SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING: COMMUNITY LANGUAGE LEARNING THEORY AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION REVISITED

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The main purpose of the present study is to shed light on principles of the Community Language Learning (CLL) approach that may apply to Social Networking Sites for Language Learning (SNSLL). The most exact definition for SNSLL can be attributed to Álvarez Valencia (2016) as he states that “Social media has given rise to a new generation of participatory online environments that have created new patterns of learning languages, social interaction, and learning experiences” (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b). According to Lockard & Pegrum (2007) on Social Networking Sites (SNSs) and the ongoing educational transformation: “SNSs systems and the personal learning environments associated with them, present language educators with an opportunity to examine existing theories of learning, and to gain invaluable data and insights into how learning is occurring in the new age of digital literacies and the deconstruction of traditional classrooms that it necessitates.”

There is a huge challenge for educators to become aware of the pedagogical affordances of new educational contexts such as SNSLL. In fact, it goes without saying that online learning settings are more adjustable to informal as well as postformal (Gidley, 2016) educational environments as their target group is non homogenic and scattered across the globe. As postformal education we intend a new and alternative educational philosophy that allows and encourages individuals to “awaken their creative, big-picture and long-term thinking” (Gidley, 2016) by considering both cognitive and psychophysical conditions. Actually, the novelty of these contexts requires also taking into account issues related to emotional and psychological conditions of the learners. In line with this, the author proposes to consider the CLL approach to learning and teaching in SNSLL setting as it addresses the psychology of the language learner. Yet, all language teaching should consider the psychology of the language learner as well as the learning barriers attributed to
negative emotions according to Lozanov (1979). On the contrary, positive emotions and the joy for learning open the human mind for acquiring new knowledge, stimulate an intrinsic motivation to learn and work as an incentive (Arnold, 2000, p. 232; De Andrés, 1999).

It has been argued though (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b) that SNSLLs are still in their infancy regarding the informed pedagogical use of their affordances. While they do connect dispersed learners around the globe, they fail to provide them with quality services other than drill and practice exercises and unstructured synchronous communication experiences (i.e. Busuu and LiveMocha). However, in the author’s view, this does not promote long-lasting learning neither does it enhance higher order thinking processes for achieving language reflexivity (or else the ability to think and feel in a foreign language). As learning a language is a complex procedure that requires a holistic effort (both cognitive and emotional) the integration of CLL principles to SNSLL contexts seems opportune. This can potentially be put into practice by drawing on online intercultural exchanges, also referred to as telecollaboration, inspired by online communities of language learners. As telecollaboration we intend “an online intercultural exchange between classes of foreign language students in geographically distant locations” (Farr & Murray, 2016).

Therefore, the creation of real context intercultural exchanges inspired also by the principles of social constructivism of Vygotsky (1978) and integrated with activities that promote aesthetic pleasure (i.e. teaching grammar through poetry, songs, fine arts or any type of cultural artifact) seems opportune. Such exchanges, defined by O’Dowd and Ritter (2006) as telecollaborative, are by default student centered and give each participant the opportunity to interact and share his or her own knowledge and perspective. A holistic community model both for telecollaborative language learning which is “In sum, characterized by institutionalized technology-mediated intercultural communication for the purposes of FL learning and the development of intercultural awareness” (Belz, 2004) and online collaborative language learning in general is highly recommended.

This introduction (Chapter 1) informs the reader on the rationale and the aims of the present study. It is followed by Chapter 2, a review of the literature focusing on the main tenets of CLL theory since the 1970’s when it was first introduced to
university students at Loyola University, Chicago (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Moreover, some theoretical considerations on intrinsic motivation which is thought to be interrelated with CLL are presented, drawing mostly on published research by Montessori, Maslow, Deci, Ushioda and Alm (Alm, 2006; Brown, 2001; Deci & Flaste, 1996; Montessori, 1989; Ushioda, 2011). Theoretical views are analyzed starting with face to face language learning environments and continuing with online language learning providers such as LiveMocha, Busuu and SaberInglés. Chapter 3 Methodology looks at existing studies on these three SNSLLs whereby SaberInglés represents a different kind of online language learning community due to its social enterprise dimension.

Chapter 4 will draw on findings (regarding the 3 aforementioned providers) from the studies regarding the pedagogical approaches of these providers as reflected in the affordances for language learning and teaching they offer. This is followed by suggestions as to the changes required -both, in terms of layout and individual affordances - in order to align them with CLL principles. Also what could be done in order to organize them (both their layout and affordances) according to the presented pedagogical principles is also outlined. Furthermore, a novel online community model is proposed that enriches CLL principles with the views of postformal pedagogies of J.M. Gidley (2016), in order to add a humanistic dimension to the corporate design of the first 2 SNSLLs as well as add synchronous communicative features to the third.

Finally, chapter 5 draws this thesis to a conclusion by paving the way for other researchers to further explore and expand the model proposed by the author. The pedagogical philosophy of this model combines constructivist educational theories and educational psychology issues that – if successfully addressed – can truly account for a change in the existing landscape of SNSLL.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

On Community Learning: “You’re by no means alone on that score, you will be excited and stimulated to know. Many, many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are right now. Happily some of them kept records of their troubles. You’ll learn from them- if you want to. Just as some day, if you have something to offer, someone will learn something from you. It’s a beautiful reciprocal arrangement. And it isn’t education. It’s history. It’s poetry.” (Salinger, 1951, p. 204)

On Intrinsic Motivation: “…lots of time you don’t know what interests you most till you start talking about something that doesn’t interest you most…What I think is, you’re supposed to leave somebody alone if he’s at least being interesting and he’s getting all excited about something. It’s nice.” (ibid, p.199)

“Interest is not immediately born, and if when it has been created, the work is withdrawn, it is like depriving a whetted appetite of the food that will satisfy it.” (Montessori, 1989, pp. 80–81)

As for Community Language Learning (CLL) is the teaching method introduced by Charles A. Curran and his associates. “Curran was a specialist in counseling and a professor of psychology at Loyola University, Chicago. His application of psychological counseling techniques to learning is known as Counseling-Learning. Community Language Learning represents the use of Counseling-Learning theory to teach languages” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). On the other hand, a person that is intrinsically motivated to learn is someone that is stimulated to act starting with internal motivators or else an inner willingness to engage with an activity e.g. “the joy of doing a particular activity or satisfying one’s curiosity” (Dörnyei, 2005). In what follows we will explore these constructs in more detail.

2.1 Community Language Learning (CLL)

The teaching method we are about to consider, is an unconventional and a holistic one mainly inspired by the humanistic psychology principles that interested the
academic community in the late 1960’s and 1970’s. A number of different aspects are going to be taken into consideration concerning the educational psychology principles that lie beyond the reciprocal arrangement of teachers-facilitators and students-human beings as well as motivational issues that lie beyond CLL. The CLL method’s origins lie in the theories of Charles A. Curran and are influenced by the client-centered therapy introduced by the renowned master of humanistic psychology, Carl Rogers. The present method which can not actually be considered as a method per se, is rather an alternative approach to language learning that announces a great shift of the conventional teacher’s role model to merely a kind of “language counselor” (Rogers, 1983, p.99) who is ready to support his students in the learning process.

To begin with, it is not until the 1970’s that the theories of Carl Rogers emerge and openly take into account as Brown (2000) points out “a classroom regarded not as a ‘class’ but as a ‘group’ in need of therapy and counseling. In this case, students and teachers become an only set, with the aim to facilitate learning and mitigate the anxiety caused by the educational context, by means of the supportive community” (Brown, 2001). Thus the student is not anymore a pathetic receptor but an “agent” able to create and transform content in a context of mutual support among peers and under the supervision of a “spiritual guide” or “mentor” where empathy is the dominating value (King, 1993). The learners are not taught by being told but rather by being left to discover long structures and “negotiate meaning” (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, the central points of these learning strategies are ‘discovery learning’- where “the learner creates understanding through personal experience and interaction with external stimuli” (Bruner, 1966a, p. 87)-, student-centered participation, participatory literacy- where the learners and their personalities are at the core of the instruction and collaborate with each other- (Fingeret, 2006). All the above mentioned, in conjunction with Maria Montessori’s constructivist educational theories of ‘learning by doing’ which stimulate creativity, fantasy and analytical learning constitute the dorsal spine of CLL (Montessori, 1989).

Charles Arthur Curran, a Roman Catholic priest, introduced the theory of the Community Language Learning in the late 1970’s (Curran, 1976) and was classified as ‘humanistic’ with a kind of a religious dimension. The central core of his educational theory focused on the attempt to “incorporate teachers and learners in a deep relationship of human belonging worth and sharing” where an exchange among
equals is going to take place in a climate of security and trustworthiness. In fact, the teacher’s actual role is to foster a kind of ‘supportive reflection’ (Stevick, 1990) among his students, with the absence of any sense of competition in a warm and caring environment. In fact, Stevick (1990) in his critical approach to Curran’s method (p.76) identifies five stages through which security and learning maturity could be achieved:

1. The risk-free (‘embryonic’ stage), where the knower-teacher is in complete responsibility – concerning the linguistic and emotional security- of the learners and therefore assumes the task of being a role model in the target language.

2. The self-assertion (‘birth’) stage where the person-leaner starts experimenting his own potential in an L2 while asking for confirmation on the validity of his efforts. Thus emotional support seems to be less pertinent than in the previous stage.

3. The separate existence (‘happy childhood’) stage where the learner becomes even more autonomous, is capable of producing language enunciates without any need of corrections that may appear as learning inhibitors.

4. The reversal (‘young adult’) stage when the learner starts “welcoming linguistic corrections” and becomes aware of the emotions of the knower. In fact, this is a difficult stage and not all learners could make this transition successfully.

5. The independent (‘mature adult’) stage where mutual understanding and support between learners and educators is finally reached.

To put it clearer, in CLL sharing knowledge becomes a feasible task when “the remote and almost God-like figures of the native language experts, as first viewed by the learners…gradually come to share, in the learner’s eyes, the common human condition [as the experts, too, allow themselves to become learners of languages]” (Stevick, 1990). Curran was found in the position to recognize this concept by being a language learner himself and experiencing the emotional insecurity and helplessness of the lack of knowledge of a new language. In terms of avoiding to directly “teach” grammar and pronunciation to the students also contends that “Resistances to
grammar and pronunciation [are] similar to resistances to ethical, legal, and religious standards of conduct…the person’s resistance…extends to a wide area of what he sees as the outside imposition of any authority” (ibid, p.297). The result according to Curran is “to experience the freedom to think and feel” in an L2. Educational psychology of the 1960’s and 1970’s where the idea of “continuous reflection, particularly in relation to the cultural values and beliefs structuring teachers’ own actions as well as of other students” (Harrison & Thomas, 2009) is central when considering language learning within a community framework. Always in the context of the community, learners are bound to develop a personal identity as foreign language users although some concerns regarding the mediator’s role, that is not necessarily a linguist or a language teacher may undermine the quality of their exchange. As Murphey (2006) posits in his Language Hungry, the ideal language teacher is not necessarily a native speaker but another target language learner who may be a teacher, as he has passed through the learning process and he is aware of the crucial strategies in language learning. Yet, Liddicoat and Tudini shed light on the situation in online environments where “the power dynamics between native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) in online chat situations. They suggest that the NS takes on almost a pedagogical role or ‘didactic voice’ and assumes a certain status as a result, with an asymmetry of power. If both interactants are able to access each other’s language this does not appear to happen” (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013). Therefore peer feedback is of paramount importance even though it doesn’t necessarily originate from a native speaker of a target language.

According to the insightful theories of Maria Montessori intrinsic motivation is a crucial element for enhancing learning as “The motive force for learning in Montessori environment comes from within the individual child. This drive toward competence is fueled by the child’s curiosity and interest. Thus is the child’s self-initiated activity considered its own reward” (Rambusch & Stoops, 1992). As it is scientifically proved, mental and emotional intelligence are strictly interconnected and as Deci & Ryan successfully underlined in their (Deci & Ryan, 2008) that people tend to engage themselves in activities that provide them with “positive feelings” and seek to satisfy their thirst for knowledge and creativity without external impositions. Thus it goes without saying that the core concept in this kind of educational theories is a certain passion for acquiring knowledge and only through love and understanding can we achieve to motivate people in pursuing their learning goals, which are supposed to
be long-term ones. Jennifer Gidley’s recent innovative views in the field of educational psychology provide us with important insight on motivational issues “I believe the most important value that is largely missing from education today is what I call pedagogical love. Why do we want to educate with and for love? We live in a cynical global world with a dominant culture that does not value care and empathy. We live under the blanket of a dominant worldview that promotes values that are clearly damaging to human and environmental wellbeing. In many ways our world, with its dominance of economic values over practically all other concerns, is a world of callous values.” (Gidley, 2016). This is where humanistic psychology principles regain their relevance, and where revisiting them – particularly in view of increasingly globalised teaching and learning contexts – seems to be justified in the context of a learning environment of dispersed learners.

Another key concept of Maria Montessori’s pedagogy that can easily be transferred to an online learning environment as well is “goal setting” as well as students’ capacity to bear responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, in such contexts students can construct and create their own knowledge in collaboration with others and according to their own interests. The teacher does not possess any authoritarian role but that of a guide who does not intend to transmit certain ideas and principles but rather “set free the individual’s own potential for constructive self-development” (Lillard, 1972, p. 77). The educator is not anymore present in order to gauge pupils’ achievements but rather encourages them to monitor their own progress. Grades and assignments do not constitute a central part of the learning process but on the contrary students are left to discover their own potential and make meaningful connections between the acquired knowledge and the ‘big picture’ (Murray, 2011).

The core elements of learning through telecollaboration in the context of online learning communities are associated as well with the theories of social constructivism (Lev Vygotsky’s theories of the Zone of Proximal Development and Abraham Maslow’s theories of intrinsic motivation)(Chew, Jones, & Turner, 2008). Vygotsky claims that learning and therefore ‘meaning negotiation’ (Ellis, 1986) takes place in a sociocultural interaction where a ‘third space’ created by the community, by means of the human capacity of abstraction, produces a knowledge exchange through the use of a common linguistic code (lingua franca) where the educator is once again a
facilitator. Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory contends that “the essential aspects of mental functioning in the individual derive from social life” (Steffe & Gale, 1995).

According to Rogers, Lyon & Tausch (2013) in (Rogers, Lyon, & Tausch, 2013) the most important features in a CLL learning exchange are:

1) **Empathic understanding**: which is the teacher’s capacity to see the world through the kaleidoscope of his students and be able to identify himself as if he were living their experiences,

2) **Genuineness**: or else the “realness” of the teacher that feels free to externalize his true-self with his virtues and vices, a true human being living in a perfect harmony with the world and that do not pretend to reach perfection or demonstrate superiority among his students.

3) **Prizing**: underlining the positive qualities of the learner and accepting his individual differences as well as demands. Prizing in the form of grades and assignments do not constitute a central part of this teaching philosophy. In this “unconditional positive regard” as characterized by Rogers a student’s uniqueness is highly celebrated.

Generally speaking we are about to measure ourselves with a teaching approach that is far from what is generally accepted as a formal educational context (i.e. following a certain syllabus blindly and showing no flexibility or focusing on teachers’ evaluation rather than fostering a model of self-evaluation etc.) for conventional teaching environments and where the first role is assigned to teacher and students’ personalities. To put it clear, in this teacher-student-centered environment each and every member can become a “decision maker” (Rardin, Tranel, Tirone, & Green, 1988) and design his own learning path. The ultimate aim of this “method” is a kind of “supportive learning process where the language becomes the means for developing creative and critical thinking and Culture is an integral part of language learning” (Larsen-Freeman, 2008).

Samimy and Rardin (1994) after measuring a number of adults’ affective variables in the context of a CLL setting such as emotional states that may influence the learning effectiveness came to the following conclusion: “the majority of the learners experienced reduction of anxiety through teacher’s sensitivity, group support/cohesion, and ‘affective-humanistic activities’ such as learner-generated materials, card games, and songs”. It is though clear that the influence of the
supportive community, where the role of the instructor is that of an extremely sensitive “spiritual leader” among equals, is anxiety alleviating and fosters the development of intrinsically motivated learners. Their attitude toward the L2 is not anymore that of being “defensive learners” but rather creative and positive while making their attempt to learn a foreign language.

Furthermore, by means of a supportive community of learners, the levels of feeling safe and confident are indispensable in order for them to achieve a successful learning experience (Reid, 1999, p. 320). In a study concerning Japanese language students that seem to be reluctant to express themselves orally due to cultural reasons related to their formal education, “CLL approach is effective for Japanese students of English, whose anxiety is often high because English is far different from Japanese” (Kaoba, Ogawa, & Wilkinson, 2000). It is therefore underlined that the sense of “involvement” and “equality” provided among peers reduces competitiveness levels and fosters risk-taking. The role of the instructor in such context it has been proven to be even more important as he has to inspire mutual support and trustworthiness with the aim of gradually withdrawing himself from the language exchange (Arnold, 2000, p. 234). What follows is an overview of studies starting with intrinsic motivation in learners in general and continuing with intrinsic motivation in language learning (both in face to face and online settings).

2.2 Intrinsic motivation in language learning

An important aspect that is stimulated and enhanced in a Community of foreign language learners that can potentially lead to an effective learning experience is the rising of intrinsic motivation among the learners. As Robert Henri puts it “this is in the back of every true work of art” (Deci & Flaste, 1996). Therefore, in the author’s view learning a language is a highly artistic and creative experience that can be easily compared to that of a painter or an actor. Having examined the role of grades as learning motivators, Deci and Flaste (1996) reached the conclusion that “those who learned in order to be tested were less intrinsically motivated” (Deci & Flaste, 1996, p. 47). Their overall conclusions on the issue were that when students are expected to be evaluated they are likely to merely memorize the provided information rather than
process it and gain insights. Therefore, if educators want to achieve learning for their students then their evaluation should primarily be limited to a continuous self-evaluation. On the whole, in the book *Why We Do What We Do: Understanding Self-Motivation* the two authors have widely demonstrated that “intrinsic motivation is associated with richer experience, better conceptual understanding, greater creativity, and improved problem solving, relative to external controls” (Deci & Flaste, 1996, p. 51).

In *Freedom to Learn* Rogers (1969) directly criticizes contemporary educators who consider being “motivated to learn” a prerequisite. In fact, he underlines that “the young human being is intrinsically motivated to a high degree. Many elements of his environment constitute challenges for him. He is curious, eager to discover, eager to know, eager to solve problems. A sad part of most education is that by the time the child has spent a number of years in school this intrinsic motivation is pretty well dampened” (Rogers, 1983, p. 131). Thus, the point for language educators is to strive to maintain this innate human inclination to acquiring knowledge by providing inspiring as well as stimulating activities for adult learners as well.

Maslow (1970) argues that intrinsic motivation (understood as the “intensity of one’s impetus to learn”) which is triggered in a community of learners, is definitely of superior level compared to extrinsic motivation. As Dörnyei (1994) contends “extrinsically motivated behaviours are the ones that the individual performs to receive some extrinsic reward (e.g., good grades) or to avoid punishment”. According to Maslow’s theory and as stated in (Brown, 2001, p. 74) “we are ultimately motivated to achieve ‘self-actualisation’ once the basic physical, safety and community needs are met. No matter what extrinsic rewards are present or absent, we will strive for self-esteem and fulfillment”. Only by liberating themselves from the authority of rewards and punishments do the learners achieve the “autonomy of self-reward” as stated in (Takaya, 2008).

The term *integrative motivation* mentioned as a synonym of intrinsic motivation according to Gardner’s *theory of second language acquisition* underlines the key elements of the inner motives that can lead learners to a successful learning experience. The term *integrativeness* stresses the “individual’s willingness and interest in social interaction with members of other groups” (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 159) whereas *motivation* delimitates the “desire to learn the language,
enjoyment of the task, and putting forward effort toward learning” (Gardner, 1985) while establishing strong bonds within a group of people that share the same attitudes.

Wu (2003) after having examined a number of variables related to the classroom environment, in L2 intrinsic motivation, reached the conclusion that in an educational setting –among young learners-self-improvement and competence are fostered as a result of providing freedom to plan personal learning paths leading to high levels of learner autonomy and thus significant levels of intrinsic motivation.

In her research on language learning motivation Ushioda (2001) highlights that “students with positive learning experiences tended to emphasize intrinsic motivational factors whereas participants with less illustrious learning histories tended to define their motivation principally in terms of particular personal goals or career plans” as stated in (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106). This stresses the importance of positive learning experiences as their first learning path while the second one was associated with a desire to climb the career ladder in order to gain external rewards such as money and social status. Furthermore Ushioda (2012) underlines the necessity to implement humanistic, person-centered approaches in order to motivate the “person” “rather than the abstract language learner”. Unfortunately, and as stated by the author this focus on personalized motivating features (that strongly considers idiosyncratic factors in language learning) does not constitute a strong field of study in the actual L2 motivation theory and research. It is therefore critical for researchers in applied linguistics to take into account considerations regarding personalized learning techniques and explore further how humanistic approach can best be integrated.

Regarding inner motives in Web 2.0 language learning contexts, Alm (2006) analyses the use of blogs and wikis and characterises them as “structures that are highly adaptable to the needs of language learners and enable them to actively become part of a learning community or target language community”. In fact, opportunities for cooperative writing (blogs and wikis) were “the most motivating factor about blogging in ESL class was the comments learners received from peers and teachers to their posts” (Alm, 2006). The authenticity and the wealth of the material provided work as an incentive for students’ active engagement as they become exposed to precious links to the real world (through their virtual interaction) but in a community context. Setting common goals and sharing material assists the students in creating
their “zone of proximal development” (as individual learning is enhanced in a context of social interaction) (Vygotsky, 1978), and thus ameliorate their language proficiency. In that way, social interactions act as an incentive for learning.

Moreover, as demonstrated by researchers such as Furstenberg (1997), Warschauer (1997), Tella (1999), Paramskis (1999), O’Dowd (2006b) and (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p. 82), intrinsic motivation in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) can be augmented:

- With authenticity of the shared material aiming at a real audience;
- Developing technical skills (electronic literacy);
- Being in contact with people from all over the world and from different time zones;
- Working collaboratively without any sense of competition;
- Creating projects with personalized content;
- “Participating in authentic exchanges with peers and/or native speakers”

In fact, as Lamy and Hampel (2007) put it and in accordance with CLL principles “it seems that modern information and communication technologies are not only tools but also create empowering learning environments that support constructivist concepts of learning. Especially in the area of written conferencing, students have been reported to be less passive and more autonomous-‘freed from the inhibitory effect of teacher presence’ and to have more control over the context of language use” (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). Thus, such environments (SNSLLs) support community learning, foster creativity, active and self-paced learning as well as student-centeredness.
Chapter 3: Methodology

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of the present study is to map against CLL and intrinsic motivation theory, the pedagogical affordances of SNSLLs and gain insight from a number of studies that considered the pedagogy underpinning the large online communities of language learners such as LiveMocha, Busuu and SaberInglés. Although this kind of research is still in its embryonic stage, it is thought to be indispensable in this new era of online education at a time where online education enjoys increasing popularity. The author’s intention is to revisit the main tenets of CLL that can be applied to the context of an online environment of language exchange such as SNSLL as well as integrate some postformal pedagogy principles. Regarding the post-formal pedagogy definition we ought to underline that “A post-formal pedagogy recognizes the need to cultivate intellectual reciprocity, empathy, humility, integrity, fair-mindedness, courage, imagination, curiosity, independent critical thinking, and personal and social responsibility in the interest of liberty, human emancipation, and critical sensibility” (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1999). In fact, the most recent educational psychology trends are based on the principles of postformal education which Gidley (2016) describes as “an alternative educational approach for the 21st century” (Gidley, 2016, p. 7). It analyses why the 19th century factory-model of education, developed to meet the needs of industrial expansion, is “obsolete” (Gidley, 2016, p. 1) and why educators are in front of a great challenge concerning their entire teaching philosophy that ought to be modeled according to our era’s requirements.

Therefore, the main purpose of the author is to establish a new model of an intercultural community for language learners that is flexible, holistic and that liberates global learners from the emotional barriers that may hinder their learning. The providers of the aforementioned online communities will be encouraged to make pedagogical amendments to their platforms (both affordances and layout) to better address these issues. Overall, a transdisciplinary (connecting together CLL and postformal pedagogies) approach to the already existing communities of language learners (LiveMocha, Busuu and SaberInglés) is going to be proposed by the author in the 3rd chapter (discussion& findings), as an alternative to their corporate design (low
cost material and unstructured synchronous communication opportunities aimed at revenue generation).

As the CLL theory has been generated in an era of humanistic research findings in the field of educational psychology there is evidence that their actual application to SNSLL may add a humanistic dimension to feelings of alienation (senses of remoteness and anonymity) and depersonalization that one may experience when engaging with a distance learning (technology-mediated) experience (Lamy & Hampel, 2007, p.81). If such theory can be successfully integrated and exploited – where possible- in the design of an online language learning setting then the results may prove to be astonishing as we are passing from local communities to global ones with huge potential for all the subjects involved in terms of more effective language acquisition. Regarding the existing SNSLL research, three such communities were selected by the author. Two of them- Livemocha and Busuu - are commercial providers and were chosen because of their popularity and available studies mostly on the willingness of the learners to participate in those communities as well as issues regarding their pedagogical design. The third online community of language exchange (http://www.saberingles.com.ar/) comes from Argentina and is an English learning site for Spanish speakers. It is aimed at supporting students of all levels as well as teachers and translators. Its main goal is learning and improving one’s skills in an enjoyable way and as a free site it encourages members’ donations. This last community was thought by the author to resemble a CLL prototype (in terms of the lack of linearity of the material provided) and to offer a wide variety of resources (coming from the community of teachers and learners) with respect to the two previous ones. Thus, to the author’s knowledge, there is no published research on SaberInglés as of yet.

Although there is evidence that “the very nature of SLA as an applied discipline should lead us to accept and welcome theoretical pluralism” (Ellis, 2010, p. 1), we managed to isolate certain features of CLL that can account for a ‘change’ and a step forward to the already existing pedagogical affordances of SNSLL. To put it clearer, as language acquisition is a complex process that leads to change (Reid, 1999) educators ought to mitigate the cultural anxiety caused in an intercultural environment and encourage this identity transformation that characterizes the learning of a language. First and foremost, the absence of a syllabus which characterizes CLL is
considered ideal for a free-form style of instruction and adult learning in online settings where “users always develop personal navigational and learning trajectories” (Álvarez Valencia, 2016c, p. 78). In fact, one of the critics of CLL (Breen, 1987) underlines the little applicability of the theory to a large-scale program, for instance at school where students are supposed to follow a certain syllabus in order to pass from one class to another. It goes without saying that this kind of approach may prove to be inadequate when applied to large-conventional classrooms (Ushioda, 2011) and this is thought to be the reason why very little research has been carried out recently on CLL. On the other hand, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies has paved the path for unconventional learning environments where Counseling-Learning as one of the main features of CLL may find its space. In the author’s view it is time for CLL to be revisited and enriched with the principles of Postformal Education Philosophy (Gidley 2007a, 2008b, 2009, 2011) in the creation of alternative language learning communities that are going to be independent from global market- corporate demands. In fact, the inspiration of this study stems from a necessity for quality teaching opportunities and materials, other than drill-and-practice exercises and unstructured student interactions that are offered by the existing SNSLLs. The main principles of CLL which will be revisited are presented in the following table:

**Table 1**: Main tenets of the CLL approach (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013; Nagaraj, 2009; Stevick, 1990).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main tenets of the CLL approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Absence of a textbook.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. No predetermined curriculum imposed to the learners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Recording conversations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Free conversations among the community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Counseling-learning characterized by empathic behaviour (makes it easier for students to internalize language).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No direct evaluation-intrusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Learning grammar rules through induction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Fosters evaluative reflection (in a secure environment).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The studies presented in the next section focus on pedagogical and motivational issues in relation to the affordances of the SNSLLs to be presented. The main features of the sites as well as the pedagogical philosophy underpinning them will be examined. Moreover, each social networking site will be presented in a separate section including a description of the providers’ respective teaching methodology and how this adapts to an innate willingness to learn (intrinsic motivation) and a humanistic perspective. Overall, whether the learners obtain a personal satisfaction when immersing themselves in learning a language using the chosen SNSLL either as an additional learning source or else in a blended learning context.

3.1 Livemocha

(http://www.rosettastone.com/lp/sbsr/livemocha/?prid=livemocha_com)
LiveMocha is a global, interactive language-learning community (or else an online Social Network) with a variety of drill and practice language resources (for basic or intermediate language levels) that supports and encourages (through mochapoints badges) peer feedback and an online language exchange with native speakers of the target language. This is achieved through synchronous and asynchronous communication channels (chat, Skype connections, voice recording, forum discussion etc.) (Jee & Park, 2009). It is a combination of a social networking and instructional website that provides opportunities of learning through social interactions (Lin & Warschauer, 2011). The idea for this site was generated by its founder Shirish Nadkarni who became aware of the fact that his children after years of learning Spanish in formal educational settings were not at all able to engage in a conversation with native speakers (Liaw, 2011).

According to (Harrison & Thomas, 2009) and their study on LiveMocha both teachers and learners are allowed to “build and participate in a multimedia collaborative learning environment that are able to promote active and creative language learning”. In their project they actually examined the way that a SNSLL (in
this case LiveMocha) is suitable in tackling a number of issues highlighted in existing research such as “impression management, friendship performance, networks and network structure, and privacy issues, as well as the potential to enhance opportunities for language exchange between native and non-native speakers” (Harrison & Thomas, 2009). The main goal is to create a kind of e-pal connections (i.e. connections with virtual friends scattered across the globe) that are about to substitute the old custom of pen-pals for a new form of communication where partners can get in touch much more easily and engage in fruitful interaction at any time and in any place throughout the world. Though, in order for the interaction to be successful there may be a necessity for formal prior learning experience that could be a face-to-face one (in case learners aim at improving their actual level) as well as a pre-structured (informal) exchange (Hampel, 2006), otherwise it might end up in causing feelings of unease and frustration among the learners. In Livemocha the learners are asked to create a profile and share it with other users. Moreover, a wide range of language material (including translating tools and online dictionaries) in WEB 2.0 is available for all learners to enhance motivation and “language hunger” within a community of “like-minded” members (Harrison & Thomas, 2009; Murphey, 2006).

Another article based on online communities research is trying to gain insight into the use of three SNSLLs including Livemocha (Stevenson & Liu, 2010a). Stevenson and Liu (2010) raise concerns regarding the technical and pedagogical usability of these websites. The novelty of these communities consists mainly of the fact that “in these exchanges, the learner acts both as a student and a teacher. These language learning websites can provide the real-time, conversational aspect of learning a language that is sometimes available when visiting or living in a foreign country” (Stevenson & Liu, 2010a). It has been suggested that when knowledge is shared (through wikis, blogs, social networks etc), engagement is far more enduring and motivation is maintained for achieving long-term goals (Arnold, Ducate, Lomicka, & Lord, 2009). The participants in Arnold’s et al. study were five students (two from Taiwan and three from the US), they were all between 28 and 40 and had already language learning experience, even if mostly in a conventional classroom only though. As it is demonstrated in the study, they related their positive experience with Livemocha mainly to the “Vocabulary Training” offered by the site. Most of the learners who participated in this case study intended to learn a language for fun or for
travel and were not taking formal language classes. They also felt the necessity to have access to traditional learning material (grammar and vocabulary activities for example) and prepare before engaging in any kind of interaction with other members, both native speakers and learners of the language. It is noteworthy though that the main concern of the users was that they did not know how to assess the quality of their learning opportunities in a social network and that they were inclined to demonstrate a preference for users with some kind of teaching experience. While these learners acknowledged the linguistic empowerment through a collaborative learning experience, they recognized the empowerment they were about to gain within a collaborative learning experience, they did stress the importance of the role of the conventional language learning classroom or else formal language education. Finally, regarding the website layout, the adult learners of the study were discouraged to engage in learning experiences when the appearance seemed to recall social networks such as Facebook as they would consider it superficial and associated with a hidden “dating website” profile (Stevenson & Liu, 2010b, p. 251).

It should be underlined that such social network sites such as Livemocha and Busuu can play their part also in setting long-term goals for learning a language, though some basic knowledge may be provided in advance and under a teacher’s guidance, who will not be necessarily a native speaker of the target language. Moreover as it has been shown “native speakers are not necessarily the best partners for language learners to talk with” as they “tend to dominate speaking time, there is little negotiation of what is said and they find difficulty in quality-adjusting even if we have to do with an extremely perceptive native speaker”. Also the students when engaged in a conversation with other NNSs, they dare much more to ask questions and negotiate meaning. Students are also less afraid of making mistakes as well (Murphey, 2006, p.15)

Lin and Warschauer (2011) examined both integrative and instrumental orientation (or else intrinsic and extrinsic motivation) of individual language learners of Livemocha. Yet, they carried out international surveys where it was shown that integrative or intrinsic motivation does not gradually disappear among foreign language learners and does not depend on the learning environment as Dörnyei (2003) suggested (Lin & Warschauer, 2011, p. 62). Thus the differentiation among the two types of motivation (integrative and instrumental) first defined by Gardner (1985) is
still relevant in the context of this online community. For instance, in the aforementioned study learners of English were found to “have a higher instrumental motivation as “Learners of English have a higher instrumental orientation than learners of languages other than English, suggesting that the majority of learners of English are studying for potential practical benefits (Kim, 2009, p.151)”. Moreover, more research regarding cross-cultural and social factors that may interfere with motivation ought to be conducted on an international level in order to identify the diverse motivators that highly influence these learning interactions (Lin & Warschauer, 2011).

Lin, Warschauer and Blake (2016) in their study focused on LiveMocha, reach the conclusion that both learners’ self-esteem and motivation increased notably when engaging in a language exchange with native speakers as the learners proved to feel more comfortable when communicating with people through a social network rather than in a face-to-face class. As a result they stress rates seemed to diminish surprisingly as also suggested in previous studies (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). On the other hand, the Achilles tendon of such communities seems to be the lack of support and guidance (unavailable in the free version) for the learners, as this is supposed to be a key feature of CLL for successfully acquiring a language (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013).

As social presence and social interaction are somewhat key features in the method we are investigating, we aim to present the following conclusions of a study, always in the context of LiveMocha. According to Swan (2002) “participants in computer-media communications create social presence by projecting their identities and building online communities through verbal immediacy behaviors alone”. As the reduced body language (camera position in a skype exchange, for example) in the online communities can result in learners’ lack of motivation by means of affective barriers, a need for further investigation rises consequently. Swan focuses on course design factors that affect asynchronous online learning in the context of the social development of learning communities through online discussion among peers. His study provides interesting data regarding students’ perceptions of learning through interaction with both classmates and instructors. Important factors from the learners’ perspective were “clarity and consistency in course design”, “contact with and feedback from course instructors” and “active and valued discussion”. In such
environments new means for mitigating emotional barriers through ‘verbal immediacy behaviours’ (Swan, 2002) are provided as alternative ways to interact with fellow students. Students’ are given the opportunity in such a context for a more democratic and equitable discourse between them (Warschauer, Turbee, & Roberts, 1996, p. 5) which is not quite feasible in a face-to-face classroom as racial or social issues may rise that could hinder the learning experience.

Swan (2002) provides us with insight in LiveMocha and the way the learner becomes a social agent in a perpetual interaction both with the computer and their virtual peers. Overall he/she sheds light on how students engage in ‘meaning negotiation’, knowledge sharing and at the same time knowledge co-construction.

According to Lloyd (2012) who examined previous research findings on anxiety issues for L2 learners in Livemocha network and especially concerning the speaking practice, stress levels are notably reduced in an online setting. As a result, the learners tend to be more willing to communicate. Thus considering the holistic CLL approach were “affective difficulties are met and resolved”, LiveMocha may suit language learners with various personality features as it is mentioned that for so called extrovert language learners, there is:

“for ’extroverted learners’ there is the potential for voice chat with literally hundreds of speakers of their target language, and for more introverted learners there are the customary asynchronous communication channels”(Lloyd, 2012).

Another CLL principle that could be identified in LiveMocha features is the possibility of recording one’s own voice while speaking the language or even write a text and then submit his work for the rest of the community members to comment on. As a result, the sense of belonging to a community rises among learners (Clark & Gruba, 2010). Furthermore, this is supposed to be one of the features that mostly select to use language learners of LiveMocha, according to the aforementioned study. Finally, the possibility of recording conversations features (as the sites offer various recording widgets) contributes to facilitating language acquisition according to Curran (1968). The majority of the participants were stimulated to engage in the community exchange through the possibility of gaining extrinsic rewards “mochapoints” whereas a certain degree of “willingness to communicate” was fomented by “authentic communication contexts with native speakers” (Clark & Gruba, 2010, p. 166).
Overall, this kind of community engagement enhances metacognitive or metareflective (Overfield, 1997) strategies by enhancing intercultural awareness while helping others to learn becomes one of the main priorities for the participants.

Regarding the cultivation of intrinsically motivated learners in LiveMocha, the results of Lloyd’s study were fairly disappointing as a lack of long-term motivation was identified. In fact Lloyd (2012) contends that:

“six of the eight participants stopped using the site in that same week, as soon as the project finished. However, two participants continued to use the site and were still signing in a few months after the end of the project period” (Lloyd, 2012)

3.2 Busuu (https://www.busuu.com/)

Busuu (https://www.busuu.com/) is another SNSLL that offers courses of different languages with free and premium learning materials as well as interactive activities (pronunciation, vocabulary, dialogue, reading, video chat etc.). It is a European
company established in 2008 and it offers up to 12 European languages. It offers self-paced language courses of 180 units which are integrated with a number of interactive multimedia tools. One of its main features is a conventional “drill-and-kill” approach to the language learning material that promotes the “repetition of isolated sentences” (Álvarez Valencia, 2016a) hence it fragmentizes language information by making it difficult for the learner to maintain the whole picture of the language. It is also demonstrated by other studies that users do not benefit enough from ‘rule learning’ and drill and practice exercises (that can easily be accessible in a face to face language context) rather than exchanging language through synchronous communication tools (i.e. live chat, forums, video apps etc.) (Malerba, 2015). Unarguably, “the repetition of the same typology of exercises is one of the main factors determining learners abandonment of the platforms” (Malerba, 2015).

An important observation made by Alvarez Valencia (2015) (p.862) is that one of the most positive features of Busuu community is the Busuutalk application that through multimodal and technological approaches assists users in “building their confidence”. As the resolving of affective barriers is of paramount importance in CLL, in some cases the role of the instructor may be replaced or at least considered of secondary importance, by the implementation of technological tools and help learners avoid emotional barriers when engaging in a “dynamic co-creation” of language (Álvarez Valencia, 2016a) with their peers. In fact, (Fan, 2015) posits that the majority of the learners in his case study opted for text messaging as their preferred mode of communication. The reason for their choice was that they were reluctant to speaking English in a face-to-face setting and secondly they felt more comfortable when making language mistakes. Therefore linguistic interactions in online communities as Busuu were proved to be “less intrusive” than face-to-face interactions hence their compatibility with CLL pedagogical principles. In addition, according to the previous article the improvement of students’ digital literacy would allow them to express their emotions through the use of emoticons and thus make a fruitful use of their ‘zone of proximal development’ (Vygotsky, 1978) in the absence of emotional inhibitions.
3.3 SaberInglés (http://www.saberingles.com.ar/)

Figure 1 3 SaberInglés Homepage

This is a content-based online community of Argentina with features of a social enterprise that offers to Spanish speaking English language learners, a wide variety of authentic resources for meaningful interaction. It presents a completely different layout respect to the two aforementioned SNSLLs with rich content based and contextualized material although lacking synchronous communication features.

The site is supported by a community of teachers that upload material on a voluntary basis as this is a no profit online community that seeks for members’ donations. The available language resources are divided into the following sections:

- Basic English and English for Tourism
- A section of contextualized grammar and interactive grammar exercises
- Topic vocabulary
All the three skills such as reading, writing and listening can be practiced effectively through the use of audiovisual methods, links to social networks, blogs etc. In every section of reading and writing tasks one can find extended bibliography proposed for the goals of the respective sections.

A wide variety of authentic resources – with a very small amount of drill and practice exercises in relation to the two aforementioned communities – to be used for the learners’ objectives are available and highly recommended. Books, on-line dictionaries including interactive vocabulary presentation (http://iate.europa.eu/), on-line links for newspapers, TV programs of the BBC or Sky News, on-line libraries such as the Michigan Electronic Library are freely available.

The integration of different links including forums, blogs, suggestions, potential collaborations with language specialists are definitely an effective tool to its principal scope. The information provided is equally scattered along the screen and there are also a number of applications such as “Take a break” and “Teacher’s corner” for student’s supportive material.

The user interface design is extremely friendly even for an amateur computer user and its objective is very clearly presented. Furthermore, there is no apparent need of any support materials as the various grammar or vocabulary topics are presented in a hierarchical order of difficulty from basic to advanced level. Though, it seems that it is more appropriate for users that they already have a prior basic knowledge of the English Language and need somehow to brush up their knowledge.

As the site is designed for self-study it is not really equipped with human evaluative tools but only automatic ones. A score is always provided in all exercises and it is indicated for self-evaluation only, with non-intrusive corrective techniques. There is a teacher’s corner where teachers can make their own contributions to the community.
of learners, though there are not any tests or other kind of assessment applications uploaded by teachers.

The lessons for each level or purpose (English for tourism) are organized through indexes and there is also space for “frequently asked questions”. Each topic category such as grammar, vocabulary or songs contains a separate folder with different links to click on. Each link can be for example a certain song with its lyrics and Youtube video in order to listen to it directly. The existence of forums and blogs contributes to the solution of potential doubts or questions which can be posted and then resolved by the community of available teachers. Overall, this is a highly interactive site although its main drawback may prove to be the lack of always available instructors for guiding the learners across the learning materials as all the contributions are voluntarily offered. Such a site could be easily integrated to an ordinary classroom course, in a blended learning context, in order to enrich vocabulary and speaking skills as well as practice more grammar.

However, the exercise level is not always uniform due to the high amount of different and heterogeneous contributions. Incorrect responses are simply indicated by a cross and there are the options of “correction”, “solution” and “start from the beginning” for the filling gaps exercises. Regarding the reading comprehension and vocabulary units one can roll easily from one page to another by simply clicking “next page” or “previous page”. In addition, a large amount of English teaching methods (textbooks) are provided for the student to integrate to the site material.

Furthermore, this is an unsupported site as progress is not monitored and it is adjusted to individual learner’s needs. Moreover, it does provide cultural awareness for instance by integrating topics related to “Halloween”, films and songs that present an affinity with the lessons provided. Cooperative learning is only supported by forums and blogs where learners can exchange their views. For the rest, learners work individually in order to achieve their objectives. Emphasis is being posed on authentic material settings and learners are encouraged to learn through games and entertaining activities. Motivation stems from either inside and outside the learning environment. Learners can definitely work at their own pace and active learning is promoted (CLL). The design of the site is based on constructivist theories and it encourages inductive
learning, which means that learners work on linguistic patterns acquired through practice.

As all the material is based on members’ contributions, therefore one cannot reassure about uniformity of the teaching material as there is in no way possible to become aware of the sources. By no means can the learner be aware of the identity of the teacher claiming to have uploaded material hence the impossibility of direct contact with globally dispersed instructors.

To the author’s view, the main important features of this site is its huge availability of real-life resources such as films, songs, videos, online newspapers, live radio and TV links etc. that promote higher order thinking and a contact with contextualized material (CLL). In order to integrate it in a class schedule it could be used as a supportive audiovisual material, either for classroom or individual learning. The teacher could also assign supportive grammar or vocabulary exercises based on the topic of the lesson provided in the classroom. It is absolutely relevant to the syllabus of each level and it can be matched to a CLL environment either in a face to face lesson or online courses especially for adult users.

The teacher’s role while using the site should be that of a facilitator. He has to offer guidance as well as propose a self-study schedule with films, videos and songs associated with the subjects treated in class.

As a result, from all the above mentioned, the web site http://www.saberingles.com.ar/ can be considered an ideal tool for Spanish speaking learners who intend to refresh their prior knowledge of English as a foreign language. It does offer ideal tools for self-study and evaluation even though there are no options of synchronous communication with tutors. The most valuable applications for such a purpose are the blogs though no synchronous communication options are available. Furthermore, the use of colorful images and graphics, incites learners to immerse themselves in a fruitful language learning experience by assisting their creativity and imagination (Goldstein, 2009).
Chapter 4: Discussion and findings (link between SNSLL findings and CLL principles)

Warschauer (1996) claims that Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) with the multimodal features provided (synchronous and asynchronous communication, file sharing etc.) or else the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 20). This has been proved to have a ‘democratising effect’ in the learning process while it is considered to eliminate inequalities among the learners (discrimination versus minorities, women, shy students, students with unusual learning styles etc.) (Warschauer et al., 1996). Furthermore, students’ control over the learning process is notably enhanced in such learning environments due to the absence of a strict syllabus. Therefore through the immersion in authentic contexts where a language exchange with native speakers takes place (SNSLLs), positive emotions as “enthusiasm, initiative, and personal commitment” (Paramskas, 1993) can potentially be cultivated among learners with an eventual increase of the levels of intrinsic motivation, according to the author.

The goal of SNSLLs is to assist learners in feeling comfortable and engage in meaningful conversations with native speakers from the safe environment of their homes. Furthermore, social inequalities are thought to be eliminated as the there is no face to face contact among the community participants and “there is the advantage of the reduction in the feelings of inhibition and anxiety that often impede learners’ productive performance in traditional classroom settings” (Lloyd, 2012). Moreover, the “non-linear” learning as one of the main principles of CLL that lacks a certain syllabus, as one of the pillars of the constructivist learning approaches is one of the core philosophies of these online communities (Brick, 2012; Kramsch, 2002, p.5). Collaborative learning is enhanced by the cultivation of a “sense of community” which is compatible with CLL principles, but always in a non-competitive way. In fact, as Ryberg and Christensen (2008) have demonstrated social networking sites “can support language acquisition by offering an opportunity to learn through observation before mastering and understanding. This leads to gaining confidence and becoming legitimate, recognized member of the community, which then allows the
learner to encourage and enable learning within the community, by being teachers themselves”. On the other hand, there are aspects of lack of compatibility with CLL practices in these social networking sites. For instance, the offering of mainly “drill and practice” exercises at a basic level (Brick, 2012) that according to studies do not promote higher-order cognitive processes (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b) and long-term motivation, or aspects such as “the lack of reciprocity in a language exchange”, the non homogeneous levels of the participants and the fact that some members may prove to have other goals rather than language learning, may hinder a fruitful experience. Extensive criticism was directed to the low quality of the learning materials (Brick, 2012, p. 6) in these communities and the cognitive and behaviorism theories (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b) underpinning the exercises offered. Although it has to be underlined that we are in front of SNSLL with commercial aims that aim at producing cheap and easily assimilated material that would satisfy the majority of dispersed learners around the globe, we consider that there may be room for further improvement. Not to mention that the complete lack of “guidance” provided by a facilitator-language teacher with formal knowledge may result in using Web 2.0 applications with a Web 1.0 pedagogy (Harrison & Thomas, 2009) as in order for students to engage in structured language learning, a need for guidance and goal setting has shown to be indispensable (Hampel, 2006). Unarguably, the teachers’ participation (mainly with the role of a coordinator) in assisting students to develop critical and intercultural capacities is a decisive element in order to achieve successful learning at distance learning projects (Kern, 2006) something that is not actually offered through SNSLL as “the close monitoring of student exchanges are also crucial to the success of telecollaborative projects” (Kern, 2006).

In fact, always in the context of cultivating willingness to learn among global learners we must come to terms with authenticity in language learning (Gilmore, 2007). This implies the inclusion of relevant and meaningful activities that create connections with the everyday life contexts or that engage students emotionally (i.e. through poetry, paintings and artistic education in general). As Willis contends “long lists of vocabulary that don’t have a personal relevance or don’t resonate with a topic about which the student has been engaged are likely to be blocked by the brain’s affective or emotional filters” (“How To Make Learning Relevant To Your Students (And Why It’s Crucial To Their Success),” 2014). Overall, according to Willis,
“relevance” is a key concept for learners in order to be motivated intrinsically. This is also reflected in the conclusions drawn by Immordino-Yang and Faeth in (Immordino-Yang & Faeth, n.d) “When students are involved in designing the lesson, they better understand the goal of the lesson and become more emotionally invested in and attached to the learning outcomes. This participatory approach has the power to instill in students a sense of ownership that can go a long way toward making later learning meaningful and the emotions they experience relevant”. In fact, when learners are engaged in social constructivist contexts they become emotionally engaged with the content and therefore are intrinsically motivated and inclined to achieving better results. In Stevick (2002) underlines the importance of affective variables in foreign language retention and thus ‘personal meaning’ and ‘personal involvement’ are decisive elements for effective and long-term learning (Stevick, 2002).

In addition, one of the weaknesses of social networking sites that follow such a model is the use of decontextualised material (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b, p. 79) that can cause frustration to the learners. In CLL practices, a highly structured environment which is monitored by a teacher-facilitator is a prerequisite for the success of the learning experience and for keeping the learners intrinsically motivated (Harrison & Thomas, 2009, p. 113; Hampel, 2006). In fact, as the learners are free to use the community at their own pace, it may prove to be difficult to maintain a constant self-discipline and motivation to learn (Jee & Park, 2009, p.454) when there are no clear goals and structure for them to follow. Therefore, higher levels of learner autonomy may be the prerequisite for successful learning in such environments. Not to mention that structure and goal setting can not be supported by casually dispersed learners who may not possess a formal education in language learning and by doing so at a voluntary basis (a lot of unpaid work) (Clark & Gruba, 2010). To put it clearer, the contribution of professional facilitators that are supposed to structure the whole exchange is paramount and should not be left to casual contributions of community members. In addition, important issues regarding the quality and the accuracy of peer assessment may arise due to non homogenous groups of participants and where no entry level tests are required in order to review others work (Jee & Park, 2009). Moreover, meaning making can not be achieved just by providing learners with an input that does not promote higher order thinking and fragmentizes knowledge (Gidley, 2016). In fact, Stevick (2002) stresses that we are in need of activities that
can engage students holistically and that equally consider the intellectual and emotional dimensions of the person.

As a result from the exploration, the following recommendations can be derived and presented in clusters in the following table:

**Table 2:** Proposed pedagogical model (Álvarez Valencia, 2016b; Gidley, 2016, p. 145; Dornyei & Gajdatsy, 1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal educational principles underpinning the actual pedagogical approach of SNSLL</th>
<th>CLL approach to SNSLL and integration of Postformal Pedagogies (Gidley, 2016, p. 145)²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Atomistic, reductionist</td>
<td>• Holistic, person-centered (CLL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Simple mechanical structure (i.e. drill and practice exercises)</td>
<td>• Complex organic structure (taking into account both emotions and intellect)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Straight line, sequential (i.e. textbook structure)</td>
<td>• Non linear language learning, absence of syllabus (CLL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disciplinary segregation, specialization and territorialism of knowledge (i.e. to consider a language to be separated from its culture)</td>
<td>• Transdisciplinary integration, pluralism and do-territorialisation of knowledge (intercultural awareness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cognitivist and behaviourist orientation</td>
<td>• Social-constructivist orientation (CLL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Privileging of brain</td>
<td>• Cognitive-affective-participatory, brain-heart balance (CLL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Knowledge as static, objective content, information-based</td>
<td>• Knowledge as process, subjective-objective capacity, wisdom-oriented (evaluative reflection) (CLL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Values-neutral, secular</td>
<td>• Values-oriented, spiritual internal development-growth (i.e. equality among members, empathy, humanistic approach as CLL principles)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language as objective tool, or pragmatic instrument of communication</td>
<td>• Language as subjective-objective, imaginative, metaphoric medium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

²The principles presented here are the ones proposed by Gidley (2016) as it is believed by the author that could apply to an SNSLL learning context.
The proposed model implies an inclusion of the principles of “Integral & Holistic Education”, “Social & Emotional Education”, “Aesthetic Artistic & Poetic Education” “An Education that cultivates Creativity & Imagination as well as Critical Thinking & Wisdom” (Gidley, 2016, p. 148) in a CLL context of a SNSLL. Needless to say that the aim and the educational value of the following activities are to enhance speaking skills and active vocabulary being those a core concept of CLL (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013). The possibility for the students to keep records of their activities and to share them with their peers can be proved to be an exceptional linguistic exercise. In fact, a tool selection such as Google Hangouts (Isaacson, 2013) for video and document sharing, recording features (CLL core concept) and possibility of embedding the video into a website, as well as Google+ social network is considered to be highly advantageous. As a learning tool we would opt to utilize the Google Hangout platform as it combines a variety of features, including the Google+ social network which is likely to be used instead of Facebook, for the participants’ convenience. The main purpose for implying a social network tool within the online community is to assist students in forming a community of practice, foster social interactions and collaborative sense and therefore enhance students’ retention of new acquired vocabulary in a real context setting (Zheng, Han, Rosson, & Carroll, 2016). Furthermore, after having completed the activities the students could keep on staying in contact for as much time as they wish, exchanging views and interacting with each
other. To the author’s view, it is of paramount importance for language learners to stay in touch with their fellow students and instructors even after the learning experience has reached its initial goals.

Table 3: Proposed activity types and roles in SNSLL (Dornyei & Gajdatsy, 1989; Arroyo, 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed activity types and roles in a SNSLL model revisited according to the aforementioned principles (outline)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Adopting a special name in group or an Avatar (identity creation).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Icebraking activity as stress mitigating: i.e. record a small video in <a href="http://www.ustream.tv/">http://www.ustream.tv/</a> introducing themselves to the community (in English as a lingua franca) or else post a photo of the place they reside and provide the others with small clues in order to guess the city or country they reside. Share the videos with the other members of the community. The rest of the members should feel free to comment or like (the possibility of selecting their preferred path, for shy students). In fact as mentioned earlier in this work, shy students perform better in an online environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Remoteness facilitates the avoidance of clique formation and therefore effective integration of the newcomers. The online Community is independent of space and time as learning can take place anytime and anywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Since the establishment of the community, agreement on certain rules that ought to be followed by the community members. The facilitator just suggests a set of rules that are going to be approved or not by simply clicking an OK button. The majority wins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Encourage the formation of open-groups. Students choose their own partners according to the information found in the account created by their peers. The information contained is not going to be mere personal information but will include hobbies, favorite ways of learning a language etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Create a wiki on a famous historical event, painting or poem (Arroyo, 2011) where everybody’s contribution will become a starting point for group discussion.

7. Using messages or hashtags for a topic introduction.

8. Virtual performance, role-play, role exchange and drama activities for language learning.

9. Integration of literature and fine arts in the context of meaningful activities.

10. All activities accompanied by background music as anxiety alleviating.

11. The group facilitators are alternated according to their availability for assisting the group.

12. Resilience of the facilitator while designing the activities. Adaptable materials according to the students’ needs.

13. “Value every member equally as a contributor to group resources” (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003).

14. No fixed positions for the group members.

15. Facilitators participating themselves in the group activities.

16. Originality and authenticity of the facilitator.

17. Encourage group members to create group logos.

18. Proposed activities: Close your eyes and listen to the background music with your headphones. Try to concentrate on the feelings that have generated during your listening to the music. Could you share your thoughts with your global peers? Feel free to express yourself.

19. Exercises of collective (or could be visual) poetry (J. Arnold, 2000, p. 229) i.e. Friendship is…A wiki will be used from the group to contribute to writing this poem.
4.1 The philosophy of the proposed online humanistic activities

“Humanistic, affective, or awareness exercises…attempt to blend what students feel, think, and know with what they are learning in the target language … self-actualization and self-esteem are the ideals the exercises pursue” (Moskowitz, 1978, p. 1).

A number of alternative- humanistic activities that include poetry, fine arts and teaching grammar through songs are presented and inspired by aesthetic pleasure and stress mitigating techniques. The proposed humanistic activities take into account both intellectual and emotional students’ needs that could be integrated to an SNSLL. The content of the activities is aimed at enhancing students’ self-esteem through the presentation of content-based activities that take into account the emotions, experiences and the lives of our students (Arnold, 2000, p. 198). What really matters in such kind of tasks is learning through sharing their experiences with the rest of their peers. In fact some studies have demonstrated that engaging students in humanistic activities they managed to perform better both in written and in oral practice with regard to other groups that have only received formal education. In addition, they have demonstrated greater self-confidence, self-awareness and a positive attitude towards the language classroom (Galyean, 1977). The formal aspects of language learning (such as gap filling exercises) are almost excluded from this kind of teaching approach as they are considered by the author to better adjust to a formal education classroom setting. The online environment requires a more flexible task design in order to engage students. The aim of this kind of exercises is to give personal relevance to the learning experience and to connect it to a real life context (Rinvolucri, 1999). In fact Rogers (1983) confirms his vision about humanistic education by stating that when utilizing global personal capacities (and not only cognitive ones) we liberate the right hemisphere of our mind which is responsible for our intuition, global learning (whole picture realization). This part of our mind is more aesthetic than logic and is responsible for creativity (artistic as well as scientific). The logic of this kind of exercises we are about to present is not for us to correct formal errors to our students but to help them clarify their meanings. In these cases the boredom of our students is going to be reduced to a minimum as what prevails is the
inexpectancy, the spontaneity and novelty of such experience (Rinvolucri, 1999) and that is how intrinsic motivation rises potentially. It is our aim to propose activities that are inspired by the main principles of CLL as well as postformal education tenets that imply a person globally. For instance when teaching grammar or syntax it is advisable for the facilitators to do so by means of fine arts, songs or cultural artifacts. And Web 2.0 is indeed a prosperous and multimodal environment that could offer educators numerous opportunities for experimentation in relation to task design. Provided that it is not possible for the online community to meet at the same time it would be almost impossible to provide them with activities that require for example “respiration exercises”. That is why it is our intention to play mostly with mental images stimulated by visual and acoustic stimuli and overall make use of the multimodality that such an environment do provide us. These stimuli may include a fine art painting (i.e. “Las meninas” of Diego Velázquez for teaching the Spanish baroque era), a song (i.e. the song of the singer Luz Casal “Un año de amor” that facilitates the teaching of the simple future tense in Spanish) or even a cultural artifact (i.e. a mop and its history) that could capture students’ interest and therefore help inductive learning. Another means aimed to be utilized for achieving a harmonic learning process is the use of baroque music (in the background) as it helps mental processes in their receptive phase with an emphasis in symmetry and regularity (Quast, 1999) by providing a “mental hygiene effect of music”.

Overall, stating Lozanov (1979) fine arts and aesthetics could deeply influence our thought and provide us with both physical and mental health. In this way students can achieve their psychophysical equilibrium which is the desired emotional state for obtaining better results when learning a language. As he explains the secretion of hormones, endorphins in particular, inhibits the creation of painful sensations and therefore generate pleasure. Another example is poetry which through its rhythm and harmony has been proven to have a tranquilizing effect. To put it clearer, Lozanov in his English classes extensively used poetic texts replete with symbols and paradoxes. The author proposes an alternative way for teaching i.e. grammar topics in Spanish that can usually cause emotional barriers to second language learners. The activities that follow are inspired by the principles presented in Table 2.
4.2 Sample activities that match a CLL approach

4.2.1 Learning Spanish pronouns (in an inductive way) through poetry and using metalanguage.

Underline the Spanish pronouns and see how they affect our poet emotionally. Which value does the author attributes to the pronouns? Do you agree with him? How does he feel about his partner? (level B2).

Figure 1 4 Pedro Salinas "La voz a ti debida"(27 et al., n.d.)

LA VOZ A TI DEBIDA of Pedro Salinas (1891-1951) [14] (Versos 494 a 521)

20. Para vivir no quiero
   islas, palacios, torres.
   ¡Qué alegría más alta:
   vivir en los pronombres!
   Trans: How happy it feels to live among pronouns!

21. Quítate ya los trajes,
   las señas, los retratos;
   yo no te quiero así,
   disfrazada de otra,
   hija siempre de algo.
   Te quiero pura, libre,
   irreductible: tú.
   Sé que cuando te llame
   entre todas las gentes
   del mundo,
sólo tú serás tú.
Y cuando me preguntas
quién es el que te llama,
el que te quiere suya,
enterraré los nombres,
los rótulos, la historia.
Iré rompiendo todo
lo que encima me echaron
desde antes de nacer.
Y vuelto ya al anónimo
eterno del desnudo,
de la piedra, del mundo,
tédiré:
«Yo té quiero, soy yo».

22.
23. Pedro Salinas

4.2.2 Teaching the use of subjunctive in prospective actions in Spanish through songs (level B2).

Song “Piensa en mí” of Luz Casal

Figure 15 Luz Casal "Piensa en mí" (“Luz Casal - Piensa en mi - YouTube,” n.d.)

Useful links
http://www.todomusica.org/luz/ (Biografía de Luz Casal)
Provide the students with song lyrics with gaps in order for them to listen to the song and complete with the missing information. Afterwards they are asked to search the information provided through the links and ask them to see the film “High heels” of Pedro Almodóvar. The students will be incited to watch the fragment of the film where the song is performed and ask them to explain to their peers what have happened. Then some vocabulary is going to be explained by the facilitator requesting the learners to look up the rest of the words and to get assistance from their peers. Furthermore, they are going to be introduced to the quintessential of sentimental expression in Spanish which is done through the use of the subjunctive mode as well the use of subjunctive in prospective actions that is one of the problematic areas of teaching Spanish as a second language. In fact their capacity of abstraction and higher-order thinking will be widely exercised.

Skills to be exercised: Listening comprehension, writing expression, oral expression and vocabulary (Hernández Ballesteros, n.d.).

4.2.3 The use of past tenses through collective narration, (learning scenario of 45 minutes).

Subject: Spanish Language for advanced students (level C1 of the European Common Framework for languages)

Topic: An Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age (digital storytelling in www.storyboardthat.com)

The following comic creation is based on the theatrical play Life is a Dream (La vida es sueño) of Pedro Calderón de la Barca published in 1635 and it is a philosophical allegory concerning the mystery of the human life as well as the irrationality of the human nature that in many cases can lead to unexpected situations.

The intention of the present activity is mainly to familiarize students with the Spanish baroque universals, characterized by the theatricalisation of life, the theatrical representation of the drama, the scenography of the XVII century, concepts of honor
code and gallantry, the politics, the philosophy and the morality of this specific historical period in Spain. The activity is going to be accompanied by authentic photos of Spanish corrales, which are the typical theatres of the Spanish Golden Age and apart from familiarizing the students with the vocabulary and the specific expressions of the time, there is going to take place an in-depth discussion of this baroque’s highest expression.

The digital story consists of the presentation of the main key points of the play and they are selected by the author, according to the universality of the expressed ideas. In fact, the play fragments included are all attributed to the edition of 1635 (Barca, 1994). The comic is intended to be used as a prompt for discussion and the students will be asked to comment on certain topics expressed by the heroes of the drama. After having discussed the play the students are going to be asked to watch the theatrical representation, to write their own review and post it in a blog created for that purpose. Furthermore, they will be asked to make a web search on the best maintained corrales in Spain and the history of the two best known corrales of the era: el Corral de la Cruz and el Corral del Príncipe (Prisma, 2011). As their final task they will be assigned the role (in pairs) to design a multimedia poster in glogster.com, advertising a theatrical festival in Spain.

Finally, they would take advantage of this occasion for practicing the past tenses in Spanish as they will be expected to demonstrate advanced narrative skills. As an overall objective of the present activity, the students would gain insight on certain cultural aspects (strictly related to the language), they will be encouraged to become global learners in the process of language learning (facilitated by the present content-based approach), strengthen their critical capacities and last but not least they will familiarize themselves with narrative techniques, indispensable for an advanced learner.
4.2.4 Linguistic deviation exercises for vocabulary retention

The use of “greguerías” of Ramón Gómez de la Serna and visual poetry in general for acquiring vocabulary (Benetti, Casellato, & Messori, 2004).

The term “greguería” is attributed to a novel and modernist literary genre that was created in the 1910, in Spain by the poet and writer Ramón Gómez de la Serna. “It can be defined as essentially an ingenious concept in prose, an image, a surprising comparison, an attempt to redefine facets of reality metaphorically through,
unexpected, novel, and humorous associations” (Jackson, 1963). These are mainly short compositions which are characterized by a concise content. Some examples of “greguerías” are following:

**Figure 1.8** "The zeroes are the eggs that went out of the rest of the numbers" (“Pasatiempo: Greguerías matemáticas,” n.d.)

**Figure 1.9** Describing your cat (“National Poetry Month – Spanish ideas «¡Vámonos!,” n.d.)

**Figure 1.10** "The parenthesis is born from the eyebrows of the writer" (Behance, n.d.)
As a task the students will be asked to interpret them and share their thoughts with their peers. Then write a collective poem in a wiki that is going to be inspired by the modernist principles of automatic writing (“Surrealism & Automatic Writing: The politics of destroying language,” n.d.). Their interpretation is not going to be subjected to any rules but they will be asked to feel free to openly express their inner feelings and thoughts.

4.2.5 The use of fine arts in language activities for promoting both linguistic and intercultural awareness (level C1 of the European Common Framework for languages).

Spanish impressionism paintings.

**Figure 11** “Los guitarristas, costumbres valencianas”. (1889) ("El traje se escapa del cuadro | Madrid | EL PAÍS,” n.d.)

Task: the students will be asked to perform a digital dialogue by choosing a number of different paintings depicting everyday life sceneries, of the impressionist painter Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida (1863-1923). The student will be offered the opportunity for a virtual visit to the museum ([http://www.mecd.gob.es/msorolla/inicio.html](http://www.mecd.gob.es/msorolla/inicio.html)) and select among a number of different paintings. Students will be asked to select the one they prefer and write a monologue for a person in the painting as well. As a result they will be incited to write a dialogue or a ‘screenplay’, rehearse it (in small groups), perform it and record it in google hangouts platform (Goldstein, 2009, p. 218).
Chapter 5: Conclusive remarks

The pedagogical issues addressed in this study raise concerns regarding three online communities of language learners and the affordances they provide. Starting with the theoretical background that characterizes CLL and intrinsic motivation the attention is directed towards applying the theoretical principles to those three online environments of SNSLL.

The aims of the present study were to investigate the opportunities for applying the theories of Community Learning to SNSLLs settings as well as to examine whether the aforementioned three major language learning providers can stimulate intrinsic motivation, in thousands of independent adult learners.

Guided by the principles of CLL, the author examines existing research on three online communities of language learners by selecting a number of studies that investigate pedagogical as well as motivational issues with the exception of one community (SaberInglés) which is examined from scratch. The intention was to map the pedagogical tenets of the three examined language learning communities against the CLL principles and discover the weaknesses as well as the strong points that characterize these online environments. Each online community is presented and analyzed in terms of its pedagogical affordances and willingness to learn (intended as the rising of intrinsic motivation) from the learners’ point of view. In addition, in the section that followed there was an overview of all the investigated SNSLLs and of the author’s proposals as to how the principles of CLL could be integrated into the activities currently provided. The novelty of this section is reflected in the integration of CLL with the tenets of postformal pedagogies introduced by Gidley (2016). In fact the latter are considered to add a humanistic value to language teaching through SNSLL and contribute together with CLL into creating a holistic language teaching environment that it is not actually offered by the existing providers. As the online setting is neither homogeneous nor predictable it could be offered for non linear (CLL), informal and postformal learning experiences that take into account the dispersed learners’ both emotional and cognitive state. The main aim is to achieve the desired harmony (of both mind and body) as well as self-esteem as a prerequisite for successful and effective language learning (De Andrés, 1999).
Furthermore, some humanistic activities were proposed and inspired by the principles presented in clusters in table 2. Those tasks highly promote aesthetic pleasure and reduction of anxiety levels as all they require is complete self-engagement without intrusive evaluative techniques. The activities proposed a way to include poetry, history, cultural artifacts and fine arts (in the context of meaningful interactions) as it is has been proven that the raising of an intercultural awareness also enhances linguistic awareness (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013).

The limitation of the present thesis was the small amount of research carried out in this area of study and the limited concern regarding educational psychology issues in SNSLL settings. However, further research should be undertaken in the future as the advent of technology in language learning and teaching poses a great challenge on how to integrate technology in a way that seriously addresses the humanistic dimension in virtual-globalised learning environments.
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