

Chapter 50

Multimodal Narratives and iPad in Second Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The present study analyses a group of students' multimodal productions who are learning a second language within a cooperative learning context using the iPad in a 1:1 format. They turn the act of creating free narrative written texts into a complex communicative process where two modes of representation are employed: written text and still images. These narratives become documents where the language of words and images are interrelated, generating production and communicative processes which should be understood in their double dimension: a) analyse the value the students give to the images in their compositions; and b) taking the narrative as an integrated text, where the systems of representation interact. Examples of experiences using mobile technologies studying the processes of learning generated in school contexts are still scarce. It is important to analyse didactic proposals which incorporate formative tasks in the classroom using these technologies, such as this case.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile technologies provide an excellent opportunity for teaching and learning. Technology, however, does not generate any change by itself (Zhao & Lai, 2005) and it should be properly integrated into the syllabus in order to promote meaningful learning experiences. From this assumption, it is obvious the need to explore how to incorporate them into the classroom in order to favour learning. Under this premise, the authors investigate how the students work with the iPad in cooperative learning teams. The piece of research presented here was carried out during the academic years 2013/15 in the EFL classroom in two K9 and K10 classrooms at Colegio LaSalle-Maravillas, a private institution in Madrid (Spain). The initial learning task demanded the students to produce free narrative short stories working in cooperative

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-1757-4.ch050

learning teams. As a result, the students produce free narrative short stories where images and written text turn them into multimodal narratives. The students transform narrative written texts into a complex communicative process when using still images that complement their pieces of writing, generating what they call 'e-books'. At the same time, and completely voluntarily, they create audio-visual narratives –trailers¹– from their e-books, in a way that promotes their stories.

Before presenting the data from the current study, the most relevant pieces of research on the use of mobile technologies in teaching and learning (M-Learning henceforth) will be reviewed, particularly those analysing the use of technological resources in second language teaching. Next, and in order to contextualize the use of the iPad in secondary education in Spain, the authors will discuss the problems which Spanish schools are facing nowadays with regards to the use of mobile technologies in the classroom. Data pertaining to the introduction of mobile technologies in Spanish households and the use that children and youngsters are making of them will be studied. Our aim here is to provide the readers with a global framework from the data provided by the National Institute for Statistics (INE). The above-mentioned sections offer the readers data and reflexions to draw their attention to the needs and possibilities to explore the new ways of teaching we have within our reach.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The study is based on two lines of evidence. The first concerns the current research on the integration of mobile devices in teaching and learning. I will review the research related to the integration of mobile devices in formal contexts that allow real time communication between students, teachers and families beyond the classroom walls. The second concerns the creation of communicative written tasks using technological devices in second and third language acquisition in cooperative learning (CL) contexts.

According to White, Booker, Carter, and Martin (2011), M-learning goes beyond the perception of the classroom as the only place for learning and communicating. M-learning enables the students to collaborate and participate in meaningful learning experiences anytime and anywhere. As White et al. (2011) stated, mobile devices fulfil four main categories of practice in the study of mathematics, these are: data capturing and collecting; communicating and collaborating; viewing and consuming; and designing and creating. The study is relevant to our case because it introduces a set of practices which allow the students to understand how using the iPad in an informal way can be later put to practice in a formal classroom setting, i.e. instructing the students on taking pictures of their daily lives and using them as classroom material. In the same manner, both Gliksman (2011) and Liestol (2011) emphasized the implications generated by the use of mobile devices in the students' learning processes and advocated the situated and connected character of learning with the students' reality and social context. The results of their studies highlighted the value of mobile devices to empower motivation and interest towards shared learning. Sharples, Taylor, and Vavuola (2005) stated that the use of mobile devices for learning enables a shared ubiquity among students situated in different places and at different times; as well as a shared construction of knowledge by means of learning tasks included in the community as an integral part of it. For Sharples et al. (2005), the most prominent outcomes are that mobile devices lead the students to link events, experiences and ways of communication which turn learning into a vivid experience, focused on the students themselves and their own knowledge. The study of Kim, Buckner, Kim, Makany, Taleja & Parikh (2012) is particularly relevant to our study since these authors observed

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