1 Introduction

The overall pervasiveness of media

This chapter will foreground some key functions of traditional and digital media. Entering any primary EFL classroom in Europe will reveal the overall pervasiveness of different media: Post-it stickers name furniture in English, posters present stock phrases of classroom language, flash cards arranged according to topics are available in boxes, a blackboard and a CD-player are standard equipment ready to be used any time. A growing number of classrooms have at least one computer with internet access, and smart-boards are increasingly available. These media are generally referred to as technical (non-personal) instructional media, encompassing the board, course books and all sorts of realia (toys furniture, shopping utensils). As we will see in this chapter, media can only unfold their functions for language learning when seen in connection with the teacher and the learners (sometimes referred to with the rather awkward term "personal or non-technical media"). In the literature, media are often grouped according to the different senses they relate to, such as the visual (e.g. flash card), the auditory (e.g. CDs), and the audiovisual (film); see FREUDENSTEIN 2003: 394–99. Accordingly, media are connected to the fostering of particular skills: The audio cassette, the film, as well as satellite and cable TV allow students to improve their listening skills and their proficiency in non-verbal communication by watching speakers of English in action. Throughout the book we have made explicit and implicit references to the use of media. It is now our task to tie these elements together. The potential of media for language learning is not only determined by its specific properties, but also by the particular role a medium plays in the interactive world of the FL classroom. The latter will be our main reference point for the next section.

2 Properties and functions of media: Focus on the language classroom

"If-then-statement"

As we pointed out in chapter 1, language classrooms constitute an arena of unique subjective and inter-subjective realities, which are worked out, changed, and maintained by both teachers and learners. The basic assumption underlying this construct of a language classroom is the rather simple "if-then-statement." If the goal of classroom work is to help learners become competent users of the target language outside the classroom, then this very capacity must be initiated, fostered, trained, and experienced through activities in the here-and-now of classroom life. For this purpose, learners and teachers jointly observe and explore communication inside and outside classroom walls, whereby the learners' own experiences of trying to use the foreign language to create meaning is at the center of awareness. During this process, the classroom takes on different shapes or configurations which can be conceptualized with the following six metaphors.

In each of these configurations media serve particular purposes supporting the classroom's central goals.

1 The classroom as simulation and stage

The creation and simulation of worlds

The very nature of the classroom's space for action is artificial in the sense that it is not the world of the target culture, and, therefore, has its obvious limitations and constraints. Yet, in spite of this artificiality it allows for the creation of a simulated world whose objects not only receive new names (the tables, walls, the board, the light switch), but where *interactive and mutable relationships* are carried on in a different code. This means that, among other interactions, the everyday routines of classroom life are acted out in the target language (→ *classroom discourse*, ch. 4). Traditional forms of media such as the board, the CD-player, and the poster have long been used by teachers as tools to create such simulated spaces, building on the ability of learners to co-create this new space with their creativity and imagination. The language classroom, therefore, is more than a physical location. Rather, it needs to be seen dramaturgically as a stage for engagement. There is no existential need to carry out learning routines and classroom discourse in the target language. It is a matter of having agreed on new rules stating the experimental use of the language here and now in order to learn how to use it later. From this perspective, the classroom appears as an ensemble of mini-situations constituting an ongoing simulation which needs a stage for realization (used, and, at the same time, co-created by all participants). Here children explore their communicative abilities by using media themselves (a menu in a role play, a transparency of a floor plan of an apartment when talking about their home, a hand-puppet telling a story about a treasure island).

2 The classroom as detective agency

The learners are challenged to unlock the foreign code

The theory of communicative language teaching (CLT) has conceptualized the foreign language classroom not only as an arena for experimental language use, but also as a world within which texts are available for listening, watching, reading, and interpretation (see CANDLIN 2003). Again, media are the tools the teacher will use to make interesting topics accessible to learners and voices from the target cultures available for appropriation. Seen from the children's point of view, classrooms therefore resemble detective agencies, because the learner-detectives are challenged to unlock the foreign code. Such decoding not only depends on the learners' ability to bring their own experience and knowledge of the world to the foreign texts, but also on the support the teacher provides through different media. Once the children have grasped the gist of a story staged by the teacher with the help of a sequence of pictures, the presentation of the same story on CD spoken in normal speed by a native speaker may pose a new challenge for the detectives and, at the same time, foster a tremendous sense of achievement for them.

3 The classroom as training ground

The greater the variety of training the more effective its outcome

Without continuous and systematic training, learners will not develop the envisaged competencies. Training is not only strenuous, but must be undergone repetitively and regularly. The greater the variety of such training, the more effective is its outcome. Variety is achieved both through changes in the activities and through the use of appropriate media. Almost all of the above mentioned skill-getting and skill-using activities (→ ch. 5) require media support: A speaking and sound discrimination activity can be best supported by a CD, learning words can be based on a memory game or on picture bingo, working on a role play presentation "On the phone with friends" can be improved considerably if recorded and played back to the learners with a digital camera. On the training ground, media not only support and frame learning, but also render learning activities more interesting, challenging, and thus more effective. It is, however, not the medium as such, but the quality and content of the activity, which makes the difference in learning (→ ch. 3).

4 The classroom as studio for text production

The two functions of learner texts

Even if primary school children do not write complex English texts independently as older students do, they will nevertheless create a variety of texts, by means of which they support their actions (a shopping list for a role play or a poster for a fashion show), formulate textual messages (a get-well card to a friend), or express what they have understood from a story the teacher has read to them (a picture sequence reconstructing the story line). What is important here is the fact that learners partially assume control of media for their communicative purposes. These learner texts have two major functions. On the one hand they are not primarily produced for the teacher to assess the learner's success or failure in mastering the input. Rather they are produced by learners for their own benefit to communicate their own meaning, however limited the expressive potential might be. They are contributions to a mutual process of creating meaning. On the other hand, as we will discuss later when commenting on the use of portfolios (→ ch. 12), such learner texts are, of course, expressions of the learners' present stage of communicative competence, and as such give evidence of what has been achieved. Therefore, they also play an important role in assessing learning outcomes.

5 The classroom as window to the world

New dimensions of the FL classroom

The metaphor of a window denotes the fact that classroom walls can be opened to allow for direct encounters with speakers of the target language. Since the early 1980s, CLT has emphasized this connection to the world outside as a crucial element of the classroom's architecture. Before the advance of the personal computer, this connection could be maintained by class correspondence projects (letter, cassette and video exchanges), through visits of L2 speakers to the classroom, and through exploratory projects in the immediate environment where the target language is used as a means of communication (youth hostels, international schools, hotels, railway stations and airports). Although these possibilities have been focused on and used successfully by communicative language teachers for many years, they are not easy to put into practice and thus have remained a sideshow to mainstream language teaching (see: Legutke & Thomas 1999). The invention of the personal computer and its rapid development into a multimedia machine linked to the internet has the potential to offer new dimensions to the language classroom, as we demonstrated with the *Teddy Bear Project* (→ ch. 8). An authentic audience, which has been lacking in most traditional classrooms, is now easily accessible. The interaction, brought about by computer-based activities potentially enhances language learning and promotes communication even in such early phases of language learning. However, the negotiation of meaning and critical cultural awareness will depend on factors that go beyond technology. We will return to these issues later. For the time being it needs to be emphasized that the spatial dimension of the language classroom extends beyond the physical location of a particular school to the world outside. Traditional and new media provide the windows where the inside and the outside merge to constitute a learning environment with great potential for the growth of language competence.

6 The classroom as workshop for learning

Language learning awareness

Finally, the classroom is the location where children learn the acquisition of languages. While becoming competent in the use of English, they develop language learning awareness that paves the way to learning still other languages. Also, this dimension of the classroom heavily depends on the multifarious use of media: creating a word box not only serves the purpose of learning English words, but also makes the learner aware of how words are built and how they are best learnt. One important medium, no doubt, is the portfolio; challenging children to take stock of what they can do in English. The learner texts assembled in the portfolio's treasure chest (the dossier) serve as stepping stones to presenting language and learning achievements (→ ch. 12).

3 Multimedia and intertextuality

1 Multiple connections

Three pedagogically relevant implications

If media are understood as integral components of the dynamic world of a primary language classroom, where they perform specific functions, as explained above, three pedagogically relevant implications need to be stated here:

- First of all, it is obvious that media must not be looked at in isolation, but rather in the way they are interdependently related to each other.

Therefore classrooms represent *multi-media* environments for language learning. "Multi-media" here simply means the integration of multiple forms of media. This is exactly what happens in the teaching and learning process: listening texts are being used in connection with printed texts which again relate to visual texts, graphics, animation, and even full-motion video.

- The second implication underscores the fact that media must not be separated from their content, i.e. from the meaning they carry. This meaning is either decoded in the process of sense-making and negotiation, or it is created through the participation in classroom discourse, as we will show in the next section. Different media allow making texts accessible in different modes (visual, auditory, print): a picture card in the context of other picture cards represents the story line of *The Three Little Pigs* and thus prepares learners for the teacher's narration of the story, which in turn might not only be followed by the presentation of the story by a native speaker on a CD, but also by a cartoon version on film or from the Internet. Since these texts are interdependent we can speak of the classroom's *intertextuality*.
- Finally, media are always connected to the people who use them for specific purposes. For this reason they are part of the discourse world of the classroom. Even if the teacher will necessarily play a dominant role in creating the learning environment, learners are by no means excluded from media use, when trying to make themselves understood, for instance. The interconnectedness of media, texts in different modes, and the people who use them can be seen in the following example:

2 "A fashion show"

Students and teacher in action

The following example is taken from the project E-LINGO, www.e-lingo.de; the lesson was recorded in the state of Hesse, March 2004.
The 24 children (in Grade 3 at the beginning of the second half of their first year of English) appear in a fashion show representing a target task of a 45 minutes lesson. The tables and chairs have been removed to make room for a catwalk. An audience is seated along the catwalk; background music gives the event an additional air of importance. Students working in pairs (one in the role of the model, the other in the role of host/ show master) stage one show after another. While the model dressed up in fancy clothes moves along the catwalk the host holding a mike introduces the model and describes their outfit. The hosts speak without any linguistic prompts, but generate their texts from memory. A round of applause concludes each presentation before the next pair takes over. Although differences between the learners in terms of speaking competence (pronunciation and intonation, range of vocabulary) are obvious, all teams succeed in completing this target task. From the body language, you can tell that the learners are completely engaged in their activities. The teacher keeps in the background. No German is spoken. In the following lesson, the show will be repeated. Host and model will, however, switch roles.

Skill-getting and skill-using activities

A sequence of skill-getting and skill-practicing activities precedes the fashion show. The activities focus on the revision of vocabulary (*colors* and *clothes*), the introduction of new words (*clothes*), the introduction and practice of phrases and chunks (*introducing a model, describing a model*). Almost all of the activities depend on the integrated use of media as will be shown with reference to the two activities *describing a female clown* (2 min, 10 sec.) and *describing a male clown* (2 min. 25 sec.). The teacher sits on a table, to her right is a girl dressed as clown with a hat, glasses, a red nose, jacket, scarf, gloves, and fancy boots. On her left, on a second table close by, is a boy clown in similar dress. The children forming a semi-circle on the floor are asked by the teacher to describe the woman clown first. The teacher in her opening stimulus emphasizes the personal pronoun *she* several times, *"tell us what **she** is wearing, what **she** is wearing..."* and holds up a flash card with the word *she*. Before initiating the description of the male clown, she makes learners aware of the gender difference "she" and "he", and holds up the appropriate flash card *he*. During both practice phases, when the children describe the clowns in simple sentences, the teacher praises the students and corrects mistakes. Several times she directs the learners' attention to word cards on the wall for the colors and to a poster mind-map of clothes. Although this phase is hard work for a lot of students, they are very engaged and enjoy this form of practice.

3 Multi-modality and classroom discourse

Interconnection of media

This short example not only demonstrates how media are interconnected in the dynamic world of the language classroom, but also how teachers and learners shape this world not only by the spoken and written word, but by simultaneously using visual objects (pictures) and artifacts (clothes and other props such as noses, glasses, lip stick, and face paint) as representational resources in the process of teaching, learning and creative expression (i.e. the practice phases and the fashion show). Teacher and learners appropriate these resources, imbuing them with their own personality (e.g. facial expression, voice, gestures, and body posture). The world of the classroom, therefore, is best characterized as multi-modal, because here the linguistic and non-linguistic means of expression supplement each other, the visual and the verbal combine in a presentation. The staging of a fashion show by the learners, together with its preparatory phases and a follow-up to examine and assess the experience is a telling example of what we call *classroom discourse*. In contrast to the traditional use of the term, which is restricted to the organizational aspects of teaching and learning (e.g. handing out of scissors, or having learners assist in cleaning the board), classroom discourse in its wider meaning denotes much more, i.e. a task-based and theme-centered process of sense-making and learning. This process takes shape in different modes, with a variety of texts made accessible through a combination of media (Hallet 2008).

4 Computers

A powerful tool

The steady increase of access to computers in educational settings has also enhanced the possibilities for teachers and learners in primary school if the medium was situated in the dynamics of the EFL classroom. In each of the above mentioned configurations, it can serve as a powerful tool for both learning and communication.

- *A tool for accessing resources:* A growing number of institutions, publishing houses, and individuals have provided a wealth of multi-media resources to be used either directly by children, if they have access to computer labs in schools or at home, or by teachers for classroom use. The BBC website *Cbeebies* and the site *LearnEnglish Kids* of the British Council (→ ch. 15.2) may serve as representative examples here. A wide range of stories, songs, language games, as well as craft activities can be found on these sites, all of them realized as multi-modal and interactive textual arrangements for learning and exploration. For the teachers, up-to-date digital add-ons offered by many publishers can not only compensate for the loss of topicality of course books, but also broaden the teachers' repertoire of tasks and activities.
- *A tool for accessing peers from other cultures:* Furthermore, computers enable teachers and learners to overcome traditional constraints of classroom learning by providing them with various channels for interaction with speakers of the target language in different cultural environments, as we have pointed out above (→ ch. 8). *The Teddy Bear Project* is a good example that e-mail ventures need not be restricted to older and more competent learners, and have earned their place in the primary classroom (Müller-Hartmann 2003). Children not only try to understand peers from different parts of the world, but also make themselves understood in the target language by using written and spoken language (audio files), as well as pictures and films.
- *A tool for learning:* Part and parcel of any modern ensemble of materials around a core textbook are digital language trainers, which aim at supplementing classroom work for individuals and groups. Again, we can find a range of skill-focused activities ranging from vocabulary training to listening, reading and writing. Although publishers generally make claims as to the high quality of these digital resources for language learning, careful assessment is called for (→ ch. 15.2).

5 The hand puppet

Most publishers have included a hand puppet in their multi-media kits supplementing their textbooks. On the surface, it seems so appealing and easy to use, yet it poses a number of challenges which have not received appropriate attention in the literature. (For further reference see: Haudeck 2000, 2001, Möller 2007, Hassheider & Scheffler 1995).

1 Reasons for the use of hand puppets in primary EFL

Mediator between teacher and students

The use of the hand puppet can be justified under four mutually supportive and interwoven perspectives based on two assumptions: As a representative of one of the target cultures it is a fluent speaker of English with no knowledge of German. Secondly, it has a vita and a distinctive character.

- *Psychological perspective:* The hand puppet serves as an important mediator between the teacher and the students. On the one hand, it needs to become a member of the learning community; students will gradually discover its vita and its character. Likewise, the puppet will get to know the children. During this process of familiarization, it will become a *partner* who is close enough to the children to express their voice, or it may inform the teacher of what is going on among the children (one child is missing). Most importantly, it invites the children to identify with the puppet and thus delegate their own voices to it. Because of its superior language competence, it can be much more expressive than the children. At the same time, the puppet can stimulate the shyer children's willingness to speak in public, because speaking to the puppet can be far less intimidating than speaking to the teacher. On the other hand, the puppet has the role of a *co-teacher*, helping the children to communicate with and through the English language. In this role, it might even assist the teacher in managing the interaction during class time (making sure that students stay on task), or it might support the students by giving prompts, whispering the missing word or the chunk.

Ideal partner for the teacher

- *Linguistic perspective:* Since communicative exchanges between teacher and students will be rather one-sided linguistically in the first years, the hand puppet is an ideal partner for the teacher to engage in meaningful dialogue. The playful staging of mini dramatic situations provides a rich context for language in action. Within such situations, new words can be introduced, expressions (chunks) repeated, intonation patterns demonstrated, or polite and impolite behavior recognized. Even if the puppet is primarily *the teacher's partner for extended discourse*, the students are not excluded from interacting with it. On the contrary, quite often the teacher-puppet interaction will be broadened in scope to include the children. Where a lot of traditional dialogues during the elementary phase of language learning are communicatively dubious, even ridiculous (e.g. asking about each others' names and hobbies, when everybody knows the answer), a dialogue with the hand puppet on such topics could make more sense. After all, it is a new member of the community. Entering and exiting the classroom stage, the puppet provides opportunities for a wide range of language related activities for students and teachers which can take the form of almost ritualized events: calling the puppet, greeting it with a song, informing it about the current birthdays, days of the week, the current weather conditions.

Valuable helper to the teacher

- *Educational perspective:* Based on the assumption we made earlier, the hand puppet can be a valuable helper to the teacher in bringing aspects of the target culture(s) to life. It could introduce cultural products (such

as food, and clothing, as well as songs and stories), present cultural symbols (such as flags and insignia), and, of course, exemplify cultural practices (forms of greetings, eating habits, school rituals). At the same time, the puppet is a stranger to the world of the children. What is perceived as common practice and not questioned by them, might appear strange to the puppet. It needs, therefore, to be introduced to cultural representations, and as a consequence, it will struggle with misunderstandings. It will, no doubt, be surprised sometimes how things are done in the world of the children, and will ask all sorts of questions. Connecting the hand puppet with central issues of intercultural learning does by no means imply that it should be overburdened with this function. However, it certainly provides an opportunity to integrate the intercultural dimension into the daily language work.

Students as participant observers

▶ *Learning perspective:* This reason is closely related to the linguistic dimension and draws our attention to the fact that learners following the mini-dramatic interactions between the teacher and their puppet act as participant observers of contextualized language use, i.e. of discourse events (cf. Cameron 2001: 37). Time and again they will be exposed to short units of language, which lend themselves to re-enactment because they carry meaning. This does not only happen in the classroom. There are reports of students copying the dialogues experienced in class at home with their siblings and friends, using their own hand puppets (Haudeck 2001). This kind of participant observation is an important stepping stone towards learning to engage in discourse with others. The creative re-enactment of a pleasurable experience serves as a bridge to this goal. What is experienced, repeated, and re-enacted could easily become the center of attention during 'focus on language sessions' when learners discover language forms and begin to understand how language works.

2 Quality, choice and training

The personal medium

Experts agree that a hand puppet not only needs to meet a number of criteria to function as a partner in classroom discourse (big enough to be seen by all the children, moveable, expressive eyes), it also requires considerable training on the part of the teacher. In addition, the teacher's creative potential and imagination are called for when inventing its character and vita (cf. Möller 2007). Since the puppet is a personal medium with its history and character, it needs a home in the classroom from where it enters the stage and to where it exits: a basket, a shelf in the cupboard. It goes without saying that the use of the hand puppet cannot succeed without the teacher having a good level of language competence. Even the fluent speaker will need some time to become familiar with the medium.

3 Issues and limitations

The puppet's final exit

Hand puppets will, no doubt, eventually lose their appeal with the growing age of the children. The acceptance of the puppet by the learners depends to an important degree not only on the skills and creativity of the teacher, but also on the puppet's character and maturity. On the other hand, the teacher should be ready for the puppet's final exit, which might be embedded in a sequence of farewell events. Several authors suggest that learners should be encouraged to take over the role of the hand puppet once they have learned to master certain phrases and expressions (e. g. Hassheider & Scheffler 1995). This move, so they argue, could boost some learners' motivation and help them overcome inhibitions, because the mask of the puppet provides the necessary protection for shyer students. Although we agree with the argument that the security given by a role can have a liberating and supporting function for many learners, the difference between drama activities and the use of the hand puppet should not be blurred. In order to preserve and maintain the puppet's distinctive character, which incorporates its superior language competence, one could, with some justification, argue against such a transfer of the puppet to a learner. A viable alternative for the teacher would be to invite the students to bring their own puppets to class and have them meet the hand puppet and the personal puppets of other learners. The hand puppet, no doubt, represents a particularly powerful tool for authenticity, yet it should be kept separate from other tools which also add to the creation of pretense: the students' cuddly toys, the paper mask and the assumed role.

6 Issues and directions

Pedagogy first, curriculum second, media third

A critical look at the history of foreign language teaching reveals a recurrent tendency of scholars to overestimate and idealize the power of media for learning and teaching. In 1948 Edison claimed *"that the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant largely, if not entirely, the use of textbooks in our schools"* (Edison in Ritter 1996: 40). In the 1960s and 1970s the language lab was seen as a revolutionary step toward effective learning, and at the turn of the century the computer was imbued with excessive expectations as to its effect on learning. Findings from research on the use of information and communication technology (ICT) support a more balanced view as to the surplus value of technology applications (cf. Kern 2006, Rösler 2007). It is not the individual medium, nor technology alone that guarantees communicative success and/or positive learning outcomes. Rather, they will depend on the choice of appropriate content that engages learners, on the definition of pedagogical goals to be pursued, and, of course, on the design and implementation of meaningful tasks providing a framework for interactions that focus learners' attention and challenge their points of view. As Rösler summarized in a review of research on e-mail in language learning

"[t]he medium is not the message because if people have nothing to say to each other then it doesn't really make any difference in which medium they don't say it" (RÖSLER, 2000: 18).

It remains a challenging task for further research on the new dimensions ICT has opened for the language classroom (e.g. the social web and the smart board) to be first and foremost concerned with issues of pedagogy, and then to be guided by curricular considerations. Only when the critical parameters of pedagogy and the curriculum have been established can the inclusion of media be addressed (LEGUTKE 2008).