



Web 2.0 Technologies, Cultural and Technological Hegemonies, and Teaching Design to Deconstruct Them in the Cross-Cultural Digital Contact Zone

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Abstract

Web 2.0 is regarded to be both a platform for building up innovative technologies as well as a space for users to upload and share their personal information in the form of text, pictures, links, and videos with others. Web 2.0 technologies have been regarded to be democratic and empowering for their collaborative, participatory and distributive characteristics, but very little is known about how collaborative, participatory, and distributive they are. So, it is important to know how students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds feel excluded in Web environments (digital contact zone). In this article, I propose to invite writing students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds to design their interfaces to transform them into democratic platforms. When they re/design digital platforms, they will be able to deconstruct the technological, cultural, and linguistic hegemonies perpetuated by Web 2.0 tools. With this, they will develop a critical perspective towards technology in the writing classroom, and they will re/design technologies to transform them into inclusive spaces by incorporating different cultural and linguistic norms and values that they bring with them. It will also provide them an opportunity to use their rhetorical strategies and design skills in their writing.

Keywords: Web 2.0 technologies, cross-cultural contact zone, collaborative learning, cultural and technological hegemonies, deconstructing hegemonies, re/design

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Introduction

Coined in 2004, Web 2.0 characterizes the transition from the read-only Web 1.0 into a read-and-write Web 2.0. It is regarded to be both a platform for building up innovative technologies as well as a space for users to upload and share their personal information in the form of text, pictures, links, and videos with others. It is associated with tools, such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, YouTube, and RSS feeds that “facilitate a more socially connected Web where everyone is able to add to and edit the information space” (Anderson, 2007, p. 5). Web 2.0 technologies have been regarded to be democratic and empowering technologies for their collaborative, participatory and distributive characteristics, but very little is known about how collaborative, participatory, and distributive they are. It seems like people are running blindly after what popular media has been touting for a long time now without developing a critical perspective towards them. Beer (2009) is not ready to accept what popular media tells about Web 2.0, rather, he argues that “the Web 2.0 bandwagon will need to be counteracted by some strong and perspective criticism that works out the commercial underpinnings, new hierarchies (of celebrity, notoriety, popularity and fandom), and rules of engagement, as well as the power plays that are occurring through and within Web 2.0 applications” (p. 999). It is urgent to make writing students aware how Web 2.0 tools are perpetuating dominant cultural, linguistic, and other hegemonies and hierarchies while fulfilling their commercial motives.

However, digital contact zones facilitated by Web 2.0 tools are regarded to be democratic platforms and popularly used in the cross-cultural contact zone situation of U.S. universities where students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds come together and collaborate. People in the academia including writing program administrators and instructors often assume that the online environments facilitated by Web 2.0 tools in the digital contact zone create unifying spaces where diverse societies, cultures, and linguistics as well as literacies and knowledge associated with them merge together as negotiated space. They think so because Web 2.0 tools allow users to publish their texts in different forms, but they seem to be forgetting how these tools are designed from the perspective of dominant culture and language and perpetuating the dominant cultural and linguistic hegemony. Some of the tools, such as Blogger and MySpace allow users to change templates, colors, fonts, and shapes, but they don't allow users to change their design to incorporate their cultural and linguistic values. Arola (2010) argues that even if “[p]opular media has heralded Web 2.0 as a movement that empowers citizens to make themselves seen and heard in online spaces” (p. 5), it is not found in reality. These online environments are, in fact, not “culturally neutral or innocent communication landscapes open to the literacy practices and values of all global citizens” (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000, p. 15). They may privilege some of the participants by acknowledging and honoring their cultural and linguistics norms and

values whereas they may alienate others who come from marginal/periphery social, cultural and linguistic background, and experience because of their disregard of their social, cultural, and linguistic norms and values in the digital contact zone. Similarly, Monroe (2004) argues that the Web remains largely “irrelevant” for many good reasons as it lacks local information (p. 15). She thinks that the Web has both literacy and cultural diversity barriers to people who don’t belong to dominant cultural and linguistic background since literacy learning and practices are culture specific. Students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds feel excluded in Web online environments. As a result, they don’t have any agency in the digital contact zone.

Acknowledging the social, cultural, and linguistic limitations of these Web 2.0 technologies that aim to provide agency to their users in this article, I propose to invite writing students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds to design their interfaces in order to transform them into democratic platforms. Their participation in interface design will help Web 2.0 tools into cross-cultural platforms where students from different cultural and linguistic experiences feel included. With their voice guaranteed in the design process will help the designers acquire their agency in the digital contact zone. Since interfaces are “cultural maps,” it is important to identify the cultural information passed along the online environment because this information “can serve to reproduce, on numerous discursive levels and through a complex set of conservative forces, the asymmetrical power relations that, in part, have shaped the educational system we labor within and that students are exposed to” (Woods, 1992, p. 21). Interface design by writing students helps them to “rewrite the relationship between the center and the marginalized and oppressed groups represented within the culture and the educational system” (Selfe & Selfe, 2009, p. 55). This rewriting of the relationship can contribute to the democratization within the cross-cultural and educational system through the true representation of marginalized voice. I think that education in general and writing programs in particular need to be “concerned with issues, such as rights as well as responsibilities” of these citizens because “citizens of the future require the right to participate in civic spaces they also need to consider questions of responsibility in an increasingly global and ecologically fragile world” (Stevenson, 2011, p. 20). In this paper, I argue that it is not enough for writing programs and instructors to use Web 2.0 tools for cross-cultural collaboration and be proud of using technologies for cross-cultural collaboration without paying any critical attention to it. Instead of using Web 2.0 tools for cross-cultural collaboration uncritically, they should, rather, think of incorporating Web interface design as a part of their writing curriculum and syllabi because it encourages writing to look at existing Web interfaces critically so that they come to know who is included and who is excluded in their design. When they re/design digital platforms, they will be able to deconstruct the technological, cultural and linguistic hegemonies perpetuated by Web 2.0 tools. With this, they will develop a critical perspective towards technology in the writing classroom on the one

hand, and they will re/design technologies to transform them into democratic platforms by incorporating different cultural and linguistic norms and values that writing students bring with them on the other hand. Further, it will provide them an opportunity to use their rhetorical and design skills in their writing practices. Finally, writing students with periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds will be able acquire their agency in the cross-cultural digital contact zone through their design activities.

Student bodies and contact zone situation in composition classrooms in U.S. universities

Composition classrooms in U. S. universities are comprised of students from both the center and the periphery. The center/periphery dichotomy among composition students is very powerful as it incorporates a number of cultural and linguistic differences between them. Canagarajah (1999) defines the “center,” as “traditionally ‘native English’ communities of North America, Britain, Australia, and New-Zealand” and the “periphery,” as “communities where English is of post-colonial currency, such as Barbados, India, Malaysia, and Nigeria” (p. 4). Canagarajah’s center/periphery dichotomy is related to linguistic differences, but it is applicable for the cultural studies as language cannot be separated from culture. For example, there are many cultural groups within U.S. because of their linguistic differences. Some cultural and linguistics norms and values are prioritized over others because of the cultural capital that the dominant culture holds. As a result, students from the dominant culture have agency whereas the students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds don’t have agency in the contact zone. Due to these cultural and linguistic differences, composition classes in U.S. universities have been example of contact zones where dominant cultural norms and values are prioritized over other marginal cultural and linguistic norms and values. This is because the cultural capital is not equally distributed in society. Cultural capital is generated through cultural tastes and styles as well as through participation in some cultural activities. According to Bordieu (1986), cultural capital is “a theoretical hypothesis which makes it possible to explain unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from different social classes by relating academic success [...] to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class faction” (p. 243). In terms of designing writing curriculum and syllabi, selection of reading materials, teaching pedagogies, and selection of technologies for collaboration, First-Year Composition in U.S. universities ignore cultural inequalities among students and perpetuate the dominant cultural and linguistic norms and values. As a result, periphery students, who have different levels of cultural capital and cultural know-how or totally lack cultural capital because of their social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds and feel excluded. Students from dominant cultural and linguistic backgrounds, on the other hand, feel privileged since they possess the cultural capital because of their affiliation

with those dominant cultural and linguistic norms and values. From this perspective, technology, such as the Web symbolizes cultural capital, which is in the side of students belonging to the central or dominant group. Further, periphery cultures are “invaded, subjected and dominated by the injection of Western technologies with the assumption that such technologies are ostensibly necessary and unavoidable steps in economic development and social progress” (Ess & Sudweeks, 2001, p. 260). This particular Western technological invasion upon other cultures can be taken as a form of colonization. Therefore, Ess and Sudweeks (2001) argue that “[t]he social context of use for such technology needs to be constructed in a manner that will best preserve and enhance crucial cultural values” (p. 262). But Web 2.0 tools, despite being touted as the most democratic technologies, don’t seem to acknowledge this cross-cultural sentiment. As a result, there is a creation of contact zone situation in the online environments created by Web 2.0 tools.

Contact zones, according to Pratt (2002), are “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out many parts of the world today” (p. 4). In Pratt’s contact zone situation, there is a conflict between center and periphery because they have different cultural backgrounds. On the one hand, the center tries to impose its racial, cultural, and linguistic hegemony whereas, on the other hand, the periphery, since it is deeply rooted in its own cultural and linguistic norms and values, tries to resist the center hegemony. It is natural to have conflict and resistance when we as members of clashing cultures, Gottschalk (2002) argues, “feel that someone is trying to take over ‘our’ territory or is not recognizing our voice, or when we feel our own rights or dignity to be threatened by others, especially others with power over us, who do not see or recognize our difference” (p. 63). The periphery resists the dominant ideology when it finds its voice not recognized. Pratt (2002) argues that “[w]hile subordinate peoples do not usually control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what gets absorbed into their own and what it gets used for” (p. 9). In such a situation, it is necessary for the periphery to make critical negotiation and the same can be applicable for the center in the composition classroom since center’s cultural hegemony is also resisted by the periphery. As a result, both groups should negotiate the cultural differences. Bizzell (2002) argues that contact zone stands for “negotiating difference” (p. 55) since it is a meeting point of differences. In a transculturation situation of negotiating the difference, the periphery students should not, Lewiecki-Wilson (2002) argues, “necessarily have to suppress or give up their own cultures, and languages in encounters with the dominant discourse” (p. 222). But the software developers of these Web 2.0 tools don’t acknowledge the cross-cultural conflict in the contact zone. In the name of creating them neutral and, hence, universal, they are working in the favor of dominant cultural

and linguistic norms and values sacrificing many others that the writing students bring with them.

When writing students in the digital contact zone are allowed to design the interface of Web 2.0 online environments used for cross-cultural collaboration in the digital contact zone, there is a possibility of developing them into democratic spaces. Writing students in the cross-cultural digital contact zone whether from the center or periphery will make critical negotiation in the process of designing the interface. While doing it, they will choose a third way that neither totally follows periphery cultural and linguistic norms and values, nor, it will totally reject center cultural and linguistic norms and values. They will use a critical move in the design process as an act of negotiation that stands for rewriting of their relationships. West (2002) argues that critical negotiation encourages differences as instruments to “change things, to influence imagination, and to redefine social institutions, in an ongoing hegemonic struggle over representations and terms of difference” (p. 29). This critical negotiation will help the periphery students, who remain invisible in the digital environment due to the disregard to their cultural and linguistic norms and values by Web 2.0 technologies, such as Wiki, blogs, and other social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, acquire their agency through the recognition of their voice in the interface design. With this particular act, according to Selfe and Selfe (2009), students can “try to enact educational practices that are more democratic and less systematically oppressive” and students will learn “to negotiate discursive power” through those student-centered, on-line discussion groups in which individuals discover their own motivations for using language (p. 42). It will help them to democratize the digital environments since the digital interfaces in online environments are not necessarily serving democratic ends because of their dominant cultural and linguistic orientation. Since the digital interfaces are also sites “within which the ideological and material legacies of racism, sexism, and colonialism are continuously written and re-written along with more positive cultural legacies” (Selfe & Selfe, 2009, p. 43).

Collaborative learning in the cross-cultural situation

Collaborative learning is valued highly because it develops a notion of writing as a process. With this, other notions enhancing peer review, addressing the audience, and understanding the limitations of writing are brought into the discussion that definitely benefit writing students in their writing process (Paton, 2002). Many writing programs whether in everyday classroom situations or in the digital online environments use collaborative learning in order to get various perspectives on a single issue and thereby to ensure the student voice. Kolko (2000) argues that “[w]hen students read and comment on their classmate’s drafts, they are providing another perspective on what constitutes effective writing for a particular assignment. In some sense, it is a

redistribution of influence that provides the student voice a space from which to speak” (pp. 34-35). This particular act of ensuring student voice through peer review is regarded to be one of the pedagogical moves in transforming classroom into a social sphere with regard to social constructionism. The cross-cultural collaboration in the contact zone can be very productive and meaningful because of a number of reasons. First, there is a check and balance situation i.e., the center and periphery are in dialogue, and no one is safe in the contact zone. Second, it benefits both the center and periphery because it provides an opportunity of mutual understanding between the center and periphery, and it will work toward ending stereotypes.

Web 2.0 tools, such as Blackboard, Wiki, blogs, Facebook, MySpace and YouTube among many others have been used for collaborative works in the digital contact zone. Even if these Web technologies are supposed to create democratic environments and conducive learning environments in the digital contact zone potentially erasing those racial, cultural, linguistic, and many other differences in the everyday real world, it is just a myth because these Web 2.0 tools are motivated by profit making principles than democratic principles. Hence, they incorporate the culture and language of the dominant institutions in society by default. As a result, the interface of those Web 2.0 tools reflect the dominant history, economy, society, and culture without acknowledging the periphery or marginal history, economy, society and culture. In such interface, students from marginal/periphery cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds/experiences do not feel included. As a result, center students are regarded to be the default users of those technologies, and periphery students are in an alienated state. It also has played a great role in the student learning because socio-cultural differences as socio-cultural conditions always “influence our cognitive activity, mediating how we perceive and interpret the world around us” (Canagarajah, 1999, p. 14). That is why periphery writing students face challenges in Web 2.0 online environments since there is nothing they can relate their experience to.

Social constructionism and production of knowledge through cross-cultural collaboration

Social constructionism can be a powerful weapon deconstructing cultural and technological hegemonies. Social constructionism is predicted on a belief in epistemic rhetoric that believes that knowledge is constructed rather than delivered. Kolko (2000) argues that “[s]ocial constructionism positions students, readers and writers in dialogue with world surrounding them,” and with this, it “incorporates the goals of cultural studies” (p. 33). Johnson (1998) argues that social constructionism is “based on the concept that reality is mutable, that there are no certain truths, and that knowledge is constructed through communally created knowledge and action” (p. 93). This notion of social constructionism is important in terms of technology because “[t]echnology to social

constructionists, therefore, is a social construct that can be interpreted and reinterpreted depending upon the people involved, the context or situated in which it is designed, developed, or deployed, and the historical moment it resides within" (Johnson, 1998, p. 93). Therefore, the notion of social constructionism promoted by cross-cultural collaboration can be immensely important to composition students in general and periphery students in particular because it helps them deconstruct the cultural or other hegemonies created by technology, and they develop critical perspective towards technology.

Web technology and cultural and linguistic hegemony

Hegemony refers to a dominance of one social group over others, and it is the result of power differential can result in terms of political-economic-cultural relations between groups, nations states and social classes. Feenberg (2010) argues that hegemony is a "form of domination so deeply rooted in social life that it seems natural to those it dominates" (p. 16). It can also be defined as an aspect of the distribution of social power that has the force of culture behind it. Hence, hegemony cannot be limited to power difference alone. It can also be a method for gaining and maintaining power by the dominant group in the society. Lull (2000) argues that "[i]f ideology is a system of structured representations, and consciousness is a structure of mind that reflects those representations, then hegemony is the linking mechanism between dominant ideology and consciousness" (p. 48). Because of this, hegemony heavily depends on widespread circulation and social acceptance of the dominant ideology. Since ideology plays a crucial role in gaining and maintaining power in the society, the dominant culture tries its best in creating hegemony through media or technology. With this, the subordinate cultural group eternalizes the dominant ideology that makes powerful group to perpetuate its domination. By its very nature, hegemony does not mature from ideological articulation, therefore, the dominant ideology should be subsequently reproduced by basic social units, such as families, workplace networks, and friendship groups. Lull (2000) argues, "Gramsci's theory of hegemony, therefore, connects ideological representation to culture through everyday social interaction. *Hegemony requires that ideological assertions become self-evident cultural assumptions*" (p. 50). The effectiveness of hegemony depends on whether the subordinated people accept it as a "normal reality or commonsense" in their everyday practice or not (Williams, 1985, p. 145). If they give consent to that hegemony in the social or cultural level, the dominance keeps going. In this way, technology helps the dominant cultural group perpetuate its hegemony; and hegemony tremendously helps the dominant group legitimize its domination.

One American narrative which holds a firm belief that digital technologies, which are global in scope, serve to erase meaningless geopolitical borders, eliminate racial

and ethnic differences, re-establish a historical familial relationship, which binds together the peoples of the world regardless of race, ethnicity, or location can be taken as an example of dominant ideology to create technological hegemony to perpetuate its hegemony because American people themselves are not culturally prepared to accept this narrative (Selfe, 1999, pp. 294-295). Similarly, Thatcher (2010) argues that most U.S. scholars “base their media theories on a U.S. rhetorical and cultural tradition but fail to recognize how this tradition influences the theory itself or what happens in other rhetorical and cultural traditions” (p. 157). Therefore, we can say that dominant culture is using web technology to create and maintain this cultural hegemony.

Further, even if the web-based technologies are regarded to be culturally, racially and linguistically neutral and are believed to create a global-village where the communication takes place without significant barriers posed by geopolitical location, language, culture, and everyday social practices and attitudes, it is just an American belief (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000, p. 2). It may not be so felt and taken in the same way by other people. Hawisher and Selfe (2000) argue that “the global-village myth is far from culturally neutral and understandably much less appealing” (p. 9). According to them, other technologically developed people of other countries may interpret the global expansion of the web within the historical context of colonialism (p. 9). Hence, web may seem less neutral and welcome material for global communication, and it can be “a distributing and unwelcome system for broadcasting western colonial culture and values” (Hawisher & Selfe, 2000, p. 9). As a result, people may lose belief on technologies themselves treating them as Westerner’s cultural agenda of introducing their cultural hegemony because the Web is promoting dominant cultural values and Standard English language disregarding other cultural values and linguistic varieties. They also argue that the vision of the Web is a “complicated and contested site for postmodern literacy practices. This site is characterized by a strongly influential set of technical cultural forces, primarily oriented toward the values of the white, western industrialized nations that were responsible for designing and building the network and that continue to exert power within it” (p. 15). Hence, these Web 2.0 technologies are neither worldwide, nor they are culturally and linguistically neutral for the transmission of information. Due to these reasons, it can be said that they are not innocent communication landscapes open to the literacy practices and values of all global citizens.

Design of Web 2.0 technologies

Web 2.0 technologies undoubtedly have created a platform for their users to publish their personalized information in the form of text, link and video. However, this easy post/publication has been mistaken as a democratic activity. Easy publication cannot make Web 2.0 a democratic space, rather it is necessary to look at whether Web 2.0

design includes people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds or not. Also, it is necessary to look at whether users have any say in terms of its design. For this, first of all, its design should be transparent so that the users come to know what factors have come into play in it. Secondly, the design should be accessible to its users so that users can change/modify or appropriate according to their needs. However, the transparency and access seem to be denied in Web 2.0 tools in practice. According to Arola (2010), the design “remains primarily beyond a user’s control” and the interface seemingly “functions in an arhetorical way” (p. 7). Even if interfaces do rhetorical work, it is not the case with Web 2.0. For Arola, the issue of constrained design agency witnessed in Web 2.0 is troubling in two ways. Firstly, it does not allow users to design anything more than choosing a template, but design should not be limited to selection of the template. Secondly, it does not allow users to design and test their design. It deprives users from using their rhetorical power through their design activities. She argues that Web 2.0 is not “about democracy or shared knowledge: it’s about making technology more efficient” (p. 12). With this particular current Web 2.0 state, Web 2.0 is not for creating a democratic environment empowering students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences. Therefore, Arola (2010) concludes that “it is important for those of us teaching composition to bring a critical lens to the design of Web 2.0” at this point of time when Web 2.0 technologies are dominating our web experiences (p. 13). It becomes a must for both writing instructors in a contact zone situation of First-Year Compositions in U.S. universities.

Deconstructing cultural and technological hegemony through re/design

Hence, digital technologies, such as Web 2.0 tools erasing all those racial, ethnic, linguistic, and geographical boundaries is more a myth than a reality because digital technologies cannot be free of designers’ cultural norms and values. Therefore, Kimmehea and Turnley (2010) argue that “all technology designs are culturally situated and value-laden” (p. 258). These digital technologies including computers “serve as powerful cultural and catalytic forces in the lives of teachers and students” (Hawisher & Selfe, 1999, p. 2) in the process of treating teaching and research as social and political activities. Therefore, it is necessary to question and challenge the technological determinism while composing in the digital/new media environment, and inviting writing students in the design of the interface itself in order to ensure their agency in the digital contact zone through critical negotiation.

Digital technologies are used to enforce the cultural hegemonies by the powerful culture. Johnson (1998) argues that “[t]echnology helps shape the discursive and material characteristics of cultures. As technologies emerge and are incorporated into a cultural context they alter not just the immediate activity for which they were designed but also have ‘ripple effects’ in defining ways” (p. 89). Technology helps the center to

create and disseminate its cultural hegemony. Therefore, it is very important to aware of the political implications of power of technology as a global citizen because “it affects, marginalizes, or privileges certain groups of people” (Thomas, 2008, p. 678).

Since the legitimating effectiveness of technology depends on unconsciousness of the cultural horizon under which it was designed, any re-contextualizing act plays a great role. Feenberg (2010) argues that re-contextualizing critique of technology can “uncover that horizon, demystify the illusion of technical necessity, and expose the relativity of the prevailing technical choices. A politics of technology can demand changes reflecting the critique” (p. 18). The finding of new ways to privilege the excluded values will lead to the democratization of technology, and technical work would take on a different character with it. Further, with the democratization of technology, “[d]esign would be consciously oriented toward politically legitimated human values rather than subject to the whims of profit-making organizations and military bureaucracies” (Feenberg, 2010, p. 81). Technological design platforms should not be guided by profit-making motive, rather they should be designed to honor multicultural norms and values in the cross-cultural contact zone situation.

Since Web 2.0 tools and their designs are not transparent as well as they are perpetuating cultural hegemonies, it is necessary to teach critical technological theory to our students while teaching them using those tools to deconstruct the technological hegemony. It is because the critical theory of technology “insists on developing educational reform and restructuring to promote multicultural democracy, and calls for appropriate restructuring of technology to advance democratic education and society” (Kellner, 2002, p. 157). Critical theory of technology studies use, design, and redesign and restructuring of the technology for positive causes, such as enhancing education and democracy and to do away with the divide between dominant and sub-ordinate cultures as well as rich and poor. Similarly, it helps people do away with technophobia, technophilia as well as technological determinism. Kellner (2002) also argues that “[c]ritical media literacy not only teaches students to learn from media, to resist media manipulation, and to use media materials in constructive ways, but is also concerned with developing skills that will help create good citizens and that will make them more motivated and competent participants in social life. Critical media literacy is tied to the project of radical democracy and concerned to develop skills that will enhance democratization and participation” (p. 159). But, only critiquing the technologies both new and old is not enough, rather it is necessary to teach them about re/design alternative/technologies. Kellner (2002) agrees with the re/design of those new technologies, pedagogies and curricula for future democratic societies, but we equally need to “critique misuse, inappropriate use, overinflated claims, and exclusions and oppressions involved in the introduction of new technologies into education” (p. 165). The re/designing of the technology helps students develop critical attitude toward existing technologies and re/design them.

Importance of teaching design in a cross-cultural digital contact zone

First of all, design is a rhetorical act because the designer should take audience, context, and purpose of a particular design into an account in the process of designing. It demands the designer to identify problems and solve them. Further, it requires the designer to communicate ideas through different mediums. The act of designing is invaluable in a cross-cultural digital contact zone because helps to create a digital environment that is inclusive since the act of designing itself is “embedded in the observation of cultural practices” (Wysocki, 2007, p. 67). As a result, the cultural norms and values of the participants are acknowledged when a digital environment is designed in a collaborative way since design also interested social action. Kress (1999) treats design as an interested action that is “socially located, culturally and historically formed” whereas designers as the remakers, the transformers, and the re-shapers of the representational resources available to them” (Kress, 1999, p. 84). The designers are rhetors because they work with the available resources to remake things through their social interaction. This act of remaking is very powerful because it “on the one hand reflects individual interest, and on the other, due to the social history and the present social location of the individual also reflects broad social-cultural trends” (Kress, 1999, p. 84). Transformation is the basic characteristic of design that transforms use into remaking as well as stable semiotic system into a dynamic resource (Kress, 1999, p. 85). Secondly, design is also more than a rhetoric because designers “add material and so consider how expected (or unexpected) materials support an audience use and understanding of a product” going beyond the usual rhetorical triad- audience, context, and purpose (p. 69). This act of going beyond and/or adding to the rhetorical triad can broaden the scope of research since design “has been tied to the development of useful (instead of readable) objects, it tends to foster a more concrete and bodily sense of audience, purpose, and context than rhetorical research often does” (Wysocki, 2007, p. 69). Hence, designing demands students to make careful and thoughtful observation. When technology design is made a part of writing curriculum and syllabi while teaching writing with the use of Web 2.0 tools, writing students question and challenge their design principles and design to make them democratic spaces where things are transparent.

It is not good to limit our writing students to the level of critique on the Blackboard, Wiki, blogs, Facebook and MySpace environments because design is far more dynamic than critique because design stands for competent use of semiotic resources, and it “requires the orchestration and remaking of these resources in the service of frameworks and models expressive of the maker’s intentions in shaping the social and cultural environment” (Kress, 1999, p. 87). Most importantly, “critique looks at the present through the means of past production” whereas “design shapes the future deliberate deployment of representational resources in the designer’s interest” (Kress,

1999, p. 87). Critique is just one part of whole design process. Gunther Kress (1999) argues:

Critique leaves the initial definition of the domain analysis to the past, to the past production of those whose processes are to be subjected to critique. It leaves definition of the agenda to those whose purposes are to be the subject of critique, are not mine. The task of the critic is to perform analysis on an agenda of someone else's construction. As a result a considerable degree of inertia is built into this process. The idea of the intellectual as critic corresponds to social arrangements and of certain historical periods: namely arrangements in which some individuals and groups set the agenda and others either follow or object. Design takes the results of past production as the resource for new shaping and for remaking. Design sets aside past agendas, and treats them and their products as resources in setting an agenda for future aims, and of assembling means and resources for implementing that. The social and political task and effect of the designer is fundamentally different from that of the critic. (p. 87)

Teaching writing students to critique already existing technologies is not enough for a long lasting social change, rather it is necessary to teach them design in order to redesign existing technologies or design some alternative technologies that perform democratic roles. In the context of teaching students with Web 2.0, is a must because Web 2.0 tools are perpetuating cultural and linguistic hegemonies in the name of democracy.

Lam (2008) also argues that “[d]esign involves the orchestration of existing resources, such as linguistic patterns, genres, and discourses in potentially transformative ways to achieve the designer's communicative purpose, particularly when the designer's interest is at odds with existing representations of social reality” (p. 1193). According to her, designers can change and renegotiate their identities in the societies through their design process. In course of doing design, they question or challenge their social identities or representations and create new through different cultural and linguistics negotiations they make in the process of design. Sun (2012) argues that technology design “embodies a constellation of design processes, design communication, standards and regulations, manufactured products and deliverables, and production and consumption that aims to transform our lives and surrounding contexts” (p. 19). Technology design is a cultural practice since technology embodies cultural values that shape our lives.

Design is related to structure and agency. Also, design is a process that keeps an individual and his or her culture intact. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) argue that the notion of design “starts with a very different set of assumptions about meaning and ends with a very different notion of culture” (p. 204). Design, instead of a focusing on stability and regularity, focuses on change and transformation. According to them, “individuals

have at their disposal a complex range representational resources, never simply of one culture but of the many cultures in their lived experience; the many layers of their identity and the many dimensions of their being” (p. 204). In the course of making meaning, individuals transform things instead of reproduce them because they add something to the available resources in their social interaction. In this process, voice and hybridity come into play for change and transformation. There is a creation of hybridity in the process of design because there is a possibility of bringing together “many layers of identity, many aspects of experience, and the many discourses that represent the Available Designs of meaning, are ever being related, combined, and recombined in such a way that all utterances are polymorphous reconstructions” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 205). On top of it, it helps to create one’s voice in addition to combining those different voices available in the previous design since “[e]very Designing picks and chooses from all the bits in the world of Available Designs and puts it back together in a way it has never quite been before. In both of these aspects- voice and hybridity- agency is the critical factor” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 205).

Design is a very powerful tool to reach to target audience or users of technology because it takes different approaches, such as cultural and linguistic to reach to the real users. For example, culture specific design focuses “on meeting the needs of a target audience through authentic or true representations” (Young, 2008, p. 330). When the writing students from periphery cultural and linguistics backgrounds are invited to design the interface of those Web 2.0 tools, they will be able to create ideal learning environment because the integration of culture in the design of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has potentials to improve students' learning for ethnically diverse learners. When the interface of Web 2.0 tools is designed by writing students with periphery cultural and linguistic experiences and backgrounds, it can create a favorable learning situation to them as well as help them acquire their agency in the cross-cultural digital contact zone.

Conclusion

Web 2.0 tools, despite being used for cross-cultural collaboration in the digital contact zone, are not serving the democratic ends. They are largely perpetuating the dominant cultural and linguistic hegemony since Web 2.0 tools are working in the favor of commercialism and technological efficiency instead of working in the interest of users from other cultures and languages for the democratic ends. Uncritical use of Web 2.0 tools for the cross-cultural collaboration will make the participants, especially students from periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds, eternalize those cultural and linguistic hegemonies. It is necessary to develop critical perspectives towards those technologies in our writing students. But developing critical perspectives is not sufficient enough to create their agency in the digital contact zone. Therefore, it is necessary to

include design as a part of writing curriculum and syllabi and invite writing students with periphery cultural and linguistic experience and backgrounds to design interfaces to transform Web 2.0 environments into cross-cultural platforms. Web 2.0 online environments will embrace cultural and linguistic norms and values of periphery cultures and languages. Similarly, periphery writing students, who don't have any say in the design of the interface, will be able to exercise their rhetoric in the process of interface design. With this, on the one hand, writing students with periphery cultural and linguistic backgrounds will acquire their agency; on the other hand, there will be a creation of conducive learning environments for students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Interface design will help writing students exercise their rhetorical power to create democratic online environments whereas culture and language will help them as subject matters for critique and design in their interface design activity.

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