



**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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Front cover photo: Maria Mont

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+44 (0)1604 832149

Preface

Dolors Masats, Maria Mont & Nathaly González-Acevedo
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

This is a book written by Catalan foreign language teachers and teacher educators and addressed to other teachers and teacher educators worldwide. Although the classroom proposals presented here have all been implemented in Catalan schools and at a Catalan University, they can serve as a source of inspiration for teachers from other countries in which educational policies put forward competence-based curricula and student-centred syllabi. Likewise, teachers' reflections on what occurs in their classrooms or the model we present for educating teachers can also be transferred to other similar situations in which (foreign language) teaching and teacher education are regarded as social collaborative processes of knowledge construction and skill development.

In Catalonia, as in other countries in the world, the adoption of a competence-based approach to learning puts forward demands such as the promotion of a common curriculum for all the languages taught at schools; the acknowledgement that language education does not only occur in language courses but across the curriculum; the incorporation of problem-solving and inquiry-based tasks in teaching practices; the inclusion of ICT literacy and other 21st century skills as a cross-curricular target; the enhancement of team work; and the need to let learning transcend the classroom walls. Project-based learning seems to be the best approach to tackle these challenges in an integrated manner and to ensure that content, pedagogy and technology are not dealt with as three separate components of any teaching proposal. Mishra and Koehler (2006) argue that a teacher who is able integrate content, pedagogy and technology in their regular teaching practices develops a form of expertise greater than that of a disciplinary expert, a technology expert or an educator. This book aims to provide teachers with practical examples of how to do so.

The book presents the work done in the last two academic years in the framework of a project, [*Preparing future English teachers with digital teaching competences and the know-how for application to practice: a collaborative task between university teachers, school tutors and pre-service teachers*](#) (2015 ARMIF 00010), subsidised by the Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca of Generalitat de Catalunya and aimed to improve the training programme in the English minor in the [*Primary Education degree*](#) offered by the [*Faculty of Education*](#) of the [*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona \(UAB\)*](#). The project was developed in two methodological courses, namely *Learning*

a foreign language (English) in primary education through ICT and Resources for teaching and learning English in infant and primary education, and Practicum V, the course designed to guide students through their school internships as English assistants. The objective was to create a training model sustained on the joint work between University teachers, university practicum tutors and school mentors to ensure that teachers trainers would develop professional skills related to how to manage communication in the classroom and how to use digital tools to design and implement global projects that could allow primary students to develop digital skills and curricular field knowledge. This book is a compilation of the proposals implemented at the university and schools by the university lecturers and tutors, school mentors and teacher trainers participating in the innovative project ([2015 ARMIF 00010](#)) for nearly three academic years, 2016-2019. In this respect, it is worth noting that the research undertaken by members of the [Research Centre on Plurilingual Interaction and Teaching \(GREIP\)](#) encourages the dissemination of findings through the joint production of texts written collaboratively by researchers, teachers and trainee teachers, as it is the case here. As contributors, we have also invited members of the *A⁺ project* to participate. *A⁺ project* is a new initiative we lead thanks to the support of the [Institute of Educational Sciences \(ICE\)](#) of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), who asked us to form a group of in-service teachers interested in reflecting upon how innovation can be conducted in primary schools in the area of English as a foreign language. The group is composed of in-service teachers interested in applying the premises of project-based learning in their classrooms and in sharing with other teachers what we learn. Some group members are also participating in this ARMIF project, a few are teacher trainers in *Generació Plurilingüe*, a teacher training programme conducted by the [Department of Education](#) of Generalitat de Catalunya, some participate in both projects, one is an [eTwinning ambassador and International Programmes Advisor](#) at the Servei de Llengües Estrangeres i d'Origen of Generalitat de Catalunya, and others are former student teachers of ours.

The volume is divided into five sections:

- Educational technology in teacher training programmes
- Innovative approaches and pioneering resources for the foreign language classroom
- Reflections from the classroom: Teacher internship from different perspectives
- Inspiring classroom projects
- Classroom research & teachers as researchers

The first section, *Educational technology in teacher training programmes*, contains four chapters which illustrate how technology education has been introduced in the teacher training programme at our university. We believe that learning is rooted in social participation (Mondada & Pekarek Doehler, 2004; Masats, 2008) and therefore defend that language education or digital education per se is meaningless. Learning is a change in situated practice activated when language and technology must be used to attain a personal or communal goal. Consequently, the chapters in this section explore the procedures used to provide student teachers with the digital resources necessary for them to engage in socially situated actions such as co-constructing knowledge on how to design and implement computer mediated global projects with primary students. It is our hope that our training proposal can serve as a source of inspiration for other teacher educators and teacher education programmes.

The second section, *Innovative approaches and pioneering resources for the foreign language classroom*, is made up of six chapters. The last chapter is a collection of humanistic suggestions for taking care of one's well-being to be able to cater for the emotional needs of young learners. In the first five, experienced in-service teachers present proposals for including specific digital tools in the primary classroom and for learning to teach with other teachers. Their texts are different in nature, some illustrate examples of teaching actions, others constitute processes of reflection on teaching practices, but all aim to contribute to teachers' professional development as they offer other teachers the opportunity to construct 'new knowledge' and 'new behaviours' through critically reflecting upon the experiences presented. As Masats & González (2018:194) argue, "teaching innovation is only possible through initiatives that empower teaching teams in schools and lead them to become true agents of transformation and improvement. Innovation, though, should stem from solid theoretical background foundations as well as from actual teaching experiences."

The third section, *Reflections from the classroom: Teacher internship from different perspectives*, is a compilation of four diary entries in which a school mentor and three recent graduate teachers reflect upon the importance of school internships in teacher training programmes. The development of professional competences does not only relate to what teachers do in their classrooms but on how they view what they do (Masats & Guerrero, 2018); in this sense, it is our belief that the inclusion of this type of texts can be beneficial for the design of school internship programmes.

The fourth section, *Inspiring classroom projects*, presents seven examples of cross-disciplinary projects structured through goal-oriented tasks that help learners

develop cognitive, social and communicative skills while they work together in the production of a final product. The conceptualization of learning as a social process of transforming information and developing critical thinking is at the core of all six proposals, also based upon the premises of collaborative learning (Sharan 1999) and the principles of competence-based language teaching through project-based learning (Dooly, 2013). The inclusion of the description of real classroom projects developed by experienced teachers or by student teachers with the support of their university teachers and school mentors is, in this book, our greatest contribution to school innovation through project-based learning.

The fifth section, *Classroom research & teachers as researchers*, contains three descriptive chapters on how teachers can conduct research in their classrooms and three shortened versions of research projects conducted by student teachers at the end of their Primary Education degree. At the [Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona \(UAB\)](https://www.uab.cat), as in other universities and teacher colleges, undergraduate students are required to carry out a [compulsory small-scale research](#) project (TFG), often linked to their school internships, to experience how research can be of aid in the classroom and to learn how to design and plan classroom research. Burnard, Apelgren and Cabaroglu (2015) defend that the knowledge teachers gain through reflecting upon what occurs in their classroom has a positive impact on their practices and on what their students learn. These chapters, thus, are included in the volume to acknowledge the role of educational research as a tool for professional development and innovation at school, especially when it is conducted by in-service teachers (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010).

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