

5TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

# Emerging Technologies For Online Learning



JULY 25-27, 2012

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### The Predictive Analytics Reporting Framework: Findings and Directions Moving Forward

Marco Polo 806/807

July 25, 2012 - 2:30pm

**Featured Session – 2**

**Learning And Data Analytics**

Phil Ice (American Public University System, US)

Mike Sharkey (University of Phoenix, US)

Karen Swan (University of Illinois Springfield, US)



The Predictive Analytics Reporting Framework (PAR) is an initiative designed to inform issues related to retention and progression, in online environments, on a multi-institutional basis.

All | – | RS

4:15 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. • Keynote Address

### Civic Mission in the Information Age: Higher Education's Relevancy in the 21st century

Galileo General Session Room

July 25, 2012 - 4:15pm

**Keynote Address**

Joel Thierstein (OpenCourseWare Consortium, US)



With the exponential growth in access to information brought about by the availability of digital technology, the learning paradigm has shifted significantly. At the same time, the costs of traditional Higher Education are skyrocketing. The plethora of informal learning opportunities, the failure of the academy to develop effective prior learning assessment tools and processes, and the failure of the U.S. Higher Education system to adequately respond to the curricular needs of the 21st century learner have begun to call the value proposition of the traditional academy into question. The toll of the academy critic's bell rings loudly. "Why do I need to pay over \$100,000 for a college education that I can get online for free? What can college do for me that the internet and my own drive can't?" Many parts of traditional higher education are struggling to maintain their relevancy. Civic engagement/civic learning are a part of the broader civic agency movement and portend to breathe new life into the traditional academy. Dr. Thierstein will discuss the civic agency movement and its positive manifestation through civic learning/civic engagement in the traditional academy. He will map a pathway forward for Higher Education to reclaim its civic mission through the use of Open Educational Resources, alternative credentialing/badging, and civic learning/civic engagement.

All | ML | –

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**THE CHRONICLE**  
of Higher Education

Thursday

8:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. • Plenary Address

### Drilling Down on the Real Impacts of Emerging Technologies in Education

Galileo General Session Room

July 26, 2012 - 8:30am

**Plenary Session**

Steve Hargadon (Consultant, US)

Audrey Watters (Consultant, US)



In their weekly ed tech podcast Audrey Watters and Steve Hargadon take an independent, sometimes critical, and hopefully insightful (but sometimes inciteful) look at emerging technologies and education. Today's session will bring you their no-holds-barred responses and reactions to the current ed tech landscape in the back-and-forth style of their show.

All | ML | –

10:10 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. • Concurrent Session 3

### Promoting Interactivity and Collaboration in an Online Program with Google+

Casanova 501

July 26, 2012 - 10:10am

**Information Session – 3**

**Digital Learning Environments and Communities**

Donald Jordan (University of the Pacific, US)

Elizabeth Maloney (University of the Pacific, US)

This session looks at early efforts to integrate collaboration and video discussions in an online program by using Google+.

Int | ML | AU

### A Framework of Learners' Digital Skills Needed for Use in Language Learning Environments

Casanova 502

July 26, 2012 - 10:10am

**Information Session – 3**

**Digital Learning Environments and Communities**

Panagiotis Arvanitis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, GR)

A framework of learners' digital skills needed for use in language learning environments.

All | – | AU; ET

## **A FRAMEWORK OF LEARNERS' DIGITAL SKILLS NEEDED FOR USE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

*Panagiotis Arvanitis*

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### **ABSTRACT**

In an era of "digital globalization" (at least for most western societies) the increasing use of open technological platforms, such as CMC, VLS, LCMS, Blogs, Wikis, social networking sites, and online gaming and simulation environments, affect the entire adulthood of young learners.

This early digital adulthood of learners, whom Prensky [1] already calls "digital natives" requires, in the field of learning a foreign language, language learning tools not only suitable to their needs but capable to assist them to construct personal technology-enhanced language learning experiences. The right use of these tools from learners' side becomes a crucial issue for language teachers who must guide them through the process of language acquisition.

In the above context, in this paper we initially propose a set of basic and extended digital skills needed in conjunction with specific linguistic tasks of the Common European Framework of Reference: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. It is well known that CEFR "... provides a practical tool for setting clear standards to be attained at successive stages of language learning and for evaluating outcomes in an internationally comparable manner" [2].

The proposed liaison, structured mainly around the concepts of CEFR, provides a teacher's guide for learners preparation in terms of helping them to develop their ability to maximize online language and culture learning in modern Language Learning Environments.

### **KEY**

Language learning skills, learners preparation, personal technology-enhanced language learning experiences, digital skills.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In an era of "digital globalization" (at least for most western societies) the increasing use of open technological platforms, such as CMC, VLS, LCMS, Blogs, Wikis, social networking sites, and online gaming and simulation environments, affect the entire adulthood of young learners. A whole new generation, often described by researchers with terms such as "*Net generation*" [3], "*new millennium learners*" [4], or as Prensky [1] and McLester [5] already calls "*digital natives*", lives, entertains and educates by digital technologies and media.

This early digital adulthood of learners, requires, in the field of learning a foreign language, language learning tools not only suitable to their needs but capable to assist them to construct personal technology-enhanced language learning experiences. The right use of these tools from learners' side becomes a crucial issue for language teachers who must guide them through the process of language acquisition.

In the above context, the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) has become the recent years widespread in second language learning and teaching environments [6, 7]. More than ever, the language teaching process encompasses and requires the use of authentic language materials such as text, video and images. We know already that in language teaching, teaching materials should be tailored to trainees' specific learning needs (sex, age, interests, etc.). Although both teachers and learners are often difficult to come into contact with sources of authentic speech, written or oral, that with native speakers.

A fundamental principle of language teaching is the maximization of the learner's exposure to the authentic target language. Therefore, it is obvious that any facility which might enable users to come into contact with native speakers of the target language should be considered of significant value. The maximization of learner's exposure to the authentic target language has been partially achieved, in the recent years, through the use of 'social software' and new tools provided by web 2.0. [7]. Furthermore these tools also changing the traditional language teacher's role.

The proposed liaison, structured mainly around the concepts of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) and *The European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning*, provides a teacher's short guide for learners' preparation in terms of helping them to develop their ability to maximize online language and culture learning in modern Language Learning Environments.

## TECHNOLOGY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Expansion of digital technology offers both teachers and learners a vast, multilingual, intercultural corpus of sociolinguistic information. In the current teaching and learning processes, the use of these authentic multimedia and multimodal materials is crucial. Modern software tools offer access to multimedia material through media sharing mechanisms and websites, data storage services, podcasts, webcasts and screencasts. They also make use of collaborative tools, wikis and real-time communication software. Digital presence through personal blogs, as well as participation in virtual classrooms, social networks and virtual 3D worlds are also encouraged [8].

Current computing applications allow teachers and learners to communicate and collaborate [9] in diverse ways, producing sometimes information overload [10]. Furthermore they help learners to act together and construct knowledge bases that fit their specific needs. Most relevant applications for modern language learning are the following:

- Social Networking Services (such as Facebook or Twitter),
- Blogs (such as educational blogs, teachers' blogs),
- Wikis (such as Wikipedia and other wikis),
- Media Sharing Services (YouTube for sharing movies, iTunes for sharing podcasts, Flickr for sharing photos, Slideshare for sharing presentations),
- 3D Virtual Worlds and environments (such as Second Life, Active Worlds),
- Massive Online social gaming (such as Role Playing Games, or MMOs).

All the computing applications mentioned above that are described mostly by the generic term "Social Software" are used on a daily basis by millions of internet users of all ages, especially by the generation of "digital natives". As software tools, they offer a great potential by providing solutions for two basic demands in language teaching; that is, access to authentic rather than scripted or simplified teaching material, and exposure to real, communicative situations [8].

But, a question is, could we take a step further and establish a set of basic and/or extended digital skills needed to maximize learner's online language learning in modern Language Learning Environments? For such an effort we need to define a set of skills based on top of two already existing frameworks. The first one specifies the general communicative language competences in relation to certain themes and communicative tasks and the second one specifies the key competences for Lifelong Learning.

### A. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

In Europe, in late 90's, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* (abbreviated as CEFR) was launched by the Council of Europe. The appearance of CEFR marked a crucial turning point in describing specifications of language-learning targets. The

framework, as a result of a decade of research, was designed to provide a “*coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of foreign language proficiency.*” [2]. Vastly translated, in over 38 languages, today has become a common reference instrument for organizing language teaching and certification in many European member [2].

The CEFR, is widely adopted and accepted as the European standard for teaching and learning foreign languages. It's implementation promote the linguistic diversity within the European Union and additionally support the use of ICT as networks and digital tools at the service of teaching / learning foreign languages [11]. Furthermore, the CEFR has developed a description of the process of mastering an unknown language by type of competence and sub-competence, using descriptors for each competence or sub-competence. The descriptors specify progressive mastery of each skill, which is graded on a six-level scale (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) [12].

Some of the instruments produced by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division are playing a decisive role both in language teaching and assessing. The *Manual for relating language examinations to the levels of the CEFR* [13], accompanied by the *Manual for Language test development and examining for use with the CEFR* promote methodological innovations and new approaches for the development of language programs.

According to CEFR, the general competences of a language learner consists of his knowledge, skills, existential competence and his ability to learn communicative language competence can be considered as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Linguistic competences include lexical, grammatical, semantic, phonological, orthographic, orthoepic knowledge and skills The communicative language competence is activated in the performance of the various language activities involving reception, production, interaction or mediation (interpretation or translation). Each of these types of activity is possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both [2].

## **B. The European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning**

At the end of 2006, the European Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning [14] was launched by the Council of Europe's Lifelong Learning Policy Division. The framework includes competences in subjects, such as mother tongue literacy, mathematical competence, knowledge of foreign languages or IT skills. But it also covers four other transversal skills, such as digital competence, learning to learn, social and civic competence and sense of initiative-taking and entrepreneurship.

### **LEARNERS' DIGITAL SKILLS**

In the above context, we define a basic set of twelve info-skills by the terms of “Use/create/edit”. From a pilot study conducted with first year language department students of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki [15] it seems that the following are the most significant skills in order to facilitate the use of online learning environments. These are:

- Use/create/edit digital video,
- Use/create/edit digital image,
- Use/create/edit Social bookmarking to share resources,
- Use/edit blogs and wikis,
- Use/edit social networking sites to connect with other learners,
- Use collaborative tools,
- Use/create digital tools for sharing documents and files,
- Use/create/edit a digital language e-portfolio,
- Use computer and networks' basic security issues,
- Use task management tools,

- Use digital assessment tools.

It is our intention to measure the above mentioned skills in various learners' groups such as to establish if the presence of these info-skills [16] helps language learning through the use of online learning environments.

## CONCLUSION

The possibilities offered by new technologies, namely the possibility of reproducing and transmitting communicative situations, have made available both to teachers and learners a plethora of educative possibilities. A right use of these tools from learners' side becomes a crucial issue for language teachers who must guide them through the process of language acquisition. A set of basic digital skills maybe will assist them to construct personal technology-enhanced language learning experiences by helping them to develop their ability to maximize online language learning in modern Language Learning Environments.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Panagiotis ARVANITIS is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of French Studies of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in the field of Multimedia Databases, Information and Communication Technologies and New ICT Learning Environments, with a teaching and research experience. He has published several papers in the fields of New ICT Learning Environments, and the use of Multimedia and Multimedia Databases in Language Teaching and Learning (in greek, French and English). He regularly participates in European research programs (CARPE D.M.-LINGUA III, DEFI-Med Campus, DIMITRA-Leonardo da Vinci, XENIOS-EPEAEK, EKATI- EPEAEK II, TNP II – New Learning Environments) as well as in Greek Ministry of Education's programs such as Greek National Foreign Language Exam System (KPG) (for French Language), and Greek Certification of teachers in ICT use.

He is interested in online language learning, computer-supported collaborative language learning, web 2.0 and web 3.0 technologies and mobile language learning. He is especially interested in how language instructors can utilize Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 technologies to promote student collaboration and knowledge construction in both online and offline settings. Additionally, some of his articles encourage language teachers to carefully consider their selection and use of online educational technologies.