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Human Communicative Dialogic Practices in Content and Language-based Educational Interactions with Technology

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ABSTRACT Anthropology has paid close attention to linguistic interaction and foreign language learning. This study approaches the use of dialogic learning that has strong roots in anthropology, sociology and applied linguistics. Following earlier research on teaching content in English in different subjects of teacher training through dialogic interaction, this paper focuses on the specific use of digital technology as a support for analysis through teacher-instructor interaction, as a means of social interaction, and as the creation of self-designed materials for content language integrated learning. Data is obtained from group discussions using digital content. Results indicate that technology represents a shifting pedagogical paradigm to enhance interaction in the Zone of Proximal Development and promote learning content in English through self and peer reflection. The findings of this study may serve as a monitor for content and language integrated learning educators aiming to enhance principled communicative insightful teaching with technology.

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists Gumperz and Hymes (1972) proposed that speech acts permit the analysis of cultural differences through language. Language serves to trigger idea interchange in context. For Foley (2007), the interaction happening in speech is deeply rooted in anthropology. Speech interaction also serves as one of the bases for education through the sharing of cognitive experiences (Whorf 1956). Dialogic learning is based in the cultural interchange of communication in speech acts that go beyond language to culture and knowledge exchange. In this way, learning stakeholders become active participants (Frijters et al. 2008) and agents of communities of practice (Archer 2015; Moate 2014). These communities of practice in the foreign language classroom were also observed by Willett (1995) and Toohey (1998). They considered that repetitive actions and routines not only led to language learning, but also to culture and habit exchange with positive results, through instructional actions and activities in a certain social situation (Edwards and Potter 1992). However, dialogic learning and teaching is still a subject of increasing discussion and some researchers have advocated that it represents a highly cognitive potential for students and a challenge for teachers (Alexander 2008; Gillies 2015; Topping and Trickey 2014). This also reinforces the premises of cognitive anthropology that states that the centrality of education lies in social action. According to this, dialogic interactions

between foreign language learners and their teachers (or between teacher trainees and their trainers) (Treff and Earnet 2016) serve to mediate between learning content and cognition (Cramp 2015; Simpson 2016) and it is also very motivating (Cetin-Dindar 2016) while also enhancing their communication skills (Chung et al. 2016). As a consequence, although the opportunity for learners to participate in educational dialogue is usually quite limited and their communicative contributions are rather insignificant (Lyle 2008; Turkan and Buzik 2016), it implies a call for a more dialogic engagement in current educative contexts (García-Carrión and Díez-Palmar 2015; Masaazi 2015) using appropriate frameworks (that is, Content Language Integrated Learning or CLIL, and digital contents).

Any discussion of dialogic approaches in education owes a debt to Vygotsky (1978), who highlighted social and cultural influences on learning development, and especially recognized language as the main dynamic behind cognitive development. Vygotsky emphasizes that learners, the teacher and the development of required tasks, provide a view of learning in interactions with others, which features the learning context within which learning takes place. He expressed the concept of ZPD, which he defines as “the distance between a person’s actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving, and the higher level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 90). Dewey (1933/1998)

also suggested an education grounded in real experience and considered that learning should take place in practical lessons in which students can prove their knowledge through innovation and interaction. Constructivist participation involves instruction in meaningful contexts to students based on class debates and cooperative task based learning.

Flecha (2000) and Aubertand Soler (2006) are known in the academic world for their contributions to dialogic learning and proposed seven principles. As described by Racionero Plaza (2010: 63), learners increase subject knowledge, personal and social transformation through egalitarian dialogue, cultural intelligence, psychological transformation, and the instrumental dimension of dialogue. These are based upon the principles of solidarity and the equality of differences to enhance meaning. According to Gillies (2015), these principles should be integrated to ensure that interaction is dialogic as opposed to just transmitted, which is the usual practice in the classroom today.

Currently, the production of educational content is extensive as information is broadly spread. Digital technology promotes creation, transmission and the incorporation of knowledge in real time (Aubert et al. 2008; Gatt and Sordé 2012; Padros et al. 2014; Barth-Cohen et al. 2016). In today's context, there is an increasing demand for dialogue as a means to negotiate meaning and to build knowledge in different areas (Cetin-Dindar 2016). This implies, according to Mello (2012: 133), the design of interactive learning situations to encourage student learning in dialogic contexts (that is, technological) and placing dialogue at the center of present methods of teaching.

Dialogical Interaction

As stated by Racionero (2010: 62), "while dialogic learning has been a popular area of research in recent years, the idea of learning through dialogue is not new. Dialogic learning is frequently associated with Socratic dialogues":

"Bakhtin (1986) placed major emphasis on the dialogicality of discourse. In the 70's, Freire (2003) developed a theory of dialogic action that pointed out the dialogic nature of humans and the importance of dialogue as a tool for raising critical consciousness. Habermas' (1984, 1987) theory of communicative action has emphasized that it is by means of

argumentation based on validity claims that greater levels of understanding are achieved" (Racionero 2010: 62).

In the educational sciences, Wells (1999) has developed a dialogic inquiry approach to the curriculum on the basis that inquiry-based learning is afforded by dialogue, according to Gallardo Perez (2014). Williams and Burden (1997) maintain that in dialogic learning cognition develops in social interaction. Furthermore, in collaborative learning, all learners share the result of learning and interact with each other (also McNeill et al. 2016). The teacher encourages learners to find new tasks and undertake them. Following Gallardo Perez (2014), some strategies, such as discussing questions, providing a context and purpose for integrating the four major skills, creating awareness behind the underlying principle of an activity, using peer scaffolding, and setting students free, are proposed here to show how the social constructivist theory can be translated into action for teaching and learning in an ESL classroom (Liu and Lan 2016). The two important aspects of the learning process are the sharing of ideas and negotiation among the learners. As a result, it promotes the ability for divergent thinking.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Learning a foreign language through specific topics or subjects (Science, Geography, History) offers the opportunity not only to develop different activities wherein students can improve the four skills and reinforce the language, but also to acquire and introduce new content. According to Marsh (2000), this educational approach where some content learning is taught in an additional language is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and involves several models:

"The first framework, based on Mohan (1986), relates materials structure and topics to students' knowledge. The second framework revises Bloom's taxonomy and suggests sequencing activities from low cognitive to high cognitive thinking skills. Finally, Coyle et al. (2010) suggest a language triptych that enables lesson planning in three stages using more specific content. All these models share, in some way, the common principle of integrating content and language learning to exploit communication and may serve as a practical tool for CLIL teachers to produce their own materials at the

early stages of schooling” (Garcia Esteban 2013: 49).

According to Coyle et al. (2010):

“[...]It is through progression in knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject matter, engagement associated with cognitive processing, interaction in a communicative context, developing appropriate language knowledge and skills, as well as acquiring a deepening intercultural awareness through the positioning of self and ‘otherness’, that effective content-based learning takes place” (p. 9).

Dialogic teaching supports content and language integrated learning and engaging language learners in dialogue offers special challenges (Klingelhofer and Schleppegrell 2016). The present study illustrates how the integration of content in language learning can help develop culture and cognition through communicative dialogical practices in a foreign language.

Digital Technology

Technology offers opportunities for communicative language learning as students are exposed to new foreign language and they must participate in cooperative tasks that favor negotiation of meaning (Duffy 2014; Kaplan and Haenlein 2010; Warschauer and Matuchniak 2010). Digital content appears in different forms such as text, audio, video, graphics, animations and images (Dudeney et al. 2014; Mullan 2014). As stated by Garcia Esteban (2015), digital technologies can be adapted to the new educational trends (that is, Content and Language Integrated Learning) and help learners improve language learning as it facilitates dynamic education, the ability to share experiences in the foreign language, as well as using online digital learning objects and the web in a participative, collaborative and reflective way.

Since many of these issues have not yet been tested, it was necessary to observe whether students of different teaching degrees in education engage in the principles of Aubert et al. (2006) and Padros and Flecha (2014) on dialogic interaction using technology to learn and teach content through English as a Foreign Language.

Objectives

Based on these concepts, this paper explores the use of digital technologies in content and language integrated learning contexts, and the promotion of the seven principles of dialogic

interaction to develop critical thinking for upgrading in teacher training education. The study is based on the experiences and impressions of using digital content such as social media (that is, blogs), video (that is, YouTube), multimedia, audio, and the web (online dictionaries, TESOL websites, and Google search) as effective tools to develop communicative activities for content and language-integrated learning. The project was aimed at developing the respondents’ language skills (reading, writing, and speaking and listening) and content (teaching different topics, like citizenship, art, environment to pre-schoolers) in a collaborative technological setting. According to these objectives, three research questions were stated:

- a) Do media support dialogic interaction?
- b) Does technology facilitate CLIL supported learning?
- c) How are the seven principles of dialogic learning reflected in the students’ attitudes?

METHODOLOGY

This research project was carried out at Universidad de Alcalá (Spain), with 22 second-year full-time students of *English as a Foreign Language* studying BA in Primary Education (11 students) and Infant Education (11 students). The survey consisted of 13 questions based on Dale and Tanner (2012) reproduced in Table 1, enquiring about the efficiency of teaching content following a Content and Language Integrated

Table 1: Self-assessment CLIL questionnaire

Content	
1	Is your message clear to the audience?
2	Your work gives a detailed explanation of ...
4	Your work covers all of the points required by the teacher ⁴ Your work suggests ...
5	Are your arguments convincing?
6	Do you give appropriate evidence to support your main points?
7	Have you involved the audience by asking questions? Are the questions relevant?
8	Are you able to answer questions about the topic from your audience?
9	Is it clear that all the members of the group participated equally?
10	Does your work make an effective visual impact on the reader? <i>Language</i>
11	Is the presentation or layout clear?
12	Have you used an appropriate style for your audience?
14	Is the language accurate (spelling, grammar, vocabulary, linking words)?

Learning (CLIL) framework (Doyle 2005) using collaborative digital content (Dudenev et al. 2014) as exposed in Table 2. Qualitative data was obtained from open questions concerning rationalization of the student's experience and proposals for improvement. Succeeding data analysis, interviews were held in order to foster the students' critical thinking about their own learning experience. This reflection was discussed in a dialogic relation between the language of teacher instructor and teacher candidates.

Table 2: Use of digital content to teach CLIL

	<i>Subject Foreign language for infant education</i>	<i>Subject Foreign language for primary education</i>	<i>Total %</i>
Multimedia	99 %	99%	99
Images and words			
Videos	89%	84%	89
Websites	99%	99%	99
Audio	99%	99%	99
Social media (i.e. Blogs)	98%	97%	97.5

This research was carried out following the critical communicative methodology (Gómez et al. 2006). Data was collected through communicative focus groups since the interest was placed in the students' explanations of how they learned through interaction practices. It was expected that being in a group setting would facilitate the students' elaboration of their own and other learners' thoughts, thus extending individual argumentation.

This study, based on Garcia Esteban (2013, 2015), Laborda and Royo (2007) and Tejedoret al. (2013) illustrates undergraduates' collaborative involvement with digital literacies to reinforce the content of different subjects. Students were involved in the following activities to work on some specific content and topics from the subject, which had been previously explained in traditional on-campus lectures using a virtual learning environment platform (Blackboard) to create and use a blog (that is, Pérez Torres 2009) and TEFL videos (Kay 2010), work on webpages, share and comment on original content, such as literature, films, news or videos online (that is, YouTube and Platform Forum), using electronic dictionaries (for example, [www. wordref-](http://www.wordreference.com)

www. wordreference.com), and remix content found online into a new creation (blog and video) with comments and discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objectives of this research were to learn and reflect on the use of different content, technological resources and specific teaching procedures while acquiring experiential and critical use of digital literacies. The main assignment was to explore content language integrated learning units that students had previously designed and delivered in micro-lessons in the classroom or subsequently uploaded to a blog to be appraised and further discussed in a dialogic interaction. The students' reflections concerning their lesson plan and design were evaluated and rationalized following the theoretical content of the subject in a questionnaire related to their microteaching performance and the use of content and language integrated learning resources and principles following Coyle's 4Cs (2005). As illustrated in each principle below, participants indicated their full involvement with digital literacies (97.5%), which consisted mainly of the use of multimedia, images and words (99%), videos (89%), specialized websites (99%), audio (99%) and social media (that is, blogs) (99%).

The following lines illustrate the students' original examples of each category (content and language). Reflections have been categorized by the author of the research. Italicized direct quotes will be used in order to detail pre-service teacher experiences and to provide evidence of the views and concerns stated by the participants. The main topics that arose after the analysis of the blog comments and dialogic discussion are rationalized below.

The analysis of the learners' responses and reflections on their own learning on teaching content and language following a CLIL framework (Dale and Tanner 2005) using digital content (that is, multimedia activities, and online reading), show that the process developed met the principles of Flecha (2000) and Aubert et al. (2006) on Dialogic Interaction:

Egalitarian Dialogue

Studies of cooperative learning have revealed that when students with different skills

and cultural backgrounds collaborate to solve tasks, their academic achievement increases (Gillies 2015; Johnson and Johnson 1981; Slavin and Oickle 1981). Dialogue is egalitarian when it takes different inputs into consideration according to rationality, instead of according to the positions of power held by those who make the contributions (Flecha 2000: 2).

“Our classmates suggest that our lesson plan was not appropriate due to the development of activities with high levels of cognitive demand for children. For example, the dialogue about the topic ‘Household and Professions’ presented in YouTube film shots was considered difficult for preschoolers. Our classmates’ comments made us realize that before doing an activity, it is recommended to revise and explain vocabulary using Bloom’s Low Order Thinking Skills” (FG2).

From a dialogical point of view, this statement supports the idea that the view and guide of a non-expert pre-service teacher, besides the tutor’s, is recognized in the classroom as significant to favor peers’ learning, according to Tello and Sava (2010).

In terms of use of digital content, technology can foster a more democratic and comprehensible participation (Pulido 2007). The use of technology involves the promotion of different types of resources, inviting peers to participate in discussions about the use of different social media (that is, videos, used as a teaching-learning resource by 89% of the students) related to their work. Egalitarian dialogue aims to promote different forms of dialogic interactions, not only with teachers, to expand a student’s learning. In this context, digital technology can support collaborative learning practices in which the variety of interaction develops the construction of knowledge (Aubert et al. 2008; Gillies 2015).

Cultural Intelligence

Besides, in contexts planned to pursue a dialogic learning approach, contributors are usually stimulated to use their *cultural intelligence* (Flecha 2000), that is, the set of educational, functional, and communicative abilities necessary to engage in the construction of understanding.

“Peer’s feedback: The topic “environment” has been well developed through motivating and didactic activities

FG1: Thank you, we did it as dynamically as possible.

Peer’s feedback: You have also done an appropriate introduction to literary storytelling and proposal for online reading (The Jungle Book), however an introduction to the author Rudyard Kipling with a search in specialized Internet websites and related multimedia activities could have been also included” (FG1).

Following this author, this type of interaction happens in dialogical learning contexts where three situations are favored, that is, interactive self-confidence, cultural transfer and dialogic creativeness (development of new comprehension ensuing from dialogue that benefits on the participants’ skills).

The greater the variety in terms of categories of intelligence, the richer the education on the critical use of digital content. Technology also allows traditional uniform standardized models to converge towards a more participatory and egalitarian one (Aubert et al. 2008). For instance, there is not only one-way to use digital contents, most students (99% according to the results) learn using diverse strategies and resources (that is, specialized websites, multimedia, TEFL programs). Additionally, using certain resources such as the blog or YouTube comment feature, students can negotiate meanings in different social media discussing content related to teaching a particular subject, thus developing their cultural intelligence (Duffy 2008: 119).

Transformation

By sharing different points of view through dialogue guided by cognitive assertions, *transformation* takes place at two stages, that is, intrapsychological and inter-psychological. Intrapyschological because through dialogue previous understanding is transformed and increased:

“Our work covered all the points required by the teacher (Coyle’s 4Cs conceptual framework for CLIL, 2005) and showed appropriate evidence to support the main concepts with multimedia visuals and audio (that is, songs). Next time we’ll try to focus more the topic (nutrition) searching for richer examples on specialized websites as our proposals were too ambiguous, according to our classmates’ point of view” (FG3).

Inter-psychological because finding common points in dialogue with the knowledge of others, causes self-awareness and a new state of mind:

“Although we were acknowledged for our excellent dramatization skills in the creation of a Movie Maker film related to the topic ‘social organization’, we were suggested that the structures used in the video and terms should have been introduced before so that children can understand. We have learnt that whatever topic we may teach in the future, a warming up activity should be applied” (FG6).

As Rodrigues de Mello states (2012: 137), “Overall, dialogic learning is aimed at transformation, personal and socio-cultural, and not to only adaptation. Transformation requires emphasis on the instrumental dimension of dialogue as a means for knowledge making” (also Gattand Sorde 2012: 171) and the significant use (99% of the participants) of digital resources such as websites, social media, video, multimedia programs, following Dudeney et al. (2014) offers this support.

Instrumental Dimension

Instrumental dimension refers to those educational aspects that are required to overcome the socio-economic approach to the information culture (Apple and Beane 2007). Existing studies have revealed that language-based engagements, such as detailing, analyzing, and asking questions, are mechanisms that develop reasoning, understanding and metacognition (Fisher 2011; Mercer 2000; Renshaw 2004).

*“Yes, we think our work gave a detailed explanation of the concept of ‘citizenship’. Despite the drawbacks we have mentioned with the **computer and the projector**, we believe that our presentation made an effective impact on the audience since we created our **own video** about the film ‘Tarzan’ with some of the most entertaining songs. Furthermore, we created effective flashcards and an original final story” (FG4).*

Students considered dialogue as tool to enhance their communicative abilities and to improve language knowledge. “Generally speaking, we think that the language was accurate. However, the pronunciation of some words or our fluency could improve” (FG2). In these instances, dialogue also involved and increased metacognition, as explained by Gillies (2015: 5).

In terms of technology, the researchers agree with Duffy (2008) that students gain self-awareness about the need for language accuracy before publishing, for instance, a post or vid-

eo dialogue in social media, as ninety-nine percent of the partakers rationalized. Everybody’s contribution about his or her own performance and tips for improvement is appreciated (O’Reilly 2005).

Creation of Meaning

Involvement in dialogic learning represents a major factor in terms of creation of meaning (Elboj and Puigvert 2004) in order to provide understanding of the actions undertaken (Weber 1968) and reasoned argumentation (Topping and Trickey 2014). Faced with multiple possible choices, it is difficult for students to design a project and to know which approaches to follow. In dialogues where a variety of opinions and standpoints emerge based on reasoning, participants realize more opportunities, and consequently, make free determinations in an analytical manner.

“Yes, we think that our lesson plan is well structured and gave a detailed explanation of the lifestyles in different habitats. Firstly, we made a summary of the book ‘The Jungle Book’. Afterwards, we introduced the vocabulary related to this topic, and we made different activities (that is, differences between habitats). In the first activity, children had to distinguish between the city and the forest, then between the desert and ocean to internalize these concepts. Lastly, we proposed a final activity (we created a digital story where Mowgli had to get adapted to the city) to consolidate new learnings” (FG3).

Students observed that when describing what they learn with the help of technology (97.5%), they have to review their knowledge and rationalize their methodology, thus realizing possible inconsistencies in their work. As stated by Gatt and Sorde (2012:167), the creation and sharing of digital contents can help negotiate meaning and develop understanding.

Solidarity

This concept conveys the principle of cooperation. In dialogic learning contexts, students share their experiences to the advantage of all team members (Flecha 2004).

“Despite this, it may not be clear that all the members of the group participated equally, which can be possible because some of us spoke less in the presentation than others due to shy-

ness, our individual and cooperative work in group and contribution to the creation of a virtual webquest about the topic "Historical London" was equal, as roles concerning information search and technical design were shared" (FG5).

The democratizing force of technology allows students organize themselves into movements involving solidarity, and coordinate with each other to carry out a joint action (Foncillas and Laorden 2014: 248). Using technology in foreign language teaching helps students make decisions and build knowledge in the collective compilation and creation of data such as webquests (Laborda and Royo 2007).

Equality of Differences

Finally, the principle of *equality of differences* or as Freire (2003) labeled it, "unity in diversity." Through dialogic learning, individuals construct new knowledge about the world and reflect about their own culture and that of others, therefore growing freedom to choose his or her own way and interacting with others, as well as generating respect for diversity (Giddens 1995).

"There are many different points of view of our work, according to our classmates. However, we used different methods (CLIL, TPR, audio-lingual) and resources (audio and Puppet video) to make our topic of "living and non-living beings" attractive. We tried to explain the objectives of the lesson plan carefully step by step so that it could be clearly understood" (FG7).

A wide range of assignments allows diverse students to partake and benefit from different types of contributions, thus applying the equality of differences principle. The respect for diversity offers any learner the possibility to contribute to a common task (Gatt and Sorde 2012: 167), thus achieving higher final performance (Webb et al. 2014).

In terms of technology, this means that different strategies can be promoted considering diversity and equality. Digital content helps conventional homogenized methods usher in more plural ones. There are many ways of teaching with technology and ninety-nine percent of students have learnt using diverse digital resources and techniques following Warschauer and Matuchniak (2010).

The seven principles of dialogic learning are related to each other, as well as exist as separate

entities. These values, initially advocated by Flecha (2000) and Aubert et al. (2006), have been further developed in education (Foncillas and Laorden 2015; Gillies 2015; Gallardo Perez 2014; Klingelhofer and Schleppegrell 2016) using different procedures, and engaging students in collective interaction for the enhancement of some core features such as understanding, experience, communication, reasoning and culture. This approach distinguishes dialogic learning from preceding educational methods.

Results of this study promote the development of current literature on cooperative learning and virtual collaboration. In collective interaction, learning procedures can be stimulated with opportunities to share different perceptions, rationalized divergent perspectives through founded argumentation, explain one's thinking about a fact, provide critiques, observe the strategies of others, and listen to explanations (Barron 2003). Data examination has expounded that digital literacies and virtual collaboration provide an opportunity for pre-service teachers to identify aspects of their own practice on language and content development in a dialogic interface.

CONCLUSION

From an anthropological perspective, this paper suggests that dialogic interaction promotes the exchange of culture and cognition through dialogic interactions. To show this, the aim of this study was to find how principled dialogic interaction enhances content and language integrated learning (CLIL) with technology in a pre-service context. The findings have allowed the researchers to draw an initial profile of how this teaching-learning approach can influence the development of content and language acquisition in higher education. In this sense, this paper supports the traditional anthropological approach of studies in local or small communities with an interest in interpersonal and interactional levels aimed at a much wider scope of application, which the researchers consider as a positive and relevant perspective.

Dialogic interaction enables meaningful learning since the student is considered as someone active who is able to construct his or her own culture or knowledge with peers, teachers, and the world at large (social constructivism). This study has shown in a real case scenario the ways in which the implementation of technolo-

gy in foreign language learning and teaching enhances dialogic learning and critical thinking within Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development involving the seven principles (egalitarian dialogue, equality of differences, solidarity, instrumental learning, cultural intelligence, the creation of meaning and transformation), which have also been potentiated by anthropologists such as Duranti.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Further proposals for enhancing foreign language learning and content acquisition are carrying out different virtual projects or a MOOC in specific subjects. This instruction could be accomplished using mobile learning applications with resources that are digital, easily portable, have access to the Internet and multimedia capabilities that offer students flexibility to access content that can be carried out anywhere at any time. Outcomes can be discussed afterwards face-to-face or via tele-collaboration in order to enhance social interaction, dialogue, debate, and intercultural exchange.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the current study was the small, non-probability sample of convenience, which will be increased in future projects.

FOR FUTURE STUDIES

For all these reasons, further research will include more in-depth studies of attitudes. All in all, it is believed that dialogic practices have a potential beneficial effect on the students' empowerment, and certainly represent a field with a great potential for further research and development.

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