



Are wikis worth it?

Presented by

Geraldine Martin

Elicos Teacher

Monash University English Language Centre

Melbourne, Australia



Workshop Outline

1. What is a wiki?
2. What's good about it?
3. Is it secure?
4. How can it assist language learning?
5. Wiki demonstration
6. What are the limitations of wikis?
7. How do I set one up?



1. What is a wiki?

- Hawaiian word meaning 'fast' or 'quick'
- American computer programmer Ward Cunningham created 'Wiki Wiki Web' in 1994
- A 'social media' just like My Space, Twitter or Face Book



2. What's good about it?

- Free access for teachers
- Simple operation
- Anyone can edit = collaborative
- Wikis save copies of successively edited versions so work can be restored
- Teachers can monitor individual contributions for assessment



2. Is it secure?

- Teachers set up a private version of wiki
 - Only the teacher can invite members
 - Access is by password only
 - Teachers can deny a request for access
- = a safe space for collaborative learning.



How can wikis assist language learning?

Two learning approaches:

1. Cooperative/Collaborative paradigm

- Peer-interaction and group work
- Students facilitate each other's success
- Groups reflect on functioning in wiki
- Method promotes collaboration, not competition



How can wikis assist language learning (cont)?

2. Constructivist paradigm

- Knowledge and meaning are ‘constructed’ by the student, not given by the teacher.
- Wikis are active, ‘fun’, challenging, reflective, and integrate new ideas with prior learning
- Teacher’s role: ‘a guide on the side, not the sage on the stage.’



3. How can wikis assist language learning (cont)?

Demonstration of a class wiki

Level: Intermediate

Type: General English

Class: 16 students

From: Japan, China, Korea, Libya, Vietnam, Indonesia, Thailand



Limitations of Wikis

- Wikis are only a tool: teachers create the collaboration.
- Not just a ‘technology’ for a computer class
- Teachers need to interact regularly with students = time commitment.
- Students may resist its use due to competitive environment



How can I set up a wiki?

- Go to <http://pbworks.com>
- Follow the handout and my instructions to set up a wiki for a class of your choice



In conclusion

Main wiki features:

- relative simplicity
- empowerment of users
- group authoring potential

make them a useful tool for collaborative learning in the ESL classroom.