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CARACTERES

Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

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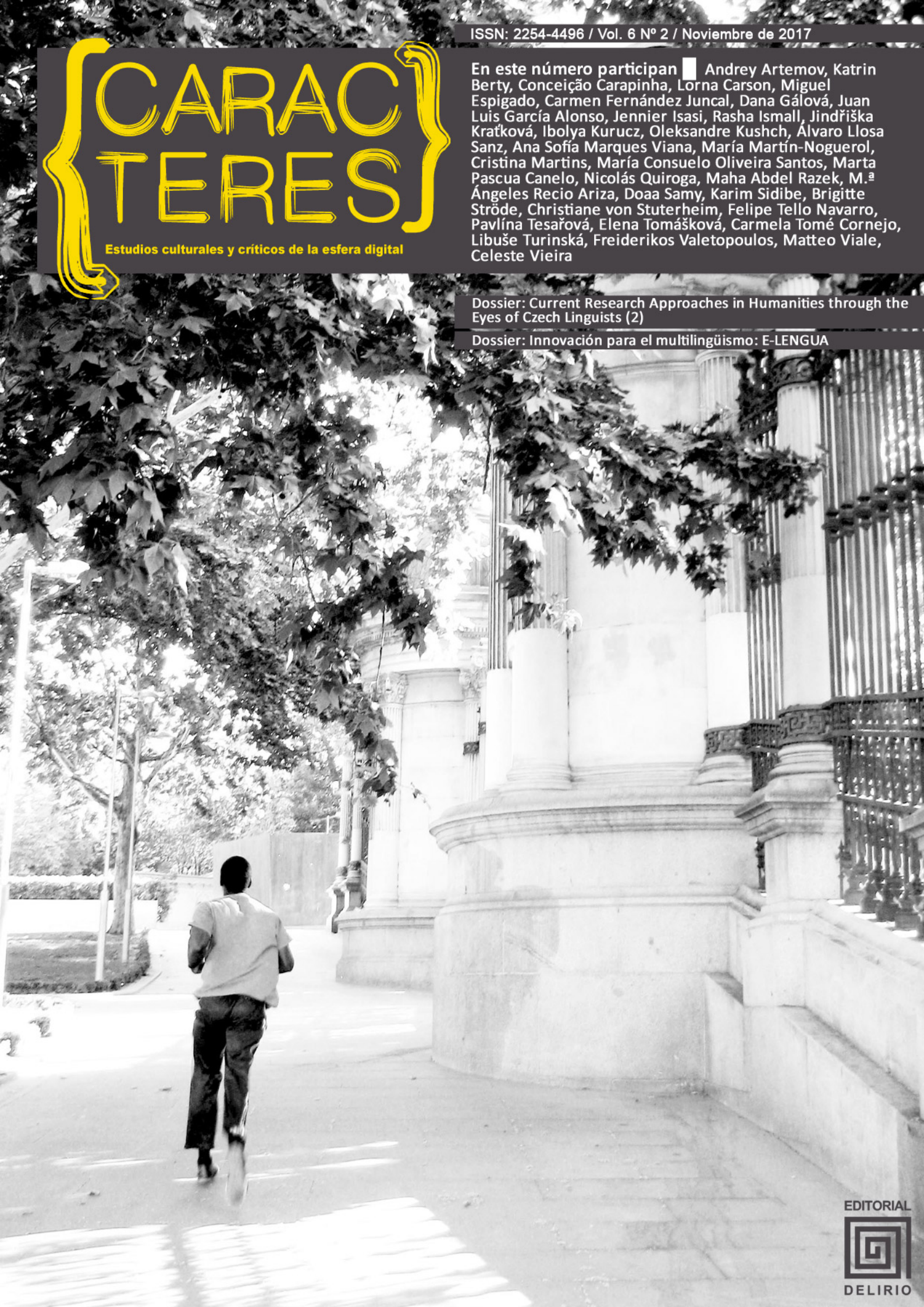

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DOSSIER: INNOVACIÓN PARA EL MULTILINGÜISMO: E-LENGUA

Coord. Carmen Fernández Juncal

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HOW TO IMPROVE COLLABORATION AND INTERACTION IN THE TEACHING OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE BY INCLUDING ICTS

CÓMO MEJORAR LA COLABORACIÓN E INTERACCIÓN EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS MEDIANTE LA INTRODUCCIÓN DE LAS TIC

FREIDERIKOS VALETOPOULOS
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ARTÍCULO RECIBIDO: 13-10-2017 | ARTÍCULO ACEPTADO: 6-11-2017

RESUMEN:
La presencia de los móviles ha abierto nuevas perspectivas para el aprendizaje autónomo, sobre todo en el marco de la enseñanza-aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. El uso de estos dispositivos en la educación implica dos cambios principales: primero, la accesibilidad a la tecnología; segundo, la metodología educativa. En este artículo el segundo aspecto relativo a la metodología educativa se explora a través de los resultados de un experimento que ha evidenciado determinadas ventajas, como el desarrollo de estrategias socioafectivas, pero también el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas a través de la integración del aspecto no verbal y la autocorrección.

ABSTRACT:
The spread of mobile phones opened up new perspectives for autonomous learning, particularly within the frame of teaching and learning a foreign language. The use of this device in education involves two major challenges: the first is accessibility to technology and the second teaching methodology. In the context of this article, the second aspect concerning teaching methodology will be explored through the results of an experiment, which highlighted certain advantages such as the development of socio-affective strategies but also the development of communicative competence through the integration of the non-verbal aspect and self-correction.

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PALABRAS CLAVE:
Teléfonos móviles, estrategias socioafectivas, estrategias metacognitivas, interacciones orales, francés como lengua extranjera

KEYWORDS:
Mobile phones, socio-affective strategies, meta-cognitive strategies, oral interactions, French as a foreign language

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1. Introduction[1]

Within the frame of the project *E-Learning Novelties towards the Goal of a Universal Acquisition of Foreign and Second Languages* [E-LENGUA] under the Erasmus+ programme (2015-1-ES01-KA203-015743), the University of Poitiers is in charge of the second challenge, which focuses on collaboration and interaction in the teaching of a foreign language. More precisely, the aim of this challenge is to explore how the use of ICTs in Language Teaching can improve collaboration and interaction in the teaching of a foreign language, both in oral and in written skills. These interactions can be multidirectional: learner to learner and learner to teacher. Two other aspects, learners' self-observation and interaction with native speakers in an authentic language use, could also be added.

In order to improve collaboration and interaction, different tools can be used such as Wikis or collaborative software (Zheng, Niiya and Warschauer, 2015), blogs (Blackstone, Spiri and Naganuma, 2007), social networks (Blattner and Lomicka, 2012), video-games (Gee, 2005; Reinders, 2012), etc. (for a general survey Thomas, 2009; Ryu and Parsons, 2009). In the framework of this specific challenge, three different practices were studied: 1. the use of mobile phones in the classroom and in other action-oriented tasks, 2. the use of a university collaborative platform and 3. the use of a massive open online course.

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[1] I would like to thank Cristina Aruffo Alonso and Daniel Silva for their thorough reading of the text. I would like also to express my gratitude to Christine Chanudet for her participation in this project.

During the first stage of the experiment, which will be presented in this paper, use of mobile phones as a tool to improve collaboration and interaction was studied. Subsequently the use of the university collaborative platform was introduced. Learners undertook different tasks in the class but also in an authentic language use context (see also Olivier, 2017). Within the context of these tasks, they interacted with other learners, with teachers as well as with native speakers. These tasks showed that learners are more motivated in collaborating with teachers and other students when self-observing their own productions in order to improve their written and oral skills. Furthermore, the learners' implication outlined the importance of the development of socio-affective and meta-cognitive strategies.

2. State of the art

In the 1950's a revolutionary turn was observed when teaching French as a Foreign Language: the audio-visual and the audio-visual global structural approaches. These approaches were based on the assumption that a foreign language is best acquired when it is presented by chunks of language and by simultaneous auditive and visual stimuli. If the use of technologies is ancillary, it is worth noting that new technologies started to be used for the first time in order to develop oral skills, especially oral comprehension. In the 1980's, the development of the communicative approach again gave teachers and learners the opportunity to focus on oral skills, expression and comprehension.

Over the last 30 years, different projects and studies have focused on new technologies and their impact on the learning and teaching process (see Al-Mahrooqi & Troudi, 2014). For the needs

of this challenge and especially for the needs of the first stage, which concerns the use of mobile phones in the development of collaboration and interaction, the focus will be on the studies concerning this aspect.

The current project finds its main source of inspiration in a previous study: *Utilisabilité et Utilité d'un dispositif de production orale asynchrone en français langue étrangère* (Chanudet, 2012). The aim of that first experiment was to test two factors: the perceived usefulness and the perceived ease-of-use according to the Technology Acceptance Model of Davis et al. (1989). The first factor is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance" and the second factor is defined as "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort".

Chanudet (2012) proposed an experiment to a group of learners of French as a foreign language living in different countries such as Korea, Canada, France, etc. These learners used mobile phones in asynchronous communication in order to carry out different action-oriented tasks. When someone posted a video or a photo on the internet, the other members of the group could send a vocal or written message commenting the photo or the video. For instance, one of the topics concerned hobbies. The task was expected to be completed in three steps:

1. learners had to film themselves playing an instrument or practicing sports trying to explain, at the same time, in French why they had chosen that instrument or that sport.

2. the other learners had to listen or to watch the video and then to post questions in order to learn more about the hobby. These questions could be written or spoken orally.

3. the first learner had to answer all the questions. The teacher watched all the films and posted recommendations as a feedback to the learners.

According to the research analysis, the author observed that a. learners produced more and b. They produced better. They produced more because of three factors: they started progressively to feel confident because they produced independently; they felt they were producing in an authentic language context; and finally they produced in an unusual, non-academic, context using a familiar device. Concerning the second aspect, the quality of their production, the author mentioned six different points (Chanudet & Valetopoulos, 2016):

a. *conscious learning*: the device requires from the learner to be the director of his/her production, since he/she is the only one who decides how to film his/her environment in order to achieve the objective of communication. It is thus a technical investment that joins the personal investment, necessary for effective learning.

b. *non-verbal aspect of the communication*: using video, the image also plays an important role, as it promotes an awareness of the importance of non-verbal communication in the transmission of messages.

c. *self-image*: the videos are posted on a virtual site, which imposes the respect of a certain quality of production. Wishing to convey a good image of them-selves, some learners try to provide oral production that they consider to be of good quality.

d. *shared storage for videos*: the possibility of multiple views gives learners the opportunity to perceive errors and to check them. Viewing peer videos also contributes to discovering the peer's language strategies. The device allows students to "learn from the other" who, unknowingly, assume the role of a tutor.

e. *the role of the teacher*: the teacher remains a reference for the learners who look for advice in order to improve their oral production.

f. *autonomy* - the last of the major factors allowing participants to justify their perception of the device as "useful" to improve their production is the dimension of "autonomy". Learners produce better if they choose the place and the time, as opposed to constrained production in a context of face-to-face learning[2].

Within this framework, other studies focusing on the advantages of the use of the mobile phone in the teaching and learning process should be remembered. As pointed out by Bachore (2015: 50):

> Mobile language learning is a field that is quickly maturing, and to this end, a growing body of research has appeared that highlights the various ways in which mobile devices may be used in the teaching and learning of languages.

Similarly, Burston (2013) underlines that "…over the past 20 years, project implementation descriptions have accounted for the majority of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) publications, some 345 in total. […] Since nearly 60% of MALL implementation studies appear outside of professional journals, in conference proceedings, project reports, academic dissertations, and so forth, locating copies of these publications poses a major challenge in itself".

---

[2] See Vavoula and Sharples (2002: 152): "learning is mobile in terms of space, i.e. it happens at the workplace, at home, and at places of leisure; it is mobile between different areas of life, i.e. it may relate to work demands, self-improvement, or leisure and it is mobile with respect to time, i.e. it happens at different times during the day, on working days or on weekends", cited by Ryu and Parsons (2009: 3).

Reinders (2010: 20) points out that "…recent interest in the potential for mobile phones and other portable devices to support learning and teaching has been driven by the fact that mobile phones are relatively cheap and increasingly powerful (Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler, 2005)". Hence, he underlines different studies such as that of Thornton and Houser (2005) who studied the attitude of young Japanese learners and observed that they prefer to use mobile phones for many activities, such as emailing and reading books. Other studies showed the interest of the use of mobile phones for learning vocabulary, for accessing or finding other teaching materials (Chen, Hsieh and Kinshuk, 2008; Huang, Hwang and Hwang, 2008; Kiernan and Aizawa, 2004; Muyinda, Mugisa and Lynch, 2007). Many other studies showed the interest of the use of mobile phones in a more difficult and complex context such as the educational system in some African countries (UNESCO, 2012; Mtega et al., 2012).

Finally, Bachore (2015: 51) underlines also that

> Research has for the most part shed a very positive light on the potential of the role that mobile devices may play. At the same time, however, there has also been indication of several areas that certainly deserve consideration in their implementation.

Hence, disadvantages such as small screen size, limited presentation of graphics and dependence on networks could be reported.

3. Methodology and target group

Three basic components have been programmed for the implementation of the challenge 2 of the E-LENGUA project:

1. use of mobile-phones in a classroom and in an authentic language use context. The aim of this component is to experiment how mobile phones can improve collaboration and interaction between learners, between learners and teachers, between learners and native speakers, and finally how they can improve self-observation.

2. use of the university collaborative platform in order to enhance collaboration and interactions, using software such as Padlet. The platform has a secondary, ancillary, use. Learners use the university collaborative platform in order to carry out different group tasks and to exchange with other learners and teachers.

3. use of a MOOC in order to improve interaction between newly arrived learners and native speakers (de Chaigneau, 2016). This third component meets a real demand of the University of Poitiers, which welcomes refugees as learners. If the first two components allow learners to be in contact with other learners and teachers, the third component concerns mostly the autonomous learning process.

The following paragraphs present a case of study in order to show the synergy between the different components, especially of the mobile phones and the collaborative platform. It will provide understanding as to how these tools can help the development of the interactions through the development of the socio-affective strategies.

4. A case study

The first action-oriented task concerned B1 learners. Teachers proposed the following topic: "You want to travel. Discuss with other students at the university. Would they participate in your adventure?". Divided into two-learner groups, learners met students, who were native French speakers, in the university restaurant and conducted an interview in French about their travel dreams (Chanudet & Valetopoulos, 2016). This task had different steps:

1. learners elaborated a questionnaire in the classroom with all the questions they would like to ask to the native speakers. Each team met two French students and recorded the entire interview with their mobile phone. A selfie was also taken.

2. learners uploaded their productions on the platform. The whole assignment (interview and selfie) was posted on a Padlet wall reserved for this activity, which allowed all the groups to share and to check the videos.

Figure 1: Oral production on the uploaded on the platform

3. learners listened and analysed other's productions.

4. teachers proposed different comprehension tasks in the classroom based on the recordings of the learners. During these tasks, learners worked in particular on the specificities of spoken French (elisions, *liaisons*, partial suppression of negation, intonation, verbal tics, etc.).

5. At the end, teacher indicated necessary adjustments and modifications via the platform. Teachers used an unusual method for the learners: they recorded or filmed their advice.

6. during the implementation of the task, learners could contact the teacher for information and other advice.

The second task concerned the expression of emotions, both in oral and in written form. This activity included 3 parts. During the first part, the learner had to take a photo in the town of Poitiers corresponding to an emotion, an impression, a particular feeling. Learners posted their photo(s) on a Padlet virtual wall created for this purpose and shared with the whole group. The second part consisted in progressively using these posts, having oral interaction being a main objective. These photos were viewed online on the screen of laptops or projected by video projector in class.

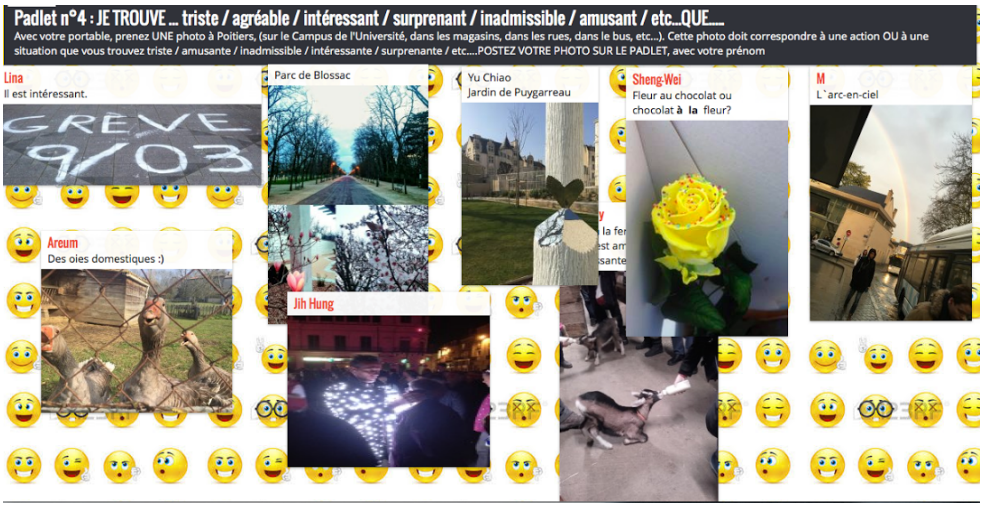

Figure 2: Pictures uploaded on the platform

Each learner expressed the feelings experienced by looking at the photos and justified their feelings by explaining them.

The last part of the activity was a written production assignment: learners had to write a "letter to the mayor of Poitiers" in order to highlight what they liked in the city, what they found regrettable or inadmissible and what they would like the Mayor to change. For this part, learners were divided in two-learner groups. They had to negotiate arguments to develop in the letter. Written productions were shared on a Padlet wall and checked together in class.

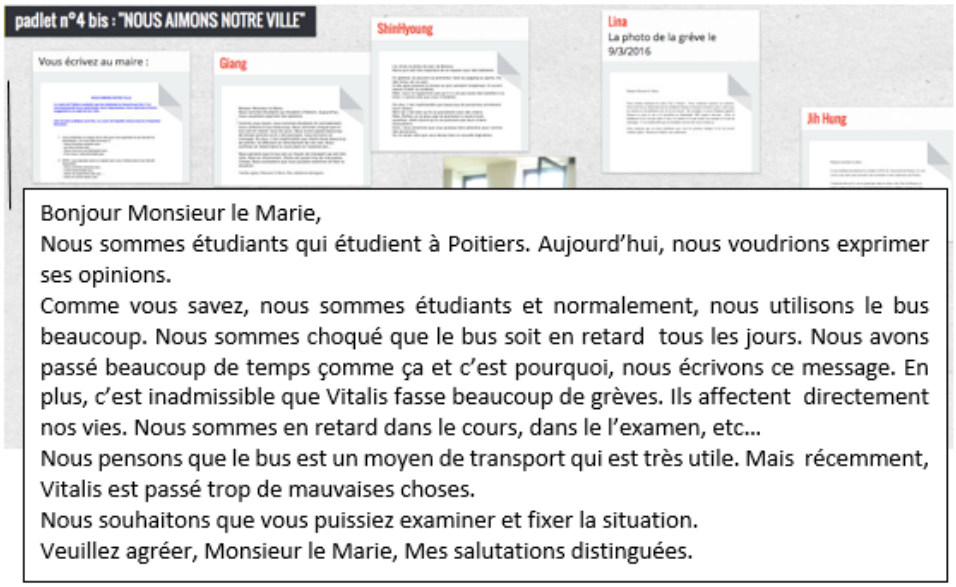

Figure 3: Written production uploaded on the platform

For this second task, the use of mobile phones seems marginal. But it was essential because the photos were collected thanks to the mobility of this device which served as a basis for the whole activity and allowed to develop both oral and written skills, but also different strategies such as remediation. The "motivation" factor due to the authenticity of the task, linked to the capture of authentic scenes of everyday life and to the emotions associated with it, played a decisive role in the success of this activity (see also Ushioda, 2011).

5. Discussion

Authentic (filmed or recorded) interaction has several advantages in terms of affectivity (self-confidence, socio-cultural skills) and communication (self-correcting, non-verbal). The first advantage is that learners become confident in their French-

speaking skills. The learner plays the major role during the interview, which gives him/her the possibility to interact with native speakers more easily.

Concerning the corrections and other modifications, there can be three different kinds: 1. the learner can compare his/her production with that of the native speakers and self-correct, 2. the interviewee can also indirectly propose a modification or a grammatical or lexical readjustment (ah, I understand, you mean ...), 3. the teacher provides a professional correction, but in an unusual form, as it takes the form of a video on the platform. Another important advantage of the filmed interview is the awareness of the importance of non-verbal communication. Learners understand that they can use mimo-gestual strategies in order to be understood. Finally, being in direct contact with native speakers, the learner finds himself/herself in a situation which requires mobilizing real socio-cultural skills (e.g. *tu* or *vous* 'you singular' or 'you plural', the distance to be respected between the interlocutors, etc. ...).

Looking back on the bibliographical references, Burston (2016: 5) pointed out that "…two main challenges face the effective integration of MALL into the foreign language curriculum: technology access and pedagogical methodology". The pilot experiment (Chanudet, 2012) highlighted about these two specific challenges but also other parameters concerning teaching and learning foreign languages. If the use of new technologies does not seem to create any difficulties for learners, other questions have arisen concerning the following points: How can the positive or negative impact of using mobile phones or other ICTs on language learning be measured and assessed? How can a large number of tasks avoiding routine be proposed? How can the impact of ICTs on student motivation and commitment to learning be measured?

What can be the appropriate balance between these tools and the conventional method in the classroom?

Bearing in mind these questions, a questionnaire was distributed to learners in order to enlighten the two challenges mentioned above: technology access and pedagogical methodology. This questionnaire included questions such as 1. language qualifications, number of foreign languages studied, amount of time spent on the study of the target-language; 2. information on student access to and use of a range of common ICT applications; 3. information about how they evaluate different aspects of their experience with mobile phones: collaboration with the others, interaction with learners and teachers and self-observation of their learning.

Learners answered very positively about the impact of the use of ICTs without precising the real impact. Different responses have shown that learners find these tools useful to improve their motivation because they like to listen and to understand their own interviews, to listen to and to understand peer interviews, to listen to their own French and, finally, to observe their own learning. All of these responses show that students face learning by taking an active approach. They observe and they self-observe. The possibility to re-listen or to review the recording or video reinforces their willingness to learn because they are confronted with their own production. Thus, they feel more motivated to learn, to speak and to interact. They also overcome their fear of losing face in collective activities.

If the learners expressed their willingness to interact with their peers or with their teachers, it can be noted, not without surprise, that only a tiny minority of the students declared that they wanted to develop their interactions with the native speakers. It is probably

difficult to put forward a hypothesis concerning the reasons of this lack of enthusiasm to be in contact with native speakers, but this approach can still be questioned. Is it a question of frequency at the level of contacts? Is this a matter of interculturality? Do they realize the real impact on their learning process? Do they realize that the communication with native speakers in an authentic language use context requires other skills than the communication in the classroom, such as negotiation and the use of specific language chunks?

It would be difficult to answer these questions but we think that overcoming apprehension and exchanging once or twice with native speakers is not necessarily perceived as an advantage of this approach. The contact with the speakers seems to be a step that could take place later, knowing that the learners have already passed through self-observation to hetero-observation or mutual observation, which requires a complementary effort on their part.

6. Conclusion

Within the frame of the international project *E-Learning Novelties towards the Goal of a Universal Acquisition of Foreign and Second Languages*, the improvement of oral and written interactions between learners and learners and teachers was studied. A tool was developed using mobile phones and the university platform. The basic assumption was that learners would be more motivated in collaborating with teachers and other students when self-observing their own productions and especially when using a familiar device. The experimentation of different tasks showed that

learners find this tool useful to indirectly improve interaction by stimulating their own motivation.

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