3

Teaching
and Learning

Classroom interactions

KEY IDEAS

- Interaction is a social process of meaning-making and interpreting

- Interaction has an important place in education as it allows active engagement with ideas and interpretation

- Interaction must be purposeful and meaningful for participants

Interaction as structural

Languages classrooms are fundamentally interactive. However, the nature and quality of the interaction varies according to the ways in which it is understood and constructed.

Studies of classroom interaction have tended to focus on the organisation of talk in the classroom and on identifying structures, such as the Initiation-Response-Feedback structure of teacher-student talk (eg Cazden, 1988; Stubbs, 1986). They have also examined patterns of teacher talk directed to students (eg the use of questions, feedback, recasts) or of student talk in small group interaction (eg the use of learners' clarification requests, comprehension and confirmation checks, how students interpret instructions). Much work in Communicative Language Teaching has also focused on the idea that classroom interactions should be 'natural', by which it is assumed that they will resemble conversations in a number of ways: unequal participation, the negotiation of meaning, topic nomination and negotiation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Such studies assume that language instruction is enhanced by certain ways of talking designed to provide students with opportunities for original utterances in the target language, clarifying the meaning of units of language, and modelling grammatically correct versions of learners' talk. These studies portray interaction as any and every opportunity to use the target language and see interaction as successful if meanings are understood.

What is missing from such a view of interaction is an appreciation of the fact that interaction is *purposeful*. People do not talk in order to use language: they use language in order to talk. Therefore people need to have something to talk about and someone they wish to talk about these things with. By removing communicative purpose as a relevant consideration in classroom action, language teaching has tended to construct interaction as a sterile and pointless activity. Moreover, by removing communicative purpose from interaction, such views make it difficult to determine the educational purpose of interaction: what learning is being developed, supported or enhanced by interaction? If the purpose of interaction is solely to use the target language, and any target language use is unproblematically seen as 'learning', then the sorts of learning through which interaction can be developed are necessarily limited and superficial.

Interaction as social

More recent understandings of interaction, and its roles and purpose in teaching and learning, see it as more than just the exchange of target language talk. Interaction is fundamentally a social process of meaning-making and interpreting, and the educational value of interaction grows out of developing and elaborating interaction as a social process. It is through interaction that learners engage with ideas and concepts and the diverse interpretations and understandings of these held by their interlocutors. In interaction, the participant is both performer and analyser of what is happening. Educationally purposeful interaction must engage the learner in both roles.

Understanding communication as a social process does not simply mean that language is used for 'socialising', it means that there is a social purpose for the interaction. In classrooms, the social purpose of interaction is related to learning, through the discussion of ideas, insights and interpretations. Classroom interaction is more than a simulation of everyday interaction: it is interaction with learning as its central concern.

A social view of interaction also means considering the participants in interaction in different ways. It involves interactions between teachers and students and between students and teachers, between students, between students and others (including the voices of others as they are encountered through texts, video, digital technologies, etc). Interactions need to bring opportunities to students to explore their ideas, interpretations and reactions as they encounter the ideas, interpretations and reactions of others. Such learning involves:

• using language as a starting point for interaction to generate ideas, interpretations and responses

• seeking opinions and the reasoning behind these

• probing responses to elaborate deeper and more complex understandings

• drawing out, analysing and building on personal experiences

• eliciting variability in contributions, and engaging with the diversity found as a resource for further interaction

• engaging in open dialogues between participants in which all have opportunities to explore their own perceptions and understandings

• developing language abilities to meet interactional needs rather than limiting interactional opportunities to current language capabilities.

In planning for interactions, it is important to consider the tasks with which students are to engage. As each task constructs an experience of language and culture, there needs to be variation in the types of tasks to which students are exposed over the course of the program. If too much class time is devoted to a particular type of activity – for example language practice, small group discussion, text analysis, projects – the range of experiences of language, culture and learning available to the students will be reduced and skewed towards certain capabilities rather than others.

In considering tasks, it is important to take into account not only what students will do but also what they will learn. If tasks are understood as activities, then it is the carrying out of the activity itself that becomes the goal and learning is only understood in relation to whether and how well the task could be done (that is, knowing the procedure). This form of learning leaves out the deeper conceptual, reflective elements which are central to the process. To move deeper, it is important to consider what students will gain from doing the task, what they will take away from the learning experience and be able to draw on in other contexts and at other times. In considering what learners will take from a learning experience, it is also important to consider what learners bring to that experience that can be drawn upon, developed and/or challenged. It is important to consider what the students will engage with in the task, the central ideas or concepts which will be the basis of their deeper learning, and how the task will bring them to such engagement. Moving to this view of task design strengthens the purposefulness of the interactions in which students engage and possibilities that they offer.

Questions for reflection

1   What kinds of interactions are evident in your classroom teaching and learning? How would you characterise them?

2   Using a task from your current program or textbook, describe how you could modify it to strengthen interaction as discussed above.

3   Imagine interaction in your language classroom from the point of view of one of your students. How do you think they might be experiencing the interactions you create? Ask them and compare their responses with yours.

4   Audio-record an interaction from one of your classes. Analyse it using the distinction between doing and learning made above. What do you notice?

The nature of interactional language

KEY IDEAS

- An interactive classroom requires attention to the nature and quality of language use

- Questioning is a central element in intercultural language teaching and learning and requires a thoughtful approach to the purpose of questions in learning

In the language classroom, language provides the starting point for learning and interactional language contributes directly to the nature and quality of the learning. This effectiveness is not simply a product of the amount of talk, but is influenced fundamentally by the quality of the talk. Talk needs to be *about* something and the substance of the talk needs to have value in its own right.

In planning for interaction, teachers plan the sorts of things that students will be able to say, whether in speaking or in writing. What sorts of ideas will they be able to explore? What sorts of ideas, interpretations and responses are likely to result from the experiences in which they participate? How will they be able to participate in these experiences? What roles are constructed for students in the interaction: initiator, respondent, critic, investigator, etc?

Explaining

Explanations are a typical element of teacher talk in which teachers introduce new concepts or information for students to assimilate into their own knowledge. In providing an explanation, a teacher is the sole source of the information being delivered and the teacher's authority is the sole validation of the information. Explanations are mostly monologues and may occupy an extensive period of class time. During an explanation, students are often expected to be passive receivers of the information being provided by the teachers, although they may be encouraged to seek clarification if they do not understand aspects of the explanation. As a part of any instructional approach, explanations need to be interactive to promote active forms of engagement with the material by students.

Concepts can be introduced in other ways which allow learners the possibility of constructing, exploring and expressing their own interpretations of the material to which they are exposed. Where learners are given experiences of meaningful communication in the target language in which ideas, attitudes or perspectives of others are present, these can be used as a starting point for exploration in which learners actively construct their own knowledge about the concept. The process is interactive in multiple senses. It involves interactions between students and the originator of the text in which they make interpretations of the language and its meaning for themselves. It needs to be guided interactively by teachers as they scaffold the processes of assembling and interpretation through questions, hints, reminders and modelling. Ideally, it should also involve opportunities for students to interact in developing and refining their interpretations, in communicating their interpretations to others and in commenting on and reflecting on the interpretations of others. While an explanation delivers information which needs to be remembered, the interactive investigation of information provides opportunities and processes for developing learners' understandings of the material.

Questioning

Questioning is a central part of developing interactive language in the classroom. Teachers allocate significant teaching time to asking questions and it is these questions which give shape to the lesson. Students' questions tend to be less frequent and are often restricted to clarification or confirmation functions. In an interactive classroom, questions need to be distributed across participants in a way which allows for collaborative exploration of ideas. It is not just who asks questions and how often that is important in the intercultural language classroom, but also what sorts of questions are asked. In studies of teachers' questioning, two main question types are described:

- *display questions* in which the answer is known by the teacher and used to elicit recall of information from students
- *referential questions* in which the answer is not known by the teacher and used to elicit a meaningful communication from the student.

Of these two types, display questions are specific to instructional contexts while referential questions are found in many types of social interaction. Display questions include, for example:

> *What did Marc lose on the train?*
>
> *Does Paulo have a cat?*
>
> *Why did Taroo not go to school today?*
>
> *How did José get to work?*

Referential questions can be closed or open. Closed questions are those which have only a single response, which is right or wrong, or true or false. For example:

> *How do you get to school in the morning?*
>
> *When do you play sport?*

These questions elicit facts, are relatively easy to answer, can be answered relatively quickly and keep control of the interaction with the questioner, almost always the teacher. They do not open up possibilities for going beyond the frame developed by the question.

Open questions are those which are designed to lead to a broad range of possible responses. For example:

> *What did you do during the holidays?*
>
> *How do you spend your leisure time?*
>
> *What do you think about nuclear power?*

Open questions allow for the possibility of opening up discussion and of developing more questions on the basis of the initial response. They ask the respondent to think and reflect, to give opinions and feelings and they hand greater control of the interaction to the respondent.

Other types of questions include the following.

- Polar questions, to which the answer is either yes or no: *Do you like ice-cream?*
- Alternative questions, to which the answer is a choice between possibilities:
  Do you prefer the red one or the blue one?
- *What, where* and *who* questions, which elicit facts: *What is your name?*
  Who gave you the book? Where is the Eiffel Tower?
- *Why* and *how*, which elicit opinion or reasoning: *Why is Mari unhappy?*
  How can Hans solve the problem?

The conventional distinctions between questions are not enough to provide a basis for developing interactional language in the classroom. They are all question types and do not consider the types of answers which come from the questions. The most important element for understanding the nature and role of questions is to consider the purpose of the question for it is the purpose which shapes the possibilities of the answers. For example:

- eliciting information
- exploring possibilities
- investigating connections
- eliciting interpretations
- eliciting assumptions
- promoting reflection.

These purposes can be elicited by a diverse range of question types. The focus of planning interaction here is not so much to ensure a diverse range of question types as to ensure that questions are used with a diverse range of purposes, appropriate to the learning focus. For example:

Why do you say that?

What is your interpretation based on?

What do you think about that?

Why do you think X thinks this way?

How do X's ideas differ from your own?

How could this be seen differently?

How does your interpretation relate to X's?

Quite often the purpose is not achieved by a single question. Rather, a question launches an interaction which is then elaborated through other questioning possibilities with multiple participants contributing questions and answers.

Questions for reflection

1   How would you characterise the kinds of questions you pose your students? The ones they pose to you? The ones they pose to each other?

2   Prior to your next class, consider the tasks/materials/ideas that you will be working with. Prepare two or three key questions that will extend your students' engagement. After the class, take note of additional questions you posed. What do you notice?

3   Describe how you might use questions to extend students' thinking.

Tasks and task-types

KEY IDEAS

- Task-based language teaching shifted the focus of language learning from knowledge of language to a focus on its use to achieve communicative purposes

- The value of tasks in language learning resides in their focus on purposeful use of language in diverse contexts

- Task-types provide a means for ensuring that students experience a comprehensive range of learning experiences

- The difficulty with using tasks as the basis for curriculum design resides in the issue of sequencing

One of the major developments in language teaching and learning in the 1980s, in concert with communicative language teaching, was the emergence of task-based language teaching and learning. This was an important movement that highlighted that students not only need to have knowledge of a language but also need to develop the ability to actually use it to achieve communicative purposes. Thus, students' learning was no longer to be described only in terms of inventories of language items, but also, and most importantly, in terms of tasks that they would accomplish – that is, what students do.

The nature of tasks

There has been an extensive debate on what constitutes a 'task' for the purposes of languages teaching and learning. Some distinctions have been drawn, for example, between 'exercises' (focused on noticing and developing aspects of the form of language) and 'tasks' (focused on integrated use of language) or between 'pedagogic' tasks (tasks accomplished for the purposes of classroom learning) and 'real-life' tasks (tasks involving the use of language in the real-world). More recently, emphasis in general education has been placed on developing 'higher order thinking tasks' or 'rich tasks'. Teachers developing these rich tasks build deep, elaborated thinking into the tasks

they ask students to do. As languages educators, we consider not only the need to develop accuracy (through a focus on form) and fluency (through active use of the target language in tasks) but also, and importantly, the need to develop complexity (Skehan, 1998) in interpreting and using language and in reflecting upon language and culture in the context of use. Thus, in developing tasks we also need to consider how each task builds on or extends previous learning and how it contributes to continuous and cumulative learning. Some of these distinctions are worth considering in developing the range of learning experiences that comprise a teaching and learning program for our students.

Tasks might be described as purposeful and contextualised instances of language use. They include:

A purpose	an underlying reason for undertaking the task (beyond the mere display of subject knowledge)
A context	the thematic, situational, and interactive circumstances in which the task is undertaken. The context may be real, simulated or imaginary. Considering context includes knowing where the task is taking place, when, who are involved, what previous experiences they share and what relationships they have
A process	a mode or process of inquiry, thinking, problem-solving, performing, creating
A product	the result of completing a task

(Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994)

Good language learning tasks, then, involve the judicious use of existing knowledge and above all an intellectual challenge (in both content and processes) for students; they involve interaction; they appeal to students' imagination and expand their interests; they develop confidence and provide a sense of achievement and enjoyment; and they contribute to learners' ever-developing communicative and learning repertoires.

Task-types

The value of tasks resides in the fact that they represent a worthwhile, integrative, purposeful, contextualised piece of work. Building on this value, tasks may be grouped in different ways to ensure a comprehensive range and variety of experiences for learners. These groupings are called task-types. The most frequently used way of categorising tasks is according to the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Another way was developed in the six activity-types of the *Australian Language Levels Guidelines* (Scarino et al, 1988). These include:

- interacting and discussing
- interacting and deciding/transacting
- obtaining information and using it
- giving information
- personal response
- personal expression.

Another system of task-types focuses on higher order thinking skills:

- enquiring, interpreting
- presenting
- problem-solving
- performing
- creating, designing, composing
- judging, evaluating, responding (see Clark, Scarino & Brownell, 1994).

The task-type categories provide a means for ensuring that students engage with a range of learning experiences, participate in a range of language use in different contexts and, through this, learn increasingly to manage the variability of context. A dimension that is not sufficiently captured in these systems of task-type categorisations is a focus on reflection. This focus requires further elaboration.

Difficulties in using tasks

Tasks can be seen as a 'one-off' experience. There is a danger, then, that the task, no matter how engaging, becomes an end in itself, rather than a meaningful experience that leads to further *learning* in a conceptually, well-sequenced program. From an assessment point of view, teachers may be tempted to 'teach to the task', which again is not necessarily conducive to developing language learning over time. Another difficulty is sequencing. While principles can be offered to provide a basis for sequencing tasks (eg extendedness, complexity, application) the way in which these are used is not obvious.

Questions for reflection

1   In your languages teaching, do you draw a distinction between exercises and tasks or pedagogic tasks and real-life tasks? Why? Why not?

2   How do you ensure that your students experience a range of tasks through your program and interactions with you?

3   How might you modify one of the tasks you currently use to make it more complex and worthwhile for your students from a language-and-culture learning point of view?

Student engagement

KEY IDEA

- In planning student learning experiences, it is important to consider: 'How does this matter to the learner?'

The orientation towards intercultural language learning brings further considerations in the development of tasks or interactions for language learning. The focus is on students interacting in the target language and culture in ways that develop their understanding of themselves as located in their particular language and culture (and the same for others with whom they interact). For both the student and the others with whom they interact, their frames of reference for interpreting their worlds, themselves and others have been constructed over time through interactions in their distinctive enculturation. These frames of reference influence how they see themselves and others moving across languages and cultures. This focus shifts the lens away from the task(s) per se and foregrounds people and human communication, specifically the role of the student as a participant in acts of communication with others. The focus is on learning to become ever mindful of the interpretations that they make and why, and how, in turn, they themselves are being interpreted by others. For each experience in and beyond the classroom teachers need to consider 'How does this interaction position the learner?' and 'How does this matter to the learners?'. It is through addressing these questions from the perspective of the learners themselves that teachers address student engagement.

Questions for reflection

1   Take a task or unit from your program or textbook and consider how it might matter to your students. What do you notice about, for example, the nature of the task itself, its orientation, its participants?

2   How can you enhance student engagement in your program? Ask your students and compare their responses.

The diversity of learners and their life-worlds

KEY IDEAS

- Learner differences have traditionally been understood as differences in 'ability', a fixed, cognitive characteristic of students. The shift now is to 'capability' which focuses on each student's potential

- It is necessary to understand the biographies of students, both as learners and young people, as a basis for developing their continuing learning

- Communicative interactions need to incorporate learner diversity

In traditional second language learning, students' learning has been construed as an individual accomplishment and 'learner differences' have been considered essentially from a cognitive point of view.

Within a sociocultural perspective, Caroline Gipps highlights that:

> We are social beings who construe the world according to our values and perceptions; thus, our biographies are central to what we see and how we interpret it.
>
> (Gipps, 1999:370)

Students and their teachers are 'social beings' who interpret the world through their own social and cultural perceptions and values. This quality of people can also be described as their intraculturality. The biographies of students are important because the totality of their life experiences in their cultural life-world, their history (ie experiences over time), their geography (their location), their interactions, their opportunities to participate and learn, their motivations, their aspirations and so on, that influence how, what and why they learn. It is in this sense that teachers need to understand their students as diverse, individual, social and cultural beings, who bring this diversity to the learning process – not just cognitive diversity but social, cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Gipps quotation also highlights the importance of seeing students as young *people*. This seems self-evident but it can be argued that curriculum teaching, learning and assessment – foregrounding 'skills', 'tasks', 'outcomes', 'standards', etc – have become 'de-peopled'. The current emphasis on pedagogy in general education represents a move towards addressing the less-than-ecological view of teaching and learning that has prevailed.

With this recognition in mind, teaching needs to focus on:

> " … what learners – with minds and bodies, home and peer cultures and languages, previous learning experiences, interests and values – bring to their learning environments and how that shapes their interactions with those learning environments.
>
> … all of the questions about meaning, experience, language, culture, positioning, and so on, need to be asked about the interactions between *particular learners and their learning environments* as they evolve over time. "
>
> (Haertel, Moss, Pullin & Gee, 2008:8)

The key questions for teachers are: What meaning is this student making of what we're doing? How does this connect with prior experiences and who this student is? How does it contribute to the student's learning trajectory? How does it contribute to developing the student's identity?

Cope and Kalantzis also highlight the importance of recognising student diversity, their subjectivities and identities:

> To be relevant, learning processes need to recruit, rather than attempt to ignore and erase, the different subjectiveness, interests, intentions, commitments, and purposes that students bring to learning.
>
> (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000:18)

This thinking invites teachers to expand the traditional notion of 'learner differences' to a recognition of learners and their diverse life-worlds and the need to build on this diversity.

The implications of the expanded view of learner diversity is that teachers need to develop a rich picture of each individual student and incorporate this, in an ongoing way, in the teaching process. They also need to use the diversity of members of the class to inform interactions and discussions that invite students to recognise and work with diversity. Working ethically and responsibly with each student and each group of students means that teachers:

- do all that they can to know the students as young human beings *and* as learners
- are mindful of what they, as teachers, bring to interactions and how they mediate dialogue
- recognise the potential in all students and provide meaningful opportunities for all to learn.

Melissa Gould-Drakeley, a senior teacher in New South Wales, highlights her understanding of each student as *intra*cultural.

> But what is different for me is the INTRAcultural. And really coming to terms with it, looking at each student's background, and knowledge and experience and absolutely everything they bring to the classroom and how we are all moving together yet on a separate journey … and that, if I don't understand and they don't understand their intracultural journey, they will never understand the intercultural. And to me that's the difference in the way I teach, I think. It's actually saying to them: what are your assumptions, and what do you think and what do you do … and I think the students love that because they feel valued; but they also love it because they're actually able to recognise and analyse what they do. Because … a lot of them don't even recognise what they do and why they do it; why they think that, and where they get that information from. For them it's a real eye-opener and in a sense for me as an educator it's very good too because it made me realise how subjective my teaching can be … of course it is … and I can't get away from that, it has to be …
>
> (Interviewed by Angela Scarino and Leo Papademetre, October 2007)

When teachers work with 'absolutely everything (students) bring', students develop both as language users and as language learners who become aware of how they learn and of the power of language over others. In this way, over time, they develop awareness of themselves as communicators across diverse languages.

Questions for reflection

1   How might you develop a rich understanding of your students' biographies?

2   In what ways can you use the diversity of students and their families in your class?

3   What do you make of Melissa's description? What implications do you draw from it for your own practice?

Scaffolding learning

KEY IDEA

- Scaffolding involves using a range of conceptual, material and linguistic tools and technologies to lead students towards understanding

Scaffolding is the process by which teachers use particular conceptual, material and linguistic tools and technologies to support student learning. Scaffolding can be used at any point of interaction between teachers and students – at the point of providing inputs and explanations, through to modelling, interacting and assessing.

Scaffolding might include:

- explaining a new concept through a concept map
- making deliberate comparisons with the first language and culture
- focusing on particular words to develop a metalanguage
- providing and explicating fruitful examples; asking students to notice particular aspects/features
- highlighting patterns, choices
- elaborating on an initial explanation
- using questions to probe students' conceptions and prompt them to describe their interpretations and challenge their opinions
- using various ways of representing ideas and concepts (eg visuals, diagrams, organisers, highlighting, various media and technologies)
- feedback that relates to improvement.

Through interactive talk, ongoing dialogue, rich, formative questioning, and careful listening and reading, teachers constantly judge what kinds of scaffolds are appropriate and how much scaffolding is appropriate for individual learners. Teachers monitor student responses and find ways to ensure that students *make personal meaning* of their experiences and develop a fuller understanding. This dialogue and questioning not only involves teacher-to-students and students-to-teacher interaction, but also peer discussion. The teacher's role is to encourage students to try to answer questions, ask more of their own and *listen* carefully to and build upon the responses of peers.

Scaffolding is also an important aspect of diagnostic assessment. By providing assistance through scaffolding, teachers are able to gauge what it is that students can do independently and what they can do with particular kinds of assistance. (See also the section on Formative Assessment.)

Questions for reflection

1   What kinds of scaffolds do you provide learners with when setting up tasks, explaining a new concept, examining visual texts, or engaging in ongoing interactive talk? What evidence do you have that they work?

2   Audio-record a segment of one of your classes. Review it in terms of (1) the way you use questioning and your own responses as a form of scaffolding and (2) the way you invite students to add to, elaborate, clarify, challenge the input and responses of another student.

Technologies in language teaching and learning

KEY IDEAS

• Communication and information technologies are integral to teaching and learning

• Technologies enable teachers and students to access contemporary materials and globalised communication interactions

• Technologies facilitate participation in the target language and with its communities

• Technologies increasingly provide students with personalised, flexible, asynchronous and networked learning opportunities

Information and communication technologies have become significant in social and economic development and increasingly important in education. As educators, we are faced with selecting and using appropriate technologies from an ever-increasing range. We know that technologies have the capacity to transform our teaching and our students' learning. We know that different technologies can change the ways our students learn and mediate the learning differently. We seek to make our use, and our students' use, of technologies integral to the whole language learning process and not an add-on to teaching or a replacement for teaching. We know that when we do this, our pedagogies engage students, enhance achievement, create new learning possibilities and extend interaction with local and global communities.

For many of us, the productive use of information and communication technologies presents a challenge in our teaching practice. Students are usually very engaged with technology and have developed expertise outside the classroom which the teacher may not have. This expertise can, however, be constructed as a resource upon which the teacher can draw, while scaffolding the linguistic and cultural dimensions of the students' engagement with language and culture through technology. We know that these technologies have a transformative role in languages education and our stance as languages educators must encompass them.

The role of teachers is to ensure that the use of technologies adds value to the intended learning. With sound educational direction, technologies support conceptual learning and enable the construction and creation of knowledge. Teachers can use technologies to achieve this by:

• requiring students to choose activities, applications and modes of communication

• selecting and using learning objects to create learning tasks and sequences

• exploring the use of games and programs that contextualise concepts

• exploring how texts may be constructed

• discussing how students are positioned in virtual spaces

• engaging students in language and culture simulations, modelling and creative tasks.

Technologies help build learning communities by enabling teachers and students to join online collaborative projects and connecting with other students, teachers and experts.

Digital technologies provide access to language and culture and also a means of self-expression through language (Debski, 1997). Our students use contemporary technologies to create a language and communication unique to themselves and their subcultural group. Technologies provide enhanced opportunities to interact with speakers of the target language in a variety of ways – websites, emails, videoconferences, podcasts, music and video streaming, etc. For language teaching, information technologies provide access to a vast range of contemporary material in the target language and about target language communities. This material makes the target language and target language communities available both in and out of class and therefore much more present in students' lives. Communication technologies allow for direct participation in the target language culture in a range of ways and with a range of different levels of engagement. They also allow learners to pursue their own interest and agendas in the target language community outside the classroom.

Questions for reflection

1   How can or do you incorporate technology in your own practice in language teaching and learning? Explain specifically the way in which the technology itself actually mediates learning.

2   Begin the process of building up a digitally sourced bank of contemporary material that you can use with your students. Think about the considerations you need to take into account in making your choices. Engage with your students in this task, acknowledge their expertise.