DIGITAL LITERACY FOR THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LANGUAGE

TOWARDS A SOCIO-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO FOSTER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND USERS

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This booklet is an introduction to the pedagogical framework developed by the e-lang team (Digital literacy for the teaching and learning of languages). This project (2016-2019) belongs to the wider ECLM (European Centre for Modern Languages) programme entitled “Languages at the Heart of Learning”. The aim of this publication is to clearly explicit the pedagogical foundations guiding our project on the integration of new technologies.

Two main elements form our project underpinning:

- adopting an approach focusing on social interactions where the preferred tasks are conducted in real life;
- combining tasks and the use of digital resources for learners to develop both lifelong skills and a stronger autonomy.

The implementation of this approach requires to:

- be aware of digital resources;
- know how to use them;
- evaluate their potential for language teaching and learning.

In order to do so, both teachers and learners have to develop their own digital literacy. The purpose of the e-lang project is to facilitate this process.

We hope that the ideas put forward in this project will resonate amongst practitioners as a change in practices needs to be implemented.
1 DIGITAL LITERACY

1.1 CLARIFICATION OF ADOPTED TERMINOLOGY


In line with the ECML, we will opt for the term ‘digital literacy’. The choice of the singular form does not prevent us to take on board the intricacy of the skills it refers to.

1.2 EVOLUTION AND DIVERSITY OF MODELS

The concept of digital literacy has been redefined many times since Gilster\(^1\) attempted to frame it in 1997. His work is nonetheless seen as pivotal as it brings the cognitive dimension to the fore (over the technological aspect): “digital literacy is about mastering ideas, not keystrokes”\(^2\). According to him, digital literacy is essentially an “ability to read with meaning, and to understand”\(^3\) combined with a critical view which allows to “make informed judgments about what you find on-line”\(^4\).

With the evolution of both technologies and practices, new definitions have emerged. They have broadened to encompass the complexity and plurality of the concept. Here are three examples:

- Eshet-Alkalai’s model combines six different types of literacies and competencies: “Photovisual literacy”, “Reproduction literacy”, “Branching literacy”, “Information literacy”, “Socioemotional literacy”; “Real-time thinking”\(^5\).
- The EU project DigEuLit\(^6\) identifies four main elements: « Technical literacy », « Information literacy », « Media literacy » et « Visual literacy ».
- The model put forward by Jisc brings together \(^7\) “communication, collaboration and participation”; “digital creation, innovation and scholarship”; “information, data and media literacies”; “digital learning and development”. It also includes digital identity and well-being.

1.3 DIGITAL LITERACY: SELECTED FEATURES

Before providing our own definition of the concept, it is worth stating that a prerequisite to the development of digital literacy is access to new technologies and digital resources. The first digital divide is a reality which should not be underestimated. It might occur for a range of reasons: lack of financial means, absence of infrastructure or inadequate access to resources (for people suffering from an handicap, such as visually-impaired people for example).

\(^1\) (Gilster, 1997)
\(^2\) (Gilster, 1997, p. 15)
\(^3\) (Gilster, 1997, p. 1)
\(^4\) (Gilster, 1997, p. 2)
\(^5\) (Eshet-Alkalai & Chajut, 2009, p. 713)
\(^6\) (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006)
\(^7\) (Beetham, 2015 ; Jics, 2015 ; Jisc, 2014)
It is our view that digital literacy results from the intertwining of three main sets of competencies within an ethical and critical framework: technology literacy, meaning-making literacy and interaction literacy.

![Figure 1: Digital literacy](image)

### 1.3.1 TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

This is one of the longest-standing elements associated with digital literacy. It has disappeared altogether from some of the most recent models, as it is viewed as an integral part of digital literacy. Bawden\(^8\) describes it as an “underpinning” onto which digital literacy is “rafted”. We view it as the ability to select and use digital resources (devices, software, apps...).

While it is vital to know the various technologies (the existence of online dictionaries for example), it is all the more important to know their affordances. A teacher will thus have to become familiar with the various functionalities of a digital resource before being able to advise a learner on how to adapt it to his/her specific needs.

### 1.3.2 MEANING-MAKING LITERACY

This feature combines several elements which can be found in other models such as information literacy, media literacy and visual literacy.

Information literacy (in association with new technologies or not) has already been widely discussed by researchers and experts. It is defined as follows in the Prague Declaration:

> Information Literacy encompasses knowledge of one’s information concerns and needs, and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, organize and effectively create, use and communicate information to address issues or problems at hand; it is a prerequisite for participating effectively in the Information Society, and is part of the basic human right of lifelong learning\(^9\).

Media literacy is closely linked to information literacy but has its own specificities. It deals with messages created on the various new media platforms (emails for example) and how these messages are formed and perceived.

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\(^8\) (Bawden, 2008, p.29)

\(^9\) (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1)
“Background knowledge”, as defined by Bawden, is also included here. It deals with the knowledge we may have of the information chain from sourcing to dissemination. Visual literacy falls under this category too as it is the ability to make meaning from information presented in the form of an image.

Many tasks require learners to first assess their information need and determine how to access new information. They then have to sort through the collected data in order to keep what is relevant for the task at hand.

For instance, a teacher can get his/her students to post an entry on an information site (such as Wikinews). This task requires students to process a wide range of information prior to publishing their articles online. Students will also learn how to collect, organise and distribute data and more generally gain an insight on information items are processed on sites such as Wikipedia or Wikinews and can then reflect on this process. This will give them a better understanding of the nature of these participatory sites.

1.3.3 INTERACTION LITERACY

Communicative and collaborative skills are gathered under this heading as interactions are required to activate both these skills. This literacy can be defined as the ability to exchange and collaborate efficiently and appropriately while using all the available technologies at hand. Users need to be aware of the specificities of online communication as they will express themselves differently depending on the platform used or the intended audience. For example, communication style will change whether on a forum where the audience is largely unknown or in an email addressed to someone known or addressed to one person but copied to a group. The ability to deal with and evaluate a large amount of data in real time (as it is the case in online gaming or public chats) is also covered here.

As interactions are at the heart of our approach, this category is particularly central to our project. To be interaction literate, learners/users have to be aware of their audience while completing a task. On a discussion forum for example, the readers (and their expectations) have to be factored in.

1.3.4 ETHICAL AND CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

This framework is one of the tenets of our model. All the above-mentioned literacies are framed by this concept which is broader than the critical dimension included within the information literacy. It requires users to be aware of how to (re)act and behave appropriately according to the specific online context they are in. Others issues such as online security and confidentiality as well as digital identity are also included within this framework. Furthermore, using technologies requires to be aware of “human and environmental health” and to aim for digital practices which are “fully inclusive and equitable” in order to foster democratic participation.

Learners would benefit from a systematic reflection on these ethical and critical issues while carrying out any online activity as the end-purpose is not only to develop their personal skills but also to promote their civic engagement (both at a micro and macro level of society). In order to do so, learners have to be aware of the impact that technologies and digital practices may have on the environment, culture, society and people.

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10 Described as “Real-time thinking” by Ehset-Akilai et Chajut (2009).
11 (Beetham, 2015)
By encouraging students to post comments to online articles or to contribute to the building of crowdsourcing sites, teachers can mobilize their students’ digital competencies in real life situations. It is then essential to ensure that this participation is meaningful both to the learners and the other users of the platform and goes beyond the mere task completion to become a real contribution. The learners will also have to keep in mind that these forms of participation contribute to their digital footprint and they thus have to decide whether they use their real identity or an avatar.

Each time a new digital resource is used in class, it would be interesting to systematically engage learners in a review of its benefits, limitations and potential risks. Learners could also be asked to assess which resource is the most relevant to complete a task.

Digital technologies should not be blindly accepted and adopted. We are in favour of an open-minded, “critical and realistic stance” which is neither overzealous nor too negative towards new technologies. It is our opinion that technology by itself cannot guarantee a successful learning outcome, but that it can enhance learning if it is carefully integrated to the teaching methodology of the teachers and the learning and communicative skills of the language learners and users.

1.4 DEVELOPING DIGITAL LITERACY

Being digitally literate requires not only the ability to use digital resources but also to create them, so to be both digital consumers and digital agents (i.e. active on social media or developing digital resources).

It may seem surprising to some that we suggest that learners have to be guided to develop their digital literacy. Indeed, many of our younger students are described as ‘digital natives’ known for their ability to use new technologies. However, recent research has shown that this is in fact more a myth that a reality. Even though digital natives are heavy users of new technologies, their practices have a very limited scope (mainly for social exchanges), they thus find it difficult to apply these skills for learning purposes. They are ‘tech-comfy’ (i.e. they can make use of technologies for private use) but not ‘tech-savvy’ (i.e. they cannot transfer these competencies to different contexts such as their professional life).

As suggested by Sharpe and Beetham, learners should be encouraged to develop their own personal learning environment (PLE), gathering all the resources (digital or not) they know and can use for language learning and language practice. This would help them to conduct a deeper reflection on how they learn and revise their approach.

We therefore advocate an action-oriented approach based on tasks which allow learners to experience different aspects of digital literacy - as passive users (using online dictionaries for example) and as active users (co-constructing knowledge on collaborative sites for example). We believe that by creating digital content, learners would deepen their awareness and knowledge of available resources.

Learners should also be encouraged to reflect on the resources they have used to complete these tasks in order to assess their relevance and to decide whether they will be adding them to their PLEs.

The main objective of this approach is not only for learners to discover new digital resources but also for them to learn how to combine them to successfully complete a task, thus developing strong skills as language learners and users.

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12 (adapted from Karsenti & Collin, 2013, p. 61)
13 (Dauphin, 2012)
14 (Baron & Bruillard, 2008 ; Guichon, 2012 ; Jones, Ramanau, Cross, & Healing, 2010 ; Kirschner & van Merriënboer, 2013)
15 (Dudeney, 2011 ; for example Dudeney & Hockly, 2016)
16 (Sharpe, Beetham, & Freitas, 2010)
1.5 IMPLEMENTATION

We will now detail how we envisage the implementation of our digital literacy strategy. This implementation plan draws upon the work of two EU projects: DidacTIclave\textsuperscript{17} and DigEuLit\textsuperscript{18}.

In order to complete a task, the following steps have to be taken:

- identify the skills and knowledge needed to complete the task;
- assess which skills and knowledge are already acquired;
- determine what is feasible to achieve;
- identify the resources which, combined with own prior knowledge, will lead to the successful completion of the task. Resources may refer here to people, physical artefacts or digital resources and may (or not) already belong to the learners’ PLEs;
- locate and access these resources, then assess their relevance and reliability;
- combine the information and support provided by these resources to accomplish the task;
- carry out the task;
- publish these outputs;
- reflect on the process as well as on the resources used in order to assess their relevance, strengths and weaknesses;
- add these newly acquired knowledge and resources to their PLEs.

\textsuperscript{17} (Ollivier & Weiβ, 2007)
\textsuperscript{18} (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006)
2 AUTONOMY

The digital literacy strategy we are promoting in this project fits within the wider concept of autonomous language learners and users, so it is important that we define our vision of ‘autonomy’.

Holec\textsuperscript{19} (amongst others) put forward a definition of the concept which is very extreme. According to him, learners are fully in charge of their learning, from setting learning objectives to evaluating the learning process and outcomes. As such, this model is probably best adapted to describe autonomy in an informal context.

However, in a formal setting, learners are generally not involved in the whole decision-making process. They rarely set the learning objectives or assessment procedures for example. They are merely in charge of the learning process, i.e. how they will pass the evaluation criteria set for them.

Yet, it is expected that this process will allow learners to develop into autonomous language users as, once they have left the school system, they will have to be entirely responsible for their tasks they will be carrying out.

The model we are adopting is based on the work of several researchers, including Holec, Little, Littlewood and Portine,\textsuperscript{20} and entails the ability to:

- be aware of and understand the learning objectives and/or the parameters of a set task (for example the constraints ensuing from the type of interaction the learner engages in);
- create an action plan responding to the learning objectives. This will be based on the result of:
  - evaluating existing knowledge, skills and resources at hand;
  - identifying resources to overcome any personal shortfall;
  - being able to use these resources to successfully complete the task at hand (including digital resources);
- implement this action plan;
- critically assess the process and the resources used;
- reflect on their autonomy development both as learners to complete tasks and as language users in their daily life.

For the purpose of this project, we will focus more specifically on the aspects linked to digital literacy, namely:

- identifying and using digital resources which complement individual knowledge and know-how;
- critically evaluating these resources and assessing their relevance as language users.

\textsuperscript{19} (Holec, 1981, 1993)
\textsuperscript{20} (Little, 1991 ; Littlewood, 2004 ; Portine, 1998)
3 SOCIO-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

Social interactions are at the heart of our pedagogical approach. We are referring to it as the socio-interactional approach and we will now present it. In order to do so, we will first review how the ability to communicate and act can be defined and then explain our own approach and the type of tasks we associate with it: tasks which are conducted in real life or real-world tasks as we will refer to them henceforth.

3.1 COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND INTERACTIONS

3.1.1 COMMUNICATION SKILL MODELS: AN OVERVIEW

Since the work of Hymes\textsuperscript{21}, it is largely accepted that socio-cultural factors in our environment are shaping the way we learn to communicate and how we use languages. Indeed, we learn to recognise the ‘appropriateness’ of our actions to our social context in order to ascertain “when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner”\textsuperscript{22}.

Research carried out after Hymes\textsuperscript{23} also highlighted the social aspects of communication. However, we can notice two main issues regarding the social dimension in these various models:

- it is placed at the same level as any other dimensions and remains one aspect amongst others;
- it is often restricted to the socio-cultural elements (thus known as sociolinguistic aspects), but leaving intersubjectivity out of the equation.

The CEFR defines the “communicative language competence [...] as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic”\textsuperscript{24}. It is worth noting that these components are listed in no particular order of priority and that the social component is confined to the sociolinguistic dimension.

However the approach adopted in the CEFR places a large emphasis on ‘social agents’ and the ‘social context’ within which the tasks are carried out, “in so far as it views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’” and views language activities as forming "part of a wider social context, which alone is able to give them their full meaning”\textsuperscript{25}.

We can infer that this refers to social and cultural norms rather than interpersonal relations as the latter are barely mentioned in the framework. The only explicit reference comes in part 4.3 when it is highlighted that the following elements should be considered: “number and familiarity of interlocutors; relative status of participants (power and solidarity, etc.); presence/absence of audience or eavesdroppers; social relationships between participants (e.g. friendliness/hostility, co-operativeness).” However, for the authors of the CEFR, these elements are some of the constraints imposed by the "external conditions”\textsuperscript{26}.

In our opinion, this vision does not fully reflect the true concept of communication which, according to us, is mainly guided by social interactions.

\textsuperscript{21} (Ollivier & Weiß, 2007)
\textsuperscript{22} « Quand parler, quand ne pas parler, et aussi de quoi parler, avec qui, à quel moment, où, de quelle manière » (trad. 1991, p. 74).
\textsuperscript{23} (Bachman, 1990 ; Canale & Swain, 1980 ; Coste, Courtillon, Ferenczi, Martins-Baltar, & Papo, 1976 ; Hymes, 1991 ; Moirand, 1982)
\textsuperscript{24} (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 13)
\textsuperscript{25} (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)
\textsuperscript{26} (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 46-47)
3.1.2 PLACING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AT THE FOREFRONT

3.1.2.1 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AS KEY ELEMENTS FOR ACTIONS AND COMMUNICATION

When talking about the communication competence, we consider that any action or communication (viewed here as a form of human action) is largely influenced by the social interactions within which it takes place. We define ‘social interactions’ as the dynamic (i.e. constantly evolving) social relationship formed between the various protagonists involved in the action. In other words, the main element guiding actions is the social relationship amongst participants and this relationship can evolve as a result of the actions.

We will now illustrate this point with a simple cooking example. The way we cook a dish is influenced by the circumstances we are in. We won’t proceed the same way whether we are cooking for: a) someone we fell in love with and who is coming to eat at home for the first time, b) a party at work where everyone is bringing a dish to be shared, c) a quick-fix meal after a day’s work. At the same time, these dishes might have an impact on the various relationships mentioned here.

Similarly, we consider that linguistic communication is first and foremost influenced by social relationships, with the dialogic and interpersonal dimension of communication being particularly important. For us, the constraints of interpersonal exchanges supersede socio-cultural norms, i.e. “abstract norms which dictate communicative practices in general”.

An example will clearly illustrate this point. In French- or German-speaking countries in Europe, it is established by social norms that pupils address their school principal using formal pronouns and forms i.e. ‘vous’ in French and ‘Sie’ in German. However if the principal happens to be related to one of the pupils, the rules will change. In this case, the practice established by the social interaction will take over, allowing the pupil to address his/her school principal using the informal forms i.e. ‘tu’ in French and ‘du’ in German.

We thus predicate that the action and communication competences are primarily defined by the ability to adapt the way we act and communicate to the social interactions at play.

It is important to note that we do not view the communication competence as being restricted to this aspect only. The sub-competences, which have been discussed since the seventies and which are included in the CEFR, are still valid. However, in our framework, social interaction comes ahead of any other aspects of the communication competence and all other elements that come into action are determined by the interpersonal relationships at play.

The previous example was taken from a sociolinguistic background, let’s now take one illustrating the linguistic field. If we want to explain this idea in only a few words, we can say that our linguistic choices (e.g. vocabulary, syntax) are decided by the social interactions we are engaged in. Indeed we use different words or syntax structures depending on the people we are addressing. We can take the example of a topic such as the one we are discussing here. If we were to write a book on it, the text would change depending on who the intended audience was. We would adapt the lexical and stylistic choices if the text was targeting: a group of academic experts in the field, teachers with a higher education qualification, or a larger lay group with no prior knowledge of the topic.

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27 (Jacques, 1979, 1985, 2000)
28 (Translated from Bouvier, 2000, p. 72)
Before tackling our next item, it is worth emphasising that there is a constant back and forth movement between actions and social interactions. While actions are largely influenced by social interactions, social interactions can also be affected by actions. Indeed, a break in communication can impact the relationship between protagonists. Social interactions are thus not just one item in the communication context, they play a key role in determining actions, whether these are language-based or not.

However, in the language field, it is particularly essential to take social interactions into account as they influence the meaning-making process.

3.1.3 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS AS KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MEANING-MAKING PROCESS

Our principles follow the research trend which points to the limitations of the unidirectional communication models. In these linear models, the sender encodes a message which is then decoded by the receiver. The receiver’s role is thus limited to the decoding process of the original message.29

But the communication process is complex and cannot be reduced to this linear model. In fact, all the protagonists of the communication are involved in the meaning-making process, as:

- producing and interpreting messages are two inseparable activities;
- the meaning of an utterance is shaped by the social interaction.

Speaking is not saying something to someone but rather saying something together about something.30

In this model, we do not have the sender on one side and the receiver on the other side, being active one after the other but rather both being involved simultaneously in the communication process31 as they co-construct the meaning of the communication.

We will now illustrate these theoretical concepts with an example. Let’s consider the following scenario: a man and a woman are sitting close to each other in a café. The woman is wearing a scarf round her neck, hiding her cleavage. The man turns to the woman and tells her: “You are wearing a beautiful scarf”. We won’t try to guess what the intentions of the man were but will instead concentrate on the possible replies to this statement. We will thus show that the meaning of his sentence is built within the interaction.

1: The woman replies: “Thank you”. The man's statement became a compliment and as such was accepted.

2a: As the man is staring at her scarf, the woman replies: “Please look away”. The man averts his eyes and this marks the end of the exchange. The man’s statement became a chat-up line.

2b: This scenario is a follow-up from 2a. The man replies: “I apologise. It is not what I meant. I wanted to ask you where you bought it so that I could purchase the same one for my girlfriend”. The meaning of the initial sentence has just been modified and can now be perceived as: “I really like your scarf and engage a conversation with you so that I can find out where you bought it”.

3a: The woman pushes her chest out and says: “Really?”. The initial sentence has established a contact between the two protagonists and the compliment has been accepted.

29 (Shannon, 1948, p. 381)
30 (1997, p. 63)
31 (Culioli, 1999)
In this model, uttering and understanding a statement are viewed as activities which cannot be separated as one has to be able to anticipate what the receiver will understand. As Jacques stated: "my ears are doing the talking"\textsuperscript{32}. Being proficient in the art of communication implies to be conscious of what the other(s) may understand when producing speech. In other words, we always have to keep our interlocutor in mind no matter what we do or say. The social ties linking us to the others in the interaction determine any communication and/or action.

### 3.1.4 LANGUAGE PRODUCTIONS WITH NO DIRECT INTERACTION: THE SPECIFIC EXAMPLE OF A LITERARY TEXT

We gave an example of an oral exchange in 3.1.3 but the same is true for language productions with no direct interaction. The meaning of these is also co-constructed even though this co-construction may be an invisible process. In the specific case of literature, authors such as Mallarmé, Valéry or Barthes have challenged the idea that the meaning of a work of art is defined by the artist. Since the nineteen-eighties, literary theories seem to be going in that direction, attributing the creation of meaning to the relationship between author, text and reader\textsuperscript{33}. Some\textsuperscript{34} even go as far as stating that a literary text cannot exist without the subjectivity of the reader's response.

As we can see, even in the event of language productions with no direct interaction, the idea of a co-construction of meaning between author and reader prevails.

### 3.1.5 SUMMARY - TOWARDS A SOCIAL INTERACTION COMPETENCY

To sum up, we can assert that any form of action or communication is first and foremost defined by the social interactions within which it takes place or in other words by its relational and intersubjective nature. We thus posit that social interactions are the most decisive elements impacting on actions and communication.

Our main underpinnings are as follows:

a) Any form of communication (and any action) occurs within the context of a social interaction, i.e. an evolving personal relationship which links the people involved.

b) This social interaction is the most decisive element of the action and/or communication as it shapes its form and determines its meanings.

c) Human actions and the co-construction of meaning contribute to define social interactions.

d) We believe that the ability to adapt one’s actions and communication to the relational context at play is a basic competency. We are referring to it as social interaction competency.

e) The construction of meaning happens within the act of communication, in the interaction which links the various actors of the communication. The message is not the mirror of a pre-defined meaning, so the interlocutor is not tasked with just reconstructing this meaning. The meaning is co-constructed within the interaction by the various communication partners.

\textsuperscript{32} (Jacques, 2000, p. 63 translated from "ce sont mes oreilles qui te parlent")

\textsuperscript{33} (Eco, 1985).

\textsuperscript{34} For example Bayard (1998)
Our socio-interactional approach finds its foundations within this theoretical framework and more generally in the action-oriented paradigm.

### 3.2 MAIN FEATURES OF THE SOCIO-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

The socio-interactional approach places social interactions at the heart of its definition of tasks. The objective is to train learners to take into account these social interactions when they act and interact in the target language. They can then realise how important these interactions are and thus improve their communication competence. We believe that learners need to undertake tasks where they are exposed to a variety of social interactions in order to develop a real ability to communicate. This experience will allow them to learn how to adapt their language activities to the various relational scenarios they may encounter.

Far too often, teaching and learning scenarios partially omit social interactions. For example, when we talk about authentic interactions, these are often only referring to the linguistic productions of the people undertaking the task, and as such only one aspect of the social action is taken into consideration. Moreover, in many cases the intended target of the task is only simulated.

Let’s take two examples: Mangenot and Penilla mention a scenario put forward by trainee teachers of French as a foreign language. They suggest a task where learners have to organise a Polynesian-themed birthday party for a Polynesian student living in France. During a French Teacher Association conference, a colleague gave the example of a task for French for specific purposes course: organising a trip for pensioners.

In both cases, even though they are plausible and close to real life, the tasks are devoid of any real purpose. At best, they will lead to language interactions which could happen in reality, but the tasks are only mimicking real life. The social interactions are totally devoid of any intended target and learners are well aware that both the Polynesian student and the group of pensioners are fake.

The range of social interactions is larger in real life than it is in a teaching and learning context.

Let’s take the second scenario as an example: planning a trip. In a travel agency, we can find an intricate variety of social interactions: a) interactions between the various employees working together to plan the trip, b) interactions with the clients as the trip must fulfill their expectations (the employees will have the clients and their satisfaction in mind while working on this project), c) interactions amongst the group of clients, d) interactions between the employees and their management team, as a group and at an individual level.

The teaching and learning scenario will mostly focus on the learners simulating the interactions of the main protagonists of the task (i.e. the travel agency employees here). But the interactions with the intended target of the tasks (i.e. the group of pensioners in our example) are partially or completely omitted.

In real life, there might be no verbal exchanges between the people carrying the task and the intended target group, however the social bond between the two groups would play a pivotal role in the way the task is carried out. In our examples, the clients’ satisfaction is the main priority for the employees of the travel agency, and the same is true for a friend’s birthday party. When completing the task, the social interactions between the various people involved in the task and between these people and the intended target group are both very important.

In a socio-interactional approach, both the purpose and the target group of a task are real. In other words, both the action and the interactions are authentic; they do not mimic real life. At the very least, the intended target is the group engaged in the teaching-learning process (closed group or group extended to other learners) or even a few individual learners within the group.
For this project, we are advocating to expand the current task taxonomy to include real-world tasks (tasks occurring in everyday/real life) in order to include social interactions with people who do not belong to the teaching-learning process. We will particularly focus on tasks taking place on the social/participative web, also known as web 2.0. This will allow learners to complete tasks which reach beyond the educational boundaries (both in terms of target audience and type of interactions).
4 REAL-WORLD TASKS

In this chapter, we will focus on the tasks we are referring to as real-world tasks. We will explain how they fit within the task taxonomy, especially with regard to interactions. We will first define how we define the concept of tasks in the context of language learning and teaching.

4.1 DEFINING A ‘TASK’

It is clear that there is “no definition of what a task is which is unanimously accepted”\(^{35}\). As highlighted by some experts in the field\(^ {36}\), some definitions are so broad that they encompass any activities from simple exercises to large projects. It was the position adopted by Frauenfelder and Forquier\(^ {37}\) who put forward a broad definition of the concept in 1980. This definition includes activities ranging from paraphrasing or gap filling to free production, as well as translation in the target language and summaries.

We agree with Nunan\(^ {38}\) that these kinds of definitions are not very useful as it implies that any form of activity carried out by a learner can be considered as a task and can be used “to justify any procedure at all as ‘task-based’”\(^ {39}\).

The definitions which are more specific and targeted are more pertinent to us. We will use these definitions to list all the elements which will form the base for our definition of a ‘task’ for the teaching and learning of languages.

Language dimension

In general terms, as highlighted by Long or in the CEFR, a task may or may not language use. For instance, Long lists the following activities as tasks: “painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation”\(^ {40}\). In the CEFR, we can find the following examples: “moving a wardrobe, writing a book, obtaining certain conditions in the negotiation of a contract, playing a game of cards, ordering a meal in a restaurant, translating a foreign language text or preparing a class newspaper through group work”\(^ {41}\). While some of these tasks are language-based (writing a letter or booking a flight for instance), some are less likely so (moving a wardrobe for example).

When teaching languages, the focus is obviously on the language-based tasks i.e. the tasks requiring at least one language activity. It is also important to note that “[a] task involves real-world processes of language use”\(^ {42}\).

Everyday actions

None of the examples listed above are linked to language learning but they clearly outline that tasks are essentially everyday actions. According to Long “‘Tasks are the things people will tell you they do if you ask

\(^{35}\)Translated from Nissen: l’acception de ce qu’est une tâche n’est pas unanime (2011).
\(^{36}\)For instance Skehan and Forster (1997) or Bygate, Skehan and Swain (2001).
\(^{37}\)(Porquier & Frauenfelder, 1980, p.64)
\(^{40}\)(Long, 1985, p. 89)
\(^{41}\)(Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10)
\(^{42}\)(Ellis, 2003, p. 9s.)
them and they are not applied linguists. (The latter tend to see the world as a series of grammatical patterns or, more recently, notions and functions.)”

Focus on meaning

Many researchers in the field agree that the concept of ‘task’ is associated with a focus on meaning. Nunan explains that when learners carried out a task “their attention is principally focussed on meaning rather than form”.

Intention

A task is usually completed with a clear intention in mind. In the CEFR, tasks are presented “as any purposeful action considered by an individual as necessary in order to achieve a given result in the context of a problem to be solved, an obligation to fulfil or an objective to be achieved”.

Workplan and cognitive process

A task also involves a “workplan” with “a beginning, a middle and an end” in order to establish whether it is completed. Moreover, a number of cognitive operations drawing on internal or external resources (digital or not) will be used to implement this workplan.

Outcome or output

The task has to produce an outcome or an output. This may be concrete (for example a letter) or abstract (for example a decision) and the amount of language used may also vary.

Within social interactions

This aspect is not systematically mentioned by researchers, however we think it is paramount. Long explains that a task is « a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others » thus emphasizing the importance of the intended audience. Our point of view is that a task is produced with others and that the social interactions at play should be kept in mind.

4.2 SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF A TASK

On the basis of these elements, we are suggesting the following list of criteria for a language-based task:

- A task occurs within social interactions and these will strongly influence its execution.
- It also occurs within a specific context imposing some constraints of space, time or resources.
- The completion of a task is based on an intention.
- The task produces an outcome or an output (concrete or abstract).
- As meaning is paramount, the task must have a purpose beyond its language learning value. A well-designed task will allow learners to concentrate on its purpose.
- The execution of a task requires cognitive operations combining knowledge and know-how.
- It is based on specific language and linguistic resources.
- It may not be solely language-based.
- It is divided in stages.

43 (Long, 1985, p. 89)
44 (Candlin, 1987; Ellis, 2003; Guichon, 2006; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996)
45 (Nunan, 2004, pp. 1-2)
46 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10)
47 (Ellis, 2003, p. 9s.)
48 (Nunan, 2004, p. 4)
49 (Long, 1985, p. 89)
50 Adapted from (Ollivier & Puren, 2011, p. 53).
The following figure illustrates these various elements and how they are combined to form a task. It highlights the key role of social interactions and shows how important it is to strategically use the internal and external resources available.

![Diagram of task components]

**Figure 2: Combination of elements and criteria forming a task** (adapted from Ollivier, 2012, p. 154)

The task consists of three main elements:

- The main frame is based on:
  - social interactions (as already explained, this is, for us, the most crucial element);
  - the aim or intention of the people involved (this is strongly linked with the social interactions);
  - the context (this includes all the elements outside of the interaction such as the material constraints for example).

- A range of activities (which are language-based or not) are required to complete the task. They draw up on the strategic use of internal (individual prior knowledge and skills) or external resources. The external resources can be human-based (the help of a person as a resource) or technology-based (digital or non-digital resources). It is worth noting that the execution of the task should result in the development of both skills and resources.

- This activity leads to an output (concrete result such as a travel guide for example) or an outcome (abstract results such as a decision for example).

We will come back to the issue of resources (especially the external resources) at a later stage as it is a vital element in our approach to digital integration for language teaching and learning.

### 4.3 TYPES OF TASKS

#### 4.3.1 TASKS AND REAL LIFE

Tasks can be grouped in different ways and following various taxonomies. We will focus here on the tasks which are linked to ‘real life’.

Nunan asserts that there is a fundamental distinction between tasks which are carried out in real life (away from the classroom) and pedagogical tasks (tasks carried out in class for learning purposes)\(^5\). According to him, real-word tasks have no place in the classroom where it is impossible to carry them out.

\(^5\) (Nunan, 2004, p. 1s)
as they are "a communicative act we achieve through language in the world outside the classroom". If such a task is transferred to the classroom, then it automatically becomes a pedagogical task.

If we exclude real-world tasks, the CEFR and researchers in the field often present a distinction between:

- Tasks which reflect real life (i.e. which are realistic or plausible). These aim to prepare for actions conducted outside the classroom,
- Tasks indirectly linked to real life. These aim to develop the communication competence and act in the target language.

### 4.3.1.1 REAL-LIFE TASKS

Several terms are used in the literature to refer to this type of tasks: Guichon, for example, names them ‘macro-tasks’ (macro-tâches). Nunan talks about « rehearsal tasks ». In the CEFR, the term ‘real-life task’ is the most commonly used but we can also find ‘target task’ or ‘rehearsal task’. These tasks "place the learner in a life-like situation to use the target language (or at least they bring him closer to activities taking place outside the classroom)". They are “chosen on the basis of learners’ needs outside the classroom, whether in the personal and public domains, or related to more specific occupational or educational needs”. These tasks are “reflecting "real-life" use “.

As a result, these tasks are often referred to as realistic, lifelike or plausible, even sometimes as authentic as it is the case in the French version of the CEFR. However the authors specify that these tasks are not carried out in real life, but are just mimicking real-life tasks. Their level of authenticity is determined by how similar they are to tasks learners might complete outside the classroom.

### 4.3.1.2 TASKS REMOVED FROM REAL LIFE: CLASSROOM TASKS

As for the other category of tasks, they are designed to practise specific skills or aspects of communication. The CEFR refers to “pedagogic tasks […] only indirectly related to real-life tasks and learner needs”. They “aim to develop communicative competence”. The CEFR also specifies that ‘learners engage in a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ and accept the use of the target language rather than the easier and more natural mother tongue to carry out meaning-focused tasks”.

These tasks are further removed from real-life, they are “more limited” and “less realistic”.

### 4.3.1.3 OUTSIDE REAL LIFE

As we can see, tasks are divided in ‘close to’ or ‘further removed from’ real life. However, as predicated by Nunan, they are always carried out outside real life. This matches the ‘action-oriented’ approach adopted by the CEFR as well as the distinction made between language learning and language use. The expression ‘action-oriented’ implies that the language teaching and learning process targets actions but it is not envisaged that these will be carried out straight away. The CEFR views the learner as a future user who is preparing to act. This is why s/he is engaging in rehearsal tasks in order to get ready for real-life actions.

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52 (Nunan, 2001)
53 (Nunan, 2001)
54 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 157)
55 (Guichon, 2006, p. 80 translated “met le participant en situation réaliste d’utiliser la L2 (ou du moins elle le rapproche des activités de la vie extrascolaire”)
56 (Council of Europe, 2001, p.157)
57 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 158)
58 (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 157)
59 (Demazière & Narcy-Combes, 2005, p. 50 translated from: « plus circonscrites » « moins réalisites »
60 Cf. (Gauchola & Murillo, 2011 ; Ollivier, 2009a, 2013 ; Ollivier & Puren, 2011)
4.4 THE DUAL FOCUS OF REAL-WORLD TASKS ON THE WEB 2.0

We are using the expression ‘real-world task’ when referring to tasks carried out within a social interaction which is taking place beyond the classroom and educational boundaries. Posting comments on a discussion thread of a newspaper61, contributing to crowdsourcing sites such as Wikipedia62 or sharing recipes on a specialised site are examples of such tasks.

‘Real-world tasks’ remain tasks insofar as they are teaching and learning activities but at the same time, they are also actions taking place in real life. The social interaction within which they take place goes beyond the educational boundaries and the language learner/user (inter)acts with people who are outside the educational realms.

These tasks thus have a dual focus or grounding, both in real life and in the educational context. When carrying out such a task, one is both a learner (in a teaching and learning context) and a user who (inter)acts with people who are outside the educational realms.

This dual grounding solves the issue of student’s dual voice (see below) as it provides an authentic communicative context to both domains.

4.4.1 GROUNDING IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Action and communication partners

When carrying out a real-world task, learners are interacting with people who are outside the educational system. This is different from online exchange projects or other tasks carried outside the classroom boundaries63 insofar as none of the task participants are chosen, prepared or informed in any way by the teacher. The learners are then also language users and (inter)act with these participants following the rules dictated by the social interaction in this given context.

Types of social interactions

In some cases, due to their nature, the social interactions at play have a very limited interpersonal component. This may be clearly established by the social norms ruling the social interaction, or not.

We might take to the example of Wikipedia. Participants have the readers’ needs in mind when they post contributions. As contributors are generally users of the site, they are familiar with what is expected from this encyclopaedia and the content they are posting reflects what they would like to access themselves. The evaluation of the content by other Wikipedia users is also a form of social interaction64. This evaluation process can generate exchanges on the ‘talk’ tab on each article. A list of behavioural guidelines was established to facilitate these exchanges.65 Moreover, Wikipedia generally encourages interpersonal interactions. The page ‘Please do not bite the newcomers’66 is a good example of an effort to promote interactions: “Begin by introducing yourself with a greeting on the user’s talk page to let them know that they are welcome here.”

The first thing to do when carrying out a real-world task is to assess the type of social interactions in which it falls. These interactions might be established by a clear list of guidelines on the platform used or they might be more implicit. In the latter case, they may arise from general use or from users’ expectations.

61 (cf. Hanna & de Nooy, 2003)
63 (Rosen & Schaller, 2008)
64 See here for list of criteria for featured articles: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Featured_article_criteria
Negotiated tasks

The primary goal of real-world tasks is to use language as you would in reality and as other participants would. Learners become users in order to collaborate with others. Language learning is not the main objective, the main objective is, for example, to share a knowledge, an opinion or an experience, to request an opinion or a piece of advice, to discuss a news item and to talk about a hobby... It is thus essential that learners engage and connect with the task. If they see it solely as a pedagogical and language learning task, it defeats the purpose. It would then be better for them to carry out classroom tasks which are cut off from the outside world. A real-world task should not be imposed on learners but rather negotiated with them and it should be up to them to decide whether or not they want to engage in activities bearing a strong social dimension.

Pre-existing nature of the tasks

Most of the real-world tasks using web 2.0 technology existed prior to their pedagogical application. They were not created by teachers or textbook authors. They arose from the nature and purpose of the site on which they are based. Wikipedia is a user-generated encyclopaedia and a discussion forum is a platform for exchanges on specific topics. These platforms, and the activities taking place on them, were not created by teachers. Teachers are just encouraging learners to post on these sites that they have identified as relevant.

External evaluation

Finally, the task evaluation is carried out within the interaction itself by the people with whom language learners/users are interacting. On Wikipedia, for instance, the other authors are rating the quality of the contributions and also correcting language mistakes. On a cooking site, site members provide a form of evaluation by reacting to the recipe: thanking the contributor, commenting on the quality or taste of the recipe or suggesting possible changes to be brought. These are forms of social validation which obey to the rules of the interactions at play.

In classroom tasks, texts produced are usually only read by the teacher and their content is often only peripheral. On the contrary, the content is paramount in real-world tasks without ignoring language accuracy. Indeed language learners know that they have to be understood and they might have to prove themselves as language users as some platforms specify that a good language level is required.

For instance, a popular English-language blog where users post stories of unfortunate happenings indicates that: "TXT language is forbidden and spelling mistakes hurt people’s eyeballs, so the use of either would result in the direct dismissal of your FML." 67

The requirements differ depending on the platforms, so language learners will have to adapt accordingly. They will also have to develop their digital literacy skills to be able to actively participate online. The educational grounding will play a key role at that level.

4.4.2 EDUCATIONAL GROUNDING

Developing the necessary skills and knowledge for the task

In order to execute real-world tasks, language learners/users need various sets of skills and knowledge. Both teachers and other learners can help in the process of mobilising these or broadening their underdeveloped aspects by using digital technologies amongst other strategies. From that point of view, the tasks are also heavily grounded in the educational realm.

67 http://www.fmylife.com/submission
A secure space

This educational grounding is an advantage for learners as it leads to the creation of a secure and safe space. Together with peers and teachers, learners can experiment within this space, receive advice and feedback and develop their skills and knowledge. Learners can for example use this space to prepare an item they will later upload online. This does not completely eradicate all the potential issues that arise from online publishing. Learners should always ensure that their input matches the standards of the chosen platform and can ask for feedback on their work before publishing it.

A preparation close to the one required for a target task

The work done in the educational space and the one carried out for a target task are thus very similar. Adopting real-world tasks does not change drastically what happens in the classroom. These tasks are interesting and different from others due to their opening to the outside world and their relying on authentic social interactions. It is also worth noting that it is not necessary to have internet access in the classroom to complete these tasks. As long as the tasks do not require synchronous communication, they can be prepared in class (as would be the case for target tasks) and some of the learners (who have internet connection) can post what has been prepared at a later stage.

Developing a Personal Learning Environment (PLE)

During the preparatory phase leading to the online publication, learners will be able to try out digital resources which will help them to understand, create and interact better but also to develop specific skills such as grammar and vocabulary. The teacher will recommend useful resources (such as online dictionaries, machine translators or text-to-speech technology for example) and accompanying activities to get familiar with these resources in order to use them for action and communication purposes in the target language.

Let's have a look at possible reading activities. An original text can be given together with several automatic translations. Learners can then compare these various translations and assess how they can help in understanding the original document. A reflection on the benefits and the limits of the tools used can conclude this task. This will help learners to decide whether or not to integrate these tools into their PLEs, to assess the strategies needed to make the best of these tools and ultimately to develop their critical digital literacy. This will allow learners to become independent language users. After executing this task, they will know that if they are experienced difficulties in reading a text in a target language, using machine translation can help. They will also be aware that generating several translations and comparing these can further help in fine-tuning their understanding of the original text.

4.5 BENEFITS OF REAL-WORLD TASKS

4.5.1 DUAL AUTHENTICITY

Our approach (based on social interactions) and its accompanying (real-world) tasks bring an extra layer of authenticity.

In the research literature on tasks, two kinds of authenticity are mentioned: situational authenticity and interactional authenticity:

- situational authenticity when tasks and real-world activities are similar.

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68 (See for example Mangenot & Penilla, 2009)
69 (Ellis, 2003, p. 6)
interactional authenticity when the language interactions used when performing a task are elicited by the task itself (inherent authenticity) and correspond to the language interactions which would be used in real life.\textsuperscript{70}

The same level of authenticity cannot be achieved with all the tasks. Rehearsal tasks are the most authentic as they aspire to both situational and interactional authenticity. In any case, the level of authenticity which is pursued is as close as possible to what is happening in real life.

With our approach, which encompasses every type of social interactions, we aim to go further and achieve socio-interactional authenticity i.e. language use is closely in line with the social interactions at play and is impacted as little as possible by the educational setting. This will be achieved, for example, when learners are interacting with their communication partners and forget about their teacher (whose presence is more or less visible).

The degree of authenticity can be measured by the way learners use the language. They should use it primarily to (inter)act with others (beyond the classroom boundaries) and not simply as a way to improve their target language. It is this shift in authentic language use for social interactions which defines our approach.

Furthermore, this dual grounding (in real life and in the educational realm) also gives its own authenticity to the teaching and learning context. When learners carry out a real-world task, they are (inter)acting in the target language on the web whereas in the educational context, they concentrate on their learning. The language interactions focus both on learning and executing a task. Teachers can then concentrate on providing expertise and guidance.

\section*{4.5.2 OPENING UNTO THE WORLD - (INTER)ACTING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM BOUNDARIES}

In the 1990's, many researchers highlighted that the web provided great opportunities to open a window unto the world and facilitate communication with native speakers. Since then, web 2.0 technologies have emerged and it is even easier to conduct online interactions. However, up to now, this affordance has not been fully harnessed. We can find many examples of classroom activities where the classroom opens up to the outside world thanks to the use of ‘authentic’ material or online information retrieval by learners for example. More recently, projects aiming at promoting online exchanges amongst students are on the rise. We can mention Internet-mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education\textsuperscript{71} with telecollaboration projects. But there are very few examples of real-world tasks being truly implemented.

An approach based on social interactions offers new avenues to open the classroom unto the world as it breaks down “restrictions of isolated classrooms, thus overcoming some of the limitations of a communicative approach in [...] a traditional organisation of learning”\textsuperscript{72}.

\section*{4.5.3 OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF THE (LANGUAGE) CLASSROOM}

Many studies have been conducted on verbal interactions in the language classroom. They show that teacher talking time is high and that teachers generally have control over the interactions.\textsuperscript{73} They also indicate that teacher-student interactions are more frequent than student-student interactions (outside group work time).

Research also highlights an asymmetry in the roles of the communication partners. Teachers are at the top in the communication hierarchy (especially as they provide the evaluation) whereas students are at a

\textsuperscript{70} (Ellis, 2003, p. 3) 
\textsuperscript{71} (Belz & Thorne, 2006)
\textsuperscript{72} (Korsvold & Rüschoff, 1997, p. 144)
\textsuperscript{73} (Bellack & Davitz, 1965; Brossard, 1981; Flanders, 1970; Stubbs & Delamont, 1976)
lower level. This very formalised system gives rise to a ‘dual voice’ phenomenon\textsuperscript{74} where productions contain a dual perspective: as learners and as individuals. In their learning role, learners have to prove their language level and focus primarily on form and expect teachers to provide feedback on it. As themselves, learners should focus on meaning. However, in a classroom setting, "individuals learn to express themselves more as learners than as entities"\textsuperscript{75}.

Moreover, learners often take part in simulation activities in which they produce "simulated speech" which has "no ‘real’ communicative value"\textsuperscript{76}. All in all, classroom communication leaves very little room to social interactions. \textsuperscript{77}

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) research has proven that some of the flaws listed above can be overcome using new technologies. Using chat rooms or discussion forums for example can reduce the communication asymmetry, increase interactions amongst learners\textsuperscript{78} and give them more control over the content.

However, the impact of the teaching presence on the communication and the issue of the learners' dual voice still remain. Teachers might be invisible in the exchanges, but they still play a role in the interactions.

\begin{quote}
Let’s take the example of a discussion forum where students are invited by their teacher to communicate with invited native speakers. Even though s/he does not take part in the exchanges, the fact that the teacher is overseeing the whole process can have a direct impact on learners' language use and participation as they are trying (something inadvertently) to fulfill the teacher’s expectations. \textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

The dual voice issue can be solved by an approach based on social interactions as two different communication spaces are created: one for educational interactions and one (online) for social (inter)actions. In this latter one, learners can concentrate on communication and on its constraints in the given context; the target language is used to truly interact with others. In the educational space, learners can concentrate on the learning process. They can practise and get feedback on the various stages of the task preparation.

It is also essential that learners carry out real-world tasks on a variety of platforms in order to engage in a range of different social interactions which are more or less interpersonal.

Finally, interacting on web 2.0 platforms allows learners to feel equal with other web users as they are co-constructing content on the web as any other users. It allows them to act with peers.

\section*{4.5.4 REAL-WORLD TASKS AND MOTIVATION}

It can be highly motivating for learners to carry out real-world tasks. Some learners, who posted on Wikipedia, explained that they felt motivated by taking part in interactions which reached beyond the classroom setting. They enjoyed writing for 'real readers', not the teacher and said that to be published online and to have their work available for all to read was a motivating factor. They felt that this type of work was more concrete and would have a longer-lasting impact. Finally they reported that they

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{74}] (Trevise, 1979 - “double énonciation”)
\item[\textsuperscript{75}] (Moore & Simon, 2002, p. 3 translation of “le sujet qui apprend s’[...]exprime davantage en tant qu’apprenant qu’en tant que personne”)
\item[\textsuperscript{76}] (Cicurel, 1985)
\item[\textsuperscript{77}] (Verdelhan-Bourgade, 1986, p. 74)
\item[\textsuperscript{79}] (Jeanneau & Ollivier, 2009, 2011)
\end{itemize}
appreciated the authenticity of the task. They viewed it a positive that other Wikipedia users amended their entries as it meant that what they had posted had been read and valued.\textsuperscript{80}

\section*{4.5.5 LEARNING TO BE MORE THOROUGH}

When carrying out real-world tasks, learners also become more aware of the required quality of their performance. Contributing to an online encyclopaedia for example requires to provide accurate information and a mastering of the formal language register whereas posting on an informal discussion forum requires accurate content but a lower language level. If they contribute to a travel site about their home country for example, learners will be in a position to answer detailed questions from future visitors. As long as they can be clearly understood, their language accuracy will not be a priority as their role as experts of the country in question is more important. Other users will be aware that learners are writing in the target language and will excuse their possible language mistakes.

In real-world tasks, it is important that learners are able to position themselves in the interaction at play and assess the standards they will have to apply within it as these standards will vary depending on the context.

\section*{4.5.6 LANGUAGE LEARNER AS LANGUAGE USER}

We have already mentioned that, traditionally, language pedagogy views the language learner phase as being separate both in time and space from the language user phase.

This separation is partially erased within our approach as learners can also be, at any time, language users. Within a formal learning context, they can take part in social interactions which extend beyond the institutional boundaries. They can, for example, contribute to online forums where the main focus is not language teaching and learning. They can for instance contribute to collaborative sites. Acting as a language user is no longer pushed back to a later stage but can happen as part of the learning process.

This will help learners to realise they have a right to express themselves in the target language.

\section*{4.5.7 LEARNER’S RIGHT TO SPEAK AND EMPOWERMENT}

With the rise of the internet, the debate over free speech and the right to make oneself heard has resurfaced. Thanks to web technologies, some of the obstacles to free speech (as described by Foucault\textsuperscript{81} and Bourdieu\textsuperscript{82}) have been overcome. The web offers new possibilities to "increase the number of places where we can express our autonomy and our power/ability to intervene [...] while exercising some of the social functions we were previously denied of."\textsuperscript{83} Internet has the potential to provide all of us with "a space where we can potentially address the whole world without prior consent/authorisation"\textsuperscript{84}. Internet access and enough money to pay for a connection is all is needed to create a blog, to post on a discussion forum or to react to a newspaper article for example.

\textsuperscript{80} (Ollivier, 2007, 2010)
\textsuperscript{81} (Foucault, 1969, 1971)
\textsuperscript{82} (Bourdieu, 1992, 1999)
\textsuperscript{83} (Weissberg, 1999) Translated from: "augmenter nos espaces d’autonomie, notre puissance d’intervention sociale [...] en conquérant […] l’exercice de fonctions sociales qui nous échappaient" p. 137
\textsuperscript{84} (Weissberg, 1999) translated from: "un espace d’expression où chacun est censé pouvoir s’adresser, sans autorisation préalable, au monde entier" p. 128
Individuals can thus recapture some of their right to free speech. The International Telecommunication Union reports that the web conveys empowerment[^85] for both individuals and community.[^86] This concept is often referred to as 'e-empowerment'.

This empowerment is facilitated by a socio-interactional approach emerging from real-work tasks carried out online. Learners are encouraged to make themselves heard and share their knowledge on the web. When they post contributions on sites such as Wikitravel, they are not just knowledge consumers but also knowledge co-creators. When answering questions on a travel site, they share their personal experience with interested parties. They are exercising their right to speak in the target language outside the educational boundaries. Learners can thus adopt a new role which is rarely enhanced within the educational framework, they can be viewed as individuals with their own personal knowledge to share: « students have the potential to move from the conventional epistemic stance of knowledge consumer to that of knowledge producer[^87] ».

Real-world tasks carried out online aim to create this feeling of empowerment. Our approach views learners as knowledgeable individuals and as language users and as such facilitates ways for learners to share their knowledge in the target language with other web users.

### 4.5.8 Benefits of Online Language and Social Interactions in Informal Context

Recent studies have highlighted the benefits of informal participation on web 2.0 sites. We can infer that similar benefits would occur (at least partially) in a teaching and learning context.

The studies we are referring to focus on young English learners. Researchers have analysed their interactions with online writing communities such as fanfiction sites[^88] or chain-writing sites (e.g.: Welcome to Buckeye City).

Research[^89] has shown that the young participants got really involved on these sites and that their participation contributed to the development of their identity, of metacognitive strategies and new language skills while learning about the social nature of the writing process. They also gained confidence in their language and linguistic abilities. Finally, they improved their knowledge of the form of English they need to use on the web, which had a direct impact on their socialisation process.

Other benefits often cited are:[^90] heightened exposure to the target language, observation of exchanges between native speakers and transfer of some of these observed practices for personal use, access to the popular target culture, feeling of being emerged in the target culture, increased motivation, access to an audience of native speakers, development of a greater “language awareness” and the adoption of ICT tools for language learning purposes.

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[^85]: Empowerment is defined as such: The concept suggests both individual determination over one’s own life and democratic participation in the life of one’s community, often through mediating structures such as schools, neighborhoods, churches, and other voluntary organizations. Empowerment conveys both a psychological sense of personal control or influence and a concern with actual social influence, political power, and legal rights.


[^87]: (Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008, p. 530)

[^88]: On these sites, fans of certain fictional characters (e.g. mangas) write new adventures for their heroes and share these texts.


[^90]: (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011)(Pierzak, 2007)
4.6 REAL-WORLD TASK OR PROJECT?

It is relevant to raise the question of the difference between real-world task and project as the two activities bear some similarities.

Project-based learning (PBL) establishes links outside the classroom with the real world. In this regard, the two approaches are close.

Kilpatrick, for example, emphasises the importance to take part in real-world practice in order to be better prepared for life. He wonders "could we [...] expect to find a better preparation for later life than practice in living now?". All the PBL experts highlight the importance to engage learners in "wholehearted purposeful activity in a social situation" as we do when describing real-world tasks.

The difference between a project and real-world task lies, amongst other things, in the length of the activity. A PBL activity is spread over an extended period of time, work is divided and allocated as collaboration is necessary to carry out all the tasks the project requires. Real-world tasks usually do not include collaboration and work allocation as their scale is similar to normal classroom tasks. They can be carried out individually or in group in the same amount of time that target tasks would.

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91 (Kilpatrick, 2009, p. 515)
92 (ibid, p. 524)
5 TEACHER ROLE(S) IN A SOCIO-INTERACTIONAL APPROACH

5.1.1 EVOLVING ROLE?

As Computer Mediated Communication is increasingly used for language learning and teaching purposes, the role of the language teacher is expected to be impacted on. Tella talks about a transition from the teacher as a knowledge ‘presenter’ to the teacher as an expert who takes on the role of a learning ‘facilitator’, ‘consultant’ or who can even be viewed as a ‘co-learner’ \(^{93}\). At the end of one of his articles, Kelm lists the following roles for teachers: « The technology allows language instructors to function in new roles: designer, coach, guide, mentor, facilitator\(^{94}\) ».

However, for the past few years, the idea of the teacher as a facilitator is being questioned\(^{95}\). The famous quote from Fitch, who describes this transition as going from “Sage on the Stage” to “Guide on the Side” has been cited many times, often with a critical perspective\(^{96}\) as some practitioners still view teachers as “key-decision makers”\(^{97}\) who are “at the centre of the teaching and learning process.”\(^{98}\) We will not develop this point any further but will instead present our vision of the role of language teachers in our approach.

5.1.2 WHAT THE ROLE DOES NOT INVOLVE

In an approach based on social interaction, the teacher has a lesser impact on the real-world tasks being carried out\(^{99}\) as s/he is neither the intended target nor the evaluator of these activities. If s/he was to assume these roles, s/he would then influence the interactions and consequently the learners’ input (as previously discussed, when the teacher assess the learner’s work it has a strong impact on the interaction).

Furthermore, in our approach, the teacher does not design the tasks, which already exist on a web 2.0 platform prior to its teaching and learning use. The site thus defines the task: to contribute to the building of an online encyclopaedia on Wikipedia, and to post recipes on a cooking site...

The teacher does not own the space where the interactions take place. This space is not linked or attached to the institutional context and teachers have no specific user right on the platforms.

Finally, it is not the teacher’s duty to find or give a prep talk to the (inter)actions partners. In that respect, real-world tasks differ from telecollaborative tasks or any other projects where native speakers are invited by the teacher to contribute\(^{100}\).

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\(^{93}\) (Tella, 1996)

\(^{94}\) (Kelm, 1996, p. 27)

\(^{95}\) (Fischer, 1998; Furstenberg & Levet, 2010; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O’Dowd & Eberbach, 2004; Ware & Kramsch, 2005)

\(^{96}\) (O’Dowd & Eberbach, 2004; Ware & Kramsch, 2005)

\(^{97}\) (Müller-Hartmann, 2000, p. 297)

\(^{98}\) (ibid, p. 299) Translated from “im Zentrum des Lehr- / Lernprozesses stehen”

\(^{99}\) (Ollivier, 2009b; Ollivier & Puren, 2011)

\(^{100}\) (Dufour, 2007)
### 5.1.3 WHAT THE ROLE DOES INVOLVE

In preparation for his/her class, the teacher will identify some sites where real-world tasks can be carried out. S/he will also assess their pedagogical and ethical value. S/he can then conceive a teaching and learning scenario around these tasks, as s/he would do with target tasks.

In this capacity, the teacher is a prospector\(^{101}\), searching for potential tasks for learners. According to the online Oxford dictionary\(^ {102}\), prospection is defined as “the action of looking forward mentally; anticipation; consideration of the future; foresight, planning; an instance of this” and also as “the action of prospecting (originally for mineral deposits, especially gold); an exploratory search, survey, etc.”. These definitions are good analogies of the teacher’s preparatory work.

The teacher conducts “an exploratory search” of digital tools and resources, similar to the preparatory work carried out to use authentic material in the classroom. The major difference lies in what the teacher is looking for. In this case, s/he is looking for sites where learners can (inter)act and engage in social interactions outside of the classroom setting.

The next step for the teacher is to convince learners to engage with the task. This process will be helped if learners are given the choice to join the task. Indeed in order to prevent learners to view this task as “just an educational thing”\(^ {103}\) carried out as a normal learning activity, it seems preferable to suggest rather than impose. It is thus necessary for the teacher to have alternative tasks to put forward so that learners can decide between real-world task and other tasks.

As per the definition of prospection, the teacher will also need to display his/her ability to anticipate, using what s/he knows of his/her learners’ interest and motivation to select tasks which will appeal to them. S/he will then be able to present the most motivating elements of his/her ‘prospection’. The crucial aspect is to highlight the specificity of real-world tasks: they imply to engage in real social interactions.

The last characteristic we can mention is directly linked to the dual grounding of the real-world tasks. As the tasks are taking place both within and without the classroom, the teacher can facilitate their execution by helping learners (if need be). People engage in the social interactions online won’t be aware of his/her intervention. Learners can draw on the teacher’s knowledge and skills in fields such as linguistics, interactional and intercultural communication or digital literacy.

Once again, it is preferable that the teacher offers his/her help thus being used by learners as a resource or an advisor to facilitate the task completion. This may impact on the teacher-learner relationship as the hierarchical power shifts from evaluation to expertise. Learners can decide whether they turn to the teacher, in his/her role as expert, to fill their skill and knowledge gaps.

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101 In our context, the term ‘prospector’ is preferred to ‘curator’
102 [https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/prospection](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/prospection)
103 Quote from a student who took part in the above-mentioned discussion forum.
The detailed task sample below will help illustrate the approach described in this document. It is aimed at level A2 and above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Pedagogical approach</th>
<th>Digital literacy</th>
<th>Developing learner autonomy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Task</strong></td>
<td>This task is a real-world task. The task description includes the action to be carried out (write travel information), the aim (share information and contribute to the development of an online travel guide) and the type of social interaction (with the Wikitravel community: English-speaking site visitors and contributors).</td>
<td>The work carried out here falls under the interaction literacy category. It aims at developing participation literacy by inviting learners to post on a crowdsourcing site.</td>
<td>The task description specifies the constraints the learners are facing and the scope within which they are operating (thus framing their autonomy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WikiTravel</strong> (<a href="http://wikitravel.org/eng">http://wikitravel.org/eng</a>) is a crowdsourced travel guide with 300,000 writer/travellers visiting every day. Everyone is invited to add to it by sharing what they know about a place. A page might already exist on your hometown but you can add some information on it. The site is a wiki which means that several people can collaborate on the writing of a page or a whole site.</td>
<td>Thanks to this short presentation, the social interaction (with the Wikitravel community) and the intentions/aims of the task are started to be defined.</td>
<td>The nature of the site (crowdsourcing site) and the digital tool used (wiki) are clearly defined from the start.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expected quality</strong></td>
<td>This step is essential in the context of the social-interactional approach. It allows locating the task within the social interaction at play. In this case, the expectations of the Wikitravel community have to be taken into account (expectations of the site visitors and contributors).</td>
<td>The skills needed to collaborate online are developed here and more specifically the need to consider the social dimension of the contribution.</td>
<td>A list of quality criteria will be created. This list will be used by learners at the end for the evaluation process. The objective is to train learners to take into consideration very early on...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. In our opinion, what qualities are the English speakers, who are visiting the site, expecting to find? In other words, what constitutes a good article about a place for future visitors? What are the quality criteria for such an article? Draw up a list of criteria.
2. Let’s now have a look at the contribution guide available on the...
You will find below the link to the 'Community policies' for the site.
http://wikitravel.org/en/Wikitravel:Community_policies

Read these guidelines. Do they correspond to the list of criteria you had in mind? If you found new recommendations on the site that you had not thought of, add them to your initial list.

**Content expected by future visitors**

1. You are going to post a contribution in English to a popular online travel guide. In your opinion, what type of information are the readers expecting to find? Draw up a list of items to include.
2. Check a page about a city and complete your original list.

**Content selection. Items to include about your hometown.**

You are going to add some listings on the ‘Eat’ section. You will make some recommendations on where to eat in your hometown. What information should you include in these listings?

- Draw up a list of items.
- Read a few restaurant recommendations on various pages of the site in English or any language you understand. Make a list of common items mentioned by contributors.

Can you think of any restaurant you could recommend to tourists? Which ones and why?

If you don’t know any restaurant to recommend, try to find out some for our next class. How and where could you get this information? (sites to visit, people to contact…)?

How can you assess the relevance of the information you have found?

Amongst all the information you have collected, which items can you safely add to your contribution to Wikitravel?

**Write-up your listings / opinion**

- Once again, the first step is to draw on learners’ prior knowledge and to then expand.
- In order to develop a plurilingual and intercultural competence, it is recommended to favour accessing documents in the target language, in a second language or in any other language(s) the learners may understand (languages they have learnt or closely-related to languages they know)
- In the writing process, this phase is known as the planning phase (looking for and selecting information to be included).

The work focus here on text genre linked to media. The learners can

As above, this aims at making learners aware of the skills and knowledge they already have and the ones they are missing. Therefore learners will start reflecting on how to access information and how to assess the quality of this information.

**Pedagogical approach**

- It is possible here to first draw on learners’ representations and prior knowledge and to then encourage them to expand after visiting some of the site pages.

**Digital literacy**

- One of the objectives here is to encourage learners to reflect on their sources of information (digital or not) and on their relevance/reliability therefore developing information literacy skills.

**Developing learner autonomy**

- This aims at making learners aware of the skills and knowledge they already have and the ones they are missing. Therefore learners will start reflecting on how to access information and how to assess the quality of this information.
You can start drafting the description of a restaurant using the skills and knowledge you already have.

If you encounter some problems in the writing process, where could you get some help and extra information on useful language items?

*If learners don’t think about it, they can be encouraged to access some restaurant presentations on other pages of the site or on other travel guides. They can then analyse the structure of these presentations and make a list of useful vocabulary and expressions which could help them in their writing process.*

Write your text.

**Reviewing**

Review your restaurant presentation before posting it.

Check that it fulfills the quality criteria established at the beginning of the task.

Ask for peer-feedback.

*Quels outils (numériques ou non) pourriez-vous utiliser pour réviser votre texte?* 

*If learners don’t think about it, they can be encouraged to access spell checkers such as the ones found on word processing tools or sites such as Bonpatron ([https://bonpatron.com/](https://bonpatron.com/)) for French, SpellCheckPlus ([https://spellcheckplus.com/](https://spellcheckplus.com/)) for English, Spanishchecker ([https://spanishchecker.com/](https://spanishchecker.com/)) for Spanish or more generally Language Tool ([https://languagetool.org](https://languagetool.org)) which provides a large range of languages.*

In the context of the social-interactional approach, it is important that the productions fulfil the explicit and implicit social requirements of the site. In other words, are the entries produced by the learners adapted to the site and visitors’ expectations?

If proofreading or spellchecking tools are being used, it will be important to present the various function of these tools (especially if further details are provided by the platform) in order to decide whether to accept or reject the proposed changes.
Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy
--- | --- | ---
**Reflection on digital literacy and autonomy**
Which resources/tools (digital or non-digital) were the most useful to:
- find information about the restaurant you have decided to present?
- write your entry?
- review your entry?

Which information sources seem the most relevant/reliable to obtain information?

Now that you know how the site is developed, would you trust Wikitravel as a source of information? Why?
Please note that Wikipedia works in the same way. Do you trust this site? Why?

In the future, what techniques and resources will you use to produce texts?

The aim here is to develop a critical approach to the use of digital tools. Learners are encouraged to reflect on the quality and relevance of the resources used (digital or not). Media literacy and information literacy are touched upon here too as learners reflect on how information is created on crowdsourcing sites and on the quality and reliability of this information.

The last question focuses more specifically on building a Personal Learning Environment (PLE). Learners are encouraged to think about the resources they can add to their PLE.

The focus here is on ways we do things. Learners have to reflect on what they did and how they did it. The aims it is make them aware of the strategies they used and to help them to adopt them again if they were adequate.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


