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Rapid e-Learning, as an informal educational tool for advanced students

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Summary
This article deals with the possibility of introducing rapid e-Learning software, usually used by teachers and content producers, into a hybrid learning paradigm and informal educational tool. The advantage of using this kind of software in virtual classrooms represents the birth of two different but correlated free resources markets among the classic Virtual Learning Environment (VLE): one with simple resources, useful to be combined among them in order to create more complex digital contents, and another one made up of several complex resources coming from previous internal resources markets or, alternatively, directly from the Web. The access to these internal markets could promote new modalities of e-Learning among students and increase the consciousness of media education in their approach to contents.

Rapid e-Learning is able to answer the need of creating synchronized digital contents and blending different kinds of materials into one format compatible with common VLEs. Therefore, if used as Web 2.0-like tools, rapid e-Learning software can grant the e-learner autonomy to produce self-made contents and the possibility to use a tool which helps e-learners to re-interpret and share more complex resources implying a higher level of understanding and re-building. To do this it is necessary to partially modify Salmon's model, in such a way that the e-Learning path is compatible with an informal approach based on the use of rapid e-Learning tools, provided that students will discuss the results of their self-production within classical VLE.

Keywords: Informal learning, content, strategies.

1 The future challenges of informality for Instructional Designers and Teachers

The openness of the educational context in el2 makes better responsible e-learners but risks to leave them alone in building their knowledge and in the way in which they decide to negotiate and share it with other colleagues or online users. The excess of freedom without a previous full consciousness of informal learning implications can reduce individual performance, owing to the common behavior of thinking participants as a classroom, and of working together in a defined group or similar setting (wrap around or collaborative approaches). So, a good part of scientific literature thinks that the best way to give importance to informality, without running all its risks, is integrating forms of informal learning process into traditional online learning paths (Bonaiuti, ed, 2006). This solution implies the ability – for instructional designers and teachers - of not reducing the positive effects concerning with a more open environment, such as the Web itself, in connection with the necessary strength of maintaining that freedom within an institutional "box", rich in rules, interaction tools and starting materials, partially created or chosen by online teacher.

Formality in an education path can be considered as equivalent to a communitarian or group setting in which each participant has a – more or less determined – role and can interact with other colleagues even through a sort of chief, a leader, or less a coordinator, known in e-Learning context as "e-tutor" (Rotta & Ranieri, 2005). The presence of rules and roles is the prove of a sort of rigidity in e-Learning path, that expresses itself through specific tools which are thought and used primarily according to teacher's/e-tutor's point of view (Varisco, 2002). Even the degree of openness regarding the VLE (Garavaglia, 2006) is considered as an instructional choice according to the structure and the aims of the learning path. Each professional involved in the learning process has a precise scheme of actions and each part, every single content provided, although it will be personalized and rebuilt by e-learners in a collective way (Santilli, 2006).

Informality has deep differences from formality in education: the same idea of a path is completely different and it is interpreted as an uncontrollable collection of learning moments that both e-learner and teacher/tutor ignore at the beginning. Learning becomes a discovering adventure in which the true aim of the "path" is running in every direction and share own discoveries and own points of view with "occasional travel colleagues". Nothing is pre-determined. Learners' freedom allows them to understand, negotiate and share meanings with people of all over the world: students become producers and at the same time consumers of knowledge, in respect to the recent "prosumer" neologism (Tapscott & Williams, 2007) that indicates this kind of fusion as the moment in which web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2005) transforms passive online users into online advanced and participative people. It is difficult to control this kind of learning path, it is limiting to indicate how e-learners can use available interactive tools and it is even unnatural to pretend precise learning goals and productions at the end of learning experience.

The evolution of technology pushes towards kinds of learning more and more similar to informal paradigm, because the availability and the intrinsic simplicity of online tools led to a customizable use of the Internet, in which the same context can be subject to several modifications and/or integrations by a potential unlimited number of users. It is reducing also the difference between user and learner, because serendipity and free personal discover are phenomena connected with the nature of the Internet and they promote in a very interesting way a new modality of learning (Siemens, 2006) which is not sequential, but reticular, which is not predetermined but which follows the user's interests and can led him to explore new boundaries and themes he has never thought before. Structured learning and any "box" in which are prepared the tools the e-learners must use is a non-sense for new generation' students: it struggles with the principles and the freedom of the Internet and it must acknowledge instead the advantages regarding informal e-Learning and try to include the best of informal lesson into traditional formal learning paths. This choice represents an ideal mix for formal education, which cannot accept the destruction of any kind of structure, materials, tools opportunely prepared but teachers, still paying attention on the way with which all the e-Learning environment is used, because the release of a certification is directly connected with the verification of each learning passage and the certification of the competencies must be necessarily subjected to a prebuilt path. For other kinds of competencies, more directly regarding every-day life, for which it is not necessary the release of an official certification, informal or non formal solutions can be fully adopted.

2 Rapid e-Learning tools as social software

In particular, informality can be considered not only an essential feature of learning environment, but it represents a way of thinking the learning process: so, the abolition or strong openness of the environment does not exclude other pedagogical solutions which can change the modality of use of several traditional tools or some technologies built for formal purposes. An example can be represented by rapid e-Learning, to which belong all authoring tools that teachers use within their online courses: the possibility of synchronizing many resources, although they have different formats, into one directly implementable in a VLE (and whose fruition is acknowledged as a standard and easily accessible) must be considered a typical

product useful for an e-Learning 1.0 didactics. But, the same tool, the same technology can be used in a different way, changing the paradigm and making e-learners protagonist of sharable content production in several places of the Web. Even social software can be used in a classical e-Learning approach, if , for example, a teacher decides to make a video and collocate it into Youtube service and gives his students the task of viewing it on the Web.

2.1 Rapid e-Learning growth and advantages

Rapid e-Learning solutions are represented by all software that are able to produce complete multiplatform digital content, which can be included into several e-Learning courses, through a simpler and less expensive production processes. So, using pre-existent wide-spread file formats (such as Microsoft Powerpoint ™. Macromedia Flash ™, Adobe Acrobat ™ and many others), which includes sounds, images, documents, videos, these rapid e-Learning tools often combine all source files into one (most of the times a flash movie file, thanks to it scarce dimension), providing to its execution through an adequate interface which assures users to navigate within the content. According to a study of Bersin & Associates, written by De Vries & Bersin (De Vries & Bersin, 2004) there are seven factors which characterizes rapid e-Learning productions:

- "Courseware which can be developed in less than three weeks;
- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) act as the primary resource for development;
- A well-know tool (e.g. Powerpoint) or user-friendly templates form the starting point for courseware;
- Simple assessment, feedback and tracking provided;
- Media elements which enhance learning but do not create technology barriers may be included (e.g. voice);
- Learning modules can be taken in one hour or less, often in less than 30 minutes;
- Synchronous (live) and asynchronous (self-paced) models may be utilized."

The great evolution and growth of rapid e-Learning is doubt to several economic factors which impacted on e-Learning companies' way of producing digital contents for time-critical solutions: in order to answer the necessity of culling high-level costs related to the complex organizational structure involved in designing and producing text, images, animations, assessments, cooperative activities and didactic support. The time required to design and perform a whole e-Learning project cannot be reduced and the economic resources involved are obviously very important. Time and cost in traditional approach were therefore essential factors which were able to influence the decision for an e-Learning company of producing or not an online course (Boccolini & Perich, 2004). Rapid e-Learning tools are made for quick solutions according to traditional producing approach, but they can be also thought, with some arrangements, as a social software, as we see in the following paragraph.

2.2 Rapid e-Learning as a social low-cost effective learning activity

What matters for an informal approach is making the technology as a successful tool, able to reach the following essential aims[1], regarding an authentic web2.0 didactics:

- technology had to make easily possible for students the production of self-made digital contents;
- technology had to make easily possible for students to share their digital contents;
- technology had to make easily possible for students to use and re-use digital contents.

[1] The three aims individuated explain what distinguishes traditional virtual community from new generation social software: in fact, while communities based on forum, chat, repository make easy access to use and re-use and share resource, only the additive function of self-production allows them to transform into a web 2.0-oriented reality. It is the additive possibility of discussing self-made shared resources which characterizes the nature of web communities 2.0: in this sense the most of known social software can be considered as new generation virtual communities.

The first point focuses on the necessary freedom of creating online resources, in different formats and digital solutions, in order to express student's point of view about something[2]: it means that students can create resources starting from existing online materials or, alternatively, create new resources in absolute terms. The production act therefore can already represent a sort of interpretation of the online knowledge flow individuated by e-learner, captured by him and rebuilt in a new personal way[3].

The second point focuses on the necessary freedom of making available for all online users the production made by every single student, so that every casual netsurfer can access to it, understand and eventually comment it, alimenting the knowledge flow of the web: casual users can give some stimulus to students and add, modify, integrate digital contents just present in cyberspace, offering an interesting experience of informal teaching/learning (Prensky, 2001). Sharing is also necessary in order to make a comparison among available online resources about the same theme, stimulating student to research, to value, to understand, to re-interpret reality and eventually re-build his production. Around online sharing services born a virtual community which primarily discuss about resources present in it: occasional users or affiliated users can add comment, make references and links, create even a personal chart of favorite resources to which people can access in order to understand personal preferences. So, many social software which offer the possibility of create and share resources (Cicognini, Mangione, Fini, & Sartini, 2007; (Pettenati, Cicognini, Mangione, & Guerin, 2007) can be considered as a sort of web community 2.0 (which differs from 1.0 ones, for the possibility of creating resource directly on them).

The third point, strongly connected with the previous ones is the possibility of using and re-using available digital contents by students - as teachers usually do with learning objects (Giacomantonio, 2007) - at the same way in which students can access to other users' resources, students' ones must be available for modification and integration for all online people.

All technologies which respond to previous three conditions can be assumed as web2-like. But, as we said before, there are also technologies, not originally thought as web2.0-oriented, which allow the implementation of web 2.0 approach: it is important therefore to use technologies according to informal paradigm. So, web 2-like technologies are all ones that are used in a way that grants the self-made production, the possibility of sharing, the availability of using and re-using digital contents. So, rapid e-Learning solutions, if used in this way, can be considered as web2 technology. Rapid e-Learning represents a stand-alone software for didactical solution similar to many known social software, because they allow self-made production and the use and re-use of them, but their limitation is primarily represented by a relative difficulty in sharing the contents: it is necessary another technology that is able to collect digital contents into a sort of general virtual flexible box (such as a blog, a wiki or simply a VLE!). Social software often integrates sharing service in it. So, we can make a first question: how can make web 2-like rapid e-Learning tools?

In order to answer this question, we must analyze in detail the features, the structure of a typical social software and make the same for a rapid e-Learning tool. The principal feature which is evident for all social software is that they are all only server-based applications: in other words, user must connect to the Internet and use the tools of the environment without any "local" operation: he does not install something on his PC, he must not have a specific software (the unique exception is the operative system and a browser) in order to use the social software. Server-side applications have the advantage of making all available for user and promote the content production directly where they will be collocated: this feature would have scarce significance if just created resources are not directly made sharable through the same software.

[2] In a web 2.0 approach it is less important speaking about user or e-learner, because online user, through serendipity and freedom of cybersurfing, is continuously learning in the Web.

[3] This paper does not take in count of copyright implications. In any case, we assume that for strictly didactical purposes, it must be adopted a free copyright license or, at least, open content with the possibility of making derivative works (see Creative Commons License and GPL).

The application in this second case could represent only a way to store files created with it; but the storage can be easily connected with the possibility of sharing the result of user's activity. The birth and the maintaining of the knowledge flow is essentially connected with the short passage from the creation to the sharing of knowledge in all its forms. The more is short that passage, the more the cyberflow is fluid.

If we look at the structure and the functions of social software and rapid learning software we notice that are approximately the same: server-side application is a sort of reproduction of stand-alone software and, owing to the continuous spreading of web 2.0, we probably will see in future the decadency of client-side applications, beginning with those that have office automation functions.

The previous comparison allows us to understand that what make different social software from rapid e-Learning ones is the possibility of sharing directly the product of their use: so, we can answer to our first question that rapid e-Learning can be used as a social software, if it is represented as a server-side application, able to make directly sharable files produced by it. It is possible in two different ways: first, developing specific software of this kind similar to social software; second, using stand-alone rapid e-Learning applications in a web 2.0 way, that is engaging students in the use of software for sharable purposes. This last case is represented by the solution of distributing licensed copies of the same software to all students and invite them to create double-way resources: more precisely, students can create both single integrable original resources and complex packed resources, so that they can build two free different 'resource-markets'. Original single resources can be used, re-used, shared in many ways in order to create new or in order to add/modify more complex already available on the Internet (or on the other market); complex resources can be used, re-used and shared too, but at an higher level of complexity and quality. Students can therefore choice between creating a new resource, beginning from simple resources, or to re-build existing resources adding/modifying it, using other simple resources personally created or created by others. The markets so determined are obviously not in competition or alternative to each other.

Rapid e-Learning in this way represents a sort of additive educational tool, thanks to an higher level of understanding, re-interpreting and re-using that it implies without cutting the possibility of sharing and creating simpler resources. It is important to evidence that while social software now available still show certain difficulties in granting portability of shared resources from a server-side system to another (although the formats used are widely accepted and known), and appear as mono-format (in other words, collect only photos or videos or presentations) rapid e-Learning software allows a perfect possibility of integration of several formats without risk of portability and, secondly, it can export a synchronized integration into an unique format widely accepted as flash. It is easy to think that the more the web becomes our learning environment the more it can be rich in compatible multi-format social software which grant portability of common resources created and shared by users.

2.3 Rapid e-Learning's ecological compliant in education

Rapid e-Learning tools answer also to an ecological didactics, and, in particular to a didactical ergonomics, that is a science between ergonomics and educational technology, which has the task of guarantying a good relationship between human beings and machines at an acceptable level of cognitive load (Calvani, 2001, p.83); constructivist approach to knowledge, adopted and enhanced by social software use, is only a sort of pre-condition to an authentic environment where will be built a collective intelligence, because the risk of isolation, cognitive overload, dependence are always present, and can prevail if teachers and instructional designer do not provide a good balance among all resources and a conscious recourse to Web as Personal Learning Environment. Rapid e-Learning, reversing the role of e-learner and designers, gives e-learner the responsibility of building artifacts in which media must be included in an ecological modality (Postman, 1979) able to assure a simple way of fruition and understanding. e-Learners, learning through the Internet and using the Web an universal collective repository, understand the importance of media education and of didactical

ergonomics, and try to offer their solutions to technological hypertrophy, information overload and cognitive leveling. The inclusion of rapid e-Learning in a socio-cultural constructivist perspective, open to web 2.0 paradigm can stimulate e-learner to have a better relationship with media (Buckingham, 2007), trying to select among all resources those that really interest them and to use those resources in an ecological approach, proposing personal artifacts with an internal media balance for themselves and for all users of the Internet.

The advantage can be viewed also to a different approach to media offered by the occasion of self-producing artifacts as instructional designers, modulating again the relationship between human beings and media (Ong, 1986; De Kerckhove, 1993; Lévy, 1992): it is true that the recourse to technology can enhance our capabilities in doing may things, but it is also true that the place taken by new tools can reduce our original ability, in function of our delegation to machine in a sort of compensation "loss-gain" (Calvani, op.cit., p.80; Negroponte, 1995). This observation however is not always correct: in many cases (but not in all) enhancement made by technologies opens human minds to new way of thought and operating: rapid e-Learning represents not only a replacement of more complex organization procedures and personal combined operations, which imply a sort of delegation to the "format-mixer"; it allows a new way of interpreting media, making conscious the "prosumer", as producer and consumer at the same time, of the power of information, analyzing the impact of media within communication and the quality requested by knowledge in order to spread it effectively. In other words, rapid e-Learning represent a good possibility of internalizing the own properties of the medium (Salomon, 1979) developing a new *forma mentis* in e-learners thanks to their engagement in producing multimedia artifacts.

At this point we must make another question: if rapid e-Learning solution are compatible with a possible el2 approach, what kind of learning activities can support them for an effective impact on students?

3 Learning activities which support rapid e-Learning as a web 2.0 educational tool

Any kind of pre-structured activity can result incompatible with informal paradigm. But, as we said at the beginning of the paper, our purpose, according to international literature, is integrating informal approach into formal e-Learning border, producing a sort of hybrid paradigm for education 2.0. Thanks to the formal component of pedagogical paradigm, we can abridge from Gilly Salmon's model (Salmon, 2002) some elements useful for a web 2.0 didactics under the control of learning community traditionally intended. Salmon's model represents a choice, widely supported by literature, in order to organize educational activities into traditional communitarian e-Learning settings: its use implies the adoptions of some preliminary observations that limit its application for hybrid paradigm, but still allows the justification of rapid e-Learning software as educational tool in a web 2.0 way of implementation.

3.1 Preliminary observations about a new hybrid paradigm

Before Salmon's model discussion, it is necessary to make some observations. Informal-like environment, even if informality is only a part of it:

- does not accept a rigid structure for learning activities and strict monitoring/valuing processes;
- cannot be based on a group rigid setting; it is more compliant with communitarian settings because the autonomy of the single, according to the weak links of the "affiliates" , allows responsible conducts and an authentic personal engagement in reaching own learning goals;
- is not able to grant that e-learners will be able to avoid the risk of cognitive overload and/or to assure the absence of free-riding conduct or even a motivation breakdown;

- reduces significantly the role of an e-tutor/e-moderator because the exchanges do not regard strictly the VLE, but are oriented to the Internet, outside the VLE; the e-tutor has still the role of supporting students, if requested, but it is very difficult that he can trace a precise roadmap for them;

- requires usually stronger competencies (than in a full formal path) in the use of the web and the educational tools in order to assure an autonomous and well-made production by e-learners.

The pedagogical solution which allows hybrid learning paradigm to exist is the weakness of the setting. It implies the weakness of the roles present in the traditional formal setting: e-tutor exists, but is less significant, teacher is marginal, resources are few and ready to be object of students' creativity, learning activities are partially and opportunely created by teachers, but their development is free, provided that students will reach their personal learning goals; collective purposes can be still present, but result secondary to personal ones; evaluation and tracing are activities no more linked to the VLE, but must be implemented in different modalities which can accept forms of qualitative evaluation and monitoring rather than quantitative ones, so as they were before.

3.2 Salmon's model for an hybrid paradigm: why?

Why we can partially adopt Salmon's model in a hybrid paradigm? Because the formal part of the hybrid paradigm requires the building of a weak learning community in which some activities of collection, of discussion, of exchange necessarily had to take place, although learners are free in making their resources with external tools and services and sharing them in different modalities. They can create them also with internal resources and tools, but it is unnecessary. The unique limitation we accept is the oblige of making a link between VLE and the resources produced elsewhere, that are, in a some way, connected with the collective activities previewed in the formal part of the learning approach[4]. So, we can use Salmon's model, modifying it and stating precise activities compatible with hybrid paradigm in order to demonstrate that rapid e-Learning in this theoretical framework can represent an authentic social software and a "task" useful for stimulate informal learning activities within a traditional learning approach. In poor words, if a formal model of e-Learning, with some modifications, can support activities based on rapid e-Learning tools, the implementation of these tools within an hybrid paradigm can be assumed as a correct web 2.0 approach to learning.

3.3 Salmon's model for an hybrid paradigm: the original approach

Salmon's model assumes as context of reference a traditional e-Learning path with cooperative/collaborative setting, in which there is a virtual classroom, one or more e-tutors and several materials from which all participants can start to do something in a collective way, establishing roles, tasks, objectives. Through the communitarian purposes, each participant can focalize own learning preferences, but these must be subordinated to the collective aims. Personal learning path is a sort of limited consequence of collective work: it is not prohibited, but is considered as a individual passage towards general learning aims. Learning constructivist (Rivoltella, 2003) result, in fact, is based on a complex knowledge building process among participants (Carletti & Varani, a cura di, 2007; Calvani, 2005) who explain his own points of view about resources already present in the VLE or they found on the Web: the student's explanation of the own point of view correspond to that moment of personal reflection, interpretation and production of knowledge that orients him in putting in common his thoughts, his meanings and waiting for classroom's answer. Personal research is therefore a pedagogical tool within the more complex knowledge sharing learning process.

[4] The abolition of this kind of link could have as consequence the application of a pure informal approach, which refuse any kind of limiting social space. So, the hybridization is granted by the presence of a specific space for discussion and collective activities, the boundaries of which are weak and open to the WWW.

Constructivist learning process implies some conditions thanks to which virtual classroom can acknowledge the existence of a social glue (Banzato, 2002), can determine precise roles within it, can reach a good level of interaction among its members in order to produce collective knowledge. According to Rowntree's online learning curve (Rowntree, 1995), there are four critical points in the virtual learning process (Piave N. A., a cura di, 2007): availableness of technical competencies, capacities of accessing resources, ability of respecting timetable of the course, understanding of interaction importance within the classroom. For these reasons, there are several models which offer solutions able to build some passages through which e-learners can really reach their learning goals according to constructivist paradigm: one of those models is Salmon's (Salmon, 2002).

Briefly, Salmon's model divides classroom's learning process into five stages and states which activities had to be pre-build and organized from teachers and e-tutors in order to facilitate e-learners to pass the following stage. In each stage there are requisites and objectives, that must be evaluated by e-tutor. We considered the model as representative of the steps a social community usually do during its development, both for large group of people and for small group (Licciardello, 2005; Di Maria & Falgares, 2004) focusing, according to Lewin (Lewin, 1948) theory of interdependence, four stages of growth: forming, storming, norming, performing; we excluded the last phase, that is adjourning, which represents the preparing moment to social death of the group, that can be represented in a learning context as the last days of the course. For his centrality in the life of group/community leader represent the most responsible member which orients the destiny of the group: so, also the e-tutor can be considered as a sort of democratic leader in the virtual classroom, owing to his role of orientation, facilitation and evaluation of group's level of maturity (Piave & Iadecola, a cura di, 2006).

From the comparison from social psychology models and Salmon's one it is possible to write the following table:

Salmon's stages	Group evolution's steps
Access and motivation	Forming
Online socialization	Storming
Information exchange	Norming
Knowledge Building	Performing
Development	

Table 1 - Correspondence between Salmon' stages and group evolution steps

In the first and in the second stage takes place the formal part of the hybrid paradigm, so that all participants understand the partial limited nature of learning path: they are in a VLE, there are specific professionals who works in it such as teachers and e-tutors, but also technicians for supporting the use of platform. Thanks to this initial approach, setting develops so that all e-learners are conscious that their learning path will not be completely free and independent: there will be a necessary return to the community, because all learning activities born in the community. The following two stages, that are the *information exchange* and the *knowledge building*, can belong to the informal part of the hybrid paradigm: instead of VLE's internal activities, the use of social software and of rapid e-Learning software can represent an informal task that had to be performed outside the VLE, recurring to the Web. At this point, the social glue and the reciprocal sufficient acknowledgment as part of a community, allow e-learners to explore individually their learning path, possibly starting from few materials already present in the VLE and suggested by e-tutor. Information exchange happens outside the VLE, through the

use of virtual communities' tools already available in many social software or in classical online forum; knowledge building happens through the reinterpretation of digital content available on the web and its comparison with the starting materials, in order to produce personal materials which led own point of view in a next stage of collective discussion within virtual learning community. Also rapid e-Learning software here can be used at the same way: giving as "starting tools" this kind of software and preparing a sort of crude resources'repository, e-learners, after their learning adventure on the Web, will create a second repository of complex resources, which make reference to the crude one. This last repository can represent therefore a new starting point in order to re-visit and reinterpret again knowledge flow of the web and can stimulate again virtual classroom in discussing and producing more and more complex resource, whose principal feature is completeness granted by the integration of several information format and the eventual synchronization of many different resources into one. In this case, therefore, it is not the teacher who deals with rapid e-Learning tools, in order to prepare complex resources, but it is the e-learner who use them to exchange information and create collective knowledge when he includes his digital self-made products in the common repository.

So, rapid e-Learning will be the protagonist of performing phase of learning process, according to the growth of a community in a constructivist setting which approves an hybrid paradigm: the important point is that, in order to grant the application of a partial formal approach, the informal activities are finalized to a common discussion according to communitarian setting and to a vision of knowledge less personal and more collective.

3.4 Salmon's model for an hybrid paradigm: some necessary modifications and considerations

The informal component of hybrid paradigm implies some modifications to Salmon's model (2002) that are the following:

- the VLE represents only a little part of the scene in which learning paths develop, because, when e-learners fell themselves as a community, can leave the common platform;
- the e-tutor role is not still facilitating e-learners; he can support them only if asked and cannot suggest any learning path, rather than stimulate e-learners to experiment, to explore interactive tools of the Web, including a web2.0-based use of rapid e-Learning software;
- the reaching of the fourth and fifth phase is subordinated to a deep understanding of informal learning principles and to the ability of sharing again with own colleagues the results of personal experience in a collective predetermined area, that is virtual community.

What does make these consequence? The different approach to virtual learning process: Gilly Salmon in fact, build her model:

a) analyzing the content of messages among learners within virtual learning community;
b) analyzing the feedback produced by e-tutors;
c) focusing the skills, the activities and the help participant required during learning process.

The theater of her research was the VLE: messages, feedbacks and behavior that were collected and codified by Salmon within virtual learning community, considered as a box where all social and psychological dynamics take place. All activities difficultly regard external resources in a free and autonomous way: the recourse to the Web is consequential to precise organized learning activities that had to produce some results for community itself. The openness of VLE to the Web causes a distortive effect on information exchange dynamics, that are not still easily analyzed; the use of multimedia tools which allow the production of resources (while in the traditional context is always sharing action the principal activity) implies deep difficulty in codifying and analyzing contents and the discussions made about it by e-learners. Briefly, Salmon's model can be modified in the part in which it represents the application of a full formal conception of e-Learning.

3.5 Salmon's e-tivities for an hybrid educational paradigm

The modifications to Salmon' model do not cut significance to it, but open it to a new didactical logics, which conserve still a formal approach, but is now compatible with web2-philosophy, responding to scientific literature about integration between formal and informal approach to virtual learning.

In order to support our considerations about the possibility of implementing informal e-tivities (based on rapid e-Learning tasks), we used Gilly Salmon's Handouts, as specified in an example by Pettenati & Sorrentino (2005), which are important in course designing, with the point of view of e-moderator (and, in general terms, according to the teacher/e-tutor point of view). Following the general scheme offered by Salmon's Reminder & Handouts, we think how re-modulate every single part of it in an informal-like approach, compatible with an hybrid pedagogical paradigm and built on the use of rapid e-Learning software for personal artifacts. So:

- the objectives, cannot be entirely précised, because constructivist approach and informal vision of learning processes avoid any kind of aim-fixing. E-learners will be responsible for their learning path; teachers and eventually e-tutor can only support them, in case of necessity in order to suggest something and it is enough to maintain a formal border;

- number of participants. This is a formal unchangeable factor;

- structure of the e-tivity. This implies a sort of pre-programming work for teachers and e-tutor in order to organize the common activities and an internal timetable for individual and communitarian tasks. In this case the structure must be weak: it is necessary to introduce precise temporal limits which indicate the starting point and the ending point of the learning experiences, but cannot be decided before any kind of steps. The temporal organization within the complete learning experience become a specific prerogative of e-learners. It is necessary however, in order to maintain a communitarian setting, to prepare only a final discussion about individual artifacts, among e-learners and promote comments, critics, collective knowledge building starting from single available knowledge products;

- elapsed time. Any kind of time-control on e-learners must be forbidden, in order to create and maintain the best level of freedom; only the starting date and the ending one must be précised and communicated at beginning; the final activity of discussion must be not too long (at least a week, in function of the number of participants);

- e-moderator time/activities. There is no a precise timetable for e-tutor and teachers. There are no activities pre-programmed: so, teachers and tutor can be present in the learning platform in order to make suggestion, if required by e-learners, but they must only keep available for consulting tasks. There are only two precise tasks to perform at the beginning and at the end of e-Learning experience: the first day of the course they must clarify the pedagogical paradigm of informal/formal approach to knowledge, indicating the social software (rapid e-Learning included) as useful tools to create, share and use knowledge flow of the web; although it is possible to make available some resources they must be necessarily vague and elementary, useful to understand the context, the matter and stimulate the desire of discovering through the web. At the end of the course all artifacts must be collected by teachers and tutor and a general discussion about them must be organized through a forum, or a blog or another tool; the final discussion is the moment in which teacher and tutor partially acquire again their original roles, because discussing about individual artifacts, they can easily promote a collective knowledge building and measure the impact, the value of the whole learning experiences;

- student time/actions. Even in this case e-learners must be free to organize their learning path, to choice the sources of information, to choice the multimedia tools for their personal artifacts, to share or not their production and to ask clarification engaging casual online people or e-tutor or teacher in the e-Learning platform. E-learners must be conscious that their autonomy implies responsibility because what they will do, will be singularly and collectively discussed and valued. They must be informed about evaluation parameters and can be helped to know and experiment social software they do not know before.

- evaluation. This is an important, crucial aspect of the hybrid setting, because the informal part learning (which is the greatest in the whole experience) cannot be valued only through a traditional approach. Teachers and tutor must precise parameters regarding the ability of using social software, multimedia balancing according to a personal conception of media education, the effectiveness of the message in the personal artifacts, the completeness of the products, the flexibility of the artifacts for eventual linking with other resources etc… It is possible (and convenient) to use also traditional tool of evaluation limiting them only to the starting moment (for a pre-evaluation of the classroom background) and to the final moment, in order to understand if artifacts correspond authentically to the thought of their authors.

4 Conclusion

The use of rapid e-Learning software as informal tools within formal settings can be compatible, through some modifications, with traditional way of managing online didactics, represented by Salmon's model: to do this, it is necessary to create a double-market resources, in which more complex resources produced by rapid e-Learning tools, can be discussed, modified and enriched by e-learners both in VLE and during their exploration on the Web. Rapid e-Learning tools represent a good answer to need of creating complex resources (which are often converted into SCORM-compliant learning object) which are able to elevate students' degree of understanding and interpreting principles, concepts in a very suitable way. Rapid e-Learning often represents a more complete solution than social software, in order to produce sharable self-made complex resources, because most of social software are only one-format oriented and make difficult the possibility of integrating more formats into a compatible one. Rapid e-Learning tools also answer to the need of an ecological approach to didactics, making e-learners responsible of multimedia content creation, acting as a media education activity within a personal learning path and possibly avoiding a passive approach to the use of multimedia, that is named as technological hypertrophy.

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