

El desarrollo de la comunicación oral en lenguas extranjeras con empleo de los entornos virtuales de enseñanza- aprendizaje

The development of oral communication in foreign languages with the use of virtual teaching-learning environments

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RESUMEN: Uno de los problemas que se identifica en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje de la comunicación oral en lenguas extranjeras mediada por las tecnologías, es la insuficiencia en las mediaciones tecno-didácticas. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo fundamentar epistemológicamente el referido proceso mediado por los entornos virtuales de enseñanza-aprendizaje. Para ello se emplearon métodos, tales como, el análisis-síntesis y el análisis documental. Los resultados obtenidos evidencian la importancia del empleo de estas plataformas de aprendizaje en línea para potenciar la comunicación oral en lenguas extranjeras, para la cual, la interactividad, la flexibilidad y los aspectos interculturales devienen condiciones indispensables.

Palabras clave: Comunicación oral; Entornos virtuales de enseñanza-aprendizaje; Interculturalidad; Mediación didáctica virtual

ABSTRACT: One of the problems identified in the teaching-learning process of oral communication mediated by technologies is insufficiencies in tecno-didactic mediations. The following article is intended to explore the epistemological foundations involved in the teaching learning process of oral communication with the use of virtual teaching-learning environments. The methods used included analysis-synthesis and documentary analysis. The results obtained evidence the importance of using these online learning management systems to improve oral skills in foreign languages, where interactivity, flexibility and intercultural backgrounds are essential.

Keywords: Oral communication; Virtual teaching-learning environments; Intercultural background; Virtual didactic mediation

Introduction

The informatization of Cuban society and the development of communicative competence in foreign languages are challenges for the country. These challenges condition the social task that the

Cuban society makes to the science of education, hence, the University of Military Sciences of Santiago de Cuba in total connection with the educational policy of the state, establishes as research priorities, the virtualization of the formative processes and the development of skills in foreign languages. From this perspective, a teaching-learning process of foreign languages is implemented, which implies the management and efficient use of linguistic, personal, interactive, professional and technological resources that allow understanding information in the foreign language, processing it and expressing it in a dialogued and monologued form, in relation to topics of their academic and professional activity that contribute to the integral configuration of the personality of the military specialists who graduate from higher level careers. However, it is necessary a deep analysis, not only of the conceptions, but also of the real conditions and new procedures and tendencies of how to implement and execute this process of transformations to contribute to guarantee the effectiveness of the teaching of foreign languages in the formation of military professionals from oral communication.

The incorporation of ICT in education has become a process whose implication goes far beyond the technological tools that make up the educational environment, we speak of a didactic construction and how to build and consolidate meaningful learning based on technology, and strictly pedagogically we speak of the use of technology in education (Díaz-Barriga, 2013).

Virtual Learning Environments offer a modern work space that enables feedback and the expansion of the limits of time and space of the classroom, thus favoring the development of oral communication in foreign languages, therefore, virtual learning environments (VLE), are one of those advanced and reference options that offer a wide range of educational resources and learning activities that stimulate and increase the interest of students by the possibilities offered to include videos, images, animations and synchronous and asynchronous interactions.

The most widely used virtual environment worldwide is Moodle, a versatile, flexible, secure, easy-to-use manager with an innovative essence that favors student-teacher interaction, greatly enhancing the teaching-learning process by developing productive and receptive skills (Acar & Kayaoglu, 2020). This environment incorporates a range of didactic tools and applications for learning English, developing activities for comprehension and practice through listening and pronouncing the language, which positively influences the attitude of students to learn by interacting on technological platforms through blogs, forums, WhatsApp chats, etc. (García-Martínez, 2020).

From considering the mastery of a foreign language as strategic and taking into account the potentialities offered by the use of EVEA for the development of communicative competences in foreign languages, an initial diagnosis is carried out to monitor the development of the referred process, with the aim of having a closer approach to it and among the manifestations revealed, are:

- Scarce use of communicative resources in the virtual environment to enhance the development of oral skills, which translates into poor levels of communicative competence.
- Insufficient student-teacher and student-student communicative interaction in the educational platforms, which allows the development of oral communicative competence in foreign languages.
- Educational technological resources do not provide feedback in the development of oral skills in terms of professional activity.

From the factual diagnosis carried out, the following causes could be identified:

- Insufficient didactic treatment to oral communication in foreign languages in the EVEA, which does not argue, sufficiently, the coherent articulation of procedures to be used from oral interaction.
- Limited didactic conception to reconstruct a teaching-learning process that takes into account the potentialities of the EVEA for the development of oral communication in foreign languages.

Likewise, the need for an integrated didactic reinterpretation of the foreign language from oral communication with the use of EVEA is recognized, based on the epistemological foundation of this process, which is the objective of this article.

Development

The virtual Teaching-Learning Process (PEA) of oral communication in English becomes a fundamental category, however, building a theoretical foundation about the virtual teaching-learning process of oral communication in foreign languages, for the training of military professionals, has been a difficult task, since there is not a sufficiently developed theoretical body in this regard. This implies, in the first instance, resorting to a conceptual diversity from oral communication.

Communication, which began at the very dawn of human existence, became a necessary element for man as it emerged and became part of his social relations. Sanchez, Vazquez, Hernández, Iosvani (2006)

The word communication comes from the Latin *communicatio*, communicationis, which, in turn, derives from the Latin verb *communicare*, which means to share, to exchange something, to put in common. Communication, in this sense, is the action of sharing with others what we think, believe or feel, and also, therefore, of transmitting or disseminating information or messages (Coelho, n. d.).

Hernández, Mendoy, Garay (2006), define communication as a process of social interaction of verbal or nonverbal character, with the intention of transmission and that can influence, with or without intention, the behavior of the people who are in the coverage of such emission.

In this way, we share the concept of oral communication of the researcher Guzmán (2021) who frames it on the basis of recognizing that auditory and oral skills are interrelated and trigger processes that are linked - among others - to the acquisition of a foreign language. For this reason, language teachers should pay special attention to the different scenarios and conditions that favor and contribute to the development of learners' oral communication.

For the present research, we also recognize Fonseca *et al.* (2000) approach in recognizing that “oral communication implies sharing something of ourselves, establishing a relationship with the other, transmitting a message with intention, while oral expression implies mastering the linguistic code, the use of paralinguistic resources (intonation, volume, rhythm, etc.) and nonverbal resources (gestures, looks, postures, etc.) as well as adapting to the communicative context and the receiver”. The definition analyzed shows us how oral communication and oral expression are related concepts, but not identical, the first has to do with the process of exchanging information, ideas, feelings and emotions through the use of the spoken word and the second refers to the ability to produce an oral discourse with coherence, correct pronunciation, intonation in correspondence with the author's purpose.

Another obligatory reference in this research is the Council of Europe (2020), an international standard that refers to oral communication as one of the 4 basic competencies in language learning, together with oral comprehension, written comprehension, and written expression. It recognizes it as the ability of individuals to communicate effectively and comprehensibly in everyday and professional situations, both spontaneous and prepared, for which it defines different levels. The

research assumes the three types of fundamental activities that take place within the oral communication process established by this international standard: oral comprehension, oral expression and oral interaction, understood as: oral comprehension, oral expression and oral interaction:

Listening comprehension: The ability to understand spoken language. Involves listening to and processing information conveyed through conversations, speeches, recordings, etc. In which listeners must identify words, interpret meanings, recognize intonation, and understand context. It is essential for following instructions, participating in dialogues and absorbing oral knowledge.

Speaking: The active production of verbal discourse. Speakers use words, phrases, and grammatical structures to communicate their ideas. Pronunciation, intonation, and fluency are important aspects of speaking. It is crucial for conversing, presenting information, telling stories and expressing opinions.

Oral interaction: Reciprocal communication between two or more people. It involves participating in conversations, debates, interviews, etc., interlocutors must listen actively, respond, ask questions and adapt to the context, and is essential for effective communication in social and professional situations.

In turn, authors who recognize technologies within the oral communication process as mediators of the same, highlighting elements related to digital oral interaction from virtual communities, among them: Piñuel (2022) when defining oral communication as, “the social action of producing, transmitting and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages that takes place in situations of face-to-face interaction or mediated by technological devices and that aims to generate understanding, influence or understanding” (p. 27) and Serafini (2022) and Serafini (2022) when defining oral communication as, “the social action of producing, transmitting and receiving verbal and nonverbal messages that takes place in situations of face-to-face interaction or mediated by technological devices and that aims to generate understanding, influence or comprehension” (p. 27) and Serafini (2022) who considers that “oral communication is enriched by the use of digital technologies that allow creating and sharing multimedia content, interacting with different audiences and participating in virtual communities”.

Within this group also stand out those who use the term virtual oral communication as a form of information exchange through digital media that use spoken language as the main resource, recognizing for the research their contributions related to presentiality, the use of technological

tools to promote interaction and the possibilities of synchronous and asynchronous activities to contribute to the development of oral communication, among these authors are included:

Orihuela (2023) who states that, “Virtual oral communication is that which occurs between people who are in different places and who use technological devices to allow them to speak and listen in real time without the need to see each other”. Sánchez (2015) for whom “Virtual oral communication is that which is carried out through the use of technological tools that enable synchronous interaction between interlocutors, through voice and sound, without the physical presence of the same” and Gutiérrez (2016) who defines it from recognizing it as a type of computer-mediated communication characterized by the transmission and reception of oral messages through digital platforms that facilitate synchronous or asynchronous communication between participants.

The conceptual analysis of oral communication in foreign languages and its relationship with technologies, allows combining both categories to support the object under investigation in greater depth, identifying that it has been addressed by several authors, who have defined its components and characteristics highlighting the dynamism, interactivity and collaborative relationships necessary for oral communication to develop in virtuality, as well as, the understanding and transmission of messages using methodological and didactic strategies mediated by the use of technologies, which become important references to define the specific process under investigation, among them:

Roman (2017) considers that, the virtual Teaching-Learning Process of oral communication in English is “a dynamic, interactive and collaborative process that takes place in an EVEA, where the teacher and the student assume active and participatory roles and where various technological tools are used to facilitate oral communication in English. According to Mendoza (2021) the virtual PEA of oral communication in English constitutes “the set of actions that are carried out in a virtual environment in order to develop the ability to produce and understand oral messages in English, through the use of digital resources and tools that allow synchronous and asynchronous interaction among participants.

Matute, Azahares, Ferrer, García & Ramírez (2013) define it as “the process by which speaking and listening skills are strengthened in the English language, through the use of methodological and didactic strategies that are supported by the use of information and communication technologies, and that are adapted to the characteristics and needs of students in the virtual context”.

The review of the literature on the subject and the particularities of the context in which the research is carried out, highlight among the educational technologies, the use of Virtual Teaching-Learning Environments (VLE) in the training processes in higher education, hence, as a didactic means and in the dynamics of the referred process, it is necessary to deepen in these platforms and their use for educational purposes.

The massification of computers and the role of the Internet in the current development of society mark the emergence of new educational paradigms that include the use of these tools to support or complement the training process. The integration of these two computer applications allows the creation of interactive spaces on which different didactic strategies can be applied according to the educational models. These spaces, called Virtual Teaching-Learning Environments (EVEA) or Virtual Learning Environments (AVA), can be defined as a virtual social environment that applies alternative learning strategies through the Internet. (Delgado & Solano, 2009)

The platforms in which Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) are inserted, commonly known as LMS (Learning Management System), are computer systems that allow the design and organization of these for their use in educational contexts.

Several authors have defined EVEAs in terms of complex digital spaces, computer application, organization of socio-technical educational character, online learning platforms, learning management system, alternatives in teaching, training spaces and communication spaces, among them, Núñez (2011); Silva (2017); Herrera (2017); Rincón (2018, p. 8); Villacís (2021, p. 695); Guerra (2020, p. 17); Guevara (2021, p. 11); Rodríguez, Sánchez (2017).

The conceptual analysis of these definitions and their characteristics allows us to recognize the following distinctive features of virtual teaching-learning environments that corroborate the pedagogical, technological and didactic value of this option to provide solutions to insufficiencies in the development of skills and that constitute references for research.

- They constitute spaces that enable collaborative and cooperative learning.
- Promote and facilitate self-regulation and self-management of learning.
- Facilitate the exchange and updating of information.
- They constitute a way of appropriating knowledge and developing skills that requires the valuation of the specificities of the students to whom it is addressed.

- Their design and conception must be conceived from the technological, pedagogical and didactic points of view in order to achieve the desired dynamics between the components of the Teaching and Learning Process.
- They constitute innovative, flexible and developmental options.

Two fundamental roles stand out: that of the teachers, as organizers of pedagogically intended content, and that of the students as transformers of the knowledge to which they will have access in terms of their personal and professional development.

Systems of procedures and specific didactic models conceived from the sciences, which take into account the particularities of students and technological resources available in universities, are required to implement these advanced options with efficient results.

The considerations of (Pardo, 2004) regarding the interactivity category as the basis of any process supported by ICT and the flexibility dimension as the quality of any training process to adapt to the individual needs of the subjects through the use of technologies are essential technological-didactic references to be taken into account.

Interactivity described by the author as, “the individual interaction of the students with the content and learning resources, and the social interaction of the student with the teacher, other students, and other actors in the process, either symmetrically where they act on equal terms, or complementary, where some complement others, at any time and from any place, mediated by the types of communication (synchronous - asynchronous), giving rise to a presence of another type or ‘virtual’ presence.

The flexibility dimension: Understood as “the diversity of alternatives, ways and possibilities, which means, variety of technologies, systems, services, resources, methodologies, tools (derived from the constant renewal of knowledge) that the subject can select and use according to its needs, interests and possibilities to face any problem”.

And the category virtual didactic mediation of Molina (2015) as the set of interactions that are established in the EVEA (subject-subject; subject-content-didactic-technological resource and between the latter) in order to facilitate the formative process in conditions of virtuality, energized by procedures used by the teacher to make apprehensible the contents and professional situations with which the student interacts in the EVEA.

On the other hand, Fainholc (2004) also presents a robust conceptual framework on didactic mediation that includes dimensions such as communication, interaction and context. His work

highlights the importance of creating learning environments that favor the inclusion and active participation of all students. Fainholc argues that virtual didactic mediation should consider not only technological aspects, but also pedagogical and psychological factors that facilitate learning. Fainholc's approach is comprehensive, which represents a strength in the understanding of virtual didactic mediation.

Both authors, Molina and Fainholc, offer valuable perspectives on virtual didactic mediation. While Molina emphasizes the role of the teacher as facilitator and promoter of learner autonomy, Fainholc provides a broader framework that includes communicative and contextual dimensions.

Recent studies (such as those by Salmon, 2021 and González, 2022) emphasize that virtual didactic mediation not only focuses on knowledge transfer, but also on building a space for interaction that promotes collaborative learning. This approach recognizes the importance of the learning community and peer interaction, as opposed to a purely instructor-student model.

Teaching foreign languages in an intercultural context offers a unique space for the discovery and exploration of different ways of life, values and beliefs. The use of Virtual Teaching-Learning Spaces (VLSS) in this setting can facilitate interactions that transcend geographical barriers, although it also presents particular challenges, especially when applied to students from the same culture. Foreign language teaching should include not only grammar and vocabulary, but also the development of intercultural competencies. This involves making students aware of cultural variations within their own environment and preparing them to interact with people from different backgrounds (Lopez, 2023). Dialogue and discussion of cultural issues can be powerful tools for promoting openness and critical awareness.

Interculturality is an essential component in foreign language teaching-learning, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Through the use of EVEA, it is possible to promote a deeper understanding of one's own culture and to develop intercultural competencies that prepare students to interact in a diverse world. However, for language teaching to be truly effective and meaningful, educators need to design activities that challenge perceptions and foster mutual respect. Only in this way can we develop critical and responsible global citizens.

Conclusions

The development of oral communication in foreign languages through virtual teaching-learning environments is a constantly evolving phenomenon. Digital platforms offer a space conducive to interaction and collaborative learning, resulting in increased motivation and language proficiency

among learners. However, it is crucial to address the challenges associated with the intercultural aspects involved in the process, as well as their implementation to maximize their educational potential. The combination of active methodologies and appropriate technologies can transform foreign language teaching, making oral communication an accessible and effective skill for all learners.

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