Applying Connectivist Principles and the Task-Based Approach to the Design of a Multimodal Didactic Unit

Aplicación de principios de conectivismo y del enfoque basado en tareas para el diseño de una unidad didáctica multimodal

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This article describes the pedagogical intervention developed in a public school as part of the research "Exploring Communications Practices through Facebook as a Mediatic Device", framed within the computer mediated communications field. Twelve ninth graders' communications practices were explored and addressed by means of multimodal technological resources and tasks based on the connectivist learning view. As a result, a didactic unit was designed in the form of the digital book *Diverface*. This one in turn displayed information through different media channels and semiotic elements to support its multimodal features. Teachers and students might thus need to reconstruct an alternative multimodal literacy so that they can produce and interpret texts of the same nature in online environments.

Key words: Connectivism, multimodality, task-based approach

Este artículo describe la intervención pedagógica desarrollada en la investigación "Explorando las Practicas Comunicacionales mediante el Facebook como Dispositivo Mediático" dentro del campo de la comunicación mediada por el ordenador. Las prácticas comunicacionales de doce estudiantes de noveno grado fueron exploradas e intervenidas metodológicamente a través de recursos tecnológicos mul-

timodales y tareas desde una perspectiva de aprendizaje conectivista. Así, una unidad didáctica fue diseñada como parte del libro digital *Diverface*. Esta incorporó diferentes canales mediales y elementos semióticos en los mensajes transmitidos, fortaleciendo su naturaleza multimodal. Tanto profesores como estudiantes necesitan considerar y reconstruir una alfabetización multimodal alternativa, de tal manera que logren producir e interpretar textos multimodales en ambientes virtuales.

Palabras clave: conectivismo, enfoque por tareas, multimodalidad

Introduction

The task-based approach to English language learning has been extensively promoted in different educational contexts. In fact, objectives, stages, activities, and procedures particular to this approach have been suggested. However, little research to date has focused on its application based on an alternative learning vision that may directly relate to current society needs. Specifically speaking, technology appears in various fields, implying further experiences and interactional manners that emerge in the form of different learning modes which call for attention nowadays.

That is why this article describes the pedagogical intervention conducted in the research project "Exploring communications Practices through Facebook as a Mediatic Device". This qualitative and phenomenological study attempted to investigate the function of Facebook as a mediatic device in the process of reshaping ninth graders' communications practices. In reality, the present paper is one of the products from the research line in the investigation nursery "Contemporary Interdisciplinary Studies in Computer-Mediated Communication namely, Connectivism and Education". This one in turn has to do with epistemological, methodological, and investigative paradigms that stem from digital world practices.

To begin with, a survey was conducted to determine the number of students who use social networks (see Appendix 1). According to the results, Facebook was highly used by these students; for this reason, we employed this social network to identify these students' needs. Hence, we were able to notice the subsequent ones through the Facebook Wall. First, some linguistic transformations took place in students' interactions e.g., computer slang, the emoticons and abbreviations that were often employed along the communication process. Second, they had a continuous tendency to have virtual meetings in Facebook and finally, diverse Face-groups were created by students regarding their musical interests.

Thus, an instructional design was unfolded in our intervention, aimed at elaborating a didactic unit to meaningfully respond to these ninth graders' communication needs. In doing so, the task-based approach was applied from the connectivists' learning vision. The processes of presenting, learning, and performing a task then occurred synchronically and asynchronically through Web sites 2.0, towards a resulting Multimodal Literacy.

The thematic development of this article is as follows: Firstly, we present the theoretical framework that supports the link between the task-based approach and the connectivism. Secondly, the pedagogical intervention is depicted, including participants and setting description, topics organization, and the application of the task-based approach. And thirdly, we spell out and display the design of the didactic unit as the principal outcome.

Theoretical Framework

The present section examines the pedagogical view of learning, connectivism and the most relevant differences among the other acknowledged learning theories i.e., behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. Additionally, it points out some relevant principles in order to understand connectivism as a connection/network-forming process. Lastly, the articulation between the connectivism and the use of Facebook, among others such as multimodal resources, is presented in order to perform tasks within an online environment.

Pedagogical Articulation: Connecting Meaningful Tasks

Nowadays, technology appears in the different fields in our society playing an essential role in each one. Therefore, alternative learning modes come into light supported by the diverse opinions afforded in the digital world. This is due to the fact that other sets of experiences and interactional manners are suggested or embedded in the technological tools. For that reason, new perspectives around learning need to be examined so that they can elucidate other teaching theories. In this way, it becomes necessary to relate the theories inside our intervention including the connectivist pedagogical view of learning, along with the Vygotskian one to arrive at the teaching theory as well as the language theory.

Initially, the connectivist standpoint about learning (Siemens, 2004) may appear as meaningful for our ninth graders' context because of various aspects. Firstly, this process is seen as a result of the continuous connection to be made among different fields, concepts, and angles while having a holistic understanding of the matter. In consequence, students are required to "create connections with the world beyond the school" (Education Queensland, 2005, p. 3) in order to develop the skills that will allow them to manage their knowledge effectively and efficiently in the information society. In doing so, students have to perform a number of tasks in order to face the everyday situations appearing in a virtual environment similar to Facebook's. Since the main purpose in those tasks is to achieve a specific functional goal, the language these students use and interact with (English or Spanish) is understood as the means of the communications practice. This is to say that apart from being authentic, this language does not constitute the focus subject to study in the English class. In doing so, students have the possibility to learn about English implicitly by using it in particular, appropriate, and significant contexts that are either, virtual or concrete.

On the other hand, connectivism also defines learning as the socially developed act of encoding and organizing information to contribute to the knowledge flow as it is pointed out in social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1986). In that regard, teachers play the role of facilitators to support the learning process. Subsequently, fulfilling the language functions in the dissimilar scenarios might come into view as a problem solving task where both teachers and learners get involved actively. Indeed, that facilitating position of the teacher stated in connectivism and the task-based approach imply a need of the critical teachers' assistance for students to make decisions when trying to do the communications activity.

Also, stimulating ninth graders' prior knowledge in order to link this knowledge to the new knowledge emerges as an imperative principle within the connectivist pedagogical perspective. At the same time, the task-based approach promotes meaningful learning too, entailing language use as the focus "rather than its form" (Nunan, 2004, p. 4). Taking this into consideration, we feel our pedagogical intervention draws on the multimodal resources available in the web 2.0 (Youtube, Prezi, Xmind, Facebook, postcasting…) to help students build a connected learning community. In this manner, students had the opportunity to talk about common themes related directly to their everyday life through authentic technological tools.

Likewise, the acknowledgement of a diversity of opinions concerning any topic or theme is highlighted in the connectivist position. As a result, ninth graders need to express their point of view, including being able to hear and respond to others'. Simultaneously, the several tasks carried out in the online environment are expected then to reflect that cooperation and inclusion are other ways to comprehend and approach a given issue. In this case, the English language might be another resource used by the learner to interact and know each other's outlook as regards a certain situation.

Finally, this pedagogical intervention unfolds through the correlation of three basic theories, each of which seems to imply the other. In this fashion, students are thought to learn in a virtual setting where functional systems and contextual features or norms are achieved by students participating in tasks socially developed (connectivism and Vygotskian theory). Accordingly, language in the form of communications practices appears then as the primary means by which learners keep contact and interact, so that they are achieving a learning and social purpose.

Connectivism as a Pedagogical View

Instructional designs, up to now, have adopted three learning theories, namely: behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. In accordance with Siemens (2004), the learning process occurs inside the individual's brain through these theories: Firstly, behaviorism asserts that "reality is external and is objective, and knowledge is gained through

experiences" (p. 6). Secondly, cognitivism asserts "reality is interpreted, and knowledge is negotiated through experience and thinking" (p. 6) and finally, constructivism states that "learning is a socially enacted process, promotes the principality of the individual in learning" (p. 11). In this regard, these traditions just focus on learning as an internal process regardless their sort of interaction.

Despite these well-structured models, they do not include the learning impact mediated by technology that since arriving has changed the individual's socio-cultural practices i.e., the way people live, communicate, and learn. Additionally, these previous theories draw their attention to the learning process, rather than the value of what is being learnt. For that reason, it is necessary to explore the worthiness of information to be learnt. It therefore implies, in agreement with Siemens (2004), a new meta-skill to evaluate the importance of knowledge; that is, identifying what will be learnt before the learning process starts.

This meta-ability may synthesize and recognize connection and patterns in today's environment, a virtual one, given that technology may reshape direct interactions i.e., to assent to Siemens, "we can no longer personally experience and acquire learning that we need to act at this time" (2004, p. 16). As a consequence, both those leaders in technology and connections making must develop a competence to design new learning tasks within the current virtual settings. That is why Siemens proposes a new learning theory, connectivism.

This theory is portrayed in terms of its interrelationship among learning, knowledge, and understanding through the individual networking. Equally, Siemens (2004) sketches a philosophy where children must create connections with the world beyond the school; thereupon, they can enhance networking skills that allow them to monitor their own knowledge successfully and efficiently within virtual spaces. Nonetheless, we consider that connectivism is not completely structured yet; seeing that, there is no clear methodology to help us to constitute an instructional design. That is why we perceive it as a pedagogical view whose principles are useful to construct and enhance our teaching practice.

In this respect, we identified a learning definition from this pedagogical view and some principles to come across one of the aims in our instructional design, namely: to implement outside tasks that include the common expressions students use in the target language through technological resources in the web 2.0. We consequently comprehend that "learning is the act of encoding and organizing nodes to facilitate data, information, and knowledge flow" (Siemens, 2005, p. 8). Thus, connections might be the key of network learning.

This sort of learning leads to the following principles presented by Siemens (2004, p. 51):

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.

- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision-making is a learning process itself. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

Accordingly, this pedagogical perspective is strongly linked to Chickering and Ehrmann's principles (1996) on good practices in view of connectivism's presentation of learning as a connection/network-forming process. This one aims at these seven principles: First, it encourages contact between students and faculty; second, it develops reciprocity and cooperation among students; third, it encourages active learning; fourth, it gives prompt feedback; fifth, it emphasizes time concerning tasks; sixth, it communicates high expectations; and finally, it respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

To conclude, organizing instructional designs currently requires further explanations apart from the ones provided by behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism. That is why connectivism, understood as a pedagogical view, points to the fact that knowledge is not constructed by us; instead, it relies on non-human spaces. For that reason, a networking competence seems necessary to fruitfully allow the knowledge connection within virtual spaces. Likewise, connectivism might enable teachers and students to work beyond the academic atmosphere; thus, in agreement with Siemens (2004, 2005), it helps to explore students' needs in order to integrate them as part of instructional designs. In other words, it lets teachers examine students' real-life situations by means of their virtual connections.

Pedagogical Intervention

Course Description

The present pedagogical intervention was aimed to develop a didactic unit with multimodal tasks based on ninth graders' communicational and interpersonal needs taken from their Facebook Walls exploration. In this regard, the prior objective was proposed so as contribute to ninth graders' learning process as well as their social development. In addition, we considered the surveys' results (see Appendix 1), which made evident ninth graders' interests in technology and, in turn, perceptible along the development of classes.

Additionally, this intervention was structured in two phases. The first one was aimed to draw up the syllabus. According to Jordan (2006), this process includes examining needs analysis, defining goals, selecting and sequencing the language and dividing the content

together with the tasks construction, selection of materials, and evaluation. Also, multimodality in tasks embraced either information displayed in different modes or the integration of two or more semiotic resources (O'Halloran, 2004), in this case, emoticons and abbreviations.

In consequence, after designing the didactic unit based on ninth graders' communication and interpersonal needs taken from Facebook during the first, second, and third terms, the second phase entailed the piloting stage of the didactic unit. The purpose of this implementation was to gain a valuable feedback to adjust and correct the respective scope and sequence from the unit. In view of that, five lesson plans related to students' interests were created to develop the multimodal tasks. At the same time, due to the fact that the classes were planned in a way that students did not become immersed in a repetitive communicative objective, we took into consideration their target language for developing a meaningful learning experience as well as reinforcing some language aspects.

Setting and Participants

This pedagogical intervention took place at *I.E.D Morisco* which is currently situated in the tenth locality (Engativá) in the Minuto de Dios neighborhood. In addition, concerning the institutional Educative Project (PEI), it is constructed upon the following principle: "My creative being in the quest for a better living." Correspondingly, the institution is promoting specialized training on technology and communication for students; however, the computer labs are not available due to factors concerning institutional regulations. Similarly, teaching processes at this school focused on teaching grammar deductively, which was reinforced by their textbook (Nuñez & Vanegas, 2004).

A morning shift ninth grade course (903) was assigned to us. There were 33 students, 17 girls and 16 boys whose ages ranged from 13 to 16 years old; equally, 90 percent of the students belonged to the middle class and the majority of them lived near the school. During the initial classes, it was possible, through some exercises, to identify that students were at level A2 according to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, Council of Europe, 2001). Thus, they were able to recognize sentences in relation to basic information such as personal, family, local, and shopping. Additionally, they were able to employ language in simple ideas and routines. In lay terms, they were able to use the target language for communicating and describing simple and immediate information based on their context.

Topics Organization

As a result of communicational practices of ninth graders' Facebook walls, we felt it was feasible to constitute the thematic development which was structured in our scope and

sequence (see Appendix 5). As a result, communicative objectives comprised students' daily life such as childhood activities, parties, music, and interpersonal relationships. At the same time, these communicative topics were accompanied by the objectives, the target language, tasks, outcomes, and learning strategies (see Appendix 2).

The Task-Based Approach Development

The TBA (task-based approach) is based on sound theoretical foundations which take into account the need for authentic communication. In this sense, the main advantages of TBA are that language is used for a genuine purpose that focuses on meaning where real communication should take place.

According to Willis (1996, p. 183), a task is "an activity where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome." In other words, this is the product of a planned process or a completed piece of work which is carried out as the result of processing or understanding language more communicatively. Although tasks are similar to exercises, it is worth mentioning that their outcomes are nonlinguistic ones. They focus on meaning rather than only on form. Moreover, the dimensions of a task are given in terms of language, procedure, learners, and the learning process.

Likewise, there are three key principles underlying tasks. The first is the authenticity by which the student encounters authentic language items. The second one is the form-function principle that is connected to the importance given to language use and meaning in conjunction to form. Finally, the task dependency principle explains how the instructional sequence should suggest a direct relation among tasks.

Class Structure and Activities

Inside this course, there was a particular class structure that followed the stages in the task-based approach with certain adjustments due to the technological means employed e.g., the use of videos on the pre task stage or uploading messages in Facebook to complete the task cycle. Simultaneously, ninth graders' roles are explained in the next lines by taking into account two kinds of practices, namely, the ones happening *inside the classroom* and the ones *outside the classroom*.

Inside the classroom. This stage embraced interactions among students and teachers inside the classroom and incorporated the *Pre-task*, *Language Focus,* and the *Task* stages.

Pre-task. Along this stage, the teacher introduced and defined the topic; meanwhile, learners engaged in activities that helped them to recall words and phrases which were useful during the main task or, they were presented new words and phrases that were essential to it. In this manner, this stage may be an essential one as it contextualized

learners. In other words, the topic and the task to be developed were introduced. At this point, Willis (1996, p. 23) claimed that the teacher as the facilitator "explores the topic with the group and highlights useful words and phrases." As some illustrations on how we as teachers led this pre-task level, students were able to watch video clips or listen to video songs from YouTube and complete top down and bottom up tasks, such as cloze tests and round table activities.

Language focus. In this part of the class, an inductive approach to English grammar teaching was followed. This approach to grammar is founded on the organic metaphor represented by a garden in which the differences between flowers in terms of growth portray the dynamic processes behind language acquisition. As a consequence, the connection among form and function appeared as a need since formal structures were considered to communicate meaning. That is why this inductive mode of grammar teaching is also seen as having a focus on form that occurs when teachers follow a task-based syllabus, but it focuses learners' attention on specific linguistic properties in the course of carrying out communicative activities. In other words, grammar was presented in context during this intervention.

The task "Task Cycle." Here, the learners performed the task (typically a reading, listening, speaking, or a problem-solving activity) in pairs or small groups. They then prepared a written or oral report for the whole class on how they did the task and what conclusions they reached.

Outside the classroom. Here students followed a set of activities based on the preceding tasks (Inside the classroom). In this sense, complementary academic activities were held outside the classroom to stimulate what was learnt in the class. It was then the way to generate a structure for scaffolding students' learning through meaningful activities following the lesson topics and activities. The outside learning times were composed of the prewriting and writing stages.

Taking into consideration that the writing skill has been understood as a problem solving activity (cognitive perspective) and a social process (sociocultural perspective) in which the genre approach has come into view, we see it is possible to assert that this language ability might be a complex one. In this way, language usage and understanding emerged in a situated context where the participants got involved through their capacity of knowing the "what" and "how" concerning underlying language tasks in everyday life. For that reason, writing needed to be comprehended considering the process and the product.

Prewriting activity. The prewriting activity in this pedagogical intervention was based on three relevant elements: videos, songs, and expressions in context. They moreover worked with this language as a scaffold process; first, they started to understand and use it in the class, then they employed it in an expansion activity.

Writing activity. This activity corresponded to the core of the class as it synthesized what had been discussed and learnt in it. The main purpose was to promote our students' process of writing while helping them to progress in their ability to support their opinions and ideas. Thus, a certain topic or situation was suggested or posed in the class to study and take a stand on through a text using the expressions highlighted. So students were asked to develop a range of drafts to be uploaded in Facebook messages. According to the topic, students wrote and answered questions by utilizing the target language. As a consequence, in this communicational space students were able to enhance their writing proficiency.

Activities and Materials

During this implementation, diverse materials were designed and adapted by teachers. In this respect, we employed a number of resources in order to carry out the classes, namely, posters, online flash cards, conversation models, worksheets, and videos in web sites, such as Facebook. Consequently, each kind of material, either authentic or adapted, was considered in consonance with class objectives. Concerning activities, we proposed communicative games such as role plays and conversations which provided chances for students to employ the English language. In this account, the criteria for selecting the activities were the following:

- Activities needed to be coherent to the main function aimed at and the topics to be approached in each class.
- Activities constituted an integrated manner to provide the information, that is, involving different channels of communication and formats such as those in media (songs, videos).
- All activities were required to connect what was practiced inside the class to what was done outside the class by the communicative function, the conversational strategy, the communicative and linguistic topics, or the vocabulary targets.
- Although cultural aspects were key throughout the whole development of the Didactic Unit lessons, these were necessarily introduced in warm-up activities and pre-tasks in the form of cultural details or idiomatic expressions for students to discuss and use in the rest of their activities, such as the main task.
- Also, activities were designed so as to assist pupils at the beginning and monitor their follow-up performance; therefore, activities were opportunities for students to use the language as independent learners with given roles.
- Activities in the form of main tasks needed to allow outcomes as a result of interaction. For that reason, tasks were suggested as activities to be completed in groups or pairs.

- Consensus and exchange of opinions or perceptions among students were other essential aspects involved in tasks, thus it was suggested that the results of the activities be shared or socialized with the whole class.
- Activities called for posing questions and employing visual hints in order to stimulate students' responses.

Activities Sequence

In the main, activities carried out in this intervention were sequenced in a scaffolding manner within every lesson by linking inside and outside classwork. Firstly, pre-tasks activities came up as involving the discussion on video clips and idiomatic expressions or vocabulary useful for the main outside and inside tasks fulfillment. At this point, teachers uploaded online flashcards (videos) in advance and students were able to get acquainted with the general topic of the class before starting the lesson. Students were also allowed to post comments and questions if any and talk about them at this class stage. Subsequently, conversation models were introduced in the class for students to attain their linguistic goal. In this way, pupils were asked to work in pairs to perform the conversation together and identify expressions connected to the linguistic topic for giving additional examples to their partners. After that, teachers explained the process of doing the inside class-task, affording an example for students to consider. These group tasks were concerned with surveys, worksheets, interviews, or alternative conversational models to be shared with the class as a whole. And finally, teachers posed a question related to the main conversation topic in order for students to sketch their written answer in the class and finish it outside, to lastly upload the final version to the Facebook account.

Criteria for Evaluation

The evaluation during the course took place inside and outside the classroom. The former embraced both the process and result. In this regard, the former was composed of the agenda or students' record of the class, class tasks, book activities, homework, Face-home tasks and participation, while the results had to do with students' scores on quizzes and final tests (see Appendix 3).

Results

Accomplishing the Didactic Unit

Bearing in mind students' responses recorded in our field notes while piloting one of the lessons of the Didactic Unit, we made modifications in the unit. Since students seemed to call

for a preparation to the whole unit for them to obtain an idea about what they were going to learn, prior knowledge stimulation was then a priority in order to activate earlier schemes and fulfill meaningful learning. In this fashion, students would have the possibility to equip themselves with enough experiential material to solve feasible problems during the learning process.

On the other hand, we observed that music was an essential component in students' entertainment discourses. Specifically, reggaeton and pop music were their most appealing music genres. Despite the fact that diverse songs were chosen because of students' interests in this type of music, some of them seemed to be apathetic to their classmates' taste during the piloting stage. Consequently, there was a discussion with students for making a decision concerning preferred musical styles, concluding that Juanes, Shakira (pop music) and J Balvin (reggaeton) were above all the students' favorite artists. Thus, the didactic unit met students' needs as involving their *taste* in different areas, such as music (Bourdieu, 1984).

Digital Book: Diverface

Having designed the different components of the didactic unit, we created a unit from the digital book: *Diverface*. This entailed distinct ninth graders' communication and interpersonal needs through multimodal tasks in five lessons. The different aspects of *Diverface* can be found in a web site to be visited. The purpose of this website was to organize and display the diverse contents and activities so that they could be viewed, analyzed, used, and assessed by students (see Figure 1).

Furthermore, the Digital Unit goals were highly meaningful owing to their communicative dimension which may be perceived along the structure of the book. Simultaneously, these goals were fruitful due to the two competences that embraced students' communication and interpersonal needs, namely, the sociolinguistic and the strategic one. The former included the possibility for students to employ and reply to language suitably while considering the setting, the theme, and the kind of interaction with people. The latter allowed students' identification and repair of misunderstandings during conversations. In consequence, these communicative goals led to the achievement of a desirable outcome. Consequently, some students were discussing their performance while considering one of the unit goals, *Introduce the band of my dreams*, (see Figure 2).

Another aspect to point out is the Facebook-unit-project (see Figure 3). This project was aimed at elaborating an interview where students acted as their favorite singers. It also had six phases that evoked the different capabilities students had strengthened and developed throughout the unit. In this regard, students planned the script for the interview by taking into account aspects from the unit such as conversational strategies or useful expressions. Moreover, they used diverse technological devices to record and edit the video. Finally, they
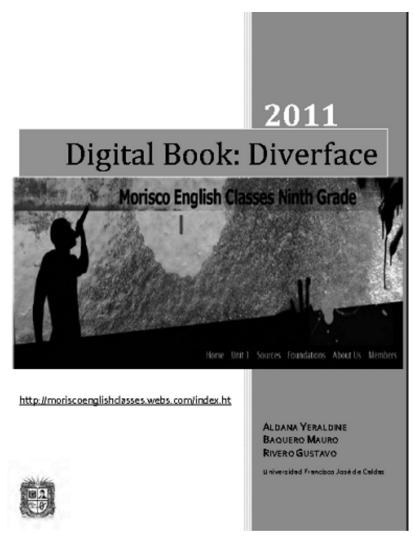
Figure 1. Front of Diverface

uploaded the interview to Facebook in order to create connections between the knowledge and experience shared during this process. Figure 4 is an excerpt from a script that some students developed during this process.

Figure 2. Students' Interaction

LESSON III

MY NEW WORDS

Click on the next link and see the Prezi presentation "*The freestyler of Bogotá*" to learn the new words. Then, answer the following questions.

The freestyler of Bogotá

PREZI LINK
http://prezi.com/gyou4fi6/mynewword/

About the story
1. What is the main idea?
2. Identify the beginning, middle and ending
3. Which are the characters?
4. Where does the story occur?
5. How would you end the story? Write your sentences in Future tense by using will.

About language
1. Identify sentences in Simple present, past and future.

facebook Unit-Project

Now, it's time to practice everything learnt during this amazing unit. In order to do it, record a video on an interview to an artist and consider the following suggestions:

1. Think of and choose an artist from your musical preference.
2. Prepare your script for the interview, including the conversational strategies, vocabulary, tenses and useful expressions in this unit.
3. Rehearse your performance helping your classmates (Peer collaboration).
4. Check your technological devices such as camera, microphone, computer and of course, your movie maker software.
5. Prepare your costumes and setting atmosphere.
6. Start to record your video, edit it and finally upload the video to the Facebook account.

Figure 3. Phases from the Facebook Unit-project

Figure 4. Student's Message

Diverface sections. Diverface is structured by the subsequent sections (see Appendix 5):

Topic exploration. This introductory section dealt firstly with a specific and familiar topic to students, namely, *Juanes* as a recognized and common singer among the target population of the Unit. Within this one, the overall objectives were presented so as to help

students get acquainted with the learning goals attainment and then promote self-monitoring. Afterwards, an exploration of the topic was suggested by exploiting photos that portrayed the abovementioned artist; furthermore, some questions were posed for students to discuss in groups. Similarly, the second part of this introduction corresponded to a celebrated musical event and involved the written and audio versions of the text as well as other questions to be addressed collectively (see Figure 5).

In lay terms, this first section incorporated diverse semiotic elements (Van Leuwen, 2005), such as visual and alphabetic ones, to support the multimodal feature of tasks. For that reason, images with different colors as well as texts with alternative fonts were employed.
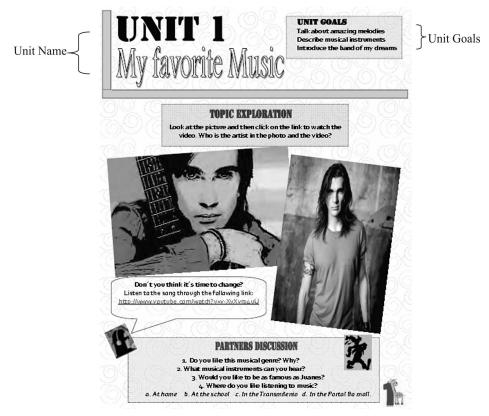

Figure 5. Unit 1, Introduction

Likewise, other channels to convey information to students, such as the written or the aural one (e.g., podcasting), were proposed.
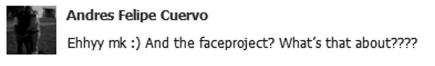
Learners and outcome. Every lesson was arranged around a communicative objective pertinent to the general task to be done. At his point, it is worth noticing how the goal was formulated in conjunction with an outcome in order to show students what they needed to perform with the purpose of arriving at an additional and general end. More specifically, the outcome pointed to what learners should do with the tasks product, so as to allow an alternative manner to visualize the message exchanged and constructed through the activity development.

Language focus and grammar practice. Diverface employed an inductive approach to English grammar teaching with the purpose of analyzing and making connections between specific samples of speech. Therefore, proposed activities helped students to communicate while understating the formal language properties. Likewise, teachers are encouraged to monitor and provide feedback during the communicative activities. Lastly, the other strong point was the target language recycled through different multimodal tasks; hence, the contextualized practice may increase comprehension of new language by integrating form, meaning, and use.

My new words. With respect to the third section, students were afforded a group of words as part of a specific semantic field through a flashcards video. In this manner, students had the possibility to draw connections between visual, alphabetic, and aural texts at the same time. Then a bottom-up exercise was designed to help students practice the vocabulary set with the book activities themselves. However, not only isolated lexical items, but also full expressions were introduced in the present section by means of different mind maps that mixed an array of semiotic features. That is why inferences on function and meaning of the expressions came from the relationship established among them through lines, pictures, and other extra-linguistic multimodal constituents.

Interacting with others and conversational strategies. Interactions make the target social language meaningful; therefore Diverface provided students with ideas and activities for interacting with other language learners. Likewise, the topic (Music) encouraged students' oral production since it was appealing for them. In this manner, students were able to monitor each other in their progress and build their confidence. Additionally, the conversational model helped students in both the development of a controlled communicative practice and the construction of the Facebook unit project. Also, Diverface promoted three conversational strategies, namely, *turn taking*, *open* and *close signals,* and *cooperation*. They were taken from conversational analysis maxims (Schegloff, 2007) to achieve the communicative goals of the unit. As a sample (Figure 6), it was evident that Diverface encouraged significant language so that students could cooperate with each other by considering real situations.

Materials and media. Web 2.0 played an essential role in multimodal tasks due to the fact that it successfully allowed the connection of knowledge within virtual spaces. Furthermore, webs 2.0 let students explore, examine and reflect on their personal interests through their virtual connections. In this way, students would be able to manage the target language effectively and efficiently in the information society; that is why distinct tasks also appeared in other virtual environments as *Facebook*, *YouTube*, *Podcast*, *Xmind,* and *Prezi*. In consequence, the main purpose in this kind of multimodal tasks was to recycle the target language in different virtual spaces with specific semiotic characteristics (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Students' Interaction

Wrap up and closed task. Considering the fact that we promoted English learning practices in and out of class, the Didactic Unit suggested both a wrap up activity and a closed task. The first one assimilated an activity for homework that stimulated students' creativity and imagination. The second one intended to provide the teacher instructional ideas as activities to be done at the beginning of the class apart from the book didactic Unit.

Assessment. Diverface also had the purpose of gathering information to help teachers and students reflect on their practices. Thus, Diverface suggested a self-assessment for students in which six aspects were considered; namely, *My Skills, My Duties, My Motivation, My Confidence, My Collaboration,* and a final one for students' opinion (see Appendix 2). Besides functioning as a complement to the class evaluation, these aspects regarded students' formative and attitudinal processes in constant evaluation to enhance teaching and learning performance.
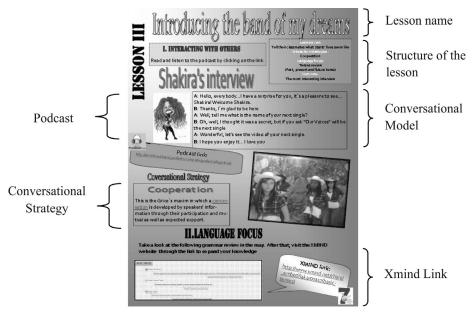

Figure 7. Lesson 3, Sample

Pedagogical Implications

As a result, teachers are challenged to acknowledge a new epistemological attitude in order to respond to an emerging mode of understanding the world and a different literacy

process. Since Web sites 2.0 allow students and teachers to read, produce, and handle multimodal hyper-discourses, amplifying their knowledge related to the design and management of this kind of texts, a multimodal literacy appears (Van Leeuwen, 2005). This means these participants can and need to learn how to interpret the multimodal arrangement of information while surfing through hypertexts in the web and specifically, social networks as Facebook. In view of that, students and teachers need to transform the learning and teaching processes towards a multimodal literacy.

As the communication gets faster, the learning process starts to take place as soon as possible in the multimodal literacy. Then, students' acquisition and development of knowledge seem to acquire a different amount of time they devote. Thus, the cognitive development and dynamics call for quick and effective information management and exchange, making the multimodal aspects from those systems of ideas meaningful.

Additionally, teachers are also required to face innovative challenges in the English class because of the necessity to create and unfold original lessons based on multimodal texts. Thus, the learning process put forward by teachers should be focused on combining meaningful non-virtual experiences and virtual ones for students, taking into consideration assigned contents. Under this perspective, teachers need to follow and define appropriate scaffolding in order to develop meta-cognitive strategies in students' reading and writing of multimodal texts. For example, teachers are able to apply some workshops about how learners can express themselves through computer-mediated language effectively, involving the *keyboard* commands that facilitate the process mentioned. Also, teachers are able to plan their classes similarly; joining, for example, writing tasks and podcast tasks or paper format (nonvirtual) tasks and computer based-material (virtual) tasks.

Conclusions

The design of this didactic unit with multimodal tasks based on connectivist principles provides a potential understanding to incorporate multimodal texts in digital instructional materials. In this manner, it is feasible that teachers construct learning experiences by "connecting specialized nodes or information sources" (Siemens, 2004, p. 51). Consequently, teachers must comprehend how to design, manipulate, and implement different modes of visual, sonorous, and written texts in their teaching practices i.e., teachers need to assimilate the promising benefits of multimodal literacy.

As presented, there is cohesiveness in the diverse multimodal tasks of the unit and the students' exposure to the target language. It is due to Diverface's entailment of distinct ninth graders' communication and interpersonal needs through these types of tasks which lead one to regard that designing this multimodal didactic unit was an integral process. Moreover,

Diverface encourages authentic communication inside a familiar environment, Facebook, which allows students to monitor themselves through these virtual connections.

Finally, despite the fact that this process embedded a dynamic way to foster teachers and students to work beyond the academic environment, we realized that the criteria by which students were evaluated had a traditional perspective. In other words, assessment and evaluation must be assumed by taking into account the varied characteristics of the multimodal texts. Hence, it is expected that teacher-researchers continue implementing multimodal tasks so that they can inquire into the criteria for evaluating under a multimodal literacy perspective and the limitless possibilities in the digital world.

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Appendix 1: Internauts Survey[1]

Web Sites Known by Students

Frequency of Facebook Use

5%

27%

59%

9%

- a. Every day
- b. Once a week
- c. Twice a week
- d. Never

---

1   This survey was conducted in the students' mother tongue (Spanish).

Appendix 2: Schedule of Instructional Implementation

Week	Class Date	Communi-cative Objective	Language	Task	Outcome	Learning strategy
05	07th Sept.	To talk about my childhood	To use past simple tense	To describe a memorable photograph	The funniest photo-graph	Imagery
06	14th Sept.	No class				
07	21st Sept.	To talk about unforgettable parties	To use past progressive and past simple	To perform a party event	The best actors	Organiza-tional planning
08	28th Sept.	To talk about amazing future sounds	To use the future tense with will	To create and sing a song about future events	The most original song	Organi-zational planning
09	05th Oct.	To talk about the band of my dreams	To review tenses (present, past, future)	To plan and perform a dialogue to interview a musical band	The most interes-ting musical band	Resourcing
10	12th Oct.	Week off				
11	19th Oct.	To talk about the ideal boyfriend and girlfriend	To use present perfect tense	To write a letter based on video "Signs"	The most creative letter	Analysis of prior knowledge

Appendix 3: Criteria for Evaluation Inside the Classroom

	Items	Description
Process	Agenda	Students will take notes about objectives of the class and the explanation, examples or any relevant information during the whole class.
	Task classes	Students will develop the task proposed in relation to the outcome.
	Book activities	Students will complete the activities assigned by teachers.
	Homework	Students will do the activities at home which were assigned in class.
	Face-home	Students will post a composition in Facebook messages. It was assigned in the class and should be developed at home.
	Participation	Students will properly participate based on class activities and instructions.
Results	Quizzes	Students will display their processes step by step learning English.
	Tests	Students will demonstrate their complete process by taking a test in accordance with their experience in the class.

Appendix 4: Self-Assessment

Colegio Morisco I.E.D.
NINTH GRADE

Wondering about Myself

Read the following statements and mark (X) according to what you think.

	Yes	No	Maybe / Sometimes
MY SKILLS			
I like to read.			
I think reading is important.			
I go to the library			
I like to write			
I think writing is important.			
I understand what my partners say in the English class.			
I understand what my teachers say in the English class.			
I can ask question in the English class.			
My partners understand what I tell them in the English class.			
MY DUTIES			
I am responsible.			
I do my homework.			
I hand in what I am asked to do.			
MY MOTIVATION			
I like to learn.			
I want to learn.			
I participate in class.			
MY CONFIDENCE			
I believe I can do it well in English.			
I can do things even if they are hard.			
I learn from my mistakes.			
MY COLLABORATION			
I help my partners when the need me.			
I share my things.			
I listen to my partners' ideas.			

What else can I say about my performance in the English class?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 5: Sample from the Scope and Sequence

Unit 1: My favorite music (3 weeks)	
Goal	**Learners talk about their favorite music**
Unit goals	• Talk about amazing melodies. • Describe musical instruments. • Introduce the band of my dreams.
Facebook-unit-project	
"Close to stars"	Learners record a video on an interview to an artist considering the next suggestions: 1. Think of and choose an artist from your musical preference. 2. Prepare your script for the interview, including the conversational strategies, vocabulary, tenses, and useful expressions in this unit. 3. Rehearse your performance helping your classmates (peer collaboration). 4. Check your technological devices such as camera, microphone, and computer and of course, your movie maker software. 5. Prepare your costumes and setting atmosphere. 6. Start to record your video, edit it and finally upload the video to the Facebook account.
Introduction: Meeting Juanes	
Topic exploration	**Partners' discussion**
Learners look at the video "El odio por amor" by Juanes and connecting it to the pictures, they identify the singer. (Materials and media: YouTube video)	Learners discuss general questions about music and the video

Lesson 1 (week I)				
Talking about amazing melodies				
Learners can	I. Interacting with others: "My musical likes"	II. My new words	III. Language focus	Materials and media
Talk about amazing melodies.	Learners read and listen to the podcast. Then they fill in the gaps from the conversation. (Materials and media: podcast link- http://yeraldinea ldana.podbean.c om/2011/11/23 /my-musical- likes/)	Classical, reggaeton, rock, Vallenato, rap, pop, salsa. Learners see the video to learn the new words. (Materials and media: flashcards video- http://www.youtu be.com/watch?v= TqQciYv73bw)	Learners read the explanation on the present simple tense in the map. (Materials and media: XMIND link: http://www.xmind .net/share/_embe d/lakarosa17/simp le-present-1/) - Learners go to our webs site MoriscoEnglishclas ses and follow this path to practice the simple present tense in the web sites suggested. Unit Þ lesson I Þ Language focus (Materials and media: webs.com- http://moriscoengl ishclasses.webs.co m/index.htm	1. podcast link- http://yeraldineald ana.podbean.com/ 2011/11/23/my-m usical- likes/) 2. Flash cards video: http://www.youtu be.com/watch? v=TqQciYv73bw 3. XMIND link: http://www.xmind .net/share/_embed /lakarosa17/simple -present-1/ 4. Web - MoriscoEnglishclas ses – http://moriscoengl ishclasses.webs.co m/index.htm 5. Digital book: Diverface
Outcome	Conversational strategies	Vocabulary practice	Grammar practice	

The most interesting musical style.	Turn taking- This term refers to the way in which a conversation normally takes place or how speakers can participate in it.	Learners complete the sentences in the book by using the new vocabulary about musical styles and take into account the first letters provided before the blanks. (Materials and media: Digital book, pg. 4)	Learners answer the questions by using the simple present tense. (Materials and media: Digital book)	
		Useful expressions	**Wrap up activity**	
		I don't like, I can't stand, I listen to, I like, I hate, I prefer, I love. (Materials and media: XMIND link-http://www.xmind.net/share/lakarosa17/useful-expressions/)	Learners compose their own song. They think of a topic for a song from the musical style they like and write one stanza. Outcome: the funniest lyrics	
Closed task (In class)	Musical style crossword	Learners receive a crossword about musical styles and solve it in pairs. (Materials: Dictionary)		