OPENING THE HORIZONS:
INTEGRATING CLIL AND WEB 2.0 WITH YOUNG LANGUAGE LEARNERS

OBRINT ELS HORITZONS:
LA INTEGRACIÓ D'AICLE I LA WEB 2.0 AMB APRENENTS DE LLENGUA A EDUCACIÓ PRIMÀRIA

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1. Theoretical framework

The growing popularity of the use of the Internet in language teaching and learning is quite often theoretically associated with the pedagogical paradigms of socio-

constructivism and situated learning within a dynamic social process (Dooly, 2010; Guth & Helm, 2010; Lamy & Hampel, 2007; Rueschoff & Ritter, 2001). In such approaches, learning is understood as part of socially and culturally situated interactions in which new meanings and knowledge are 'constructed', all this through the collaboration of sharing knowledge. That is, the socio-cultural approach to SLA postulates that learning is situated and rooted in the learner's participation in social practices (Masats, Nussbaum & Unamuno, 2007; Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004), accomplished accordingly to the rules operating in a specific community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Context-bound social actions take place within these communities.

The acceptance that learning is rooted in social participation implies accepting that language education or digital education per se is meaningless. Learning is activated when language and technology have to be used to attain a personal or communal goal. The adoption of project-based learning (PBL) as a methodological proposal makes it possible, as projects are structured through goal-oriented tasks that help learners develop cognitive, social and communicative skills while they work together in the production of a final product (a video clip, a poster, an e-book, etc.). PBL is not a new methodology in the field of language learning but it often has met with scepticism, especially by novice teachers. Yet, it is a powerful tool for enhancing the integrative development of linguistic competences, audiovisual competences, digital competences and the competences linked to the acquisition of field knowledge (Dooly & Masats, 2011; Masats & Dooly, 2011).

In this digital era, the acquisition of such competences, however, should not occur only inside the classroom doors. Language education cannot ignore that "today's children are brought up in a 'wired' society and soon grow into skilful and eager users of technology" (Masats, Dooly & Costa, 2009: 341), which means that some of the social activities they will engage in will take part in virtual communities. Hence, as barriers come down, at least in the sense of speed and access to global information and communication, virtual learning environments and computer mediated discursive practices should become more present and relevant in the everyday classrooms.

2. Objectives

The applied linguistics research project, funded by the Spanish Ministry of Education (Project Title: PADS, EDU2010-17859[6]), aimed to design, experiment and evaluate telecollaborative, cross-disciplinary Project-Based Language Learning (PBLL) approaches in primary education. The project was first piloted in the academic year 2010-2011, based on an Internet-mediated exchange between a school in Catalonia, Spain and a school in Ontario, Canada. The pedagogical design and subsequent research was triangulated and coordinated by two teacher educators from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The students from Catalonia were six-year old beginners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and the students from Canada were eight-year old students, working from a focus of language arts (in English). In order to break away from a 'language-only' focus, the project was deliberately designed to be cross-disciplinary so that multiple competences would come into play. The research aimed to see what, if any, development took place in various literacies – linguistic (e.g., communicative) competences, digital competences, artistic competences and intercultural competences.

3. Analysis Framework

The case study takes an educational ethnography perspective. The compiled data consists of: video and audio recordings of all the sessions (transcribed), collection of specific output from the students, evaluative feedback from the teachers (all the disciplines), student self-evaluation of learning and post-PBLL recall activities. The analysis departs from a perspective that "cognition is as much a socially situated activity as it is an individual phenomenon" (Markee, 2011: 604), a sequential analysis of language learning behaviors, enacted in the language learners' different speech events during the PBLL exchange, shows language skills evolving during the whole process. Thus, the analysis takes recurrence as a factor to select examples patterns of language use that are clearly situated in response to the social context (e.g. the use of Virtual

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[6] For more information, see http://pagines.uab.cat/pads/en/content/pilot-project-0

Worlds in the language classroom), versus what might be called 'teacher prompting' in the format of initiation response feedback.

4. Results

Our preliminary analysis pinpoints 'learning events' centred around the abilities of Catalan students to understand, reiterate and produce language for a variety of purposes in different communicative contexts (in Second Life, in face-to-face sessions). First results indicate that teacher guided-interaction and goal-directed social actions undertaken in the virtual context favoured the development of communicative abilities that learners, as language users, extrapolate to other communicative contexts.

5. References

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