Diseño instruccional basado en aprendizaje social y TPACK para mejorar el aprendizaje de idiomas

Instructional design based on social learning and TPACK to improve language learning

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RESUMEN

La tecnología juega un papel importante en la educación hoy en día. Todos somos conscientes de su importancia y existen numerosas investigaciones sobre lo beneficiosa que puede ser cuando se aplica al proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje; sin embargo, dado que las redes sociales han sido desarrolladas hace relativamente poco tiempo, no existen muchas investigaciones al respecto en el mundo, y prácticamente ninguna en el Perú. Esta investigación fue desarrollada con el único propósito de analizar el impacto que la aplicación de un diseño instruccional que promueve el uso de las redes sociales, basado en la teoría del aprendizaje social y el marco de trabajo TPACK tiene en la mejora del aprendizaje del idioma inglés de los estudiantes que cursan el Beginners IV en el Centro de Idiomas Señor de Sipán (SSLC) durante octubre de 2015. Para probar la hipótesis se aplicó el diseño cuasi experimental. Se realizó un Pre - test para diagnosticar el problema. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes tenían un bajo nivel de aprendizaje del idioma inglés, no eran capaces de comunicarse en el idioma de destino ni siquiera en un nivel básico. Se realizaron más investigaciones, para profundizar en el problema y después de aplicar una entrevista y un cuestionario a los profesores, fue posible detectar el problema: las actividades, estrategias y métodos aplicados en la mayoría de las clases eran tradicionales y no utilizaban adecuadamente la tecnología. Las clases no satisfacían los intereses de los estudiantes y no involucraban su participación. Los resultados fueron alentadores, después de la aplicación del Post - test se pudo observar la mejora del nivel de los estudiantes y el interés por sus clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: Teoría del aprendizaje social, marco de trabajo TPACK, sitios de redes sociales, diseño instruccional.

ABSTRACT

Technology plays a significant role in education nowadays. People is aware of its importance and there are numerous researches regarding its benefits when applied to the teaching – learning process. Nevertheless, since social networks are a relatively young developed technology, few researches have been carried out around the world about it, and virtually none in Peru. This research was developed with the sole purpose of analyzing the impact that the application of an instructional design based on social learning theory and TPACK framework has on promoting the use of social network sites to improve English language learning of students coursing Beginners IV at Señor de Sipan Language Center (SSLC) during October 2015. To test the hypothesis the quasi experimental design was applied. A Pre - test was given, to diagnose the problem. Results shown that students had a low level of English language learning, they were not capable of communicating in the target language even at a basic level. Further research was carried out, to dig deeper into the problem and after applying an interview and questionnaire to the teachers, it was possible to spot the problem: Activities, strategies and methods, applied in most classes were traditional and left behind the proper use of any technology. Classes did not meet students interests and did not engage their participation. Results were encouraging, after the application of the Post - test it was possible to note the improvement of students' level and interest for their English classes.

Keywords: Social learning theory, TPACK framework, Social network sites, instructional design.

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INTRODUCTION

Students use screens in every other aspect of their lives, but in their learning. Therefore, if teachers, want students to learn and to be really motivated, they must leave behind old-fashioned concepts, there is no place for narrow minds. A real educator must try to walk at the same pace with his or her students, to talk the same language. It is not possible to continue thinking that technology and social networks are the enemies of learning, when they are actually allies in the teaching – learning process.

This research was intended to prove and disclose that Internet, if used properly, is a tool that provides language teachers with a variety of authentic material to complement and empower their classes and that students can check, review and practice during or after their classes, promoting that way independent learning and encouraging their autonomy. In fact, there is even a new trend which is social network sites (SNSs). SNSs have become more and more popular, creating new opportunities for language learners to interact in authentic ways that were previously hard to achieve. Thanks to the advances in technology, today, learners of a language can easily interact with their peers (either from their class or even from the other side of the world!) in meaningful practice that helps foster language acquisition and motivation. That is, activities that imply the use of Web 2.0 resources can significantly boost students' performance, helping them to engage with their learning and therefore achieving real and meaningful knowledge (Chartrand, 2011).

It is a fact that students practice actively informal learning through their Facebook walls, they learn subjects that perhaps they did not like when they studied, and when a traditional teacher imposed them to listen to, nevertheless, they learn these topics through images or comments from their contacts, because according to Bandura (1977) learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement.

Behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism are the three main learning theories most often considered in the creation and development of instructional environments. Nevertheless, according to Siemens (2005) and Duţă and Martínez-Rivera (2015), these theories were conceived in a time when learning was not impacted through technology. Over the last twenty years, technology has reorganized how we live, how we communicate, and how we learn. It is a logical conclusion that learning needs theories that include those changes in order to maximize and potentialize its use in students benefit.

Now, it is not suggested that educators should completely revolutionize teaching, it is not realistic to go completely digital; there is not the equipment available for a start. But what this research suggests is that students' behavior patterns can be observed to see how teachers can tinker with their methodology to allow the students to get the most out of their teaching.

METHODOLOGY

To test the hypothesis, the quasi experimental design was applied.

According to Hernández R. et al (2014). a research is considered to be quasi experimental, when it was not possible to randomly assign the sample. In this case, classrooms are already formed and are not possible to be manipulated in any other way. This design is the most commonly developed in educational intervention researches, since they are conducted in a field where it is virtually impossible random assignment. Nevertheless, this design research seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of a treatment.

The design applied was as follows:

EG: O1 --- X ---- O2
Key
EG: Experimental group
O1: Pre-test
X: Application of the stimulus
O2: Post Test

The population consisted of 64 students around 18 years old, who presented problems with language learning in their English classes. They were divided in 3 sections. Those students coursed beginners IV at Señor de Sipán language center

during October 2015.

To be in Beginners IV, students must be in level A1 according to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Nevertheless, by the time they finish the cycle in order to pass to Elementary I, they were intended to achieve level A2.

The sample consisted of 21 students around 18 years old, who present problems with language learning in their English classes. Those students were coursing beginners IV section L at the Señor de Sipán language center during October 2015.

In order to collect the data required to conduct this research, the following instruments were used.

a.   Pre - Test: This instrument will permit to know the level of English learning of students prior the application of the instructional design.
b.   Interview: To gather information about the existence or lack of existence of an instructional design for classes.
c.   Questionnaire: To gather information about the use of technology in classes.
d.   Post - test: This instrument will permit to know the level of English learning of students after the application of the instructional design.
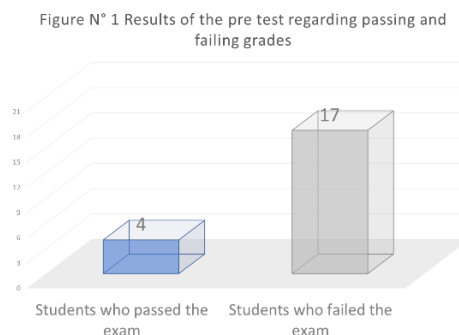
RESULTS

Pre test
The Pre - test applied fulfils the standards to measure the level of English learning in students. Always keeping in mind, as explained before, English is a language and as such, its nature is communicative.

Questions considered in the Pre – test, evaluated the minimum required to achieve A1 level according to The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages.

A satisfactory answer which demonstrates A1 level was scored 2. Scores 1 and 0 were considered below the level required.

This test was applied at the beginning of the cycle. After evaluating the sample, consisted of 21 students coursing Beginners IV at Señor de

Sipan Language Center in October 2015. The results are as shown below in Figure 1.


Figure N° 1 Results of the pre test regarding passing and failing grades

Source: Results of Pre - test applied to students of Beginners IV - L of SSLC in October 2015.

As it can be clearly seen, data collected in the pre – test undoubtedly shows that most of the students of Señor de Sipan Language Center coursing Beginners IV during October 2015 did not reach the degree of language domain required to be considered within A1 level according to CEFR. It should also be heeded that being in Beginners IV, would actually mean they are one step from A2 level, which is the level that they were supposed to achieve once they finish Beginners IV.

Post - test
The post - test applied followed the same structure and exercises than the Pre -test, in order of truly measuring the changes operated in students after the implementation of the instructional design. Thus, it also fulfils the standards to measure the level of English learning in students.

FIGURE N° 2 RESULTS OF THE P0ST TEST REGARDING PASSING AND FAILING GRADES
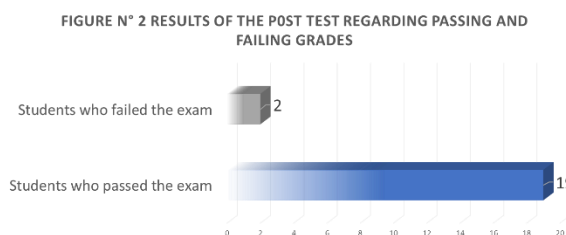
Source: Results of Post- test applied to students of Beginners IV - L of SSLC in October 2015

DISCUSSION

The outcome of this research is an instructional design, following the ASSURE model, proposed by Heinich, Molenda, Russel and Smaldino (1999). This is a learner – centered instructional design model, which makes emphasis in the integration of technology in the classroom to produce more efficient and effective teaching and learning experiences. It requires the students' active participation.

According to this model, the designer must follow six steps, which form the acronym of the name.
The core of the proposal is set off from the idea that authors as Krashen & Terrel (1983) and Bandura (1977) claim, significant learning, especially significant language learning is only possible when the student is provided in a social environment, where he or she can interact with his or her teacher and peers, performing meaningful activities which promote communication. To make these activities meaningful they must be connected to their reality, experiences and interests. Now, what is that reality?

Students at SSLC are teenagers, digital natives as most members of Generation Z, who use devices to communicate, to investigate, and also for leisure. They use devices for almost anything. Technology is an important part of their lives. The only moment when they must unplug is for their classes, when they are asked to leave behind or turn off their devices and "focus" on their class.

There is a factor in this equation that teachers are not considering; students now are different from the way we used to be when we were the students. They need a different approach, so instead of forbidding technology we should use it in our favor. Technology is a tool, so it only depends on how well or how bad we use it.

As part of technology, as it as mentioned before, Social network sites can be used to facilitate language learning in collaboration and interaction with one's peers and teachers (Blake, 2008).

They were considered in this proposal for the many benefits the use of this tools in the classroom has, as Koehler, M. J., & Mishra, P. (2008) propose, teachers must keep updated in this new digital era, it is not enough to master the content of the course, and pedagogy in order to deliver a good class, it is important to know how to use technology and use it according to the characteristics of each session or class.
Keeping all mentioned in mind, is that this instructional design was developed. All activities are intended to promote interaction and communication, using technology as a key tool, especially social network sites which essence is precisely that: communication, technology and fun!

As it can be clearly seen in Figure N° 2, data collected in the Post – test undoubtedly shows that most of the students of Señor de Sipan Language Center Coursing Beginners IV during October 2015 significantly improved their English level and reached the degree of language domain required to be considered within A1 level according to CEFR after the application of the instructional design Social – E - learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this research showed that:

Students coursing Beginners IV at SSLC during 2015 had low domain of English and did not reach the level required which is A1 according to the CEFR.

After analyzing the possible causes and applying a questionnaire and interviewing the teachers it was possible to find out that the cause was the lack of an instructional design regarding the needs of these digital native students.

The proposal consisted on an instructional design based on social learning theory and TPACK framework which was intended to supply the students with meaningful activities that enhance their communication and language level using SNSs.

After the application of the proposal, a Post - test was taken. The results showed a significant increase of English domain, especially in oral communicative skills students finally achieved and surpassed level A1.

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