Developing and Designing Materials for English Language Teaching and Learning

Edited by

Benâ Gül Peker and Ahmet Acar
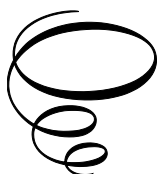
Developing and Designing Materials for English Language Teaching and Learning

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DIDACTIC INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION:
THE CASE OF SOCIAL ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH (SAOA) AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

CHRISTIAN PUREN[1]

Introduction[2]

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the use of digital technologies (DT) in the context of the implementation of the new methodological orientation in language-culture didactics (DLC), the Social Action-Oriented Approach (SAOA). To this end, I will describe, in the first part, the three main models that have appeared throughout history to think about the relationship between didactic innovation and technological innovation. These are two models that we have seen above, the models of didactic determinism and technological determinism, and a third one, which seems to me the most adequate to account for the real complexity of this relation: the model of multifactorial convergences-divergences. In the second part, I will describe the existing convergences between SAOA and DT, which are numerous and promising. In conclusion, however, we will see that if we do not want to remain at the level of "innovation", *i.e.* local and punctual experiments, but to achieve "change", *i.e.* if we aim at the generalization and perpetuation in the classrooms of the new devices and practices that these convergences allow, it is essential to take into account as much the convergences as the divergences between all the factors in play, which are not only didactic and technological.

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[1] Professor Emeritus of the University of Jean Monnet Saint-Étienne, France.
[2] Acronyms: DLC: Didactics of Languages and Cultures, DT: Digital Technologies, L1: Source language, L2: Target language, SAOA: Social Action-Oriented Approach

Conclusion

The convergences between didactic innovation and technological innovation at a certain point explain the large amount of research and experimentation devoted to them at the time, but they are not enough to ensure lasting success. It is essential to contrast "innovation" and "change," which correspond to realities of a different nature (Puren 2016a):

– Innovation generally concerns a small group of experimenters, or even a single one, who, for a limited period of time, on a limited terrain and under optimal conditions, will devote a significant amount of time and energy to a particular problem.
– Change, on the other hand, concerns all teachers, who, in their ordinary classes and by mobilizing all their experience, must manage all the problems of teaching-learning on a daily basis.

Numerous studies show that one of the indispensable factors for ensuring real change, *i.e.* a widespread and lasting modification of the practices of all teachers, is a strong institutional investment.

In a report by the French Institute of Education (IFE), Rémi Thibert cites a Finnish study (Niemi *et al.* 2012), which "shows that successful integration of ICT in schools requires both pedagogical and organizational skills. The role of leadership is essential to develop a true school culture ("community oriented approach"). According to these researchers, the first of the characteristics of a successful integration of ICT is the following: ("1) as an integral component of the school's project, [these technologies] are part of the culture of the school as a whole.

This is the same conclusion reached by the authors of a book published in 2010 by the European Commission, *Learning, innovation and ICT: Lessons learned by the ICT cluster* (EC 2010). They write in a chapter entitled "Key lessons learned":

> *"It is vital that the Principal and school management team recognize the potential of technology and provide strong leadership by gaining the commitment of the staff and their engagement to a common vision for ICT. School leaders are charged with providing a suitable infrastructure and resources, and appropriate professional development to upskill the workforce"* (p. 15).

But this, in my opinion, is not enough: to aim for this sustainable change with any chance of success, it is the whole of the different factors and their

relations, which we have seen historically at work, that must be taken into account. For this purpose, I propose the following action-research process, which seems to me to be the most adequate[17]:

1. To start from the coherent set of didactic innovations in accordance with the educational aims of school education, as well as with the evolution of social needs and citizens' demands, namely the SAOA.
2. Identify the didactic potential of existing technological innovations.
3. Identify the convergences between the didactic and technological factors, but also the divergences between them, as well as between them and the other factors. These must also be taken into account when implementing the results obtained at the end of this processus.
4. Adapt the technologies implemented as much as possible to the experience of teachers and learners in terms of the ordinary uses of technological innovations in their daily lives.
5. In the implementation of the new systems, ensure the convergence of other factors, because they appear to be decisive in the large-scale feedback available now: first and foremost, a strong institutional commitment over time in the conduct of a common pedagogical reform of all the disciplines taught at the level where the maximum coherence and synergy can be obtained between all the actors involved, that of the educational institution (Puren 2022b).

It is understandable that as a didactician I naturally place the consideration of didactic factors at the beginning of this process, but the teams will undoubtedly make other choices in the field: the essential thing is that the action is concerted, common, and that it takes into account all the factors at stake and their relationships.

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[17] In my opinion, this is not a linear process ("une procédure", in French), but "un processus" (always recursive, in French): the different tasks, in fact, are likely to be repeated according to the results obtained by the previous tasks.