



**Joint Efforts for Innovation:
Working Together
to Improve
Foreign Language
Teaching in the
21st Century**

**Dolors Masats, Maria Mont
& Nathaly González-Acevedo (Editors)**

A book for the curious and passionate 21st century language teachers and teacher trainers.

Tired of reading about the wonders of technology enhanced project-based learning but not knowing where to seek inspiration to start to adopt this teaching approach? A team of in-service teachers, teacher trainers, pre-service teachers and researchers have worked together to present a simple, engaging and practical book to offer fellow education professionals stimulating ideas for their teaching practice.

Joint efforts for innovation: Working together to improve foreign language teaching in the 21st century offers:

- Inspiring classroom projects and innovative teaching experiences.
- A compilation of digital tools and resources for the foreign language classroom.
- Pioneering proposals to open up the classroom doors.
- Problem-solving and inquiry-based tasks that promote team work.
- Honest reflections from practitioners on their classroom practices.

This book includes

- accessible examples of teacher-led classroom research small-scale studies.
- calls for teachers to do research in their classrooms.
- personal accounts on the importance of school internships for pre-service teachers.

This book is an invitation for practicing teachers and teacher trainers to be creative and to develop learning skills, literacy skills and life skills.

Are you ready to become an innovative 21st century educator?



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FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN
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Inspiring classroom projects: An introduction

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The Catalan curriculum today, like many competence-based existing curricula, is based upon the premise that all learning proposals must ensure learners develop the so-called 21st century knowledge, skills and competences (World Economic Forum, 2015) necessary to enable them to act socially in an effective and reasoned fashion. This objective is difficult to achieve if learners are not placed at the centre of the learning process and if teachers do not create contexts to integrate the acquisition of language, field knowledge and social values. The adoption of project-based learning (PBL) as a methodological proposal makes it possible, as curriculum contents are organised around global projects structured through goal-oriented tasks that get learners to work together to develop a wide range of competences (communicative, mathematic, artistic, ICT, civic, etc.) and 21st century skills (creativity, adaptability, flexibility, social awareness, leadership, collaboration, etc.) in an integrative manner.

The Buck Institute of Education (BIE, 2003:4) defines PBL as a “systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an extended inquired process, structured around complex, authentic questions and carefully designed products and tasks”. The nature of products and tasks is what distinguishes PBL from other student-centred educational proposals. On the one hand, PBL enables students to design, plan, and conduct projects that result in a realistic output or final product targeted at an audience other than the teacher or the classmates (Patton, 2012). A final product is realistic when it relates with the objective to answer an authentic “driving” question, which, in turn, will engage students in a process of reflecting and responding to crucial social issues. On the other hand, PBL offers learners the opportunity to learn in context over extended periods of time because projects are structured around sequentially meaningful collaborative problem-solving and decision-making tasks (Thomas, 2000) linked to the prosecution of the project’s goal (Dooly, 2016). Finally, PBL offers learners plenty of opportunities to use the target language and plausible authentic reasons for using it (Dooly & Masats, 2011). Their participation in projects also ensures they will develop cognitive, social and digital competences while acquiring and co-constructing interdisciplinary knowledge (Beckett & Slater, 2005) and learning to collaborate with peers to take actions to react to real world challenges (Mont & Masats, 2018).

PBL is not a new methodology in the field of language learning but it is still challenging for teachers to find realistic contexts in which young learners of English need to use the target language to address a real audience or to undertake problem-solving and decision-making tasks. The chapters in this section describe six classroom projects carried out in primary schools in the province of Barcelona (Catalonia) either by in-service English teachers in their regular classrooms or by pre-service teachers during their school internships. They all serve to illustrate the key principles of PBL and are meant to serve as source of inspiration for other practising teachers who want to adopt this methodological approach in their lessons.

How do plants survive? Observing a carnivorous plant is a project organised around the principles of inquiry-based learning to encourage children to construct scientific knowledge through the observation of natural phenomena, in this case the behaviour of the Venus Flytrap. Mariona Huguet and Aina Obiols invited their group of 9-year-old children to elaborate a video documentary on the Venus Flytrap addressed to a group of second graders responsible to take care of a small specimen of this plant. Children first created a mind map using ICT tools to design a plan to gather information for their documentary, then they produced a plasticine scale model of the plant with the purpose of illustrating in their video the plant's digestion process.

Tangram Animals: Creating a game as a vehicle for learning is a cross-disciplinary project developed with a group of 11-year-old learners of English. Teresa Casas designed this classroom proposal during an in-service teacher training course led by the Department of Education of the Generalitat de Catalunya. As her school encourages children to play board games, the author engaged her 5th graders in the process of creating one in English for younger learners. The challenge of designing a Tangram and its instructions on how to represent animals was also used as an excuse to gain new knowledge in Maths, Arts, ICT, Catalan and English.

The country of the year is a flexible project carried out annually in different periods during one academic year with the objective of helping young learners of English to discover an English-speaking country around the world. Íngrid Piccola and Judith Quintanilla's objective is to awake children's interest in getting to know other countries while they gain respect for traditions and festivities in other cultures. Although the learning objectives and the teacher procedures used to carry out the project remain stable, the nature of the final product and of the tasks that lead to its elaboration vary from one year to another, not only because each year a different country is targeted but also because teachers take

into account children's interests and call for the participation of their families in various stages of the project development. This is an example of a project designed by teachers but led by children and families.

City students and town students is a STEAM (Science, Technology, Art, Engineering, Maths) project that is carried out every year in collaboration between students from two Catalan primary schools and their teachers. In their English lessons, Teresa Oliva and Cristina Asensio introduce their six graders to geolocation tools with the objective of getting them to design or participate in two treasure hunts, one in each of the areas where the schools are set. The authors guide their group of students through a process of inquiry in which they need to discover the landmarks of their city/town and create a QR to guide the students from the other school to find them and learn about them during a school trip. Consequently, children use English to become familiar with modernist architecture in the town where one school is located and with modern architecture in the city that hosts the other school, while they either design a treasure hunt for their partner students or take part in the treasure hunt that was designed for them.

Rose Mary's Case is an example of a game-based project created collaboratively and implemented in the four Catalan schools that hosted the authors as student-teachers. Meritxell Martínez, Sònia Reig, Mar Bañeras Capella and Helena Bueno had to be creative to face the challenge to create a joint project targeted to different age groups with diverse learning agendas. By gamifying their lessons and creating a fictitious mystery case their students should solve, they were able to meet the course requirements in each host classroom. Each group was assigned a task to contribute to the resolution of the common case. Their students developed inquiring and communicative skills as they needed to investigate the case and report their findings to the other groups and to the persona who had involved them in the case.

How does Dalí turn his emotions into Art? is a creative project that encourages learners to express their feelings and emotions through the production of a surrealist painting which would be exposed in a virtual gallery. Maria Gracia, during her last school internship, leads her students to discover the concept of "art movement" and the work of Dalí as a painter who hid many symbols in his artwork. Children accessed theoretical knowledge by solving challenging tasks and understood surrealism by analysing art pieces and by becoming artists themselves. English was used to conduct the whole project but also to produce audio guides targeted at the visitors to the virtual gallery.

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