Framing the Use of Social Technologies towards Social Constructionism

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**Motivation**
The applicability of social technologies is unclear, and their use is still not clearly framed in theory [Wang and Vasquez 2012]. Need for a holistic framework that will ground their use.

**Aim**
Develop a framework that will ground the use of social technologies for facilitating groups of learners to socially construct a shared, meaningful artifact. This framework will be based on the learning theory of constructionism.

**Constructionism**
A theory of learning, teaching and design, which can be summarized in the conviction that individual learning occurs more effectively when learners understand the world around them by engaging in the making of concrete and public artifacts. Computers are needed, as an environment through which rich activities can be developed.

**Social Technologies**
Social technologies came into view as a major element of the Web 2.0 movement. These types of software differ significantly from static web-pages in the sense that they are open to the world and editable by everyone.

**Our Approach**
We employed Design Based Research [Barab 2006] as an overarching framework of inquiry. Figure 1 demonstrates the core elements (design, theory problem, real-life environment) of DBR and communicates that each of these components were taken into consideration in all studies.

Three consecutive studies fed into the development of the framework focusing on the use of different social technologies as social constructionist tools in three different classroom settings:

- a) teaching Greek as a second language (L2);
- b) teaching Greek as a first/native language (L1) for academic purposes/dissertation writing and
- c) teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) for specific academic purposes.

**Results**
Three core dimensions that enabled learners to participate actively in the construction of artifacts within social technologies (see figure 2).

**Conclusion**
Novel pathway for their use of social technologies towards the direction of social constructionism.

In-depth understanding of how social technologies can be used for facilitating groups of learners to socially construct a shared artifact. Move the discussion about the use of social technologies further in the direction of social constructionism.

**Figure 1:** Core Elements of Design Based Research adopted for framing the use of different types of social technologies towards the theoretical framework of social constructionism.

**Figure 2:** Core dimensions that manifest the use of social technologies as social constructionist tools.

- Evaluation of artifact
  - Revising
  - Peer reviewing
  - Instructor reviewing
  - Presenting/Publishing
- Construction of artifact
  - Outlining
  - Editing material
- Exploration of ideas
  - Orientation
  - Brainstorming
  - Material exploration