

## *Combining affective strategies and the internet for learning second languages*

### *La combinación de estrategias afectivas e internet para el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas*

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**Abstract:** Current language learning is based on the development of metacognition to promote student independence, who is no longer considered to be a passive subject. Students are an active part of their learning process, they reflect and apply their own strategies. In the last decade language teaching has gone through another revolution: the use of the Internet. The net has become a platform for communicating and learning languages independently. Independence does not mean solitude or anonymity. Although language courses are often distance courses or courses in which the student attends classes only part of the time, their participants continue to be people that apart from learning also feel. Feelings influenced by synchronic and asynchronous relationships with fellow class mates and the teacher. But how can this teaching based on the web 2.0 respond in a positive way to the affective needs of second language students? This article analyzes how and why second language students use web tools. From the results we will propose some techniques which unite affective strategies for learning second languages and the tools and ways of working that web 2.0 provides for current second language teaching.

**Keywords:** Second language learning, learning strategies, affective strategies, Web 2.0 tools.

**Resumen:** El método actual de aprendizaje de idiomas está basado en el desarrollo de la metacognición con el objetivo de impulsar la autonomía del alumno que no está considerado como sujeto pasivo. Los estudiantes son parte activa de su propio proceso de aprendizaje, que reflexionan y aplican sus propias estrategias. Durante las últimas décadas la enseñanza de lenguas ha vivido una nueva revolución: la inclusión de Internet. La Red se ha convertido en plataforma para comunicarse y aprender lenguas de forma independiente. Pero autonomía no significa ni soledad ni anonimato. A pesar de que los cursos de lenguas cada vez con mayor frecuencia son a distancia o semi-presenciales, sus participantes siguen siendo personas que además de aprender, sienten. Un sentir que viene influenciado en el uso de Internet, por la relación sincrónica o asincrónica con los compañeros y el profesor. Pero, ¿cómo se puede responder de forma positiva en esta enseñanza basada en Internet a las necesidades afectivas del alumnado de segundas lenguas? En este artículo se analiza cómo y por qué utilizan los estudiantes de segundas lenguas herramientas de la web. A partir de los resultados se propondrán algunas técnicas que unen las estrategias de aprendizaje afectivas con herramientas y vías que ofrece la web 2.0 en la enseñanza de segundas lenguas.

**Palabras clave:** Aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, estrategias de aprendizaje, estrategias afectivas, herramientas de la Web 2.0.

# I ntroduction

From the end of the nineteenth century methods for teaching second languages have varied a lot. Starting from a perspective in which the student was only a recipient of information and the learning consisted basically in studying structures of memory to use them later in real situations we have passed to a constructivist theory, developed in the 1980s and 1990s. During this period cognitive theories were especially important, the autonomy of the learner in second languages and the metacognitive activities tried to be boosted, meaning by metacognitive activities those which centre in the student's learning process, that is, those which focus on the student's mind and try to understand how he mentally works (BURÓN, 1993: 7).

At present, the Common European Framework of References for Languages continues boosting the student autonomous nature for the learning of second languages and gives importance to the development of learning strategies which foster the autonomy of the individual:

*Las destrezas y las estrategias de aprendizaje que facilitan la realización de la tarea y que comprenden: saber desenvolverse bien cuando los recursos lingüísticos son insuficientes, ser capaz de descubrir por uno mismo, planificar y hacer un seguimiento de la puesta en práctica de la tarea (2002:159).*

Second languages learning strategies have been defined from different points of view although most of the authors agree that they are essential in the development of autonomy. In 1992, in the paper titled "Un modelo teórico del aprendizaje de lenguas segundas", BYALSTOK define them as *Métodos opcionales para explotar la información disponible con el fin de aumentar la suficiencia del aprendizaje de la L2* (LICERAS, 1992:186). In 1997 ELLIS points that they are behavioral and mental techniques of learning. To CYR they are a group of actions. According to Oxford they are procedures which foster the student's autonomy in the hard way of second language learning (CYR, 2000: 32).

The first classifications of learning strategies date from the beginning of the 1970s, SKEHAN points two periods (1997:73): the first one covers the 1970s (FILLMORE, NAIMAN *et al.*, RUBIN) and the second one the 1980s (O'MALLEY *et al.*, POLITZER and MCGROARTY, etc.). According to SKEHAN, at the beginning of the 1970s FILLMORE identified social and cognitive strategies in the researches carried out with young people. NAIMAN, in 1978, numbered five types of strategies used by the best students. RUBIN, in 1981, pointed that he had found two types of strategies: direct (guessing/inductive inferencing, monitoring) and transverse (paraphrase, gestures ...).

At the beginning of the 1990s different types of strategies continue to be identified and classified, but from that year on some authors such as OXFORD, O'MALLEY and CHAMOT start to notice affective and social strategies as part of the group of strategies used in second language learning.

O'MALLEY and CHAMOT consider that social and affective strategies must be in the same group, given that the affective part is controlled by the social one, that is, according to O' O'MALLEY and CHAMOT we will improve our spirit and self-esteem. Therefore, the group of these strategies is called socio-affective strategies. Inside this group, we can distinguish four groups: questioning for clarification, cooperation, self-talk and self-reinforcement. (1990). However, OXFORD traced a slightly line between the social and affective strategies (1989: 140-147).

From the end of the 1990s different learning strategies continue to be defined, identified and classified, but according to CYR the researches which were carried out at the beginning of the 1990s by OXFORD, O'MALLEY and CHAMOT are the most complete and have consolidated this field of study (2000: 31).

In this paper we will take as reference OXFORD's classification for being the most complete and that which helps us the most in our research, given that makes a clear differentiation between affective and social strategies, which is precisely what we look for in order to draw conclusions when evaluating the use of affective strategies in second language learning among several university students by means of Internet.

## **Definition, types, characteristics and advantages of affective strategies**

Affective strategies can be defined as those strategies which help to create and maintain the emotional stability throughout learning. OXFORD relates them with emotions, attitudes, motivation and values. It is not enough to study, the student has to be aware of what is being done, how it is done and how he feels during that process, the results can vary from a student who is totally motivated and controls his learning from an emotional point of view to another who does not know to control emotions when a task goes wrong or feels nervous when he is speaking a language which is not the mother one. Following OXFORD's typology we can distinguish three groups of affective strategies (1989: 141):

Those which are useful to reduce anxiety:

- Meditate
- Breathe deeply
- Calm down
- Listen to the music
- Laugh

To increase self-esteem:

- Congratulate and reward oneself
- Accept dangers

To know how one feels in the learning process:

- Listen to oneself
- Use lists of control
- Write diaries
- Show feelings

Some authors emphasize the importance they have both because of the control they exert in anxiety episodes and because they let know the emotional state of the student (FRANCO, 2003: 62). Others agree that this type of strategies contribute to the adequate development of the student's affective part and to the effective learning (OXFORD, 1990; O'MALLEY and CHAMOT, 1994; CYR, 2000) but OXFORD goes further away and focusing even more in the advantages which provide says that they influence the increment of:

- Self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Speed in the consecution of proposed aims.
- Respect for other mates, teacher and school.
- Use of cognitive strategies.
- Motivation.
- Feedback from failure.
- Respect to the rests' ideas, believes or practices.

## **Internet Evolution and language learning**

In the last years Internet has advanced vertiginously. From being just a reading tool, a place to look for information that some experts dumped, it has become a meeting place for people, culture and languages. The jump from the known web 1.0 to the web 2.0 has brought Internet plenty of tools not only for reading but also for writing, becoming thus in one of the communication channels most used by much of the society, where young people stand out.

Thus, this shift has also favoured that Internet get more involved in education, although it seems that the promising results about the benefits expected of its use have not been reached. And this occurs in a similar way if we focus that learning in linguistic learning or second language learning.

One of the causes which authors like AKBIYIK (2010) points to justify such failure is the lack of interactivity and emotion in the use that was being given to those tools provided by the Web 2.0 at present. According to the author's own words:

*La falta de interactividad y emoción en las tecnologías actuales [es] una de las dificultades frente a esta integración. La actual generación de estudiantes quiere una participación activa y emoción para manipular los objetos presentados y espera un cierto grado de emoción e interactividad. [...] No quieren tener un papel pasivo en los distintos medios de comunicación, en su lugar prefieren una participación activa y emocional para manipular los objeto presentados y esperan un nivel de emoción e interacción. Como la tecnología evoluciona rápidamente, los usuarios de los productos tecnológicos y sistemas de computación interactiva no están ya sólo satisfechos con los niveles de eficiencia del producto y eficacia. Los usuarios están buscando satisfacción emocional al usar e interactuar con los productos (AKBIYIK, 2010: 181-185).*

Thus, following this author and others (GARAY, 2010), the students in general and those of languages in particular demand a kind of learning based in the development of affective strategies. But, at the same time, it seems difficult to find language courses where affective strategies are consciously developed, but even more complicated is to see students that develop them by means of web tools.

But, what reality lies behind this, what is the real situation of the people who learn and teachers who teach second languages. This is, what really worries us is what do the today students think about all this? And even more, what do they do, how do they do it, and what for?

## Field study and results

With the aim of gathering and measuring the students' assessments we have carried out a survey anonymously implemented<sup>1</sup>. The survey was carried out by several teachers from the Language and Literature Didactics Department at Education University School of Bilbao (UPV-EHU) about a universe of 95 students from Primary Education and Preschool Education.

The survey consisted of 9 items elaborated in an inductive way from the merge of affective strategies for the linguistic learning and tools that the Web 2.0 provides for language teaching and learning. Going into details, the tools of the Web 2.0 selected by the researchers as relevant for the development of affective strategies in linguistic learning are the following: forums, chats, blogs, cooperative platforms, electronic portfolios. It is a

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<sup>1</sup> The survey is appended in the final appendix.

choice based in the personal and professional experience in the use of such tools, which could be refuted and reformulated.

Thus, in the basis of Oxford's classification (1990) three variables were created, one for every aspect of the classification, based on the use and philosophy of the Web 2.0. From that moment on the following items were elaborated:

Table 1: Affective strategies, variables and items

Oxford's Classification (1990)	Variable	Items
Affective strategies which help to reduce anxiety	Contrast	I contrast opinions with other people about my language learning by means of:  I feel good when I contrast opinions about my learning in chats or forums  When I have a problem or I need a correction I consult:
Affective strategies to increase self-esteem	Feeling good	I use cooperative platforms (wikis, forums, language learning environments) to feel better in my language learning I feel good when somebody solves my doubts and problems in forums and chats I encourage and congratulate other learners by means of: I feel good when I am congratulated and encouraged in forums, free chats or cooperative platform chats
Affective strategies to know how one feels in the learning process	Think	I think about my feelings during my linguistic learning by means of: I think about my progress in my linguistic learning by means of:

For the answers to the items, a scale of three has been used whenever two types of answers were combined:

- a. Those which made reference to tools of the Web 2.0 to be able to develop the cited affective strategy in the item or the fact of not using any of them.
- b. By means of those which could affirm or negate the use of tools of the Web 2.0 used for the development of the affective strategy pointed out in the item, or could refuse to answer the question by means of the answer 'not available'.

Regarding the quantitative analysis of the results of the survey we have used a program of Data Analysis called Rotator which let us obtain the results that we resume by items classified in the cited variables and related with OXFORD's classification of affective strategies (1990):

### GROUP 1

Variable: Contrast

Affective strategies group: Affective strategies which help to reduce anxiety.

Items and results:

I contrast opinions with other people about my language learning by means of:  
The 98.96% of the contestants say they do not do it, the 1.04% say they do it by means of forums and chats (Figure 1).

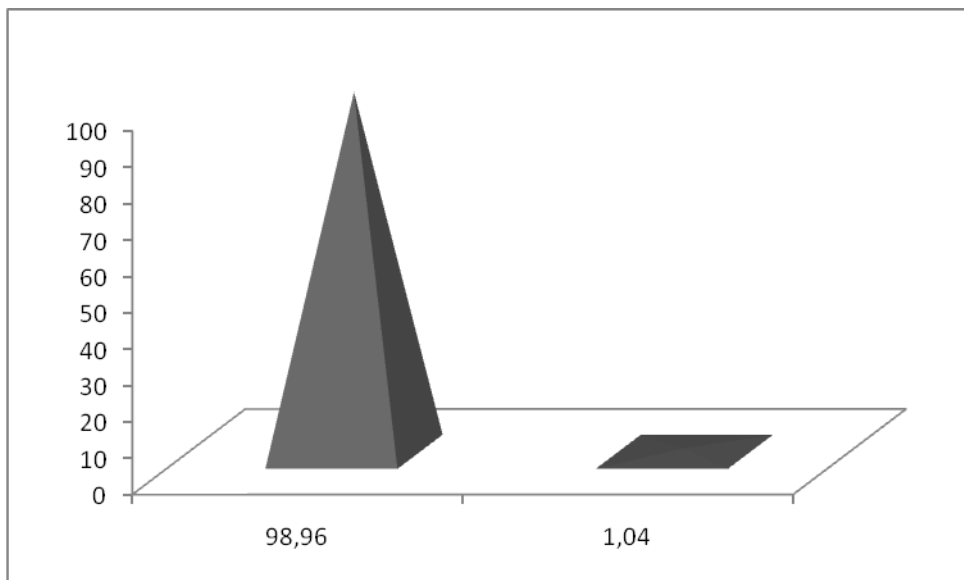


Figure 1: Frist item and results

I feel good when I contrast opinions about my learning in chats or forums: The 55.61% of the contestants answer not available, the 6.25% answer yes, and the 38.54% answer no (Figure 2).



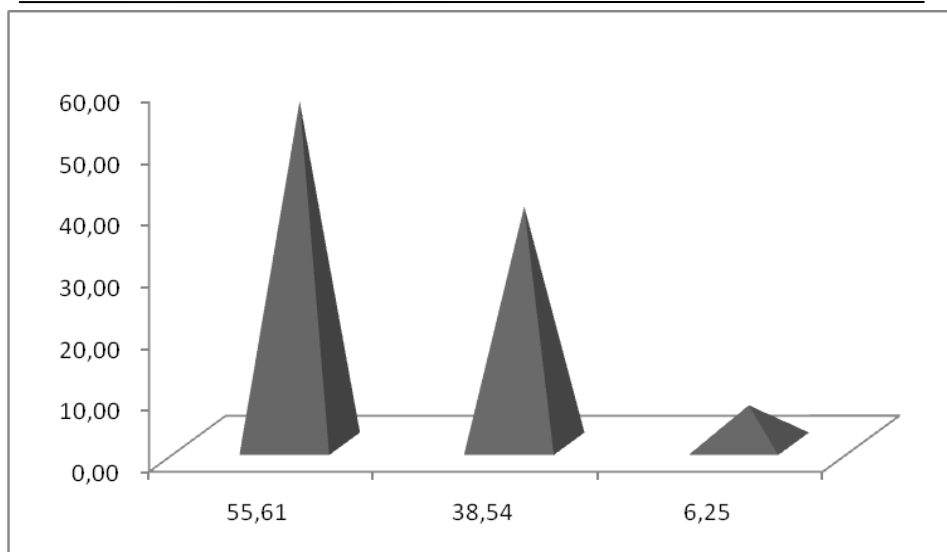


Figure 2: Second item and results

When I have a problem or I need a correction I consult: The 81.25% of the contestants do not make any of this, the 6.25% of the answers point that they turn to chats, and the 12.5% to forums (Figure 3).

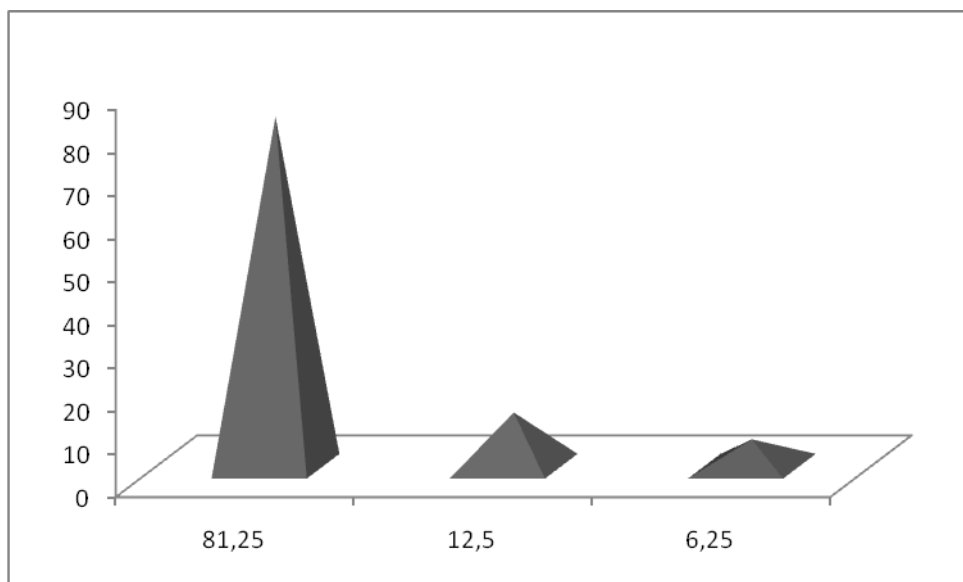


Figure 3: Third item and results

**GROUP 2:**

Variable: Feeling good

Affective strategies group: Affective strategies to increase self-esteem

Items and results:

I use cooperative platforms (wikis, forums, language learning environments) to feel better in my language learning. The 81.25% answer no, the 14.58% answer yes and the 4.17% not available (Figure 4).

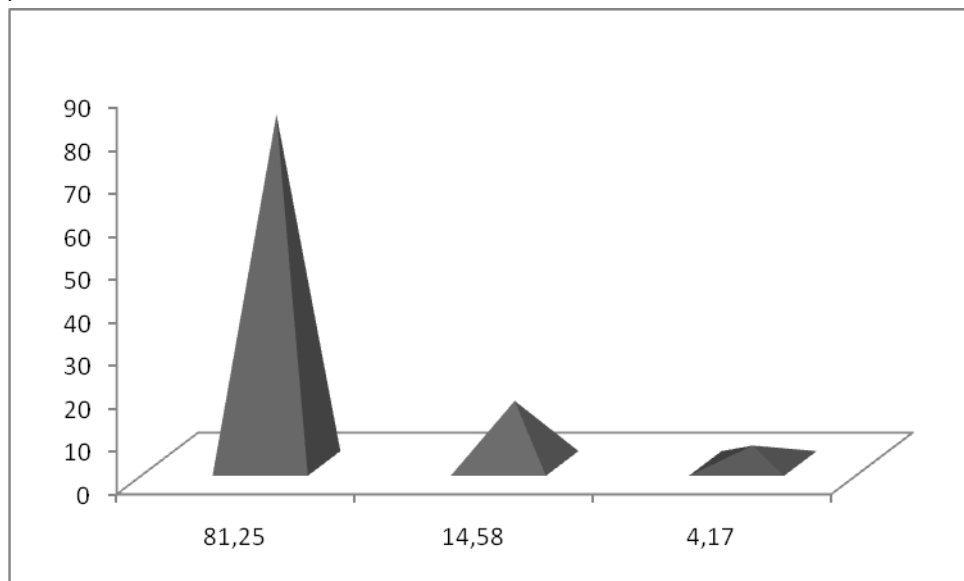


Figure 4: Fourth item and results

I feel good when somebody solves my doubts and problems in forums and chats: The 25.00% answer yes, the 55.21% not available and the 19.79% no (Figure 5).

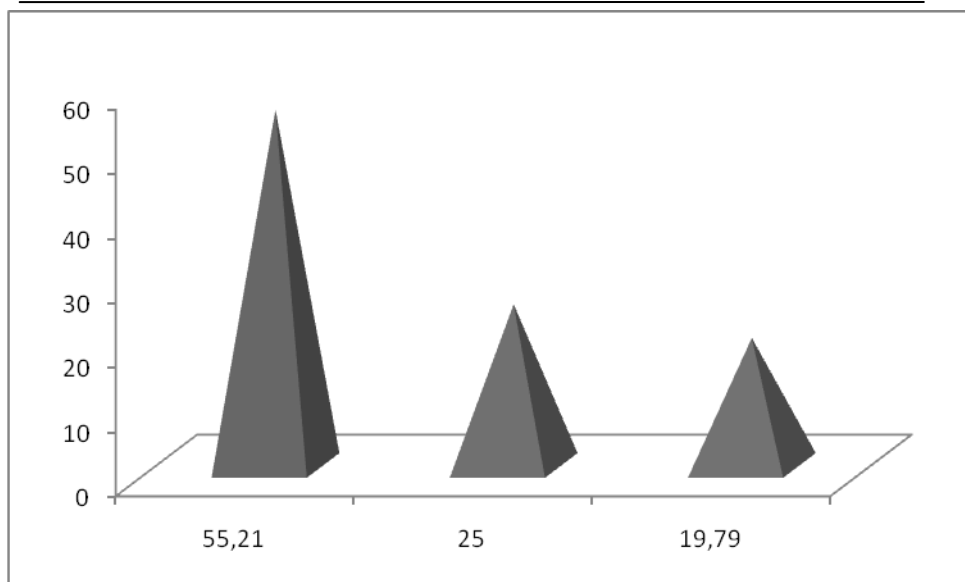


Figure 5: Fifth item and results

I encourage and congratulate other learners by means of: The 95.83% don't do that at all, a 2.08% turn to chats and the 2.08% turn to forums (Figure 6).

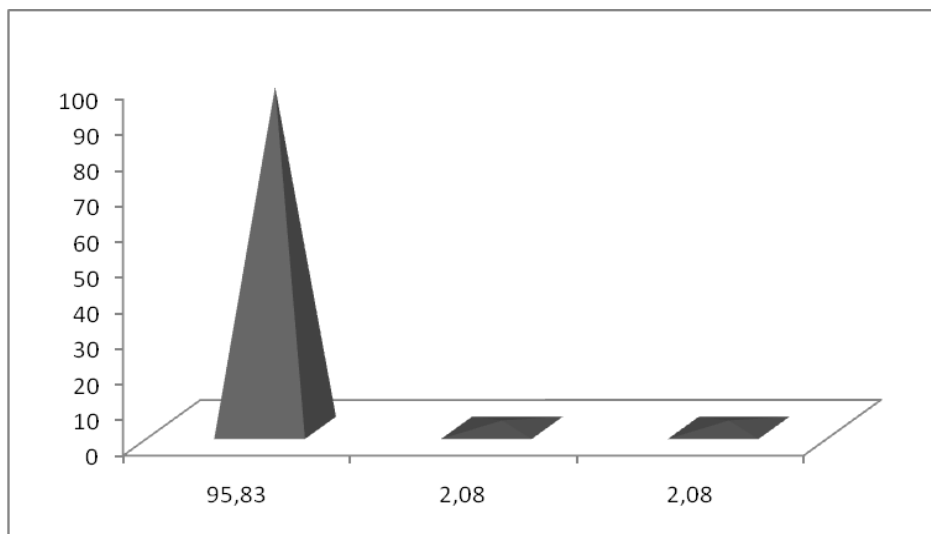


Figure 6: Sixth item and results

I feel good when I am congratulated and encouraged in forums, free chats or cooperative platform chats: The 62.50% answer not available, the 26.04% no and the 11.46% yes (Figure 7).

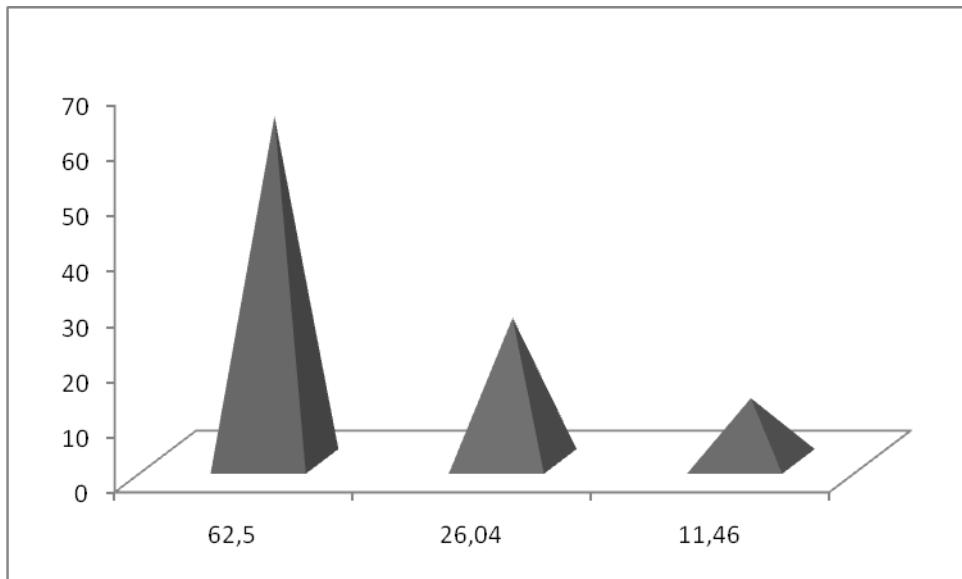


Figure 7: Seventh item and results

**GROUP 3:**

Variable: Think

Affective strategies group: Strategies to know how one feels in the learning process

Items and results:

I think about my feelings during my linguistic learning by means of: The 87.50% answer that they don't do this at all, the 9.38% say they do it by means of blogs and the 3.13% using electronic portfolios (Figure 8).

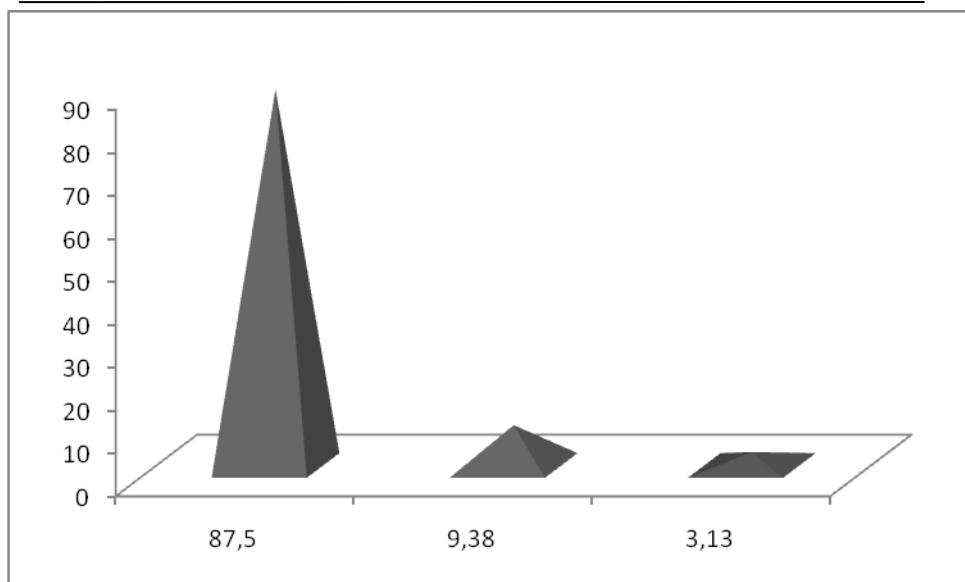


Figure 8: Eighth item and results

I think about my progress in my linguistic learning by means of: The 92.71% point that they do not do this at all, the 4.17% say they think about using blogs and the 3.13% by means of electronic portfolios (Figure 9).

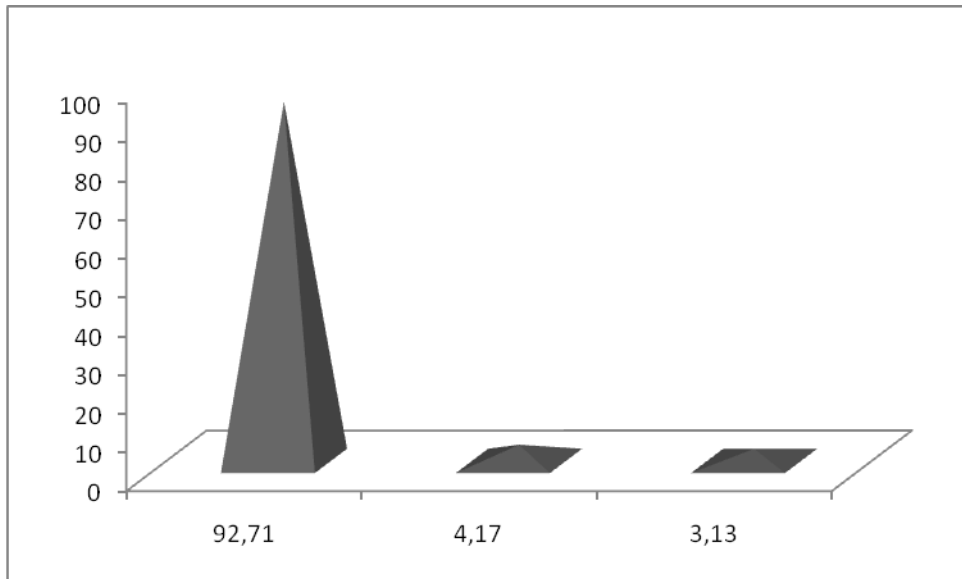


Figure 9: Ninth item and results

Thus, we can conclude that, despite it is a general belief that new technologies in general and Web 2.0 tools in particular, have become a daily thing in our lives and despite it is a general belief that university and language students are digital natives, the reality is quite the opposite. This is, according to the results of our survey the majority of the polled university students admit that they don't use tools of the web 2.0 such as blogs, wikis, electronic portfolios or cooperative platforms in their linguistic learning. This is reflected in the answers, being 'I don't do it' and 'not available' those which obtain a higher percentage. Therefore, they are tools that, despite being very positively valued in scientific literature, have not had a deep effect as tools for the development of second language learning strategies (in this case, affective). The answer that arises now is why are not they used?

### Final conclusions and future alternatives

We start our conclusions answering the question we put on the table in the previous section: why the tools that the web 2.0 offers for developing affective strategies are not used?

It is clear that scientific literature has specified the benefits of the use of these tools and the own tools, from a technical point of view, have a high development providing many applications, etc. But, from our point of view, what the student needs is

to know 'what for' and not only 'how'. This is, they need to know what type of tools they can use and why they can be used for the development of their affective strategies. To be conscious and to have clear which tools must be used to get the development of the different strategies. For that purpose, it is also essential that second language teaching staff know it and elaborate it inside his second language programming.

This way, to offer some help in this aspect, we provide in this paper an example of which tools can develop each affective strategy; how, that is, which way or by means of what type of projects or exercises, and why to use that tool and not others. We summarize these in the following tables:

Table 2: Type of affective strategy, variable, web 2.0 tool, activity and development

Type of affective strategy	Variable				
Reduce anxiety	Contrast	Strategy	I contrast opinions with other people about my language learning.	Activity	Fill in the questionnaire y share the results.
		Web 2.0 tool	Forums	Way of development	1. The teachers provide a questionnaire about emotions that each student fills in individually. 2. Each student writes a thread in the forum with the summary of his questionnaire or the aspects he wants to emphasize and share. 3. An asynchronic answer is promoted to the entries about the published emotions.
		Strategy	I feel good when I contrast opinions about my learning in chats or forums.	Activity	Make simultaneous conversations about the task and think about them.
		Web 2.0 tool	Chats (forums)	Way of development	1. I read and answer the messages written asynchronously. 2. While I do the previous task I share my emotions synchronically. 3. I think about my feelings and continue writing messages that will be answered asynchronously.
		Strategy	When I have a problem or I need a correction I consult.	Activity	Ask
		Web 2.0 tool	Forums	Way of development	I ask a question in the forum waiting for an asynchronic and horizontal (student-student) or vertical (teacher-student) answer.

It has been demonstrated that reducing anxiety provides us plenty of benefits in learning in general, and very especially in language learning when it is not our mother language, given that in many occasions we have observed in our students, and even ourselves, the anguish that appears at practicing a language orally. Therefore, to face this situation we can contrast opinions or problems that worry us when the time comes to advance with others or a given necessity to correct something. The tools that we suggest in this table are forums and chats. By means of forums we can fill in questionnaires and share results, and even ask about some doubts we have. As chats as forums let us maintain simultaneous conversations and think about them. The process which must follow the teacher has to be very organized and precise, as it is specified in each activity in the table.



Table 3: Type of affective strategy, variable, web 2.0 tool, activity and development

Type of affective strategy	Variable				
Increase self-esteem	Feeling good	Strategy	I feel good when somebody solves my doubts and problems	Activity	Admit the advance by means of the answer or solution of the doubt
		Web 2.0 tool	Forums and chats	Way of development	Answer synchronically in <b>chats</b> describing and admitting the advance in the learning and giving thanks. Answer synchronically in <b>forums</b> describing and admitting the advance in the learning and giving thanks.
		Strategy	I encourage and congratulate other learners	Activity	Impel to encourage and congratulate openly
		Web 2.0 tool	Social Networks (twitter and tuenti)	Way of development	Create a community to maintain relaxed horizontal (student-student) and vertical (teacher-student) relations. Impel students to congratulate and encourage, to this end the teacher must be a promoter with congratulations related with the work done.
		Strategy	I feel good when I am congratulated and encouraged	Activity	Share progress and receive congratulations
		Web 2.0 tool	Redes sociales (twitter y tuenti)	Way of development	Impel students to write small posts which put forward their emotions about the accomplished advances and encourage the rest of learners to congratulate by means of the example.

Sometimes it is hard to learn something because of the fact that we think that we are not going to learn it, according to a study carried out by a group of researchers from the Universidad de Santo Tomás the students who show a higher academic achievement tend to be characterized by presenting higher levels of general self-esteem, higher levels of academic self-esteem and higher levels of familiar self-esteem. (FERNÁNDEZ, MARTÍNEZ-CONDE, MELIPILLÁN).

Therefore, it is important to feel good with oneself, and many times it can be achieved encouraging oneself or others when something goes right or admitting that we have advanced because of the clarifications given to us by others. This can be achieved by means of forums and chats in which we describe and express our advance in the learning process. Also, we can use social networks like twitter and tuenti, by means of which the teacher impels students to encourage and congratulate other mates besides of sharing progresses.

Table 4: Type of affective strategy, variable, web 2.0 tool, activity and development

Type of affective strategy	Variable				
To know how one feels in the learning process	Think	Strategy	I think about my feelings during my linguistic learning	Activity	Writing a diary
		Web 2.0 tool	Blog	Way of development	Create a blog to: • Fulfill a reflection diary about the

					learning phases. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share tools found interesting. (RSS)</li> <li>• Encourage the exchange of assertive comments about the fulfilled reflections.</li> </ul>
		Strategy	I think about my progress in my linguistic learning	Activity	Create a portfolio
		Web 2.0 tool	Electronic portfolio	Way of development	Create the habit of saving those results of the activities that the student finds an evidence of his learning. Check the progress by means of the fulfilled activities saved in several formats.

It is very important to know how we feel when it comes to learn something, whether we are nervous or feel insecure, in order to apply the strategies and carry out the activities pointed out in tables 2 and 3. Therefore, we must reflect on our emotions, mood and thus, take the appropriate measures.

This reflection can be carried out by means of blogs and electronic portfolios. Blogs can be used to describe our feelings in a diary and electronic portfolios to check the progress we have done through the result of several activities.

Therefore, what we suggest is using those tools that the Web 2.0 offers in order to develop the affective part when it comes to learn a second language. That is to say, we have to be conscious of the way we feel during the learning, and according to our emotions and feelings, we have to apply the appropriate strategies in order to increase our self-esteem and reduce our anxiety when necessary. To apply this type of strategies we have tools such as forums, chats, social networks, blogs and electronic portfolios.

Blogs and electronic portfolios give us the opportunity to admit our emotions and feelings. We can save the results of our activities as an evidence of our learning process and thus reflect on it by means of a diary about the phases of our learning.

By means of forums and chats we contrast opinions, feelings, in order that we can feel more confident. Many times the fact of discovering that a mate has the same feelings or obstacles when fulfilling a task makes us feel better as we realize it is a general problem. Forums and chats give us the opportunity to feel better if we share our learning advances and we congratulate each other.

We are conscious that what we present in this paper is a proposal for those teachers and students who want and need a different way to learn languages, but it is clear that in order to apply this proposal the habits not only of teachers but also of students must be certainly changed, and it should be checked whether this type of learning is really effective in the linguistic field by means of research.

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## Appendix

### Survey used in the research:

Choose an option:

I use cooperative platforms to feel better in the learning of a language:

Yes

No

Not available

I contrast opinions with others about my language learning by means of:

Forums

Chats

I don't do it

I feel good when I contrast opinions about my learning in chats or forums:

Yes

No

Not available

When I have a problem or I need a correction I ask in:

Forums

Chats

Not available

I feel good when somebody solves my doubts and problems in forums and chats:

Yes

No

Not available

I encourage and congratulate other learners by:

Forums

Chats

I don't do it

I feel good when I am congratulated and encouraged in forums, free chats or cooperative platform chats:

Yes

No

Not available

I think about my feelings during my linguistic learning by means of:

Blogs

Electronic portfolios

I don't do it

I think about my progress in my linguistic learning by means of:

Blogs

Electronic portfolios

I don't do it