to complete an open-ended questionnaire through which they were able to express their opinions about the CALL curriculum. They anonymously responded to the questionnaire and it was administered in my absence. Following are the primary sources of data that I gathered in this project:
I collected data from three different sources so that I could triangulate them. The process of triangulation refers to “using multiple sources of data or multiple approaches to analyzing data to enhance the credibility of a research study” (Hastings, 2010, p. 1538). Researchers have conflicting views of triangulation because it might involve multiple data sources, multiple investigators, multiple theoretical perspectives, or multiple research methods (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010; Hastings, 2010). In this project, I utilized triangulation as a means of achieving greater validity of the research findings by eliciting data from multiple sources. The artifacts from student source provided me with insights into their perceptions of the technology integration. Their records of attendance indicated whether or not they were motivated to attend classes. An artifact from the teacher source was my professional journals, which I wrote after teaching each lesson. Observational checklist as a method provided me with an opportunity to watch the behavioural patterns of the participants. The observations were naturalistic because I carried them out in a setting where the observable behaviours naturally occurred. Additionally, I had three visitors (senior TESOL majors at NSU) observe my classes when I used the CALL curriculum. In addition to providing valuable insights, their observations and comments helped me evaluate my biases (if any) as a teacher-researcher. Another method I used to collect data was an open-ended questionnaire, which is “often used for exploratory research, such as when the researcher wants to know how participants think or feel or experience a phenomenon or when the researcher wants to know why participants believe something happens” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 177). The questionnaire helped me identify the participants’ thoughts, feelings, and perceptions about the studying phenomenon.

I gathered a wide range of empirical materials from three different sources. My initial technique of data analysis was to organize them into manageable and meaningful chunks. While coding the data, I looked for themes, topics, ideas, concepts, and keywords. After I had finished labeling the topics/concepts, I sorted them according to their nature and type. Thus, I created groups of ideas, events, concepts, and behaviours. Then I compared and contrasted these groups to look for patterns. After identifying the patterns, I created a visual representation of what I had found. (To create the visuals, I used a software called Inspiration available at http://www.mywebspiration.com/).
my research, I took measures to maximize descriptive and interpretive validity. I described and interpreted all findings and had them peer-reviewed. For internal validity, I thoroughly examined the evidences, possible cause-and-effect relationships, and any competing explanations. Additionally, I wrote professional journals after each class session that opened an avenue for me to engage in ongoing reflections on my practice.

**Findings**
The findings of my action research project have demonstrated that the use of Web 2.0 technologies increased the participants’ motivation as well as their learning of English. These findings are in alignment with other empirical studies which identified that students appreciated the use of CALL, believed that CALL facilitated their learning of the target language, and recommended more frequent uses of CALL in L2 education (e.g., Ayres, 2002).

*Were the participants motivated?* According to Gardner (2001), motivation to learn an L2 has three elements: desire, effort, and affect. My research findings indicated that most students:

- displayed a strong desire to achieve goals by learning the target language;
- expended all possible efforts persistently and consistently to learn the language;
- showed positive attitudes towards learning the language and enjoyed the activities that led to successful accomplishment of the goal.

Following are some representative student comments that support the claim that successful integration of Web 2.0 in my CALL curriculum increased L2 learners’ motivation:

The computer-based technology was very helpful. Because students use computer for a lot of purposes so if they can do their homework or assignment online it’s interesting and time saving.

I enjoyed to use Facebook for doing my assignments.

Yeah, it was helpful. Because, nowadays we are entering in the world of technology. So, it was an extra-ordinary idea (or somehow a very much interesting idea to me) to use computer-based technology in learning. There will be an easy access to the whole world as well as everyone can see what another person is thinking [sic].

In addition to the three elements of motivation, the data demonstrated two other indicators of learner motivation. First, students were “on task” for longer periods of time during the CALL lessons. During the non-CALL lessons, I always found it challenging to get all my students focus on classroom activities. Many of them would talk to their neighbours and some of them would send text messages using mobile phones. Therefore, staying on-task for longer periods of time during the CALL lessons was an indicator of learning motivation. Second, student attendance was 99% during the CALL lessons. In contrast, findings showed
that the average student attendance during the non-CALL lessons was 91%. There is no doubt that attending classes regularly is critical to successful learning of an L2. Hence, an increase in students’ on-task time and class attendance during the CALL lessons suggests that students were motivated to learn the TL.

Did the results show that our classroom interactions supported collaborative learning? Previous research in the field of L2 education emphasized the importance of engaging students in collaborative learning activities (e.g., Beatty & Nunan, 2004). Computer-based technologies can effectively facilitate such collaborative activities (McDonough & Sunitham, 2009). The findings of my action research project showed that students developed an appreciation for collaborative learning. Some representative comments from students include:

Yes, it was helpful because it provided us new method of learning English. For example, we could read our classmates’ writings and give comments. We could learn from each other.

It was very helpful. Because I received comments from my classmates, in addition to my teacher. Although some comments were rude, but most of them were helpful [sic].

Did the results show that students became interested in using computer-based technology in other English courses? It was my assumption that if the students enjoyed learning English in the CALL curriculum, they would like to use CBT in other English courses. When I asked them about this in the questionnaire, the overwhelming response was “yes.” Following are some student comments that indicate their willingness to use CBT in other English courses:

Yes, I would recommend the use of computer-based technology in other English courses because this method is more easier than our present method of learning.

Yes, I recommend the use of computer-based technology in other English courses because using this technology, we learn and know easily about anything.

I would strongly recommend the use of computer-based technology in other English courses. Because, I think it would help us in reading skill, as we have to read all in English [sic].

Finally, did the results show that our classroom interactions helped students learn the course contents? My primary objective was to teach English, and Web 2.0 technology was only a learning tool. I was aware of the fact that some students might be interested more in technology than in course contents. At times, I had to remind them of our learning objectives because they were spending too much time talking about and using Web 2.0. Nevertheless, my observations of students’ classroom activities, evaluation of their written
assignments, and their scores in tests and quizzes indicated that the CALL instructions supported their learning of the course contents. Online test was a new learning experience for all of them, and it seemed to ignite their curiosity and interest. Flexibility to take these tests at their convenient time and place lessened their exam anxiety. In addition, curiosity to learn more about these new educational technologies inspired them to stay on-task for longer periods of time. All these helped them to meet the course objectives by learning the contents. Following are some representative comments regarding students’ attitudes towards learning in the CALL activities:

Yes, I think that the use of computer-based technology was helpful. Because it reduced the time and helped us to find out our mistakes very easily. We could also submit our assignments very easily staying at home; if we could not come in university for various reasons [sic].

Because I like to use computer all the time, I did not feel bored to do my homework. And I think that I learned the lessons very well.

In the technology-integrated teaching, it will be better if the listening and speaking will be added. Cause, we students really feel some problems in speaking and listening. So, by the use of the technology-integrated teaching it will be very helpful for the students [sic].

In summary, my students who participated in this action research project got an opportunity to interact with each other through using computer- and web-based technologies. This interaction assisted them in improving their linguistic competence within a community of learners where they were able to utilize computer and the internet as learning tools. In this way, the results of this study highlighted the importance of integrating Web 2.0 into second/foreign language curricula as a way of increasing students’ motivation and supporting their L2 learning.

**DISCUSSIONS**
The findings are in alignment with other empirical studies that have documented significant gains of students’ learning motivation when digital technologies are incorporated into official curricula (Beatty & Nunan, 2004; McDonough & Sunitham, 2009; Golonka, 2012). Moreover, the findings of my study support an important hypothesis in L2 motivation theories, i.e., motivated students successfully learn a target language because they are active learners (Gardner, 1985; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). In the beginning of my study, I noticed that some of my students were hesitant to participate in classroom discussions. Soon after I introduced the Web 2.0-based CALL lessons, the quietest students in my class found an avenue to voice their opinions and collaborate with other class members. They actively participated in the instructional activities, especially those designed for collaborative work on Facebook. Furthermore, they wrote constructive comments and feedback on their peers’ work. When I asked them to evaluate their experiences with the CALL lessons, they recommended that it be integrated into other
English courses. Their interest in CALL and active involvement in the learning activities confirmed the active learning hypothesis of L2 education. Active learning is strongly correlated to motivation because previous studies have shown that “unmotivated students are insufficiently involved and therefore unable to develop their potential L2 skills” (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p. 12).

As a teacher-researcher, my goal was to encourage “students to engage in activities with motivation to learn: the intension of acquiring the knowledge or skills that learning activities are designed to develop” (Brophy, 2010, p. 3), and I used Web 2.0 technologies to meet this goal. Most empirical studies that dealt with technology use in L2 teaching and learning described the affordances offered by various technologies and/or their effects on students’ affects such as attitude and motivation. For this reason, Golonka et al. (2012) argued that “although describing technology’s uses and students’ enjoyment when using it are admirable and useful goals, it remains unclear to what extent the activities supported by the technology or the potential increased motivation attributed to them actually increase students’ learning” (p. 23). In light of this argument, the findings of my action research have shown how an integration of Web 2.0 not only increased students’ motivation, but also contributed to their learning of the course contents. The quality of students’ written assignments and their scores in tests and quizzes supported this claim about successful accomplishment of the course objectives.

In addition to shedding light on students’ motivation and learning, the findings emphasize the importance of technology-mediated L2 pedagogy. I use the concept of mediation through the lens of sociocultural theory, which claims that all human activities are mediated by tools or signs. An important goal of mediation is internalization, which is “the internal reconstruction of an external operation” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 56). Thus, tools that individuals use are very critical because they lead to what Vygotsky calls higher psychological functions. Seen from this perspective, Web 2.0 can be a tool for mediation and transformation of human activities (e.g., learning an L2). Moreover, other L2 learning theories influenced by Vygotskian sociocultural theory maintain that effective learning occurs when learners interact actively and meaningfully with others. For example, Jonassen (2000) presented a framework of technology-mediated learning and described computers as mindtools. In this conceptualization, students learn not only from computers but also with computers that are intelligent tools supporting learners’ intellectual and creative needs. Therefore, the findings of the present study illuminate our understanding of how successful integration of Web 2.0 in a CALL curriculum may increase students’ motivation, create a collaborative learning environment, and facilitate students’ active learning of the TL.

Another distinguishing feature of my research project was an understanding of learner agency. Most of the studies that examined language learners’ agency tended to focus on issues such as capacities for autonomous and self-regulated behaviours (e.g., Bown, 2009). They prioritized individuals’ cognition over social and structural contexts. However, I argue that these contexts are critical to our understandings of learner agency because an actor’s agency arises from his/her ability to identify appropriate resources and apply them to new
contexts (Sewell, 1992). As such, I interpret learner agency as an individual’s awareness and control of appropriate resources and ability to use them to his/her advantage. To understand my students’ agency, I used a framework proposed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998) which conceptualizes:

human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). (p. 963)

I observed that my students’ social engagement in learning activities was mediated by their past experience of using CBT. Although they regularly used CBTs, they had never used them for educational purposes prior to participating in this study. When they contextualized their past “habits” of using CBT in the present (in my study), they also engaged in future projects by imagining possibilities of utilizing CBT for learning English. Thus, the concept of learner agency helped me understand my students’ ability to utilize available resources within their social and structural contexts of learning. I believe that this understanding is significant because some contemporary L2 researchers have emphasized a notion of learner agency which must go beyond learners’ meta-cognitive knowledge or self-regulatory competence to include social and structural contexts in which actors engage in learning activities (e.g., Gao, 2010).

Although the findings of my research are valuable for my professional development as well as for my students’ learning, I do not intend to generalize them to all L2 learning contexts. I collected data from only 33 first-year undergraduate students who were using Web 2.0 in their daily life. Another group of students who live in a different geographical context and do not use computer and the internet on a regular basis may have quite different experiences with my CALL curriculum. Nevertheless, I am inclined to claim a naturalistic generalization, which refers to the notion that “the more similar the people and circumstances in a particular research study are to the ones that you want to generalize to, the more defensible your generalization will be and the more readily you should make such a generalization” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 281). Thus, it is my hope that the findings will be helpful for L2 teachers and students in contexts that are similar to the one in which I conducted this study.

**REFLECTIONS**

Writing this report has made me reflect deeply on my pedagogical practices. Because action research is a recursive process, I gained new insights in every step of my inquiry. I was able to record these insights in my professional journals. Analysis of the journals at the end of my project enabled me to become aware of and critical to my practices as an educator. Additionally, this study has provided me with an opportunity to contribute to my students’ learning by combining action with reflection. As Freire (1970) believed, reflection without action is merely verbalism and action without reflection is only activism. All my action in
this project was accompanied by reflection in three phases: reflection before, during, and after action. Through these systematic reflections, I was able to create knowledge about my own practice which, I believe, has contributed to my professional development as well as my students’ learning of the course contents.

REFERENCES


**Biographical note:**

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