**Personal Learning Environments: A Call for Personalized Learning In Colombia**

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**Abstract**

Every person in the world has specific learning necessities. These refer to how differently each person learns. In order to supply these preferences, which play an important role at the time of learning a specific topic, the learners look for the place or tool that brings them comfortability.

A Personal learning environments (PLE for short) is constructed by a learner who seeks to learn about a specific topic in a customized environment. In this century, a huge amount of learning methods, tools and websites are available for people to try and decide which ones work for each learning necessities and which ones don´t. The learner, aided by classmates and teachers, can create an environment where the learning necessities are met. Thanks to this personalization possibility, the person will feel comfortable and motivated to learn the topic. The classroom is a perfect place for people to understand different tools and websites that could become part of a person PLE.

The current social demands ask people to have healthy amount of knowledge of the English language. Because of this, language learning should be the focus of a lot of people nowadays and a PLE could potentially help them to do it faster.

Learning is a very broad concept. It cannot simply be understood as the apprehension of knowledge. People daily inquire about how to facilitate the learning of concepts and of course it is important to address the issue. It is possible, that among all the places where a person tries to learn about the content there is one where a person is able to learn easily, in the rest of the places this person has problems to understand what you intend to learn. A person that reflects on his learning may very well realize that there are activities and tools that make learning an easier task while other learning systems cause headache for this individual.

People who manage to recognize how the environment affects their processes do their best to ensure that the space where they work or study is exempt from the things which makes learning difficult, are building a learning environment ¨Personal learning environment” or PLE. The present essay seeks to investigate the characteristics to take into account when investigating about learning environments. It will also take the concepts not only united but as separate concepts (learning and environments) to denote how they converge. Technological media is also to be considered in the following work as it is a staple in the contemporaneous context. This type of research is certainly related to the practices of teachers for many reasons that are presented in the same way to the previously mentioned concepts.

Learning in this society is an important factor that leads to globalization and career possibilities (McDougald, 2009, p. 47). In the 21st century people will need to enhance their learning practices or they will be unable catch up with the demands. From early age, people should be encouraged to find an appropriate method for learning. By doing this the person will feel motivated to learn and will gain motivation from a method adjusted to the learner wishes and needs. This paper will analyze the characteristics of a PLE and how it could be used for language learning in Colombia.

**The Importance of Technology in Education**

To begin this essay, it would be appropriate to present this commentary by Marino (2010), who talks about how technologies play an important role in learning.

La inclusión de la tecnología y la identificación de conexiones como actividades de aprendizaje, empieza a mover a las teorías de aprendizaje hacia la edad digital. Ya no es posible experimentar y adquirir personalmente el aprendizaje que necesitamos para actuar (Marino, 2010. p. 82)

Learning is a concept that is directly linked to the disciplines of education. When it comes to questioning how you learn, one could fall into the mistake of thinking that the only learning space is the classroom and that therefore the teacher decides how the student learns and that such student would not need anything else. It would be appropriate to consider the technology in this case. People today use the technological means for a lot of things and therefore the relationship that can be established between these and learning is very broad.

La internet es hoy en día la mayor fuente de información y el entorno más importante de aprendizaje sobre muchísimos temas, y no sólo porque contenga mucha ¨información¨ sino porque ¨conecta¨ a muchas personas y les facilita la comunicación entre sí. (Quintero, L., Segura, J., 2010. p. 4)

A source of information as extensive as the internet shows that it can spread to hundreds of places in the world and connect the people who have access to it. According to Adell and Castaneda (2010) the web has changed the way people communicate with each other. For this reason, learning is a concept that, due to the fact of that it generates interactions, will also require new horizons of understanding. And that learning is a very complex concept that manifests itself in many ways in people's lives. Atwell (2007) proposes that there are two types of learning, formal and informal, each of which has very different roles in how a person approaches knowledge.

[...] Most of this learning does not come from formal educational programs. According to the Institute for Research on Learning, at most, formal training only accounts for 20 percent of how people learn their jobs. Most workers learn their jobs from observing others, asking questions, trial and error [...] (p.2)

We can see in the previous excerpt how these two spaces (formal and informal) cover different parts of our lives. If only 20% of a person's learning is the result of processes in formal environments, then this remaining 80% of learning falls into the dilemma of not possibly having a present guide that coordinates it. For this reason, it is important that people know how to handle this remaining time appropriately to obtain positive results.

**The Internet and its Possibilities**

According to Brignall and Van Valey (2005), the internet is not something that can be categorized as either good or bad (p. 10). This is because the users are the ones who decide what to do with the information on it. Internet represents potential, a potential that, if well exploited, could allow people to learn more efficiently.

Technologies are a standard nowadays. This quote may be related to the fact that teachers have to adapt their methodologies for contemporary classes. Teachers introduce students to the media and it is often in class that students begin to connect with the digital environments. A study developed by Restrepo and Bedoya (2015) stated that 86.1% of the people they interviewed in a school in Medellin, Antioquia had access to Wi-Fi and that 75% of them used it to dive into the web for at least two hours each day. (p. 90). This should not come as a surprise, considering the value people place on technology in their daily lives, but these high numbers are an example of why a virtual-based learning strategy can be very plausible: The high accessibility and the high attachment rate of the web would make it easy for people to dedicate time to design it.

Also, according to Ahrens and Zascerinska (2010), people support the content of the internet additionally from taking things from it (p. 2), In other words, people who dig into the web may publish their own discoveries and works there. This factor is very useful to understand why technology can offer infinite possibilities when questioning about its use for education: as more information is documented in the web libraries, more information people will have in mind. As Morales and Ferreira (2008) explained,

La instrucción a través de plataformas de educación a distancia cubre sólo algunas necesidades de los estudiantes, sin embargo, el uso de tecnologías ofrece beneficios que podrían incorporarse en contextos de enseñanza tradicional, logrando así una combinación ideal entre actividades presenciales y no presenciales, lo que se ha denominado aprendizaje mixto o híbrido. (p. 97)

The possibility of using multimodal techniques is indeed a very useful characteristic that technology offers to a learner. We can also add that technologies can be used outside of the traditional classroom. The learner can apply them in any environment, and that is precisely why they may be very useful in a personal learning environment.

**Personal Learning Environment**

This is where the concept of Personal Learning Environments (PLE) comes from. As a point of reference, Atwell’s (2007) understanding is useful to recognize how these present themselves today in the life of the people.

Personal Learning Environments provide more responsibility and more independence for learners. They would imply redrawing the balance between institutional learning and learning in the wider world. (p.5)

In a society where technologies are very important, it is quite interesting to recognize how they affect people's processes. Social networks, tools installed on computers and many other things more than a student can use, will surely not be used exclusively for leisure purposes. Students are changing their methods for learning and spending time in and out of classrooms. The technologies are very versatile and for this reason they change constantly, perhaps faster than people and therefore are easily adapted to their needs. Returning to Atwell (2007), he explained that,

A PLE is comprised of all the different tools we use in our everyday life for learning. [...] Social software is increasingly being used in education and training through such applications the web logs, wikis, tools and applications for creating and sharing multimedia and tools for sharing all kinds of different personal knowledge bases including bookmarks and book collections. (p.4)

Although technologies are recognized as a part of the PLE, we cannot forget that PLEs are more than this. As its name says they are "Environments". An environment, according to Atwell (2007), is the space where actions are developed, whether face-to-face or digital. From this definition, one can infer that people’s interactions outside digital scenarios also influence PLEs. These interactions are varied and Atwell (2007) assessed this situation by stating that even PLEs in informal contexts are created in formal settings since teachers or peers themselves can introduce certain tools to the students to improve the quality of their processes (pp. 5-6).

Why should a person build useful PLE? Although certain benefits can be inferred for the student at this time, Van Harmelen (2006) wrote about a kind of learning that can exist thanks to the PLE, “lifelong learning,”

The needs of life-long learners who need to have a system that interfaces to different institutional elearning systems. This need is in part predicated on requirements to maintain portfolio information across different institutions, and to insulate individual users from the need to learn to use different institutional e-learning systems. (p.1)

Harmelen (2006) precedes this idea by asking about the motivations of the PLE, as does Atwell (2007). People learn all their lives, a person who does not learn is because he stopped receiving stimulation in life, and for this, such person would have to have lost his five senses since one of these is enough to experience feelings. If a person is able to inquire about how to make learning a simpler process, then this person is facilitating a life of new learning mediated by predesigned tools to deliver positive results on this path that is being crossed.

Creating a PLE is truly a matter of trial and error as it may look easy to make it may have issues staying together. Because of this possible barrier that may appear when creating a PLE, technologies become a key component when making a PLE as they can either form part of it or allow it to be formed easily. Banyard and Underwood's (2010) posture recognizes that technologies have a role in society and therefore in education,

The people who predominantly occupy the learning, teaching and institutional spaces have very different experiences and expectations of digital technologies. The digital world is the norm for pupils, even those of a very young age […] (p. 10)

**The Personal Aspect of a PLE**

Whether school or university, people should undertake self-regulation processes to improve their educational quality and learning (Allal & Mottier, 2005)

Personalization: PLEs may be fixed in scope and functionality or may be extendable, preferably on an individual basis during their use. Unsurprisingly, proponents of PLEs are generally proponents of personalization facilities. (p. 2)

It is precisely the quality of personalization that PLE have which allows the people who decide to work in this to show better results to determine how they want their learning environments. PLEs are "Personal" and, therefore, they are not imposed tools but each person sees what works best in their academic processes or among things they have found on their own.

Self-awareness is a key component of the PLE. Taborda (2013) wrote about user interface in applications. She claimed that the user interface was in effect a process of designs based on the user itself (p. 14). While the PLE may not necessarily be an application, this does bring an interesting point. Successful applications are generally designed to meet the needs of a specific public. This same population that has the possibility of choosing among different systems generally pick one based on the personal references. This same process has to be done by the learner that is building a PLE: to carefully analyze what suits the personal likes and needs.

**Social Construction of Identity as The Engine That Characterizes A PLE: How Interactions Make a PLE**

According to Marino and Godoy (2012) Knowledge is gained from life in society as this one is precisely the source of all signs and symbols the person gains. (p. 5-6). The understanding of learning and the methods that are used to approach it are taken directly or indirectly from other people. People are not born with the knowledge in mind but are born in a place that tells them what to do. Culture in this case acts as a guard that imposes what the person can use, in this case, to create a useable learning environment. A group of individuals that are authorized to transmit the knowledge of what is useful and not are the teacher,

El ambiente se deriva de la interacción del hombre con el entorno natural que lo rodea. Se trata de una concepción activa que involucra al ser humano y, por tanto, involucra acciones pedagógicas en las que quienes aprenden están en condiciones de reflexionar sobre su propia acción y sobre las de otros, en relación con el ambiente. (Duarte, 2003. p.4)

This is a good moment to return to the notion of environment and its characteristics in order to recognize its importance. Duarte (2003) explained that the environment can be a problem worth investigating and solving. When the student recognizes certain things in the environment that help them and also knows how to self-evaluate and recognize what they should have so far, then the student is recognizing barriers in their learning through PLE and should now inquire about how to solve that problem. Another very important idea developed by Duarte (2003) is that building a PLE is a way of life that people must know how to manage on their own and from which they must have a high knowledge.

Sometimes people will find themselves inside a system whose learning strategies were not very effective with this particular person. This is not something that would come as unexpected. Oxford (2003) claims that people have different methods for approaching the knowledge they pursue in second language learning. Among them, one can find the visual method for learning and the auditory oriented learning strategies. The term that defines the decision a person makes when deciding how to learn is called “sensory preferences” by Oxford (2003, p. 3). When designing a PLE, the learner has to take into closer consideration his own sensory preferences. Falling to create a PLE that correctly addresses the own preferences will result in an environment that will result tedious to dive in.

This is the reason why a PLE cannot be shared among peers, or should not be enforced in a classroom to the students: A Personal Learning Environment, as its name states, takes into consideration personal aspects of an individual. Attempting to use a PLE that is based on a different person will result in negative results. The PLE is a strategy implemented by a person and a strategy is a plan done by a person to approach the very own learning process (AOURI, 2013, p. 53).This learning environment will stop being personal the moment is shared and will not allow the learner to be fleshed out in his learning processes.

**Usefulness of PLE**

The reason why the PLE can be very effective is precisely because being immersed in a world where one has the control can potentially motivate students in their learning processes. Regarding this, Vásquez; Peláez and Peláez (2013) claimed the following about learning motivation:

En el municipio de Antioquia como se puedo observar anteriormente en el texto, cuenta con diversos planes y proyectos para incentivar el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, en este caso el inglés. Sin embargo, se nota en el medio educativo que los estudiantes no aprovechan estos recursos para mejorar su conocimiento o acercamiento a este nuevo idioma (inglés) que está diariamente en la vida común y más en la de los niños y jóvenes y es entonces la razón por la que con este proyecto se quiere conocer esos factores motivacionales que no permiten el buen aprendizaje del inglés. (p. 28)

There is also another factor that we need to consider in learning strategies. Some students might consider that they can learn more with their peers than in an environment created by themselves. Creating a PLE is not easy, as it demands self-assessment from the learner and thus a sociable environment would be more useful than a PLE for some people. There is something that a PLE offers that learning groups do not: a PLE is always available to the student. As Mylett and Gluck (2004) stated, working with peers means that everyone should meet at a time all the participants are available. A personal learning environment on the other hand, can be used anytime the person wants to dig onto it, more so if it is virtual.

While the idea of trying to assess oneself in terms of learning preferences might sound problematic, it should not be something to fear. In fact, Liang (2009) states that “Learners are generally aware of the approaches or techniques they have used in language learning, despite some subconscious activities under certain circumstances” (p.199). Based on this, the important activity of the learner would not really be to list his learning preferences because he is aware of a considerable portion of these. The learner´s job would be to be critical with his preferences and to think on how this person could apply them in a hypothetical environment. Once all of the constructed ideas are organized, the building process of the learning environment can start.

**Personalization: The Gate to Infinite Possibilities**

Before delving into this important aspect of the PLE, it is necessary to address a very important term for learning environments: Learning strategy. Oxford (1990) conceived the term (in a second language learning scenario) as, “Specific actions, behaviors ,steps ,or techniques-- such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task -- used by students to enhance their own learning” (Scarcella & Oxford,1992, p. 63).

Having learning strategies defined as the actions a person does to learn, in this case, a language, we can imply that a Personal Learning Environment is the product of a learning strategy. A learning strategy is an action a person does to learn. In this situation, the creation of a PLE can be one decision a person takes to enhance their language skills.

According to Schaffert and Hilzensauer (2008), this same personalization allows the PLE to respond to the needs encountered by the same person who builds it, as can be seen below.

Within PLE, "personalization" focuses on activities and possibilities to arrange structure, tools, (external) aggregated materials, look-and-feel and so on. Personalization means, to get information about learning opportunities and content from multiple communities and services fitting to the learner's interest. The sources of information are selected by the learner him- or herself (p. 5)

Personalization as a concept implies an experience on the student’s behalf. How else can a person determine if something is good or bad than having a prior history with the object that is being examined? People learn from others. Learning to recognize that something harms or benefits is an essential life skill that turns out to be part of a process of formative evaluation or self-regulation (Allal & Mottier, 2005). This evaluation of our environment and the tools that emerge from it are part of a process named by Aviram et al (2008) as "Experimentation." Experimentation would be, as its name implies, the need to seek new strategies, to remove them from the terrain of uncertainty and incoherence, from the terrain on which its usefulness is questionable. After having thought about its use, it will be possible to keep it or to discard it from the search of tools to personalize the PLE. (p.8).

The creation of a Personal Learning Environment represents an opportunity for people to take a look at themselves and to make an analysis of what is missing in the places they study. This is quite important because if the learner seeks to improve in some aspect his process, then they need to make a very private construction that improves learning and this person must make sure that the environment is actually working as intended. Regarding this aspect, Rincón (2009) stated that the learner must regulate the environment that was built,

El ambiente de aprendizaje […] Es una propuesta más que involucra el diseño y control en la ampliación del espacio para regular los momentos y el movimiento, el lenguaje, materiales; articulados a un “telos” desde las teorías y tecnologías que a bien el diseñador escoge. (p. 101-102)

This quote brings to mind the question of how useful a PLE can really be. The PLE could potentially have a lot of “things” that the user considers useful. However, the user must discover whether or not these things work in harmony and provide the hypothetic experience that was expected from them. The user can construct the PLE using the instruments that the builder desires. Multimodality is a possibility that can be considered in the construction of a PLE. This is due to the fact that the user chooses at will what to use and how to apply it, so deciding to use different told that interact between themselves is something that not only could work but could also deliver positive results.

**Building a Language-Learning PLE**

Language learning has proven to be a topic worth tackling due to its importance in today’s society. According to Conquist and Fiszbein (2017), 68% of executives from Latin American companies stated that English proficiency is required when applying for a work in their workplace (p. 9). However, the same report states that, in spite of the language importance, the overall English level of the Latin American population is low. (p. 11). Latin Business Today (2016) also claimed that although “80% of job listings in Latin America require a proficient English level, only 20% of professionals possess this skill”. El Informador (2016) stated that the language is necessary from an economic point of view. People cannot pretend to be successful in an area (in the case of the article, economy) without being aware of and solving all the inconveniences. This helps people to understand the importance of English in society and why people aim to learn it. This process is not only important because of the role of English itself, but also due to the cultural aspect tied to the language. Getting involved with a language means getting involved with the culture the language was conceived in (Elmes, 2013, p. 12)**.** And from a business perspective, cutting cultural differences is important to reach economic success (Economist intelligence unit, 2012, p. 11). In Colombia, the National Ministry of Education (2014a, July) reported that by 2013, only 6% of eleventh grade students had reached the B1 level in English (p. 9). One of the many reasons is the lack of studet motivation. Therefore, a tool that truly inspires and appeals to them is necessary.

Improving English proficiency in Colombian context is a very important topic that has to be addressed. In fact, quantitative evidence allows Delgado (2013) to state that English skills are something people need to learn in the current generation for various motives, among which there is globalization (p. 16). The British Council (2015b) conducted a study in Colombia in order to understand why people learn or do not learn the language. In this study, only 3% of respondents stated they did not need English in their life (p. 36). This confirms that people are aware of English importance. Having these factors in mind opens the door of understanding why English learning should be a priority in people´s processes.

According to Zascerinska (2010), the process in which an individual recognizes more words and learns a language is conscious (p. 4). When someone wishes to know a language, they have to learn about it and how to approach such language. Learners cannot simply expect language to be engraved in their mind. In order to fulfill the task of learning a language, the person will require to prepare the tools in order to get results. How one learns words easier? By listening to them or by reading? Asking this type of questions is important fr a Language PLE because the answer to it will tell a person what kind of tools should be at the learner disposal in the PLE.

Regarding the decisions a person must make when building a PLE is the language. At first, one could assume that a person could create a PLE in their first Language, but there are multiple factors that could modify this idea. In a Spanish-speaking scenario, for example, it could be plausible to develop the PLE by integrating the English language with the first language. First of all, it could be because this individual is attempting to master English and therefore utilizes it to learn it better (This environment to be created is, after all, a learning environment). Another reason that could cause the people to work with English is because many instruments that the person could potentially utilize are in this language only and thus not using it would present itself as a problem. For example, there are situations where a person seeks to learn by interacting with others. The PLE in this case would resolve around websites or it could be in a place where the person can practice the language. The person must learn specific language skills in order to communicate and build the learning environment successfully.

While many people could use English for necessity, there are others that could do so because they simply like the language. According to a research by Montoya (2015) 85% of the population he interviewed in a university in Envigado claimed that they were happy with the language, they liked it (p. 14). The people in this case could easily make the PLE in English just because the like the language.

According to this, a PLE for learning a specific language is a strategy to approach this same language. According to Varisoglu (2016), a strategy is a set of decisions meant to complete an objective (p. 2). This definition goes very well with what a student has to do to build a PLE: to strategize, regard their own selves, to know which steps to take and which tools to use. Chamot (1989), on the other hand, claimed that learning strategies are the questions learners ask themselves regarding a content in order to know whether they can use it (p. 1). This conception of learning strategy defines perfectly, as mentioned above, how to build a PLE. Therefore, the PLE is a strategy users can create improve their learning experience.

This strategy would and should allow users to experience learning at their own rules. This means that they can get acquainted with what they desire to learn at their own rhythm. The possibility of choosing how to learn will be enticing to learners and this is a key factor of the PLE: Motivation. If a learner is motivated to learn something, they will most likely be effective understanding it and may even desire to know more about such language according to Gardner (1972).

Another important factor that will encourage learners to continue using the PLE is confidence. According to the language sustainability team (2017) confidence has the role of comforting the learner and will give this student the feeling that the process that is being used works. (p. 11). If the PLE was built consciously, then the confidence in that it will work should present itself while using the PLE. The favorite learning strategies will be reflected in the PLE and this will increase the motivation the student will feel regarding the environment, and the responsibility the students puts in their learning processes as stated by Banditvilaj (2016).

… Both teachers and learners perceive that e-learning can help students take responsibility for their own learning by making them autonomous and confident. This enables introverted students to interact more freely, provides diversification of activities, fosters an intrinsic impetus of learning and permits the acquisition of valuable study and time management skills (p. 224)

Since the internet is a place where people can approach learning at their rhythm, it is very important to reiterate technology importance in a PLE: it is an environment that should be considered when crafting a PLE.

**The Teacher Figure in a PLE**

Certainly, a Personal Learning Environment would be most effective if each person builds it on their own and does not require another person to make decisions for them. Since people know themselves better, if each person directs their learning, they will have a better chance of getting the results they expect, as long as they do it responsibly. At this point, it is worth clarifying that the message is not that the role of teachers is worthless and that the children can learn by themselves. In order to make decisions in specific environments, the person must first have learned how to do so in this same context.

Having recognized the context the people will acquire some skills and from these they are able to produce "something" related to what they learned. Since knowledge is transferred from person to person, people who build the knowledge do it from what they received. This is named by Schaffert and Hilzensauer (2008) (p.4) as being ¨prosumers,¨ as a counter to the traditional idea of *consumer*. Not all people are prosumers. It is worth for each person to have a self-evaluation process and ask if in life they have built something with the knowledge that was acquired or if such person has just received silently everything that has been presented to this person. In the context of a PLE construction, the learner will become a producer the moment that the PLE is created. Until then the learner is a consumer who is building this tool base on the information this person has received from peers. Among these peers the teacher should be included,

Successful learners know their preferences, their strengths and weaknesses, and effectively utilize strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Successful language learning is linked to the learner’s passion. And instructors should find ways to connect to this passion. (Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011). p. 3)

It is necessary to emphasize that it is the teacher who can and should help the student to build their PLE, considering that it is in teachers’ best interest that students manage to learn how to learn. In fact, the National Ministry of Education (2014b) stated in their documents about teacher competences that they should always design strategies that favor their learning (p. 8). They should filter their activities to include tools that have demonstrated positive outcomes and help their students to have a foundation to help them learn outside the classroom. Also, Weinstein (1986) states that learning strategies can indeed be taught to students (p 4). According to Marinelli (2016) one of the causes for low English proficiency in Latin American countries is the lack of teachers prepared to tackle the current generations (p. 28). How can we teach and learn languages? García (2008) attempts to answer that question, “[…] los niños y niñas aprenden eficazmente, cuando exploran y hacen descubrimientos, mediante el uso de materiales didácticos concretos que les interesan y, que la organización del salón de clase” (p. 5)

What interests people? What encourages them to learn? These kinds of questions help each person so that they can make a self-regulation process that will be very useful when it comes to personalizing their environment. Kramina (2000) argued that these are precisely the questions teachers must ask:

The modem language learner of 90s will not be satisfied with the possibility to use the language only in the classroom, […]. Hence, the significance of learners' needs and wants. Teaching aids, materials and methodologies should be relevant to learners' age, language experience and needs and should take them through varied language use in the classroom, bringing it as close as possible to its authentic variants used in real-life situations.” (p. 16)

So long as the teacher can give the students materials they feel comfortable with, they will come back and utilize these for their own learning processes. This is how a teacher can support the construction of a PLE. Teachers do not have to use the most “up to date” equipment and expect the students to follow suit. Teacher need to be creative with their activities to, in turn, stimulate creativity in the students (Peachey & Maley (2015). p. 6). This creativity is a requirement for designing a PLE.

García (2008) shared ideas about "autonomy, self-control, initiative" as very important tools in these processes. Marchetti and Cullen (2016) state that the classroom can be defined as a “convergent form of interaction between multiple people and objects” (p. 46). While the interactions mediated by the teacher are important, the teacher should always make clear that the classroom is not the only place to learn in order to allow student to understand that they should utilize learning strategies outside school.

In the context of Antioquia, Colombia, the students are presented in classes with multiple tools when it comes to teaching. In schools, teachers utilize different methods to allow students to learn about a topic. These methods may or may not work, but in some cases when it does not, it is because the students were not motivated in class and therefore the methodology failed. If teacher incited students to design their own learning environment, based on the students own decisions, then these students could be motivated with this new strategy. The labor of the teacher who tries to offer tools for the student to learn is very difficult too, as stated by Piaget (1962),

In some cases, what is transmitted through education is well assimilated by the child because it represents an extension of some spontaneous construction with consequential acceleration in development. But is some cases, educational assimilation intervenes too early or too late” (p. 251)

Sometimes the student may not be ready for a specific learning technique or instrument. One of the recommendations Lefeber (2016) gives to teachers is that “– the needs, motivations, resources and characteristics of learners, rather than on the disembodied properties of the language as such” (p. 7). An activity with a tool must not be done having in mind the general level of students, the teacher must be well aware of the student background before attempting to utilize a strategy with that student. The worst consequence would be that a person disregards something that, in the correct moment, would have been useful due to a terrible experience.

There have been several school-funded projects that have attempted to change the environment of the students to enable them to feel motivated. One example is English immersion camps: Students were sent to camps for 13 days in which they could learn in the methods they decided for themselves. Either they could work with their classmates or they could go and study with outsiders. They could practice the language in the camp or they could go to town and find a place in which they felt good. According to a report published the National Ministry of Education (2016), the experience left positive results in the student’s processes (p. 34). The important factor that allowed this project to work was the fact that the students had the freedom to decide how to make their activities, each could pick up an environment that suited each necessities or desires.

Another experiment that should be remembered is the SOLE (Self-Organized Learning Environments) project. SOLE aims to create cloud based environments crafted by the students take the lead and learn through their own. One of the teachers involved in the project claimed she taught up to the point where the students would learn on their own (SOLE Colombia, 2017). The students were motivated because they could interact with their teachers and classmates in the way the desired and could learn languages, which they consider important for their future. SOLE also made a pilot in Colombia and managed to empower a community of over 1,100 people in Zona Cafetera with the tools and the preparation to learn through the cloud (SOLE Colombia, 2017).

These studies demonstrate that giving the students the authority to learn through their own means not only motivated them, but also improve the results of learning. The objective of PLE instruction is precisely to encourage students in schools to create their own PLE. It is a call for teacher to move past the classroom only instruction (which according to the SOLE researchers has become obsolete) and craft new types of teaching strategies which can become learning strategies the students can utilize outside of the classroom environment.

**Closing Words**

To educate learners in the construction of their personal learning environment is something that has not been done thoroughly. It is true that there have been projects with positive feedback that attempt to educate and that attempt to teach learners how to learn, but this is not something that has been done at a wider scale. Just as technology is becoming more prominent in the 21st century, changing the way in which people interact with reality, education is also changing. Our call is to create new and enticing tools for the students to work with. The question is: Why not let them create the tools by themselves? Directing one’s learning processes is not something that is easily done, but once a person has made a self-assessment of the personal learning needs and is in condition of taking decisions regarding the learning process, this person will be able to create a motivating and interesting environment that will not only assist the person in the school but also will motivate students in learning processes they decide to dive into.

The proposal of Personal Learning Environment is the call for institutions to break the conception of “learning is at its best in the classroom” and let students discover new spaces where they can learn. Technology offers multiple platforms to work with that students can test and make use of according to how things go on.

The research of personal learning environments has demonstrated that, in the context of Colombia, the attempt to let students discover learning and its importance by learning how to manage their processes provides positive results and is a plausible strategy. The interactions created in these pilots that have been attempted in here have helped the immersed students to create the PLE of their choice and to break the misconception of learning as something limited to the closed school. Therefore, institutions should consider arranging their institutional projects to allow for more interactions with different environments so that the students have a basis for them to use in their PLE.

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