Summary

Taking the above discussion into account, some key dimensions of language learning include the following.

- Learning is both *intra*personal (ie takes place within the individual) and *inter*personal (ie accomplished socially in interaction with others). It is also personal in the sense of pertaining to the person, shaping who they are and their identity. The most important point here is that learning is about personal meaning-making – how children and young people make meaning within themselves and with others, in and through learning.

- Learning is developmental – that is, a continuous process where students engage with increasing complexity.

- Learning builds on prior knowledge and cannot occur without attending to students' prior conceptions/misconceptions.

- Learning is interactive where interaction is focused on meaning-making.

Learning is mediated primarily through language – all the languages of the students' repertoires.

- Feedback is critical to learning – students need to know where they stand and what they need to do and understand in order to take the next steps in their learning.

- Learning involves transfer; it needs to be applied in diverse contexts. Through use in different situations, with different participants etc, students learn how to adjust their learning to the particular local context, circumstances and requirements.

- Learning is self-awareness and relates to metacognition (ie learners being aware of how they learn, and why they learn as they do).

These characteristics of learning are also features of *intercultural* language learning.

An expanded view of learning and using languages in the context of culture recognises these as intra- and interpersonal processes of meaning-making: interactional, developmental, interpretive, imaginative and creative. The implication for teaching is, fundamentally, that learning extends beyond 'exposure' to focus on interaction and the life-worlds of all people involved. As such, it is a 'peopled' view of language learning.

Questions for reflection

1 Consider your view of language learning in the light of the discussion and summary above. Which characteristics are regular parts of your teaching? In what ways are these characteristics evident?

2 Which characteristics are less evident in your teaching? In what ways might you incorporate these characteristics? How will this change your 'stance'?