

WORKSHEET A

Title	Interaction
Goal	To clarify the concept of interaction, which combines and expands on communicative activities of production and reception
Keywords	Learner – learning strategies – communicative language activities
Ref to the Guide I.3, II.4, III.4, IV.2	Ref to the CEFR 2.1.3, 4.4.3, 5.2.3

Task A († † †)

Step 1

What was before known as the four skills: receptive skills (reading and listening) and productive skills (speaking and writing) has been reformulated by the CEFR as communicative language activities, which now include four broad categories. Thus, the CEFR enumerates productive, receptive, interactive and mediating activities. Discuss the reasons for this shift in terminology and the need for stressing interaction as different from a simple combination of production and reception activities.

You may start from the following excerpt from the CECR:

The language learner/user's communicative language competence is activated in the performance of the various *language activities*, involving **reception, production, interaction** or **mediation** (in particular interpreting or translating). Each of these types of activity is possible in relation to texts in oral or written form, or both.

[...]

In *interaction* at least two individuals participate in an oral and/or written exchange in which production and reception alternate and may in fact overlap in oral communication. Not only may two interlocutors be speaking and yet listening to each other simultaneously. Even where turn-taking is strictly respected, the listener is generally already forecasting the remainder of the speaker's message and preparing a response. Learning to interact thus involves more than learning to receive and to produce utterances. High importance is generally attributed to interaction in language use and learning in view of its central role in communication.

(CECR, p. 14)

Step 2

Go back to the CEFR and consider the entire paragraph 2.1.3. Formulate a shared description of interaction, without forgetting the link between interaction and the intercultural dimension in the case of second/foreign language exchanges. Discuss in what way interaction is linked to reception and production.

Task B

Step 1 († †)

Considering the social nature of interaction, a greater number of strategies is required than in the



case of both reception and production. An explicit consideration of this aspect is not necessarily included in all pedagogical traditions. Read the following passage from the CEFR focused on the specific features of interaction and on the types of strategies. Exchange your findings with your colleague(s) for clarifying and for finding concrete examples.

4.4.3.5 Interaction strategies

Interaction encompasses both receptive and productive activity as well as activity unique to the construction of joint discourse and therefore all reception strategies and all production strategies mentioned above are also involved in interaction. However, the fact that spoken interaction entails the collective creation of meaning by the establishment of some degree of common mental context, defining what can be taken as given, working out where people are coming from, converging towards each other or defining and maintaining a comfortable distance, usually in real time, means that in addition to receptive and productive strategies there is a class of strategies exclusive to interaction concerned with the management of this process. In addition, the fact that interaction is primarily face to face tends to provide far greater redundancy both in textual, linguistic terms and with regard to paralinguistic features, contextual cues, all of which can be made more or less elaborate, more or less explicit to the extent that the constant monitoring of the process by the participants indicates that this is appropriate.

Planning for spoken interaction involves the activation of schemata or a 'praxeogram' (i.e. a diagram representing the structure of a communicative interaction) of the exchanges possible and probable in the forthcoming activity (*Framing*) and consideration of the communicative distance from other interlocutors (*Identifying information/opinion gap; Judging what can be taken as given*) in order to decide on options and prepare possible moves in those exchanges (*Planning moves*). During the activity itself, language users adopt turntaking strategies in order to obtain the discourse initiative (*Taking the floor*), to cement the collaboration in the task and keep the discussion on course (*Co-operating: interpersonal*), to help mutual understanding and maintain a focused approach to the task at hand (*Co-operating: ideational*), and so that they themselves can ask for assistance in formulating something (*Asking for Help*). As with Planning, Evaluation takes place at a communicative level: judging the 'fit' between the schemata thought to apply, and what is actually happening (*Monitoring: schemata, praxeogram*) and the extent to which things are going the way one wants them to go (*Monitoring: effect, success*); miscomprehension or intolerable ambiguity leads to requests for clarification which may be on a communicative or linguistic level (*Asking for, giving clarification*), and to active intervention to re-establish communication and clear up misunderstandings when necessary (*Communication Repair*).

Step 2 († † †)

Reflect on the link between interaction and intercultural awareness. In your opinion, in what way can the learners be made aware of this and what impact can it have on your teaching practice? Discuss this and think of possible pedagogic scenarios.

