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# UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS WEB 2.0 TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR USE FOR TEACHING ENGLISH FOR GENERAL AND SPECIFIC PURPOSES

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**Abstract.** The present small-scale study investigated Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards Web 2.0 technologies and their use in the process of teaching English for general and specific purposes (ESP). It also analysed the teachers' ability to use these technologies as perceived by the teachers themselves and aimed to establish which technologies they use in the process of teaching English, including ESP. A sample of 39 university and college teachers of English from five higher education institutions in Lithuania participated in the present study. The data were collected from their responses to the questionnaire and analysed using descriptive and correlational statistics.

The results revealed that most teachers have a positive attitude towards Web 2.0 technologies in general as well as towards their use for teaching English for general and specific purposes. The findings also showed that the majority of the study participants view themselves as proficient or moderate users of digital environments available at their institutions, however, their ability to use educational technologies, such as RSS, the software of social bookmarking and image sharing, as well as blogs and vlogs, for teaching English is limited.

**Key words**: Web 2.0 technologies, teachers' attitudes, General English, English for Specific Purposes, higher education

# 1. Introduction

During the recent decades, the use of *Web 2.0* technologies has been growing on all levels of education in a number of countries. It has been reported by the research that they enhance educators' ability to address diverse audiences and allow them to pattern their teaching styles to many different needs and skill levels in diverse teaching and learning environments, including traditional classrooms, online learning and blended learning environments (Brindley and Paul, 2014). Nowadays English has become the dominating language among the Internet users around the world, and it is significant that it was the teachers of English who were among the first to have acknowledged their benefits in the process of acquisition of English and to have established the first communities of practice for continuous professional development and dissemination of best practices (Pop, 2010).

It has been established by research (Albirini, 2006; Virkus, 2008) that the success of the use of *Web 2.0* technologies in education is predetermined by a number of factors, including educators and learners' attitudes towards them as well as learners' acceptance of these technologies for learning. For example, Albirini (2006) considers that "the successful implementation of educational technologies depends largely on the attitudes of educators, who eventually determine how they are used in the classroom". Virkus (2008), on the other hand, stresses the importance of the factor of usefulness of using these technologies in education: "...technology alone does not deliver educational success. It only becomes valuable in education if learners and teachers can do something useful with it" (Virkus, 2008:265).

The use of Web 2.0 technologies for teaching and learning English (including ESP) in higher education has been researched from different perspectives. To illustrate, Balula et al (2014); Hunter (2013); Dias (2010, 2011); Liu et al (2010) focused on the use and educational benefits of CmapTools for teaching and learning English as the second language for specific or academic purposes. Karkoulia (2016), Özel and Arikan (2015), Heirati and Alashti (2015), Golshan and Tafazoli (2014), Khany and Boghayari (2013), Al-Ali (2010), Tarhini et al (2015), Yea-Ru Tsai (2015), Cakir and Solak (2014), Yu-Li Chen (2014), Ramazani et al (2013) investigated university teachers' attitudes towards the use of these technologies for teaching as well as the students' attitudes towards these technologies and their acceptance in the process of learning, and analysed the obstacles that prevent teachers from using them in higher education institutions. In this context, it should be noted that even though the use of Web 2.0 technologies for teaching and learning English (including ESP) in higher education has been studied by a number of countries, in Lithuania this field has not been investigated much yet. The present smallscale study aims to investigate Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards Web 2.0 technologies and their use in the process of teaching English (including ESP), to analyse the teachers' views of their own ability to use these technologies as well as to establish which of these technologies are used in their courses of English (including

The data for the present study were collected from the responses of 39 university and college teachers of English (including ESP) in five higher education institutions in Lithuania. The investigation begins by the overview of the literature that reports on the results of previous research followed by the explanation of the research methodology and research limitation. The findings of this small-scale study are then reported. To carry out the research, a quantitative methodology was used.

# 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review demonstrates that university teachers' attitudes towards Web 2.0 technologies and their use for teaching English in higher education institutions have been widely investigated. For instance, the purpose of the study conducted by Karkoulia (2016) was to analyse Greek teachers' attitudes towards the integration of Web 2.0 tools into the process of teaching English, to establish which Web 2.0 tools were used by teachers and why, and to examine the barriers that prevented them from using these tools in English classrooms. The research findings suggested that the attitudes of the majority of the research participants were positive and that they usually used such Web 2.0 tools as

YouTube, Google Sites, blogs, and wikis. However, the frequency of using these tools, lack of training and/or technological equipment, and the fact that *Web 2.0* technologies were not integrated into the syllabus indicated that the tools were not well established in the process of teaching English. In another example, Özel and Arikan (2015) explored the use of Internet and *Web 2.0* tools by Turkish teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and their perceptions of them. The results showed that even though the EFL teachers' attitudes were positive, they did not use these tools systematically. On the other hand, the findings revealed that the teachers were not satisfied with the degree of opportunity their universities provided to them to learn about the Internet and *Web 2.0* tools.

The most recent research reports on the results of the investigations of Iranian teachers and students' attitudes towards the Internet, *Web 2.0* tools and their use for teaching and learning EFL (Kia Heirati and Ahmadi Alashti, 2015; Golshan and Tafazoli, 2014; Khany and Boghayari, 2013). To illustrate, in their research, Kia Heirati and Ahmadi Alashti (2015) established that both teachers and learners benefited from the use of the Internet and that most students had positive attitudes towards its use for learning EFL.

The studies conducted by Iranian researchers Golshan and Tafazoli (2014), Khany and Boghayari (2013) focused on the most and the least frequent technology-enhanced language learning tools in Iranian EFL context and English teachers' perceptions of the use of these tools in their courses. These studies revealed that the teachers had a positive attitude regarding the use of *Web 2.0* tools in English classrooms and that the majority of them valued them as highly effective learning tools. A significant finding of Golshan and Tafazoli's (2014) research was that only a small number of their research participants preferred to use traditional learning methods rather than technology-enhanced tools.

The purpose of the study carried out by Al-Ali (2010) was to gain a better understanding of the students and teachers' role while using *Web 2.0* technologies in their English courses. The findings disclosed that both the teachers and the students acted as consumers of *Web 2.0* services rather than their creators. It was also established that the students were not familiar with many of the *Web 2.0* services and that although the teachers were generally familiar with most of the services, they did not use them much either for personal needs or for teaching.

The literature overview illustrates that university teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies and their use in the process of teaching English (including ESP) in higher education have been investigated in a number of foreign countries, however, in Lithuania, the research in this field has been scarce. For example, Darginavičienė *et al* (2008) explored university teachers' attitudes towards the use of information technologies (IT) for teaching foreign languages. The findings revealed that the majority of them expressed a positive attitude towards the use of new technologies for teaching. In another example, the results of the research conducted by Bijeikienė *et al* (2011) disclosed that, on the one hand, the English language teachers' attitudes towards different forms of blending ICT into language classes were positive. On the other hand, the teachers agreed that to ensure effective blended teaching/learning, they had to improve their personal proficiency in computer skills and the application of ICT.

The present article reports on the results of a small-scale study that investigated Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies and their use in higher education for teaching English (including ESP). It also presents the findings of the analysis of the teachers' ability to use these technologies as perceived by the teachers themselves and reports which *Web 2.0* technologies are used for teaching English (including ESP) in five higher education institutions.

#### 3. METHODOLOGY

To get an insight into Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies and their use for teaching English (including ESP), to analyse the teachers' ability to use these technologies and establish which technologies they use in university and college courses of English (including ESP), a small-scale study was conducted. The data for the present study were collected from university and college teachers' responses to the questionnaire and were analysed using descriptive and correlational statistics (SPSS-17 for Windows).

The limitation of the present study is the number of its participants. This investigation was conducted as a pilot study preceding large-scale research, therefore, its results do not allow for wide-scale generalisations.

### 4. THE SETTING, PARTICIPANTS AND RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

This study was conducted in five higher education institutions in Lithuania at the end of the second semester of academic year 2016-2017 with the participation of 39 teachers of English (including ESP). The participants' age ranged from 30 to over 60, and their teaching experience varied from six to over 20 years. According to their education, 56% of the participants (n= 22) had a Master's degree and 44% (n= 17) of them had a Doctor's degree. According to their position, 54% (n= 21) of the teachers were lecturers, 31% (n= 12) were associate professors, 13% (n=5) were professors, and one person (3%) was an assistant.

The instrument used for this small-scale study was a modified version of the questionnaire designed by Albirini (2006). It consisted of six sections that contained 60 items. To meet the aim of the present study, the participants' responses from four sections were analysed. Section 1 was used to collect the participants' demographic data, including their age, gender, education, professional experience of teaching English (including ESP) and current position. Sections 2 and 3 studied the teachers' attitudes regarding the use of *Web 2.0* technologies in general and in the process of teaching English (including ESP). Section 4 analysed the teachers' views of their ability to use these technologies.

The Likert-type scale of measurement was used for the questionnaire. A five-point scale of agreement (ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') was applied for all items with the exception of items that measured the teachers' ability to use *Web 2.0* technologies. In the latter case, a four-point scale (ranging from 'proficient' to 'not competent') was used.

The questionnaires were delivered in person to each participant of the study. Prior to filling in the questionnaires, the teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study. To keep in line with the principles of anonymity and confidentiality, explicit assurance was given that the collected data would not include any personally identifiable information. Having completed the questionnaires, the respondents were provided with contact information to inquire about the study.

To ensure the validity of the results, the research data underwent instrument reliability analysis. It showed a high positive Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.865, which suggests strong internal consistency for the measure. As correlational statistics are commonly used to determine systematic relations (Miller 2003), in this study they were used to determine relationships between the participants' age, gender, education, position and their attitudes towards *Web* 2.0 technologies both used in their personal life and in the process of teaching English (including ESP).

#### 4. RESULTS

To analyse the participants' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies in general, descriptive statistics, including the mean values (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) for items in *Section 2* of the questionnaire were calculated. The results are presented in Table 1. As the questionnaire included a mixture of both positively and negatively-keyed items, the negatively worded questions were reversed scored before the analysis to ensure that all of the items are consistent with each other in terms of what labels 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' imply. The mean values were compared and presented in rank order from the highest to the lowest.

Table 1 Teachers' views regarding the use of Web 2.0 technologies in general

Statements	Mean	St.	Rank
	Deviation		
I will surely need Web 2.0 technologies in my personal life	4.51	.601	10
I intend to use Web 2.0 technologies in the near future	4.10	1.046	9
Web 2.0 technologies are a fast and efficient means of getting	4.10	.788	8
information			
Web 2.0 technologies do not scare me at all	3.97	1.386	7
Using Web 2.0 technologies for personal usage is enjoyable	3.87	1.080	6
I feel comfortable when I use Web 2.0 technologies	3.74	1.186	5
I would rather do things by hand than using Web 2.0 technologies	2.46	1.097	4
I am glad there are more Web 2.0 technologies these days	2.13	.923	3
Learning about Web 2.0 technologies is a waste of time	1.72	.887	2
If I had time, I would improve my Web 2.0 skills	1.72	.605	1

The results show that the mean values across the items in this section range from 4.51 to 1.72, which indicates that the teachers' attitudes towards the use of *Web 2.0* technologies are positive. It was also established that 95% of the participants (n= 37) were positive regarding the statement "I will need Web 2.0 technologies in my personal life, 79% (n= 31) of the teachers acknowledged that "Web 2.0 technologies are a fast and efficient means of getting information", and 75% (n= 29) of them reported that "Using Web 2.0 technologies for personal usage was enjoyable". Only a small number of teachers (6%, n= 2) indicated that "Learning about Web 2.0 technologies is a waste of time".

The analysis of the demographic data collected from *Section 1* of the questionnaire revealed a detailed picture of the respondents' background, including their age, gender, education, position, and their professional experience of teaching English (including ESP). To establish the relationships between these particular factors and the teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies in general, simple correlations analysis using correlational statistics (*Spearman* correlation coefficient r) were performed. The results demonstrated that there was a weak, but statistically significant relationship (r= .329, p< .05) between the number of years that the participants had been teaching English and the statement "*Web 2.0 technologies are a fast and efficient means of getting information*". This finding indicates that the bigger the teachers' work experience in teaching English (including ESP), the more they acknowledge significant benefits offered by *Web 2.0* technologies, i.e. that technologies save time by providing an immediate access to desired information in any language.

To analyse the participants' views towards the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the process of teaching English for general and specific purposes, the mean (M) values of the teachers' responses across the statements in Section 3 of the questionnaire were calculated. The results are presented in rank order from the highest to the lowest mean (Table 2).

Table 2 Teachers' attitudes regarding the use of Web 2.0 technologies in the process of teaching English (including ESP)

Statements	Mean	St.	Rank
		Deviation	
Using Web 2.0 technologies in a foreign language classroom	4.23	4.27	10
would make the subject matter more interesting			
The use of Web 2.0 technologies is appropriate for many	4.08	.664	9
foreign language learning activities			
I use Web 2.0 technologies in teaching foreign languages	4.08	1.036	8
Web 2.0 technologies can improve the quality of students'	3.95	.769	7
learning of foreign languages			
Teaching foreign languages with Web 2.0 technologies offers	3,85	.670	6
real advantages over traditional methods of instruction			
It would not be hard for me to learn to use Web 2.0	3.77	1.087	5
technologies in teaching foreign languages			
Web 2.0 technologies will improve education	3.62	.907	4
The use of Web 2.0 technologies fits well into my curriculum	3.49	.942	3
goals			
Foreign language class time is too limited for the use of Web	2.82	1.023	2
2.0 technologies			
I have no difficulty in understanding how to use Web 2.0	2.38	.963	1
technologies			

It was established that the majority of the participants were particularly positive (23%, n= 9) or positive (77%, n= 30) regarding the statement that "Web 2.0 technologies is a means of making the process of teaching / learning English enjoyable and interesting".

An important finding of the present small-scale study is that the majority of the teachers (87%, n= 34) acknowledged the pedagogical value of these technologies, indicating that it is appropriate for many English learning activities. Besides, 77% (n= 30) of them agreed with the statements that "Web 2.0 technologies can improve the quality of students' learning of foreign languages" and that "The use of these technologies for teaching English offers real advantages over traditional methods of instruction" (75%, n= 29).

To investigate the relationship between university and college teachers' background factors and their attitudes towards the use of Web~2.0 technologies in the process of teaching English (including ESP), correlational statistics (Pearson correlational coefficient r) were used. The analysis revealed a positive statistically significant relationship of medium strength (r = .439, p < .01) between the respondents' education and the statement "Teaching~English~with~Web~2.0~offers~real~advantages~over~traditional~methods~of~instruction", which indicates that the higher the teachers' academic qualification, the more benefits they can see being offered by Web~2.0 technologies for teaching English.

To explore the teachers' perceptions of their own ability to use different Web 2.0 technologies, the distribution frequencies analysis was used. The results demonstrated that 90% (n= 35) of the teachers viewed themselves as proficient or moderate users of digital environment (Moodle) available at their institutions. It was also established that 87% (n= 34) of the teachers perceived themselves to be proficient or moderate users of social networking software. The teachers also reported that they had a high or moderate ability to read, watch and comment other people's blogs and vlogs (69%, n= 27), to use text-based software (64%, n= 25) and video-sharing software (64%, n= 25). On the other hand, the present small-scale study showed that most teachers (83%, n= 32) considered that they had little or no ability to contribute to the development of a wiki, keep their own blog or vlog (77%, n= 30), use RSS (72%, n= 28), the software of social bookmarking (69%, n= 27), or the software of audio and image sharing.

Distribution frequencies analysis was also used to establish *which Web 2.0* technologies the teachers used in the process of teaching English (including ESP). The findings showed that the digital environment (Moodle) was the technology which was used by 92% (n= 36) of the respondents followed by video sharing software used by 69% (n= 27) of the teachers. However, the results also demonstrated that other *Web 2.0* technologies were used by a much smaller number of teachers and in some instances by only a few of them. For example, slightly more than a third of teachers (36%, n= 14) indicated to be using audio sharing and wikis (33%, n= 13), and less than a third of them used social networking (26%, n= 10) or forum discussions (28%, n= 11). It was also established that the number of the teachers who used the rest *Web 2.0* technologies was much smaller, e.g. blogs and vlogs were used by 23% (n= 9) of the teachers, image sharing was used by 21% (n=8), whereas the software of social bookmarking was used by only 2 teachers (5%), and RSS was used by only one research participant (3%).

# 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This small-scale study explored Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies and their use for teaching English (including ESP), analysed their views of their own ability to use these technologies and established which *Web 2.0* technologies were used in the process of teaching English (including ESP).

The findings demonstrated that most teachers had positive attitudes towards the use of *Web 2.0* tools in general as well as towards their use in the process of teaching English (including ESP), which supports the findings of many researchers (Özel and Arikan, 2015; Kia Heirati and Ahmadi Alashti, 2015; Golshan and Tafazoli, 2014; Khany and Boghayari, 2013; Bijeikienė *et al*, 2011).

This small-scale study also revealed that most teachers viewed themselves to be proficient or moderate technology users of the digital environment (Moodle) available at their institutions. This is in accord with the results of the surveys conducted by Walker *et al* (2011) who focused on university teachers' attitudes towards this digital environment. It also supports the results of Fidalgo *et al* (2011) who investigated higher education teachers' perceptions of advantages and disadvantages of using Moodle. Both studies established that the teachers expressed confidence in their ability to use this digital environment and acknowledged its great potential for supporting conventional classroom instruction, i.e. for the dissemination of information about the course for students, downloading lesson plans, handouts and other

course materials, tracking and assessing students' progress, assigning forums and other interactive activities for homework, etc.

The present study also demonstrated that the participants considered themselves to be proficient or moderate users of video sharing software (YouTube) and that they used this technology in their English classrooms extensively. This finding is in line with the results of the research conducted by Karkoulia (2016) who established that the majority of the research participants (Greek teachers) used YouTube, followed by other *Web 2.0* technologies. It also supports Alhamami's (2013) results who stated that due its free-of-charge availability and easiness of use, many language teachers have started to use it to teach different languages by uploading language learning videos.

The present small-scale study contributes to the research in this field as it is one of the first studies in Lithuania which focuses on Lithuanian university and college teachers' attitudes towards *Web 2.0* technologies and their use in the process of teaching English for general and specific purposes (ESP). It is also novel in that it analyses the teachers' perceptions of their own ability to use these technologies and establishes which of them are used for teaching English (including ESP) in the Lithuanian context of higher education.

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