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DETECTION OF LEARNING NEEDS BY MEANS OF A SOCIAL NETWORK AND VIDEO IN A CLASS OF FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT:

Social networking sites currently offer a whole host of possibilities in the classroom. The teaching social network gives students the chance to try out a great amount of groundbreaking and varied learning experiences. Along these lines, the use of video as a classroom tool can arm teachers with new methods for boosting motivation and improving the learning experience, bringing into the classroom resources used by students in their daily lives.

The following account presents the results of a study that set out to analyze the learning needs of a group of French-language students on the basis of use of a social network combined with video in the classroom. To do so, a virtual space was created in an open-source social network used to knit together and centralize the activities of the group during the four-month academic term under study.

KEY WORDS: social network – video - multimedia environment - French as a foreign language

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DETECCIÓN DE NECESIDADES DE APRENDIZAJE MEDIANTE EL USO DE UNA RED SOCIAL Y DEL VÍDEO EN UNA CLASE DE FRANCÉS LENGUA EXTRANJERA

RESUMEN:

Las redes sociales ofrecen en el momento actual numerosas posibilidades en el aula. La red social pedagógica plantea un espacio en el que desarrollar gran cantidad de actividades innovadoras para el estudiante. En esa línea, la utilización del vídeo puede aportar elementos novedosos en los que el docente encontrará argumentos, tanto en lo que se refiere a motivación como al aprendizaje de los estudiantes, para integrar en su clase recursos que estos utilizan habitualmente en la vida diaria.

En las líneas que siguen se presentan los resultados de un estudio cuyo objetivo ha sido analizar las necesidades de aprendizaje de un grupo de estudiantes de lengua francesa como lengua extranjera a partir de la utilización en clase de una red social en uso combinado con el vídeo. Para ello, se procedió a crear un espacio virtual en una red social de código abierto, que se utilizó como dispositivo aglutinador y centralizador de las actividades del grupo a lo largo del cuatrimestre objeto de estudio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: red social – vídeo - entorno multimedia - Francés Lengua Extranjera

1. INTRODUCTION

Technologies and especially the multimedia environment have provided new dimensions to the classroom where the teacher as mediator in the constructivist terminology (Lara, 2005) provides the necessary tools to be students who build their own learning. In this context, as Lara says, the teacher's ability is important to diagnose students' prior knowledge and ensure a climate of trust and communication in the educational process.

The moving image has a special interest in particular for the so-called Net Generations, who were born and have been trained in an environment in which the image has a powerful appeal. The way to learn of these young people have much to do, therefore, with the generational nature itself and requires educational approaches in which the tools they use every day can have a well-defined space, as this will ensure at least a simpler approximation and, surely, greater motivation.

It is true that the teacher, in this respect, needs to respond moderately but also effectively to this challenge; in many cases, it requires training for which the teacher not always feels qualified. Unlike the young, who surf video network or daily consume video naturally through "smartphones", tablets or computers, teachers, especially of a given age, have seen how the environment for which they had prepared has been modified so that it bears little resemblance to the original. This has required them to catch up, which has not always been free from without uncertainties, as the classroom of this second decade of the 21st century and has little to do with that of just a few years ago.

1.1 Video Vs. social network for learning a foreign language, complementarity or antagonism?

The entry of Internet in the educational setting and, in particular, the so-called Web 2.0 has upset many of the schemes that were traditionally considered nothing short of tenure. In addition, the multimedia resources, especially in the teaching of languages, have introduced new elements in the methodologies as access to information, both in video and audio, it is easier every day, allowing teachers to access resources as easily as they had never done before.

Naturally, the teacher having the task of reaching a foreign language to his students faces the possibility, with Internet and multimedia, of introducing elements of great innovative power in his methodology. Exploiting the potential of this technology is therefore part of his daily work. One of these potentials is the consideration of the creativity of students in the classroom. Contrary to what some researchers thought in the early 2000s and before, the computer does not have to be an obstacle to the development of imagination; until the arrival of technologies, such term seemed to be more linked with tasks considered to be crafts than with a machine that was supposed to be away from the most creative impulses. Time has shown that the development of certain skills throughout childhood has had a particular embodiment in the use of modern devices in adulthood. Otherwise one could not explain the fact that modern generations are able to easily handle high-precision medical devices such as those used in neurosurgery, for example, something that takes the previous generations harder work.

Having said that the computer or the mobile devices, Internet and especially the multimedia environment are part of the essential tool box of any teacher, we must add that this must combine these elements coherently, exploiting the potential

offered by each of these tools, in order to achieve the best results in terms of motivation and learning.

In early 2000, some educational environments proposed the installation, as an optimal model for the class, of one computer per student, an idea that was tried in several countries. In fact, in 2012, 85% of secondary schools in OECD countries were equipped with desktop computers; 41% with laptops and 11% with tablets. Today, we can say that the prospect of one computer per student is away from the priorities of the official authorities, not only for reasons of budget cuts but because the arrival of mobile devices such as "*smartphones*" and tablets, has resulted in a turnabout as regards approaches that ten years ago seemed full of wisdom. While, particularly in secondary education, the mobile phone is considered nothing short of anathema, thereby losing real possibilities of being used in the classroom, we cannot deny some qualities that could be reconsidered by the relevant authorities of the IES:

- All students have one.
- Portability.
- Wide range of possible applications.

The fact that virtually all students have a mobile phone, most of said phones being of the latest generation, should be seen as a huge advantage for the classroom because, in fact, each of our students, both in high school and in college, carries in his pocket a minicomputer that, to give a crude reference, has more capacity than the one available to Armstrong, Aldrin and Collins in the mission of Apollo 11 that landed on the moon.

Another advantage of mobile phones is that every student carries it with him at all times and almost everyone has access to Internet, which makes things much easier when it comes to certain activities. Do not forget that with a mobile we can take good quality pictures or videos and even upload them to the network in which we work or, where applicable, the video channel we created. Beyond that, the audio possibilities of any mobile phone must not be neglected, as it can record sounds and also upload them to the site on which they work. Therefore, this device can and should be recognized as useful for learning, as it gives access to sources of information. It should not happen as decades ago with calculators, which went from being banned from use in the classroom to being used to learn, but after several years from their inception.

Of course, if the use of the mobile phone, the work possibilities are as many as there are teachers, the same applies to tablets, which some advantages with regard to computers:

- They are cheaper.
- They have greater maneuverability.
- They can perform functions similar to those performed by the computer.

At present, we know the projection these devices can have even in the immediate future, as this will depend not only on the desire of teachers but on other areas where the economy is not far, as you can imagine. But the interest of some companies to make the tablet have a space in the classroom is shown, for example, on the Apple website that, under the title "*Learning with the iPad*", includes a series of contents of an educational nature to be developed with this mobile device.

In the teaching of languages, particularly French which is the subject in question, you can hardly disregard the advantages of using the multimedia and all what relates to them. If we consider that language is a living element and that what is transmitted when teaching is a number of elements of direct and immediate application, we can easily understand that the traditional tools of the teacher (books, photocopies, documents of recorded video ...) are greatly exceeded by what the multimedia provide us with, such as:

- Digital Diaries.
- Video documents generated daily by the media.
- Video documents that can be created for the class.
- Audio documents, daily generated by radio stations...
- Audio documents that can be created by students in class.
- Easy search that can be performed in any video repository, thematic searches, searches by people ...
- A huge amount of self-correcting teaching resources.

With multimedia and technologies we can say that the language teacher has at his disposal the necessary elements to produce learning "*in context*" that, after all, represents the greatest proximity to learning in the country itself. This, of course, is far from the traditional formulation in which the teacher should produce an environment with a high degree of impost.

Now, it is true that the multimedia environment facilitates the work of the teacher by offering many alternatives for the development of his teaching in learning a language, and so is the fact that the profusion of tools does not improve the

methodology *"per se"*. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that the use of too many resources may not necessarily be productive in terms of learning; in fact, it is well known that some of these resources, if the teacher does not organize them well, tend to chaos, as in the case of blogs. Therefore, the proposal made on these lines has more to do with the use of two devices, each for different reasons, that offer clear advantages to the best of our knowledge. The first is the social network and the second is the video, as a material with which to work or as material specifically created for the class, either as a knowledge-generating mechanism or as a mechanism for evaluation.

1.2 The social network in the center of everything?

The social network is showing a great power of motivation. Today, almost all youth have a profile on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tuenti or others and this resource has become a space of communication above all. In them the youth upload their intimacy in ways that are nothing short of incomprehensible to the generations of parents who attend, with surprise, a daily demonstration of what some scholars define, following Lacan, as extimacy (Tello, 2013). Networks like Facebook have become huge agoras in which the one who is not present does not exist. Young people need to be seen, enthusiastically participate in proposals for their *"friends"*, make a permanent demonstration of happiness, show aspects of privacy that does not really interest anyone but become iconic, such as photographing a dish that one is going to eat a few moments afterwards, a tennis match in which one participates, intimate spaces like the bedroom..., etc. Indeed, issues of importance to people are obviated, as Tello mentioned (2013):

The majority of users are unaware that their personal information, the choices they make in the various search engines, the goods they buy or the links they visit are stored and used for purposes of varied nature without their consent or knowledge.

In this sense, it is a necessary part for teachers to teach young people what the positive and negative elements of the use of social networks are.

But it is also true that, given the overwhelming power of social networks among this segment of the population, the teacher has a tool with a huge towing capacity for its enormous advantages, some of which are listed below:

- They create team spirit.
- Students can observe and judge each other, thereby giving occasion to enhance their learning.

- They help build knowledge as work, tasks, audio documents, video documents ... etc are shared.
- They contribute to building relationships among their members.

Networks are part of the lives of our young students in a sufficiently intense way to make neuroscience be interested in their effect on our brains. Specifically Dar Meshi has studied the impact of Facebook on the brain, observing brain activity in more or less regular users of Facebook, finding that a particular area, the accumbens nucleus, is especially active among those who use this social network more. Contributing to this possibly, as stated by Tamir et al. (2012) is the fact that 80% of our activities on social networks are to express our mood or our occupations. In a word, talking about ourselves. In that vein, Facebook would be a space for expression and self-promotion, what Anglophones call "*self-disclosure*", the revelation of oneself. In fact, the theme of neuroscience and socialization is not new, and Dunbar (2010) already in the middle of the 1990s became interested in the brains of different species of primates, he measured their cerebral cortex (generally associated with cognitive functions) and related it to the total brain volume, noting that the degree of cerebral evolution of the species is proportional to the complexity of social groups of the same species. That is, the greater the rate of development of the cortex, the more developed and numerous social groups are. Dunbar also assures that the primitive social groups should consist of approximately 150 individuals, which is known as "*Dunbar number*". A number that is exceeded by the desire of our youth to surpass it, considering in many cases that more friends means more company, which is not consistent with the approach of Dunbar, for whom, above that figure, we stand beyond the limits of our brain resources and, on the other hand, having relationships with a large number of individuals requires us to develop numerous capabilities such as memory, attention, emotion, insight, empathy, ability to listen...

Anyway, the social network is an element that has a number of features that make it a paradigm of a form of communication and, therefore, liable to be used in the learning process, especially in the case of languages and, more specifically, French. Similarly, specific educational social networks generally offer features that allow them to be used in association with different resources and environments, which makes them useful from various points of view:

- Their interfaces resemble those of generalists, which reinforces the playful feeling among students.
- Content distribution is simple for both the teacher and the student.

- They can accommodate documents of different types (.pdf, .doc, .xls, .mp3, ...).
- They generally have internal communication resources, with which students do not need to leave the environment.

These virtues, along with others, make networks a space that can be used as a central body of information / action around which the other tools that the teacher wants to use are located.

1.3 The audiovisual document as a tool for learning a foreign language

The transition from analogical to digital technology represents a revolution and it will likely take years for us to assess its importance. On the one hand, technology related to mobile devices allows recording of video documents and, on the other hand, from the beginning digital cameras incorporated the option of the moving image, which universalized the possibility of creating videos. If we add that the software sold with any computer comes standard with an editing program, the obvious consequence is that a huge number of users of technologies have incorporated moving images into their lives. In this context, new generations coexist with it quite naturally, they are not surprised with this technology and keep track of everything. As a contribution we can mention the information provided in Youtube channel, the space with more concentration of audiovisual documents ,on its own activity, which is an exponent of the current situation:

- YouTube has more than one billion users.
- Every day people see hundreds of millions of hours on this channel and billions of copies are generated.
- The number of viewing hours per month increases 50% year after year.
- 300 hours of video are uploaded per minute.
- Approximately 60% of the reproductions of a creator come from outside his country of origin.
- YouTube is available in 75 countries and in 61 languages.
- Half of the copies take place on mobile devices.
- Revenues from mobile phones increase more than 100% year after year.

These data are from a company that began its activity in 2005 and, although it is the most powerful so far, it is not alone in the market, which gives an idea of the attractiveness of video as a daily tool for both private and professional use.

The use of video in the classroom to learn a foreign language can have different orientations, but it is useful to distinguish three modes or possibilities to address this use, starting:

- Video as a resource, to which the teacher has to provide an educational, operational component working in different directions, able to be used in different contexts. We refer here to the video documents the teacher incorporates into the class but are not intended to be educational resources. This section includes all the enormous amount of publicity videos, business activity in various sectors, speeches at public and political events, videos showing heterogeneous situations and not constituting an educational corpus. In the case of teaching a language, such materials are extremely useful because they can contribute contents of a linguistic, social, communicative or cultural nature. Therefore, teachers will look at the need to go through a process including the search for videos that fit the needs of students, selection, setting up a proposal for exploitation and presentation in class.

- The video that is created as a resource for the class. In this case, the teacher must determine his goals and, according to them, adapt their perspectives. In this situation, from the perspective of the student, there are two functions:

- self-learning function (prepare, record, review, self-assess).
- showing function, as it can be compared with classmates.

- The video that is presented as a pedagogical tool, designed especially for this purpose and that already comes with an educational content to develop.

Although it has already been referred, it is worth remembering together with Brandimonte (2003) that

In recent years, the communicative approach has gradually been consolidated in teaching foreign languages, whose main objective is the development of communicative competence (sociolinguistic, discursive and strategic linguistics), which also entails the integration of the cultural component in the classroom.

In that sense, Ferrés (1988, p. 10 et seq.) notes that the audiovisual language exercises multiple perceptual attitudes, constantly provokes the imagination and can transform the processes of thinking and reasoning; it has proved effective in the dissemination of content and has a strong impact on the emotions and sensitivity; It is extremely motivating and gives encouragement in expression. This peculiarity of

motivation and encouragement shows (Azevedo and Azevedo, 2006) that the use of video as an audiovisual support and the use of adequate techniques and strategies collaborate with the dynamism of the pedagogical action. It is obvious that images, both still and in motion, arouse a positive reaction in the student, convey a better idea of modernity and integration at the current time. Marque (1999) proposes some interesting items for discussion:

- Images are motivating, they sensitize and stimulate the interest of students in a particular topic.
- They demand global processing the information they contain and can produce an emotional impact that generates feelings and attitudes.
- They facilitate comparisons between different elements and allow us to analyze in detail the different phases of the complex processes;

Indeed, the image also arouses fantasy (de Azevedo and Azevedo), which corroborates Square (1999) when he says that moving images not only activate the intellect but also the emotional part of the student, especially, he adds, when it comes to learning a language because video gives many students the possibility to see themselves on display for the first time and hear them speaking in a language other than their mother tongue. The image also helps us to consolidate memory, thus helping to reinforce learning.

2. OBJECTIVES

Reference work was done from an educational communicational perspective in teaching foreign languages, in our case, French, as already noted. Our interest was in the development of communicative competence in its linguistic, discursive and strategic aspects. This development naturally has an area of great relevance, the cultural component, which finds a particularly appropriate way of transmission using video as a tool.

The group with which we worked was the one studying Tourism, in the 2nd year, in the course of *"Tourism Applied Foreign Language: French I"* mandatory, with 6 credits and 45 contact hours.

This subject, according to the teaching guide, requires a minimum level corresponding to A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and students were expected to reach the A2 level. The following resources were used:

- A social network created in the www.mixxt.com server.
- Textbook (Tourisme.com, CLE International).

- Single video channel on Youtube server.

From these approaches, the objective of our study was to determine what learning needs could be detected in the process of students, using a resource such as web 2.0 social network in collaboration with the use of a device as video.

3. METHODOLOGY

According to these starting parameters, the social network was put at the center of all resources, so that it reflected the activity in all contexts. To do so, we proceeded to a reinterpretation of the textbook in a technological key, that is, given that the method did not include the introduction of technological resources, or if it did so it was very quietly, the contents of its teaching units were reconstructed from the use of network resources, generating audio files, text, etc. This made, as noted above, the subject revolve around the space offered by the social network, the element from which information was arranged and managed.

With these approaches, we decided to distribute the spaces of the network based on the following criteria:

- Search for empathy. To do this, soft colors were chosen in different interfaces and the item Members stood at the top center of the page. We decided to do it this way because it has been observed with other networks that displaying the photo of each student on the home page helps him identify more easily with the environment that is offered to him and with his own classmates.
- Establishment of compartmentalized spaces for different activities, so that the student does not have orientation difficulties when accessing the network.
- Use of a folder system, the folders bearing the name of each student to concentrate each individual documentation on each of them.
- Place a number of immediate use resources (dictionaries, conjugation dictionaries ...) in a very visible area of the homepage so that students can access quickly.
- Place videos that are being produced or linked in a visible place of the homepage. The aim is that all videos are available to students so that everyone can watch them when he wants to or compare them with his classmates ... this is an important aspect since the use of video is also aimed at having students develop job skills in autonomy, critical spirit and / or ability to assess themselves.

From these ideas, we worked on learning processes with special emphasis on detecting the needs shown by personal videos and on orienting learning strategies in the direction that marked these mismatches.

4. RESULTS

In this section, the results obtained from the hypothesis are valued in relation to the development of students in learning throughout the semester, based at all times on the needs identified from the use of video as a tool.

Two types of videos were added to the process; on the one hand, a number of them, numbering 18, proposed by the teacher and which are endowed with the respective instrument of exploitation in order to use them in class, because they were of professional, business-related, video, etc. documents, and on the other hand, self-created videos, up to a total of 70. In the first case, the choice of video documents corresponded to the following topics:

- Communication strategies in French.
- Music Videos, ie video clips that, for specific reasons, were considered to contribute appropriate content for group learning.
- Videos in which different professionals or companies proposed a presentation aimed at its own promotion.
- Videos where tourism professionals (hosts, guides, consultants, travel agents) proposed a concrete and detailed description of their work.
- Videos in different professional environments of the tourist sector were shown.

The working procedure in this case was like this: after a process of searching, selecting, evaluating and proposing exploitation, the teacher explained them to the group, once they had been linked in the network, under different working synergies oriented to the development of one or more learning skills.

With regard to the videos recorded by the students, the procedure followed was to propose the recording activity (framed in accordance with the contents of a teaching unit) for students to proceed to, publish the video on their Youtube account and subsequently link it in the network. It should be noted that, in the first week of the semester, each student was asked to record a personal presentation. This activity was aimed to determine some starting parameters, which are truly significant. He was raised with a free character, ie, the student must determine from the title

(Personal presentation) the content and form of expressing it. In other words, each student should develop a process in which the following steps were suggested:

- a) determination of content,
- b) search for vocabulary;
- c) development of speech;
- d) recording;
- e) publication in Youtube, and
- f) link to the network.

For our part, each of the videos of the students provided relevant information on the following levels:

- a) at the phonetic level (difficulties with the pronunciation of certain sounds of French, links, phonetic groups ...);
- b) the ability to construct sentences;
- d) communicative competence (level of fluency of expression);
- e) in the lexicon registry.

Note that this type of activity allowed us, once located at the starting point, to get particularly significant information regarding the group's needs concerning the development of the subject. Indeed, one could say that the realization of a level test would be able to replace the implementation of a video. However, the conditions under which the test is performed are usually very different from the conditions in which a test is performed as proposed. The deadline to make the video was a week and every student published it when he considered it convenient, respecting the deadline, that is, students took their time to choose the content they wished to convey, they organized and presented contents as they considered it convenient. If we compare this situation to that which represents the completion of a test, we understand that the choice of video provides a more accurate approximation when defining the language level of a student, especially as it relates to one of the elements being more important to us: oral competence, which cannot be evaluated in a written test, however, for students of the Degree in Tourism, as future professionals, it is much more relevant than any other competence.

Besides the video activity mentioned above, students should create others, also from the same perspective, that is, given the tools of communication in each teaching unit, students were asked to record other videos, always with an open mind to allow them to develop information from a space of comfort in which to show their skills.

In addition to the evaluative nature of these activities, they allowed us to determine the individual progression in language skills, while each student also had the opportunity to observe his own progress.

In total, we worked with 88 videos, 35 folders were created in which 108 files were entered, in turn generating a total of 1225 downloads.

From the detection of needs and reorientation of learning, we observed that 40% of students improved their results if the analysis of the first video test is compared with the last one, also noting that the remaining 60% consolidated their knowledge and only a tiny percentage (3%) worsened their results. The latter circumstance could be attributed to rejection or ignorance that the use of technologies causes in some students. True, the number who showed such refusal or such ignorance is always placed at very low values, but it is equally true that this is a circumstance that must be taken into consideration.

5. DISCUSSION

In order to determine the suitability of using video to detect learning needs through the use of social networking and video when learning a foreign language, a study was carried out to verify in practice if the combined use of audiovisual documents (some of own creation and others selected from various channels) could contribute to the detection of needs. To do so, a social network in which the activity of the course was focused was created. It was raised that way because the support offered by the network is empathic to students, it helps to understand the group as a content-generating structure, there is a visibility of activities contributing to create a workspace and, in particular, the social network represents a space where students feel especially comfortable as it is part of their personal universe of communication. In addition to the above reasons, the fact of working in a social network is also linked to the habitual use of technology, for which the network is very desirable because it supports different types of applications to store different file extensions and ultimately it combines the relational aspect with the possibility of storage. It is a very suitable space for video viewing, because the interface allows registration of blocks of pages, so that each student can access his own videos as well as those of his classmates. This feature is relevant because this scheme allows the student to work in autonomy or proceed to partial self-evaluations. In the present case, the combination of social networking and the use of video seemed especially suitable as it would allow the professor, as it were, to work in evaluating each personal video

and detect learning needs, especially in a subject, French in tourism, in which priority was given to oral competence.

The results are, in our view, in two directions. On the one hand, the video document is considered a suitable tool for our objective, and it is shown in the results presented above, while – and this is the second direction – they are thought to be improvable if some strategies are modified. One of the strategies, perhaps the most important to us, is that the individual channel in which each student has posted his videos, for obvious reasons, does not make it possible to measure some other variables that would be allowed, for example, by a collective channel in which the teacher could access internal statistics in which he could measure aspects such as the number of views, popularity ..., etc., in order to assess more overall learning needs of students and hence , proceed with more refined proposals as regards specificity. In any case, it was an approach that has resulted in useful insights to continue in the same line of research.

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