Title: Language Learning 2.0: Web Tools for the Tech-Wary Teacher
Author: Shannon Spasova, Dalhousie University

One of the newest trends in Internet technology is the phenomenon called "Web 2.0." Instead of only conveying information, Web 2.0 applications have become ways for users to collaborate and participate in creating content. For several years, the Internet has been offering language teachers an exciting amount of authentic materials for the so-called "passive" skills. With Web 2.0 applications, the opportunity extends to the "active" skills. Some of the most exciting developments in the Internet for language teachers and language learners are the new ways to not only practice language skills, but to make contact directly with the target culture and native speakers of the target language, while at the same time potentially developing more autonomy in language learning.

Lists of Web 2.0 tools include podcasts, blogs, wikis, social networking and bookmarking sites, file and video sharing sites, and sites for collaborative editing. The potential in using these services in the classroom is enormous, but many teachers are rightly concerned about some of the consequences. The controversy surrounding Wikipedia is just the most obvious of the problems involved in asking students to use online tools. How should teachers assess students when they work on collaborative projects? How can teachers keep control over assignments in this new interface? And how can we keep the personal information of students safe on sites that may be open to the public? Fortunately, there are ways to address these issues and Web 2.0 tools that can be used even by the tech-wary teacher.

This presentation will outline some of the different types of Web 2.0 tools, talk about their potential for use in the foreign language classroom (focused on Russian, but most of the sites will also be able to be used in other languages), with attention to solutions to some of the problems encountered by teachers in the use of the technology, along with suggestions of Web 2.0 sites that can be used even in a more traditional classroom. While some of the general uses of the online tools will be discussed, the presentation will also give concrete suggestions for how to use them in a lesson plan, choosing a lexical topic and showing how a specific tool can be used in a variety of ways with that topic.