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?

JOINT EFFORTS FOR INNOVATION: WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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

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Classroom research & teachers as researchers: Introduction

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Educators, students, parents, politicians and society in general expect the educational research community to take up the challenge of finding solutions to current educational challenges and of identifying those teaching approaches or classroom practices that will result in increased achievement for learners. Who assumes the responsibility of conducting those studies is what makes educational inquiry different from research in other fields. It can be argued, for example, that fundamental research in medicine is not only carried out exclusively by health professionals, but the written studies stemming from the results of such research is also produced by health professionals and addressed at other health professionals. Similarly, research in architecture is conducted by architects and addressed at architects. Why is this not so in educational research? Why are the studies conducted by teachers still so scarce?

A great many studies in the field of education rely on collecting data in schools as they investigate classroom practices, classroom interaction, students' performance and achievements, teachers' strategies, and so on. If the ultimate goal of research is to try to find solutions to current educational problems, challenges and dilemmas and/or to promote teaching innovation to favour learning achievement for all learners, research results should have an impact on teaching practices. Yet, this is not always so. This is probably, in part, because educational researchers are rarely teachers. Collaborative research conducted by teams composed of university academics and teachers may solve this dilemma, as teachers adopt a more prominent role than that of mere subjects of inquiry, which reduces the gap between the researcher and the object of the research (Nussbaum, 2017). As Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle (2010:4) state, "practitioners can have a major role in influencing positive change in their classrooms, schools and districts if they actively engage in the research project". Consequently, if educational research must serve as a tool for professional development and innovation at school, teachers as researchers are needed; either as team members in collaborative research projects or as reflective practitioners.

This section serves the purpose of opening the door to research for its legitimate stakeholders, and of making teachers value themselves as researchers who have a role to play in educational research. The first two articles, written by a teacher researcher, are theoretical in nature and provide teachers with

fundamental background knowledge necessary to conduct research in the classroom. The third article, written by a teacher trainer and researcher, introduces a future teacher researcher to Conversational Analysis (CA), a theoretical and methodological tool to analyse talk-in-interaction. Finally, the last three texts in this section present CA studies conducted in primary classrooms in schools in Catalonia by pre-service English teachers just before the completion of their Degree in Primary Education.

It is our belief that any teacher can do research in their classrooms provided they develop some degree of expertise in the form of: (a) familiarity with literature on the same or similar phenomena to be analysed, (b) ability in setting up the right methodology or procedure to plan and develop a reliable study, (c) skill in using valid procedures to collect, record and analyse data, and (d) competence in observing the phenomena objectively. Nathaly Gonzalez-Acevedo, in the first two chapters in this section, tackles these issues in a very comprehensible manner. In ***Research in the classroom for teachers by teachers***, the author encourages educators to become researchers and leads them in the various phases of conducting a small-scale study in one's own classroom. She first offers teachers practical hints on how to formulate research questions and objectives, how to select a theoretical and a methodological framework, and how to design the process of collecting and analysing data. She then gives them practical advice on how to actually complete the research and concludes by encouraging teachers to make their results public and indicating how to do so. In ***Some research methods for teacher researchers***, the author briefly describes the positivist paradigm that supports quantitative research methods and the interpretative paradigm that validates qualitative research. She then lists the research tools (surveys, interviews, diaries or journals) and methods (case studies, action-research) most widely used in educational research and offers practical information on how to use them efficiently.

In ***Analysing classroom discourse***, Dolors Masats presents the premises of Conversational Analysis for the study of Second Language Learning (CA-for-SLA). Her chapter relies on the premise that "learning takes place through interaction and that learners acquire knowledge and communicative expertise through socially situated activities that take place in specific context of use" (Masats, 2017: 322) and guides readers on how to use CA-for-SLA to analyse classroom discourse. The three following chapters constitute examples of classroom research using CA-for-SLA procedures. They illustrate how teachers can do educational research at a very small scale to shed light on significant topics of interest for teachers and demonstrate that conducting classroom research following the premises of CA-for-SLA is not a chimera for teachers.

In ***Exploring the benefits of using iPads to teach children English***, Sònia Reig conducts a case study to compare how young learners of English engage in the task of creating a comic with and without using technology. The author suggests that children's use of the target language is not only mediated by technology, but also by the nature of the task and the procedure children adopt to solve it. In ***Analysing children's talk to understand how they solve a problem-solving reading task***, Míriam Martínez studies learner talk to observe the reading strategies young children make explicit when they collaborate to order sentences in a text to obtain information about five animal species in danger of extinction. The author stresses the importance of collaborative work to overcome language barriers and to get a grip on the information provided in the text. She also acknowledges the role played by group leaders to scaffold learning and help their peers complete the task successfully. Finally, in ***Asking for volunteers: Strategies used to enhance learning while organising participation***, Marta Bou analyses teacher talk. She particularly observes the various procedures her school mentor employs to nominate a volunteer to answer her questions or come to the board. The author then reflects upon which features turn that simple action into an opportunity for learners to practice and review language.

References

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