

Online Language Teaching in Diverse Contexts

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Edited by

Rachel Friedman and Angela George

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



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This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-5275-8600-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8600-0

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in March 2020 and continuing in the months that followed, many educators faced a sense of urgency in figuring out how to facilitate teaching and learning through virtual means in response to rapid changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Language courses have specific features and goals that have factored into instructors' and other educational leaders' decisions about teaching these courses remotely and online. These considerations have included, but are not limited to, ways of engaging learners in different modes of communication and the development of various language skills. Particular challenges have included facilitating spontaneous speaking, structuring group work and interaction among students, and designing assignments and assessments suitable for distance learning formats. This book provides some solutions and reflections offered by language teachers who have successfully employed a variety of strategies and tools to teach languages remotely and online.

This volume has emerged following a workshop series and subsequent conference that we organized at the University of Calgary in order to address and promote education about aspects of online and remote language teaching and learning. While in March 2020 many of us had to begin emergency remote teaching abruptly, by the start of that summer we knew we would most likely be teaching our courses in a distance format during some or all of the coming academic year. Thus, we had the idea of organizing workshops in summer 2020 through which colleagues could learn from instructors who had long been teaching languages online (or making significant use of online resources in their teaching), as we prepared to teach our courses during the year(s) ahead—not knowing at that time how long the pandemic conditions would result in the delay of a return to in-person teaching. Through this professional development, workshop attendees were able to gather ideas and insights from the realm of online teaching to bring to their course planning for the semesters that lay ahead. The subsequent Conference on Teaching Additional Languages Online took place online in March 2021.

Both the workshops and conference were organized and hosted by the Language Teaching & Learning Working Group of the Language Research Centre at the University of Calgary, which we co-lead. The workshop series and conference aimed to bring together insights emerging

from research, practice, and theory related to teaching additional languages online and remotely, both to further future research in this area and to benefit students, teachers, and curriculum designers working to understand and implement high quality teaching practices during COVID remote learning, and with the idea in mind that interest in online course offerings may expand in the future. The contributors to this volume reflect and build on presentations given as part of this workshop series and conference. The presentations at those events featured a diverse range of speakers, some of whom imparted teaching insights based on years of online language teaching research and practice, while others reflected on and shared new and timely ideas developed during COVID remote teaching. This book, similarly, brings together a wide range of contributions on remote and online language instruction.

We follow established terminological conventions in using the terms ‘online’ and ‘remote’ in reference to describing teaching modalities, using the term ‘online teaching’ to refer to instruction that has been purposefully planned and designed to take place online, and ‘remote teaching’ to refer to the teaching that happens as a result of transferring a course to an online mode in order to provide continuity to the learning experience when teaching in person is not possible. In some cases, we refer to the two together (e.g., online/remote teaching and learning), as in cases when both online and remote instruction are concerned, and when the distinction between the two may be blurred.

* * *

The chapters in this volume all address language teaching and learning in online, remote, and virtual settings from a variety of different perspectives, and all have been written in the wake of the disruption to in-person learning precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first several chapters address teaching innovations and strategies that were developed entirely or primarily before pandemic remote learning began, while the chapters that follow them place more of an emphasis on discussing and reflecting on developments that arose as a result of COVID remote learning. What follows is a short description of each chapter.

The first chapter, by Catherine Caws, focuses on open and participatory pedagogy and the ways in which it can help prepare learners to participate in an increasingly digital world. The chapter reflects on a wealth of experience over many years of language teaching in online and hybrid modalities, giving specific attention to situating the reflections with reference to theories of learning, aspects of language learning that have

influenced the author's own thinking as well as the development of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) discourse, and finally the author's experience as a partner in the development of the e-lang and e-lang citizen projects. The chapter also addresses the ways in which developing learners' digital skills in the realm of language learning relates to the issues of developing digital literacy and citizenship.

In the second chapter, Joe Terantino describes contextualized language teaching as a strategy for teaching learners how to complete real-world tasks in the target language. He then explains how Hyme's (1974) SPEAKING model can provide a framework for designing and implementing communicative tasks. This is then linked to the online teaching environment, and several ideas and examples are presented. After explaining contextualized input and contextualized learning tasks, the chapter ends with a section on the benefits of establishing communicative context in online language learning, which include not only providing learners with real-world contexts but also enriching their social interactions.

The third chapter, written by Noah McLaughlin, deals with reflective learning wherein students take ownership of their learning process through goal-setting, selecting learning strategies to achieve their goals, monitoring their progress, and finally evaluating their own work. The chapter starts with a description of metacognition in language learning, which includes metacognitive strategies, experiences, and knowledge. The next part of the chapter explains the context in which the development of the teaching materials took place. Then, each of the four activities in which students demonstrate reflective learning are described in detail. The chapter reflects on the various ways in which students use metacognition in the author's own introductory through advanced university-level French courses.

The fourth chapter, written by Randall Gess, describes the use of the mirroring technique to improve students' listening comprehension and pronunciation in French while at the same time teaching students about French phonetics and phonology. Throughout the course Gess describes, students completed two projects in which students recorded and analyzed their own speech. They then compared their speech to samples found in a corpus representing French from speakers around the world and tried to mimic certain speakers. The chapter ends with student reflections about the projects and assignments they completed using the mirroring technique. These projects can be completed in remote courses or in person courses.

In the fifth chapter, Ganna Pletnyova discusses ways of applying Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in online language teaching in university settings. UDL principles aim to create learning experiences that

accommodate the diverse needs of individual learners. Pletnyova's chapter explains the ways in which this pedagogical framework can be put into practice in online language teaching through the strategic use of learning technologies such as learning management systems, video and audio tools, graphic design apps, and more. The chapter provides examples of the ways in which its author has put these ideas into practice in her own language teaching.

The sixth chapter deals with the study of culture in language courses through online and virtual means. It discusses an assignment—the cultural portfolio—that can be used in language courses in any modality to support and structure learners' self-guided explorations of the target culture. The chapter discusses ways of implementing this project with a focus on cultural engagement in online and virtual spaces. In presenting the cultural portfolio project, the chapter explains the way that this assignment functions in a university Arabic program, including both an instructor's perspective (Rachel Friedman) and two accounts by former students (Meghan Munro and Yasser Katib).

The seventh chapter reflects on teaching adaptations and strategies implemented in Portuguese language courses during the early phase of COVID remote learning. In this chapter, Ana Paula Huback discusses ways of thinking through and implementing aspects of remote teaching that include norms for etiquette and behavior in the remote classroom, addressing the pandemic and its effects as an explicit topic of discussion with students, as well as aspects of assignment design for asynchronous activities and assessments with attention to the pandemic's impacts on learners. In describing and reflecting on the ways in which these aspects of remote teaching worked in the author's Portuguese language classes, the chapter addresses the ways in which research in the fields of pedagogy and the scholarship of teaching and learning align with the ideas under discussion.

The eighth chapter, by Yasuyo Tomita and Yujeong Choi, also addresses specific types of changes made in courses offered remotely during COVID, specifically in the context of Japanese and Korean courses. Their chapter includes explanations of effective ways of teaching writing systems, communicative activities designed to help students practice use of grammatical structures, strategies for providing students with feedback, assignment design, and means of undertaking assessment and evaluation of student work in remote learning settings. Throughout the chapter, Tomita and Choi highlight the ways in which the ideas that the chapter presents align with findings in research on second language acquisition and pedagogy.

Online Language Teaching in Diverse Contexts

In the ninth chapter, Eleonora Buonocore and Angela George report the initial findings of a research project that combines collaborative learning with experiential learning in novice, intermediate, and advanced Spanish and Italian university courses both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. An emphasis is placed on the reflective portion of these activities as evidence of students' own assessment of their learning. Although these activities pose some difficulties to both instructors and students in the online format, this chapter concludes that most students noted an increase in confidence and proficiency after partaking in the collaborative experiential learning activities.

In the final chapter of this volume, Chapter 10, Justin P. White, Paul B. Mandell, and Anel Brandl discuss changes they made as university-level language program directors to their lower-division Spanish language courses when teaching the courses remotely during the pandemic. The chapter starts with an explanation of why input-based materials are particularly useful when teaching language courses. It is followed by ways to include grammar outside of the classroom but in the course. After this, an explanation of activities focused on maximizing language output and interaction along with some sample output-based activities are provided. Then, a description of the reduced synchronous class time explains the ways in which students worked together to practice the target language. The changes addressed in the chapter were implemented with over 8000 students enrolled in lower-division Spanish courses across three large public universities in the United States. The chapter ends with considerations for implementing the changes addressed in order to create effective changes in pedagogy.

The chapters in this book share research, teaching ideas, and reflections on pedagogical experiences with the aim of communicating constructive responses to the challenges involved in teaching languages online and/or remotely. In particular, the chapters that discuss ideas developed during the COVID-19 pandemic reflect the hard work and creativity of educators and researchers who have responded admirably to the unique and extreme conditions of working and teaching during the pandemic—conditions that have been difficult and challenging to different people in different ways. The focus in these chapters is on the sharing of ideas for creating high quality teaching and learning experiences rather than on the burdens that may have been involved in teaching under these conditions. Nonetheless, we feel it important to recognize and acknowledge that for many, difficulty and stress of various kinds were part and parcel of the experience of teaching and learning during the pandemic.

* * *

Our appreciation and gratitude go to all who participated in the workshops and conference out of which this volume developed, as presenters and as attendees; the discussion sessions following each workshop and conference panel constituted rich venues for making connections and furthering thought on the topic at hand.

The Conference on Teaching Additional Languages Online (March 5-6, 2021) benefited from the generous support of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connections Grant as well as funding from the Language Research Centre (LRC) and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Calgary. In particular, we would like to thank Martin Wagner, who was at the time Director of the LRC, for his support of this project.

The financial support from these grants allowed us to benefit from the work of University of Calgary graduate students Adam Daniel, Harriet Haggerty, Shuo Kang, Qing Li, and Dante Prado as well as undergraduate student Kimia Negahdari. Together these students helped with the logistical and technical aspects of organizing and hosting a conference via Zoom, developing a website to host workshop- and conference-related materials, and editing video recordings of conference presentations. Special thanks go to Qing Li for her invaluable assistance in preparing the chapters of this volume for publication, including help with proofreading, copyediting, and formatting the chapters.

Both the conference presentations and the chapters of this volume underwent a double-blind peer review process. We are grateful to the anonymous peer reviewers for giving of their time, energy, and expertise to select high quality proposals for presentations and to provide thoughtful reviews and constructive feedback on chapters in order to strengthen them.

We thank Charlie McAnulty for designing the book cover.

We hope that this volume will provide readers with helpful ideas and perspectives on language teaching that includes online components, and that it will be a useful documentation of reflections on the efficacy and results of strategies and methods used in remote and online language learning at a time when many are taking stock of enduring changes brought about by the pandemic and when online and virtual spaces are growing in their importance in language learning programs and courses in many places around the world.

Calgary, April 2022

CHAPTER ONE

LANGUAGE LEARNING IN OPEN AND PARTICIPATORY DIGITAL CONTEXTS

CATHERINE CAWS

Introduction

This chapter is based on a keynote address delivered at the Conference on Teaching Additional Languages Online (University of Calgary) in March 2021 and is based on previous research and work done in collaboration with Christian Ollivier, Catherine Jeanneau, and Marie-Josée Hamel (Caws et al. 2021). In the last year, many papers on opportunities and challenges of online learning and teaching have been published as a result of a pandemic that is still today shaking the world and forcing educators to reassess what technology can bring to learners and what limits it also may impose on them.

In the present chapter, I do not seek to offer a set of recipes or lesson plans on what works or does not work in technology-mediated contexts or online. Instead, my goal is to share my reflections based on over 20 years of teaching and promoting language learning in online or hybrid contexts. These reflections will in turn invite readers, I hope, to similar thoughts about their own practices or personal aspirations. I also hope that it will engage readers and educators in a dialogue, in particular within today's particular educational context. In so doing, I will start by explaining where I come from and where I have been musing in regard to L2 learning since my first university appointment.

The chapter is roughly organized into three main parts: first, I will set the context of my reflections in regard to several theories of learning; secondly, I will look back at aspects of L2 learning and teaching that have influenced my thinking and that have also been influential within the CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) discourse and framework; thirdly, I will present the European projects with which I have been involved as a partner over the last four years, the e-lang (digital literacies

through language learning) (ECML 2016), and the more recent and ongoing e-lang citizen project (ECML 2018). These will give me an opportunity to offer a few concrete examples of language tasks that exploit open access resources and tools in order to enhance collaboration and content production, as well as the development of critical thinking among learners. While focusing on language learning (fully or partially) online, our reflection will seek to see how the development of these new digital skills in open and participatory contexts is intimately linked to the wider and critical issues of the development of digital literacy and citizenship.

The Context

Technology mediated learning (more particularly language learning) has been flourishing for decades. Yet the current situation has exacerbated the false belief that technology can save pedagogy. However, the reason why I, along many other colleagues, have invested so many years to study language learning in CALL contexts is that we initially sought specific interaction and learning opportunities that did not exist in traditional face-to-face (F2F) contexts. Already in 2000, Tony Bates published a book on how institutions could manage technological changes; he expressed his views as follows:

The academic's core values need to be served in a rapidly changing world. Technologies now play a central role in everyone's life, and universities and colleges need to find new ways to respond to the growing demand for lifelong learning. Using technology for teaching can help universities and colleges serve the public more cost-effectively, and in particular, can prepare students better for a technological based society. (Bates 2000, 34)

While this book does not address language learning specifically, it still provides some very interesting guidance for the implementation of changes in post-secondary institutions that make sense in an ever-changing society. How can language learning in technology mediated contexts contribute to this life-long training and learning?

Some Influential Work

CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) research has a long and established tradition that illustrates a discipline that has always been at the forefront of innovation and that has managed to quickly adapt to digital changes as well as adopt new ways of learning and teaching.

My first CALL experiment occurred in 1998. At the time I was teaching French at Simon Fraser University. Together with one of my colleagues, Trude Heift, we designed a collaborative writing task on a local area network (LAN) in order to motivate students to write for a purpose, i.e., to communicate with each other and brainstorm ideas before engaging in their final paper. I remember that we spent many hours discussing the design of the task so that its purpose made sense within the context of the course objectives. Looking back, I realize that since then my thinking about learning has been highly influenced by two principles: (1) that learning design is key to addressing students' needs and purposes, and (2) that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is so interwoven into many processes of our daily life that it should also play a significant role in education.

Fast-tracking to 2016, Mike Levy and I investigated areas of CALL design and research to reflect on those that have proved problematic over time, such as the broader contextual factors that influence CALL activity. We argued that to better address potential limits of CALL and enrich our understandings of the practices and processes that we may witness in technology-mediated language learning, we should investigate insights and techniques drawn from the fields of human computer interactions (HCI) and engineering: "concepts and techniques from HCI and engineering can help us with the analysis of learners' experience, the analysis of technologies and, ultimately, the overall CALL design" (Levy and Caws 2016, 93).

Indeed, Don Norman's influential book *The Design of Everyday Things* (2013) explains how design affects just about every aspect of our daily lives. An essential argument in his text is that design should have a purpose. As such it would include an iterative process starting from planning ahead, anticipating actions or responses, implementing tasks or activities, collecting feedback, and re-designing processes if necessary. Furthermore, the author adds that design contributes to the facilitation, support, or optimization of task completion. Norman bases the principles of design on psychology, cognition, action, or interaction. These are inherently critical aspects of learning in contexts where instruments (be they computers, iPhones, web apps, interactive sites, or web 2.0 sites) are used to mediate interactions.

Thinking ecologically about learning has been shared by many other scholars. The concept of ecological learning reflects the view that (language) learning is a dynamic and complex human activity that involves many elements within various environments, thus enabling or creating multifaceted opportunities for learning (e.g., Blin 2016; Van Lier 2004). Ellis and Goodyear stated that "helping students learn, in

contemporary higher education, involves an understanding of the complex web of relationships that give shape and meaning to students' activity and experience" (2010, 6). More recently, Goodyear, Carvalho, and Yeoman (2021) suggested that Activity-Centered Analysis and Design (ACAD) could provide a strong theoretical approach to better understanding and analyzing complex learning situations. ACAD adopts some of the principles also expressed in didactic ergonomics, notably that a more systematic understanding of activities (i.e., what students are actually doing as opposed to what we think they are doing or what we intend for them to be doing) can help us enhance learning (especially autonomous learning). Goodyear, Carvalho, and Yeoman further explain:

Students' actual activity emerges in response to a range of non-deterministic influences. The external influences can be categorized in a number of ways, but with ACAD we use a simple tripartite approach, arguing that students' activity is epistemically, physically and socially situated. In other words, what students do is substantially influenced by (i) the tasks they are set, (ii) the tools and other resources that come to hand, and (iii) what the people around them are doing. (2021, 447)

For language learning online, these activities can be understood in view of the relationships that students experience with information and communication technologies (ICT). In particular, we need to focus our intention on the interactions between language-learners and digital instruments or between learners and other human beings via the instruments. These can be viewed through the lens of CALL ergonomics, a discipline that constitutes "both a methodological and theoretical framework that seeks to describe interactions between users and instruments in a view to ameliorate these interactions so that learning or work can be enhanced" (Caws and Hamel 2016, 21).

Within such contexts of ecological language learning design, CALL research has also been grounded in Activity Theory (AT). As explained by Engeström and Miettinen, AT is "a commonly accepted name for a line of theorizing and research initiated by the founders of the cultural-historical school of Russian psychology, L.S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leont'ev, and A.R. Luria in the 1920s and 1930s" (1999, 1), with Vygotsky's work being particularly influential in education.

Of particular interest within the framework of AT are the concept of tools and instruments. Instruments constitute essential elements of an activity and offer specific affordances (Blin 2016). As stated by Blin, "affordances are embedded in cultural contexts and emerge in interactions between active persons, artefacts and cultural environments" (53). The

author adds that these affordances may change across time and space and thus are not static. This cognitivist view of activity is conveyed similarly by other scholars who argue that “tools, mind, action and language have evolved together and cannot be understood in separation from one another” (Ellis and Goodyear 2010, 11). Furthermore, VÉrillon and Rabardel made an important distinction between tool and instrument, explaining that a tool (the initial agent used to interact) becomes an instrument once “the subject has been able to appropriate it for himself—has been able to subordinate it as a means to his ends—and in this respect, has integrated it with his activity” (1995, 85).

The expanded AT model, conceived by Engeström (1987, 101) and adapted below to model interactions in CALL contexts, is multifaceted:

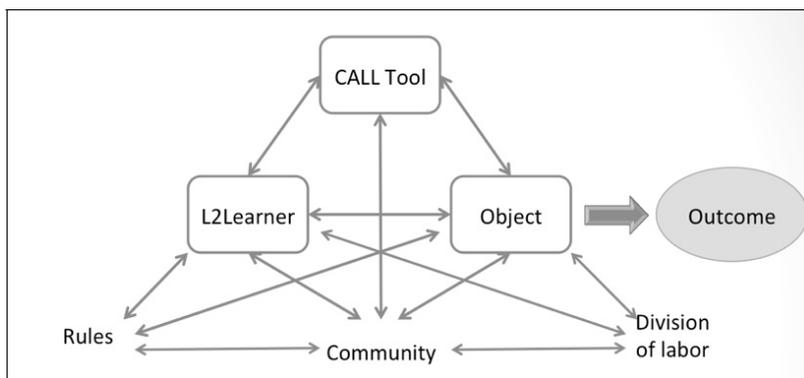


Figure 1.1. A CALL-mediated activity based on Engeström’s AT model (adapted from Engeström 1987)

Figure 1.1 illustrates the notion that CALL environments are complex dynamic systems that often reflect a social practice within which individuals, or groups of individuals, may share an object that becomes an outcome through the mediation by the tool/instrument. Very importantly, the mediation through the technology also occurs within an environment that is regulated by implicit or explicit rules, regulations, norms, or conventions (Lantolf and Thorne 2006). These rules or conventions, as well as the several other elements that come into play during a complex activity, will be revisited when we discuss the notions of digital literacies and citizenship via the e-lang projects.

The Situation Today

The current pandemic has forced many traditional institutions to reconsider their role in society, in particular in regard to the ways in which they participate in the development and advancement of their citizens. Such is notably the case for educational institutions. As expressed earlier, while technology-mediated language learning or teaching has a long and established tradition of research, development, and practices, we note that more recently, language learning and teaching have been increasingly drawn towards the opportunities offered by open and participatory culture (Benson and Reinders 2011; Sauro and Zourou 2019; Godwin-Jones 2019). In other fields of education, notions of openness, open digital practices, open educational resources (OER), or participatory technologies are also bringing sweeping changes to education (Hegarty 2015; Jenkins 2009; Jenkins et al. 2017).

With the forced switch to online pedagogy in the last year, the question of autonomous learning in technology-mediated ways outside the classroom has led me and other scholars to ask ourselves the following:

1. What role can language training play in preparing learners to function in an increasingly digital world?
2. How can education help individuals to adapt throughout their lives to ever-changing social, cultural, or professional spaces?
3. In what way can open and participatory pedagogy contribute to new ways of language learning and teaching?

Language Learning Theories in Today's Contexts

Within the specific context of language learning and teaching, many theories of second language acquisition (SLA) have been influential. While structuralist and generativist theories of SLA have focused specifically on the language as a system to be acquired and understood (Chomsky 1965), other theoretical approaches quickly gained momentum by introducing a more contextualized and dynamic approach to learning and teaching languages. Of particular interest to the concept of dynamic and complex language activities are the constructivist, socio-constructivist, and sociocultural movements that value the activity (or activities) performed by human beings rather than focusing strictly on the nature or value of language output.

The notion of activity to which we referred earlier has been at the core of many research studies in technology-mediated language learning and

teaching. Referring to Van Lier's, Kern summarized activity in the following terms:

Activity, whether physical or mental, is motivated by goals and mediated by tools, and these goals and tools are socially and historically shaped. If activity is the engine that produces and reproduces culture, culture in turn provides the conditions and resources for new activity and innovation, thus generating a perpetual circle. (2015, 63)

As we inferred when introducing AT, mediation plays a key role within this sociocultural current. Vygotsky (1985) proposed two types of mediation, an implicit mediation and an explicit mediation. The implicit mediation is not empirically observable as it is unconscious (it can be referred as the inner language), while the explicit mediation can be represented by objects, language, or communication systems (Wertsch 2002). The explicit mediation is a fundamental concept in online language learning because it encompasses many digital instruments that mediate communication between individuals, allowing language learners to connect with their peers as well as other native (or non-native) speakers of a language through pedagogically oriented tasks or through open, participatory real-world tasks. Friedrich refers to mediations as "intermediate elements [...] situated between human activity and its object" (2012, 59). Furthermore, as explained by Wertsch, new forms of mediation made possible by ICT will generate new forms of communicative practices. As such, as remarked by Van Lier, mediation plays a central role in all interactions between language users (2004). Furthermore, mediation, which takes place through instruments of a material and/or psychological nature, allows language users/learners to get closer to the world around them. This mediation also implies particular affinities that, in some cases, will have to be mastered to optimize communication. This refers to the affordances that we mentioned earlier when discussing didactic ergonomics in CALL.

When discussing mediation within complex and dynamic systems available in digital spaces, we ought to consider the real impact that digitally mediated interactions can have on human language, on human relations, and on the didactics of languages. Martinez argues that "the need for communication between individuals who do not speak the same language has never been greater," notably for geopolitical reasons (2017, 3). As a consequence, and given that digital contexts of interaction and communication are developing almost exponentially, we can postulate that language pedagogy would benefit from taking into account these multiple and diverse contexts in which language is becoming more complex (i.e.,

integrating new signs, new dialogical strategies, or new instruments). As such, and to answer our first question, we argue that language learning and teaching (online or in hybrid formats) can play an important role in preparing students to function in these digital spaces by introducing purposeful and meaningful tasks in pedagogical contexts while offering opportunities for these learners to develop the skills to operate autonomously online. The real-world tasks that are proposed herein illustrate what can be achieved in this regard.

Let us now reflect on the notion of openness and participatory culture as we know it today.

The Culture of Openness

When considering the notion of openness, notions of virtual world or augmented reality versus real environments also come to mind. In the last year, many activities that used to be performed in F2F contexts have been moved online. In *Being and the Screen* (2019), Vial questions the many ways in which digital technology is transforming how we perceive the world and our actions within it. The author describes the concept of digital as a phenomenon, that is as what is shown and offered to us via the interface. He adds that contexts of sociability mediated by digital instruments are becoming normalized and that the very notion of virtual is a misnomer:

There is no such thing as a truer or more false technological modality when it comes to being in relation to others. [...] Rather than succumb to the reverie of the virtual, which leads to considering sociability online as unreal, we simply have to accept the notion that our modalities of social interaction are, thanks to digital technologies, augmented with new possibilities, without eliminating or replacing earlier ones. (Vial 2019, 133)

Research that is concerned with the interactions between human beings and digital instruments has also highlighted specific concerns, notably in regard to the loss of true “human” conversation or interaction (Turkle 2015). Since the advent of social media, some scholars have also expressed similar concerns about literacy and its decline over time. However, as conveyed by Gee and Hayes (2011) this fear often expressed by the general public that digital media may negatively affect literacy levels deserved to be challenged. They argue that it actually betrays a nostalgia for a specific type of reading and writing while ignoring that in reality new forms of communication continue to develop (21). Indeed,

literacy is increasingly becoming multimodal, as studies on participatory culture have shown (Jenkins, Ito, and boyd 2017). These new forms of communication in turn impose new instruments, new modalities, new affordances, and thus new postures. Can these new forms of literacy be harnessed in language learning and teaching environments?

Participatory Culture and the “Digital Wilds”

In 2021, our relationship to text, instruments, or modes of communication is intimately connected with the notion of a digital humanism in the sense that digital instruments have become cultural artifacts. While accepting the limitations and opportunities of the Internet, we should pose and reflect on them, for instance regarding the notion of giving “free” access to knowledge (Moatti 2015). Within the context of post-secondary education, we feel that this view is an essential one. It allows us to consider (either by accepting or negating) the current relationships that learners and teachers may construct with the digital world. To answer our second question, we postulate that to help learners adapt to these transformative and variable digital environments, we ought to adopt a position whereby we include a careful and critical development of digital literacy without falling into the trap of excessive enthusiasm towards their potential.

Participatory culture in digital spaces contributes to connecting educators and learners to activities that involve community building, particularly via social media, even though examples of participatory cultures existed before the advent of the Internet (Jenkins, Ito, and boyd 2017). In language learning, participatory culture, also referred to as “digital wilds,” designates spaces that learners have already adopted as users and that may be exploited as unpredictable yet authentic and motivating learning environments. As also stated by Sauro and Zourou:

Understanding the wider context (historical, semiotic, cultural) in which language learning and socialization occurs is key in the pedagogical use of any artifact, particularly for unpredictable technologies. By prescribing learner activity or by confining it to pre-existing scenarios or mainstream assessment practices, we limit our view of the richness of wild technologies and their value in second language (L2) learning. (2019, 2)

Alluding to the Internet, open resources, or participatory sites designed or used in educational contexts in a view to empower learners and teachers inevitably brings up the critical aspect of inclusion and the notion that the digital divide today remains a key issue. More generally speaking, inclusion relates to the ability of learners, educators, and the general public

to become active participants of the digital world, while the digital divide refers more specifically to the gap that still exists between individuals, places, or nations due to a widespread inequity to digital access. While we could assume that this imbalance of digital power has become more prominent in the last year, it was already noted by scholars over ten years ago. Referring to social media platforms, Jenkins remarked that in order to reduce the participation gap, education needs to focus on providing an equal access to participation and meaning making, and ensuring that all young learners have “access to the skills and experiences needed to become full participants, can articulate their understanding of how media shapes perceptions, and are socialized into the emerging ethical standards that should shape their practices as media makers and participants in online communities” (2009, xiii).

Not surprisingly, the imbalance of participation affects more directly vulnerable populations, whereas it increases the power already enjoyed by some (Collin, Guichon, and Ntebutse 2015; Jenkins 2009; Veletsianos 2016). In addition, the fact that English still dominates the development of open platforms or web applications leads to an empowerment of the English language as compared to other world languages. Thus, technological barriers or social and individual inequities have not disappeared, which further reinforces the need to include digital literacy strategies in as many educational contexts as possible, including that of language learning and teaching.

Language Learners in Open and Participatory Contexts

Mastering digital literacy has become an essential skill to help to establish healthy and critical interactions (Reinhardt and Thome 2019). Given that the majority of learners build their digital identity first in informal contexts, the concept of literacy needs to be rethought according to the different relationships that exist or flourish during interactions that are mediated by digital instruments (Kessler 2019). The learner, who is already a Web user, must then acquire interactional and linguistic competences to build an autonomy of usage that may vary according to the communication contexts in which s/he is involved.

Developing digital literacy is also associated with the goal of transforming a basic user of the web into a citizen capable of civic-mindedness, empathy, and critical analysis online (Caws et al. 2021). In order to build this identity, we propose to consider learners as “real” users of the participatory web and thus embed online activities into the educational context, enabling language learners to exercise this citizenship,

to expose themselves to each other and build a range of new socio-interactive skills. In so doing, we postulate that language learning and teaching can be used as a platform to help language learners become active participants in the digital discourses, hence (and to answer our second question) helping them to adapt throughout their lives to ever-changing social or cultural spaces.

Digital Literacy and Citizenship Through Language Learning-Teaching

In this last part of our chapter, we introduce the socio-interactive approach and the notion of real-world online tasks as a method to address the need to develop digital literacy and digital citizenship through language learning and teaching (Ollivier 2018). The socio-interactive approach seeks to take into account the various socio-cultural particularities of each of the contexts where the digital citizenship may be fostered. Furthermore, this didactic approach is based on Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) (Long 2015), which offers an opportunity to change the relationship between teacher-learner, aiming at a greater individual freedom and emancipation of the learner. The socio-interactive approach is reflected in two projects, e-lang and e-lang citizen, which are funded by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) and led by Christian Ollivier (Université de la Réunion) (ECML 2016, 2020).

The E-Lang Project

The e-lang project's main goal is to provide training in digital literacy in order to empower language teachers to foster the integration of digital technology in specific educational contexts. The project also aims at assisting language learners to become critical users of online resources and tools, develop an enhanced ability towards their cultural and functional affordances, and hence acquire a greater autonomy in language learning and practices. To achieve these goals, e-lang views language learners as (language) users who are actively engaged in multimodal digital environments and who can act as social agents and cultural producers or consumers.

Being digitally literate requires the ability to both use and create digital resources. In that regard, learners should be encouraged to develop their own personal learning environment (PLE), gathering all the digital resources that they already know and can use for language learning and for

language practice. In addition, they should be encouraged to discover new resources online and reflect critically on how these may help them develop their linguistic, communicative, or interaction competences, and how they may change their own practices (Rhona, Beethamet, and de Freitas 2010). Figure 1.2 (created by this chapter's author) below illustrates the transformation of the language learner into a social agent (a digital consumer or a digital agent) and the back-and-forth mechanism that occurs between learning, being, consuming, or producing that is a natural tendency of life-long learning:



Figure 1.2. On being and becoming a digital language user

The project comprises three main components that are connected to each other while fulfilling specific purposes. It offers a pedagogical framework on digital literacy for the teaching and learning of languages promoting a socio-interactive approach in a view to foster autonomy in language learners and users (Ollivier 2018). In addition, e-lang offers a suite of developed open online resources available through a Moodle platform (Moodle, n.d.). Thirdly, e-lang delivers training sessions to language teachers worldwide.

The socio-interactive approach, initially based on the CEFR action-oriented perspective (Conseil de l'Europe 2001), is built on the premise that "action and communication competences are primarily defined by the ability to adapt the way we act and communicate to the social interactions at play" (Ollivier 2018, 25). This implies that the meaning of an utterance is shaped by the social interactions in which it occurs and that, as a consequence, a co-construction of meaning occurs through interactions. The basic competence that is referred to as the socio-interactive competence allows subjects (namely language learners/users) to act and communicate in accordance with the relationship or communicative context in which they are involved.

From The E-Lang to the E-Lang Citizen Project

The e-lang citizen project also builds on the socio-interactive approach developed by the e-lang project (see above) and on some of the concepts

evoked herein to characterize the various literacies that matter when a web user is involved in authentic online tasks. More specifically, the *e-lang* model encompasses three main literacies, as illustrated in the figure below:

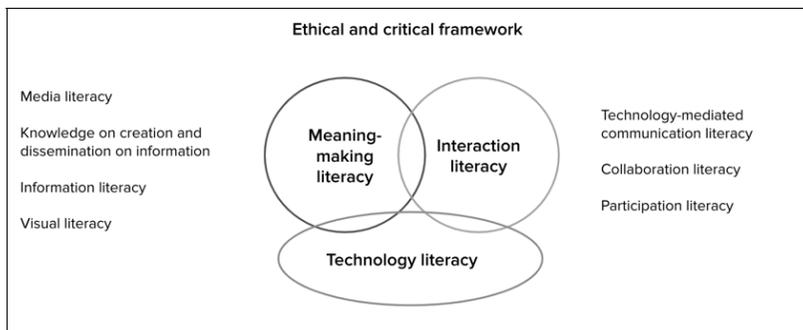


Figure 1.3. The *e-lang* framework (Ollivier 2018, 6)

The technology literacy (sometimes referred to as functional literacy) is about knowing digital resources, understanding how to use them (in a wise and responsible manner), and foreseeing their affordances. The interaction concerns the ability to communicate, exchange, collaborate, or participate efficiently and appropriately while using all the available technologies at hand. The meaning-making literacy refers to knowing how to curate, create, and/or disseminate information. As shown on the left of the framework, this literacy comprises many other literacies including media literacy (ability to create new forms of messages on various media while understanding how these messages are generated or perceived) or multimodal literacy or information literacy (being able to search, find or evaluate information to use it). Why should we focus on these literacies?

To answer this question, we will refer to the webpage of the *e-lang citizen* project which states the following:

The digital democratic society, which is characterized by a high degree of cultural and linguistic diversity, requires new skills and attitudes from citizens. It requires the development of multiple literacies (digital, plurilingual, intercultural) to be a citizen who is: aware of the challenges that digital technologies and plural societies bring; a responsible and autonomous participant in the pluralistic digital society; and a creative and a player in the digital world. (ECML 2020)

As described above, *e-lang citizen* integrates a strong inclusive (targeting multilingualism and interculturality) and creative dimension. It also seeks

to focus on motivation and on mechanisms that provide motivating activities by also critically taking into account the gamification of education or the concept of the digital wild (Sauro and Zourou 2019; Ollivier et al. 2021).

Languages Tasks: Towards the Real-World Task

Like e-lang, e-lang citizen gives particular attention to real-world tasks (see figure 1.4 below). These tasks allow learners to be language users on the Internet and experience authentic communication in a target language or multilingual communicative environment. Secondly, real-world tasks allow digital participation and creativity, including the use of multimedia. Thirdly, real-world tasks permit the creation and dissemination of information on participative websites (such as travel guides, participative encyclopedias, or online forums). Thus, these tasks provide a motivating way to develop language competence and digital citizenship by allowing students to (inter)act "for real." Learners are indeed led to act as citizens and to reflect critically on their experience.

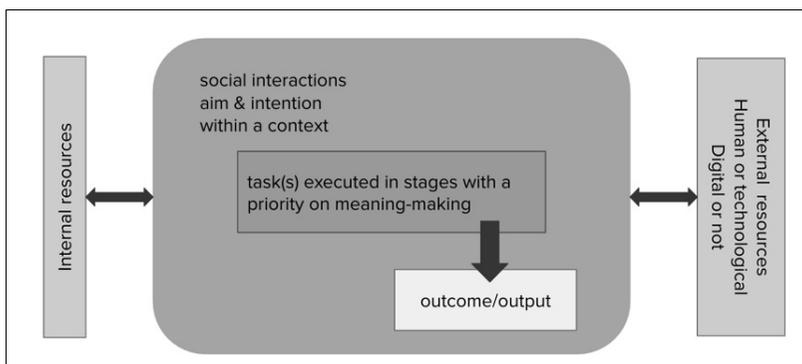


Figure 1.4. Real-world tasks as illustrated in the e-lang project (Ollivier 2018, 42)

The figure shows what is considered as a real-world task within both e-lang and e-lang citizen projects and within a socio-interactional approach. 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 newspaper or sharing recipes on a cooking site are examples of such tasks” (Ollivier 2018, 43). The contextualized nature of these tasks, as illustrated by the figure, is a key aspect to consider. When involved in real-word tasks, the