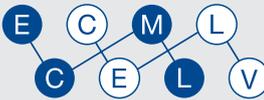




E-LANG

Towards a socio-interactive approach to foster autonomy in language learners and users

Christian Ollivier
e-lang project team

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The present publication has been developed by the e-lang project team (Digital literacy for the teaching and learning of languages). The aim of the publication is to clearly define the pedagogical foundations guiding the e-lang project on the use of new technologies. A set of training modules has also been developed by the e-lang project team which complement this publication. The modules (available at: www.ecml.at/e-lang) present a teaching methodology which integrates new technologies.

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**Towards a socio-interactional approach
to foster autonomy in
language learners and users**

Christian OLLIVIER

E-lang project
“Digital literacy
for the teaching and learning of language”

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European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz
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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 (2016-2018) is part of the ECML (European Centre for Modern Languages) programme entitled “Languages at the heart of learning”. The aim of this publication is to clearly define the pedagogical foundations guiding our project on the use of new technologies.

Two main elements underpin our project:

- adopting a socio-interactional approach focusing on the implementation of real-world tasks;
- combining tasks with the use of digital resources in order to help learners develop both their autonomy and lifelong skills.

The implementation of this approach requires that teachers (and ultimately learners):

- know 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 and encourage them to see *change in practices* as a concept to be implemented and valued.

A detailed example of a real-world task can be found at the end of this publication. We invite readers to refer to it in order to develop a better understanding of the concepts discussed in this document.

1 Digital literacy

1.1 Clarification of adopted terminology

Definitions of digital literacy abound as do many terms associated with it. To name a few, we find: ‘computer literacy’, ‘ICT literacy’, ‘eLiteracy’, ‘new literacies’, ‘21st century literacy/ies’, ‘literacies of the digital’. The use of the plural form (literacies) illustrates the complexity of the notion.

In line with the ECML, we will adopt the term ‘digital literacy’. The choice of the singular form does not prevent us from accepting the intricacy of the various skills to which the concept refers.

1.2 Evolution and diversity of models

The concept of digital literacy has been redefined many times since Gilster¹ attempted to frame it in 1997. His work is nonetheless seen as pivotal as it values the cognitive dimension 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 us 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, as the three examples below illustrate:

- Eshet-Alkalai’s model combines six different types of literacies and competences: “photovisual literacy”, “reproduction literacy”, “branching literacy”, “information literacy”, “socioemotional literacy”, “real-time thinking”⁵.
- The EU project DigEuLit⁶ identifies four main elements: “technical literacy”, “information literacy”, “media literacy” and “visual literacy”.

¹ (Gilster, 1997)

² (Gilster, 1997, p. 15)

³ (Gilster, 1997, p. 1)

⁴ (Gilster, 1997, p. 2)

⁵ (Eshet-Alkalai, 2004)

⁶ (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006)

- 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 encourages taking digital identity and well-being into consideration in a world which increasingly relies on digital tools both for work and leisure.

1.3 Digital literacy: selected components

Before providing our own definition of the concept, it is worth stating that having access to new technologies and digital resources is a prerequisite to the development of digital literacy. There exists a digital divide and being aware of this situation is essential to implementing a context of learning with technologies and digital resources. This digital divide might exist for various reasons such as a lack of financial means, an absence of infrastructure or an inadequate access to resources (for people suffering from a handicap, such as visual impairment for example).

It is our view that digital literacy results from the intertwining of three main sets of competences within an ethical and critical framework: technology literacy, meaning-making literacy and interaction literacy.

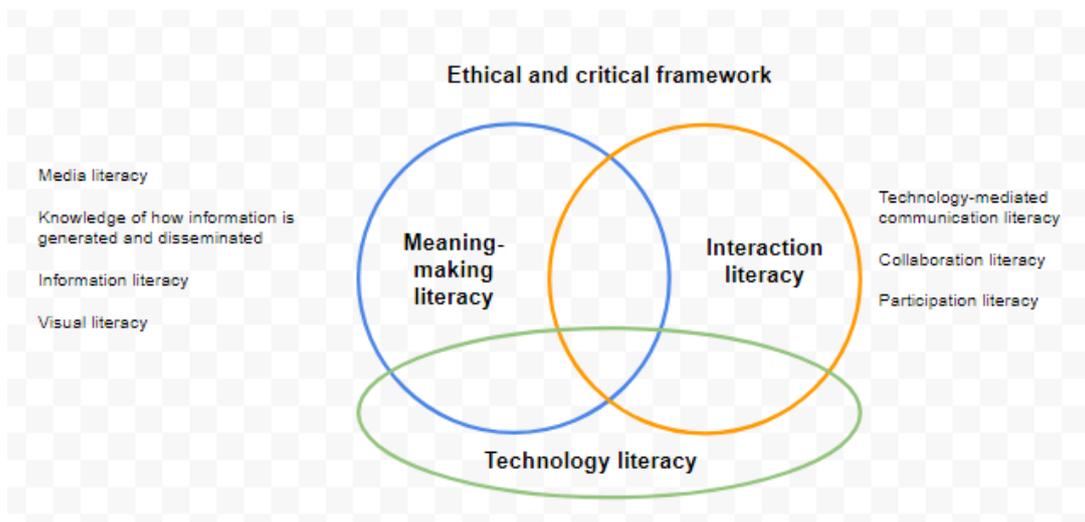


Figure 1: Digital literacy

⁷ (Beetham, 2015; Killen, 2015; Jisc, 2014)

1.3.1 Technology literacy

As one of the longest-standing components of digital literacy, technology literacy has been removed from some of the most recent models because it is considered an integral part of digital literacy. Bawden⁸ describes computer/ICT literacy as an “underpinning” component onto which digital literacy would be “grafted”. In our model, we view technology literacy as the ability to select and use digital resources and devices (devices, software, mobile apps, etc.).

Having the competency to manipulate a device or a resource is a condition to being able to function within a digital space. However, while it is essential to know the various technologies (the existence of online dictionaries for example), it is all the more important to know their various possible uses i.e. affordances. Teachers thus need to become familiar with the various functionalities of a digital resource before being able to guide a learner on how to adapt it to his/her specific needs.

1.3.2 Meaning-making literacy

This component focuses on the construction of meaning and combines several elements which can be found in other models of digital literacy such as information literacy, media literacy and visual literacy.

Information literacy (associated to new technologies or not) has already been widely discussed by researchers and experts. It is defined as follows in UNESCO’s 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

While media literacy is closely related to information literacy, it has its own specificities. Media literacy includes the ability to create new forms of messages on various media (emails for example) and to understand how these messages are generated and perceived on the chosen platforms.

“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

⁸ (Bawden, 2008, p. 29)

⁹ (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1)

dissemination. Visual literacy also falls under this category as it is the ability to make sense of information presented in the form of images.

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, teachers can get their learners to post an entry on a crowdsourcing information site (such as Wikinews). This task requires learners 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 a better understanding of how information is processed on sites such as Wikipedia or Wikinews and can then reflect on this process. This will give them an insight into how these sites work.

1.3.3 Interaction literacy

Communicative and collaborative skills are listed 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 is the case in online gaming or public chats) is also covered here¹⁰.

As interactions are at the heart of our approach, this category is 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.

¹⁰ Described as “*real-time thinking*” by Eshet-Akai et Chajut (2009).

1.3.4 Ethical and critical framework

This framework is one of the key elements of our model. All the above-mentioned literacies are framed by this concept, which is broader than the critical dimension included within information literacy. It requires users to be aware of how to (re)act and behave appropriately depending on the online context. Other issues such as online security and confidentiality as well as digital identity are also included within this framework. Furthermore, using technologies requires users to be aware of “human and environmental health” and to incorporate digital practices which are “fully inclusive and equitable”¹¹ in order to foster democratic participation.

Learners will benefit from a systematic reflection on these ethical and critical issues when carrying out any online activity as the objectives of these activities are to develop their personal skills as well as promote their civic engagement both at interpersonal and societal levels (i.e. 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.

By encouraging learners to post comments on online articles or to contribute to crowdsourcing sites, teachers can mobilise learners’ digital competences in real situations. However, it is also essential to ensure that this participation is meaningful both to learners and other users of the platform and goes beyond a mere learning task in order to become a real contribution. Learners will also have to keep in mind that these modes of participation contribute to their digital footprint and as a consequence, they will need to decide whether they use their real identity or create an avatar.

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

Digital technologies should not be blindly accepted and put into practice. We promote herein an open-minded, “critical and realistic stance” which is neither overzealous nor too negative towards new technologies¹². It is our opinion that

¹¹ (Beetham, 2015)

¹² Adapted from Karsenti & Collin, 2013, p. 61.

technology by itself cannot guarantee a successful learning outcome, but that it can enhance learning if it is carefully integrated into the pedagogical practices and the learning and communicative skills of language learners and users.

1.4 Developing digital literacy

Being digitally literate requires the ability to both (critically) use and create digital resources. In other words, it means that to be digitally literate, you have to be a: i) digital consumer (in a position to evaluate digital tools and resources in order to make a critical and informed use of them); ii) digital agent (i.e. active on social media or developing digital resources).

The suggestion that learners have to be guided to develop their digital literacy may seem surprising. Indeed, many of our younger students are often regarded as ‘digital natives’ known for their ability to use new technologies. However, recent research has shown that this may be more a myth than a reality. Indeed, while digital natives are heavy users of new technologies, their practices have a very limited scope (mainly for social exchanges).¹³ As a result, they have difficulties applying these skills for learning purposes¹⁴. They are “tech-comfy”¹⁵ (i.e. they can make use of technologies for private use) but not “tech-savvy” (i.e. they cannot easily transfer these skills to different contexts such as their professional or educational environments).

As suggested by Sharpe *et al*¹⁶, learners should be encouraged to develop their own personal learning environment (PLE), gathering all the resources (digital or non-digital) they know and can use for language learning and language practice. This would help them to reflect critically on how they learn, and on how they may change their practices.

We therefore advocate an action-oriented approach based on tasks that 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 critical knowledge of available resources.

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)

In order to develop their critical perspective, 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 and sustainable skills as language learners and language users.

1.5 Implementation

We describe below how we envisage the development of digital literacy. This implementation plan draws upon the work of two EU projects: DidacTIClang¹⁷ (An Internet-based didactic approach for language teaching and learning) and DigEuLit¹⁸ (A European framework for digital literacy).

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

- identify the skills and knowledge needed to complete a task;
- assess which skills and knowledge are already acquired;
- determine what is feasible to achieve;
- identify resources which, combined with learners' 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 complete the task;
- carry out the task;
- publish the task output(s);
- reflect on the process as well as on the resources used in order to assess their relevance, strengths and limitations;
- add these newly acquired and relevant knowledge and resources to the PLEs.

¹⁷ (Ollivier & Weiß, 2007)

¹⁸ (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006)

2 Autonomy

The digital literacy development and implementation that we are promoting can be located within the wider concept of autonomous language learners and users, so it is important that we define our view of ‘autonomy’.

According to Holec¹⁹ and other scholars, learners are developing their autonomy when they are fully in charge of their learning, from setting learning objectives to evaluating the learning process and its outcomes. As such, this concept is probably best suited to describing autonomy in an informal context or for independent language learners.

In a formal setting, however, learners are rarely involved in the whole decision-making process; for instance, they rarely set their own learning objectives or decide on assessment procedures. They are merely in charge of their learning process, so they will exert their autonomy only when assessing how they can successfully meet the evaluation criteria set for them. Yet, it is expected that this will suffice to prepare learners to become autonomous language users as, once they have left the school system, they will be entirely responsible for the 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,²⁰ and entails the ability to:

- be aware of and understand the learning objectives of a set task as well as its parameters (for example the constraints ensuing from the type of interaction learners engage in);
- define personal objectives (within the institutional framework);
- choose how to implement these learning objectives: working options, activities and resources are selected to create an action plan. This will be supported by:
 - evaluating existing knowledge, skills and resources at hand;
 - identifying resources to overcome any personal shortfall;

¹⁹ (Holec, 1981, 1993)

²⁰ (Little, 1991; Little, Dam & Legenhausen, 2017; Littlewood, 2004; Portine, 1998)

- being able to use these resources(including digital resources) to successfully complete the task at hand;
- implement this action plan;
- critically assess the process and resources used;
- reflect on how the whole process contributed to the development of autonomy both as language learners to complete the set tasks and as language users to interact in real 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 that complement individual knowledge and know-how;
- critically evaluating these resources and assessing their relevance as language users.

3 Socio-interactional approach

In this section, we present our pedagogical approach: it is referred to as the socio-
interactional approach. We will first explain how we define the ability to
communicate and act, and then explain our own approach as well as the type of
tasks we associate with it, tasks that are conducted in real life and referred to as
real-world tasks hereafter.

3.1 Communicative competence and interactions

3.1.1 *Communicative competence: an overview*

Since the publication of Hymes' ground-breaking work in communicative
competence²¹, it is largely accepted that socio-cultural factors in our environment
shape the way we learn to communicate and how we use languages. Indeed, we
learn to recognise the 'appropriateness' of our actions within our social context in
order to know "when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom,
when, where, and in what manner"²².

Subsequent research²³ also highlighted the social aspects of communication. Two
main issues regarding the social dimension in these various models are apparent:

- the social dimension is placed at the same level as any other dimensions as
one aspect of communicative competence amongst others;
- the social dimension is often restricted to socio-cultural elements (also known
as sociolinguistic aspects), leaving intersubjectivity out of the equation. In
other words, the interpersonal relationship which binds the individuals
engaged in the communication is not considered.

The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) defines
the "communicative language competence [...] as comprising several components:
linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic"²⁴. It is worth noting that these
components are listed on a non-hierarchical basis and that the social dimension is
confined to the sociolinguistic elements.

²¹ (Hymes, 1972)

²² (Hymes, 1972, p. 277)

²³ (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980; Coste, Courtillon, Ferenczi, Martins-Baltar & Papo,
1976; Moirand, 1982)

²⁴ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 13)

However, the CEFR action-oriented approach places a large emphasis on “social agents” and the “social context” within which tasks are carried out. “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”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 4.1.3 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 “external conditions”²⁶.

This view does not fully reflect the way in which we view communication in real life: we consider that communication is mainly guided by social interactions.

3.1.2 Placing social interactions at the forefront

When talking about communicative 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 that exists between the various people involved in the action. In other words, the initial element guiding actions is the social relationship between 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 in which we are in at the time of the action. We will not follow the same process 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, the way we prepare the dish might have an impact on the various relationships mentioned here.

²⁵ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 9)

²⁶ (Council of Europe, 2001, pp. 46-47)

Similarly, we consider that linguistic communication is first and foremost influenced by social relationships, with the dialogic and interpersonal dimension ²⁷ of communication being particularly important. For us, the constraints of interpersonal exchanges override socio-cultural norms, that is, “abstract norms which dictate communicative practices in general”²⁸.

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 communicative competence as being restricted to this aspect only. The sub-competences, discussed since the seventies and included in the CEFR, are still valid. However, in our framework, social interactions prevail over any other aspects of communicative competence and all other elements that come into action are determined by the interpersonal relationships at play.

The previous example illustrated a sociolinguistic aspect of communication, let's now take one illustrating linguistic norms. If we wanted to explain our concept in only a few words, we could say that our linguistic choices (e.g., vocabulary, syntax) are decided by the social interactions in which we are engaged. Indeed we use different words or syntactical structures depending on the people we are addressing. For instance, if we were to write a book about this concept, we would adapt the text to its intended audience: a group of academic experts, teachers with a university degree, or the larger public interested in pedagogy but with no prior knowledge of the topic.

²⁷ (Jacques, 1979, 1985, 2000)

²⁸ Translated from Bouvier, 2000, p. 72.

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, the success or failure in communication can impact the relationship between individuals. 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.

In the language-related field, it is crucial 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 that disputes the limitations of unidirectional communication models. Within these linear models²⁹, the sender encodes a message which is then decoded by the receiver. The receiver's role is thus essentially limited to decoding the original message.

However, as more recent research in the field highlights, communication is a complex process that cannot be over simplified. Indeed, all the individuals that take part in the communication are involved in the meaning-making process. Consequently, we consider that:

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

Speaking is not saying something *to* someone but rather saying something *together* about something³⁰. Therefore, 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, which illustrates the evolution of meaning during an exchange. Let's consider the following scenario: a man and a woman are sitting close to each other in a café. The man is wearing a scarf around his neck. The

²⁹ (Jakobson, 1980; Shannon, 1948)

³⁰ (Grillo, 1997, p. 63)

³¹ (Culioli, 1999)

woman turns to the man and tells him: “You are wearing a beautiful scarf”. We will concentrate on the possible replies to this statement, showing that the meaning of her sentence is built through the interaction.

1:

Woman: You are wearing a beautiful scarf.

Man: Thank you.

The woman’s statement became a compliment and as such was accepted.

2:

Woman: You are wearing a beautiful scarf.

Man: It is a bit of an easy chat-up line, isn’t it?

The woman averts her eyes and this marks the end of the exchange. The woman’s initial statement was viewed as a way to engage in conversation.

3:

Woman: You are wearing a beautiful scarf.

Man: It is a bit of an easy chat-up line, isn’t it?

Woman: 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 boyfriend.

The meaning of the initial sentence has just been modified and can now be perceived as: “*I really like your scarf and engage in a conversation with you so that I can find out where you bought it*”.

4:

Woman: You are wearing a beautiful scarf.

Man (flattered): Really?

The initial sentence has been successful in establishing a contact between the two individuals and the compliment has been accepted.

5.

Woman: You are wearing a beautiful scarf.

Man (flattered): Really?

Woman: 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 boyfriend.

The meaning of the initial sentence has been changed once again.

In this approach, uttering and understanding a statement are viewed as activities which cannot be separated. To be able to utter speech, one has to be able to understand. To be even more precise, one has to be able to anticipate what the receiver will understand from the speech one has produced. As Jacques stated: “my ears are doing the talking”³². Being an effective communicator entails that we can produce a message that we feel the other(s) should understand. In other words, we always have to keep our interlocutor(s) in mind no matter what we do or say. The social ties linking us to the others in the interaction constrain any communication and/or action.

3.1.4 Language productions with no direct interaction: example of literary texts

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 ‘silent’ and part of an internal process, which is not concretely perceived. 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 the author, the text and the reader³³. Some literary theorists even go as far as to state 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 co-construction of meaning between author and reader prevails.

³² (Jacques, 2000, p. 63 translated from “*ce sont mes oreilles qui te parlent*”)

³³ (Eco, 1985)

3.1.5 Summary – Towards a socio-interactional competence

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 postulate that social interactions are the most decisive elements that impact on actions and communication.

Our underpinning principles are as follows:

- a) Any form of communication or action occurs within the context of a social interaction, that is, a dynamic interpersonal relationship linking all the people involved.
- b) This social interaction is the most decisive element of the action and/or communication as it determines its form and its meanings.
- c) In turn, human interactions and the co-construction of meaning contribute to define social interactions.
- d) We believe that the ability to adapt our actions and communication to the context of the relationship at play is a basic competence. We refer to this competence as the socio-interactional competence.
- e) The construction of meaning happens within the act of communication, through the interaction that connects the various actors of the communication. The meaning of the message is not pre-defined, and so the interlocutor's task is not to simply decode meaning. The meaning is co-constructed through the interaction by the various individuals involved in the communication.

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 undertaken by learners. The overall aim 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 communicative 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 skills 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, we often only refer 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.

- a) Mangenot and Penilla³⁴ mention a scenario created 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 fictitious Polynesian student living in France.
- b) The second scenario comes from a French Teacher Association conference, where a colleague gave the example of a task for a French for specific purposes course that consisted of organising a trip for a group of 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 imaginary people.

The range of social interactions which can be encountered in real life is larger 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 fulfil their expectations (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 employees and their management team, as a group and at an individual level.

³⁴ (Mangenot & Penilla, 2009)

When creating teaching and learning scenarios, we tend to focus mostly on asking learners to simulate 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 second scenario) are partially or completely omitted.

In real life, no direct exchange might take place between people carrying out 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(s) of the task and its target audience(s) are real. In other words, both the action (for example, a decision-making process) and the interactions (for example, a letter) 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 aim 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 regular teaching-learning contexts. 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 that take them 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 the concept of task 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. Some definitions are so broad that they encompass any activities ranging from a simple exercise to a large project. This was the position adopted by Frauenfelder and Porquier,³⁶ who put forward a broad definition of the concept in 1980. Their 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 Nunan³⁷ that these kinds of definitions are not very useful as they imply that any form of activity carried out by learners can be considered as a task and can be used “to justify any procedure at all as ‘task-based’ ”³⁸.

Definitions which are more specific and targeted are more pertinent to us. We will use these definitions to list all the elements that form the basic elements of our own 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 require 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”³⁹. 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,

³⁵ Translated from Nissen: *l’acception de ce qu’est une tâche n’est pas unanime* (2011).

³⁶ (Porquier & Frauenfelder, 1980, p. 64)

³⁷ (Nunan, 2004, et 2006)

³⁸ (Nunan, 2004, p. 3, et 2006, p. 16)

³⁹ (Long, 1985, p. 89)

translating a foreign language text or preparing a class newspaper through group work”⁴⁰. While some of these tasks are language-based (writing a book 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”⁴¹.

Everyday actions

Several of the examples listed above are not directly 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 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)”⁴².

Focus on meaning

Many researchers⁴³ agree that the concept of ‘task’ is associated with a focus on meaning. Nunan explains that when learners carry out a task “their attention is principally focussed on meaning rather than form”⁴⁴.

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”⁴⁵.

Workplan, cognitive process and resources

A task also involves a “workplan”⁴⁶ with “a beginning, a middle and an end”⁴⁷ which helps in establishing whether it is completed or not. Moreover, a number of cognitive operations drawing on internal resources (knowledge and competences

⁴⁰ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10)

⁴¹ (Ellis, 2003, p. 9 et seq.)

⁴² (Long, 1985, p. 89)

⁴³ (Candlin, 1987; Ellis, 2003; Guichon, 2006; Skehan, 1998; Willis, 1996)

⁴⁴ (Nunan, 2004, pp. 1-2)

⁴⁵ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 10)

⁴⁶ (Ellis, 2003, p. 9 et seq.)

⁴⁷ (Nunan, 2004, p. 4)

already acquired) 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

The aspect of social interactions is not systematically mentioned by researchers; however we think it is paramount. Long states that a task is “a piece of work undertaken for oneself or for others”,⁴⁸ thus emphasizing the importance of the intended audience. According to our framework, a task is produced *with* others, which means that the social interactions at play should always be kept in mind.

4.2 Selected characteristics of a task

The following figure illustrates these various elements of a task and how they are combined. It highlights the key role of social interactions and shows how important it is to use strategically the internal and external resources available.

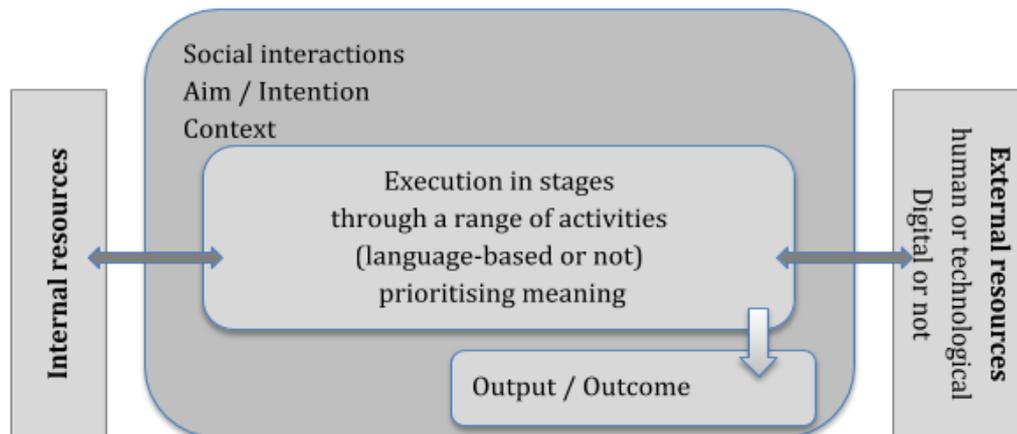


Figure 2: Combination of elements and criteria forming a task
(adapted from Ollivier, 2012, p. 154)

⁴⁸ (Long, 1985, p. 89)

The task consists of three main elements:

- The main background frame is based on:
 - social interactions (as already explained, this is the most crucial element within our framework);
 - the aim or intention of people involved (this is strongly linked to social interactions);
 - the context (this includes all the elements outside of the interaction such as material constraints for example).
- A range of activities (which are language-based or not) are required to complete a task. They draw on the strategic use of internal (individual prior knowledge and skills) or external resources. The external resources can be human-based (such as the help of a person as a resource) or technology-based (digital or not). 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 external resources) at a later stage as it is a vital element in our approach of integration of digital literacy 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 related to ‘real life’ situations and social interactions.

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)⁴⁹. According to him, real-world tasks have no place in the classroom where it is impossible to carry them out as they are “a communicative act we achieve through language in the world outside the classroom”⁵⁰. If such a task is transferred to the classroom, then it automatically becomes a pedagogical task.

⁴⁹ (Nunan, 2004, p. 1 et seq.)

⁵⁰ (Nunan, 2001)

If we exclude real-world tasks, the CEFR and researchers in the field makes the following distinction between tasks:

- Tasks which reflect real life. These tasks aim to prepare for actions conducted outside the classroom;
- Tasks indirectly related to real life. These tasks aim to develop the communicative competence 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: Guichon⁵¹, for example, refers to them as “macro-tasks” (macro-tâches). Nunan⁵² 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”⁵³. These tasks are “chosen on the basis of learners’ needs outside the classroom, whether in the personal and public domains, or in relation to more specific occupational or educational needs”⁵⁴.

As a result, these tasks are often referred to as realistic, lifelike or plausible, even sometimes as authentic as 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 “reflecting ‘real-life’ use”⁵⁵. Their level of authenticity is determined by how similar they are to tasks that learners might complete outside the classroom.

In most cases, these tasks are mimicking social interactions as we have shown with the scenario of a trip for a group of retirees.

4.3.1.2 Tasks indirectly related to 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

⁵¹ (Guichon, 2006)

⁵² (Nunan, 2001)

⁵³ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 157)

⁵⁴ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 157)

⁵⁵ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 158)

than the easier and more natural mother tongue to carry out meaning-focused tasks”⁵⁶.

These tasks are more detached from real-life; they are also “more limited” and “less realistic”⁵⁷. Their first objective is pedagogical. They do not belong to any social interaction other than that established within the teaching and learning context.

4.3.1.3 Exclusion of real life

As previously described, tasks are either ‘close to’ real life or ‘more detached’ from real life. However, as stated by Nunan, they are always carried out outside real life. Moreover they do not belong to any social interaction or if they do, only partially. This deliberate distant positioning from real life explains the terminology adopted in the CEFR: action-oriented approach. It also reflects the distinction made in the CEFR between language learning and language use⁵⁸. The term ‘action-oriented’ implies that the language teaching and learning process focuses on actions that are not designed to be carried out straight away. The CEFR views learners as future users preparing to act. They take advantage of a safe environment to engage in rehearsal tasks in order to get ready for real-life actions.

4.4 The dual focus of real-world tasks on the web 2.0

We use the expression ‘real-world task’ to refer to tasks carried out within a social interaction that occur outside the classroom and educational contexts. Posting comments on a discussion thread of a newspaper⁵⁹, contributing to crowdsourcing sites such as Wikipedia⁶⁰ or sharing recipes on a specialised cooking 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 constitute actions taking place in real life. The social interactions within which they occur go beyond the educational boundaries allowing a language learner/user to (inter)act with people who are outside the educational context.

⁵⁶ (Council of Europe, 2001, p. 157)

⁵⁷ (Demaizière & Narcy-Combes, 2005, p. 50 translated from: « plus circonscrites » « moins réalistes »)

⁵⁸ Cf. (Gauchola & Murillo, 2011; Ollivier, 2009a, 2013; Ollivier & Puren, 2011)

⁵⁹ (cf. Hanna & de Nooy, 2003)

⁶⁰ (cf. Ollivier, 2007, 2010)

These tasks thus have a dual focus or grounding, combining real life and educational contexts. While carrying out such a task, a contributor is both a learner (within a teaching and learning context) and a user (inter)acting with people outside the educational context.

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 performed outside of the classroom⁶¹ insofar as none of the task participants are chosen, prepared or informed in any way by the teacher. Learners also become language users and (inter)act with these participants following the interactional conventions in this given context.

Types of social interactions

In some cases, due to their nature, the social interactions are guided by explicit social norms. In other cases, these norms are implicit. Moreover, these norms can have a very strong or limited interpersonal component.

We might take the example of *Wikipedia*. Participants' behaviour on the platform is guided by these norms. Contributors have implicitly the readers' needs in mind when they post. As contributors are generally users of the site, they are familiar with what is expected from this encyclopaedia and the content that they post reflects what they would like to access themselves. The evaluation of the content by other Wikipedia users is also a form of social interaction⁶². This evaluation process can generate exchanges on the 'talk' page on each article. Explicit behavioural guidelines were established to facilitate these exchanges.⁶³ Moreover, Wikipedia generally encourages interpersonal interactions. The page "Please do not bite the newcomers"⁶⁴ 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."

⁶¹ (Rosen & Schaller, 2008)

⁶² See here for a list of criteria for featured articles:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Featured_article_criteria

⁶³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_guidelines

⁶⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:List_of_policies

The first thing to do when carrying out a real-world task is to assess the type of social interactions into 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 experience resulting from general use or from users' expectations.

Suggested tasks

The primary goal of real-world tasks is to use language as you would in real contexts and as other participants would. Learners become users in order to collaborate with other individuals. Language learning is not the main objective of the task; the main objective is, for example, to share knowledge, an opinion or an experience, to request an opinion or a piece of advice, to discuss a news item or to talk about a hobby. It is thus essential that learners fully 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 these language learning tasks in a classroom context which does not involve people outside of the educational system. A real-world task should not be imposed on learners but rather suggested to them. Moreover, it should be up to them to decide whether they want to engage in activities containing 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, as such it encourages contributions from everyone; similarly a discussion forum is a platform where exchanges on specific topics are expected to take place. Teachers do not design the activities that take place on these social platforms; they merely invite learners to contribute to the specific sites that they have identified as relevant.

External evaluation

The task evaluation is carried out within the interaction itself by the people with whom language learners/users interact.

On Wikipedia, for instance, the other authors rate the quality of the contributions and correct 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 dish or suggesting possible changes to the recipe. These are forms of social validation which obey to the rules of the interactions at play.

In classroom tasks, texts produced by learners are often read exclusively by teachers and the content of the text is often only peripheral. In real-world tasks, on the one hand, both content and language play an important role in defining the task. Language learners know that they have to be understood and 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.”⁶⁵

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, which will now be discussed, plays 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 skills or broadening those that are underdeveloped by using digital technologies amongst other strategies. In this regard, the tasks are also heavily grounded in the educational context.

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 may prepare their contribution offline benefitting from time and guidance. They will later upload it online. Even though it does not completely eradicate all the potential issues and risks that arise from online publishing⁶⁶, this process limits them. Learners should always be encouraged to ensure that their input matches the standards of the chosen platform. They may also ask for feedback on their work before publishing it.

⁶⁵ <http://www.fmylife.com/submission>

⁶⁶ (See for example Mangenot & Penilla, 2009)

A preparation close to what is required for a target task

The work done in the educational space and that carried out for a target task are thus very similar. Adopting real-world tasks does not change drastically what happens in the classroom. However, these tasks offer the advantage of being open to the outside world and 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 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 experiment with digital resources that will help them to understand, create and interact with others. In addition, they will develop specific skills such as grammatical, lexical, textual, discursive or intercultural competences.

Teachers will recommend useful resources (such as online dictionaries, machine translators or text-to-speech technology) and accompanying activities to help learners get familiar with these resources in order to use them to act or communicate in the target language. Learners can later decide whether they wish to integrate these resources to their PLEs.

Let's have a look at possible reading activities. An original text can be given together with several automatic translations (e.g. Google Translate, DeepL...). 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 use 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 experiencing 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 types of authenticity are frequently mentioned: situational authenticity and interactional authenticity:

- situational authenticity is achieved when tasks and real-world activities are similar⁶⁷;
- interactional authenticity occurs 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 life⁶⁸.

The same level of authenticity cannot be achieved with all tasks. Rehearsal tasks are the most authentic. Close to reality, they prepare for situations which may well occur in real life. They thus aspire to both situational and interactional authenticity: the desired level of authenticity is as close as possible to what is happening in real life, without ever reaching it.

With our approach, which encompasses every type of social interactions, we aim to go further and achieve socio-interactional authenticity, that is, language use is closely in line with the social interactions at play to complete the task and is impacted as little as possible by the educational setting. This will be achieved, for example, when learners interact with their communication partners and forget about their teacher (whose presence is more or less felt or 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. However, the situational authenticity is also achieved in the teaching and learning context, as we will now see.

The dual grounding (in real life and in the educational realm) 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. In the

⁶⁷ (Ellis, 2003, p. 6)

⁶⁸ (Ellis, 2003, p. 3)

educational context, they concentrate fully on their learning. The language interactions focus both on learning and executing a task. Teachers can then concentrate on providing expertise and guidance.

4.5.2 Opening up to the world – (inter)acting outside the classroom

In the 1990's, many researchers highlighted the fact that the web provided great opportunities to open a window to 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, in our view, the opportunities have not been fully harnessed. We have found 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. More recently, projects aiming at promoting online exchanges amongst students have been on the rise. These are known as telecollaboration projects⁶⁹. However, there are very few examples of real-world tasks being truly implemented.

An approach based on social interactions offers new avenues to opening up the classroom to the world and breaking down "restrictions of isolated classrooms, thus overcoming some of the limitations of a communicative approach in [...] a traditional organisation of learning"⁷⁰.

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 interactions⁷¹. 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 communication partners. Teachers are at the top in the communication hierarchy (especially as they provide the evaluation) whereas students are at a lower level. This very formalised system gives rise to a 'dual voice' phenomenon⁷² where learners' 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

⁶⁹ (Belz & Thorne, 2006)

⁷⁰ (Korsvold & Rüschoff, 1997, p. 144)

⁷¹ (Bellack & Davitz, 1965 ; Brossard, 1981; Flanders, 1970; Stubbs & Delamont, 1976)

⁷² (Trevisse, 1979 – "double énonciation")

meaning. However, very often in a classroom setting, “individuals learn to express themselves more as learners than as human beings”⁷³.

Moreover, learners sometimes take part in simulation activities in which they produce “simulated speech” which has “no ‘real’ communicative value”. Cicurel states that simulation is not real communication⁷⁴. All in all, classroom communication leaves very little room to social interactions.⁷⁵ Even though these tasks might prove valuable in some contexts, it would be a pity not to go any further.

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 learners⁷⁶ and give them more control over the content.

However, the impact of the teaching presence on 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.

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 (sometimes inadvertently) to fulfil teachers’ expectations.⁷⁷

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 the latter, 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.

⁷³ (Moore & Simon, 2002, p. 3 translation of “le sujet qui apprend s’[...]exprime davantage en tant qu’apprenant qu’en tant que personne”)

⁷⁴ (Cicurel, 1985, p.16 « lorsqu’on simule, on ne fait jamais que semblant de communiquer »)

⁷⁵ (Verdelhan-Bourgade, 1986, p. 74)

⁷⁶ (Bump, 1990); Kelm, 1992; Kern, 1995; and Warschauer, 1996)

⁷⁷ (Jeanneau & Ollivier, 2009, 2011)

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. Some will be more interpersonal than others (on a discussion forum for example) and will require learners to adapt to (social) rules which are more or less explicit on the sites.

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 (inter)act with peers.

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 that reached beyond the classroom setting. They enjoyed writing for ‘real readers’ instead of solely their 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 appreciated the authenticity of the task. They appreciated the fact that Wikipedians amended their entries as it meant that what they had posted had been read by others and valued.⁷⁸

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 providing accurate information and mastering the formal language register whereas posting on an informal discussion forum requires accurate content but using a more informal language register.

If they contribute to a travel site about their home country for example, learners will be in a position to answer detailed questions to 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. However, it will be important that learners clearly indicate that:

- a) they are from this country – to clearly position themselves as experts;

⁷⁸ (Ollivier, 2007, 2010)

b) they are writing in their target language – to clearly position themselves as language learners therefore justifying their possible language mistakes.

In real-world tasks, it is important that learners are able to position themselves in the social interactions in question as these will influence their online actions. They will particularly need to assess the socio-cultural norms and register they will have to apply as these will vary according to the context.

4.5.6 Language learner as language user

Within the socio-interactional approach, learners are also language users as they use the language in real contexts at the same time as they learn it. Within a formal learning context, they take part in social interactions that extend beyond the institution. They may contribute to online forums where the main focus is not on language teaching and learning, or to collaborative sites. Acting as a language user is no longer delayed but can happen as part of the learning process.

4.5.7 Learner's right to speak and empowerment

With the rise of 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 Foucault⁷⁹ and Bourdieu⁸⁰) have been overcome. In order to publish a text, for example, it was necessary to go through a reviewing process carried out by publishers or journal editors who would accept or reject the publication. Nowadays, the web offers new possibilities to “increase spaces where we can express our autonomy and our power/ability to intervene [...] while exercising some of the social functions which we were previously denied”⁸¹. Internet has the potential to provide all of us with “a space where we can potentially address the whole world without prior consent/authorisation”⁸². Internet access and enough money to pay for a connection are the only things needed to create a blog, post on a discussion forum or react to a newspaper article.

⁷⁹ (Foucault, 1969, 1971)

⁸⁰ (Bourdieu, 1992, 1999)

⁸¹ (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.

⁸² (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 reclaim some of their rights to free speech. The International Telecommunication Union reports that the web conveys empowerment⁸³ for both individuals and community.⁸⁴ This concept is often referred to as “e-empowerment”.

This empowerment is enabled by our socio-interactional approach. 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 role that is not necessarily valued in every education setting, that of being viewed as individuals willing to share their own personal knowledge: “students have the potential to move from the conventional epistemic stance of knowledge consumer to that of knowledge producer”⁸⁵.

Real-world tasks carried out online aim to create this feeling of empowerment. Our approach views learners as both knowledgeable individuals and 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

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 to which we are referring focus on young English learners. Researchers have analysed their interactions with online writing communities such as fanfiction sites⁸⁶ or chain-writing sites (where a text is started by one person and then further developed by others).

⁸³ 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” (Rappaport 1987, p. 121).

⁸⁴ http://www.itu.int/osg/spuold/wsis-themes/ict_stories/themes/e-empowerment.html

⁸⁵ (Sykes, Oskoz & Thorne, 2008, p. 530)

⁸⁶ On these sites, fans of certain fictional characters (e.g. mangas) write new adventures for their heroes and share these texts.

Research⁸⁷ has shown that the young participants became really involved on these sites and that their participation contributed to the development of their identity, 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:⁸⁸ 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 immersed into 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.

4.6 Real-world task or project?

It is crucial to make the distinction between real-world tasks and projects as the two activities share 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 of real-world practice as a preparation for life. He wonders “could we [...] expect to find a better preparation for later life than practice in living now”⁸⁹?. All the PBL experts highlight the value of engaging learners in “wholehearted purposeful activity in a social situation”⁹⁰ as we do when advocating 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 or work allocation because their scale is similar to normal classroom tasks. They can be carried out individually or in group in the same amount of time target tasks would.

⁸⁷ (Yi, 2007, 2008; Black, 2005, 2006, 2008; Lam & Kramersch, 2003; Lam, 2004; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009; Kramersch, A’Ness & Lam, 2000, p. 95)

⁸⁸ (Pasfield-Neofitou, 2011; Pierozak, 2007)

⁸⁹ (Kilpatrick, 2009, p. 515)

⁹⁰ (ibid, p. 524)

5 Teacher role(s) in a socio-interactional approach

5.1 An evolving role?

As Computer Mediated Communication is increasingly used for language learning and teaching purposes, the role of language teachers is likely to evolve. 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”⁹¹. 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”⁹².

However, in recent years, the idea of teachers as facilitators is being questioned⁹³. The famous quote from King⁹⁴, 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 perspective⁹⁵ as some practitioners still view teachers as “key-decision makers”⁹⁶ who are “at the centre of the teaching and learning process.”⁹⁷ We will not develop this point any further but will instead present our vision of the role of language teachers in our approach.

5.2 What the role does not involve

In an approach based on social interactions, teachers have a small role to play in the real-world tasks being carried out⁹⁸ as they are neither the intended target nor the evaluator of these activities. If they were to assume these roles, they would then influence the interactions and consequently learners’ input.

Furthermore, in our approach, teachers do not design the tasks, which pre-exist on a web 2.0 platform prior to their teaching and learning use. The site thus defines

⁹¹ (Tella, 1996)

⁹² (Kelm, 1996, p. 27)

⁹³ (Fischer, 1998 ; Furstenberg & Levet, 2010; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O’Dowd & Eberbach, 2004; Ware & Kramsch, 2005)

⁹⁴ (King, 1993)

⁹⁵ (O’Dowd & Eberbach, 2004 ; Ware & Kramsch, 2005)

⁹⁶ (Müller-Hartmann, 2000, p. 297)

⁹⁷ (Müller-Hartmann, 2000, p. 299) Translated from “im Zentrum des Lehr-/Lernprozesses stehen”

⁹⁸ (Ollivier, 2009b ; Ollivier & Puren, 2011)

the task, such as to contribute to the building of an online encyclopaedia on Wikipedia, or to post recipes on a cooking site.

Teachers do not own the space where the interactions are taking place. This space is not linked or attached to the institutional context and teachers have no specific user rights on the platforms.

Finally, it is not the teachers' duty to find or prepare the (inter)actions partners. In that respect, real-world tasks differ from telecollaborative tasks or other projects where, for example, invited native speakers contribute⁹⁹.

5.3 What the role does involve

In preparation for their class, teachers will identify some sites where real-world tasks can be carried out. They will also assess the pedagogical and ethical value of the sites. They can then conceive a teaching and learning scenario around these tasks, as they would do with any target tasks.

In this capacity, teachers are prospectors¹⁰⁰. According to the online Oxford dictionary¹⁰¹, 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 provide good analogies for teachers' preparatory work.

Teachers conduct “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 teachers are looking for. In this case, they are looking for sites where learners can (inter)act and engage in social interactions outside of the classroom setting.

The next step for teachers is to convince learners to engage with the task. This process will be helped if learners are given the choice as to whether to join in the task. Indeed, in order to prevent learners from viewing this task as “just an educational thing”¹⁰² carried out as a normal learning activity, it seems preferable to suggest rather than impose this task. It is thus necessary for teachers to offer

⁹⁹ (Dufour, 2007)

¹⁰⁰ In our context, the term ‘prospector’ is preferred to ‘curator’.

¹⁰¹ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/prospection>

¹⁰² Quote from a student who took part in the above-mentioned discussion forum.

alternative tasks so that learners can decide between real-world task and other tasks.

In accordance with the definition of prospection, teachers will also need to demonstrate their ability to anticipate, using what they know about their learners' interest and motivation to select tasks which will appeal to them. It will also allow them to present the most motivating elements of their 'prospection'. The crucial aspect is to highlight the specificity of real-world tasks which require learners to engage in real social interactions.

The last characteristic we can mention is directly linked to the dual grounding of real-world tasks. As tasks are happening in and outside the classroom at the same time, teachers can facilitate their implementation by helping learners (if need be). People engaged in the social interactions online will not be aware of this intervention. Learners can draw on teachers' knowledge and skills with regard to language, interactional and intercultural communication or digital literacy.

Once again, it is preferable that teachers *offer* their help, thus being used by learners as resources or advisors to facilitate the task completion. This may affect the teacher-learner relationship as the hierarchical powers shift from evaluation to expertise. Learners can decide whether they need or want to turn to the teachers, in their role as experts, to fill their own skill and knowledge gaps.

6 Perspectives

With this handbook and online training modules, the e-lang project aims to promote new perspectives in language teaching and learning. Taking social interactions fully into account while carrying out real-world tasks (especially the ones carried out online) seems to be one possible way to help learners develop action and interaction competence. By acting as active citizens of the web and users of the target languages, learners can become aware of the constraints set by social interactions and get used to take them fully into account. By learning to use digital tools and resources critically and effectively in order to perform tasks, they also have the opportunity to develop their digital literacy and autonomy not only as learners but also, and more importantly, as language users.

We would like to invite our readers to explore the training modules developed by the e-lang project team on the ECML website (<https://www.ecml.at/e-lang>). These modules offer concrete examples of real-world tasks, such as the one presented at the end of this book, and ways to use digital tools and resources to develop various competences for communication and action.

7 Task sample

The detailed task sample below will help illustrate the approach described in this document. It is aimed at A2 level and above.

| | Comments | | |
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| | Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy |
| <p>Task</p> <p>You are going to write some tourist information in English about your hometown. This will be shared on the English version of the Wikitravel site. You will thus contribute to further develop this online travel guide.</p> <p>You will particularly focus on adding some recommendations in the ‘Eat’ and ‘Drink’ sections.</p> | <p>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).</p> | <p>The work carried out here falls under the interaction literacy category. It aims at developing participatory literacy by inviting learners to post on a crowdsourcing site.</p> | <p>The task description specifies the constraints learners are facing and the scope within which they are operating (thus framing their degree of autonomy to complete the task).</p> |
| <p>Wikitravel</p> <p>(http://wikitravel.org/eng) 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.</p> <p>A page might already exist on your hometown but you can contribute some additional information on it.</p> <p>The site is a wiki which means that several people can collaborate on the writing of a page or a whole site.</p> | <p>Thanks to this short presentation, the social interaction (with the Wikitravel community) and the intentions/aims of the task are defined.</p> | <p>The nature of the site (crowdsourcing site) and the digital tool used (wiki) are clearly defined from the start.</p> | |

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| | Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy |
| <p>Community policies for contributing to WikiTravel</p> <p>Expected quality</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your 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 site. You will find below the link to the 'Community policies' for the site. http://wikitravel.org/en/Wikitravel:Community_policies <p>Read these guidelines. Do they correspond to the list of criteria you had in mind?</p> <p>If you found new recommendations on the site that you had not thought of, add them to your initial list.</p> <p>Content expected by future visitors</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 town and complete your original list. | <p>This step is essential in the context of the social-interactional approach. It locates 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 of the contributors' community).</p> <p>It is possible here to first draw on learners' representations and prior knowledge and then to encourage them to expand on these after visiting some of the site pages.</p> | <p>The skills needed to collaborate online are developed here and more specifically the need to consider the social dimension of the contribution.</p> | <p>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 the social interaction at play at a very early stage. They should also be able to carry out a self-evaluation incorporating socio-interactive criteria (in other words, the socio-cultural norms and register they will have to adopt in the given interactional context).</p> |
| <p>Content selection. Items to include</p> | <p>Once again, the first step is to draw on learners' prior</p> | <p>One of the objectives here is to encourage learners to reflect on</p> | <p>This aims at making learners aware of the skills and knowledge</p> |

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| | Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy |
| <p>about your hometown.</p> <p>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?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Can you think of any restaurant you could recommend to tourists? Which ones and why?</p> <p>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?</p> <p>Amongst all the information you have collected, which items can you safely add to your contribution to Wikitravel?</p> | <p>knowledge and then expand.</p> <p>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) learners may understand (languages they have learnt or closely-related to languages they know).</p> <p>In the writing process, this phase is known as the planning phase (looking for and selecting information to be included). Please note that Wikitravel is available in several languages.</p> | <p>their sources of information (digital or not) and on their relevance/reliability, therefore developing information literacy skills.</p> | <p>they already have and those they are missing. Learners will therefore start reflecting on how to access information and how to assess the quality of this information.</p> |

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| | Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy |
| <p>Write-up your listings / opinion</p> <p>You can start drafting the description of a restaurant using the skills and knowledge you already have.</p> <p>If you encounter difficulties in the writing process, where could you get help and extra information on useful language you may need?</p> <p><i>If learners don't think about it themselves, 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.</i></p> <p>Write your text.</p> | | <p>The work focuses here on text genres linked to media. Learners can access presentations which already exist on the site in order to become familiar with the style thus developing their meaning-making literacy.</p> <p>It is also possible to encourage learners to share all the presentations on one single shared document (Google Docs or Etherpad). This will allow the pooling of knowledge and practice. Learners will also be able to critically compare productions and develop the necessary skills to collaborate online.</p> | <p>As above, this aims at making learners aware of the skills and knowledge they already have. Learners are then required to think about ways to add to their internal resources by accessing external resources.</p> <p>The aim is to train learners to access and analyse similar material to the one they have to produce and to determine the linguistic features they might be able to use.</p> |
| <p>Reviewing</p> <p>Review your restaurant presentation before posting it.</p> <p>Check that it fulfils the quality criteria established at the beginning of the task.</p> <p>Ask for peer-feedback.</p> <p>Which tools (digital or not) could you use to review your work?</p> <p><i>If learners don't think about it themselves, they can be encouraged to access spell checkers such as the ones found on word processing tools or</i></p> | <p>For the socio-interactive 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 learners adapted to the site and visitors' expectations?</p> | <p>If proofreading or spellchecking tools are being used, it will be important to present the various functions of these tools (especially if explanations are provided by the platform) in order to decide whether to accept or reject the proposed changes.</p> | <p>The use of online resources promotes learner and user autonomy. Learners are learning what resources to use to revise their written productions.</p> |

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| | Pedagogical approach | Digital literacy | Developing learner autonomy |
| <p><i>sites such as Bonpatron (https://bonpatron.com) for French, SpellCheckPlus (https://spellcheckplus.com) for English, Spanishchecker (https://spanishchecker.com) for Spanish or more generally Language Tool (https://languagetool.org) which provides a large range of languages and language varieties.</i></p> | | | |
| <p>Reflection on digital literacy and autonomy</p> <p>Which resources/tools (digital or non-digital) were the most useful to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find information about the restaurant you have decided to present? • write your entry? • review your entry? <p>Which information sources seem the most relevant/reliable to obtain information?</p> <p>Now that you know how the site is developed, would you trust Wikitravel as a source of information? Why?</p> <p>Please note that Wikipedia works in the same way. Do you trust this site? Why?</p> <p>In the future, what techniques and resources will you adopt to write texts?</p> | | <p>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).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The last question focuses more specifically on building a Personal Learning Environment (PLE). Learners are encouraged to think about resources they can add to their PLE.</p> | <p>The focus here is on ways we do things. Learners have to reflect on what they did and how they did it. The aim is to make them aware of the strategies they used and to encourage them to adopt them if they were helpful/ appropriate.</p> |

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The book explores a possible evolution of the action-oriented approach and the tasks associated to it as presented in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It introduces a socio-interactional approach to language teaching and learning and a new type of task to be implemented on the Web 2.0: real-world tasks. The overall objective is to enable learners to start being language users at a very early stage in their learning path. Through real-world tasks, they will engage in activities taking place beyond the classroom and learn to fully take into consideration the social interactions that determine action and communication. Furthermore, they will learn to become digital citizens equipped with strong digital literacy skills.

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