



**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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> century educator?



**JOINT EFFORTS FOR INNOVATION:  
WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE  
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN  
THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

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

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$$\begin{array}{r} 2 \text{ teach is} \\ + 2 \text{ touch lives} \\ \hline 4 \text{ ever} \end{array}$$



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## *Preface*

Dolors Masats, Maria Mont & Nathaly González-Acevedo  
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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 21<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>+</sup> project* to participate. *A<sup>+</sup> 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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**SECTION ONE: Educational technology in teacher training programmes**



# Educational technology in teacher training programmes: Introduction

Xavier Pascual & Marta Juanhhuix  
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Research shows there are many reasons —time constraints, lack of support, lack of ICT specialist teachers to solve technical issues, lack of help supervising children when using computers, etc.— that explain why teachers are still reluctant to use digital technologies in the classroom (Mumtaz, 2000) or why the use of digital technologies does not always enhance innovative classroom practices, but lack of familiarity with technology and lack of expertise in its use as teaching tools seem to be the most important ones. Goldsby and Fazal (2000) argue that teachers who are not inclined to use digital tools during their professional practice are those who received little training as pre-service teachers. Similarly, Egbert, Paulus and Nakamichi (2002:122) found out that “those (teachers) who had previous experience with technology use were more likely to implement technology in their classrooms”, therefore they defend that teacher educational programmes should be based on the “development of a sequence of situated technology experiences for teachers.” This idea is aligned with a socio-constructivist approach to learning through action, that calls for the participation of pre-service teachers in significant practical experiences that would allow them to understand how technology can enhance learning.

Changing teacher paradigms is not an easy task. Yet, teachers use technology successfully when (a) they are motivated and committed to their students’ learning and to their own development as teachers; (b) they receive support from experienced teachers in the use of technology; and (c) they have access to a great range of digital tools (Mumtaz, 2000). Along this line of thought, Dooly & Masats (2011) suggest that, if, during their training, pre-service teachers receive effective support in the use of technology and are presented with good technology-enhanced teaching practices, modelled through their own experience as learners and as student teachers, the possibilities that, as practitioners, they will contribute to successfully integrating technology into the curriculum increase. This idea is supported in this section as all its chapters are based on the premise that learning through technology in context promotes professional knowledge related to the theory and pedagogy of technology.

In the first chapter, *Preparing English student-teachers with digital and collaborative knowledge: An illustrative synopsis*, Melinda Dooly & Randall Sadler

describe how they have contributed to the development of the digital competence of student teachers at a Catalan university through engaging them in telecollaborative training practices with students from an American university and with their own peers. Their theoretical reflections are supported by the analysis of students' posts on their participation in telecollaborative projects at the university and at the schools in which they do their internships. In the second chapter, ***Coordinating between classes: Tasks and tools***, Melinda Dooly, Maria Mont & Claudia Vallejo describe how a number of digital resources (*Padlet, Flipgrid, Mentimeter, Wordle, Mindmeister, GoogleDocs, InsertLearning, ThingLink, Genially, Emaze, Wiszgerme & Piktochart*) were introduced in a telecollaborative teacher education course entitled Learning a foreign language (English) in primary education through ICT and later exploited by the same learners and their university practicum supervisors at their weekly seminars. In the third chapter, ***Hands on! Introducing EdTech in the seminars for tutoring pre-service teachers***, Dolors Masats, Maria Mont & Javier Barba present and analyse how six digital resources (*Canva, Edpuzzle, Storybird, Kahoot, Quizizz & Classdojo*) tools were exploited, in the seminars organised at a Catalan University to prepare trainees for their internships in primary school English classrooms, with the double objective of getting pre-service teachers to have first-hand experience on the use of social media as a powerful and significant learning tool and of setting the ground that will guarantee they will use technology in their future classrooms. Finally, in the fourth chapter, ***Digital teaching competences of pre-service teachers***, Maria Llanes presents a brief state-of-the-art paper on the development of teachers' professional digital competences. Her text is complemented with the perceptions of a group of Catalan pre-service teachers and their practicum university tutors and school mentors, obtained through the analysis of data gathered in interviews, questionnaires and discussion sessions. The results are relevant to assess the degree of success of the experiences narrated in the three preceding chapters.

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# Preparing English student-teachers with digital and collaborative knowledge: An illustrative synopsis

Melinda Dooly<sup>1</sup> & Randall Sadler<sup>2</sup>

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## Introduction

There have been many advances in communication technology over the last few decades. These innovations, combined with social, political, economic and cultural changes (at both the global and the local scale), require new understandings of how to educate future generations. One principal shift in concept relates to trying to impart ‘knowledge’ within a framework of the seemingly continuous interconnectivity of our everyday lives (knowledge is put in scare quotes to indicate that it is often seen as unproblematic). Knowledge is no longer understood as something to be acquired in any given place (for instance, a library or a classroom). It is increasingly recognized that knowledge emerges from our multiple experiences lived while sharing, creating, participating and interacting with a knowing community –often in online communities. Knowledge comes from taking part in meaningful activities with others –and for our students this means interacting both locally (e.g. their classmates) and globally (e.g. online peers). These new conceptualizations of knowledge acquisition have also led to interrogation of how to best teach and how to effectively support the learning process (Dooly & Sadler, 2015, 2019; Sadler & Dooly, 2016; Lewis, O’Rourke & Dooly, 2016). In particular, as the role of education in what Meskill (2013) calls the ‘global social network’ (p. 1) is interrogated, there is more and more pressure for teacher education to provide answers on how to best keep up with and adapt to rapid technological changes that affect the way individuals organise and interact in their daily lives. These changes are perhaps even more visible in the domain of language teaching and learning, as the use of social media to provide opportunities for authentic communication has become more prominent in language learning environments.

## Context and design of telecollaborative pedagogical model for teacher education

With these principles in mind, a telecollaborative exchange between two university courses was designed for teacher education that combines flipped materials, in-class instruction and telecollaboration (also known as Virtual Exchange) for foreign language teacher education. The content of the course is on methods and

approaches for project-based language teaching, enhanced by communication technology. The three main teaching approaches to the content were through the integrated use of flipped materials, in-class instruction and telecollaboration (what we have called the ‘FIT’ model; cf. Sadler & Dooly, 2016, Dooly & Sadler, 2019). The collaboration had actually begun in 2004, however the last two iterations of this pedagogical model were inscribed within an innovative teacher development project funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya, which allowed for more in-depth exploration of how the student-teachers’ participation in telecollaborative practices with students at an American university and with their own colleagues could enrich their experience in their internships, help them develop digital skills that they can then transfer (as future teachers) to students in primary education and nurture joint work between university content teachers (e.g. methodological and pedagogical approaches to language teaching), university internship tutors (teacher educators responsible for the design of teaching units), in conjunction with school internship tutors, all of which can contribute to the development of a replicable teacher education model.

As previously mentioned, the participants (one group from Illinois and the other from Barcelona) were in teacher education, studying to become language teachers (the languages varied, and some were studying to become L1 or L2 teachers, others foreign languages). The students at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (herein UAB) were in their final year of an undergraduate degree of teaching while the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (herein UoI) students were at a Master level.

In the last two years, under the auspice of the project, the pedagogical focus of the telecollaborative exchange has shifted from discussion of the use of technology (in the form of technology showcases and the use of only one social communication platform for telecollaboration) to a fully integrated, reflective practice of collaborative learning, facilitated through many different modalities of communication technology as the two groups work together online throughout the course. At the same time, the full integration of the three established means of teaching (flipped instruction, in-class, face-to-face dialogic teaching and telecollaboration) were brought into play so that the students of both classes now share core content in their programmes (despite being registered in different universities on separate continents) and over 75% of collaborative work takes place between distanced peers online. The students are expected to use technology for individual work at home which prepares them for collaborative work online which, in turn, feeds directly into the in-class activities and discussions held at each campus on different sides of the world.

Flipped materials may be mini-videos, prepared in conjunction between the UAB-UoI teachers (and at times with other collaborators), reading assignments (often done in collaboration with other members of their online groups —each group member assigned different parts), interactive documents (e.g. *Thinglink*), interactive presentations or online collaborative online exams (created by the students themselves in previous online meetings for different groups), to name a few examples.

The following example aims to provide a glimpse into the way in which the online and in-class activities are intricately sequenced to most effectively scaffold the student-teachers’ self-directed learning process. Figure 1 shows the results of an online activity done early in the course (carried out on an online bulletin board). The sequencing of out-of-class (flipped materials and activities) during the week leading up to these posts were the following: a) reading an individually assigned text and b) finding supplementary materials; and c) finally posing a question that they, as future teachers, felt was still unanswered (names of students have been marked out for anonymity, see figure 1).

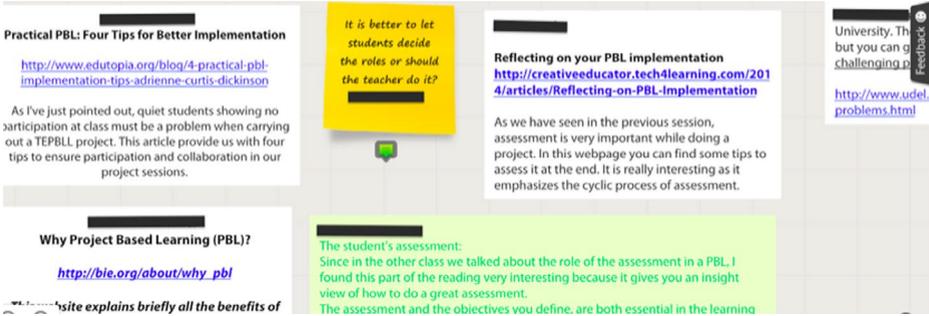


Figure 1. Students’ posting of reflection, suggested materials and questions

This activity was followed by the in-class activity (done locally at UAB and UoI) wherein the students were asked to engage in dialogical learning. First, the students were given specific questions from the platform to try to answer (they were guided to use the supplementary materials, apart from providing answers from the individual texts) and then in small groups were asked to combine and discuss their summarized ‘take-away’ of what they had learnt from all of the previous activities. These summaries then served as the basis for the next (out-of-class) telecollaborative discussions.

As the students carried out the activities, the design of the course aimed for sufficient iteration of the content in different contexts (individually online, collaboratively online and in-class with teacher and peers) to afford more opportunities

for what Lynch, Mannix McNamara and Seery (2012) have called ‘deep learning’, that is a multi-layered understanding of complex issues that arises from considering the content of learning from multiple perspectives. The design also required them to be prepared with the materials by giving them the responsibility of preparing and discussing with their peers texts that the others had not read and encouraged them to reflect on their own learning process by explicitly stating what they had learnt as well as verbalizing questions they still had.

This three-fold approach is also conceived as a means to introduce the student-teachers into a community of practice (Lave, 1991; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996) of experienced teachers by bringing in educational experts from outside the classroom into the learning process. Experienced practitioners (in as many cases as possible these were authors of the texts that the students were assigned) were invited to correspond, collaborate and even visit (digitally and in-person) both groups of students to join in the dialogic reflection taking part during the course.

The experience has brought about changes in the pedagogical focus of the co-organized course so that telecollaboration is not an ‘add-on’ for language practice; telecollaboration is core to the programme (both empirically and theoretically —student-teachers use telecollaboration to learn about technology and its advantages for communicative language teaching). The premise of the project which has helped frame the more recent iterations of this course is that the task of helping student-teachers develop ‘quality’ digital skills that allow them to become multimodal communicators is still a daunting one. Despite their supposed ‘native-like’ digital skills, newer generations of teachers do not necessarily have the competences needed in order to design digital learning environments which fully integrate the use of technology in their own classroom practices (Dooly & Sadler, 2013; Hubbard, 2008; Koehler & Mishra, 2009). In order to acquire the teacher ‘know-how’ for implementing project-based teaching, student-teachers need to be involved in real online learning projects that compel them to perform activities and make individual contributions that eventually lead to final (collaborative created and shared) output (Masats & Dooly, 2011).

This pedagogical approach has also resulted in increased student responsibility, for instance, students are expected to:

- set up and organize meetings outside of class period (promoted and institutionalized in the Bologna Treaty);
- do self and peer evaluation (continuous) as percentage of final mark;
- explore a variety of tools that are not introduced in class;
- focus on critical thinking and dialogic interaction;

- reflect and discuss materials before class (flipped instruction);
- take on the continuous role of evaluator;
- collaborate with peers who are not teaching same area and levels.

This in turn, has led to a lower profile of the teacher as protagonist as the telecollaborative activities and student-led classes following the online exchanges take on more weight.

### Examples of outcome

Finally, the outcomes of this pedagogical focus have been extended beyond the classrooms of the two groups involved as the students in the course transferred their knowledge of telecollaborative language learning projects to the schools in which they were doing their internships. For instance, in figure 2, one of the student-teachers reflected on her experience of taking part in a telecollaborative project designed to learn more about what being a refugee means and to come up with means of earning money to donate to Syrian refugee families.



Figure 2. Student-teacher's posted reflection about participation in intern school telecollaborative project

In other instances, the student-teachers decided to take their enthusiasm and 'know-how' regarding designing and implementing telecollaborative language

learning projects to the schools where they were working. In figure 3, one of the students reflects on her decision, along with a classmate from the course (which they had completed the semester before this internship) to design just such a project for their internship (hers was not the only pair who decided to do this).

In order to plan this Teaching Unit, I think that for the first time in my life, I decided to co-work, when I could have done it alone. And I have to admit that I am absolutely proud of the decision taken. According to Brufee (1995, p.1 cited Dooly 2007, p.1), "Two heads are better than one if, and only if, the two heads agree on what they're doing and on how they're going to go about doing it".

It all started when coursing the TEBPLL subject. In my group I met Gerard, who was also motivated about telecollaborative techniques. Since then, we had been always "joking" about working telecollaboratively together. When it came the time to plan our implementation for practicum V, we sat down and took it seriously. Actually, we had 2 perfect contexts that could match fantastically in order to telecollaborate. His school had an immersion plan in Catalan, while my school had it in English. His students could help my students to learn Catalan and mine help them to learn some English. So both would have the roles of learners and helpers/guiders and could participate in a bidirectional process. Despite the amount of work (we knew that this was going to take 'ages' to be planned, specially because we were amateurs) we were so motivated to try it out: we had all the information fresh, we had margin of error, we had experts' support, and we were brave enough to risk it.

Figure 3. Student-teacher's posted reflection about motivation to try to design and implement telecollaboration during her internship

In order to plan this Teaching Unit, I think that for the first time in my life, I decided to co-work, when I could have done it alone. And I have to admit that I am absolutely proud of the decision taken. According to Brufee (1995, p.1 cited Dooly 2007, p.1) "Two heads are better than one if, and only if, the two heads agree on what they're doing and how they're going to go about doing it".

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Figure 4. Transcript of reflection post in figure 3

And as shown in the following post, not only did the students get permission for the project, the experiential learning and reflection which are so key to eventual development of teacher education were brought to the fore.

just here, communication and cooperation were key.

The project was [motivating](#) for the students. In my class, sometimes I felt it was hard to motivate the pupils. These children are used to deal with technologies, innovative programs, outdoor visits... However, the idea of exchanging virtually our school reality with another group was [meaningful](#) enough. Since I played the first introductory video they got engaged. I think we scored a great point when involving ourselves in the [presentation video](#) and creating that "fake reality". They were always willing to create their productions and receive some news from the other school. Constantly, they were asking for a new video to see or to make. Actually, they were so amazed by the results that they wanted to discover how to edit the videos, it was a pity that we did not have more time to let them at least experiment a bit with the editor, or do a technological showcase.

Figure 5. Post from reflection after implementation

The project was motivating for the student. In my class, sometimes I felt it was hard to motivate the pupils. These children are used to deal with technologies, innovative programs, outdoor visits ... However, the idea of exchanging virtually our school reality with another group was meaningful enough. Since I played the first introductory video they got engaged. (...) They were always willing to create their productions and receive some news from the other school. Constantly, they were asking for a new video to see or to make. Actually, they were so amazed by the results that they wanted to discover how to edit the videos. (...).

Figure 6. Transcript of reflection post in figure 5

## Concluding remarks

This short outline of the innovative framework implemented within the project indicates that the objective of bringing greater cohesion and coordination between core teacher education subject courses and the internship supervision (both at university and in the schools) has been achieved. Additionally, the collaborative approach to teaching has been shared between university teachers, student-teachers (including working with their colleagues telecollaboratively during their internship) and between university and school tutors (see Serramià & Barriuso this volume). This has led to augmented reflection of the student-teachers regarding the potential of this innovative approach as well as placing greater emphasis on the agentive role of student-teachers in their own development as they become effective and pioneering educators.

## Acknowledgements

The work presented was developed within the framework of a project, entitled *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*, funded by AGAUR, Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca. Reference number [2015 ARMIF 00010](#).

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## Coordinating between classes: Tasks and tools

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### **Introduction: Coordinating between classes**

This text stems from the notes and observations regarding the technology tools that have been most popular throughout a telecollaborative teacher education course on Technology-Infused Language Teaching (TILT) and during university tutorials between supervisors of the student-teachers during their second semester. The aforementioned course, which is co-taught telecollaboratively between the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (herein UoI) and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) shares identical core curriculums and included fourteen weeks of telecollaboration between groups of students each semester (see Dooly & Sadler, this volume, Sadler & Dooly, 2016, Dooly & Sadler 2019). While the end goal of the telecollaboration in each semester is for each group to design their own telecollaborative project that they might implement in the future with their own class, there is also a substantial emphasis on the exploration, reflection and presentation of a significant number of technological tools each year.

During the course, students are introduced to both long-popular as well as recently introduced tools (always free versions) that are available for educational purposes. Indeed, technology is prevalent throughout the course—all of the flipped instruction and telecollaborative activities are carefully planned so that there is maximum ‘hands-on’ exposure to different platforms and tools and also the student-teachers are required to choose a tool to present (and teach how to use as well as offer pedagogical ideas) in what is called a ‘technology showcase’.

As part of an innovative teacher development project, funded by the Generalitat de Catalunya, that has as one of its aims to bring greater cohesion and coordination between core teacher education subject courses and the internship supervision (both at university and in the schools), the teachers passed along information to the other university teachers and school internship supervisors regarding tools that had been introduced in the course (in first semester) and which could be picked up and carried into the next semester for their internship teaching. This resulted in a weekly presentation in each session of the university internship supervision, called “My great resource”. During the session one student was in charge of bringing and presenting a teaching resource (technological

or otherwise), that they deemed useful for their teaching practice, discussing possible applications and justifying its ‘greatness’ and why they had chosen it.

The instructions of the subject’s guide read as follows:

*Every week at least one participant will share with the rest of the group his/her Great Resource, which should be an ORIGINAL teaching resource (of ANY kind) that has worked for you, or that you have seen applied, and that could be useful for your peers. Presentations should last around 10 minutes.*

*The objective is to create a collective bank of useful and original teaching resources and ideas to be used in the design of your teaching sequence’s CLIL lessons.*

#### *Practicum IV subject’s guide 2018-2019*

Several of the tools described in this text (below) emerged in the students’ selection, providing key input regarding which of the resources introduced in the first semester’s course were carried into the next semester for their internship teaching. Other ‘great resources’ were more focused on classroom management, such as ‘Scholastic Daily Starters’, a webpage that is updated daily and has short tips and activities to either kick-off the school day or fill-in gaps between activities or subjects. Classic classroom resources such as story-telling or using songs as well as hands-on activities were also included. At the end of the internship, a collective repository of resources was compiled into what student-teachers named ‘My great resource: The complete collection’.

A second example of our interest in opening spaces for continuity between the TILT course and the internship tutorials emerged as two of the internship student-teachers, each one in a different tutorial group and assigned to a different primary school, decided to join efforts and design a telecollaborative project between their respective classrooms, applying what they had learnt in the previous course (for a similar example, see Dooly & Sadler, this volume).

Given that each student had a different university tutor, the design of their telecollaborative project also included 4-person telecollaborative supervision sessions through Skype (the student-teachers who were preparing the telecollaborative project along with the two university supervisors). These sessions were key for both student-teachers and their supervisors to discuss doubts and exchange advice on how to better design and implement their sequences.

Throughout the years, the teachers of the course have taken notes on the tools —the ones that are perennial favourite tools, the ones that have lots of ‘pizzazz’ and generate excitement in both teachers and learners alike, the ones that are good for organizing, for facilitating collaborative learning and the ones that potentially could make a real difference in the way students learn or create output. Almost all of the technology can be used in multiple ways and while most of them have been created with educational purposes in mind, in many cases, teachers and students-teachers have discovered tools, platforms and technologies that were never intended for educational support but provide idea support for different learning projects. For instance, Skype has become so popular for telecollaborative projects that the company has introduced a specific mode for telecollaboration called ‘Mystery Skype’.

### **Opening spaces for continuity and application of technological tools into student-teachers practice**

A list, description and some of the suggested activities (culled from the show-cases and teaching unit designs) of the most popular tools and platforms is presented below.

#### ***Facilitating dialogue and multimodality***

##### *Top choice: Padlet*

Ever since its introduction several years ago, this collaborative platform has been a favourite for both the teachers and the student-teachers. It is an attractive, extremely easy to use platform that allows the posting of direct text, several different document formats, video and audio files and images (settings allow for monitoring of posts). An offshoot of less successful ‘electronic bulletin boards’, this platform is very versatile and the school edition (Padlet backpack) allows for a controlled online environment. The posts can be enabled so others can react to them (e.g. stars).

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* This platform seems to pop up everywhere! We have used it for our output stemming from flipped instruction, in-class instruction and online meetings. Student-teachers use it to create KWL charts, for short and mid-term outcomes in task sequences (so they can be shared with others) and a multitude of other fun activities. This tool was also used for peer assessment for the internship tutorials.

##### *A newcomer: Flipgrid*

Flipgrid is an app where the administrator (usually a teacher but not necessarily),

poses a question or cue, and others can respond to it with short videos. The app also allows others to leave responses to the videos.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* In the TILT class, flipgrid was used predominantly for self-reflection on the student-teachers' own learning. It has also been spotted in student-teachers' activity design for the internship such as self-presentations and for homework answers regarding different short narratives.

*A good discovery: Mentimeter*

This app enables teachers to send out questions to students and allow them to instantly vote or even send feedback through tablets or their own mobile phones.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* This tool was used for formative feedback during the internship tutorials. Several of the students also integrated its use into their own teaching during the implementation stage of their internship.

### ***Thinking together: Tools that 'show' thoughts***

*What's our key words: Wordle*

This online tool generates 'word clouds' from texts that are typed into the platform (or collected from other data). The words obtain more prominence when they appear several times. You can design different layouts and choose different fonts and colours.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* Several of the online telecollaborative groups used *Wordle* to add images to summaries of their discussions and to create short introduction videos of their groups to other groups. This is a perennial favourite for creating presentations as well as collecting main ideas or keywords from discussions.

*Mind map: Mindmeister*

Mindmeister is a mind-mapping tool that helps students develop and organize ideas. This free app encourages collaborative brainstorming, where students can work together to plan and analyse concepts and ideas.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:*

Some student-teachers used them while deciding ideas for their project or even in class with their internship students while they were recapping or summarizing new concepts.

## ***Collaborative work***

*Old-time favourite: GoogleDocs*

This is a well-known online editing tool that allows for real-time, co-editing of any text.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* GoogleDocs has been used for collaborative writing (quite obviously) –in particular during class as prompts for additional texts that emerge during class presentations or as a means of co-authored minutes of brainstorming and reflective discussion sessions. Student-teachers have used the tool as a central part of telecollaborative projects for journalism and book-making, among other topics.

## ***Individual work and materials design***

*Getting them to read: InsertLearning*

This platform (formerly called *DocentEDU*) works as an extension in the Chrome browser. Once installed, any web page can be turned into a lesson where the teacher can highlight text, add notes, and even embed different types of questions (multiple-choice or open-ended).

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* This platform was useful for working with core subject content (e.g. texts on pedagogy), especially as a tool for helping the student-teachers prepare for their online meetings. Student-teachers of primary education found the platform to be a bit more difficult to integrate into their activities because the ‘authentic’ materials that are generally available on the internet tend to be of higher cognitive demand than they were needing. However, the UoI student-teachers preparing for secondary education found the tool to be very useful for both checking reading comprehension as well as generating preliminary thinking before classroom discussions.

*Creating interactive presentations: ThingLink*

The free version of this tool allows the user to create and add links (called tags) to images and then to share or display these images in any online platform. The interactive documents can also be collected and stored in the user’s channel.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* Thinglink has been used to present online materials (flipped instruction in the TILT class). It was also used to create summaries of an assigned reading with pop-up questions for the authors of the text to answer during an online interview during the class.

### *Catchy and dynamic presentations: Genial.ly and Emaze*

Both of these tools can be used for presentations (Emaze allows 3D-like image movement in some cases). Genial.ly can be used for many different options, including interactive documents (similar to ThingLink)

*Ways they have been used in the classes:* Similar to ThingLink, Genial.ly was used for flipped materials in the TILT class. It also served as a repository for collecting reflections on internship experiences, divided into ‘chapters’ that were made in a Genial.ly e-book.

### *Designing interactive teaching materials: Wizer.me*

This online platform can help teachers differentiate their instructions and materials for different student levels. The tool allows teachers to create online, interactive worksheets that can be printed or used online. If used online, different worksheets can be assigned to specific student profiles.

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* The worksheet templates were spotted in several internship material plans. In some cases, the worksheets were designed to support reviewing of the material, in others they served as self-assessment aids and of course, there were a few end-of-unit final evaluations.

### *Making information beautiful: Piktochart*

This is an easy-to-use tool that helps provides visual impact for information summary (an increasingly required digital competence).

*Ways it has been used in the classes:* This tool was chosen by many of the student-teachers in the TILT class to present the summary of their group projects (done in a poster presentation session with the tutorial supervisors as visiting experts, along with other experienced teachers). It was also a key feature for several teaching units as a means of summarizing key content learnt by the students during their internship teaching.

## **Concluding remarks**

As this brief summary shows, the project that provided the framework for this cross-disciplinary approach to educating future student-teachers about technology seems to have yielded the intended outcomes and made progress toward alleviating the hurdles of bridging different courses that are not always articulated so specifically as the TILT and the tutorial supervisions were during these two years. There is evidence that the student-teachers have successfully transferred learning in one context (the TILT class) to another (the internship seminars and in-school teaching). The student-teachers were able to identify potential

moments of applications of what they had seen and experienced into their own materials in order to successfully incorporate technology into areas such as materials development, assessments, visualization of thinking, peer and instructor support and collaborative learning.

### **Acknowledgements**

The work presented was developed within the framework of a project, entitled *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*, funded by AGAUR, Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca. Reference number [2015 ARMIF 00010](#).

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# Hands on! Introducing EdTech in the seminars for tutoring pre-service teachers

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## Introduction

The use of computer-based technology in higher education in general, and in teacher training faculties in particular, has widely spread over the last two decades. Yet, the term “technology use” has different interpretations. University teachers may claim to employ technology because they have an online classroom in which they upload course contents and send messages to a group of students they teach face-to-face. Other lecturers may report to be using technologies in their classrooms because they either make use of or get their students to utilise various types of software or internet resources to present or reflect upon the course contents; and a small number of them may recount to be using social media and Web 2.0 tools in their lessons. Given the fact that a vast number of pre-service (and in-service) teachers are digital natives today (Grant and Mims, 2009), teacher education should be tailored around proposals that consider the needs of individuals who are plugged-in in their personal lives and who will be responsible for educating younger generations of social media users.

Social media is “a group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010:61). Greenhow (2011) suggests that, amongst others, Internet based applications are of different nature and they include both social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc.), media sharing sites (e.g. Instagram, YouTube, etc.) and publishing tools (e.g. blogs, wikis, etc.). Strangely enough, the fact that pre-service teachers use social media in their personal lives does not guarantee that they are going to use it in their classrooms. Russell et al (2003) reported that experienced teachers employ technology more often in their classrooms than novice teachers do. Their study concluded that new teachers feel comfortable with technology and rely on it to prepare their lessons or as communication tools but do not seem to be too eager to engage their students in learning activities that demand the use of social media.

Incorporating social media, getting pre-service teachers to create things with technology, is a must in teacher training programmes as pre-service teachers must acquire first-hand experience as technology users, but also expertise in

creating opportunities for the use of technology in their future classrooms. It is thus necessary to ensure that during their training period, pre-service teachers develop positive views and perceptions on the use of Internet based applications as powerful tools to enhance meaningful learning rather than as a set of mechanistic devices used to accomplish tasks and create products. The presence of technology in teacher training programmes must transform instruction and be associated with learner-centred teaching approaches which promote collaborative learning (Masats, Dooly & Costa, 2009) and must provide pre-service teachers with opportunities not only for experiencing how different resources are used with them by their university teachers but also for creating similar learning activities for young learners during their school internships (Masats & Dooly, 2011).

In this paper we are going to present the first phase of a two-year programme which aims at enhancing the use of social media amongst fourth year undergraduates enrolled in a pre-service training programme for primary teachers of English offered by a Catalan university. The programme's objective is to help future teachers develop (a) digital abilities to become multimodal competent communicators (Avalos, 2011; Kumaravadivelu, 2012) and (b) professional abilities to integrate technology in their future classrooms in a significant fashion (Dooly & Sadler, 2013). As part of the requirements of their school internships, in year four pre-service teachers of English have, for four months, weekly 90-minute meetings with their university tutors, who are both in-service primary teachers working part time at the university and full time at their schools. During the same period, pre-service teachers are attending a primary school one day a week. One of the tasks university tutors carry out in these seminar meetings is to guide pre-service teachers on how to plan a project they would later implement in the primary schools where they will be doing their internships. This year, however, a change was made. Prior, and parallel to the task of planning their teaching projects and reflecting on what they do and observe in their primary classrooms, during these meetings, pre-service teachers were engaged in short workshops in which they were presented with practical examples of how their university tutors were using different software with their primary students. Finally, they were also expected to use technology to first present their teaching projects to their practicum team during the seminars and later to implement the projects in the primary schools. Here we will present the technologies employed in the seminars and will briefly discuss what they were used for.

### **Which technologies?**

Guiding pre-service language teachers on how to introduce technologies in their future classrooms means taking decisions on how to minimise the effect of two

digital divides amongst young learners: access and quality. Although not all young learners have computers at home today we cannot divide them into the two groups Wresch (1996) had referred to as “information haves” versus “information have-nots” back in the late 1990s. Technology (and social media) today is not only accessible through computers but also through smartphones, iPads or other devices which most children in Catalonia —where the study takes place— have access to regardless of the socioeconomic situation of their families. If we want young learners to incorporate what they do at school into their daily lives, it is important to make sure that some of the software they would learn to use is accessible through their smartphones. With regards to quality, Fernández Enguita (2012) suggests that there is a big difference between consuming technology and creating with technology. If we adhere to the principles of socio-constructivism and postulate that language learning is a process of knowledge construction through the participation in social activities/actions, we need to present pre-service teachers with tasks that force them to use technology with a creative purpose.

### ***Game-based tools accessible through smartphones***

There were two workshops devoted to experimenting with the use of free game-based learning platforms such as *Kahoot* and *Quizizz*, which can be used on any device with a web browser. Being introduced to the practical usability of *Kahoot* first, which is slightly more user-friendly than *Quizizz*, gave pre-service teachers the possibility of becoming familiar with both programmes and discussing their pros and cons.

*Kahoot* (<https://getkahoot.com/>) allows teachers to create quizzes, discussions, polls or even surveys. It is suitable for all ages and can be used in any subject, in any language. The results learners obtain can be downloaded and viewed in an Excel file, which saves teachers lots of time when monitoring their students' progress.

*Quizizz* (<https://quizizz.com/>) also allows teachers to build their own quizzes in a few minutes or use the ones available. *Kahoot* is designed to just show multiple choice questions on a large screen and get students to respond to them by clicking on the buttons on their own devices that correspond to the answers they want to choose. *Quizizz* takes a different approach, which we consider is one of its highlights: No overhead projector is necessary because players see both the questions and the answer options on their own screens. This is a great improvement since fast finishers can use the tool whenever they need to, without having to wait for their classmates to start. However, this could also be a drawback, since students

in *Quizizz* can zip through questions at their own pace, so having group discussions after all answers have been given is not a simple task, compared with what you can do with *Kahoot* (teachers can pause the programme to set discussions).

### ***Tools for developing creativity***

Project-based learning is a common methodology in Catalan schools. The outcome of a project is usually related to the creation of multimodal documents (video reports, interactive stories, etc.). Creativity is important when learners (pre-service teachers and primary students alike) need to present and make public the results of the projects they take part in. Having to create a video or a poster to synthesise what they have learnt forces learners to develop their cognitive and communicative skills, as they need to reflect upon how to use a variety of languages (text, iconic, visual, etc.) to transform the information they possess and make it accessible to others. There were three apps used in the workshops planned to deal with it: *EdPuzzle*, *Canva* and *Storybird*.

*EdPuzzle* ([www.edpuzzle.com](http://www.edpuzzle.com)) is an online platform to upload or link videos, which can later be edited and insert comments or questions in them. It is particularly useful in “flipped classrooms”, as teachers can easily send their students videos to watch and comment (by answering questions, for example). Unlike *Youtube*, *EdPuzzle* is a platform that gives teachers the possibility to know which students watched the video, how many times they did so and whether they answered the questions correctly or not. In this case, in the workshop pre-service teachers were also given examples of how the platform was being used in primary schools. This time, though, they were not asked to attempt to create a flipped classroom, basically because participants were also enrolled on a methodology course which used flipped learning as one of the instruction modes (see Dooly & Sadler, this volume).

*Canva* ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)), which can only be used online, is suitable for designing posters, images, slides, etc. During the seminars, pre-service teachers were given examples of products produced by a group of sixth grade students and then they were asked to use it to present their teaching projects and to justify their rationale (see figure 1).



*Storybird* (<https://storybird.com>) is a collaborative storytelling tool that allows writers of all ages to select artwork from illustrators and animators as inspirational tools to create visual stories in seconds. First, users choose a collection of artwork and then drag and drop pictures on a storyline before making up a text to match their story. It is attractive for language students and teachers alike. Teachers can easily create student accounts and set them a task. The site allows learners to focus more on writing their stories rather than on drawing pictures to illustrate it. Collaborating with others to create a story is also extremely easy and engaging.

The workshop was used to deconstruct the myth that writing is a very demotivating task for primary students. Writing is an excellent tool to cultivate creativity in language use if students' writing projects have a real purpose and their creations look professional. Some of the pre-service teachers opted to use the tool in the projects they were designing. Figure 2 shows the production of one group of primary students taking part in one of the projects designed by a pre-service teacher.

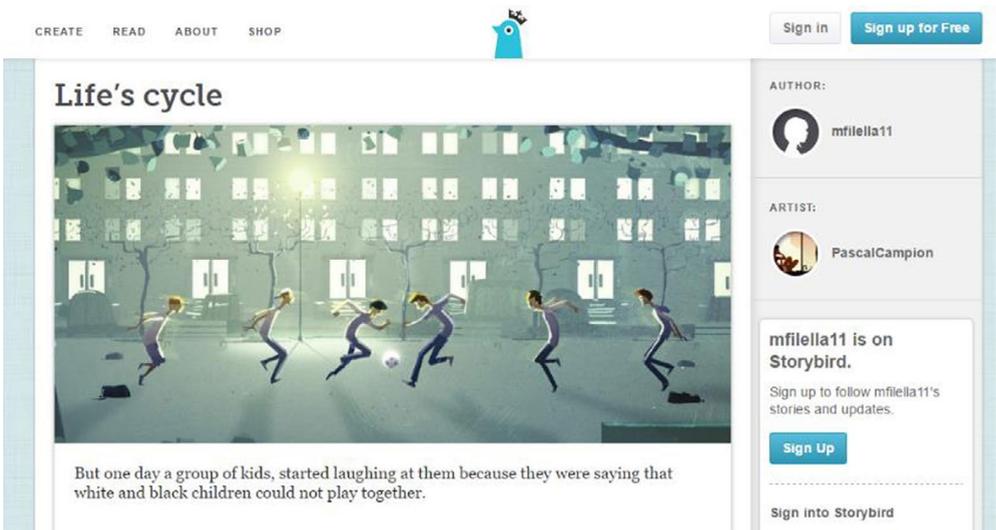


Figure 2. Fragment of a story created with *Storybird* by a group of primary pupils in a project designed by one of the pre-service teachers in our study

### ***Tools for classroom management***

Technology can also help teachers manage their groups. One of the fears pre-service teachers share concerns their lack of ideas and resources to keep a relaxed and calm atmosphere in their classrooms. It was thus necessary to include a tool

like *Classdojo* in the workshops, again by showing how it is used in real primary classrooms, as shown in figure 3 below.



Figure 3. Example of how a class group looks like in ClassDojo.

*Classdojo* (<https://www.classdojo.com>) is an online behaviour management system designed to foster positive student behaviours and classroom culture. Each kid is given an avatar in the shape of a monster. Guided by their teachers, primary students negotiate classroom rules and how avatars/students are going to get their rewards (points) and how they can avoid being punished (lose points). The time invested to let children become familiar with the system is well spent: as soon as they know what to do, they all try to follow the common and agreed rules. Finally, *Classdojo* can also be used to keep parents updated on their children's progress and classroom happenings.

## Discussion

The two groups of pre-service teachers which participated in the first phase of our project valued very positively the fact that the practicum seminars had a hands-on component that went beyond assisting them in the task of planning the teaching projects they would have to implement at the end of the term. It is too early to assess the kind of impact this methodology would have on the professional life of these future teachers but they all felt confident in the use of the technology presented (they used them in the seminars and during their internships), developed positive attitudes towards the employment of technology in the classroom (they observed real examples of classroom use) and were eager to explore new tools during their internship, as we can see in the practicum report of one of them (see figure 4 below).

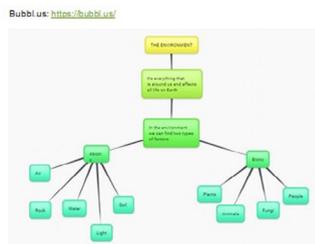
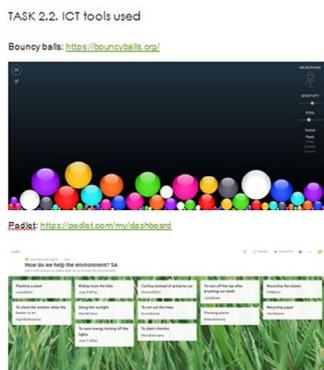


Figure 4. Fragment of the practicum report of one of the pre-service teachers in our study in which she reports having employed other ICT tools with her students.

## Concluding remarks

If, as research shows (see McKinney, 1998; Goldsby & Fazal, 2000), pre-service teachers that learn to use technology during their training period are far more likely to incorporate technology in their future classes than those who have not had hands-on experience with its use, we feel that the future is promising. The pre-service teachers in our project could not only use the software themselves, as learners, but also, as prospective teachers, they could observe how in-service teachers were using them to attain real objectives in primary classrooms and experiment on how to design and implement similar proposals during their internships.

## Acknowledgments

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# Digital teaching competences of pre-service teachers

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## Introduction

In the information and communication era, due to the multiple and rapid technological advances, society has undergone many changes. In a relatively short period of time we have shifted from being an analogue society into a digital one. At present, there is a lot of information available to everyone, about any topic that might interest us. This information can be accessed and transferred through multichannel means (through email, WhatsApp, text message, mobile phone) in multimodal modes (using written or oral texts, videos ...), synchronous or asynchronously (real time or not) to an individual, a small group or multiple people. In other words, access to information and communication possibilities have been multiplied exponentially. Education in the digital era has also evolved. The way information is accessed and managed today, and the way students acquire their knowledge and develop their skills has changed dramatically.

In the last 20 years the roles of students and teachers have changed quickly and radically. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers are facilitators and guides, and students are responsible of their learning process. However, despite the fact that full access to all kinds of information is a common feature in our society, it is worth taking into account the digital divide between students who are immersed in technology-rich environments and those who use it for passive consumption. The problems related to the digital divide are not just linked to access to technology. How technology is used in schools and at home may lead to severe social and educational inequalities (Warschauer, 2007).

Most of the pre-service teachers today are millennials, yet that does not guarantee that they have developed digital teaching competences. Lei (2009) analysed the beliefs, attitudes and experiences related to the use of new technologies in more than 2,000 universities by students of education and concluded that they used technology for social communication and as a learning tool. However, although they fully recognized the importance of integrating the use of ICT in the primary and secondary classrooms, they did not have, as future teachers, the knowledge, skills and experiences required to do so. As a result, new technologies are either used in the classroom compulsively, without any pedagogical criteria to support their use or are used just to substitute other “traditional” tools.

## **Integrating technology and pedagogy**

To reflect upon the type of digital competences pre-service teachers need to develop to be able to integrate technology in their classrooms, first one must define the concept of competence. “A competency is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilizing psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context”. (OECD, 2005, p. 4). The notion of digital competence is relatively new. There are several terms which have been used to describe the skills and competence of using digital technologies: ICT skills, technology skills, information technology skills, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, information literacy, digital literacy, and digital skills (Ilomäki & Lakkala, 2011). The European Parliament and The Council of the EU (2006) acknowledges digital competence as one of the eight key competences any young person must have developed at the end of compulsory education in order to be able to interact in adult life in a satisfactory way and be able to keep on learning throughout all his or her life.

Teacher training cannot be reduced to the acquisition of technological competences, “per se”, it must be based on its pedagogical application as well (Tejada, 2009). It is important to emphasize that teachers must have the necessary instrumental knowledge to guide the learning process of their students. However, that is not enough, they must also possess the necessary methodological knowledge and criteria to design their class activities using new technologies. The merging of these two aspects, gives way to the so-called digital teaching competences or, as a wider concept, what some authors and researchers call digital literacy.

“Digital literacy refers to the skills, attitudes and knowledge required by educators to support learning in a digitally-rich world. To be digitally literate, educators must be able to utilise technology to enhance and transform classroom practices, and to enrich their own professional development and identity. The digitally literate educator will be able to think critically about why, how and when technology supplements learning and teaching” Hall, Atkins & Fraser (2014:5).

Digital teaching competence is a new phenomenon derived by the need of integrating technologies into class activities, which, as Mishra & Koehler (2008) recognize, is not an easy task. Yet, if, as a consequence of developing their digital teaching competences, teachers create learning environments that foster critical thinking, creativity, collaborative work and problem-solving skills, it is worth a try.

## The digital teaching competence of pre-service teachers

To explore how teachers develop their digital teaching competences it is important to observe their perception of it during their training. With such an objective in mind, we conducted a small-scale study. A group of fourth year undergraduate students enrolled in a pre-service training programme at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, their teacher educators and school mentors took part in it. Data was gathered through interviews, online questionnaires and discussion sessions.

Our study confirms that although most teacher candidates have well developed digital skills and master the communication tools they use in their daily life, they have many difficulties when trying to integrate technology in the lessons they carry out at their host schools during their internships (see table 1).

Teacher educators	School mentors	Pre-service teachers
<p><i>“What I see is that <b>they know how to use these tools on a personal level, but to communicate, not as a form of learning, not as a form... not as a methodology in the classroom either</b>”.</i></p> <p><i>“So, I see that many of my students know things about social media, Facebook, Instagram and so on in their personal lives, but they are still very traditional. Although they are millennials and have been raised with computers, at school it is hard for them because there are many teachers who come to school and do not use the computer... “</i></p>	<p><i>“But sometimes, they don’t know much about apps, they know the apps they use in their day to day, but the apps we use for education, they don’t know”.</i></p> <p><i>“I think they’re used to using it and I think they have it well internalized, they know how to use the tools, but they don’t know how to apply these tools inside the classroom, with the kids”.</i></p>	<p><i>“But they take it for granted, or I don’t know... “You’re going to use YouTube and Powtoon and I don’t know that”</i></p> <p><i>“So, I don’t think there’s any training on that”.</i></p> <p><i>“But I think that first, implement... even if it was a subject devoted to technology and say resources that teachers can use with children. So, we can talk about classroom management, we can talk about websites that are designed for children so that they can use them in class... and I think that, basically”.</i></p>

Table 1. Quotes from interviews with university tutors, in service teachers and teacher candidates.

In contrast to the information presented in table 1, a closer look at the data allowed as to observe some evidence on the emerging development of pre-service teachers’ digital teaching skills during their school internships (see table 2).

School mentors	Pre-service teachers
<p><i>“Also, because they have realized that using new technologies with students is not that difficult”.</i></p>	<p><i>“I worked on a telecollaboration project with another student from San Cugat, and my students were from third grade... they had to write as a story and then the other school voted the best stories from here and we voted theirs.”</i></p> <p><i>“For example, Plicker. It is a tool that, for example, first, I passed a test to do, to see the previous knowledge, what their previous knowledge was and then I compared it with the final results. And, really, I saw the difference of what they had improved”</i></p>

Table 2. Presence of digital teaching competencies in pedagogy students

Although teacher educators, school mentors and pre-service teachers in our study are fully aware of the beginning of a transformation process in their pedagogical practices or beliefs, our data suggest there is a slow change taking place at both university and school levels. In this sense, programmes which foster links between university and schools are urgently needed. Similarly, methodological proposals such as the ones described in the three preceding chapters, in which the use of new technologies by pre-service teachers is supported with actions targeted at helping them construct what Mishra & Koehler (2008) refer to as Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) are necessary to ensure teachers have sound methodological criteria on how to integrate technology in their classrooms. The kind of knowledge teachers should possess to develop their professional digital teaching competences “is above and beyond understanding technology, content, or pedagogy in isolation, but rather as an emergent form that understands how these forms of knowledge interact with each other” (Mishra & Koehler, 2008:10). To develop digital competences efficiently, pre-service teachers must have clear expectations on the use technology in primary classrooms, receive effective support during their training, know good practices and have had the opportunity of experimenting the ins and outs of designing and implementing technology-enhanced projects during their internships (Dooly & Masats, 2011).

### Concluding remarks

The field of education is constantly changing due to rapid technological development, constant innovations and growing access to information through multiple sources and modes of communication. The way young students deal with information and learn has evolved and, consequently, the way they are taught should change as well. Preparing teacher candidates for teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

is a real challenge. To participate successfully in this process of transformation, teacher training programmes should be organised around proposals that promote collaborative work, creativity and inquiry and offer pre-service teachers the opportunity of sharing ideas and experiences (see Dooly & Sadler; Dooly, Mont & Vallejo and Masats, Mont & Barba, this volume).

## Acknowledgments

This paper is part of my Ph.D. dissertation, conducted within the framework of a project ([2015 ARMIF 00010](#)) whose objective is to design and study proposals to help pre-service teachers develop digital teaching competences during their training. My sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Dolors Masats, for inviting me to take part in it.

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**SECTION TWO: Innovative approaches and pioneering resources for the foreign language classroom**



## **Innovative approaches and pioneering resources for the foreign language classroom: Introduction**

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Second language acquisition (SLA) and educational research in the 20<sup>th</sup> century focussed on the elaboration of theories to describe and understand language and language learning. (Socio)linguists, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and other academics interested in educational research also sought the best approaches and methods to learn a foreign language (see an overview of the main SLA theories, methods & approaches in, for example, Richard & Rogers, 1986; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Moore, 2016). At the end of the century, we entered the so-called postmethod era that empowered teachers to create coherent alternatives to the existing methods (Kumaravadivelu, 1994) by systematically conducting actions such as to

“observe their teaching, interpret their classroom events, evaluate their outcomes, identify problems, find solutions, and try them out to see once again what works and what doesn’t. In other words, they have to become strategic thinkers as well as strategic practitioners. As strategic thinkers, they need to reflect on the specific needs, wants, situations, and processes of learning and teaching. As strategic practitioners, they need to develop knowledge and skills necessary to self-observe, self-analyse, and self-evaluate their own teaching acts.” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:2).

No new language learning theory, approach or method has emerged during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet teachers have had to test and adapt existing theories to the peculiarities of their teaching contexts. Consequently, they have learnt to envision their own approach to foreign language teaching and to develop their personal method. While doing so, they also had to be attentive to the numerous technological advancements in our global and wired society. This means that they constantly need to be eager to (a) experiment with new digital tools and resources, (b) open their classrooms to other realities and learning environments, (c) test new teaching strategies/modes and (d) learn to cooperate and (tele)collaborate with other teachers (Sandler & Dooly, 2016).

The first five chapters in this section constitute examples of the type of innovations teachers today incorporate in their classrooms to maximize learning

opportunities. The last chapter is a reminder of how necessary it is to cultivate teachers' emotions and welfare. All six chapters have been written by in-service teachers with ample experience in teaching young children English and are meant to encourage other teachers to incorporate in their classrooms the learner-centred resources and methodologies they present. In the first chapter, ***Coding toys while learning English: Programming with very young learners***, Maria Mont and Nathaly González-Acevedo suggest practical activities teachers can put at play in their classrooms if they opt to use Bee-Bots, small robots very young children can use to understand and give commands in English. In the second chapter, ***Co-teaching***, Maribel Gomáriz reflects upon co-teaching or team teaching by narrating her personal experience as a teacher who works together with a colleague to plan, implement and assess classroom projects. The author does not only highlight the advantages of this methodological proposal but also examines the challenges co-teachers need to face. In the third chapter, ***Flipped classrooms***, Esther Serramià & Carol Barriuso describe this instructional strategy that consists in practising communicative skills or delivering grammar contents online, often outside the classrooms. They provide teachers with pieces of advice on how to plan and assess learning in flipped classrooms. Their proposals are illustrated with real examples of tasks and projects conducted in their lessons. In the fourth chapter, ***Classroom management***, Esther Serramià describes her personal journey of development as a teacher to inspire us on how to set up our classrooms to create a nourishing learning environment and on how to organise teaching and establish routines as meaningful opportunities for students to use the target language. In the fifth chapter, ***Bringing real-life English into your classroom***, Carol Barriuso aims at persuading teachers to take part in European projects as a tool to create real contexts for language use. She presents two initiatives promoted by the European Commission, namely *Erasmus+* and *eTwinning*, instructs teachers on how to get involved and offers them practical knowledge about what they can do and cannot do as project participants. Finally, in the last chapter, ***A recipe for becoming a supportive teacher***, Xavier Núñez uses a cooking metaphor to give teachers ideas on how to take care of their emotional wellbeing. Interesting enough, the tips he suggests can also be used by teachers to care for their students and create a supportive learning environment for them.

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# Coding toys while learning English: Programming with very young learners

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## Introduction

We live in a highly technology-mediated society; most of us need technology during our daily lives. Technology has changed the way we access and manage money, the way we communicate and access communication and clearly the way we access and enjoy entertainment. In response to the demands of modern society, education is putting a great emphasis in including technology in its curriculum. The use of technology is being promoted by policy makers and administrations to reduce the technology gap and ensure that the younger generations are prepared to succeed in our connected society. However the value of computers and technologies today does not reside in the technical use of gadgets, apps or software. The focus of education has expanded to the area of creating and co-creating resources supported by technology. Teaching children to code and programme digital devices is a must as in a not-so-far future, the mastery of these skills will be a requirement for most professions.

Coding has been an area of expansion for tech industries that create toys or gadgets for didactic or personal use. There is a great offer of gadgets designed to teach pre-coding and coding skills even to the young ones. Most of the gadgets designed for a didactic purpose are based on the use of mathematical concepts and skills and promote not only coding skills but many of the so-called 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (World Economic Forum, 2015), such as problem-solving, decision-making, critical-thinking and spatial awareness. In language learning contexts, and especially in foreign language classrooms, the use of digital tools has been regarded as a unique opportunity to promote meaningful learning, because the use of technology enhances students' motivation and connects learning with their interests. "Learning through active engagement is essential because it enables students to develop a conceptual understanding of the material being learnt" (Faisal, Kapila & Iskander, 2012:2). Designers, teachers, parents and even children have found ways to include the teaching and learning of language skills through technology. In this chapter we want to present examples of real classroom experiences in which a group of kindergarteners have also developed mathematical knowledge and coding and problem-solving skills while playing with Bee-bots and learning English.

## **Let's get started with some inspiring ideas**

Bee-bots are easy-to-operate floor robots in the shape of a bee. Despite the fact of being quite simple (they can remember a sequence of up to 40 commands and can move forward, backwards, left or right), they are a great start for coding language and developing computational thinking. Using Bee-bots in the classroom offer teachers the opportunity to integrate the contents of the English and ICT syllabi, while empowering students to master 21st century skills and become more autonomous and responsible of their own learning.

There is no minimum age requirement to use Bee-bots, since students just need to press 5 buttons in the shape of arrows in order to direct a robot and make it move. The teaching proposals we want to present here were carried out during the English lessons in the pre-primary levels (3, 4 and 5-year-old pupils) of a state school in Catalonia. They range from tasks which require less language and less complex cognitive demands to more challenging tasks. For each of them, we present the learning goals, detail the resources needed to implement it and provide a brief description of the lesson. They have all been designed with the objective of helping young learners of English to develop digital competences and learning to learn skills. The tasks require learners to understand and apply instructions to learn how to sequence movement.

### ***Naming***

**Learning goal:** To become familiar with new vocabulary

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots, vocabulary flashcards and a transparent plastic mat with a grid (low-cost version: teachers can draw and produce their own vocabulary flashcards and create their own mat in the format of a big poster, as in figure 1).

**Lesson Description:** This is one of the simplest task for learners to practice new words in English and to become familiar with the commands Bee-bot can execute.

Teachers say out loud one word and students take turns to press the control buttons and help the Bee-Bot reach the correct flashcard displayed on the mat. When students are familiar with the task, they can even choose the vocabulary they want to practice, self-regulate the process of turn taking, and assess the performance of their peers.

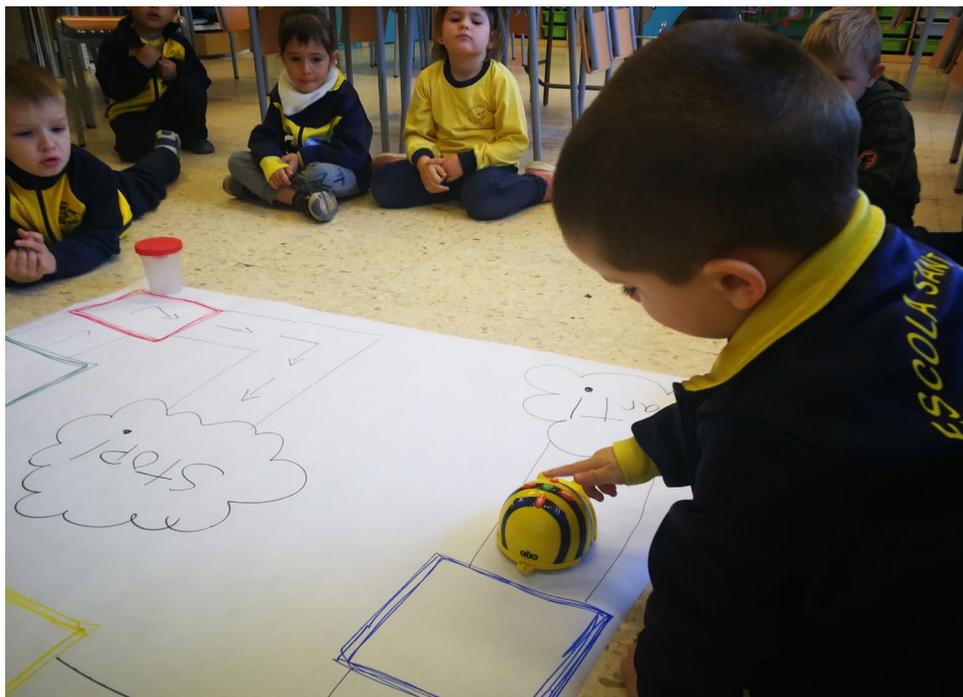


Figure 1. Children pressing the control buttons of a Bee-bot on a mat made by a teacher

### ***Following the steps of a recipe***

**Learning goal:** to understand a recipe and be able to prepare it to have a quick snack at the end of the lesson.

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots, a mat, a set of flashcards illustrating cooking actions and different ingredients. Optional: real food and cooking tools.

**Lesson Description:** The teacher dictates operations and students must resolve them mentally, say the resulting number out loud in English and then lead the Bee-bot to the cards containing the numerical representation of the operation and the result.

Alternatively, students can challenge one another by taking turns to dictate and solve other mathematical operations.

### ***Mental arithmetic in English***

**Learning goal:** To improve knowledge of number names in English and to understand the operations of addition and subtraction.

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots, the mathematical symbols of addition and

subtraction and some numbers (according to the level those numbers will be up to or over ten).



Figure 2. Children doing mental arithmetic with their Bee-bots

**Lesson Description:** The teacher presents a recipe using a video. After each step, the video is paused and students need to lead the Bee-bot to the flashcard that best summarizes the corresponding cooking actions and the food and tools required.

If there is time, after the warm-up task with the Bee-bot and the video, students can follow the instructions again to prepare the recipe. A healthy fruit salad or a fruit brochette are just examples of recipes that can easily be prepared in class.

### ***Retelling a short story, a song or a traditional tale***

**Learning goal:** To order a series of events in a story game-based context.

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots and flashcards to tell a story children know well.

**Lesson Description:** This activity must be done with stories students are familiar with and can easily sequence pictures that illustrate it. Children must lead the Bee-bot from one picture to another to reconstruct the story. Alternatively, children can use the Bee-bots while following a story the teacher tells them from the very first time.

If the flashcards depict the characters in the story or objects present in it, students can use their Bee-bots to make connections between characters or between a character and an object. Similarly, if the flashcards illustrate different possible endings, students can use the Bee-bots to construct an alternative end.

### ***Starting to spell***

**Learning goal:** To learn the letters of the alphabet, to recognise sounds in the foreign language and to start writing words.

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots, a Bee-bot mat (or a self-made poster) and some letters of the alphabet.

**Lesson Description:** The Bee-bot is surrounded by the letters of the alphabet. Students need to guide it from letter to letter to spell the words that the teacher has drawn or written on the whiteboard. With older students, this last step can be skipped, and the teacher says the word out loud and gives children no language support to spell it.

Optional: the students who are not controlling the Bee-bot can write the words on a piece of paper, so they are all focused on the task.

### ***Solving problem-based situations***

**Learning goal:** To develop students' problem-solving skills in a game-based context.

**Resources needed:** A Bee-bot, a mat and a set of images or flashcards related to the problem students need to solve.

**Lesson Description:** The teacher comes to class with a real or fictional problem students need to solve. For example, the teacher has a mat with different places in town and she tells students that their Bee-bot is very hungry. She asks them to think where the robot needs to go. In this case, they need to programme it to go to a supermarket or a restaurant. In another situation, if the robot were sick, they would need to take it to the hospital or to a chemist's. This is a more demanding task because students must have developed cognitive skills to solve the challenge set by the task. It is advisable to carry out this type of task with students aged 5-6 and older.

### ***Decoding a secret message***

**Learning goal:** To practice spelling and vocabulary recognition

**Resources needed:** Bee-bots, mats as in the Battleship game, alphabet letters or flashcard representing letters and a worksheet with a secret message/word on it with some blanks on which students can write down their findings.

**Lesson Description:** The teacher provides all students with a worksheet in which they find a secret message or, for a shorter version of the same task, just a secret word. Students must take the Bee-bot to the square that coincides with

the information in the worksheet. For instance, the worksheet may contain an instruction such as “*take the Bee-bot to A-7*”. Students need to lead the Bee-bot to this square, where they will find a letter (in the case of the shorter version) or a word or image (in the case of the longer version). Once they complete all the instructions, they will be able to decode the secret message and write the solution on the worksheet provided.

### ***Creating and Sequencing their own stories and situations***

**Learning goal:** To create a short story or a situation in small groups.

**Resources needed:** A Bee-bot, a mat, pieces of paper, pencils and colours.

**Lesson Description:** This time students are the main protagonists of the task. In small groups they imagine a short situation or story. Then they draw the main characters and events in their story on blank pieces of paper.

Once they have finished preparing their materials, they pair up with another group. The two groups take turns to tell their stories. When students in one group tell their story, the members of the other group lead the Bee-bot from one scene/character to the next.



Figure 3. Two students posing with a Bee-bot and their English mascot, Sparky. They are so proud of their invented stories!

### **Concluding remarks**

The use of technology in foreign language classrooms offers teachers many possibilities to reduce the technology gap. Using Bee-bots or coding-based gadgets to learn a foreign language at an early age is relevant, motivating and “a modern form of interdisciplinary education of children” (Smyrnova-Trybulska et al., 2016:197). Using technology, however, is not always easy, often because of budget constraints. In part, technology is being introduced in schools at a slow pace because teachers feel uncomfortable to spend money on apps, software or gadgets they have not had the opportunity to try first and explore the possibilities they offer. Technology devices, as with any other learning tool, must be adapted to the context and the reality of each school. We encourage teachers to join associations or to create spaces in which they can use all sorts of technological

devices and receive support on how to use them. Teachers need to experiment and manipulate technological tools and resources before including them in their teaching practices.

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## Co-teaching

Maribel Gomàriz  
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### Introduction

Co-teaching (also known as push-in arrangements) is a methodology that emerged in the USA in the late 1960s as a means to ensure that as many mainstream students as possible could follow regular lessons and would not suffer segregation (Peery, 2017a). The practice consists in assigning a team of two teachers the shared responsibility of planning and implementing lessons in a classroom and of monitoring and assessing the work of students. Co-teaching is based on the premise that “when teachers with different areas of expertise and skill work together, they can individually tailor learning better for all their students” (Ferguson, Desjarlais, & Meyer, 2000: 3). As the initiative seeks to create more inclusive classrooms, teams are typically composed of a class teacher and a special education teacher. In schools in Catalonia, though, the methodology is quite popular to teach young children English. In this case, the general education teacher and a specialist in teaching English as a foreign language work together. Co-teaching presents many benefits, among which we could highlight that (a) lessons are more attractive and creative because they have been designed by two teachers who support and complement each other, (b) lessons are less teacher-centred and rely more on group work and on experimental hands-on tasks, (c) in the classroom there are more opportunities for one on one interaction between the teachers and the learners and (d) learners benefit from the extra support they receive and from the fact that teachers can create parallel classroom dynamics.

When co-teaching is done well, it offers benefits for both, students and teachers. When not done properly, it can be confusing and frustrating for all parties involved. Therefore, teachers need to negotiate how they would organise teaching before they actually start working together.

Cook & Friend (2004) propose six forms to organise co-teaching: (a) one teacher teaches and the other observes; (b) one teacher teaches and the other monitors and supports students; (c) the two teachers teach simultaneously the same contents to two groups of students from the same class; (d) each teacher teaches part of the content to a group of students from the same class and then they switch the groups and teach the same contents again; (e) one teacher is in charge of teaching a large group of students and the other one a small group, both from the same classroom; and (f) both teachers teach simultaneously the same contents to the same group of students.

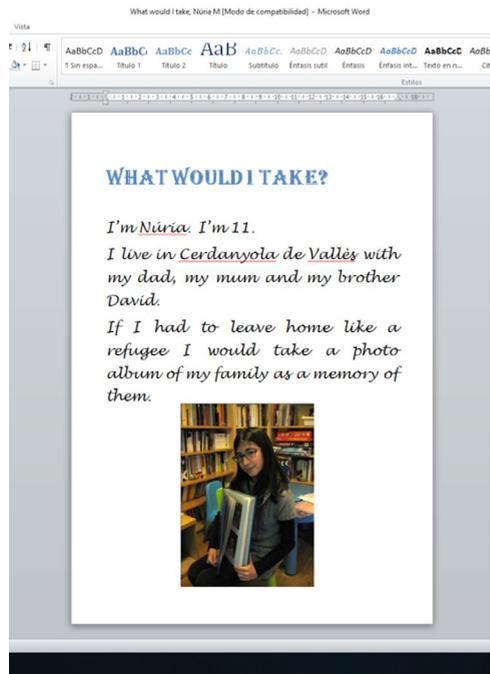


Figure 1. Example of a student’s response to a personal question in a co-taught project on social conflicts

The objective of this paper is to reflect upon my personal experience as a co-teacher in a Catalan school.

### **My experience: Co-teaching for three years**

I have worked as a general teacher and as an English teacher in various schools in Catalonia. The school I currently work in as an English teacher is next to a Faculty of Education and has always hosted student teachers. Three years ago, a colleague of mine, a class teacher, experienced co-teaching with a university trainee teacher during her internship at our school and she then proposed we could repeat the experience and pair up to form a team. She argued that this methodology offers kids a chance of receiving extra exposure to language and provides us, teachers, with more time to cater for the diverse needs of our students. I was easily persuaded to become a co-teacher. Among the different teaching methods we use, the one that we have been practising more often is known as “one teaches, one assists”: One of us leads the instruction while the other moves around helping students, especially the ones with special needs (autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, language disorder...). In our schedules we refer to this shared

time as the “English Project” (EP), although only the English teacher, me, uses English to communicate with children. Their class teacher addresses them in Catalan, as she normally does when I am not present.

At my school we adopted the project-based learning (PBL) approach to teach curriculum contents long ago, because, as Mont & Masats (2018:94) suggest, we believe that “projects that are structured through goal-oriented tasks offer a great opportunity to integrate learning as a social practice (collaborating, co-constructing knowledge, communicating, developing critical and creative thinking, etc.) and as a means to favour the development of life skills (leadership, social skills, initiative and flexibility).” Students engage with projects with their class teachers and, once a week, I join them and develop part of the ongoing class project in English. English is taught three times a week in slots of sixty minutes. Two of the English lessons students have with me are focussed on the development of their communicative skills, the third one, English Project, is the one I share with their class tutor. We follow the same procedure with all grades. I teach a total of six groups with six different class teachers. Projects are always connected and related to ongoing social issues, science, art or children’s interests.

Some of the projects we’ve co-taught include:

- Refugees
- The Ocean Clean-up
- Friendly Cities
- Climate Change and Global Warming
- Andy Warhol
- Art Detectives at Fundació Tàpies
- Our School Natural Surroundings



Figure 2. Spore print from the project “Our School Natural Surroundings”

When we started, none of us knew much about this teaching method, but with time, we have developed our personal style, which we try to improve project after project. Here I would like to share my reflections so that other teachers can benefit from what we have experienced.

## **Strong points, things to improve and key issues to consider for guaranteeing success**

As teachers we need to observe our practices from a critical viewpoint to be able to progress and improve. In the next few pages, I will reflect upon the best features (strong points) all our projects have in common, then I will focus my attention on those aspects we need to improve, and finally I will consider those aspects all co-teaching proposals must include to guarantee success.



Figure 3. Students taking part in the project entitled “Our School Natural Surroundings”

### ***Strong points***

1. - Having two more hands (and ears and eyes!) is a great support for students with special needs, for those kids who experience some sort of learning difficulty or just have different learning styles. Co-teaching offers class teachers an excellent opportunity to spend time observing their students. As the class is conducted in English, they act as assistants most of the time. They take advantage of the situation and can assess and observe their students closely, something difficult to do when leading a lesson or a class.

2. - It is a constant challenge for me, for my level of English and for my knowledge of other field subjects. I’m constantly recycling what I know and learning new words, new sayings or idioms and new concepts every day! It helps me grow as a teacher.

3. - It is a great thing to be two teachers working together. We gain double of

expertise and experience and our students benefit from it. Our lessons are richer in contents compare to when we teach them as two different subjects.

4. - English is taught as part of a school project and we do not need to create artificial or complicated context for getting students to use this language. Everyone knows, from the very first day in the school year, that once a week their English teacher and their class teacher will work together so that they can develop a project through English. In the English lessons they are also more motivated than in the past because they see an end to the development of their communicative skills.



Figure 4. After learning the importance of fungi, children made white bread

5. - English is no longer the focus of instruction in class. It becomes a tool to discover, to learn and to do things. Kids are supposed to improve their proficiency in English by using the language to acquire knowledge of very different, real and current fields of study and they manage to do so!

### ***Things to improve***

1. - The relationships with my co-teachers have to continue growing in confidence. Sometimes they repeat in Catalan some of the concepts we have worked together because they are uncertain about whether the kids have understood what we've been doing. I do not think that is positive.

2. - Class teachers need to become aware that teaching through English is not the same as teaching through Catalan or Spanish. Scaffolding language is important to help children understand field knowledge, so we need to plan our discourse and activities which serve as language support to access knowledge.

3. - We need time, not only for planning contents, preparing resources, designing assessment tools and establishing rules to control behaviours or guide students. We also need time to carefully define our roles and responsibilities and agree on what we allow our students to do. We should not improvise how to act when students do not want to work with others, do not do their homework or do not bring their classroom supplies. We do not have time to plan joint meetings and end up discussing these issues during the last five minutes of staff meetings, or along the corridor when we move from one classroom to another or when we are on duty at the playground!

4. - During the time devoted to what we call the English Project I am the instructor but sometimes I feel like a class assistant. Children are engaged in their class projects for many hours a week, but I am just with them for an hour. I miss most of the things they do and cannot witness how the project evolves between my lessons. I've tried to persuade my colleagues to schedule co-teaching differently, but I have not succeeded yet.

5. - It is difficult to find authentic content materials and resources foreign language students can understand. The BBC website contains good videos and texts for language learners (see, for example, this [video](#) or this [recipe](#) on how to make bread). I should have extra time to sit in front of the computer to search for good videos and texts.



Figure 5. Children need to order sentences to classify living creatures

6.- The time allocated to co-teaching should be added to the three hours devoted to English in the national curriculum. As it is done during one of these three weekly hours, students have less time to learn English through the use of literature (through stories, role plays, comics, songs, chants, poetry, etc.) or through activities that allow them to use English in social contexts.

## *Key issues for guaranteeing success*



Figure 6. The English teacher supporting students' work

1. – English teachers need to be trained to teach content knowledge through English. Being a keen and enthusiastic teacher, fluent in English, is not enough to teach children specialised field knowledge in a foreign language.

2. - Class teachers should be fluent in English and have some knowledge on the teaching of foreign languages.

3. - Co-teachers need time together to plan, discuss, search for materials, assess students, share their views on the development of their lessons, etc. Not knowing what to do for the next lesson is frustrating, scary and counterproductive.

4. - Co-teachers should base their professional relationship on mutual trust. Both should have an equal status, share responsibilities and ensure their partner has enough time and space to teach efficiently.

### **Concluding remarks**

In a regular lesson, co-teaching is a very good method, particularly to cater for diversity: when working with students with special needs, with different learning paces and various learning styles. Two teachers in the same class guarantee that students receive more individual support than in regular classrooms. As children with difficulties are taught in their regular classrooms, they feel better and more confident when facing new concepts or conducting new activities. When children observe their teachers sharing their lessons and experience the benefits of learning with two teachers in the same room, they gain confidence in what they can do and become more receptive to challenges (Peery, 2017b). If co-teaching is done properly, if the two teachers complement each other, they can easily create a shared positive learning environment.



Figure 7. Students' scale-model of their ideal town, as the final product of their project on "Friendly Cities"

See how they present their findings at: [https://youtu.be/I7fDdbP4Y\\_0](https://youtu.be/I7fDdbP4Y_0)

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## Flipped classrooms

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### Introduction

A decade ago, Jonathan Bergmann & Aaron Sams (see Bergman & Sams, 2012) developed a teaching proposal, known as Flipped Classroom, which has transformed many teaching practices around the world. Essentially, a flipped classroom reverses the usual order of traditional teaching methods. Students, rather than learning new content in the classroom, learn it at home through taking part in activities —previously prepared by their teachers— like reading articles, watching videos, listening to songs or stories. Class time is dedicated to discussions, group activities and projects. In a flipped classroom, every student can learn at their own pace. Students are given the opportunity to watch a lesson as many times as they need. They can rewind a video, skip parts or simply pause it. When students come to class, if there is still something that needs clarification, the teacher is there to help. It should be born in mind that there is no such thing as “the flipped classroom model”. Each flipped classroom depends on the type of teaching context it delivers, the learning goals and the students’ needs. Moreover, not everything should or can be flipped. Teachers choose how to do it. For example, they can set students the task to watch a video at home and then do some school task, individually or in groups, or set a discussion in the classroom or online, they can prepare videos to be seen in class to demonstrate part of the course contents, they can set students the challenge to create the videos other students would view, etc.

In primary schools, ESL (English as a Second Language) lessons are very different from lessons in other subjects, since students’ language proficiency is limited and in the same class there can be students with different degrees of competence in the target language. Students’ aptitudes are also heterogeneous, while some students struggle to understand and get their homework done, others need to be challenged. Bergman & Sams (2012) created flipped classrooms as a tool to cater for the needs of all students in heterogeneous groups. When students are given the opportunity to learn the lesson for the first time in their homes, they can go through it at their own pace. Therefore, advanced students can do so without having to wait for the rest of their classmates to understand the material

and the ones having more trouble with the subject matter are able to review it as many times as needed because they are working independently. One of the drawbacks of this proposal, however, is that it might easily increase the digital divide between the students who have a computer or internet access at home and those who do not. To avoid this, teachers should ensure that students without a computer or internet access at home can be offered the opportunity to use computers with internet connection at school (in the computer lab, at the library) or allow them to watch the video in class while other students engage in discussions and wait for them to join right after they finish.

Flipped classrooms are suitable for students of all ages. The aim of this paper is to give primary teachers of English experience-based ideas on how they can flip their lessons.

### **Our experience planning lessons for primary kids**

Research demonstrates that flipped classrooms create a favourable learning environment and that students who take part in flipped classrooms understand lesson contents better than in regular face-to-face classrooms (Bergman & Sams, 2012; Santikarn & Wichadee, 2018), therefore, it is worth making a try. Parallel to this, one of the advantages of this methodology is that it easily blends with other approaches. In our case, we are particularly interested in project-based learning (PBL), a student-centred competence-based approach that, as Patton (2012) suggests, leads learners to produce some sort of project (a video, an oral presentation, an eBook, etc.). PBL is also “an ideal tool teachers have at their disposal to get their students to “connect the dots” between content, language use, the construction of knowledge and the development of 21st century skills” (Mont & Masats, 2018: 93-94).

The first time teachers think about the possibility of creating a flipped classroom in a PBL environment a lot of ideas come to their minds. It is important to organize these ideas first. Teachers must have clear teaching objectives before they choose the appropriate learning tasks and correct tools to create those tasks. When they start planning the lessons, they need to bear in mind which are the objectives set and what kind of final product kids will have to create at the end of the project. This could also help them choose different types of task to cater for the learning styles of all students, and to keep students’ motivation during their learning process.

The nature of the tasks teachers need to set will depend on their students’ grade, command of English and interest in the topic. Higher grade level students are more autonomous than students in first grades. Consequently, teachers can plan

activities for them to do at home. Fifth and six graders in Catalan schools already use the school email account, which is helpful for teachers who want to exploit a flipped classroom through activities presented in google drive, google classroom or in the format of a web quest. First and second graders are not asked to have and use an email account, so teachers need to plan differently how to use the flipped classroom methodology. In this section we will present two examples of real classroom practices in our schools, one flipped classroom as part of a project carried out with second graders and one with six graders.

### *City characters*

With their class teacher, second grade students were doing research on the city where the school is set and on local celebrations. In the English classroom we took advantage of the fact that children were learning about the giants —cardboard fictional characters— present in the local festivity (see figure 1) to design a project around the topic of clothes. The final product of this project would be an [oral description](#) of the clothes worn by the giants in the city. So the main objective of this project was to ensure students could produce this oral text. Taking this into account, the lesson plan was focussed on learning the names of various items of clothing and the formulae used in English to ask about and to describe somebody's outfit.



Figure 1. A local giant (source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/122076518@N08/21597657256/in/album-72157658540513790/>)

The first activities were planned to be done autonomously, but since not all students had a device with internet connection at home, the last ten minutes of each sessions were devoted to introduce the vocabulary needed for the

following session through a [story](#) and a song. Both the story and the song were also uploaded to the blog the class has in the school website to give students the opportunity to review them at home.

Teachers may find other ways to start using flipped classrooms. For example, they can ask the computer lab teacher to use a few minutes of his/her session to have the students complete their assignments. This can also be done in the English classroom if there is a computer available for each student.

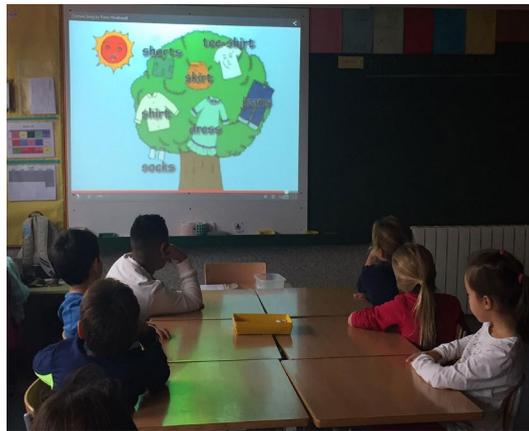


Figure 2. Listening to a song about clothes

The results observed were very positive. All students knew the vocabulary about clothes on the first session devoted to the project. There was no need to spend time to introduce or learn the vocabulary. The first session was, then, used to enhance interaction among the students and to start practising a dialogue. Communication was possible from the very first day.



Figure 3. Practising vocabulary

One of the activities planned involved the creation of a washing line with laminated clothes drawings. Students would take turns to ask for the kind of clothes hanging in the various washing lines. Other proposals carried out in class included activities such as dressing up a paper doll, creating a picture dictionary, playing a bingo and a memory game using pictures and words, and describing, orally, what one of the students was wearing and asking others to identify the person being described.



Figure 4. Dressing a paper doll

Students' confidence when participating in the various learning activities proposed was amazing. They were actively engaged in them because they already knew the vocabulary to participate. The level of motivation was substantially higher compared to the times we have used other teaching methods. As mentioned before, teaching through a flipped lesson is not easy to plan, it requires time investment and creativity, but it is worth trying.

### ***Flipping grammar***

Using the flipped classroom methodology in project-based environments does not mean that teachers cannot design focus-on-form activities. Teaching grammar can be challenging, as students are not thrilled to study grammar, but flipping grammar content can be the solution.

The proposal we present was carried out with a group of six graders who had used Google Classroom for two years to do different assignments as part of their English courses. We had prepared an activity using [EDpuzzle to illustrate how to form comparative adjectives in English](#) and uploaded it in their Google Classroom, where they could access it from home and become familiar with the topic.



Figure 5. Example of a video created in *EDpuzzle* to explain how to form comparisons in English



Figure 6. Example of the type of form Google Classroom creates on the students' task performance

When students come to class after doing the flipped assignment it is time to review and solve problems they might have encountered. Learning management systems (LMS) such as Google Classroom allow teachers to communicate with their students when they are not in class and to share materials with them, as is the case with the activity presented in figure 5. Additionally, one of the main advantages Google Classroom presents is the fact that it allows teachers to check the real interaction of students with the materials, as this LMS creates an assessment form on Google Drive. It also allows teachers to see if students watched the video, when they did it and how many times. If students do some sort of task, the system also informs teachers about the students' results. The analysis of this type of feedback is really useful as teachers have more information that allows them to take better care of the needs of all students and to prepare the activity of solving doubts.

After all doubts have been clarified, we carry out activities, usually in groups of four, that enhance cooperative learning. Grouping children with different degrees of expertise in English benefits both high level students and low level students, as they help each other to achieve the tasks. Students with low competence in English are given support by students with better competences, and giving support is also a learning task for more advanced students. When students are working in groups, the role of the teacher is just that of an observer who monitors learning and provides support when necessary.

In class, when students are working cooperatively, they do not learn grammar, but communicate using the grammar they learnt at home. Some of the activities proposed to put into practice the different grammar topics flipped consisted in unscrambling sentences (previously laminated and cut), filling gaps and playing board games or even action games like hot potato. To play hot potato students sit in a circle and pass a ball. The student who catches the ball must say one target word (an item of clothing in this case) or sentence (describing the outfit of a person in the group) and throw the ball to another student before the allotted time runs out.

Students' feedback on the methodology used to teach grammar —presenting grammar in flipped classrooms and practising it in class through games— indicates that they found online learning very helpful and more interesting than the traditional one. Group work, on the other hand, encouraged students to take challenges and strengthened the bonds between them.

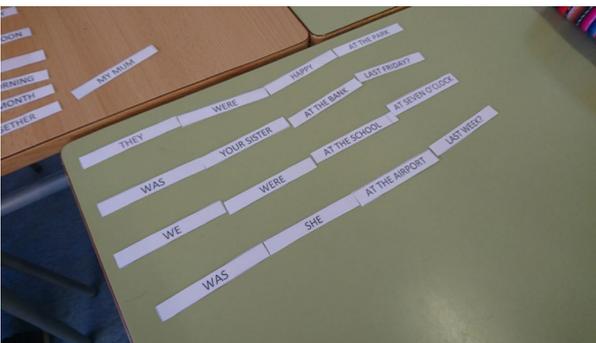


Figure 7. Students playing grammar games in class

## Assessment when using the flipped classrooms method

Flipped classrooms reverse learning, but also assessment. Students' assessment cannot focus only on the knowledge students gain but on how they gain it. A flipped classroom does not teach for the test. As lectures take place at students' homes, teachers have more time to interact with each student individually in the classroom. Consequently, they can integrate a great variety of formative assessment tools in their instruction.

Rubrics are the best tools to assess students in flipped classrooms. A rubric is a grid that illustrates the expected outcomes of a product (e.g. a text, a video, etc.) or a process (students' engagement, cooperation, etc.) in the form of a list of criteria and descriptions of various levels of performance per each criteria. This document is both a teaching and a learning tool. It helps teachers to focus on the observation of particular items and to assess all students objectively. Also, it helps students to know what the teacher expects from them and the assessment criteria can be used as a checklist while they are creating a product/text or conducting a task. It is important to have the rubrics available to students at any time and to prepare rubrics for assessing products and processes.

It is also advisable for teachers to conduct some form of assessment every session. As all sessions have a set objective, one feasible possibility is to design a quick activity to check whether students have attained the learning objective of the session. It must be a short activity, between five and ten minutes long, done at the end of the class. For lower grades the activity can consist of drawing pictures or writing words on a whiteboard to demonstrate what they have learnt, in circling relevant vocabulary on a worksheet containing a set of pictures or words, in playing games like bingo or memory games using pictures and words. For upper grade levels the format of the assessment activities can change and turn into more engaging proposals for them such as answering questions in *Kaboot* or performing actions. TPR (Total Physical Response) tasks are very useful as assessment tools. For example, if students have learnt to name and describe items of clothing, the teacher can give commands using the target vocabulary and structures (e.g. students wearing blue jeans, please turn around; students wearing a pair of white sneakers, please stand up, etc.). Similarly if students have learnt the body parts, the teacher's commands may instruct them to touch a part of their body or to perform an action involving a part of the body (clap your hands, stomp your feet, close your eyes, etc.).

Finally, it is also very important to have students assess themselves and their peers. After the completion of their classroom projects, students can fill in a

self-assessment worksheet to evaluate the product they produced and to assess what they learnt and their degree of engagement in the work done by the group. Peer-assessment is also a powerful learning and assessing tool. For example, if students, in groups, need to prepare an oral presentation as the final product of a project, students can assess the performance of the members of the other groups and observe and comment on aspects such as the quality of the information provided and of the resources used as support (e.g. visual documents, body language, etc.), as well as aspects related to students' accurate and fluent use of the target language. Again, rubrics are key assessment tools to guide children on what to observe when assessing others or one's work. If children are not familiar with assessment vocabulary, the teacher should make it comprehensible. This assessment task concludes when both the children and the teacher complete the rubric and the teacher comments the results and presents his/her observations on the work done by all the groups.

### **Concluding remarks**

The interests of our society and the modes of communication among its members have dramatically changed over the past few years. Similarly children's needs and interests today have also evolved. Schools need to adapt to the new situation and teachers need to readjust their practices. Children receive inputs and stimuli from a great variety of sources, so lessons must be also diverse and varied. Children will only participate actively in their learning process if the tasks teachers set are interesting and meaningful for them and if they access knowledge using resources they are familiar with and make them enjoy learning and feel comfortable when faced with new concepts.

Flipped classroom is a methodology that consists of substituting classroom lectures with activities students need to produce at home after having watched a video or read a text previously selected or created by their teachers. Research proves that students learn better and faster, probably because in flipped classrooms they become more conscious and aware of what they are expected to learn, take more responsibilities and develop greater autonomy. As students can review a lesson more than once, they have the possibility of receiving extra exposure to the target language. Students' motivation also increases notably, basically because they take control over their learning pace, decide when or how they want to study, and feel more confident and secure in the classroom because they already possess the previous knowledge gained in the flipped classroom. In addition to this, new technologies make them feel they are learning as they would do in the real world.

Learning management systems give teachers the possibility of observing their students' performance in greater detail, which will help them to cater for the needs of individual students in class. The use of this methodology also offers teachers the opportunity of engaging students in classroom projects oriented to the completion of a sequence of practical tasks, often done in groups. Group work fosters collaborative learning and students' respect for what others do and say. Accepting the ideas or proposals suggested by other learners or reaching a consensus and accepting what the majority of the members in the group decides to do is not an easy task for students, so having more time in class to devote to group work has positive benefits for learners and satisfies teachers when they observe the results. Students' products and learning process can easily be assessed, by teachers and learners alike, through the use of rubrics. This assessment tool is useful because it helps children be aware, already at the beginning of the class project, of what is expected from them and of how they need to conduct the tasks. Rubrics also guide students' productions, help learners stay focused and direct them on how to assess their work and the work of their peers.

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# Classroom management

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## Introduction

Teachers spend several years at the university preparing themselves to become teachers. They gain knowledge on learning theories, methods and approaches and are taught about how to put theory into practice, but when they face their own classrooms for the very first time they usually feel overwhelmed. As pre-service teachers, during school placements they have learnt to plan lessons and prepare materials addressed to different groups of students and grades, but they have little or no experience in designing their own teaching spaces, in developing strategies for knowing students' names and needs quickly to give them immediate support, in dealing with disruptive behaviour or in catering for diversity by attending to students' different learning styles. That is, novice teachers still need to develop their classroom management skills.

The term classroom management refers to the procedures expert teachers develop to arrange the physical teaching space and to organise participation in the classroom, with the objective of creating a supportive learning environment (Wright 2005). According to Richards & Bohlke (2011:8) “good classroom management is a prerequisite to an effective lesson [...] and teachers deal with management issues differently, depending on the kind of class they are teaching, their relationships with their students, and their own individual teaching style”. Masats (2016) relates classroom language with four actions teachers need to engage in: (a) arranging the physical and psychological learning spaces, (b) fostering students' participation, (c) promoting group dynamics that favour communication and cooperation and (d) assessing students' learning process and progress. This chapter will provide teachers with practical ideas on how to undertake the first two actions.

## Arranging the physical and psychological learning spaces

Students learn better in colourful neatly arranged classrooms that transmit warmth and harmony. A space that allows movement, promotes creativity and gives students easy access to various types of learning tools and resources. Students learn better when they feel comfortable and self-assured when they have responsibilities to meet, when they are familiar with the classroom rules

and routines and when they know what it is expected from them. In this section we will illustrate with examples how to create a physically and psychologically positive learning environment.

### *Arranging the physical space*

Class teachers have their own classrooms, which, a few hours a week are used by specialist teachers. English teachers typically move from class to class to teach and need to adapt to the different styles of organising the space of different teachers. Occasionally, they can have a class of their own, a space they can manage and where they can arrange the furniture and display materials as they please. If that is the case, before setting up their classrooms, teachers need to reflect upon the learning goals for the students who will use that space, the course contents and the methodologies they would use. For example, in figure two below, we can observe one of the classrooms I had. In this case, it was used by kindergarteners. As can be observed, the room is divided into different spaces to allow the organisation of simultaneous learning spaces, each decorated to serve the purpose of reinforcing particular contents. We have the phonological awareness corner, the alphabet section, a classroom library, the computer section, a construction site, a science table, the arts corner, the math wall, the assembly mat, tables for group work and a digital board for lectures.

The contrast between what the same classroom looks like in figures 1 & 2 is obvious. The classroom as it was originally settled was a dull poor learning space. After rearranging the furniture and decorating the walls it turned into a colourful welcoming learning environment.



Figure 1. Poor learning space



Figure 2. Classroom turned into a cosy learning space

### ***Organising the materials***

When you teach different groups of students, you need to organise yourself very well. I have a colour tray to keep the copies I give to each grade class. The different groups within the same grade that visit the English classroom have a different tray as well. Each student has a plastic bag to store their worksheets together before putting them on the corresponding tray. This particular way of organising materials also helps teachers subbing in your class to find activities for students easily. It is a fantastic arrangement to have an English classroom organized, especially in my case, as I teach 13 different groups in my class every week.



Figure 3. Colour trays to organise the copies for each grade and class group

I have two different kinds of storage for the materials I create for my lessons. I use plastic drawer units, labelled for every grade level, to store small teaching materials and realia, such as games, maps, cards, etc. They are all stored in different plastic folders organised by topics. For bigger materials such as posters, I use bigger plastic folders, also classified by topics. This arrangement saves time. Not only because when you are teaching you can find the materials very quickly and use them immediately, but also when cleaning up the walls in June or when setting up the classroom again at the beginning of the school year.

### ***Using the classroom walls effectively***

The classroom walls are typically used to display the basic vocabulary, structures and expressions children may need to use to communicate with others. Children tend to use their first language to talk to the other students in the classroom, but teachers should demand them to use certain formulaic expressions to, for example, ask for some water, express the need for extra supplies or ask for permission to go to the toilet. Having flashcards on the wall with the sentences children need to produce in these situations is a useful learning aid.



Figure 4. Classroom displays to illustrate different learning actions

The classroom walls can also be used to label the different learning areas in the classroom, to represent the actions children need to perform or to list the classroom rules. Displaying expected behaviours rules is a strategy that favours the creation of a positive psychological learning space, especially if students themselves agree upon those rules and create posters to list them. This can be a bit more difficult when you teach more than one group in the same class because you cannot have different rules, but it is easy to come to an agreement regarding the most basic rules that should be followed in the English class.

***Creating positive psychological spaces for learning: routines, transitions and closings***

English teachers don't spend much time with the same group of students, therefore they need to find strategies that, after a short period of time, can create a psychologically safe and nurturing learning environment. Classroom routines have a positive influence on students' performance and behaviour as they inform learners about what they can expect and what is expected of them in class (Burden, 2003). Routines are a set of short learning activities teachers and students carry out on a daily basis to signal the start and the closure of a lesson. When routines are used to create smooth transitions from one activity to the next, they minimise the possibilities for disruptions to occur (Docking, 2002).



Figure 5. A classroom calendar

Lessons typically start with greetings and the teacher checking attendance, and they are also opportunities for checking on the date, especially early in the morning. Writing down the date on the blackboard may turn into a tedious chore, instead, a classroom calendar like the one in figure 5 can serve the same purpose and turns the task of recording the date into a more dynamic activity as students can manipulate the cards they need to set up the date. A similar design can be used to create a weather chart.

Another good way to start a lesson is by providing students with a class menu, a list of the activities they will engage in that day. During the lesson, routines are also necessary to help students expand their vocabulary and develop their communicative competence in a self-assuring way. I weekly plan two different routines connected to numeracy and literacy.

In groups, and for 5 minutes, at the beginning of the lesson students must play games or complete different activities to practice how to say the numbers in English or how to make calculations. The routine is the same, but the tasks set vary on a weekly basis.

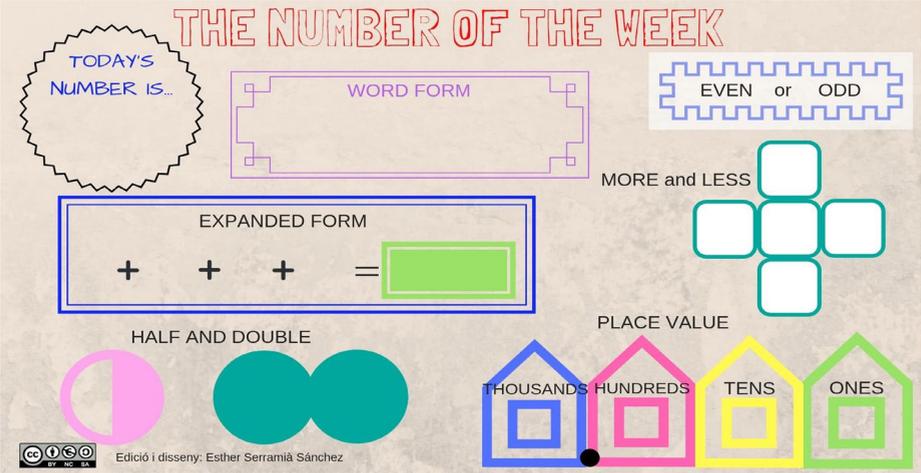


Figure 6. Example of a routine to practise numeracy

After that, they spend some time reading for pleasure. They choose a book from the class library and read parts of it every day. When they finish a book, they do a short activity. They have four choices: giving feedback and commenting on the book, describing the traits of the main characters in the book, drawing a story map or writing a summary of the plot.

During the lesson, students may get very excited when conducting certain activities, so teachers need to use some strategies to catch their attention or to make

them be quieter. I use different attention grabbers in my class. I sometimes ring a hotel bell, other times I use clapping rhythms for them to follow.



Figure 7. Wall posters with clapping rhymes used as attention grabbers

Reciting short rhymes or poems or singing a song are useful procedures teachers can employ to set smooth transitions from one activity to another or to change students' groupings. Also, when moving from class to class, my youngest students love to play a pretend game. They imagine they are making bubbles with their mouth or they are eating tasty cotton candies. On doing so, they are able to cross the hallway and walk along the corridors without making noise.

Finally, to signal the end of the lesson, students can sing a song. Alternatively, the teachers can prepare an exit ticket for them. On my door there is a poster where I draw a different picture every day. Pictures are usually connected to something students have to learn during the session. When they enter the class, they see the picture but do not know the word that would allow them to leave the room when the lesson is over. That makes the routine more exciting and forces them to pay attention to what we do in class. Before any holiday seasons, the password I use as an exit ticket is related to the traditions in English speaking countries.

### **Fostering students' participation**

Giving students responsibilities enhances their self-esteem and increases their degree of engagement in the class activities. One procedure I typically use is that of appointing students as class secretaries.

Students in my English class are divided into four groups. All members of the same group sit around a table and one of them adopts the role of a secretary for a week. This role is alternately taken by all students in the group, at least

once every term. Group secretaries are assigned managing roles such as being in charge of setting up the date in the classroom calendar or recording the weather on a daily basis. On each table we place a picture frame that illustrates the class role the group assistant will take on that week.



Figure 8. Tools to assign students classroom management roles



Figure 9. Display and storage of classroom supplies

Class secretaries are also responsible for giving the members of their own groups the supplies needed to carry out the activities planned and for putting them away at the end of the lesson. This procedure serves a two-fold objective. On the one hand it favours learners’ empowerment. On the other hand it supports learning because as the supplies are labelled, students can practice vocabulary in a more natural and effective way.

What it is important for creating positive learning environments is to set activities and routines that trigger students’ spontaneous use of the language. A routine that works well in my classroom to encourage spontaneous writing is what we call “a note to the teacher”. I display a poster on the wall to invite students to send me notes (on how they feel, on ideas they have, etc.). The poster is above a

table decorated with two small attractive mailboxes (one per each English teacher who uses the room), colour papers and pens.

It is a voluntary task and they know their teacher will reply to them and will not use their notes for assessing their writing skills. Grading all texts students produce is counterproductive.

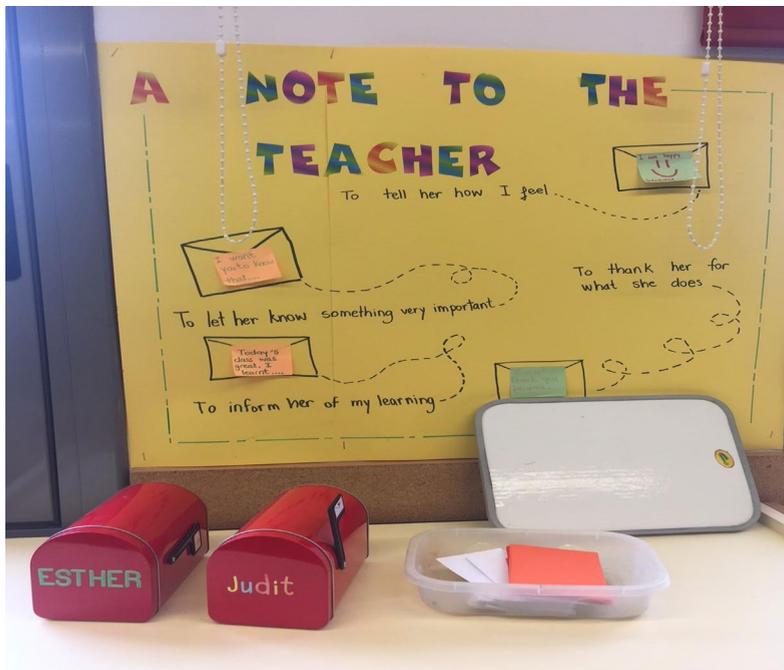


Figure 10. Realia used to encourage students to communicate with their teacher

Writing spontaneously and with no pressure allows students to feel more confident about writing. The activity also promotes cooperation because as students are engaged in an authentic writing task with a real target addressee, they want to make themselves understood and ask their peers for help if needed.

Classroom routines need to be part of teachers lesson plans and teachers need to plan well in advanced which language they want their students to practice through classroom routines and how often they will modify those routines. Establishing a visual year calendar can be a useful managing tool (see figure 11).

# Notes on planning

ENGLISH					
TERM	MONTH	WEEKS (1 Week)	DIDACTIC UNIT	ENGLISH CONTENT	
First term	September	1st Week	TOPIC 1		
		2nd Week			
		3rd Week			
		4th Week			
	October	5th Week			
		6th Week			
		7th Week			
	November	8th Week	TOPIC 2		HALLOWEEN
		9th Week			
		10th Week			
		11th Week			
		12th Week			
	December	13th Week	TOPIC 3		CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS
		14th Week			
		15th Week			
Christmas holidays					
Second term	January	16th Week	TOPIC 3		
		17th Week			
		18th Week			
		19th Week			
	February	20th Week	TOPIC 4		
		21st Week			
		22nd Week			
Third term	March	23rd Week	TOPIC 5		
		24th Week			
	April	25th Week			
		26th Week			
		27th Week			
		28th Week			
Easter Holidays					
Third term	April	29th Week	TOPIC 6		
		30th Week			
		31st Week			
	May	32nd Week			
		33rd Week			
		34th Week			
June	35th Week				
	36th Week				
SCHOOL CULTURAL WEEK					

Figure 11. A sample of a blank teachers' calendar

The calendar should organise teaching weeks into the corresponding term periods and for each period, teachers should decide on how many topics or projects will be developed in class. When planning there is no such thing as a specific sequence of steps to follow. Each project will be different. The most important thing that counts is to have a clear idea of the contents that will be taught, the skills students would employ and the kind of activities that would allow them to do so. As a routine in my class, all projects include a song, a story and a game. Regularly, singing the song will be used as a procedure to set transitions between activities or as a strategy to capture students' attention.

The calendar is also useful to list the tasks students will be engaged in during the implementation of each class project and the assessment activities linked to those tasks. Before actually planning the lessons, it is important to have this general overview of the whole project. This allows teachers to notice if the tasks allow for a good balance between all sorts of student groupings (individual work, pairs and group work, whole class work), as this is essential to manage students' participation effectively.

## Concluding remarks

Learning is more likely to take place in positive and reinforcing milieus. At the beginning of the school year, teachers should invest time arranging the classroom and the learning resources and materials to create a warm atmosphere that

welcome students to learn. Once the physical space is settled, and during the first lessons of every school year, time should be invested on creating a confident and secure environment to support students. Investing a few sessions to negotiate classroom rules, to assign classroom roles to students, and to make sure learners know what they can expect and what is expected from them is worth the time spent.

Good classroom routines are those which contextualise language use, serve the purpose of managing students' participation and contribute to the creation of a favourable learning environment. Not all procedures used as classroom routines work well for all the groups, so teachers need to adjust them to the learning objectives of each lesson and to the learning style of each group of students.

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# Bringing real-life English into your classroom

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## Introduction

Learning is contextualised and meaningful when teachers create opportunities for learners to participate, actively, in emotionally engaging, motivating, contextualised, constructive, collaborative and conversational guided tasks (Karpinnen, 2005). The development of Information Communications Technology (ICT) enhances and rapidly transforms opportunities for learning languages. Computers in the 1960s were used as tutors in charge of delivering instructing materials to learners. In the 1970s and 1980s, they served as vehicles to promote more authentic communication in the classroom. Nowadays computers and other technological devices are present in the classroom as tools learners can employ to learn languages in all sorts of virtual and non-virtual environments. Teachers use digital technologies as instruments that assist them when they teach in an integrative manner, often by adopting project-based approaches to learning (Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Masats, Juanuix & Albines, 2017).

Today it is impossible to promote effective learning only within the classroom walls, especially when it comes to language learning. No matter how hard we try to recreate real-life situations in class, nothing compares to authentic conversations, to the experience of taking part in real communicative situations. Students should be given the chance to improve their linguistic competence and communicative skills for a real purpose, to attain a meaningful goal. During the time learners spend at school, they should have plenty of opportunities to take part in real projects targeted at real audiences. Opening up the classroom doors to the world is a good procedure to ensure students learn the target language in context while they learn to appreciate the value of learning languages and the richness of intercultural communication (Dooly, 2010).

At first, teachers who wanted to work together online had to develop their own Content Management Systems (CMS) portals, for doing so (see, for example, Dooly, Masats & Koenraad, 2018). Now the task is less complex, as the European Commission promotes initiatives to create school partnerships as means to encourage teachers' mobility across Europe and to favour the development of transnational online (tele)collaboration programmes. This chapter

will describe two of these European-supported programmes, namely eTwinning and Erasmus+, and will illustrate the opportunities they offer teachers as keys to succeed in bringing real-life language into their classrooms.

## eTwinning

The initiative was launched in January 2005 and became a part of the Comenius Lifelong Learning Program in 2007. In 2014 it was integrated into Erasmus+, the new EU programme for Education, Training, Youth and Sport (2014-2020). eTwinning, also known as “The Community for schools in Europe”, is a free online learning community that allows schools from Europe to collaborate within a secure platform. Its main aims are to promote collaboration among European schools in the use of ICT in the classroom, and in developing a common European identity. The platform is targeted at teachers and staff members from kindergarten to upper secondary and accessible to teachers from all the Member States of the European Union.

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom are the 34 countries with full rights to participate in the eTwinning programme. In 2013, under the eTwinning Plus action, special membership status was given to eight other countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lebanon, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Tunisia.



Figure 1. The scope of the eTwinning programme.  
Source: <http://etwinning.es/es/que-es-etwinning/>

## *How to get started*

Setting up an account inside the eTwinning platform is not rocket science. First you need to go to the eTwinning portal ([www.etwinning.net](http://www.etwinning.net)) and follow the steps to set up your account. Then your headmaster/headmistress needs to confirm the National Agency and that you are member of their school's teaching staff. When that is done, you can edit your profile and be one step closer to start igniting your teaching!

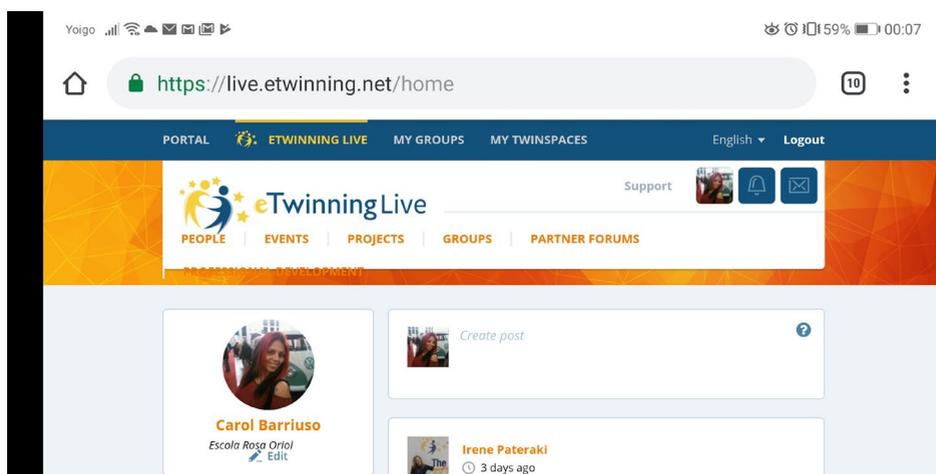


Figure 2. Example of an eTwinning account

After completing your profile, it is time then to look for potential partners. You can either go to partner forums and check the ideas proposed by other teachers or post your own preferences. These forums are split in year stages, so it becomes easier to find and share project ideas within your students' age range. You can also connect with other teachers by joining one of the eTwinning groups, participating in the Learning Events or the Professional Development Activities or by simply browsing personal profiles. You can message anyone inside the eTwinning community, but spamming must be avoided. It is advisable to send friendship requests to those people you want to connect with.

Once you have a partner, you are ready to set up your project. Only one of you can register the project, so first you need to decide which of you will do that. Setting the project up is also very simple: you need to choose your school, choose your partner, write down the most important details of what you have decided to do (project description, age range, languages, subjects, aims, expected results, etc.), review what you have written and send the proposal. Again, National Agencies need the validation of the headmaster/headmistress of both schools

to approve the project. When the project is approved, a *TwinSpace*, your own private workspace, is automatically created. When that is done, you are almost ready to start your journey through the Community for schools in Europe and let the magic begin.

### ***What to do in TwinSpace***

For a telecollaborative project to succeed, partners need to establish SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-related) goals and easy and direct modes to communicate throughout the project's life span (Mont & Masats, 2018). Before the project starts, founder teachers need to decide if they want to add to their *TwinSpace* other participants interested in the project. If that is the case, they need to do that before they register their students. When the teams are completed, students can start working together. Teachers know their project partners, students do not. That could be the first step. Teachers should first set tasks that let learners get to know one another. As examples, teachers can ask students to produce a video clip, to create a PPT or a virtual presentation using apps such as *Voki*, *Bitmoji* or *GoAnimate* or to design a “who is who game” using *Quizizz* or *Kahoot*. With any of these activities, students can practice English while they produce a real text for a real purpose: to introduce themselves to the students in the partner schools. As students need to be understood, the task sets a real context for engaging students in focus on form activities.

eTwinning projects are cross-curricular in nature, so any subject can be taught through this platform. Similarly, inside *TwinSpace*, students learn in many different ways, as the platform offers teachers a wide range of possibilities to collaborate using methodologies such as Project Based Learning (PBL), Flipped Classrooms, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and even through Gamification. Learning tasks can be designed either by the teachers or by their students. eTwinning promotes learner-centred proposals as it offers learners opportunities to gain new knowledge by doing things, by interacting with others and by learning from and with them. Collaborating with others helps students be responsible of their own learning process.

As Dooly & Sadler (2016:55) suggest, “despite the oft-cited constraints of implementing technology-enhanced online collaborative learning with very young language learners, [...] (telecollaboration projects) —even with beginning learners— can provide fundamental opportunities for communicative exchanges which are key to long-term language learning”. At this point, it is important to stress the value of international collaboration to create the final products. If teachers let their students start and finish the process of creating products or

sub-products for the common project, there will be no real collaboration among the students from the various participating schools. Working teams should be international and composed with students from every country. Together, and by using collaborative Web 2.0 tools, they can brainstorm ideas and take decisions on what they want to create together. In all groups students should assign responsibilities to their members and also decide how they would put everything together to create a joint product. Students are capable of producing great results and being engaged in collaborative tasks allows them to improve their language skills without noticing it! In this sense, research reveals that

“telecollaborative tasks with young learners are more productive when they are nested within a variety of pre- and post-telecollaboration tasks that introduce and repeat the target language through many different modes within the Technology-Enhanced Project-Based Language Learning (TEPBLL) approach. It can also be seen that through the carefully scaffolded, meticulously planned TEPBLL task sequencing, the learners gradually developed more socio-pragmatic competences in their use of formulaic chunks in contextualized ‘everyday’ talk” (Dooly & Sadler, 2016:73).

*TwinSpace* has several tools (blogs, forums, chats, video chats, etc.) to help teachers bringing real-life situations to exploit in their lessons during the development of the joint project. Chat and video sessions are probably the ones children enjoy the most. Using these tools in class offers students the possibility of developing their conversation skills, both writing and speaking, and of putting into practice those language forms (e.g. to ask questions, to express an opinion, etc.) previously learnt in the regular class. Although non-synchronous communication is less fun for children, getting them to participate in fora or to write blog entries also allows them to practice language in context and to develop their communicative competence. The advantage in this case is that students have time to review their texts before posting them, and therefore they can learn from their mistakes. Finally, by reviewing the posts they create throughout a long extended period of time, students (and teachers) can become aware of their progress.

### **Erasmus+**

Erasmus+ is the programme for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport of the European Commission for the period of 2014-2020. It supports three main types of key action:

- Key Action 1 (KA1): mobility for individuals
- Key Action 2 (KA2): cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices
- Key Action 3 (KA3): support for policy reform

The most meaningful action for the context of this article is KA2, which promotes exchanges of teachers and students from European Countries (Member States of the European Union along with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Iceland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Turkey and Serbia).

Erasmus+ brings teachers the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of their students' communicative skills not only by taking part in online collaborative exchanges but also face to face.



Figure 3. Logo of the Erasmus + programme  
Source: <http://www.erasmusplus.gob.es/>

If teachers opt to include mobility actions in their project, their pupils will have the chance to live with a foreign family for a short period of time; an experience which will undoubtedly broaden their horizons, physically and mentally, develop their cultural awareness and open their minds to the acceptance of linguistic and cultural diversity. For students and teachers, Erasmus+ is also a great opportunity to observe different learning and teaching practices within the European framework and make friends that could last for a lifetime!

Secondary school teachers can also apply for long-term mobility programmes with their students, up to two months. This kind of action allows students to develop a better understanding of the diversity of European cultures and languages and helps them acquire the necessary skills for their personal development. To ensure the quality of the mobility experience and the academic results of the students, the sending and the hosting institutions must establish a learning agreement.

To take part in this action is not as easy as in the eTwinning programme. Applicants must write a full project proposal for a period up to three years and deliver it in due time. Every year there is a call to submit proposals, and the deadline is usually around 21<sup>st</sup> March. Before they start writing an application, partners are advised to have a look at the three main priorities of that year's call. There are no restrictions concerning the topics of the projects that can be presented, but relating projects to the priorities in the call may guarantee success.

Unlike eTwinning, Erasmus+ includes funding, not only for exchanges, but also to support project management and implementation. This also explains why not all project proposals are approved. Strictly following the recommendations in the project guide facilitates the whole process. Proposals must be based on the analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) of the applicant schools and should be directly linked to the attainment of the objectives proposed. The needs of partners institutions must be clearly stated in their proposal and partners need to justify how through their partnership and the funding of the European Union those needs will be covered in the long run.

### **Synergies between the eTwinning and the Erasmus+ initiatives**

Before deciding which of the two proposals fits better the needs of their students, teachers should examine what each initiative offers. Taking a close look at the similarities and differences between the two programmes may help.

#### ***Similarities***

The two programmes share six main objectives. They both

- Promote cooperative learning through the internet with two or more European partners.
- Enhance the use of ICT.
- Support collaborative projects in any area of knowledge.
- Strengthen the European dimension in school curricula.
- Boost innovation and the exchange of good practices.
- Contribute to the improvement of participants' communication skills in foreign languages.

#### ***Differences***

Although eTwinning is, as we pointed out earlier, one of the initiatives promoted within the framework of Erasmus+ and shares with it key objectives, the two programmes are very different in nature. Table 1 below summarises and contrasts the traits that characterise eTwinning and Erasmus+.

	<b>eTwinning</b>	<b>Erasmus+</b>
Funding	X	✓
Mobilities of students and teachers	X	✓
Educational stages	Non-university educational levels.	School, vocational training, higher education and adult education, and other institutions related to the education and employment world.
Work area	Education Initiatives.	Education, training, youth and sport initiatives.
Partners	Minimum: two founding partners from two different countries.	Minimum: two partners from two different countries.
Application/Date	Online. No date.	Both according to the annual announcement published by the National Agencies.
Duration	No limit.	1 to 3 school years.
Focus	European dimension.  Digital competence.  Collaborative work through the use of ICT tools.	European dimension.  Mobility and cooperation between institutions for innovation and exchange of good practices.
Approval of the partnership	It depends solely on the checking and validation of details and ensuring that the objectives and content correspond to teaching practice.	Selected and funded or otherwise under the criteria established in the annual announcement.
Evaluation and report	Voluntary report.  A project is evaluated if the teacher requests the Quality Label or Award.	Progress and final reports are mandatory.

Table 1. eTwinning and Erasmus+ initiatives compared

Formally connected, the most important difference between the two actions is funding. It is highly recommended that teachers start getting their students involved in eTwinning projects before applying for an Erasmus+ grant. This would give them the chance to get to know potential partners before actually setting up a partnership. The experience will nurture teachers with expertise and

first-hand knowledge on how to collaborate with other European teachers and would be an added value both in the evaluation process (eligibility) and during the project development. In fact, previous participation in a successful eTwinning project has been included among the potential benefits of applying for an Erasmus+ grant as listed in the programme guidelines this year.

## **Concluding remarks**

Bringing real-life language into the classrooms is one of the most challenging facets foreign language teachers need to face. Creating real communicative situations is essential to help learners develop their interactional competence and their communicative skills, but it is not an easy task. The internet has transformed learning and teaching practices and offers teachers and learners opportunities to contextualise learning. European initiatives like eTwinning and Erasmus+ open up the classroom doors and support initiatives based on creating partnerships of schools whose teachers are interested in developing collaborative projects with teachers from other European countries. The proposals are different in nature but both are based on the premises that languages cannot be learnt detached from other fields of knowledge and that learners will only use a foreign language if that use serves a communicative purpose.

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## **A recipe for becoming a supportive teacher**

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*Escola Samuntada (Sabadell)*

Teaching can be a rather solitary and demanding activity. Engaging students in the classroom activities and helping them take control over their learning is not an easy task. Active learners require empowered teachers, that is, educators who put them at the centre of learning, help them fulfil their personal potential and create a cooperative and supportive environment for learning to take place. “Empowerment is closely related to self-efficacy, among other factors. Self-efficacy, similarly to the concept of agency, is the belief that one controls one’s life and that one can make positive changes in one’s surrounding environment” (Boom, 2015:1). Consequently, empowerment transcends the classroom walls. As teachers, our attitudes in our professional world as well as in our personal lives can have an impact on what occurs in the classroom. In this regard, Goleman (1998:275) gives us the following piece of advice: “if your emotional abilities aren’t in hand, if you don’t have self-awareness, if you are not able to manage your distressing emotions, if you can’t have empathy and have effective relationships, then no matter how smart you are, you are not going to get very far.”

In order to help our students develop and grow as learners and as individuals, we, teachers, must first learn to take care of ourselves. In this chapter, we will reflect upon the self-care and self-nurture actions we can adopt to learn to nourish ourselves every day. We will metaphorically present them in the form of a recipe that requires the right mixture of all the ingredients. It is our hope that those teachers who carefully follow the directions of the preparation method we suggest will be able to develop their emotional intelligence and become more supportive educators. Our recipe can be read many times, as each attempt will offer a new reading and new opportunities to grow and become a teacher who touches their students’ lives.

### **Our recipe**

We suggest that you allow yourself spare time on a daily basis to prepare this recipe and to assess your progress in the process of learning to take better care of your mind, soul and body. Do not worry about when you will find all the necessary ingredients, that is not what matters. Just take as much time as you need to make sure you will not forget to collect them all.

## Ingredients List

200 gr Respect	1 tbsp.	Positive beliefs about diversity
150 gr Love	1 tbsp.	Learning environment ideas
150 gr Effort	1/2 cup	Naturalist and humanistic knowledge
100 gr Kindness		Freshly ground of critical thinking skills
100 gr Visual arts & performance		
100 gr Body consciousness		
100 gr Curiosity		

## Preparation Method

1. Whisk together kindness, love and effort in a bowl.
2. Stir together respect and curiosity in a cup.
3. Beat together the mixture in the bowl and the appropriate dose of visual arts and performance with an electric mixer for about 3 minutes, until the mixture reaches consistency.
4. Add body consciousness until well combined.
5. Mix the resulting dough together with naturalist and humanistic knowledge alternately in batches at low speed until smooth.
6. Add the mixture in the cup.
7. Transfer to an oven proof casserole and bake it for 15 to 17 minutes.
8. When ready, let it chill before decorating it with ideas from the immediate learning environment and a good dose of positive feelings about diversity.
9. Sprinkle a pinch of critical thinking on it and enjoy the experience!

## **Tips to find all the ingredients**

### ***Kindness***

In your daily routine there may be times when you feel you are not doing the right things not only for you but even for others. When that occurs, stop torturing yourself. Be kind to you. Silence your mind and try to visualize the situation-problem from a bird's eye view to find the right solution. It is in you. When you have it, try to write it down or draw it as soon as possible. If you have problems in seeing the solution, focus on a sound or an image instead —they will probably trigger the positive thought that will help you move ahead.

### ***Love***

Where can you find this ingredient? Every day try to find a moment to recall a good memory and rejoice in it. Draw it, write it down in your personal diary or register it in one of your electronic devices. If you like socialization, share a conversation about that memory with a friend, either face-to-face or online. Do not be lazy or think you are too busy to spare your time on past events. Good memories are nurturing! They help you look back on what you have just done and focus on some positive experience. In the end, you will feel somehow all days are lovely days.

### ***Effort***

Every morning, when you wake up, try to envisage a purpose for the day. Try, for example, to complete this sentence “Today I’ll put my effort on...” If at first you find it too difficult, fix a frequency on your calendar (every other day, twice a week, etc.) in order to establish this routine. To attain your set purpose, share it with others, comment in a conversation what your purpose of the day is. Look around in search for clues on how to fulfil it. The universe is like a treasure map you need to learn to read! Feel your corporeality and let it inspire you. Acknowledge your progress, too.

### ***Respect***

Try to recognize and accept others (your students and their relatives, your friends, your partners, etc.) without making judgments. It is a difficult task because our brain is used to judging others and to create one's reality based on assumptions, fake opinions and rumours built from prejudice. Do not judge others, do not judge yourself. Learn self-respect and to respect those who are around you.

### ***Curiosity***

Connect with your origin. Build up your family tree and know about your ancestors. Invite other family members to do this research with you, to know more about your origins. Investigate your past to understand your present.

### ***Visual art and performance***

Your clothes, your hairstyle, the colours you sport are clues to express yourself with creativity, but also hints others can use to know how you feel on a particular day. Re-think your appearance day by day. Use your body to express yourself and to present to others.

### ***Body consciousness***

*Mens sana in corpore sano.* To cultivate yourself prepare your body by doing physical exercises before or after school time. Move consciously, feel your body and treat it as it deserves, not just as a mere capsule to store your brain.

### ***Naturalist and humanistic knowledge***

Everyday a learning journey, an opportunity to gain knowledge and grow. Observe and be attentive to what occurs around you, to what you see and listen. Stay connected and try to make the most out of your time. Make George Bernard Shaw's words your motto: "Don't wait for the right opportunity: create it."

### ***Ideas from the immediate learning environment***

Your culture and the cultures of those around you, the diverse physical locations in which you move, the various communicative events you take part in, etc. constitute rich learning environments that provide a great variety of sources of inspiration and opportunities for gaining knowledge. Never underestimate your immediate surrounding.

### ***Positive feelings about diversity***

Love the diversity in your community. Use gender-neutral language when appropriate. Give others a voice without silencing your voice. Let others recognise in you and recognise that the other person is you.

### ***Critical thinking skills***

Solving problems, formulating hypothesis, making guesses, taking decisions or inferencing, among others, are examples of reasoned, purposeful and goal-directed thinking, also called critical thinking (Halpern, 2014). Taking responsibility

for your thinking has a potential impact on your personal growth and success, accept the challenge.

### **Checking your progress**

Self-knowledge is the first step to making meaningful changes in your life. You cannot know yourself if you do not observe what you do. We should all develop the habit to monitor our actions on a regular basis. The chart in Table 1 below can be a useful instrument to do so. In the first column, we can write down the daily activities we conduct when we want to invest our time on doing things we enjoy. At the end of the day, we can recall what we did and reflect upon whether we collected all the ingredients we need to nurture our body, soul and mind. By observing which items we tick and which ones we do not tick, we can become aware of our strengths and weaknesses. Knowing ourselves better allows us to reflect upon which changes are necessary in our lives and which attitudes we need to maintain. Acknowledging what we do and what we can improve is undoubtedly an empowering tool we should make use of.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this article we have subscribed to the premise that the more teachers nurture their needs through self-care, the more supportive they can be for their students. People who know how to take care of themselves are undoubtedly capable of taking care of others. We have used the metaphor of elaborating a recipe as an excuse to reflect upon how we can develop a self-care and self-nurturing plan. We have also presented a tool to reflect upon how we develop such plan (see annex 1). If we are able to complete it, we will feel empowered and will be able to replicate it with our students.

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**Annex 1. Self-evaluation grid to keep track of the type of self-nurturing actions we take**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

	I nurture my ....										
	Critical thinking skills	Positive feelings about diversity	Ideas from the immediate learning environment	Naturalist & humanistic knowledge	Body consciousness	Visual art and performance	Curiosity	Respect	Effort	Love	Kindness
DAILY ACTIVITIES											
When I register and reread my thoughts											
When I explain/listen to myself or others...											
When I assist others during a voluntary (artistic/activist) event											
When I practice some body exercise											
When I consider diversity											
When I read about the past											
.....											



**SECTION THREE: Reflections from the classroom: Teacher internship  
from different perspectives**



## Reflections from the classroom: Teacher internship from different perspectives

Melinda Dooly<sup>1</sup> & Constanza Tolosa<sup>2</sup>

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There have been ample studies that underscore the key role of teacher education programmes that combine both campus-based training as well as practical, school-based training (Smeby & Heggen, 2014), commonly known as teacher internship. Both anecdotal information (as many tutors can report when summarizing their intern's reflections) as well as formal surveys indicate that most student teachers identify their school-based teaching periods as one of, if not the most important part of their preparation to become teachers (cf. Korthagen & Kessels, 1999; Kosnik & Beck, 2003). Internships can ensure key moments for future teachers to accrue extended field based and context-responsive professional learning experiences and to make the transfer from the 'declarative' knowledge of educational theories they are exposed to during their university courses to the application of that knowledge in context-bound situations. This 'field experience' can be a critical component for the professional development of foreign language teachers as these experiences present teacher candidates with ample opportunities to connect principles and theories to actual classrooms and guarantee meaningful learning experiences (see Mont & Masats, 2019, as an example).

At the same time, there has been a growing awareness of the need to develop closer and more collaborative ties between university level education faculties and schools that host interns, while simultaneously providing space for the intern's 'voice' as well (see Masats & Guerrero, 2018, as an example). Studies have shown that the interpersonal networks developed in the workplace are vital to professional growth for both the future teacher and the intern's future workplace colleagues (Cho & Imel, 2003). As Bayonese, et al. explain it,

The concept of collaborative practice is based on the premise that successful teaching relies on the expertise of everyone involved in the learning environment (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, & Waldron, 2006). Collaborative techniques include planning, implementing instruction, assessing, and then communicating about student learning in order to repeat the process in a continuous leverage for increased achievement. In this way, collaboration becomes a co teaching partnership. (Bayonese, et al., 2017, p. 72)

Ideally, teacher education should have a positive impact on students' learning

to become professional, well-prepared and resourceful teachers in their future classrooms. Finely tuned collaboration between teacher educators at university, teacher mentors in the internship placement schools and the student-teachers can help bring that about and also have other benefits apart from highly qualified professional teachers. This type of collaboration can enhance the reputation of the intern placement school as a source of qualified and highly skilled teachers; may provide a springboard for further collaboration between the participants (for instance, current and future teachers and university researchers) and bring about innovative and creative pedagogical practices which ensue from multiple input (see, as an example, Unamuno & Patiño, 2017).

Language teacher education at university cannot simply act as ‘content connoisseurs’ who transmit knowledge to future teachers. The complexity of the technologically connected, globalized world implies that teacher education must continuously adapt without lowering the quality of their programmes (Tolosa, et al., 2016). At the same time, these programmes must find the most appropriate way to serve the student community by placing them as the focal point of their learning process. Of course, the ultimate goal of language teacher education internship should be to ensure the highest quality learning experiences for these future teachers and —through this— the outcomes of learning of their future students. According to Dooly (2013)

teacher education should promote an involved, critical stance towards the academic literature and teaching theory and get student-teachers to move from ‘knowledge telling’ to ‘knowledge transforming’. One way in which teacher education can promote knowledge transformation that allows future teachers to ‘connect the dots’ between theory and practice is to engage them in distributed learning themselves in a way that promotes reflective thinking. (p. 241)

In this sense, the chapters in this section constitute examples of personal reflections on the value of school-based teaching periods in the teacher training programme developed at a Catalan university. In *The benefits of hosting an intern teacher*, Yolanda Álvarez tries to persuade other in-service teachers to volunteer to host a student teacher in their classrooms. Her arguments are supported with details of her personal experience as a student intern first and as a school mentor later. In *Taking a trip down memory lane*, Aina Obiols, from her perspective as a junior in-service teacher, draws back to the years in which she was a student teacher, provides a rich account of what she learnt during her school internships and suggests that teacher training programmes should be closely connected to field experience and with what students learn and do at schools as trainees.

Similarly, in *How I became a teacher*, Maria Vrban, a recent graduate teacher, details what she learnt during her school internships and reflects upon how the experience has shaped her views on teaching. In the last chapter, *Reflections after the completion of our last school placement*, Helena Bueno, Mar Bañeras Capella, Sònia Reig & Meritxell Martínez focus on the lessons they learnt during the practicum seminars, led by a university tutor, aimed to prepare and support them during their internships. All four texts express personal viewpoints, but listening to ‘teachers’ voices’ can serve educators, both at schools and at universities and colleges, to become aware of the issues that are really important for novice teachers. Such knowledge is a rich source of input to support changes in teacher education programmes.

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# The benefits of hosting an intern student

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## Introduction

*Do you want to have an intern student?* This is the typical question that headteachers ask the teachers at their school. Sometimes, they already know who they should address or not, because, in many cases, the answer is NO. Luckily, however, there is always someone who says YES. In my school, I am that person. It is also true that I have colleagues who say YES, but unfortunately there are not many.

For some years now, the headteacher in my school no longer asks me if I want to have an internship student, she takes it for granted, and now her question is different: How many do you want? And there have been years in which I have had three student teachers in my class. The reasons why I want to have intern students in my classroom are several and all are good, of course, but I think I should start this article by reflecting upon why I think some fellow teachers do not want to have student teachers in their classrooms. Then I will provide arguments to prove that school internships are worthy for all parties involved: mentors, interns and primary pupils. Finally, I will support my viewpoint with the account of my personal experience both as an intern student and as a mentor.

## Why don't all teachers want to host interns students in their classrooms?

In Catalonia, the process of selecting schools that can host student teachers and the tasks expected from the practicum coordinators and school mentors are regulated by the Policy Act of 17<sup>th</sup> October 2017 (ORDRE ENS/237/2017) created by the Generalitat de Catalunya. The document established that school mentors must have a minimum of three years of teaching experience, should have taken part in projects developed at the host school and need to be in possession of a teacher qualification in the same areas of expertise of the potential student teachers under their mentoring. School mentors are expected to conduct the following tasks:

- To welcome and guide student teachers throughout their internship.
- To determine whether the educational project designed by universities for student teachers is adequate to the school mission.

- To offer trainees teaching and professional models and opportunities for observing good educational practices.
- To observe and evaluate the actions taken by student teachers and share with them reflections on teaching and learning.
- To encourage student teachers to take initiatives and value the viability of their teaching proposals.
- To promote the participation of student teachers in the activities organised at the school and offer them guidelines on how to conduct the various teaching tasks in a classroom.
- To collaborate with university practicum tutors to evaluate student teachers.

If we review those tasks, we can easily understand why some teachers say NO to having an internship student. We, teachers, already have too many regular duties to be able to take on extra tasks during the same working period. This is why they say NO to have one more student in the classroom. And I say ‘one more student’, because this is how they see a pre-service teacher: someone they would also have to teach. In short, more work. Many teachers feel they do not have time to guide the learning process of another person, to coordinate with university tutors, to adapt their own planning and agenda to the needs of the student teachers. Those tasks can really be overwhelming.

Other factors that explain why some teachers are reluctant to have intern students relate to the constraints set by universities, especially those related to what students should do and when. Sometimes it is complicated to combine our class schedule with the agenda of internship students. Some universities set which is the day of the week in which trainees must be at school, without asking school teachers whether they have lessons on the subjects student teachers must observe. This, sometimes, forces teachers to change their schedule, but that is not always possible. The educational programme set by universities for their student teachers establishes that they should plan and implement a teaching unit. This work is supervised by university tutors. Ideally, they should contact school mentors first to come to an agreement with regards to the contents to be taught and the methodology that student teachers would use, but this is not always the case. Having to alter one’s schedule and syllabus is not easy and acceptable for all teachers.

### **Why do we have to say YES to have an intern student?**

Despite these drawbacks, having an internship student in the classroom is beneficial for all the parties involved.

### *Advantages for schools*

Schools which participate in internship programmes are in constant contact with universities and therefore they have easy access to new methods, teaching materials and resources, and to updated knowledge on how to enhance learning. This is an element of transformation and improvement for schools.

### *Advantages for mentors*

Mentoring someone means putting your skills to the test as you need to let student teachers observe good practices. This triggers your motivation to continue learning, to expand your knowledge and understanding of the contents you teach and how you teach them. You learn to look at your subject from a different perspective, with a different attitude and that is rewarding for your growth as a teacher, but it also benefits your students. And, of course, helping others learn is a great satisfaction.

In addition, having an intern student in your classroom offers you opportunities for conducting tasks you could not do if you were by yourself. You learn to collaborate with another teacher and being able to take joint decisions empowers you both.

### *Advantages for intern students*

Being able to learn to teach under the guidance of a skilled educator is self-assuring. Student teachers have a hands-on personalised and structured learning experience that allows them to put theory into practice, observe good practices and become familiar with what really occurs in the classroom. It is a valuable opportunity for their personal and professional growth, one that increases that increases their self-esteem.

### *Advantages for primary students*

Having two teachers in the classroom is a luxury that, unfortunately, not all schools can afford due to lack of sufficient staff. When class teachers can work hand in hand with intern students, they can adopt more student-centred methodologies, which will undoubtedly be beneficial for the students in that group. There is greater attention to diversity, the space is democratized, students do not need to be engaged in the same tasks, managing group work is easier, etc. In short, an intern student reinforces learning.

### **My experience as an intern student**

I am part of the 2000 promotion of teachers of the Faculty of Education at

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the teachers of the new millennium. I remember that at our graduation ceremony we were told that we were the generation of teachers that could end the era of traditional teaching practices because we had been trained to put into practice new methods. Unfortunately, that was not what I had experienced.

I still have bad memories from the time spent at a school during my first practicum internship. During the two-month period I stayed at the school, my only job was to make photocopies, paint murals in the corridors (alone, without students) and be seated in a corner of the classroom observing how my mentor taught her master classes, in which I never participated. Those practices were so boring and unfulfilling that I even questioned whether I wanted to complete my studies. There was one thing I learnt: what I do not want my intern students to experience in my classroom.

Fortunately, during my second and last internship I lived a completely different unforgettable experience. I learnt a lot with my mentor. She helped me understand how I could cater for the needs and interests of the students in the group, to treat them equally, value them all and myself, too. She made me love the profession I had chosen and be confident with my personality qualities and my teaching skills.

### **What does it take for me to have an intern student?**

I have been a primary teacher and English mentor for more than 10 years. As I said earlier, I typically host two or three intern students in my classroom. I consider that intern students are a great support for me and for the students in my group. The experience is worthy because we co-teach. To me, they are already teachers, still being trained, but teachers who come to our classrooms to help us all.

I consider myself a flexible teacher who easily adapts to changes, who loves to experience new teaching methods and to try new things. I am fascinated by new technologies and am always keen on taking risks to explore how they can be turned into learning tools. Having younger teachers in my classroom helps me keep updated on the latest teaching methods and the trendiest digital technologies. As a counterpart, I share with them what I do. I put my experience and my advice at their service, and above all, I try to transmit them my passion for this profession.

## **Concluding remarks**

I encourage all my colleagues to welcome intern students in their classrooms. The experience will be enriching as pre-service teachers bring fresh air, change the classroom dynamics, inspire new teaching practices and share updated resources and materials. The only dull task they would be asked do is to fill out the documentation required to take part in an internship programme as a mentor. Everything else is personal enrichment.



# Taking a trip down memory lane

Aina Obiols

*Escola Bellaterra (Cerdanyola del Vallès)*

## Introduction

This chapter is aimed to promote reflection towards practicum experiences, and launches several suggestions about how to make student-teacher training proposals a bit more useful and real. Although the opinion and arguments I will provide are solely based on personal experience and, therefore, subjective, it is my belief that they relate to experiences lived by other teachers and can serve to help teacher-educators to design more tailored training programmes for pre-service teachers.

During my Primary Education degree, within the framework of Erasmus student mobility grants, I could study in Finland. The proposals I will make here regarding the training of pre-service teachers are inspired by what I could observe there. I will critically reflect upon how school internships are organised in my home university with the hope of making a small contribution towards change.

## My practicum experiences

Gaining practical experience during our training is fundamental for us, teachers. Research proves we all learn by doing. It is through engaging in practical and meaningful actions that we can learn what to be a teacher is like. If a hands-on approach to learning is useful and relevant for both, pupils and university students alike, why isn't this methodology implemented from day one at universities?

The Primary Education programme offered at *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* has one compulsory internship period in years two and three, and two periods in year four. Students have the chance to get to know a total of three or four schools. I conducted my last two practicums at *Escola Bellaterra*, a brilliant, innovative and reflective school in which I spent two trimesters. During that time, I became familiar with the methodology used at the school, with the kind of actions teachers planned for school festivities, with the training initiatives teachers had at hand and basically, on how to manage a classroom and plan learning on a daily basis. Moreover, both my school mentor and my university tutor were amazing and motivated educators able to get my teaching skills to flourish. They were demanding but supportive and encouraged me to take challenges. For example, I spent my practicum V with a 4<sup>th</sup> grade group that was reading Oscar Wilde in Catalan. I suggested that children could know the author better if we

established links between what children were learning in Catalan and what they were learning in English. With this objective in mind, I prepared a teaching unit based on Wilde's novel *The Canterville Ghost* (see annex 1). It was a challenge for the children and for me, but I could create a good learning proposal thanks to the support and guidance I received from my mentor. As a pre-task, children watched the cartoon movie, then they read the book, and finally, they retold the story using Scratch (a coding language that allows children to programme a story). At the end of the project, children had read a graphic gothic comic, had learnt to construct sentences in the past tense, and had practised how to use Scratch. As the story is set in the countryside, they also got a glimpse on that typical English landscape. All this was possible because my mentor was flexible with her syllabi and eager to include in it the proposals I made. With her, I also learnt that the teacher's role is to guide students more than to instruct them, that we should listen to their voices and take their interests into account, and that they look on us as models to follow and therefore we need to help them look at the world from a positive but also socially active perspective if we want them to become committed citizens, not only in the future but also in the present.

All teachers-to-be deserve to have positive training experiences during their internships. This means that universities should guarantee that teacher trainees attend innovative schools and are mentored by caring teachers. During our training, we need to learn how to observe students, how to listen to pupils and colleagues, how to choose ideas that promote relevant knowledge, how to relate knowledge to practice and how to provoke rich learning experiences. These "how to" actions can only be achieved if you are supported by committed in-service teachers and mentors. Thus, if we cannot attend innovative schools whose teachers can offer quality mentorships, our internships will not be worthwhile.

Apart from that, tuition at universities should also be different. If our methodology teachers tell us that certain teaching methods are outdated and should not be used in class, they should not employ them either. Similarly, our teachers told us about the importance of encouraging learners to develop their ideas and of being flexible enough to acknowledge that all learners are unique and have different abilities. However, in general, our university tutors gave us so many instructions on what to do during our internships that it was very difficult for us to fit their demands into our regular practices and still accomplish the expectations set by our school mentors on how to organise learning. University tutors and school mentors should work together and reach agreements with regards to the tasks student-teachers must perform at schools. This would undoubtedly reduce the stress and the pressure trainees suffer when they are asked to do different tasks for the two educators.

## **Lessons learnt thanks to my practicum experiences**

During my internships I got the chance to experiment, to reflect and to discuss upon what learning English should be like in primary schools. How did I manage to do that? I had excellent school mentors who provided me with a lot of examples of good practices, who showed me they believed in me and who were flexible with their lesson plans to include my proposals in them. As I said earlier, they were very flexible but also highly demanding. When we discussed my lesson plans, they used to make me reflect on my proposals, on what I wanted to do and why. That allowed me to understand the needs and interests of the students better and to modify my initial plans to meet those needs. After implementing the activities I had designed, I could also reflect with them about what had worked and what had not. For me, those were powerful opportunities for learning and growing as a teacher.

At schools I also discovered that language learning can occur across the curriculum, you just need to see learning as a network of knowledge. I learnt to value games as learning tools. Games are repetitive as they trigger the use of certain language structures again and again. Through repetition children get to notice those structures, reflect about language usage and internalise new linguistic knowledge. But above all, I developed team work skills and learnt how to work collaboratively with my mentors. Co-teaching was a secure step into learning to be a teacher. I felt self-confident and relaxed as I knew my mentors were giving me their support and guidance. On those occasions I was taking the lead, they would only intervene if it was necessary; and even then, I felt my work was appreciated. Learning from my mistakes on the spur of the moment was priceless. Co-teaching allowed me to gain first-hand experience on how to manage the classroom dynamics, on how to adapt the lesson plans to unforeseen events, on how to observe students' interest and needs and act accordingly, on how to address learners, etc. I think co-teaching was also profitable for my mentors as my presence in the classroom made it possible to organise learning differently.

## **Proposals for improvement**

Today I work as an English primary teacher in one of the schools in which I did my internships. Having my own classrooms help me reflect upon what I would have liked to learn while I was still a pre-service teacher. I would like to share my thoughts with the hope to contribute to improving teacher training programmes, at least at the university from which I graduated.

Learning must be meaningful, functional and real. This idea was repeated as a mantra in most of the courses I took as part of the requirements to obtain my

Primary Education degree. I used to reproduce it in my exams, but it was not until I took my internship at *Escola Bellaterra* that I was able to understand what it really meant. What I learnt in a year by being engaged in co-teaching tasks with my school mentor was 10 times more motivating and important for me as a teacher than what I had learnt during four years at university. Therefore, I think that the amount of time pre-teachers spend at schools working with in-service teachers should increase. School mentors and university teachers should establish solid bonds, not only to plan together what pre-service teacher education should be like, but also to conduct research on innovation and learning. This way research could be more practically based and school methodologies more updated.

Ideally, school internships should be carried out in innovative, reflective and updated schools, whose teachers work hand in hand with university teachers to bridge theory and practice. If what you observe in the classroom as a pre-service teacher does not differ significantly from what you lived as a primary student, you are not going to learn much and you would not be prepared for being an agent for change. This also implies that not all teachers could be mentors. Whereas there are schools whose school board is still debating where it is necessary to plan changes in their methodology, there are other schools whose teachers are implementing innovative educational approaches and reflecting on the effect they have on learners. Teacher trainees should learn at the best schools with the best teachers to guarantee a new supply of good teachers.

Finally, student placements should last for 10 months instead of two. Trainee teachers would then be able to observe students' progress through a whole academic year. During that time, pre-service teachers would be progressively asked to focus on particular issues (observe, for example, how to plan a lesson, how to develop students' literacy skills, how to handle discipline, how to cater for students with special needs, how to make teaching proposals to integrate language learning and disciplinary contents, etc.) and university courses should relate to them. Student teachers at the university would have to read articles and research papers to participate in discussion around the observation tasks conducted at schools. This way, they could also relate the theory to the practice and learning for teacher trainees would be meaningful, functional and real.

## **Concluding remarks**

Teachers tend to reproduce the teaching models they have been exposed to. In order to guarantee that they promote innovation at schools, during their pre-service training programmes, teachers should observe and take part in the development of innovative proposals. There are two requirements for this to be possible. On the one hand, school placements should take a more prominent role in education degrees: there should be more and they should take longer. On the other hand, university teachers and school mentors should team up to bring innovation to schools and universities, and to design more hands-on proposals for pre-service teachers.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to send my best wishes to all the children who shared time with me at school, because thanks to being with them I have learnt to become the teacher I wanted to be. I want to thank all the teachers from *Escola Bellaterra* for teaching me that everybody has positive and valuable qualities we need to learn to observe and promote. My special thanks to all the readers who might get inspired by my words, or at least will reflect on my proposals.

## Annex 1. Rationale of a teaching unit based on Oscar Wilde's novel *Canterville Ghost*

Curriculum core competences		Activities	
Cultural competences		Introducing a British writer; Observing the English countryside	
Audio-visual, linguistic & communicative competences		Watching a movie, reading a gothic comic, recording voice messages, retelling a story	
ICT competences		Retelling a story using Scratch, playing online educational games	
Learning to learn competences		Reflecting and assessing own work and the work of peers	
Sessions	Objectives	Contents	Assessment Indicators
Session 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To present the project and the final product</li> <li>• To create a routine for all the sessions</li> <li>• To reflect upon what happened in the movie</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive listening: the <i>Canterville ghost</i> movie</li> <li>• Specific vocabulary related to the story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to create a mental sequence of the tasks required to complete the project</li> <li>• To be able to understand the plot of the movie</li> <li>• To share their knowledge on the story in the movie</li> </ul>
Session 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand the plot of the story</li> <li>• To read accurately focusing on the pronunciation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary on chapter one</li> <li>• Subjects and verbs in phrases and sentences</li> <li>• Simple present and past tenses</li> <li>• Intensive reading: the <i>Canterville Ghost</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read a text with good pronunciation and intonation</li> <li>• To be able to summarise the plot of the <i>Canterville Ghost</i></li> <li>• To identify verbs on the book and establish a chronological line (past or present)</li> </ul>

Session 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read accurately</li> <li>• To understand instructions</li> <li>• To reflect upon language use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive reading: the Canterville Ghost</li> <li>• Vocabulary from the story</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read a text with good pronunciation and intonation</li> <li>• To be able to understand and follow the instructions to play a game</li> <li>• To be able to identify subjects and verbs in a text</li> </ul>
Session 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read accurately</li> <li>• To feel comfortable when reading in English</li> <li>• To reflect upon language use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules to create sentences using the present and the past simple tenses</li> <li>• Rules to formulate instructions</li> </ul>	
Session 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read accurately</li> <li>• To feel comfortable when reading in English</li> <li>• To understand the plot and important details in the story</li> <li>• To reflect upon language use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive Reading: the Canterville ghost</li> <li>• Vocabulary from the story</li> <li>• Rules to create sentences using the present and the past simple tenses</li> <li>• Following instructions</li> <li>• Retelling the book cooperatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To construct simple sentences in past and present using previously learnt appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>• To classify verbs separating present simple from past simple forms</li> <li>• To be able to communicate verbally and non-verbally</li> </ul>
Session 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To read accurately</li> <li>• To reflect upon language use</li> <li>• To create oral texts using good pronunciation and intonation patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intensive Reading: the Canterville ghost</li> <li>• Vocabulary from the story</li> <li>• Rules to create sentences using the present and the past simple tenses</li> <li>• Following instructions</li> <li>• Recording oral texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to retell the story orally, using appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and accurate pronunciation and intonation.</li> </ul>
Session 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reflect and assess the project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applying assessment criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be able to fairly self-assess and peer assess the activities done</li> <li>• To assess language learning throughout the various games played</li> </ul>



# How I became a teacher

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## Introduction

Ever since I was a child I knew I wanted to be a teacher, I even used to tell my mother I was going to be an English teacher. Looking back, I wonder how I was so thoroughly sure about it, considering I had always been on the other side of the learning process, on the student's side. I followed all my studies with that same objective in my mind, I would become a teacher. But it was not until I started my university placements that I realized I was truly made for this. For some, having the chance, whilst at university, to attend a school, to be somehow part of its community, and to act as a teacher helped them become aware that they were not born to be teachers; for me it was completely the opposite. As soon as I went through the doors of that first school I knew I had made the right choice. However, even though I was very sure about my decision, these placements taught me, challenged me and moulded me into the teacher I am today.

My internships were the best opportunity I had to learn from my mistakes thanks to the support I received from people who had more experience and knowledge than me. As a matter of fact, I consider tutoring and mentoring as the main pillars of school internships, and I was lucky enough to have had tutors and mentors who gave me good advice and helped me shape and reshape my ideas to make them as good as they could be. Together with this, peer tutoring was key in my personal and professional development. My didactic units, my teaching work-plans for a short time period, benefitted from the ideas my fellow pre-teachers gave me during the university practicum seminars, when I was planning. They helped me analyse my lesson plans from different perspectives. In a way, today I hope that working with my classmates was a prelude of what is to come when I work in a school with other teachers.

Putting what I learnt during my internships into words seems quite overwhelming as it implies recalling both positive and negative feelings and experiences, but it is worth trying.

## Learning to understand new methodologies

School internships are necessary in teacher training programmes. As pre-teachers, we are placed in different schools, which support different values and

methodologies, and this allows us to observe which practices we like the most. We also receive a lot of input on what teaching is like and we learn strategies and resources we will most likely use in the future. But understanding innovation is not an easy task. For instance, in one of my university placements I went to a school that did not follow a traditional curriculum organisation. Contents were not divided into subjects. On the contrary, learning was organised in more global areas or in what they referred to as 'learning spaces'. There were seven with inspiring names such as 'Atelier', 'Mathematics universe' or 'Blue planet', just to cite a few. Each class was divided into groups and the members of those groups were reorganised and mixed with students from other classes and years. I found this very enriching as students could work with students from other classes and levels and lessons were not teacher-centred. As much as I liked this way of teaching, I also found some aspects that needed improvement: the work done in each space was not equally cognitively demanding.

### **Learning to cater for students' needs**

One of the discoveries I made through my internships was the fascinating yet challenging world of SEN (Special Educational Needs). During my first school placement, I was asked to point out all the special learning situations I could observe in a particular classroom. At first, I genuinely thought none of the children had special needs. However, as time went by and I had the opportunity to get to know them better and could talk to their teacher, I realised that several of them needed an individualised support plan, others had been diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) and one of them had a severe visual impairment. As I got more experienced I managed to differentiate the needs of students and I was given tools to tackle specific and challenging cases. I learnt that as a teacher I should meet the needs of every single student and that would not be an easy task. On many occasions I felt I was not ready or trained to confront certain situations. For example, I was asked to help several kids who had dyslexia, and, even though I tried my best, I knew that if I had had more knowledge and skills, I would have helped them better. However, what had a great impact on me and my future plans was the realisation that most school teachers have little or no training on how to deal with students with special needs. As a consequence of that experience, I am considering the possibility of taking a master's degree in SEN, which will hopefully give me a deep insight on the issue and will equip me with the tools and strategies I need. In this sense, internships helped me guide my path through education and encouraged me to keep on learning and improving.

## **Learning to be creative and to collaborate with others**

Internships also made me appreciate my value as a materials designer. On most of my placements, I was asked to create an engaging and cutting-edge didactic unit. Over the years, I found out that creating my own materials made my lessons be more tailored and focussed on my students' needs and interests. I really enjoyed the process of creating materials and educational resources. I was so satisfied with the results that I created my online alter ego "All you can teach", a website where I share my work with other teachers. Internships pushed me further and made me become aware of the importance of delivering engaging and attractive materials and the essential role of innovation to guarantee success.

Throughout my internships I got to know myself better, too. I discovered how good I feel when I develop a sense of belonging, when I see myself as part of a teaching community. It may seem irrelevant, but walking into the staff room and being able to chat with other teachers was very welcoming and comforting. At times, I have to be honest, not all was peaches and cream. I had to face moments in which my work was not appreciated and I felt I did not fit in. Fortunately, I could manage the situation and learnt to cope with my feelings. That was also part of my learning process and having the chance to experience it was constructive for me. It helped me value teamwork more and appreciate the importance of creating a positive environment at work, a place to count on one another.

## **Learning to cope with challenges**

Something I learnt to appreciate during my Practicums are the benefits of ICT. We cannot deny the fact that, nowadays, ICT are very much present in all walks of life and in education it could not be any different. Personally, I was never too keen on technology and when it comes to teaching I preferred being a bit more traditional. It is true that ICT tools are very useful in class, but I always thought they create a distance between the teacher and the students and makes the learning process somehow artificial. However, I was pushed to introduce technology in my teaching units and I was able to understand that ICT provides us teachers with a handful of resources that enable us to help students become more independent learners. It is a great way to improve students' engagement and to make learning more fun and enjoyable for them. It also promotes collaboration and leads learners to develop cooperative skills. Technology can connect students within the same classroom or even with students around the world, which is quite amazing. As a pre-service teacher I had the chance to participate in a telecollaborative project and, as challenging as it was, it was also very enriching.

On a different note, during one of my placements I had to face the challenge to plan a didactic unit for a Physical Education class. At first, I was worried because PE was not my area of expertise and I am not good at sports. But, on second thought, I knew it would probably be my only chance to be a PE teacher and giving it a go could be fulfilling. During another placement, this time in the UK, I was placed in a religious school, and I am not a religious person. I was a bit sceptical at first, but I ended up appreciating the school mission and values. I even picked up ideas for my future lessons, such as getting children, every morning, to say a couple of things they are grateful for. What I understand now is that internships encouraged me to think out of the box, took me out of my comfort zone, challenged me to do things I had never thought I would do, and thanks to that I broadened my horizons and became a better teacher.

### **Looking at the future**

It seems obvious for me to say that internships were a great opportunity to put theory into practice: they make a difference on someone's studies. During the first years at university, I found myself learning about many educators, theories and methodologies. I knew learning by doing was amazing and according to Vygotsky we need to help children overcome their ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), but how was I supposed to do that in a classroom? During my internships, while I was planning my didactic units, I realized I was putting all my knowledge into practice, adapting it in accordance to my personality and teaching style. I was able to see my weaknesses and my strengths, and I, somehow, managed to know the teacher in me. I found out I dislike homework, I discovered my love for gamification and I even grew a new passion. For my last placement I had the chance to go to the UK and become a Spanish teacher in a primary school. Even though I was a bit reluctant about how it would turn out, I discovered I loved it. Shortly after the completion of my studies, I enrolled in online courses on how to teach Spanish as a foreign language. I could foresee my future as a Spanish teacher, so I moved to the UK and started forging a career path as a Spanish teacher. In the end, had I not done such a placement in the UK, I would not have discovered this passion. I am very thankful for that.

## **Concluding remarks**

University placements are of great importance in a teacher's career and they definitely shape you as a teacher. Who would dare to teach without having been a trainee teacher first? As in most professions, practice is the key, especially when children's wellbeing and education are at stake. Would I be the teacher I am today without having taken part in those internships? Definitely not! At the end of the day, I believe we are all life-long learners, and, for me, such experiences were, hopefully, just the beginning of a long fruitful career as a teacher. Just like Joseph Joubert sentenced back in 1842, "To teach is to learn twice", or maybe even 20 times. To me, that is the magic of education.



## Reflections after the completion of our last school placement

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### Introduction

Education is in constant evolution. Teacher training programmes should offer trainees updated knowledge to ensure the new generations of teachers will be capable of meeting their pupils' needs. However, when student teachers graduate from university, they very often complain about having gained a lot of theoretical knowledge on how learning occurs without having been exposed to opportunities to apply it. This was our case before participating in our last school internship as part of our English minor. A few of our teachers had applied for a grant to improve our current teacher training programme. They engaged in collaborative tasks (see the first section of this same volume) to attain three main objectives: (a) to help us improve our command of English, (b) to truly foster the development of our professional digital competences, and (c) to strengthen the bonds between university tutors and school mentors. The present article analyses how a group of four student-teachers benefitted from the initiatives they took during their last school internship.

In Catalonia, teacher training programmes last for four years. Students have taken 240 ECTS credits when they graduate as primary teachers. At our university, courses in the first three years are compulsory. Optional courses are only offered in year 4, when student teachers enrol in a minor. Out of the 240 ECTS credits, only 44 are obtained through taking part in school placements, two of them in year four. Our last school placement was developed within the framework of the English minor. We spent a total of 203 hours at our host schools and 25 hours at the seminars offered at the university. Our team in the practicum seminars was small, as it was only composed of four student-teachers and a university tutor. The seminars were aimed to guide the work we were expected to do at schools. Sessions were devoted to sharing and reflecting upon our observations and our performances, to share learning materials and resources, and to learn how to apply theory into practice by planning tasks and projects to be implemented at the host schools. Rose Mary's case ([see chapter 19 in this same volume](#)) was born in those seminar sessions, a training experience that forged us into the teachers we are today. It is our objective to reflect upon what we did with the hope to inspire

other student-teachers, school mentors and university teacher to engage in similar fruitful training adventures.

### **A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step**

In all our school internships we were expected to plan a teaching unit and to implement it at our host school. We knew our last practicum was not going to be an exception, but we were not ready for the challenge our university tutor was going to set for us on our first tutorial seminar together. In the theoretical courses we had taken in the first semester and the one we were taking in the second semester we had been told that applying the principles of Project Based Learning (PBL) in the classroom, combined when possible with some sort of telecollaborative exchange with other schools, had excellent benefits for learners. It was our turn to turn theory into practice. The problem was that our university teacher suggested that we tried to design a single common project.

It was a crazy idea as our school contexts differed enormously. No school was implementing PBL in their classrooms, none of us were teaching on the same grades, each school had organised the curriculum differently and, as a consequence, schedules and the length of the sessions varied from one school to another. And on top of that, all our school mentors had a pre-planned agenda with the kind of topics we were expected to cover ... and they were not the same!! Still, our university teacher insisted that it was possible. Two of us left that first seminar willingly to accept the challenge, the other two were not convinced at all.

On the second seminar, those of us who had embraced the possibility of designing a joint project were eager to share our ideas. They had gone through the list of contents they were expected to cover with their teaching unit and believed that if they prepared a sort of interactive game, those so diverse contents could fit into the same teaching proposal. Our university tutor was thrilled with the thought and gave us more ideas and showed us resources we could use. The three of them were so enthusiastic that the other two finally gave in. We were really overwhelmed but thought that we would have enough time in the future to plan lessons by ourselves and that we could not miss the opportunity to join our classmates and form a team. After the seminar, we kept on brainstorming what we could do and we finally came up with an idea. We would create a fictional character who had suffered a theft and would ask our students to help her discover who the thief was, what he had stolen, when he had done it and where he hid the stolen objects. Rose Mary, our fictional character who impersonated a rich Australian woman, was travelling around

Europe and needed our students help her know what had happened in her mansion. That was the argument line we needed to start planning. We wrote to our university teacher immediately.

Hello, Maria!

Yes, we are going to work together and we are so excited about it 😊  
In fact... we would like that you could participate in our T.U. too, so we thought about asking you for a little favour.

Would you like to be our rich Rose Mary from Australia, who has lost her precious treasure? We could record the video tomorrow, after talking about the T.U. (we will finish before 18:30). If you want, you can bring some rich and snob complements (we will do the same).

Figure 1. Extract of the email sent to our university tutor to inform her about our plans and ask for her support

We had already taken our first step to learn about being a collaborative teacher.

### **Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration**

Working as a team was vital to come up with an engaging teaching unit that covered the agendas our school mentors had set for us and that could motivate our students to learn English. We would not have succeeded on our own. Four brains have better ideas than only one. But planning together required a large time investment. Due to time and distance constraints, most of our meetings to take decisions about what we would do and how were held through Skype or by phone calls.

Our common project was to get our students to solve Rose Mary's case, but each school was in charge of one part of the enigma (who, what, when, where). We agreed on a shared calendar to conduct the common tasks (becoming familiar with vocabulary related to robberies, presenting Rose Mary's case, understanding what a treasure is, accepting the case and distributing tasks among the different schools, presenting preliminary findings, creating a video to present the solution to the part of the case assigned, sharing the videos, closing the case). We established that the project could not last longer than four weeks, but each of us was free to decide how much time would be spent on the implementation of tasks assigned to our group to solve part of the mystery.

The creation of a digital blog provided a platform for the students to communicate and share their discoveries. The blog kept us and the students in the four

schools interconnected, also with our university mentor, who, to the eyes of children, was Rose Mary. So, on the blog we were all working on the same case. Children were really excited and eager to enter the platform to see if Rose Mary or the other groups had left them a message. In class, each of us used other ICT tools to relate the course contents to be covered with the case.

Being and acting as a team guaranteed success. As we had a shared objective and we all more or less knew what the others were doing in their lessons, we could help one another even to plan the sessions which were not common. Peer support was also essential to cope with stress. We all enjoyed the experience, but at times we felt pressure inside. We worked hard to cater for the needs of the students in our groups and respect their learning pace while we were struggling to finish the tasks in our groups on time to keep to the shared schedule and maintain the coordination with the other groups stable. We all helped one another minimize these minor moments of crisis and together we learnt to relax and enjoy the terrific experience we were living. But what Rose Mary's case really taught us was that we are well prepared for challenges. No matter how big they are, our determination will always lead us to their accomplishment.

### **Actions speak louder than words**

Looking back, we can say that although we never made it explicit and we had not yet fully experienced it, we all believed in the importance of teacher collaboration. We created a joint project because we supported the idea that by working together our students would achieve better results and we could learn more, too. One of the key points that explains why we succeeded was the fact that we managed to turn an individual assignment for our practicum course into a collective project.

The second key to success is to be found in our weekly seminars. Our university tutor was also an in-service primary teacher and she could present to us a significant number of tools and resources, together with ideas on how to exploit them in regular classrooms and in our shared project. In the seminars we had attended as part of our previous school placements, each student teacher was responsible for planning and implementing their own teaching sequence. This meant that we spent a lot of time listening to what other student teachers were doing and did not have much time to collectively reflect upon what we personally were doing. This was not the case this time, as we all pursued the same objectives and our university tutor could focus on just guiding a project. We learnt a lot from her, not only because she shared a lot of resources and teaching strategies with us, but also because she showed us the importance of teachers' commitment and

engagement with what students do. Her enthusiasm towards how we were developing our shared project was contagious. The seminars became a learning space for being creative, for solving problems, for being flexible to modify some of our ideas to improve them, and, above all, for sharing and caring.

### **Nothing succeeds like success**

Having had the privilege of learning by doing with a caring educator empowered us as teachers. We are all now feeling the joy of teaching our own groups for the very first time. The experience is positive because our last school internship nurtured us and helped us trust who we are as teachers and what we are capable of doing. As we were taking part in a project to promote innovations in our teaching programme, we knew that our case was going to be examined. We would not have behaved differently if it had not been, especially because we could not foresee that what we were doing was important. We were simply too busy and focussed on the task at hand.

Over the summer we learnt that our university teacher and the head of studies in our minor had presented the experience we lived at the seminars and during our internships at a couple of teacher conferences, and they even produced a research paper about it (see Mont & Masats, 2019). That also made us value our actions more. We are aware that we have joined a profession everybody seems to know a lot about. We have seen that parents, politicians and society in general always give teachers advice on what they should or should not do. Teachers are always looked at and their job is often minimised. Being able to read a paper that speaks positively about what we have done is self-assuring. Giving us the opportunity to also write about it is rewarding. But best of all was the new challenge they both set us: presenting Rose Mary's case at APAC 2019, a local Convention for teachers of English in Catalonia.

At the Conference held by the Association of English Teachers of Catalonia (APAC) we presented our experience, shared our materials and prepared a hands-on session for in-service teachers (see figure 2). We could state that attendees valued our work and described it as an extremely inspiring practice for the educational community. That was the icing on the cake.



Figure 2. Rose Mary's case reaches the APAC 2109 Conference

## Concluding remarks

Rose Mary's Case allowed us to put in practice what we had learnt about telecollaboration and project-based learning. It made us grow as teachers because it allowed us to develop foundational literacies (ICT literacy), competences (problem-solving, creativity, communication, collaboration) and character qualities (curiosity, initiative, persistence, adaptability, and leadership) so necessary to become 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers. It helped our students to engage in a problem-solving telecollaborative project that also put at play their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. But above all, the experience was significant because it constituted an example of a good teaching practice during university practicum seminars. We just hope our thoughts serve as a source of inspiration to teacher-educators and other student-teachers can live enriching similar experiences such as ours.

## Acknowledgments

The work presented was developed within the framework of a project, entitled *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*, funded by AGAUR, Agència de Gestió d'Ajuts Universitaris i de Recerca. Reference number [2015 ARMIF 00010](#).

Our sincerest gratitude to Maria Mont, our university teacher, for embarking us on the adventure of planning and implementing a project together and for guiding us to become the best teacher versions of ourselves.

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**SECTION FOUR: Inspiring classroom projects**



## Inspiring classroom projects: An introduction

Josep Cortada<sup>1</sup> & Dolors Masats<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Escola Les Aigües (Cardedeu)*; <sup>2</sup>*Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona*

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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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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# How do plants survive? Observing a carnivorous plant

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## Introduction

*How do plants survive? Observing a carnivorous plant* is a three-month interdisciplinary project that gives young learners of English the responsibility of learning to work in teams to create a video documentary to help younger students understand how to take care of a Venus Flytrap. Based on the premises of project-based learning (PBL), this student-centred proposal, carried out by a group of four graders in the English class, was interdisciplinary in nature as it linked contents from six areas: Maths, Arts and crafts, English, Science, Social sciences and Catalan.

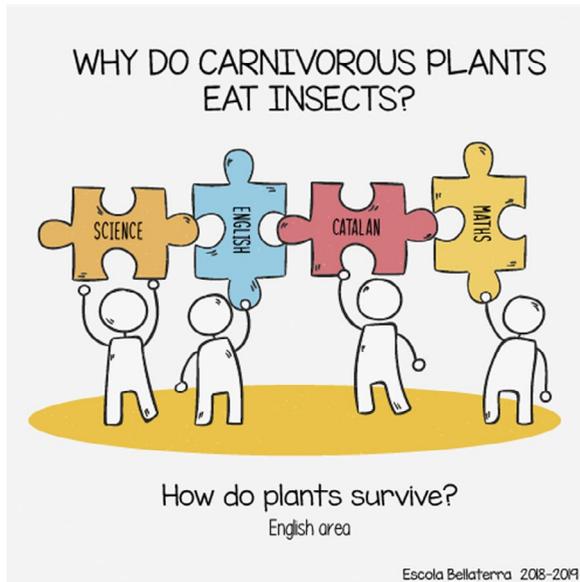


Figure 1. Front cover of the Power Point document created to present the project

Students in our school start taking care of a vegetable garden at the age of five. By the age of 10, growing plants is a relevant task for them and they are fully aware that plants are helpful not only because they have fundamental nutrients for us, but because they are essential for all of the ecosystems as they clean the air we breathe. Children are constantly making parallels between plants and human beings.

## Project contents and learning objectives

Bearing in mind the fact that the project is interdisciplinary, contents dealt with are closely linked and related to most of the areas in the Catalan curriculum. They are listed in table 1 below, together with the target competences for each area of knowledge.

Skills /Subjects	Contents	Competence-based learning objectives
Numeracy/ Mathematics	Time and calendar	To identify mathematical concepts in everyday objects, paying special attention to the characteristics of 2D and 3D geometrical figures.
Fine Arts	Materials and forms	To manipulate plasticine to create 3D models. To express knowledge through drawings.
Autonomy, empowerment and entrepreneurship	Reaching agreements	To be able to imagine how to explain what they've learnt to other students. To develop creativity and teamwork skills.
Learning to learn	Making connections	To be able to interconnect knowledge in order to build a mind map.
ICT Literacy	The use of digital tools to express complex concepts in a mind-map. The use of digital tools for interpersonal and personal communication	To use Popplet to create a mind map. To use digital tools to communicate ideas and create multimodal texts.
Citizenship Education	Cooperation & solidarity	To develop ethical critical thinking skills linked to the establishment of connections between cause-effect and means-ends actions. To identify ethics and empathy values. To adopt a solidarity attitude towards the environment.
Social Sciences	The world around us: Plants' native habitats  Different climates, different needs	To pose critical questions related to what plants need to survive. To locate different countries on a map. To understand the consequences of the climate linked to plants.

Skills /Subjects	Contents	Competence-based learning objectives
Literacy	<p>Reading and writing short multimodal texts</p> <p>Understanding and producing short oral texts</p> <p>Asking and answering questions</p> <p>Recognising the need to know more than one language to communicate</p>	<p>English:</p> <p>To create an audio-visual text.</p> <p>To understand short oral texts.</p> <p>To make descriptions.</p> <p>To read short texts.</p> <p>Catalan:</p> <p>To create a written scientific text describing an experiment.</p> <p>To share knowledge about what one has learnt.</p> <p>Plurilingual competence:</p> <p>To determine which language should be used in each communicative situation.</p>

Table 1. Overview of the project contents and learning objectives

## Project Outline

### *Getting Started*

Creative teachers often see PBL as a huge opportunity to engage all the educational community members (students and teachers, even families) in a marvellous learning adventure. After deciding the topic of the project (plants) with children, we brought a carnivorous plant to class and told them that second graders would get one too and would need advice from us to learn to take care of it. The objective was to trigger students' motivation to get the project started and help learners to design a good driving question to lead their inquiries. Getting the "wow effect" beforehand made things simple. Children were simply amazed by the fact that they were going to have a carnivorous plant in class and eager to discover how they survive.

During the first days, pupils shared their ideas on how to take care of the plant. They knew how to make a plant live, but this experience was different. Lots of questions were raised after they observed how the plant ate insects. They first read the label on the pot (see figure 2) to know the conditions that the plant needed to live. Then, students surfed the Net to find more for information.

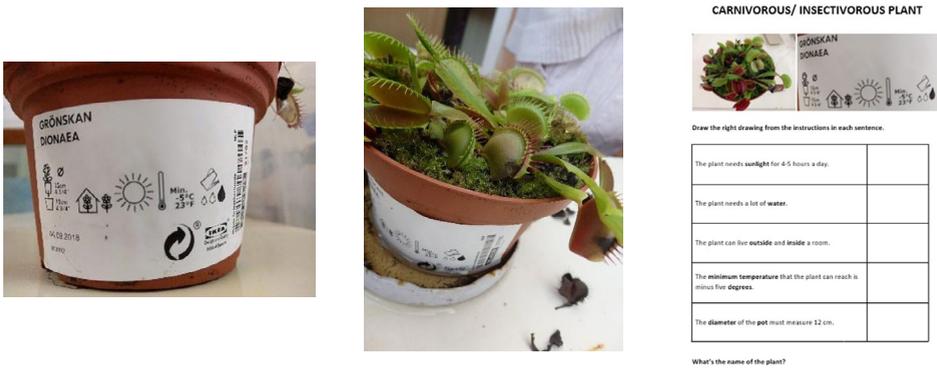


Figure 2. Shots of our carnivorous plant, its pot and the worksheet students had to complete

During their search, they had to find out the *common* and the *scientific name* of the plant, discover which its *native habitat* is, determine the *type of soil* that it needs, and learn to name specific *parts of the plant*. The worksheet also contained *instructions* (see figure 3) in English, supported by icons and drawings, that children had to read and understand to take good care of the plant.

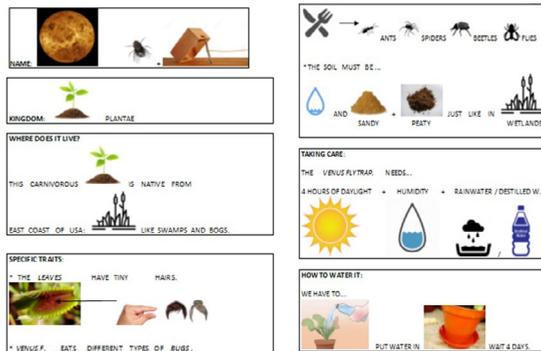


Figure 3. Instructions given the very first day the carnivorous plant got into the class

### ***Implementing the project***

With the help of their teachers, children decided to observe the Venus Flytrap (aka *Dionaea muscipula*) and investigate how plants survive. Following an enquiry-based methodology, students engaged in experiments, and through processes of observation and analysis they learnt complex scientific concepts such as adaptation to a habitat, digestion, water types, water cycle, nutrients, the periodic table, etc. It is important to highlight that the project was carried out through

English so students had to learn new vocabulary related to the topic and to create sentences using the present simple tense. In the Catalan class, pupils engaged in the process of creating distilled water for the plant and wrote about it (what water is, where it comes from, etc.). Moreover, they also learnt the water cycle and the periodic table elements essential for the carnivorous plant. Maths also played a key role throughout the project, as students wanted to create a model to show younger students how the carnivorous plant survives. For example, they focussed on numeracy when they counted the days the plant needed to digest an insect. They also had to decode the information about the diameter of the Venus Flytrap contained on the label of the original pot, before deciding the size of the pot they would need to repot it. At that point, they also had to figure out what  $\frac{3}{4}$  of water meant.



Figure 4. Reading the instructions and repotting a new carnivorous plant

Before creating the video documentary, students had to produce two sub-products. Sub-product 1 was aimed at creating a mind map with relevant information about carnivorous plants. Sub-product 2 focused on the creation of a Venus Flytrap model to illustrate all the important aspects related to the plant's survival. Both sub-products were necessary to create the project's final product: a video documentary on our carnivorous plant (why there aren't carnivorous plants in "el Bosquet", the forest near the school, what and how often the plant eats, how the digestion process works, etc.) to illustrate how they live and how they should be grown.

Sub-product I: Creating a mind map using ICT tools. The tasks necessary to elaborate this sub-product were mainly carried out in the areas of English and Science, as pupils had to look for scientific information related to the plant. Specific scientific vocabulary was introduced through different worksheets with activities in which students had to match pictures and words. They were also asked to create a picture dictionary with the key words that they would need to use throughout the whole project.

First, pupils focused on learning basic and elemental information about the plant.

After some discussions about what we had also observed, as a group we came up with certain sentences that described what we knew about the Venus Flytrap. Then, students, in pairs, wrote down a scientific text explaining what they had learnt about the plant.

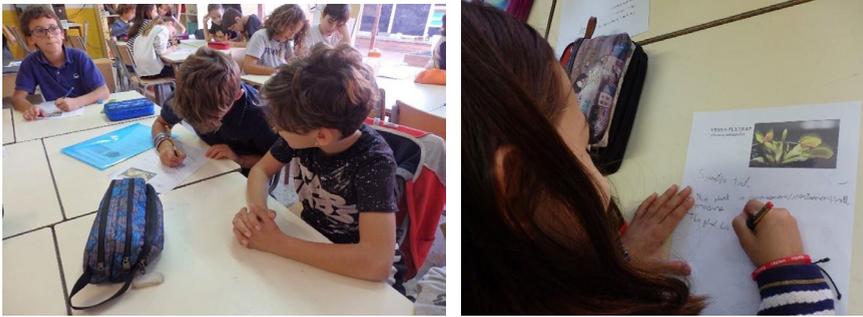


Figure 5. Writing a scientific text cooperatively

Children also produced drawings of the plant (see figure 6). Amazingly, students' drawings were based, in part, on what they had learnt during the previous school years in the lessons devoted to take care of the school vegetable garden. Some of the children also illustrated how they imagined the plant looked like inside and related its digestion process to ours by drawing small stomachs in the stems. Drawing is a common tool used in our school to explain a process or a statement, because it helps students organise information to make it understandable for others. They are used to doing it from a very young age.



Figure 6. Scientific drawings based on children's representation of the plant's digestion process

Through the analysis of their drawings (some were similar, others were different), we focused on understanding the plant's digestion process from the start (when

they catch the prey) to the end (when an exoskeleton is left in its leaves). To do this task, we had to take a close look at a leaf, so we used a 'Motic loupe', a binocular loupe that allows users to take pictures of the objects observed and to project the images directly into a computer. With the loupe we could observe many things: digestive glands, exoskeletons, trigger hairs, three wings, etc. We read some information about the plant to be able to identify its parts. Then, we watched a time-lapse video related to the digestion process of a Venus Flytrap in which we could see the digestive liquid and the length of the process.

As stated previously, drawing is a powerful tool used commonly in our school in the Science, Maths or Literacy lessons, not only as an art technique itself, but also as a tool to understand processes and as a visual representation of our thoughts. So, students drew how the digestion process works to have their ideas clear.



Figure 7. Digging into the digestion process

Afterwards, they watched a video from 'Doctor Binocs'<sup>2</sup> about the different types of carnivorous plants, first all together, and then in pairs. During the second

viewing, they took notes, focusing only on the types of carnivorous plants. Then, they created a collaborative poster (see figure 8) with some shots from the video. This was just a starting point, as this collaborative poster grew exponentially along the lessons and was used by children to produce their own with Popplet (a mind maps creator).

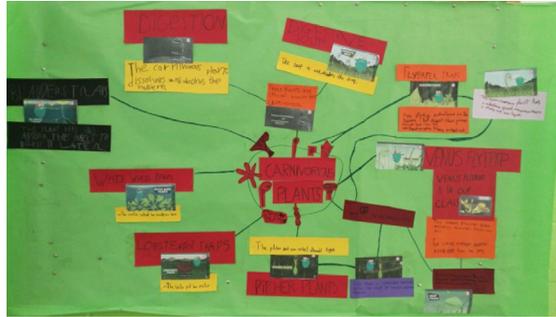


Figure 8. Shots of the collaborative mind map

After that, in the computer room, students created a more complex mind map using Popplet (see figure 8). Students had a template of a possible mind map and key words. In groups, students filled the template using the words they thought were essential to describe the plant: habitat, types, characteristics, preys, parts, etc.

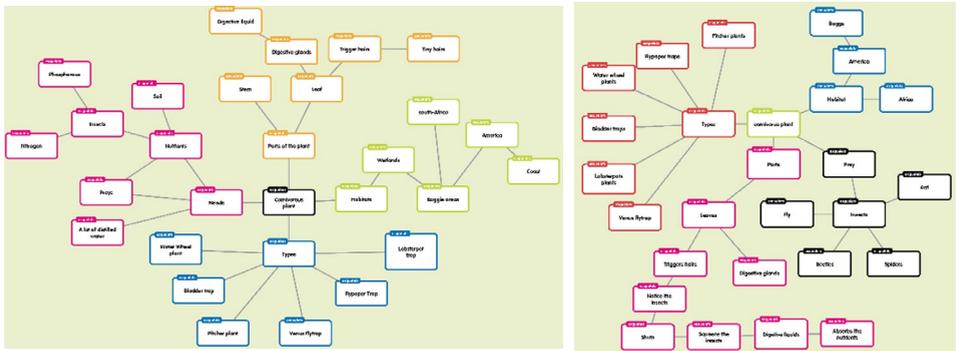


Figure 9. Shots of the Popplet mind maps

**Sub-product II:** *Creating a Venus Flytrap scale model made of plasticine.* Thanks to the elaboration of this sub-product, children developed teamwork skills and acquired the most important concepts related to the life of a Venus Flytrap. This hands-on approach helped students understand what happens in the inner body of a Venus Flytrap. To produce the scale model, pupils had to bear in mind all

they knew about the Venus Flytrap (sub-product I) and they had to decide how they would represent it to students who had not observed the plant. The model would later be used as support material to record a video documentary (the project's final product).



Figure 10. Creating the Venus Flytrap scale model

Final product: *Recording a video to explain what we know about the Venus Flytrap.* As we said earlier, the groups in second grade had also received a Venus Flytrap, so the video documentaries fourth graders had to produce were targeted at them. Fourth graders produced the documentaries in groups, so there were a total of six videos. In them, fourth graders let second graders know what they had learnt about the Venus Flytrap and gave them instructions to help them take care of their plant. The documentaries presented more or less the same information but some groups gave more detailed descriptions than others.



Figure 11. Screen shot of one of the video documentaries used to explain to a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader how to take care of the plant

## ***Presenting the project final product***

The various videos created were later projected along the school corridor during the days in which the school held an exhibition entitled “Discovering our environment”. Other groups in the school had learnt about trees or about the medical properties of some plants. The video documentary on the carnivorous plant served to illustrate the whole community how plants adapt to their environment. As in our school we follow the PBL approach, for us it is important to establish links between what students in the different grades are learning, and between school contents and real life. The exhibition followed these two objectives.

## **Concluding remarks**

The project demonstrates that learning complex and abstract scientific facts in English is possible if tasks conducted for such a purpose are meaningful, functional and real. Pupils were at the centre of the learning process, were given responsibilities and had a real motivating objective to fulfill: helping younger schoolmates take care of a Venus Flytrap. The experience was so fulfilling for them that a few have a carnivorous plant at home. During the project, students’ competence in English improved considerably and some of the students are no longer afraid of using this language to communicate their ideas and thoughts.

## **Acknowledgements**

We want to express our gratitude to the A<sup>+</sup> Project group leaders for inviting us to write this article. As teachers, sometimes we tend to think that what we do at our schools is not important and we need empowering tasks like this one to realise we dreamt big and managed to conduct a good project.

We want to give our special thanks to our colleagues from Escola Bellaterra who are always eager to help us. This project was successfully developed thanks to their enthusiasm and support.

## **Notes**

1. Time-lapse video on the digestion process of a Venus Flytrap:  
<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2016/01/video-venus-flytrap-counts-avoid-being-tricked>
2. Video on the different types of carnivorous plants:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4yvUjw2-jl>

# Tangram Animals: Creating a game as a vehicle for learning

Teresa Casas Rio  
*Escola Lacustària (Llagostera)*

## Introduction

*Tangram Animals: Creating a game as a vehicle for learning* is an interdisciplinary project that gives 5<sup>th</sup> graders the possibility of creating a tangram game while learning Maths, English, ICT, Art and Catalan. The main objective of the project was to use the game of tangram as the guiding thread, a sort of motivational element, that encouraged students to learn and acquire teamwork skills. All the sessions were carried out during the English class and the one-hour-a-week Maths class in English. A wide range of activities offered the students the opportunity to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.



Figure 1. 5<sup>th</sup> graders helping younger students play *Tangram Animals* during the break

*Tangram Animals* was the final product students produced at the end of the project, a game created to be played during the break. Children in our school have the chance to play boardgames, once a week, as a form of entertainment. In those occasions, 5<sup>th</sup> graders take the role of game assistants. That is why I suggested they create a new type of game. They enjoyed the idea and easily got immersed in the world of tangrams.

## Project contents and learning objectives

This project aimed at getting students to develop positive feelings towards learning Geometry while designing and creating an artistic production in the form of a game. It was organised around a series of challenging tasks that enabled learners to develop reading comprehension and writing skills and the communicative abilities required to speak in front of an audience. The tasks also fostered learners' imagination and improved their ICT literacy.

Table 1 presents the project's specific learning objectives and the corresponding assessment criteria.

Learning objectives	Assessment tasks
1. To discover the origins of the tangram.	1. Answering explicit, implicit and referential questions about the text.
2. To talk about shapes, sizes and colours.	2. Identifying tans through the game <i>"Is this your shape?"</i>
3. To make a tangram.	3. Manipulating the tans to create shapes.
4. To boost visual-spatial orientation skills.	4. Rearranging the seven tans to complete images or create new ones.
5. To activate oral communication through a tangram dictation.	5. Listening to their peers' instructions to arrange the tans correctly.
6. To investigate and observe geometrical figures.	6. Creating specific polygons using one or more of their tans, without overlapping them.
7. To discover the relations between area and perimeter.	7. Sharing reflections after observing several polygons created with the seven tans.
8. To foster writing.	8. Describing an animal that can be created with the tans.
9. To develop ICT skills.	9.1. Typing the description of an animal. 9.2. Designing a PPT as a support to present the project.
10. To promote artistic skills.	10. Creating a game for the school: designing boxes with the descriptions of the tangram animals on the cover and the tans inside.
11. To foster a critical and respectful attitude towards learning.	11.1. Showing interest and involvement on the tasks. 11.2. Developing positive attitudes towards cooperation and teamwork.
12. To improve the communicative skills.	12. Presenting the project and the final product (a tangram game) in front of an audience.

Table 1. Overview of the project learning objectives and assessment criteria

Table 2 presents the project’s contents and relates them to the corresponding curriculum areas.

<b>Connections with Catalan Curriculum</b>	
<b>Maths Specific Competences</b>	<b>Maths Key Contents</b>
<p><b>Problem solving dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 2. Answering questions to solve a problem and checking the correctness of solution proposed.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasoning dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 4. Making conjectures related to everyday situations and verifying the results</li> </ul> <p><b>Connections dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 6. Stablishing connections between different mathematical concepts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geometrical (2D and 3D) figures: elements, characteristics and properties.</li> <li>• Geometrical transformations.</li> <li>• Equivalences.</li> </ul>
<b>English Specific Competences</b>	<b>English Key Contents</b>
<p><b>Oral communication dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 3. Interacting orally using basic appropriate strategies in accordance with the communicative situation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 5. Using the basic, visual and discursive characteristics of a text format to understand it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Writing dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 8. Producing simple written texts.</li> </ul> <p><b>Multilingual dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 12. Using multilingual strategies to communicate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral fluency skills.</li> <li>• Managing communication and information.</li> <li>• Reading aloud skills.</li> <li>• Using specific vocabulary to describe animals.</li> <li>• Searching information in paper and digital sources.</li> <li>• Text adequacy, coherence and cohesion.</li> <li>• Connectors and punctuation marks.</li> <li>• Nonverbal cue element.</li> <li>• Sociolinguistic and cultural aspects in texts.</li> </ul>
<b>Art Specific Competences</b>	<b>Art Key Contents</b>
<p><b>Instruments and applications dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designing and creating multidisciplinary artistic productions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interest, appreciation and respect for (own and others) artistic productions.</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Specific Competences</b>	
<p><b>Instruments and applications dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 2. Using the basic functions of text editors to present digital data and create multimedia presentations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Citizenship, habits and digital identity dimension</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competence 9. Promoting healthy habits when using technology.</li> <li>• Competence 10. Making a critical, safe and responsible use of ICT tools.</li> </ul>	

Table 2. Overview of the project competences and key contents

## **Project Outline**

### ***Getting Started***

During academic year 2016-2017, the 5<sup>th</sup> graders in our school were responsible for the correct management of a weekly session in which, during the break time, students of different ages could play boardgames. “How could we create a new game based on the tangram?” was the question used as a trigger to start the project. However, additional questions would soon arise: “What do we know about tangram games?”, “What is a tangram game?”, “Can we learn maths playing tangram games?” To start, we decided to investigate the origins of the tangram.

### ***Implementing the project***

We started reading an abridged text<sup>1</sup> about the tangram. It provided students with key information about this Chinese puzzle: the type of tans, the history of the game, the large number of possible shapes that can be created by arranging the tans differently, etc. That data awakened great interest in the students who soon were eager to manipulate the tans. To check their comprehension of the text, I prepared explicit, implicit and referential questions. The answers to explicit questions were words or sentences that could easily be located in one of the text passages. The answers to implicit questions could be found by interpreting clues in the text. Finally, to answer referential questions, students had to make connections between the information in the text and their prior knowledge about the game.

A tangram is composed of seven tans: two small triangles, one medium triangle, one square, one parallelogram, and two large triangles. To help students become familiar with the names of the shapes and their characteristics, they were first invited to play the game “Is this your shape?” in pairs. It consisted of trying to guess the shape of a tan that a classmate had chosen by asking questions such as “is this your shape?” and paying attention to the answers given (“No, my shape is not a triangle”, “No, my shape is not big”, “No, my shape is not green”). They had to ask as many questions as necessary to discover the right piece. Second, students could play with the tans, using them to create their own shapes or to solve puzzles<sup>2</sup>. This second option was more challenging because students had to figure out how the shapes were placed to build up a particular image. In any case, students had to consider the ancient rules of the game, which established that the pieces must lie flat, that they must all be connected and that they must not overlap.



Figure 2. Checking comprehension when playing the game ‘Is this your shape?’ and when solving puzzles

After playing tangram, children were asked to carry out a set of mathematical activities. To cater for different learning styles and multiple intelligences, I offered my students three different ways to make a tangram<sup>3</sup>. The first option was to use a 4 x 4 grid as a template. The second option consisted of drawing their own pattern and cutting it out. As a third option they could create a tangram without using a template, just by following simple and visual guided steps. After completing their tangrams, students accepted a new challenge: arranging the tans in a square to create a double sized tangram of fourteen tans. They discovered that the only possibility to create such a tangram was to compose a new double sized squared piece by cutting the original squared piece into four triangles.



Figure 3. Children making their own tangram and solving the challenge to create a square using fourteen tans

In order to promote communication I designed a tangram dictation. Students formed groups of four. Each group had a 3 x 3 grid. Two students in each group had to give instructions to the other to create a tangram shape. Before playing the game in groups, we performed a small demonstration. Seven students acted as tans and had to follow the instructions given by the group to move around the classroom (e.g. ‘Paula, stay in the middle’, ‘Mireia, take Martí and place him to the left of Teia’). Then students did the same in groups. This gave students the possibility of practising prepositions and how to give commands in English. Then we did the same but using tangram pieces that we placed on the ground. This time students took turns to instruct a classmate on how to arrange the tans to form a shape. After completing this activity, students were ready to work in teams and play the tangram dictation. The methodology used to prepare students

for the dictation was based on the philosophy defended by Rosa Sensat's a+a+ maths group, which I am part of, and that defends that experiential and game-based activities are necessary to help children understand and learn complex mathematical concepts.



Figure 4. Practising how to give instructions and doing a tangram dictation

To understand the mathematics in the game, I set children challenging geometry activities created by Laura Candle<sup>4</sup>. Thanks to them, we could describe various shapes and their attributes, we learnt to use precise mathematical terms, we managed to create specific polygons with one or more tangram pieces, and we were able to draw our findings on a chart. We paid special attention to the type of polygons we could create with seven tans and dealt with the concepts of perimeter and area. I encouraged students to make hypothesis about the perimeter and the area of the different polygons. They could also use strings to measure the sides of the shapes, which helped them draw their conclusions. It was very rewarding for me to listen to a student proclaim that all the polygons had the same area because all of them had been made with the same number of pieces and shapes. She was also delighted and enthusiastic about her discovery.



Figure 5. Investigating, observing, discovering and developing abstract thinking

The idea of creating a game with animal silhouettes came up during the English class. In pairs, they looked for an animal that could be made with a set of tans and described it with the help of teacher. The descriptions had to include the name of the animal and information related to its appearance (size, colour, weigh, parts of the body), its abilities, its likes and dislikes, its habitat, its behaviour, and its diet. If they judged it necessary, they could also add other special details. When their descriptions were completed and corrected, they typed them and printed them. In the art class they laminated and glued the descriptions on the top of a

box cover. Then they produced two sets of seven tans. One set was used to build the silhouette of the animal in the description and glue it inside the box cover to provide players with the answer to the puzzle, the other set was put in the box to be used to play the game. All the boxes were stored inside a bigger one.

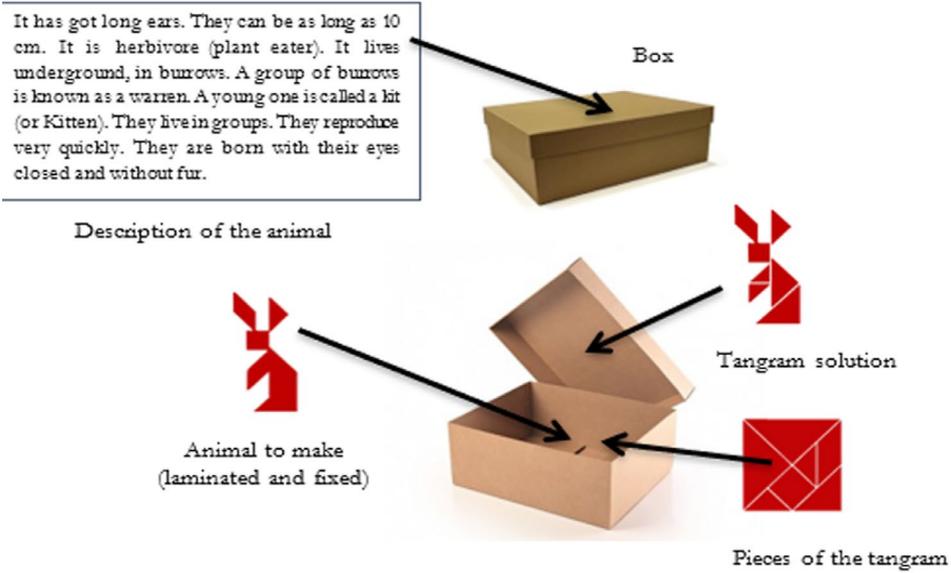


Figure 6. Steps to create the boxes for the game

Students also created the instructions to play the game and glued them on the cover of the big box. The instructions explained to the players that to play the game they should take one of the smaller boxes, read the description of an animal on the cover, identify that animal, check if their answer was correct, try to make the silhouette of the animal using all seven tans and finally check if they had produced the correct silhouette by looking at the solution inside the cover.

***Presenting the project final product***

After having created 23 boxes with descriptions of animals, one more step was missing: presenting the game to all students in the school. To prepare this task, students were organised in small groups. Each group had to prepare an oral presentation to summarise the process of creating the game and to present the rules to play it. They had to create a PPT to support their presentation. To create visual slides, they could include some of the photographs they had taken while they were preparing the game. Each group was in charge of presenting the

project and the game to another class. They created a checklist to decide what they would say and to use it as a self-assessment tool afterwards.



Figure 7. Stages of the project and presentation of the final product

When the project was finished, I asked all my students to write, this time in Catalan, how they would value the experience and I invited them to reflect on their personal learning process. I would like to remark on one of the views they shared: “We had the feeling of doing several subjects at the same time and that was great fun”. I was satisfied as they described with their own words the objective of a cross-disciplinary project such as ours.

At the start of the project, I had presented them the rubric I wanted to use to assess them. I would focus on their attitude in class, on whether they cooperated and helped one another, on the quality of their descriptions (good contents, correct presentation, right structures and accurate vocabulary), on the design

of the box (originality) and on their use of English to address me and their peers. The results were good. They got deeply involved in the project, and even enjoyed playing the game in class. They loved being the protagonists of a school project and liked watching a recording of themselves on the school website. That made them become aware of the large number of linked activities they had really carried out, of how hard they had worked and how rewarding their learning outcomes were. And they did it all in English!

### **Concluding remarks**

Thanks to *Tangram Animals: Creating a game as a vehicle for learning*, students, families and teachers were convinced that cross-disciplinary projects promote significant learning and allow students to look at the world from different angles, through different disciplines. Moreover, a common goal always stimulates participation, enthusiasm and collaboration with peers. The adoption of the project-based learning approach in class has many benefits because critical thinking, motivation, team work and cooperation are guaranteed.

### **Acknowledgements**

My gratitude to the A+ Project leaders for inviting me to write this article. I would like to thank my 5<sup>th</sup> A and 5<sup>th</sup> B students from Lacustària School who got involved in this project with great enthusiasm and care. I would also like to thank my colleagues for their inspiration and support. I want to express my special gratitude to Rosa Sensat's a+a+ maths group in Llagostera and of course, to our coordinator Josep Callís i Franco. Working with them has changed my way of valuing, understanding and teaching mathematics.

Last but not least, I would like to mention that this project was created during academic year 2016-2017 within the framework of my participation in GEP 1 training group (Grup d'Experimentació per al Plurilingüisme), supported by the Subdirecció General de Llengua i Plurilingüisme del Departament d'Educació de la Generalitat de Catalunya.

### **Notes**

1. The texts about the origins of the tangram we used were <https://www.siammandalay.com/blogs/puzzles/62356035-spotlight-tangram-puzzles> and also <https://www.parentingscience.com/tangrams-for-kids.html>
2. The images used as silhouettes of the animals were found on this webpage <https://www.tangram-channel.com/tangram-puzzles/animals-easy/>

3. The options to make a tangram were taken from <http://www.fun-stuff-to-do.com/support-files/how-to-make-a-tangram.pdf> and <http://www.fun-stuff-to-do.com/support-files/how-to-fold-a-tangram.pdf>
4. The geometry challenging activities created by Laura Candler can be found at: [www.lauracandler.com](http://www.lauracandler.com)
5. The video of the project can be seen on the school website <https://agora.xtec.cat/escolalacustaria/gep/gep-projects/>

## The country of the year

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### Introduction

*The country of the year* is a year-round cross-disciplinary project that offers students the possibility to gain historical, geographical and cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries around the world. This project, which is mainly carried out in the English classroom, is structured through a series of sequenced goal-oriented tasks developed at different times during one academic year. The project started six years ago and involves all the primary students in the school and most of their teachers. Each year the project is devoted to the study of an English speaking country, so the structure of the project varies to adapt to the ongoing object of inquiry and so does the end product children need to produce. When students graduate from the school, they have had the opportunity to learn about six different countries.

At the beginning of each school year, we inform pupils, school staff and families about the country that has been chosen, and give them all the possibility of suggesting tasks to do. Although the goals of the project are the same for all the students, the tasks will be tailored to meet the needs of students in each grade. Younger students will engage in less cognitive demanding tasks than older students, but they will all collaborate to produce a joint product at the end of the school year.

As the project is cross-disciplinary in nature, contents and competence-based learning objectives relate to various field areas in the Catalan curriculum and they vary from one project to another. Table 1 below summarises those common to all projects:

## Contents and learning objectives

Skills/Subjects	Contents	Competence-based learning objectives
Arts and crafts	Art techniques Famous artists	To develop creativity and aesthetic emotions. To apply art techniques. To appreciate art work.
Autonomy, empowerment and entrepreneurship	Building the right learning environment.	To develop creativity and teamwork skills. To cooperate to reach agreements. To make personal contributions to the project.
Learning to learn	Planning & assessing	To apply previous knowledge to solve tasks. To self-assess and peer assess processes and products. To develop techniques for cooperative work.
ICT	Searching for Information Delivering information	To use the internet as a tool to search for information. To employ Power Point to create presentations.
Citizenship Education	Cultural and linguistic diversity	To develop curiosity and interest in the culture and the history of English-speaking countries. To appreciate and respect local traditions and traditions from other countries.
Literacy	Understanding and creating oral and written texts  The value of knowing other languages	To create multimodal texts to deliver information. To understand short oral and written texts and be able to ask and answer questions related to them. To appreciate and respect home and foreign languages
Music & PE	Musical instruments of English-speaking countries Traditional songs & dances	To recognise the sounds of different instruments (bagpipes, didgeridoo, etc). To sing traditional songs and perform folk songs from English speaking countries (Irish dancing, Haka...).

Table 1. Overview of the project contents and learning objectives common to all projects

### Project outline

As we said earlier, every year we follow the same steps to present the project to the children and their families, the structure of the project remains the same but the activities are always different and the final product often is too. First, we will describe the process of presenting the project to the community and then we will briefly summarise the projects we have developed so far.

### ***Getting started***

At the beginning of the school year our pupils are welcomed with the bulletin board outside the English classroom decorated with a map, posters and photographs of one English speaking country. In the first weeks, we ask students what they know about that country, if they have ever been there, if they know someone that has visited it, etc. It is at that point that we also inform the school staff and families which the selected country is. Class tutors, who are always informed about the project activities children carry out in the English class, will occasionally devote time in their lessons to get students to make new discoveries about the target country. Families are also welcome to propose activities to be done at school.

### ***Implementing the project***

The tasks done during the first weeks of every academic year are essentially the same. Then, the tasks proposed are oriented towards the production of a particular product, a different one each time. In the next sections we will briefly describe what we did each year.

#### ***Academic year 2013-2014: NEW ZEALAND***

The final product was a mini-book for each kid. As it was the first year in which we implemented the project, students were invited to conduct a mini research on the presence of the English language around the world. They used their laptops and the school library to find out the name of the countries in which English was the official or a co-official language. They were surprised to see there were many, as they associated the language with UK and USA. For that reason, the first country we chose was New Zealand (the furthest and surely one of the less known by the students).

Apart from preparing a mini-book with information about the country (geography, history, flora and fauna, customs and traditions, gastronomy), children had access to other materials (e.g. a Power Point elaborated by the grandparents of one of the students, who had travelled to New Zealand recently) and engaged in the creation of other projects, either as a whole group (e.g. they invented a song about the kiwi bird) or in their own classrooms. For example, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders prepared an oral presentation on a bird, the kiwi, to be delivered to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders created posters to present the Maori culture to the 2<sup>nd</sup> graders. That year, the PE teacher got involved in the project and taught 6<sup>th</sup> graders how to dance the Haka, a traditional ritual dance.

### *Academic year 2014-2105: IRELAND*

Thanks to our second project, we learnt many things about Ireland and Irish traditions, but as a final product that year we celebrated St Patrick's Day. Everybody was invited to come to school dressed in green that day. On that occasion, to signal the beginning and the end of the school day, Irish music played through the school loudspeakers.

Prior to that, half of the children in the school had taken part in a workshop on Irish dancing offered by an Irish Dancing Company. The dances learnt were performed during St Patrick's Day. Some groups recited short poems, others had decorated the corridors of the school.



Figure 1. Celebrating St. Patrick's Day

The youngest students wore a self-made necklace in the shape of a shamrock.



Figure 2. Jack-o-Lanterns made with the help of parents

During the school year, children took part in other activities related to the Irish culture. For example, that year a few families stayed at the school during the last week of October to help teachers and children make Jack-o-Lanterns. To celebrate Halloween, we also organised a storytelling session to listen to Irish tales and we had a traditional Irish breakfast in the morning. The latter task was also used as an excuse to learn about food and nutrition later on.

### *Academic year 2015-2016: THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA*

Through the third project, children got to know elements related to history, traditions and culture of the United States of America: geography, politics (Presidents/flag), currency, famous monuments and places, traditional food, fauna and flora, sports, famous people (singers, actors...). The final product this time was to create a collective big book, with lots of pictures and short texts, to summarise the main lessons learnt during the project. As always, each group did different activities and learnt about local artists: 6<sup>th</sup> graders, for example,

focussed on Bruce Springsteen and his song “Born in the USA”.

Children made other discoveries. For example, they learnt to identify the major differences between British English and American English. But the task they all enjoyed the most was the one we carried out at the beginning of the school year: we celebrated Thanksgiving Day. First, we had learnt about the origins of the celebration. We decorated the door of the English class with pictures to symbolize the trip of the Pilgrims to the USA and an American family from the school prepared a Power Point to present us with this part of American history. We read abridged texts about Thanks Giving Day, played memory games using vocabulary related to this festivity and we even organised short performances in class!

Children created nice posters to summarise what they had learnt about Thanksgiving Day, but to celebrate it in the school, we had to ask the kitchen coordinator if children could have a traditional Thanksgiving meal for lunch. They agreed and it was really nice and meaningful! This activity was the start point to learn about healthy food and healthy habits later on and to create a poster with the food pyramid to decorate the classrooms.

Apart from having a special meal on Thanksgiving Day, children also engaged in a meaningful activity to understand what it is being celebrated: they had to express gratitude. We wanted them to become aware and conscious of the so many little things in life we must be grateful for.

Different groups did different tasks to say what they were grateful for: For example, the youngest students did a crown with the shape of a turkey and decorate it with key words to represent what they were grateful for. The oldest students wrote a postcard with the same purpose to take home.



Figure 3. Thanksgiving card for parents

### *Academic year 2016-2017: AUSTRALIA*

Many interesting activities took place during this project! But the one that children liked the most and the one that captured the attention of the local media was the visit of the Australian consul in Barcelona to our school at the end of the

school year. He was received by a group of students who gave him a tour around the school and showed him the displays about his country we had prepared to summarise what we had learnt. The displays complemented a video we had prepared for the same purpose. During his visit, the consul could also watch our video and deliver a presentation about Australia to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. At the end of his visit he recorded a short video thanking the students and teachers for the great job done<sup>1</sup>.



Figure 4. Arts and Crafts model of an Australian landmark



Figure 5. Mr. John S. Rochlin (Honorary Consul of Australia in Barcelona) at our school

During the visit, the consul was impressed with all the tasks students had participated in. As usual, different groups had been in charge of conducting different activities. At Christmas, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders had decorated the hall of the school with ornaments that could evoke warm Christmas in Australia (e.g. flip flops painted in red and green were hanging from the ceiling) and all the students took home a self-made Christmas card inspired in Australian Christmas cards (e.g. Santa Claus surfing).

One of the student teachers doing an internship at our school had recently been to Australia and prepared a Power Point to present to the students the most relevant facts about the country and to narrate his personal experiences there. We did not have families from Australia in the school, but one of our parents had lived there and had learnt to play the “didgeridoo”. He came to the school and taught first graders how to play this musical instrument. This same group also learnt how to throw a boomerang and even made one. 2<sup>nd</sup> graders decorated the cover of their folders with drawings inspired on the finger paint technique used by Australian aboriginals. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders created models to represent different natural sites of Australia (Ayer’s Rock, Coral Reef, Shark Bay...), which were exposed in the school’s corridors during the visit of the Australian consul. Other groups made big posters illustrating different aspects of life in Australia.

*Academic year 2017-2018: THE UK*

Our fifth project was devoted to discovering the UK. First, we dealt with cultural aspects common to all parts of the UK (the weather, the tea time ritual, traditional food), then we divided the project into three smaller projects. In the first term we discovered Scotland, in the second term Wales and in the third term England. We learnt a few facts about Northern Ireland, but as our first project had been about Ireland, we did not create a specific project to learn more about the northern part of the island.

Again, we could count on our families and some parents prepared a Power Point presentation to talk to us about Scotland. They even came to class with homemade shortbread cookies. They were so good that we decided to learn to bake shortbread cookies by following the recipe a very famous British chef had recorded on video. We took our cookies home as a Christmas present. Our Christmas cards that year were also inspired by Scotland: Nessie was in them.

WALES: GROUP EVALUATION						
Mark every item with a Tick or a Cross						
	Is the Power Point clear?	Is it well prepared?	Did you understand it?	Is the pronunciation ok?	Positive things	To improve (a suggestion)
GROUP 1	✓	✗	✓	✓	Interesting information	They were a bit noisy
GROUP 2						
GROUP 3						
GROUP 4						
GROUP 5						
GROUP 6						



Figure 6. Peer evaluation of a Power Point presentation of Wales

Figure 7. A matching activity using a cooperative technique (pencil in the middle)

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> term we learnt about Wales and the story of its patron Saint David. Some of the youngest kids in the school prepared a short performance in class to retell it. In our last term we focused on England and its capital London. Apart from knowing about famous landmarks, we discovered famous British artists. In the English class, we learnt about English artist David Hockney and songwriter Ed Sheeran. Class tutors engaged children in an arts project inspired by one of the artist’s most famous collections. As a final product children created a collective video clip of Sheeran’s song “Perfect”, each class sang a part of the song.



Figure 8. Class of 1st graders singing an Ed Sheeran song for the final school video

## **Concluding remarks**

We have to say that we are amazed at children's engagement in the projects. We have noticed that children enjoy learning about other countries and other traditions. We believe that if they learn to appreciate other cultures they will grow as citizens who respect differences. Taking part in this project is always a very enriching experience for students and for us, their English teachers, especially because through the project, we can establish links with some of our colleagues. In turn, it is a very helpful tool children have at hand to build bridges between what they do in English and what they do in other subjects.

## **Acknowledgements**

We want to thank everyone who, at some point, has been involved in this project: school staff, families and visitors who organised workshops for children or entered our classrooms to collaborate with us.

We are especially grateful to Mr John S. Rochlin (Honorary Consul of Australia in Barcelona), who so easily accepted our invitation to come to the school to visit our exhibition and delivered a talk about Australia. We were touched by his generosity, kindness and his nice words about what he had seen.

We also want to give special thanks to all the English teachers that have been working with us during these years. Their participation and enthusiasm towards this project has been very appreciated.

## **Notes**

1. The message the Australian Consul addressed to our students can be watched at: <https://agora.xtec.cat/ceip-turocanmates/general/el-consol-daustrialia-visita-lescola-turo-de-can-mates/>

# City students and town students

Teresa Oliva<sup>1</sup> & Cristina Asensio<sup>2</sup>

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## Introduction

Students' access to technological gadgets does not guarantee that they learn better. The value of digital tools depends on how they are applied and used in the classroom and on how teachers manage the learning tasks that trigger their use. Students today are quite used to employing digital technologies for entertainment purposes, at schools they should learn to use technologies to create. This project consists in getting students from two primary schools located in different municipalities (Barcelona and Cardedeu) to prepare a geolocation game to present the local landmarks to the students from the other school. The learners are responsible of creating the contents of the game and of sharing what they know about their home town/city.



Figure 1. Front cover of the Power Point created to present the project

This project was first designed in academic year 2014-2015, and, as technologies evolve rapidly, it has been updated every year since then, with the objective of taking advantage of the new instruments technology provides us with. The children in our classrooms understand that communicating and interacting with others today cannot be done using only “paper and pencil”. We believe that as teachers, we must encourage them to make sound use of technology. Our challenge was to decide how we were going to use the digital tools children had access to at school (tablets, computers, mobile phones, gadgets, digital whiteboard) to deliver the contents of the English curriculum in Catalonia. Following

the premises of the project-based learning approach, we opted for giving learners the power to act and challenged them to create their own contents. First, we wanted them to use their tablets as devices in which to create collaborative documents, but soon we observed they preferred to use their mobile phones.

### Project contents and learning objectives

The learning objective of *City students and town students* is to help learners to improve their communicative and digital competences while designing learning activities in which the use of mobile devices plays a significant role. Students' tablets and phones are not mere tools to access and consume contents, students use software to create multimodal texts. Among others, children learn to edit texts and images or to create video presentations and spreadsheets. As students adopt an active role as material creators, they develop their communicative and digital competences in an integrated way. The use of digital technologies such as QR code generators and readers, augmented reality tools, geo-mapping tools and audio-visual editing apps such as iMovie, also allow learners to construct knowledge related to other field disciplines and develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Table 1 summarises the learning contents and objectives in our project.

Competence-based learning objectives	Subjects / Skills	Contents
To design collaborative tasks.	Citizenship Education	Discussing and reporting information. Conducting research.
To describe one's immediate surrounding.	Geography	Neighbourhood, town, city characteristics.
To develop oral communicative skills in English.  To improve writing skills.	English	Oral presentations and verbal interaction. Describing people. Describing places. Asking and answering questions.
To develop autonomy and creativity.	Autonomy	Applying knowledge creatively and autonomously.
To interpret and apply knowledge.	Learning to learn	Applying knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts.
To use digital tools creatively.	ICT	Creating with <i>iMovie</i> , <i>QR reader and creator</i> , <i>Piccolage</i> and <i>Picsart</i> .
To appraise one's own culture. To develop a sense of belonging.	Social Sciences	Traditions and culture.

Table 1. Overview of the project contents and learning objectives

## **Project outline**

### ***Getting started***

The English teachers in both schools are the project designers and team managers. Students are the project executors. Students who live in the city of Barcelona will do a tour around the town of Cardedeu to learn about modernism and to know the modernist buildings in the town. So the task of the students in Cardedeu is preparing this tour. Similarly, the students from Cardedeu will visit the city of Barcelona to learn about modern architecture. The task of the students in Barcelona is to prepare a tour around the neighbourhood of Poblenou, where their school is located, so that students in Cardedeu can visit the modern buildings in the area.

We believe that today, more than ever, members of society need to develop effective teamwork skills. Consequently, in this project, students mainly work in small teams. They learn to develop self-confidence and to appreciate the diverse talents of each and every person in the group. Cooperative work also helps children create closer bonds with their peers, in the same class and with the students of the other school. As teachers we guided students and enabled them to realise that we can learn from others.

### ***Implementing the project***

The project encompasses a series of sequential mini projects related to different areas of knowledge.

#### ***Mini project 1: “Do people live better in the city or in the countryside?”***

At a pre-stage in the development of the project, students watch a video of the traditional tale ‘Country Mouse and Town Mouse’ as a tool to activate their previous knowledge and vocabulary necessary to take part in a discussion about the pros and cons of living in a city or in the country. During the discussion, students talk about our current lifestyles and list the differences and similarities that they see with regards to living in these two environments.

#### ***Mini project 2: Who are they? Where do they live? How can we find out?***

To present the project to the students through an inquiry-based learning task, we give children clues on the location of the partner school and get them to observe images using geo-localization mapping tools such as *Google maps* and *Google street view*. Through the observation of unfamiliar surroundings, children are able to discover the origin of these images, locate their partner school and

develop their abilities to describe the differences between the landscapes in a city and in a town. This latter task generates debate and helps students to express their ideas and opinions accurately and to compare them with the opinions of other classmates.



Figure 2. Pupils discover the location of the partner school

Next, children are asked to introduce themselves to the children in the partner school. We design a sort of ‘Who is who’ game for this purpose. First, students create a written text to introduce themselves and provide details such as their name, age, birthday, nationality, languages spoken, hobbies and interests. They also describe their physical appearance and the clothes they are wearing that day. Then, they use their tablets to take a long shot photograph of themselves and upload this image and their written description to a *QR generator app*. The QR code is then pasted onto an image of a mobile phone using *Picollage/Picsart*. Then students give their QR code a personal touch by adding stickers related to their personal description. Finally, we share the QRs with the students in the other school and interpret the data in the QRs they send us and we all know each other before we meet in person.



Figure 3. Reading QR codes

To get students to appreciate how much they have in common and to become aware that the main difference of living in a rural or urban environment concerns the amount of time spent in getting from one place to another, students create and share videos that describe their daily routines and what they enjoy doing during their free time. Other tasks carried out within this project include making graphics and bar charts to share information on their birthdays, and on creating oral presentations using *Tellegami*. On a few occasions, students meet each other through *Skype*.

*Mini project 3: “Our school is cool!”*

In the next stage, students learn to describe their school building and the different activities that they do on a typical school day. Students map their school using geo-localization tools and record a short, fun video to present their school to their friends. To do so, first they need to practice how to give directions in English and revise the vocabulary necessary to describe accurately the location of the different rooms in a building.

As an example of the activities done at school, on Halloween students wrote and recorded scary stories to share with the students from the other school. This also reinforces students’ sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge related to the target language.



Figure 4. My school is cool!!

*Mini project 4: Describing the place where we live*

As one of the core tasks in the project, students work in small groups in class time to search and collect information about the different neighbourhoods in their area. The city of Barcelona and the town of Cardedeu are both divided into 10 neighbourhoods, so students in each school form 10 groups. Each group creates a fact file after deciding which information on the internet is important for the project. Then, they are asked to visit the neighbourhoods with their

families at the weekend and record and edit a promotional video of the area. On the videos, they should act as tour guides and present interesting places to visit. This is a wonderful opportunity for them to expand their vocabulary, to improve their public speaking skills and to learn to use video editing technology. These videos are uploaded and shared with the students in the other school, who appreciate the work done by others and have the possibility to become familiar with the places they will soon have the opportunity to see in person.

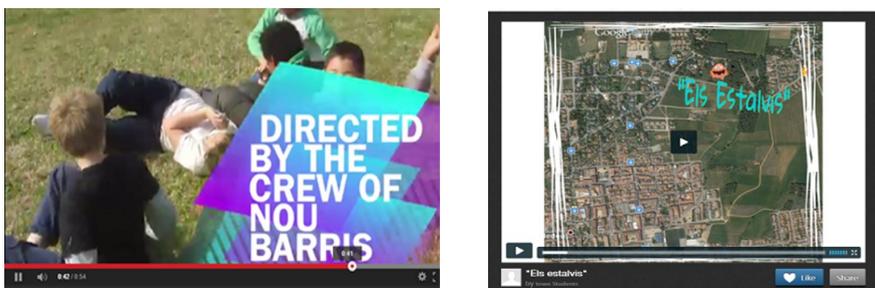


Figure 5. Video documentaries on our city and our town

### *Mini project 5: Designing the treasure hunt*

The video documentary serves students as a resource to reflect upon how they can prepare a treasure hunt in their school area. Again, through inquiry-based tasks children select the landmarks they want to present to the students in the other school and create a route, they sketch a tour to the selected buildings in a “treasure hunt” format. To prepare the treasure hunt, students, in small groups, do research on one of the buildings and create a leaflet describing its main architectural elements. Descriptions are complemented with a series of questions to help visitors focus on the observation of particular features of the buildings. This information is transferred to a *QR generator app*.

### *Presenting the project final product*

The project has two final products: the treasure hunt around a neighbourhood in the city of Barcelona and the treasure hunt in the town of Cardedeu. When students arrive at their partner school, they are welcomed by the students who have prepared a small tour around the school. Together they have a small snack in the playground to break the ice and then visitors are given self-made maps of the area and the instructions on where to find the QRs to complete the treasure hunt and get to know the main landmarks in the city/town they are visiting. Visitors lead the tour by following the instructions the local students have prepared for

them. Local students follow their visitors and only intervene if it is necessary. Observing how others interpret the instructions and respond to the questions they have posed for each of the buildings is a powerful assessment tool to value the work done.



Figure 6. The treasure hunts in Barcelona and Cardedeu

The tours have worked extremely well year after year. Students from Barcelona can appreciate modernist architecture in Cardedeu by visiting places such as the Viader house and the Golferichs house. Students from Cardedeu can appreciate modern architecture in Barcelona by touring around the most emblematic buildings in the 22@ district of Poblenou (Indra, Mediativ, Torre Glories, Dhub). The two groups of students establish connections between them and they appreciate the activities others have prepared for them. There has never been any conflict during the tours.

### **Concluding remarks**

The use of mobile devices in the classroom is open to debate. Through this project we have introduced them in our classes in a tangible and systematic way as a tool to teach students how to interact with their environment. The use of mobile devices and other digital tools has completely changed our teaching practice because now we can create inquiry-based tasks to promote significant learning in a student-centred environment. Every year we try to incorporate the trendiest digital tools into the project to keep it updated. This also allows us to open a pedagogical debate in our schools on how technologies could be used in other contexts to give students access to contents and field knowledge in other subjects. We intend to continue with this project and expand it. Our immediate plan is to keep on working together to attain three objectives:

- To use digital technology as a pedagogical tool for students to teach other content knowledge.
- To create a school network to generate and exchange similar experiences.

- To train other in-service (and pre-service) teachers to use digital tools effectively in their classrooms.

Finally, we believe that the experience is positive because it helped us create a positive learning environment to encourage the development of our students' autonomy and creativity. By learning in a cooperative environment, students were able to learn with and from others. We know that the project helped students forge close bonds with their peers. Many friendships have blossomed since the project started, five years ago. We hope that many of the students who first met in 6<sup>th</sup> grade while preparing a tour around their city/town will reunite soon in university lecture halls.

### **Acknowledgments**

This activity could not have been done without the support of Àrea TIC (Consorti d'Educació), Àrea TAC (Departament d'Ensenyament), CPR Sant Martí and Sant Celoni, and the administration departments in our school.

We would like to thank the teachers and intern students in our schools for their support and, especially for accompanying us and a group of about 100 students on the tours in Cardedeu and around the 22@ district in the city of Barcelona. The project has been in action for five years thanks to students, teachers and families who value it. We are immensely grateful for that.

Our special thanks to the coordinator of [2015 ARMIF 00010](#) for selecting our proposal as an example of best practice and for inviting us to participate in her project.

## Rose Mary's Case

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### Introduction

*Rose Mary's Case* is a project created by four student teachers during their last school internship. The proposal, whose objective was to get four groups of primary children from different schools and ages to collaborate to solve a fictional robbery case, was designed according to the premises of the Project Based Learning (PBL) approach. It was carried out in the English classroom and contributed to the development of learners' 21st century skills (literacy in English, ICT literacy, critical thinking, communication, problem solving and learning to learn).

At the beginning, the project was challenging for different reasons. First, we were not teachers yet, but trainees. This meant that each of us was doing an internship at a different school under the supervision of mentors who had different views on education and on classroom dynamics. Second, at our schools we were in charge of different age groups: one of us was in a 3<sup>th</sup> grade class, another one in a 4<sup>th</sup> grade class, and the other two in 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes. Consequently, the curriculum requirements differed from one group to another and so did the teaching agendas our mentors had for us. Yet, our university tutor had set us the challenge to create a joint project and we had accepted it.

### Project contents and learning objectives

A fictional multimillionaire, Rose Mary, contacted the kids in the four schools to ask them if they could help her solve four mysteries. First, she wanted to know who had robbed her in her absence. Second, she wished to find out when the robbery had occurred. As she was not at home, she was also uncertain about what had been stolen. Finally, she was interested in discovering where the robber had hidden her belongings. Students from each school should solve one part of the puzzle and together they would solve the case. Consequently, *Rose Mary's Case* could be seen as four different cross-disciplinary projects in the framework of a shared bigger project.

Organising the joint project in the form of a puzzle-like structure allowed us to respect our individual teaching agendas and still collaborate to design and create a common student-centred learning proposal. All of us had to teach English, but

each of us had also to teach contents from other areas in the Catalan curriculum, such as social sciences, maths or citizenship education. The contents for the area of English were not the same for all the participating students, either. For example, in one of the schools, the project had to serve as an excuse to teach children how to construct sentences using the past tense, whereas in two other schools form-focused instruction should relate to the use of specific vocabulary, in one case to describe the parts of a house and in the other case to name professions. Yet, as we developed a joint telecollaborative project, contents and competences linked to the use of ICT tools were common for all schools. Similarly, learners' autonomy, learning to learn or critical thinking were skills all children should learn to put at play while taking part in the shared project.

We think it is not necessary to detail the objectives and contents of each of the four teaching proposals developed, but we would like to describe the contents and learning objectives that were common to all. Table 1 lists them.

Skills	Contents	Competence-based learning objectives
Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding and producing oral and written texts</li> <li>• Asking and answering questions</li> </ul>	To interpret oral and written texts. To select information from a text. To identify the different parts of a text. To create written texts. To create a video documentary. To express opinions and thoughts.
ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using digital tools and resources</li> </ul>	To use emails and blogs to communicate with others. To record a video.
Critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem solving</li> </ul>	To formulate hypotheses. To justify one's ideas.
Autonomy, empowerment and entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building the right learning environment.</li> </ul>	To develop autonomy and teamwork skills. To take responsibility. To share knowledge with the team.
Learning to learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-assessment</li> </ul>	To be appraise one's learning process.

Table 1. Overview of the project contents and learning objectives

## **Project outline**

### ***Getting started***

Through a video recorded by our university practicum tutor, who played the part of our fictional character, Rose Mary, learners knew about the project. Rose Mary presented her case and asked children if they accepted the challenge to solve it. The four teachers adopted different procedures to present the video to the children. In two of the schools, teachers read children a letter they had pretended to receive from Rose Mary. In the other two the teachers brought a small poster in which Rose Mary announced a reward for those who could solve her case. After agreeing that they could help Rose Mary, children wrote an email to her.

In her reply, Rose Mary informed children that she had selected four groups of children to resolve her case and provided them with a link to a private blog they would also use to keep in contact and share their discoveries.

### ***Implementing the project***

The project was organised through a series of inquiry-based tasks, some of which were common to all the groups while others differed. Occasionally, the goals of the sessions were the same but the procedures to achieve them varied from one school to another. That was the case of the introductory session we described in the previous section.

The second section, also common for all the groups, consisted in getting to know Rose Mary. For that purpose, students were provided with a fake Wikipedia profile about the millionaire woman they were now working for. Students, in small groups, should read the entry and fill in a grid to record information about her that could likely be of help to solve the case. Again, each school adapted the cognitive and linguistic requirements of the task to the students' competences, skills and command of English. While they were engaged in this task, students received a message from Rose Mary in which she announced that each school had to focus on one aspect of the case in order to solve the mystery: who the thief was, what had been stolen, where the stolen goods were hidden and when the robbery occurred. From that point onwards, each group worked on the task they had been assigned.

- **School 1- What was the treasure stolen?** One of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade class had to solve this part of the puzzle. First students, in small groups, took part in a running dictation task, whose objective was to find out clues about objects in Rose Mary's mansion that could have possibly been stolen.

Then students had to brainstorm names of treasures that could match those descriptions. They had to write about a maximum of five options. Students would then share their hypothesis with the whole class and had to provide arguments to support their ideas. After that, Rose Mary asked them to solve ten riddles that described ten possible treasures. Based on the new information and the one that they already had, students selected six options out of the ten possibilities presented through the riddles. They also had to justify their choices. Finally, the pupils, again in groups, had to solve a breakout game, namely the Rose Mary Escape Box —a box that contained puzzles students had to solve and instructions students had to follow to discover the stolen treasure. At the end, all groups shared their results and compared them to see if they coincided.

- **School 2- Where was the treasure hidden?** 3rd graders had to discover where the treasure was hidden. To do so, they first had to carry out activities to revise and/or learn how to name types of buildings and parts of a house in English. Then, students formed groups and each group was given a piece of Rose Mary's neighbourhood map with three QRs, that could be scanned using a tablet. The message stored in each QR contained a number and a sentence describing a building. Children had to scan the three QRs, write the numbers down and understand the descriptions to interpret the clues they had about six suspicious buildings. To discover which of the buildings stored the treasure, students had to complete a series of tasks, whose instructions were also hidden in QR cards which students had to find in the classroom and scan. Once this mission was completed, students received an envelope with a message naming the building where the treasure was located.
- **School 3- When was the treasure stolen?** The other group of 5th graders were in charge of discovering when the treasure had been stolen. To do so, they had to learn how to narrate past events using the past simple tense. The Australian police had sent them a copy of the personal diary Rose Mary's neighbour kept. Unfortunately, the message had been partially destroyed and contained no verbs. In groups, students had to reconstruct the message and place the verbs, in the past tense, back in their place. As a support, students could use a glossary that contained a list of verbs in the infinitive form and in the past form and images to illustrate their meaning. Verbs were provided in coloured letters. Each colour represented one page of the diary. The pages of the diary were not bound together and they were also mixed up, so students had to arrange them in chronological order. By reading through the diary, students, still in

groups, had to develop six hypotheses with regards to possible moments which the robbery could have occurred. After putting the different hypotheses in common, students received five boxes, one per group. Each box contained four envelopes with activities students had to complete using verbs in the past simple tense. After solving the four activities each group received a message disregarding one of the six hypotheses. The hypothesis that was not mentioned was the solution to the puzzle.

- **School 4- Who was the thief?** 4th graders were in charge of discovering who the thief was. To do so, they had to link the suspects with their professions. First, students were introduced to different types of professions and then, through the blog, Rose Mary shared with them the information she had received from the Australian police about the possible robbers. This information (suspects' names, ages, nationalities, professions and relationship with Rose Mary) was presented as a set of enigmas students should solve to create the suspects' profiles. Finally, they received an encoded message that revealed which profile belonged to the thief.

Although these activities were carried out independently by each of the schools, they were carried out through the same time span, which made it possible to share with others the work done. At all the schools, children started their sessions by checking the blog for Rose Mary's news and, occasionally, by uploading pictures and comments on the work done. This meant that the blog was being regularly updated with news, comments and clues. The children in the four schools were virtually connected and informed about each other's progress. This helped them to create a positive teamwork environment.

As we said in the introduction, through their participation in this project, students could develop literacy skills in English, ICT literacy skills, critical thinking, problem solving and learning to learn skills in an integrated manner. To solve the case, students engaged in critical thinking as most of the tasks they had to carry out engaged them in a process of solving some sort of problem (ordering a text, finding missing verbs, answering a riddle etc.). As the project was developed entirely in English, these tasks triggered the development of students' communicative competence in this language. Students had plenty of opportunities to put at play their listening skills (e.g. when they were watching videos), their speaking skills (e.g. when they were recording their findings), their interaction skills (e.g. when they were sharing knowledge, ideas and opinions), their reading skills (e.g. when they were reading Rose Mary's Wikipedia profile or the instructions to solve some of the tasks) and their writing skills (e.g. when they were writing short

texts or sentences in the blog to report on their progress). Learning to learn was also very important, this is why students embarked on many tasks in which they had to think and reflect upon what they were learning. These recapitulations on the work done were also used as assessment tools. It was indispensable for us to know if our pupils were learning and if we had to make changes and adaptations to our initial plans to provide richer learning opportunities for them. All activities children engaged in were some sort of opportunity for us to assess what they knew. Correcting some of the tasks with the whole group also gave learners the opportunity of knowing how well they had solved the tasks and of becoming aware of whether they were making progress. Finally, at the end of the project, we also gave them a checklist to obtain feedback from them on the work done, which was useful for us in order to reflect upon what we could improve in the future.

### ***Presenting the project final product***

Prior to the resolution of the case, students in the four schools engaged in a common task. They were given the names of six possible thieves, six possible stolen treasures, six possible places to hide the treasure and six possible moments in which the robbery occurred. Students had to develop their critical thinking skills to provide arguments to vote for one of the solutions to the three puzzles they had not solved. Teachers then created graphs to illustrate which proposal obtained more votes and the students in charge of solving each puzzle provided the right answer and the corresponding explanation. The activity also served the purpose of arousing students' consciousness on the number of minds behind the case.

The final product in *Rose Mary's Case* were the four video clips students created to report on what they had done to solve their part of the mystery. The video clips were sent to Rose Mary, who, as a sign of appreciation for the effort done by the young detectives, put them all together and sent them back to the schools through their shared secret blog. By watching the joint video, learners could understand how the other groups had managed to solve their part of the puzzle. The most exciting part of this session occurred when the students realised that at the end of their clips, Rose Mary had added a short clip in which she personally thanked the students for the work done. She also sent a little reward for the children as sign of her immense gratitude.

## **Concluding remarks**

Designing and planning a project like the one we have presented here is a challenging and demanding, but a rewarding task for student-teachers ([see chapter 14 in this same volume](#)). The most important lesson we learnt was to value the benefits of teamwork. Having four minds working to attain the same objective is very enriching. Each of us came across with good ideas and resources to build up a common project but also to help others design their individual proposals. The second important lesson relates to the importance of integrating language learning and use in a global inquiry-based learning proposal. Students were really engaged in the project and improve their communicative skills in English throughout the development of the whole process. The third lesson learnt relates to the fact of becoming aware of what we can do when creativity, adaptability and persistence are combined. Our context was complex because the project was targeted at four groups of students who had very different needs and abilities. Yet, the contextual constraints became excellent opportunities to learn to solve challenges.

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all we would like to thank the four schools in which we developed our project for trusting us and letting us implement what at first seemed a crazy idea. Second, we would like to express our gratitude towards our school mentors for their unconditional support and encouragement. Third, we also want to thank the [2015 ARMIF 00010](#) project coordinator for creating the conditions that made this training experience possible. Finally, we would like to give our special thanks to Maria Mont, our university practicum tutor, who accompanied us in this adventure and inspired us to become the best teacher version of ourselves.



# How does Dalí turn his emotions into Art?

Maria Gracia

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## Introduction

“Every child is an artist, the problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up” (Picasso, 1976). I could not put it better than Picasso to describe the basis of the project I implemented during my teaching internship in my last year of my Primary Education degree. The project, entitled *How does Dalí turn his emotions into Art?*, was carried out, during two weekly sessions, in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade Art class conducted in English.

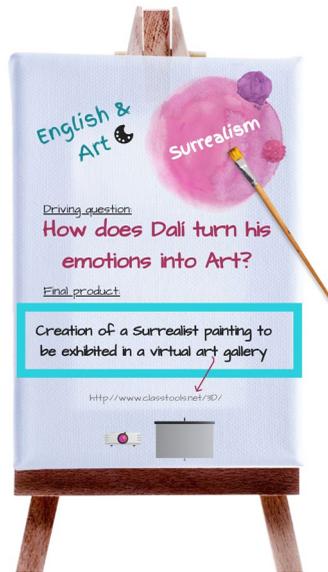


Figure 1. Image used to introduce the project to the students

*How does Dalí turn his emotions into Art?* was designed to teach children the characteristics of Dalí’s painting style and the common techniques of Surrealism, whilst providing them with an authentic context for communicating in English. Students were asked to be creative to produce a Surrealist painting to describe their emotions and concerns. Such final product would later be exhibited in a virtual art gallery and interpreted by different classmates, which provided the project with a real audience and purpose.

## Project contents and learning objectives

The project is cross disciplinary in nature. Table 1 presents the project's specific learning objectives and contents for each of the areas involved.

Skills/ Subjects	Contents	Competence-based learning objectives
Arts	<p>Recognition of the typical techniques of four different art movements: Baroque, Impressionism, Cubism and Surrealism.</p> <p>Analysis of the elements that we find in Dalí's artistic Surrealist works.</p> <p>Artistic expression of emotions, experiences, desires and critical appraisals.</p> <p>Elaborating a Surrealist painting.</p> <p>Development of aesthetic emotions.</p>	<p>To recognize different art styles and identify their main characteristics.</p> <p>To analyse in depth one of Dalí's Surrealist paintings.</p> <p>To express emotions through Art.</p> <p>To create a personal Surrealist painting.</p> <p>To interpret art work.</p>
English Literacy	<p>Understanding of short oral and written information in English.</p> <p>Adequate use and pronunciation of art vocabulary.</p> <p>Production of oral and written short texts in English.</p>	<p>To read, write and listen to short texts in English.</p> <p>To use art vocabulary correctly.</p> <p>To create oral and written texts to summarise the main information in the documents presented in class.</p> <p>To write a script and record an audio examining one of Dalí's masterpieces in detail.</p>
Learning to learn	Autonomous discovery of knowledge.	To extract information from different sources to build up new knowledge.
ICT Literacy	Use of digital resources to express information.	To use online tools ( <i>Canva</i> , <i>MakeBeliefsComix</i> and <i>Powtoon</i> ) to create digital informative texts.

Citizenship Education	Active participation in oral interactions respecting the basic rules of communication.  Interest, appreciation and respect for others' artistic productions.	To work collaboratively to reach a consensus and to achieve common goals.  To analyse and pose questions about the paintings produced by other classmates.
Social Sciences	Getting to know past events to understand the present.  Appreciation of our cultural heritage.  Awareness of how we and others feel	To analyse important events on Dalí's life to understand his paintings better.  To be aware of who Dalí was and how he contributed to the development of Art worldwide.  To express feelings and concerns and be attentive to others' feelings.

Table 1. Overview of the project contents and learning objectives

## Project outline

### *Getting started*

The first activity of the project consisted of getting students to write down on a piece of paper what an art movement was, crumple it up into a ball and throw it into a basket. We only read the pieces of paper that got inside the bin. None of them related the idea of an art movement with painting styles. Most of the students coincided in saying that an art movement had to do with the state of moving, so they wrote ideas such as “cinema”, “skating” or “stop motion”.

### *Implementing the project*

This brings us to the next important point that I would like to emphasise, which involves the means of introducing new knowledge to students. What I had clear from the very beginning is that I did not want my lessons to be teacher-centred, but I needed my students to be active and learn by themselves under my guidance. Thus, far from me being their main source of information, I designed materials that enabled them to build their own knowledge.

For example, instead of providing children with a correct definition of the concept of art movement, I prepared a Running Dictation through which they had to relate the definitions of Cubism, Impressionism, Baroque and Surrealism with their corresponding painting. Students formed groups of four and were

given pictures of four paintings, each belonging to a different art style. I posted four cards with a brief description of each art movement on the walls of the corridor. A student in each group had to run to the wall to read one of the definitions and return to the group to dictate it to their classmates. The other members of the group had to pay attention to the dictation and write down what they heard.

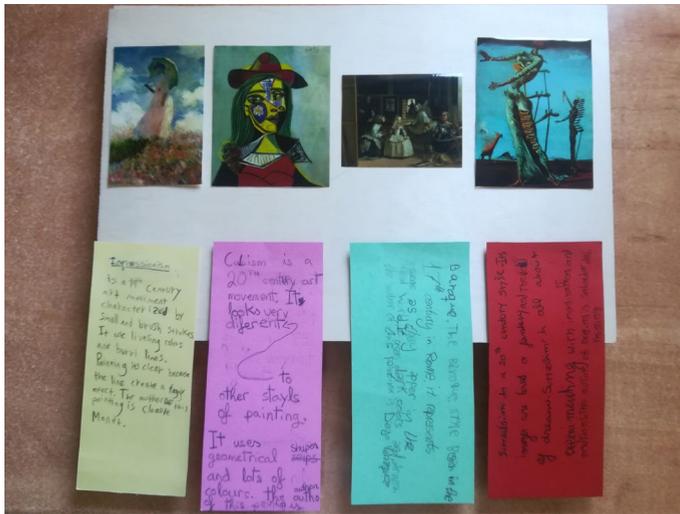


Figure 3. Example of students' productions in the running dictation

Due to space constraints, I cannot detail all the activities that enabled students to create their final product. However, I will try to give an overview of the main tasks that led students to fulfil their goal:

- *Getting to know Dalí's biography.* Students learnt about Dalí's biography by listening to an audio recording to know how to order a set of pictures that illustrated the main events in his life (see figure 4). This was also a unique opportunity for them to see the real purpose of using past tenses (see figure 5).



Figure 4. Images representing key events in Dalí's life

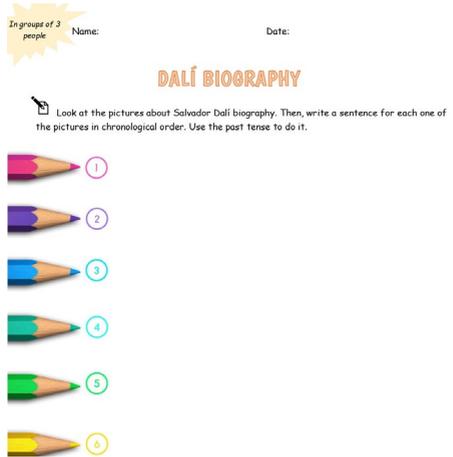


Figure 5. Worksheets to have students write seven events in Dalí's life, using the past tense

- Discovering Dalinian symbols.* Students formed groups. Each team had 16 squares with the name and an image of different symbols (see figure 6) present in Dalí's paintings (e.g. clocks). They also had a pile of cards with fragments of texts with explanations of the meaning those symbols had for Dalí (see figure 7). The name of the symbol was not mentioned in the texts, so students had to read the excerpts, match them with the appropriate symbol and summarise, on the corresponding card, what the symbol meant.



Figure 6. Symbols on Dalí's paintings

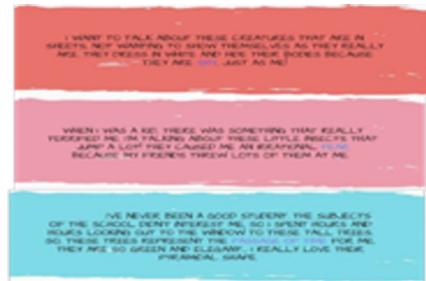


Figure 7. Fragments of texts to relate each symbol and understand its meaning

*Learning how to describe a painting.* Once students knew the meaning of the main Dalinian symbols, they were asked to analyse one of Dalí's masterpieces. Before

doing so, we did an information-gap activity to have students practice how to describe a painting. In pairs, they were asked to sit-back-to-back with their partner to play the game ‘spot the differences’. Each member of the pair had a picture. The two pictures were slightly different (see figure 8). The objective of the task was to discover the differences between the two pictures without seeing each other’s images.



- *Analysing a painting.* Students were asked to describe one of Dalí’s paintings to create an audio guide. Before recording their messages, students had to script what they planned to say (see figure 9). In the following session, we created a museum in class with the analysed paintings. Students would move around the class to observe them and could use the audio guide to interpret them.

Write a short analysis of the painting. It will be the script for an audio guide. Model

- The title of this painting/artwork/masterpiece is...
- This painting/artwork/masterpiece is called...
- Our names are..... and we are delighted to talk you about the painting called...

- The painting/artwork/masterpiece has the following Dalinian symbols:
  - On the right side of the painting, at the top, there is a flower, which/that represents happiness
  - In the middle, there is a baby, which/that symbolizes tenderness
  - ...

- With this painting/artwork/masterpiece, Dalí wanted to express...
- All in all, this painting/artwork/masterpiece transmits...
- This is the clear message of the painting/artwork/masterpiece:

Figure 9. Model used to help students write their script

As it can be noticed, all tasks were preceded by a focus-on-form activity with the objective of scaffolding the language students would need to use. The pictures used in the ‘spot the differences’ task also contained phrases students could use to produce their descriptions (see figure 8). I also devoted time to correct students’ mistakes.

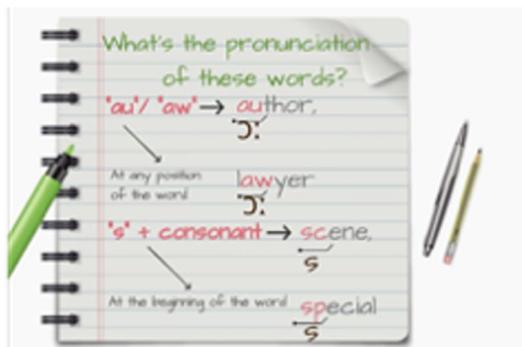


Figure 10. Poster used to correct the pronunciation errors detected during the game

For example, as I detected that during the Running Dictation task some students did not pronounce a few of the words correctly, on the following session I devoted some time to teach two basic phonics rules (see figure 10). Corrections were not made on the spur of the moment because the linguistic objective of the running dictation was to enhance students' oral fluency. Accuracy was dealt with through activities that promoted students' metalinguistic reflections on certain aspects of language —pronunciation in this case

### ***Presenting the project final product***

 Explain to your group what your surrealist symbol is about.



Figure 11. Interaction

As a final product, students had to create, in groups of five, a surrealist painting to represent a feeling. In the painting they had to hide a symbol to represent that feeling. Their text in their audio guide had to lead the visitors of the museum to recognise the symbol and understand it (see figure 11).

When their productions were completed, they were uploaded to a virtual art gallery. The paintings were accompanied by a description to help visitors interpret them better (see figure 12).

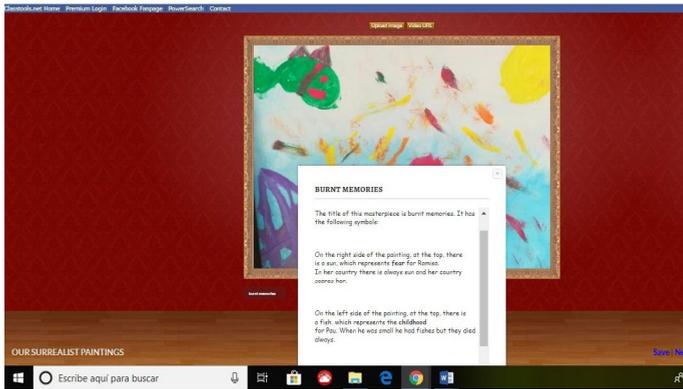


Figure 12. Example of a painting exhibited in the virtual art gallery

## Concluding remarks

Connecting language learning with real-life experiences and linking contents to students' lives and emotions was undoubtedly one of the strengths of this project. The other was its cross-disciplinary nature. English and Art contents were so intertwined that tasks always serve a double purpose: to learn English to learn to understand art and develop aesthetic emotions. Added to that, as most of the tasks involved interacting with peers and playing games, students could enjoy while learning, which counterbalanced the cognitive demands of learning complex contents in a foreign language. Gaming also allowed me to design tasks that were demanding for fifth graders but also attainable. As a consequence, neither the contents nor the language was trivialised in an attempt to reach all students.

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I would first like to thank Maria Mont and Dolors Masats for trusting me and allowing me to participate in this marvellous project. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to Nathaly González, my university tutor during my last teaching internship, for helping me think critically and for being such a different teacher. She taught me untold lessons that cannot be found in books. It was a great privilege and honour to work and study under her guidance. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the support of Raúl Martínez, my school mentor. I could not have had a better advisor and mentor during my last school placement. I would particularly thank him for giving me so much freedom to develop the teaching project I present here and for being such an extraordinary and committed teacher.

**SECTION FIVE: Classroom research & teachers as researchers**



## 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.

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# Research in the classroom by teachers for teachers

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## Introduction

Doing research in the classroom is not only for academics or researchers. Teachers and educators can find great aid in designing, implementing and learning from research in their own classrooms and/or schools (Moore & Dooly, 2017). Research is a means to understand a situation and act accordingly. In other words, research can help administrations, school communities and teachers to analyse a task or a process in order to understand it better and, if necessary, to design an action plan to improve it. An action plan that has already been implemented can also be the focus of inquiry of a research study (Dooly & Moore, 2017; Tusón, 2017; Noguerol, 2017).

Research can be done at a major scale, for example about a whole school community, or at a minor scale, for example about a class group in a specific subject. For example, a major scale research study could be conducted by a school principal interested in developing a programme to promote healthy eating habits among children. First, he would design a survey addressed to students and families with the objective of knowing children's eating habits at home. Imagine that the survey indicates that a high percentage of students do not eat fruit as they do not like it, and parents do not know how to introduce it to their children's menu. The principal wants to decide if teachers can intervene and make children aware of the importance of eating fruit. He then designs another survey, targeted at the school staff, to identify the actions that are already being implemented in the classroom and the perceptions teachers have. The data obtained is presented to teachers, and they all design and implement a programme to increase the consumption of fruit among learners. After some time, they can conduct another study to analyse whether the programme was successful and the goal was achieved or if it needs to be modified. An example of a small scale research study could be that carried out by a teacher who wants to introduce mindfulness techniques in her daily teaching routine to tame students' anxiety. For a short period of time she carefully observes students and keeps a diary to describe the situations in which children suffer stress in class. She uses her observations to design an action plan which includes employing mindfulness strategies. After some time, the teacher compares children's behaviour before and after the implementation

of mindfulness techniques in class and decides whether her plan is successful or needs to be improved. This cycle can continue until the teacher feels her main goal has been attained. This type of research is known as action-research.

Research in education can be very formal and involve different actors, a budget, and complex data compilation and analysis techniques. However, it can be less formal, which does not mean less useful, and require no budget and the involvement of just a few other teachers. In any case, a good research plan should include information about the goals of the study, the processes of selecting, gathering and analysing data and about when it will be implemented and by who. All research studies, whether qualitative or quantitative, have to be rigorous and systematic. As Alexakos (2015) claims, whether teacher-researchers are subjective in their own practice research is irrelevant as all human interpretation, including researchers' interpretation of their own analysis, is subjective hence what needs to be taken into consideration is that the research is done systematically and rigorously.

At the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and at other Catalan and Spanish universities, undergraduate education students are required to carry out a research project to complete their studies. The main objective of this compulsory assignment is to demonstrate to future teachers that research can be of aid in the classroom. As a consequence, student teachers are expected to design, plan and conduct a small scale research study under the guidance of a tutor (see the last three chapters in this section). The research is often implemented at schools, during their last placement, so in an authentic teaching and learning context. The project is very useful for their professional development as they learn the tools to carry out research in the classroom and are encouraged to inquire about something they are interested in. Furthermore, they learn that in the field of education it is key to understanding how things happen and why.

### **Getting started with research in your own classroom**

If you decide to undertake a research project in your classroom or in your school community, whether on your own or with others, you need to outline your research project before getting started. The very first step, which is usually what triggers the need for research, is to determine your research questions and aims. You need to have no more than three questions (you can have more but then the research gets more complex) that you want to answer, and a goal related to each question. When thinking about your questions and aims you have to be very specific, and narrow down the scope of your research. It is not the same to ask “What do children like playing?” as to ask “What do children like playing

during break time?”. The first question is too broad and will provide you with answers not focused on what you really want to know. The second question is narrower, specific and a target-oriented question. Then you need to set your research objectives. For example, if you want to find an answer to a question like “How do children best learn to read simple sentences: using apps or using manipulative materials?”, you need to decide what is most important for you: (a) to identify the best way for children to learn to read simple sentences; (b) to identify the affordances of apps for children to learn to read simple sentences; (c) to identify the affordances of manipulative material in learning to read simple sentences, (d) to recognize children’s opinions about the use of apps and materials in learning to read simple sentences. Your objective will guide your research and may lead you to modify the research questions accordingly.

Once you have your research questions and aims outlined you would then need to carry out a literature review to construct the theoretical framework of your study. This is a very important and time-consuming phase, but you need to know what other people before you have said about the topic you are going to investigate. What is important for you to bear in mind is that what you read will shape your thoughts. Having said that, avoid the use of non-reliable sources such as personal or commercial blogs and web pages. You can always find useful information there for your practice, but for research you should rely on academic books, journals or research group’s web pages, among others. It is not that you have to be picky, but your research should be based on facts rather than on assumptions or biased ideas. In education, context is key, so using trustworthy information will help you to find the answers for your own situation. Imagine that you familiarise yourself with a teacher’s blog that states very firmly that iPads and tablets are the worst resource ever, how would you even begin your study if you are basing it on a biased opinion and no facts? Reliable documents always provide the context of the study and often analyse the pros and the cons of using certain materials, tasks or teaching practice. Reliable studies will highlight that their findings apply to a specific context or situation and will most likely offer conclusions that will bear that in mind. Use the literature review phase to reflect on your thoughts and to gain insight into how the research can be designed. Writing a summary of what you read is advisable, as it will help you remember which the main findings are and recall who said what. Basing your research plan on a solid literature base is fundamental if you plan to apply for a grant or funding to conduct your study.

Next, you need to decide what data you are going to collect and how you are going to analyse it. That is, you need to create the methodological framework for your study: a detailed account of your research design. Again, this is very important if

you are planning to apply for funding. Selecting the method that best suits your research interests is fundamental (see the [next chapter](#) in this section for some advice on this) to ensure that you can complete your study. You need to take decisions regarding the type of data you are going to collect and how you plan to analyse it (Moore & Llompарт, 2017). If you work with children, make sure you have permission from your supervisor (in some contexts you even need external approval, too) and from your students' parents in order for you to collect, store and use certain types of data. Some types of data are less sensitive than others, however, it is very intuitive to know whether you need parents to sign a consent form or if you are covered by the school policy and current laws (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017). In any case, you would always need to inform your supervisor and it is likely to have a positive impact on your research. As for parents, it is always necessary to share with them that you are conducting a research project and to ask for permission to video record or photograph their children. If you were a parent you would not like the teacher of your child to be using photos or videos of your child and even sharing them, within an academic community, for research purposes without your knowledge and consent. Be sensible about that. If you briefly explain what you want to know more about and inform them of what you will use the data and the images for, you might even find support from them. As for the need of a written consent, bear in mind that there are strict privacy laws you need to know and apply. Even if you have permission to use data from children, anonymising your sources (changing the names of the participants in your study) is an ethical issue you should take into account (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017). Anyhow, before starting to collect your data you need to ask yourself the question: am I exposing the children or their identity in any way? If you are, then you need signed consent.

Once you have completed all the previous steps, it is time for you to implement your research. Be aware that it is the most important phase and that you would, most likely, not be able to go back to this step once it is finished. Follow your data collection plan carefully and allow extra time to sort any inconveniences. If you are using equipment make sure you have everything under control and working before you start collecting the data. More often than you think data is missed because the equipment is not charged or the researcher does not know how a tool functions. Yet, research in education is very dynamic and challenges may arise. It is common to miss data because on the day you collect the data a considerable percentage of the group is sick, or because a child turns his back to the camera or switches off the microphone. While conducting your research, it is useful to keep a diary and register all incidences. For instance, it might sound exaggerated, but if on the day you have to collect data all the children in a group

are overexcited because there is something affecting their daily routine, annotate it. When you analyse your data, going through those notes will help you decide if you need to leave that sample out (as it gives you data that is not representative) or not. The procedure you use to analyse your data will depend on the research method you have employed to collect it (see [next chapter](#) in this same section). Broadly speaking, if you conduct a quantitative study and have used a survey to collect your data, your analysis will consist of measuring the results statistically. If, on the contrary, you are interested in analysing talk-in-interaction, you will have recorded data while your children were engaged in groupwork tasks and will need to rely on the conventions of conversational analysis (Masats, 2017, see also [chapter 23 in this volume](#)), discourse analysis or any other method to interpret oral natural data objectively.

Once you have analysed your data, you need to make the results public. Even in the cases in which you conducted a small scale study to improve your teaching practices, you should inform others, in this case parents and other teachers, about your results. It is an ethical issue, too. Not encountering the expected results is a result, so be true, to you and to other people involved, on the nature of your findings. In the case that you plan to publish your results, you need to follow three steps to describe your findings: 1) present the bare results, what you have found; 2) present how you interpreted the data and explain the decisions you took; 3) present your discussion on what you found. The line between these parts may look very thin, but it is not. First you need to describe the data objectively, then you have to analyse the data and finally you must discuss your interpretations.

Every step you take is a decision, and you need to account for your decisions. Table 1 summarises the decisions you need to take to conduct a research study in your classroom or school.

<b>Research Stage</b>	<b>Aspects to take into consideration</b>	<b>Tips</b>
Research Project Outline and Aims	List 1 to 3 questions you want to answer. Define 1 to 3 aims for each question.	Be realistic and narrow down the scope of your research.
Theoretical Framework	Use reliable sources of information. Summarise the key ideas in your sources.	Use at least 10 different reliable sources to become familiar with the topic.
Methodological Framework	Design a plan to collect and analyse data. Decide if you are going to use a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methodology. Describe the research method (action-research; interviews, case study, survey...)	Always bear in mind the context and setting of your research.
Data Collection	Double check your plan and leave time for unanticipated problems. Check that you have all the equipment and material ready before collecting data. Double check that you have permission to collect data. If you need a written consent, confirm with all participants that you have it. Be sure to exclude the rest. Take notes during the process of collecting data.	Make sure you can implement your research in favourable conditions.
Analysis	Select the data in your sample you will analyse. Apply statistical or reasoning techniques to describe your data. Present your data organized according to justifiable criteria.	Be objective and justify the decisions you take.
Results and Discussion	Discuss the results by relating your analysis to your theoretical framework and to your research aims and questions. Provide the answers to your research questions. Offer reliable results and conclusions. Even if you do not find answers to your questions the research is still valid.	Think about the implications of your research and list other aspects worth to be considered in the future.

Table 1. Overview of the process of conducting a research study

## Concluding remarks

The first time you conduct research in your classroom you may feel overwhelmed by all the possibilities and by all the restrictions and formalities. I suggest you begin with a simple and manageable research project in your classroom. Think of a change you would like to introduce in your classroom and plan how to implement it and observe if it works. Start by posing very concrete questions and achievable aims. Choose research methods you fully understand. Read academic books and articles on the topic you want to investigate. Contact research groups<sup>1</sup> or universities as they often look for partners in schools. Professional researchers in education are very interested in researching hand in hand with practitioners and you might find the support you need. Grow with the experience and learn to collaborate with others, professional research is seldom individual.

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## Notes

1. GREIP (Research Centre for Teaching & Plurilingual Interaction) is based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Catalonia) and supports collaborative research with teachers. For more information visit <http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/greip/en>

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## Some research methods for teacher researchers

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### Introduction

When designing research, you need to select the method or (methods) you would employ. Research methods refer to the techniques used to gather data while research methodology refers to the process (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). There are no rules or restrictions on which method to use, it is just a matter of deciding what is best for your study. Choosing a paradigm “constitutes the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how a researcher sees the world, and how he/she interprets and acts within the world” (Kibunya & and Kuyini, 2017:26). Here you can find a summary of research methods very commonly used in education. They are easy to understand and feasible to put in practice even if you are new to research. Before getting started, you should know that every research study is framed in a paradigm or approach which has its own epistemology (definition of knowledge), axiology (research ethics) and ontology (definition of reality/ies). There are two main paradigms in educational research, the experimental or positivist and the interpretivist or naturalistic.

The positivist paradigm’s main goal is to prove whether a theory is right and it usually uses deductive and quantitative methods to do so. This approach is not interested in analysing contexts but on experimenting with variables to test theories. Researchers interested in this paradigm claim their research is objective and unbiased because they are disconnected from the object of research. This research approach is not usually used by teachers (Antoniadou & Dooly, 2017; Nussbaum, 2017); can you imagine not considering the context in your research or being detached from your teacher-researcher perspective? The interpretative paradigm, on the contrary, is more interested in understanding what is happening and even in developing a theory. In other words, you can initiate a research without having a theory in mind, just aiming to understand what you are studying. The methods employed are usually qualitative and take context into account as an essential part of what is being studied (Dooly & Moore, 2017; Noguerol, 2017). Research is also reliable and objective because the researcher acknowledges the perspective he/she adopts. To guarantee the reliability of the results, most researchers rely on data triangulation processes, that is, they analyse the object under study from different angles or with different methods.

If you want to conduct research in your classroom, it is highly advisable that you opt for the interpretative paradigm's perspective and use qualitative methods or mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative; cf. Nussbaum, 2017; Pascual, 2017) to analyse your data. In any case, first you need to define what you want to investigate (you need to set your aims and formulate your research questions), second you need to reflect upon how best you can obtain the data for your study (you need to choose a research method) and then you need to decide how you will analyse your data (you need to determine whether you would adopt the interpretative or the positivist paradigm) in order for you to find your answers (Canals, 2017).

## **Getting started with research methods**

### ***Surveys***

Surveys are an easy and usually cost-free method of gathering data (cf. Canals, 2017). Nowadays, with free applications such as Google Forms or Survey Monkey it is very easy to create a survey. Using such digital tools you can access two types of data. If you create a survey based on closed-ended answers, the tool can quantitatively analyse the results for you and represent them with pie charts and percentages. If, on the contrary, your survey is based on open-ended questions, you will need to code and analyse the answers yourself. Surveys are used to compile data that describes specific viewpoints of a large group of people (Jaeger, 1988) at a particular point in time (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Surveys are generally used when researchers want to analyse the relationship between some variables (e.g. teachers' most preferred digital tools) or they want to understand existing circumstances (teachers' reluctance to use digital tools). Surveys can be done in large-scale or small-scale studies, for example a survey in which all the school community participates is a large scale study, while a survey aimed at a whole class can be considered a small-scale study.

The most important steps in designing a survey are: 1) pose target-oriented questions which are easy to understand and that offer no interpretation to the participants. You should bear in mind that their answers need to be informative to you (ask the right questions!); 2) identify and select your population (the group of people who share the characteristics you want to analyse) and your sample (the number of people in the group who will participate in the survey). The sample has to be representative, therefore, you will need to explain why and how you have chosen it; 3) create the design and layout of the survey. Think about your sample and design the survey in such a way that they find it appealing and doable. A dull layout or a very long survey can result in many drop-outs; 4) include a

brief description of your aims so that participants can understand its objective. Including information about the estimated time it will take them to complete the survey is advisable. Close-ended questions can adopt various forms. They can elicit yes-no responses, require participants to select an answer from multiple choices, or to choose a position along a like-dislike (Likert) scale. To analyse data obtained through close-ended questions, you will need sharp eyes and intuition to connect the different variables. Answers to open-ended questions can be restricted in extent or present no sort of time-space restriction. To analyse data obtained through open-ended questions, you need to read all the answers and find patterns or codes to organize the information. Finally, make sure you only use the data that is complete, discard surveys that are incomplete and annotate the loss of data for your records.

### ***Interviews***

Some researchers consider interviews a type of survey. Interviews are similar to surveys but serve different research objectives. Interviews are implemented in small groups and the aim is to gather in-depth information (Canals, 2017). So, while surveys reach a larger sample and focus on narrowed answers, interviews reach a smaller group of people and focus on deeper and longer answers. Surveys often use closed-ended questions while interviews focus on open-ended questions, however researchers are free to choose which type of questions to include. Furthermore, researchers can also decide to interview the subject (the person who is being studied) several times during a period of time to record different information. For example, a teacher can interview students before and after the implementation of a new grading system to compare their views on assessment.

Interviews can be structured or unstructured. In a structured interview, the interviewer has a set of questions, and guides the interviewee to answer them all. In an unstructured interview the interviewer is more flexible, accepts answers that deviate from the pre-set questions and even creates, on-site, new questions following his or her own arbitration. To put it in other words, in a structured interview there is a script that has to be followed and in an unstructured interview there is a guide. The interviewer has to bear in mind which type of answers he or she wants to gather —facts or opinions (Falk and Blumenreich, 2005). A research based on opinions is not biased or subjective if the aim of the researcher is to understand the *perception* (which is personal and subjective) of a group of people on a subject matter.

The most important steps if you plan to use interviews are: 1) decide whether you want to conduct a structured or an unstructured interview. Think about

your research objectives. If you want to know the perception of a group of people, you will most likely need an unstructured interview, whereas if you want to examine a procedure, you should probably rely on structured interviews; 2) consider if it is necessary to record the interview (and whether you need signed consent) and if during the interview you should take notes to describe aspects that you might forget later; 3) transcribe the whole interview or the fragments you consider most relevant (for more information on transcribing, see Masats, 2017; Moore & Llompарт, 2017); 4) use codes or labels to highlight the themes you find in the answers; 5) examine fragments of the interview in context; 6) identify and eliminate redundancies, in order not to count what someone said twice as two different answers; 7) write a summary; 8) do not interpret the answers until you have them all coded and ready for interpretation; 9) connect, compare, contrast the data from all your participants (for extensive information on these steps, see the guidelines provided in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

### ***Diaries or journals***

Keeping a diary can be a great research method for teachers. A diary is a cost-efficient and a simple tool to use. However, if you plan to use a diary as a tool to gather data, you first need to learn how to make annotations for it to be a reliable source of information. As with all other methods, you first need to have clear aims and questions you want to answer (Canals, 2017). If you do not have an outline, your notes will end up being so broad that it will be impossible for you to analyse them. Entries in a diary should be descriptive and non-judgemental, detailed and specific. Each entry should include the date, the time and the location and a clear description of what happened. The reason being that you need to be objective in order for you to later understand your data.

Some researchers find it useful to employ a two-column diary. In the left column they write the description of the action being studied, and in the right column they annotate their personal views or thoughts on what happened. It is very difficult for teachers who conduct research in their classrooms to keep their emotions and judgements separate from what they observe. A two-column diary may help maintain their objectivity. In any case, what you analyse first is the column with the descriptions and then you can compare your analysis with the personal views you noted down. The main difficulty with this method is to find a way to keep a reliable track of the actions you want to analyse. Some researchers prefer recording voice notes to keeping a diary. Others use sticky notes or carry a notebook with them so that they can write down their observations as soon as they perceive something worth noticing. However, you might find it easier to allocate a time in your day to write, for example during

the break, on the train on your way home, after school or while still in the classroom. As long as you find a systematic way of writing down your thoughts, the method is powerful. Just bear in mind that it has to be descriptive and detailed. For example, in the left column, you write what you observe, comments such as “Jenna went to the reading corner and before picking up a book she looked at the covers of various of them. She made her choice when she found one with a baby on the cover. Jenna smiled, touched the baby and quickly picked the book up”. In the right column you can write your personal thoughts, something such as: “There’s a new baby in Jenna’s family, I think it is her cousin \* I need to ask her. Jenna usually does not like books (?).” The information in the left column is an objective description of what happened. The information in the right column is a subjective impression of why that happened. Although the analysis would always be based on the data in the left column, revising the personal comments might be useful to draw conclusions and find out if Jenna’s choice was related to a personal experience rather than to her preferences for certain objects such as baby toys.

The most important steps if you plan to use a diary are 1) have clear aims and objectives; 2) reflect on how and when you would most likely write systematically in your diary; 3) reflect upon the differences between descriptions and thoughts, ideas and interpretations; 4) decide whether you want to use a single-column diary or a double-column diary; 5) select the digital or non-digital device you would use as a diary; 6) decide if you want to include sketches or photos in the diary; 7) during the analysis, anonymize the people mentioned in the diary; 8) when analysing, connect the entries to answer your questions. Bear in mind that the more you write, the easier it will get!

### ***Case studies***

As Stake (1995) argues a “case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (p. xi). Case studies can help you to understand other cases, but your main interest is to understand that one case and its particularities. A case study in a classroom can be a study on a specific child, a class, a teacher, a group of friends or a community, among others. If you want to research about the use of x app for learning to read and write, a case study is not the method you need to use. Case studies are often presented in a narrative format. Bear in mind that it is a specific study, if you are interested in several similar cases you can design a **collective case study** in which you study several similar cases.

Cohen, Manion & Morrison describe very clearly what a case study in educational research is:

(...) the case study researcher typically observes the characteristics of an individual unit—a child, a clique, a class, a school, or a community. The purpose of such observation is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs.” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:258)

The method is based on descriptive observations, which can be differentiated into two types: participant-observation or non-participant observation. If you are the teacher, the teacher assistant, the student-teacher and have an active role in the classroom, then you are a participant observer. Most teacher-researchers are participant-observers. However, if you are just “observing” what a teacher or a group of students do without intervening, then you are a non-participant observer.

The most important steps if you are planning to conduct a case study are 1) define your aims and questions clearly; 2) decide how you are going to register your observations (consider whether you need to use a digital or non-digital tool for this purpose); 3) decide whether you need written consent from parents; 4) write detailed and concrete descriptions of your observations, including date, time and location; 5) while observing, focus on your object of study but be open to broaden your scope if you find unplanned situations worth looking at; 6) be careful not to invade personal spaces and avoid making students feel judged or continuously under observation (Dooly, Moore & Vallejo, 2017).

### ***Action Research***

Action Research is a method that, as its name suggests, involves action. This method is usually designed for small-scale studies although it can be well suited to larger studies (Corona, 2017; Nussbaum, 2017; Pascual, 2017). This is because Action Research is mainly context located and rather particular as opposed to general. The method has three cyclic basic steps, that differ slightly from researcher to researcher, which are: documentation, implementation and reflection. As Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007: 297) argue, action research “can be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution”. Hence, this method is used when there is a situation that has been identified and needs to be solved or modified, usually by the practitioner in his or her own classroom. Often, teams are involved but it is very common to find action research implemented by individual teachers.

Action research is your best option if there is an issue, aspect or situation in your classroom that you feel needs to improve. The very first thing you need to do is to identify what needs to be changed or modified, which will usually be what drives you to conduct research in the first place. In the first stage, you will need to carry out a literature review, as extensive and as reliable as possible, about the situation you will analyse. It is a good idea to write a summary of all your findings, as it will be the base of your next step. In the second stage, you need to design and implement an action plan based on what you learnt thanks to your literature review. In the third stage you will analyse the data collected during the implementation of your action plan. You will focus on the aspects you changed, on the aspects that remained the same and on whether there are further changes you want to make. As mentioned earlier, this method is cyclic so once you have completed the third stage you may want to start again and do a second literature review, although this time focusing on those aspects that need further change. You then design a second action plan, implement it and analyse it. You can keep on performing these cyclic actions until you achieve your goals. As you might imagine, it is a type of method that is well suited to teachers that feel the need to modify, solve or implement an action in their classrooms. The conclusions can be transferred to other contexts and you might share your experience with colleagues, who, in turn, can design their own studies based on yours. Action research, as Elliot (1990) argues, considers the situation from the point of view of the participants and requires self-reflection from the researcher. However, for you to collect data, you need to complement this method with others. For example, you can use diaries or interviews to collect the data. Nonetheless, it has to be said that, in contrast with other methods, you might find it easier to plan the changes and to analyse the data because you are actually analysing the ‘before and after’ results of an action you conducted in your classroom.

The most important steps if you are planning to conduct an action research study are: 1) define very clearly the situation you want to act on; 2) carry out an extensive and reliable literature review; 3) design your action based on the literature review; 4) implement the action; 5) observe and record the implementation of your action; 6) reflect on the changes derived from the implementation; 7) decide if there are other aspects that you need to focus on in more detail; 8) if so, engage in a new literature review based on the new changes or modifications and continue the cycle until you are satisfied. Remember to keep a record of all your actions, you will find it very useful to reflect upon how you managed to accomplish your goal.

## *Analysing data*

Often the most difficult part of the research is to analyse the data, especially because you have to be objective, but you do not really know how. You have to understand that the analysis of data is a process that usually begins during the process of data collection (Antoniadou, 2017). When you are collecting your data, no matter what method you decide to use, you need to write down what you observe. Any decision you take at that point is based on some sort of process of analysis. When you have all your data, you need to go through and decide how you could organize them and categorize them. Coding data or organizing them through themes is also a process of analysis. Not all the data will be relevant, so you need to select what is important for your research. Sometimes, your themes or codes will be given by your aims and questions. For example, if you are analysing the implementation of mindfulness techniques you might want to focus on whether participants use the word 'relaxation' or show signs of being relaxed. Again, this is a process of analysis.

Organizing your data is like organizing your classroom for the very first time. You have plenty of material, some new, some old and everything is mixed. The first thing you need to do is organize it by categories, but the categories you choose are based on your own decisions. For example, as a teacher, you may need to classify and store classroom materials. In that case you may decide that you will store scissors and glue sticks in the same box because you use them for cutting and pasting tasks. Another teacher, however, may store scissors in a box for dangerous classroom materials. Both options are valid as long as the categories remain stable. The same applies when you categorize data to be analysed. You need to define your categories very well and use them coherently across your research. If you are not sure about how to categorise your data, ask a colleague for help, it is always a good idea to get validation from someone else. Continuing with the classroom organization metaphor, there will be materials that you will disregard and not use in the classroom either because you think they are dangerous or inappropriate for children or because you have not enough for everybody. Again, the same applies for data. You will need to discard data because it is damaged (e.g. the sound quality is not good), because it is irrelevant (does not illustrate the phenomenon you want to study) or because it is insignificant (just an isolated answer). During the process of organising your data, you will need to learn to understand it. Research analysis is an active process.

Finally, you need to ensure the reliability of your analysis. A very common strategy to do so is to present triangulated data. Data triangulation entails looking at the same data from multiple angles. The triangulation can be done in different ways, you might ask two more researchers to analyse the data and present the

commonalities of the three analyses. But you would need external help for that. What you can do, though, is to analyse the perspective of different actors (e.g. how different students act or express themselves similarly) or use different sources of information (e.g. interviews to know what teachers say they do, surveys to know what students think the teacher does and classroom observations to see what they actually do). To triangulate data is to ensure that what you claim is not only a single event, but that it occurs systematically (even if you talk about just one student in a case study). Although it is called data triangulation you do not need to have only three (although you do need at least three), it is the concept of presenting evidence from different angles that confirm your findings.

## Concluding remarks

Research is never easy at first, but you will eventually enjoy the process and learn more than you expected. It just takes a spur of curiosity to begin the journey. Once there, the process will lead you. Remember to read and keep informed (that will help you be objective); and reflect on what you find (that will help you learn and grow as a teacher). Do not hesitate to get in contact with your local university or research centre<sup>1</sup> if you want a partner on this journey.

Make a start and have an exciting journey!

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## Notes

1. GREIP (**Research Centre for Teaching & Plurilingual Interaction**) is based at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Catalonia) and supports collaborative research with teachers. For more information visit <http://grupsderecerca.uab.cat/greip/en>

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## Analysing classroom discourse

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### Introduction

Language learning is not about learning words, but rather learning to construct, along with other participants in a communicative event, meaningful exchanges to carry out some kind of social activity (reaching a consensus, purchasing goods, sharing information, etc.). If, as Vygotsky (1962) suggests, the construction of meaning is the conjunction of thought and word, learning is a process of gradual transition from not knowing a language to being able to use that language for a purpose. The process starts and develops thanks to social interaction: children come into contact with a language through socialising with adult (and peers) speakers of that language. By taking part in social activities with them, they internalise knowledge of and about the language. That is, through their participation in conversations in the target language, they learn how the language works (knowledge of) and learn how to use that language and what they know of it to communicate (knowledge about). If there is no socialization, knowledge cannot be internalized and, therefore, learning does not occur.

The process of learning a second, third or additional language does not differ much from the process of learning the first language(s), in the sense that participation and social interaction also play a key role in the development of communicative expertise in the target language(s). Socio-interactionist language learning theories sustain that acquisition emerges from interaction, as learning is a situated social practice. Learning is described as situated because learning only takes place through action, and meaning is constructed in the social context in which action takes place. From this viewpoint, cognition is also situated as cognitive actions are responses to the demands of a given social activity (Resnick, 1991). Consequently, analysing classroom conversations is essential to understand how languages are learnt. The study of verbal interaction has been undertaken from different, sometimes complementary theoretical approaches. The aim of this paper is to introduce teacher researchers to *Conversational Analysis for Second Language Acquisition* (CA-for-SLA), a theoretical and methodological tool to analyse natural classroom data.

## Conversational Analysis (CA-for-SLA)

Conversational Analysis (CA) has its origins in Sacks' revolutionary studies on ordinary talk in a time in which linguistics was under the influence of the paradigm proposed by Noam Chomsky and, therefore, it was believed ordinary talk was too disordered to become the object of study for linguistics. CA's scope, unlike what its name suggests, is not restricted to the analysis of conversation, instead, talk-in-interaction is CA's object of study:

CA's broader provenance extends to *the study of talk and other forms of conduct* (including the disposition of the body in gesture, posture, facial expression, and ongoing activities in the setting) *in all forms of talk in interaction.* (Schegloff et al., 2002:3)

When CA emerged in the 1960s, it had no connection with learning. CA studies exclusively analysed monolingual data in English. CA has only been associated to the study of second language acquisition (CA-for-SLA) in the past two decades (Seedhouse, 2005), although, since the late 1980s CA has also been used by researchers interested in establishing links between plurilingual practices and language learning (see, among others, Lüdi & Py, 1986; de Pietro, Matthey & Py, 1989; Py, 1997). CA-for-SLA studies make relevant contributions to the teaching of languages. For example, they offer guidelines for the design of materials and textbooks regarding the types of discourses that must be presented, they give teachers suggestions on how to manage interaction in the classroom or, among others, provide hints to understand how conversations between native and non-native speakers (experts and non-experts) are structured or to comprehend code-switching and code-mixing procedures in bilingual or multilingual environments.

Teachers interested in doing research in their classrooms should consider the possibility of engaging in small case studies using CA procedures. Case studies are a very useful methodology ([see chapter 22 in this volume](#)) to analyse particular phenomena (see chapters [24](#), [25](#) & [26](#) in this volume) because it does not require teachers to have control groups, which for ethical issues are better to disregard. Good committed teachers should not apply a given methodology to one of their groups and not to others if they are convinced that the approach they want to test could be beneficial for all their students. Case studies, on the contrary, allow researchers to observe and analyse behaviours and phenomena of interest naturally, without altering what occurs in the classroom.

### ***What is it?***

CA is not a field of study related to descriptive linguistics because it is not interested in the study of decontextualized language. Instead it studies language use and the social activities that participants make when they interact. That is, “CA’s primary interest is in the social act whereas a linguist’s primary interest is normally in language. CA, therefore, does not treat language as an autonomous system independent of its use; rather, it treats ‘grammar and lexical choices as sets of resources which participants, deploy, monitor, interpret and manipulate’ (Schegloff et al. 2002:15) in order to perform their social acts” (Seedhouse, 2005:165).

The work done by Sacks with Schegloff and Jefferson (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977) is especially important for the development of conversation analysis as a discipline for the study of oral data (see a review about the origin and development of the discipline in Goodwin and Heritage, 1990). In the beginning, the discipline is interested in ordinary talk, but later it discusses other discursive genres (interviews, political speeches, judicial interrogations, etc.) and, at present, talk-in-interaction is its focus of inquiry.

CA studies must fulfil four premises:

- a) Interaction is a form of discourse that has a clear structure. The analyst has to observe talk-in-interaction episodes to determine its organization and sequencing.
- b) Interaction is linked to the context in which it is produced and, therefore, it is essential to analyse it sequentially, in order to be able to understand it.
- c) Details (silence, changes of intonation or rhythm, whispers, pauses, etc.), even when they are small, are never insignificant. For this reason, classroom interactions must be transcribed carefully and in detail.
- d) The analysis must emerge from the data and must account for how participants interpret and give meaning to what they do. For example, an ungrammatical sentence cannot be described as a problem if speakers do not identify it as such.

To apply these premises, classroom interaction must be (audio or video) recorded and carefully transcribed (see Moore & Llompart, 2017 for tips and suggestions on how to conduct these tasks). The degree of detail in the transcription will depend on the object of study. If we want to understand how children learn to pronounce foreign words, we would need a phonetic transcription of the conversation, but in other cases, signalling how children pronounce certain sounds may be irrelevant for the study and therefore unnecessary. Transcriptions, however,

are partial and selective by nature because they reduce the social reality they wish to study (Bucholtz, 2000; Ochs, 1979). For Haviland (1996:58), a transcription represents speech outside its production context, it is, in the words of the author, “that talk that has been ripped from its physical setting.” Transcribing is also a decision-making process that will have an impact on the analysis, and therefore it must be understood as a first phase of this analysis (Ochs, 1979), as a starting point for reflection (Mondada, 2002). For ethical purposes, participants identities must be anonymised in the transcriptions by either changing their names or by referring to them using other procedures (using their initials, using the word student followed by a number, etc.), as we can see in excerpt 1.

### ***What does it study?***

CA-for-SLA can be used to study any topic related to talk-in-interaction. To cite a few, we could refer to the study of how students co-construct a written text ([see chapter 24 in this same volume](#)), of how learners collaborate to solve a reading puzzle ([see chapter 25 in this same volume](#)), or how a teacher transforms the task of asking for volunteers into an excuse for practicing language ([see chapter 26 in this same volume](#)). In CA-for-SLA studies, the description and explanation of the use of language as social action focuses on the study of the four elements on which Sacks (1992) based his analysis of the organization of the interaction: the production of adjacency pairs, the notion of preference, the taking of turns and repair mechanisms (see a detailed description of these elements in Schegloff, Koshik, Jacoby & Olsher; 2002; Seedhouse, 2005, or Masats, 2017, among others). We will exemplify these four phenomena through the analysis of excerpt 1 below:

Excerpt 1. BCN1 School: Pairing picture cards. Participants: 2 young learners of English and Mar, their teacher.

232. BAW: banana and\_ the ladder\ | it's colour yellow |

233. PAU: **cómo se llama\ | caer | en inglés?** | ((how do you say 'caer' in English?))

234. BAW: eh\_ |

235. PAU: **cómo se dice caer en inglés?** | ((how do you say 'caer' in English?))

((to the teacher)) *caure que com es din caure en inglés?* | ((how do you say 'caure' in English?))

236. MAR: fall |

### *Analysing the transcription*

We can observe that the transcription system used (see the Annex) is very simple, as it only reflects pauses after speech unit boundaries [ | ], the lengthening of a few sounds [ \_ ], and the raising [ ? ] or falling intonation [ \ ] of several phrases. The name of the school and of the participants are anonymised. Turns (participant's interventions) are numbered and presented sequenced, as they were produced. Numbers are high, which indicates that this episode did not occur shortly after the two children started talking. Transcription symbols are normally based on a widely accepted system created by Jefferson (2004), so people familiar with transcription symbols can easily identify that the information inside the double brackets contains comments provided by the transcriber. But discourse analysts can also create their own codes, if necessary. In this case, the transcriber has opted to mark language changes by using italics for fragments in Catalan or translated from Catalan and bold for fragments in Spanish or translated from Spanish.

### *Analysing the production of adjacency pairs*

The analysis of adjacency pairs is based on the ethnomethodological principle of reflexivity, which postulates that the procedures activated for the production of an action or statement are the same ones that are activated to interpret them. For example, a question is generated in order to obtain an answer and thus the interlocutor to whom the question is addressed also interprets that and answers the question. The adjacent pairs, then, serve to describe the sequential order in which the interaction is organized. Typically adjacency pairs are distributed in two sequential turns (question/answer), but occasionally other adjacency pairs may be embedded in a pair. For example the question PAU addresses MAR in the second part of turn 235 (*caure que com es diu caure en inglés?*) is responded in the next turn (turn 236: fall). Turns 235 and 236 are a clear example of a question-answer adjacency pair. On the contrary, the first time PAU asked this question (turn 233) did not obtain the expected answer (turn 234), which explains why he had to say it again (turn 236), first addressing his partner and then their teacher.

### *Analysing preference*

Preferences refer to participants' choices. Responding to a greeting with another greeting is a preferred action, it is the most common, but the partners can choose not to perform the preferred action. For example, the learners in excerpt one are making proposals to pair picture cards they would later use to play the memory game. In turn 232 BAW makes a proposal. PAU could have answered that

proposal with 'ok' before making his own proposal or before asking for help, but he opted not to comment BAW's proposal in his turn. The fact that he immediately tries to make a new proposal indicates that he accepts BAW's statement. Then, we can claim that this pair preferred structure for this task is to organise their conversation in single alternatively produced turns.

Preference may also be linked to a participant's choice of language. We can observe that the two learners are conducting their task in English. When PAU encounters a challenge (he wants to use the word 'fall' but does not know it), he asks for help. First, he addresses his request for help to BAW and then to their teacher. In the first case, he formulates his question in Spanish, then in Catalan. Catalan is the language of communication between teachers and students in Catalan schools. By addressing their teacher in Catalan, PAU is simply respecting the conversation norms set at the school. By addressing BAW in Spanish, he indicates this is his preferred language to communicate with his peers.

### *Analysing turn taking mechanisms*

Turns, which can be verbal or non-verbal, are the minimum units of participation in which interactions are structured. The study of turns and the presence of pauses, interruptions, silences, gestures, and even overlapping turns is necessary to understand how participants build and organize interaction and how learning takes place during those interactions. "Why does this happen in this way at this precise moment?" is the basic question that guides CA studies.

The behaviour of the interlocutors when sequencing and organizing the speech should not be analysed from a normative point of view. That is, analysts are not interested in explaining what speakers have to say, but in describing the preferences speakers adopt when they interact. As we pointed out when we were analysing adjacency pairs, BAW and PAU seem to choose to organise their conversation by producing single alternative turns, instead of adjacency pairs. Yet, that is valid because they still can perform the task set by the teacher (pairing cards).

### *Analysing repair mechanisms*

When learners communicate using a language they don't yet master, occasionally they need to interrupt the flow of their conversation to solve some sort of language challenge. This is the case of PAU in turn 233. Instead of making a suggestion about how to form another pair of cards, he makes a request for help. At this point, the task is being interrupted and will not start again until the problem is solved, until it is repaired. Repairs, sometimes, take the form of self-corrections or other corrections.

### *Analysing the episode*

The goal of our study will determine how we analyse students' conversations. For example, if we are interested in observing how students make suggestions and justify them, only turn 232 in this excerpt is interesting for that purpose. In this case, we can say that BAW produces two statements. First, she names the two cards/objects she suggests to pair. Then she produces a sentence indicating what the two objects have in common (it is the colour yellow). We can conclude that BAW cannot produce complex questions in English yet (she cannot say something like 'the banana and the ladder form a pair because both objects are yellow). Instead, if we are interested in observing how students solve communicative problems, turn 232 is irrelevant for our analysis and we should focus on turns 233, 234, 235 and 236. Finally, if we study language preference, we need to observe what occurs in the whole excerpt. In this case, we could conclude that when the students are 'on task' (turn 232), they use the target language, English in this case. However, when they are 'off task', as when they try to solve a communicative breakdown, their language preferences change and they use Spanish or Catalan depending on to whom they address.

### **Concluding remarks**

Research into foreign language learning should begin where all human activities originate: interaction. Adopting a solid theoretical and analytical apparatus is fundamental in any sort of research. CA-for-SLA, a theoretical and methodological tool traditionally used to analyse ordinary talk, seems to be the right instrument that allows researchers to study participation in communicative events in foreign language classrooms. Teachers who also subscribe to the idea that all human activity is organized through participation in social interaction would find CA-for-SLA offers them a simple path to approach the study of oral data. The studies presented in the next three chapters, all written by pre-service teachers, proves this statement right.

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**Annex: Transcription conventions**

Pseudonym of participants	ABC (three capital letters)
Rising intonation	/
Speech unit boundary	
Analysts comments	((comment))
Interruption	text_
Languages	<i>Catalan</i> & transcription from <i>Catalan</i> <b>Spanish &amp; transcription from Spanish</b> English



# Exploring the benefits of using iPads to teach children English

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## Introduction

The presence of technology in our daily lives has increased significantly. Nowadays, people live surrounded by digital devices and use them at all times. Technologies are also entering the classroom, not only because they are considered powerful learning resources, but also because students are expected to become technology literate. Children's immersion in digital communication occurs at the same time as they are developing their literacy skills (Flewitt, Messer & Kucirkova, 2015). In this sense, digital technologies cannot be left out of classrooms. New digital tools, such as iPads, should be utilised to their full and included in regular teaching and learning practices, both as tools to access knowledge and as means to develop digital skills and competences.

Education has largely been based on blackboards and books, but now that technology is accessible and affordable, it can be used to improve lessons, to make them more attractive and engaging for students. Research has proved that technology has a positive impact on children's learning, especially for the development of their communicative and social skills (Sandvik, Smørdal, & Østerud, 2012). Technologies can also trigger the use of innovative practices in schools. However, given the amount of time necessary to select the appropriate apps and to design the right activities to do with them, only committed teachers are willing to integrate digital devices such as the iPad into their classroom (Flewitt et al., 2015). Consequently, it is fundamental to know if the time spent is time well invested. This paper aims at investigating whether the use of iPads in the classroom is more beneficial for young learners of English compared to the use of non-digital tools. We will analyse children's talk while engaged in two similar written tasks (creating a comic), one using pen and pencil, and the other using their iPads. Our objective is to determine whether students' use of English differs from one situation to another, and if differences are triggered by the use of a particular tool.

## Theoretical framework

In a highly technological society such as ours, being digital literate is essential. To guarantee that children can develop digital competences and skills, technologies

should be present in schools. When introducing technologies into the classroom, teachers should reflect upon how they might be used. Children can simply use technologies as they would use a pen and paper, or they can construct knowledge and create through technology. Research suggests that “teachers must ensure that active engagement, group participation, interactivity and feedback, and connecting technology to real world contexts, are present elements while using technology for learning” (Sandvik et al., 2012, p. 210).

Giving children access to technology in the classroom is not difficult today. As Flewitt et al. (2015) suggest, “the small size and portability of the iPads opened up multiple new independent spaces for learning” (p. 300), facilitating and increasing their use in the classroom and in different spaces. iPads have changed the traditional way of learning a language as they have become a powerful tool for allowing pupils to learn in a playful and more interactive way. The authors argue that using iPads is “a good way of engaging children in the work you’re trying to get them to concentrate on” (Flewitt et al., 2015, p. 300). They add that children are engaged and motivated to learn when an iPad is involved. They show enthusiasm, have a positive learning disposition and enjoy their work, reviewing and mending parts of it, thereby reducing the consequences of making mistakes.

Technology promotes autonomy and collaboration. Collaboration fosters respect towards others and their opinions. Children also help and support one another when they carry out technology-enhanced activities in groups (Flewitt et al., 2015). Working together promotes interaction, thus it contributes to the improvement of communicative skills. In sum, technology brings out the best in young learners if teachers know how and when to use it.

Teachers may need to face difficulties and limitations when trying to use iPads in their classrooms. One of the main drawbacks of using iPads is the high cost of the equipment, supported by the fear of keeping the devices safe (Flewitt et al., 2015). The possibility of encountering technical problems is another problem, as most teachers lack support or ability to overcome them. Despite this, as Lynch and Redpath (2014) highlight, the advantage of using iPads over other types of devices is the fact that iPads bring minimal technical issues, sometimes almost none. Yet, teachers who do not have much confidence in their own digital skills need a lot of time before they can incorporate iPads into the classroom in an enriching way. iPads offer an endless range of possibilities and apps which provide “edutainment” (Flewitt et al., 2015, p. 297), that is, education and entertainment at the same time. iPads offer numerous possibilities for their use, but as it has been said, there is a risk that teachers use them for delivering content. There are two types of app: closed apps whose contents cannot be enhanced or changed; and open apps, which offer the possibility of

extending the content. Closed apps can be employed for practising, individually, particular skills through repetitive formats; open apps offer flexibility and provide learners opportunities for developing digital skills (Flewitt et al., 2015; Lynch & Redpath, 2014).

As Verenikina, Kervin, Rivera and Lidbetter (2016) highlight, when choosing an app, teachers should consider whether it facilitates the improvement of specific competencies in the children. Apps “are designed in a playful manner to initially attract and then sustain children’s attention.” (p. 1). With regards to the importance of play in learning, Plowman and McPake (as cited in Verenikina et al., 2016) argue that play creates the most beneficial learning experiences, and digital technologies have a role in play-based learning. Similarly, Verenikina et al. (2016) stated that “play helps develop children’s imagination and creativity, which are key for their cognitive, social and emotional development” (p. 1). The idea that children are engaged and enthusiastic about apps, because they consider working with them to be a form of play, is also supported by Lynch and Redpath (2014). The authors defend that, for children, working with iPads is similar to playing, because they are more engaged in the activities, and therefore learning is more meaningful, and contents are better acquired. iPad apps can also be used for language learning, they make meaning more accessible to children, and also allow learners to create their own productions (Sandvik et al., 2012). Moreover, digital devices allow children to listen and therefore be aware of the correct pronunciation of words, repeating after the device in order to acquire competence (Flewitt et al., 2015). As Ortega-Auquilla, and Heras Urgilès (2017) state, given the considerable number of apps for iPads available on the market, the possibilities teachers have to use them for teaching English are enormous.

## **Methodology**

To explore the influence of iPads on the use of English by two pairs of young learners engaged in oral communication tasks, two similar tasks were planned. Participants had to create two comic strips, one using an iPad and the other just a paper and two pencils. For the iPad-based task they had to use “MakeBeliefsComix”, a website designed to facilitate the creation of comics. Children were offered an explanation of the different options offered by the app before getting started. For the second comic strip, learners were given a paper with five squares drawn on it to create the comic. They could use them all or produce a shorter strip. In both cases, children could be creative in the selection of themes and characters. The only instruction was to use English during the whole process.

The participants in this study were four students in Year 6, 11 to 12 year olds, from a public (state) school on the outskirts of Barcelona. The criterium followed when choosing the participants was to group students with different abilities. Each pair was formed by one child with a high command of English and another with a positive attitude and interest, but less skilful in the use of the target language. They collaborated voluntarily, with the agreement of the school and the essential authorization of their parents. Their names have been anonymized. Hence, throughout the paper they will be referred to as Student A, B, C and D, and using the abbreviation St and the letter on the excerpts. When referring to the students as a couple, couple 1 is used to signify students A and B, and couple 2 signifies students C and D.

The research methodology used is a case study and the method of analysis is conversation analysis (CA). The data gathered was video-recorded using a hand-held camera lent by the school. The method of recording the data was as follows: couple 1 did the iPad-based activity first and, in order to avoid repetition of the same story, some days later they produced the paper-based activity. Couple 2 did the opposite; first they completed the paper-based task followed by the iPad-based task, some days later. The data collected was thoroughly transcribed in order to be analysed (see transcription symbols in the Annex).

### Analysis and discussion

Participants mostly used Catalan to communicate. English was used mostly in key words or common phrases, and to propose the text that was going to be written in the comic, as shown in turns 2 and 4 in the excerpt 1 below:

Excerpt 1: Pair 1 is discussing what to write in the last vignette.

Original conversation	Translation
1. StB: <i>la última que podem fer?</i>	1. StB: <i>What can we do at the last one?</i>
2. StA: <i>pues que al final a la moon sí que li agrada</i>	2. StA: <i>so that at the end the moon does like it (the Sun)</i>
3. StB: <i>i l'accepta i::</i>	3. StB <i>and accepts it and...</i>
4. StA: <i>eem the moon em take, take the flowers (.) ai the gift, and...</i>	4. StA: <i>eem the moon em take, take the flowers (.) oops the gift, and...</i>

Occasionally, when students had to discuss how a particular word was said or spelt, they also switched into Catalan or Spanish, as in excerpt 2. When they used English, they often self-corrected themselves in an attempt to pronounce the words correctly, as in turn 1 in excerpt 2:

Excerpt 2: Pair 1 is discussing what to write in the last vignette.

Original conversation	Translation
1. StA: take (.) the heart. (/hert/), the heart (/hɑ:t/) <b>robarle el corazón</b>	1. StA: take (.) the heart (/hert/), the heart (/hɑ:t/) <b>steals the heart</b>
2. StB: <b>robarle el corazón</b>	2. StB: <b>steals the heart</b>
3. StA: <b>robarle?</b>	3. StA: <b>steal?</b>
4. StB: steal (.) <i>st/ea/l, no, sí, sí st/ea/l, perquè steel amb dos E és el metall.</i>	4. StB: steal (.) <i>st/ea/l, no, yes, yes st/ea/l, because steel with double e means the metal.</i>

When using the iPads to create the comic strips, plots could be slightly influenced by the images given. Children simply needed to provide ideas on how they could create stories based on those messages. Their conversational practices, though, were the same. They used Catalan and/or Spanish to share ideas and talk about the words that the characters would use, but English in the fictional dialogue they were creating, as we can see in excerpt 3.

Excerpt 3: Pair 1 is going through the pictures provided by the app.

Original conversation	Translation
1. StA: (.) <b>a ver els</b> objects, <i>que li pot cau/re?</i>	7. StA: (.) <b>let's see the</b> objects, <i>what can f[all?</i>
2. StB: [ <i>Algo pesat?</i> ((they look at the possible objects))	8. StB: [ <i>Something heavy</i> ((they look at the possible objects))
3. StA: <i>que li pot caure?</i> ((continue looking))	9. StA: <i>What can fall on him?</i> ((continue looking))
4. StA: <i>un bastó no::</i>	10. StA: <i>a walking stick no::</i>
5. StB: the gu[itar	11. StB: the gu[itar
6. StA: [the guitar, the guitar	12. StA: [the guitar, the guitar

The excerpts also illustrate that children in this pair were collaborating to do the assigned task correctly: they asked each other questions about how a word was said and written in English. When helping their peer, they pronounced the words in a Catalan way, using Catalan phonetics. Very often, student A was in charge of creating the text and B checked and corrected.

Excerpt 4: Students B suggests to student A what the latter should write.

Original conversation	Translation
1. StB: eh, of the moon (.) with gifts ((is dictating and StA writes))	1. StB: eh, of the moon (.) with gifts ((is dictating and StA writes))
2. StB: no, don't, <i>no, una "o" no</i>	2. StB: no, don't, no <i>one "o" no</i>
3. StA: <i>ai, sempre m'equivoco/ (.)</i> with, <i>amb regals</i>	3. StA: <i>oops, I always make this mistake/(.)</i> with, <i>with gifts</i>
4. StB: with gifts	4. StB: with gifts
5. StA: <i>ai que tonta</i> ((StA had made a mistake))	5. StA: <i>oops so naive</i> ((she had made a mistake))
6. StB: /g/ - /i/ - /f/ gift ((spelling))	6. StB: /g/ - /i/ - /f/ gift ((spelling))
7. StA: gi::ft ((looks at StB for approbation))	7. StA: gi::ft ((looks at StB for approbation))

In both tasks, students in the second pair also used Catalan or Spanish to plan the text (see excerpt 5), and English when they wrote what the comic characters say. The most striking difference between the two pairs was related to how they managed the task. Students C & D did not engage in collaborative work. Instead, Student D practically did everything on her own. In excerpt 5, for example, she described, in Spanish, the plot of the comic script while she was drawing the characters. In this case, she did not let her student partner participate. In other cases, she instructed him what to do.

Excerpt 5: Student D performs the task on her own

Original	Translation
1. StD: <b>y entonces aparece otra persona, que la mata, que es más pequeña pero bueno (.) bueno y este no tiene que estar sonriendo (.) entonces cuando el sol ya está aquí (5.0) la persona</b>	1. <b>StD: and then appears a person, that kills him, that is smaller but well (.) well and this one doesn't have to be smiling (.) then when the sun is already here (5.0) the person</b>

The differences in students' use of English in the two tasks were practically non-existent in both pairs. In this small case study we cannot conclude that the use of the iPad modified what seems to be well established conversational rules in classrooms in Catalonia. Our study corroborates the findings of previous studies that demonstrate than in pair-group interaction English is used to perform the task and Catalan and/or Spanish to negotiate participation, to plan a fictional dialogue or to focus on form and solve communication problems (Masats, 2008).

Children did not write long texts in their comics. The limited space allowed inside the speech bubbles in the App (see figure 1) or the size of the squares on the paper may explain why. The vignettes with no speech bubbles, contained longer texts (see figure 2).



Figure 1. iPad-comic produced by pair 1

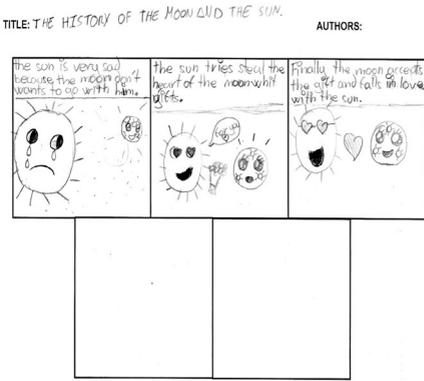


Figure 2. Hand-made comic produced by pair 1

Pair 1 produced comics with more text than pair 2, but children’s use of written English in all comics but one was scarce. The comic produced by pair 1 without the support of the digital tool was the one containing the largest number of written words. To see if students could write more complex texts, they were asked to briefly write on paper the story of the comic created on the iPad, because it was the comic in which both pairs had written the least. It was found that when writing the story, both pairs used more oral English, because they had to decide what to write and the written text they had to produce was longer than the one used to fill in the bubbles. Their discourse was based on how to write or spell English, but their exposure to this language was higher than when they were creating the comic, especially because while one participant wrote, the other read aloud what was being written.

Children in our study showed enthusiasm towards the idea of using iPad to create comics. They expressed it through applause and phrases such as “So cool”, when the device was shown. This initial affection towards the iPad let us presuppose that the concentration towards the activity would be higher and therefore would have an influence on language use. However, enthusiasm was not reflected in the conversations. Using their iPad to create comics did not trigger longer conversations compared to handmaking the same task. When children were asked about which of the tools to create the comic they had liked best, half of them said they did not have a preference, while the other half chose

iPads for their built-in images. The answer of the latter may be related to children's experiences of using iPads for play (Lynch & Redpath, 2014; Verenikina et al., 2016): when using the device, they are accustomed to getting what they want without having to produce anything. Images, though, triggered students' use of English, as they were a source of input (Sandvik et al., 2012): even though participants spoke Catalan to manage the task, the name of the objects and options given by the app were in English. Images also influenced the plot of the stories children created.

Among other aspects that had an impact on children's use of language we should mention the way the two pairs managed the tasks. As we have seen, pair 1 worked collaboratively, and therefore, their conversations contained a significantly higher number of question-answer exchanges compared to the other pair, whose members worked more individually. As we pointed out earlier, student D told the story to her partner and instructed him on what to do. This was clearly reflected in the conversations: the amount of talk is unbalanced because most of the time student D controlled the conversation. When choosing the activities and forming groups, teachers should reflect upon how they ensure everybody's participation. For pair 1, using an iPad to create their comics fostered learning through interactivity (Flewitt et al., 2015; Sandvik et al., 2012), but this was not the case for pair 2. As Barraja-Rohan (2011) suggests, the different roles participants adopt when working together shape their conversations.

### **Concluding remarks**

This paper has attempted to describe the influence of iPads on ESL oral language tasks. Due to the time and extension limitations, the research has been short, and therefore, further research needs to be carried out in order to acquire knowledge about how the iPad can be used to convert the initial enthusiasm that students show into an improvement in second language usage. For future research it would be essential to have more participants, to achieve a better scenario allowing the analysis of different ways of working or interacting, and its impact on the language. With the aim to improve, it would also be essential to plan tasks allowing for the meaningful use of English, in order to explore better the influence that iPads have on language learning, and then using this knowledge to improve their incorporation and use in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms.

The experience demonstrates that different aspects have an influence on how young learners use English as a foreign language, not only the supports they use during tasks. The conversations that arose when both couples were carrying out the tasks show that the way that participants organise the work and the task

planned could mould the use of language. Finally, it can be seen that the initial preference towards the iPad was not reflected in their work, due to the perspective that children have of using the iPad for play, whereas they see the paper activity as a learning task.

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## Notes

1. MakeBeliefsComix can be accessed at <https://www.makebeliefscomix.com/>

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**Annex: Transcription conventions**

Pseudonym of participants	StA StB StC StD
Overlapping	[
Pause	(.)
Time paused	(5.0)
Rising intonation	/
Speech unit boundary	
Analysts comments	((comment))
Lengthening of sound (according to duration)	: :: :::
Approximate phonetic transcription	(/text/)
Languages	<i>Catalan &amp; transcription from Catalan</i> <b>Spanish &amp; transcription from Spanish</b> English

# **Analysing children’s talk to understand how they solve a problem-solving reading task**

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## **Introduction**

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and value written texts with the purpose of widening one’s knowledge. Being a good reader or a highly skilled interpreter of a text does not entail merely reproducing syllables or phonemes with a good diction. It implies assimilating the information received through the eyes (or fingers through braille), which is then transmitted to our brains in order to build global meanings—including making hypotheses regarding unknown terms—based on information in the context in which the words are being used. Not everyone reads the same way and not all the students have similar abilities in decoding written texts, especially if reading is done in a foreign language.

The purpose of this study is to discover the main reading strategies a group of primary students applies to comprehend a problem-solving task in English. This study seeks to demonstrate that receptive skills (reading and listening) are as relevant as productive skills (writing, speaking, interacting). Firstly, we provide a theoretical background based on the most relevant literature related to the topic. Secondly, we present the thesis, the main methodology and the tools used to carry out the study. Thirdly, we analyse the transcribed interaction of a group of students who were able to overcome all the reading difficulties they encountered and accomplished the task. Finally, we present our conclusions.

## **Promoting reading skills and overcoming reading comprehension difficulties**

Reading skills should be considered of great importance in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Reading a text not only expands the reader’s knowledge of the language, but it also contributes to the opportunity of knowing and interacting with new cultures and experiences (Escobar, Gilabert and Sarramona, 2015) and increases learners’ possibilities of being exposed to the target language. Despite all the advantages of reading, learners may need to overcome several reading difficulties during the learning process. These complications may either be linked to decoding problems, comprehension problems, or a combination of both (Gough and Tunmer, 1986). Decoding is understood as the process of turning spelling (written text) into speech through a word recognition process, while

comprehension is the global understanding of the text. As Oakhill and Yuill (1996) acknowledge, readers who can be considered skilled in comprehension are able to: a) assess which inferences are needed when reading, b) understand the structure of a text, and c) monitor their comprehension. By contrast, less skilled readers might a) lack the general knowledge to make inferences, b) have difficulty accessing relevant understanding and c) may not realize that inferences are needed. Readers who are poor in comprehension may present reading difficulties at the level of single words (Perfetti, 1985), but they might also have trouble in developing memory skills. Several reading strategies can (and ideally should) be taught to foster pupils' readiness to become problem solvers and self-regulated learners (Lumbelli, 1996). However, only those students able to recognise their reading comprehension deficits will be able to control their learning process in a motivating, meaningful and autonomous way.

### ***Interaction in L2 reading tasks: Reciprocal teaching***

Social interaction plays an important mediator role in cognitive development in general, and in metacognitive development in particular (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, when engaged in reading tasks, learners need to interact with each other to guide their understanding, moderate their contributions, discuss ideas, scaffold each other's learning and build theories around the task at hand. To promote the development of students' comprehension skills teachers should explicitly instruct learners to employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies to comprehend texts, and should set reading tasks that allowed learners to process information. Brown and Palincsar (1989) argue that reading texts in small cooperative groups helps learners to comprehend written texts because, while interacting, learners engage in reciprocal teaching. Reciprocal teaching is a methodological technique used to facilitate reading comprehension. It is based on the interaction between teachers and their students, or between student leaders and the members of their teams. During reciprocal teaching, the teacher (or the student leader) models and guides group discussions on the text by engaging all in four actions that favour comprehension: predicting, questioning, clarifying and summarizing. These actions, often regarded to as the Fab Four reading strategies in reciprocal teaching, have been used, with excellent results, in regular elementary classrooms with students with and without learning disabilities (Lederer, 2000). Gibbons (2002) expands the list of reading strategies that support comprehension and suggests that teachers should explicitly direct students to employ them. To cite a few, the author mentions the following: skimming and scanning the text, re-reading for detail, pausing and predicting, summarizing the text, looking for someone's approval, skipping misunderstandings. He also encourages teachers to

rely on tasks that engage students in jigsaw reading and in reading aloud, among others.

### *The role of the teacher*

In reciprocal teaching, teachers play a key role in the development of their students' reading comprehension skills, because they are responsible for guiding the process of constructing knowledge, for giving feedback and for scaffolding learning. The more teachers know about their students' preferred learning styles, the more effectively they can orient their L2 instruction (Oxford, 2003). Guiding students means providing them with opportunities to employ and regulate strategic reading activities, which, in turn will enhance their performance in everyday contexts (Baker, 1994). When students are not able to employ proper reading strategies or are not able to repair comprehension obstacles, teachers should rely on questions that trigger reflection or that provide help (Lumbelli, 1996). Questions are a good resource to get the students' attention, to guide their reading and to improve their level of comprehension.

### *The role of students*

Pupils need to study in a comfortable environment in which they can learn with others. Individual development is best achieved through a judicious blend of support and challenge (Jaques, 1991). Teachers can scaffold students' learning or promote peer support in cooperative reading tasks. Cooperative learning requires students to adopt roles during the development of classroom tasks. Teachers have the option to assign roles that designate a specific responsibility to each student in a group according to their preferences or can give students the responsibility to choose or assign roles within the groups.

One of the most demanding roles in a group is related to "leadership". In reciprocal teaching, the leader of a group is the student who reads the text and that sets questions to elicit students' predictions that during the reading need to be confirmed or challenged (Gillies, 2007). The leader is also the student who tends to guide and manage the team. This complex role is often assigned unconsciously to one member of the group, but it can also be developed in an explicitly shared manner. One way or another, leadership is not a feature but an attitude.

### **Methodological framework**

This study is based on the analysis of recorded observational data and looks at the learning strategies used by a group of sixth graders to overcome comprehension barriers when facing a problem-solving reading task. It is carried out

in a semi-private school in Malgrat de Mar (Barcelona). Students have English lessons three times a week, but once a week, they also take a Science course taught in English. Data was collected in the English class while students were engaged in a problem-solving task linked to the contents they were dealing with in the Science class at that time. Learners had to read 36 statements regarding five endangered animals and use them to complete a grid containing key information about each species (see annex 1). The task was not about ordering the statements, but about using the clues they provided to complete the grid and gain information on those animals. In the grid, the information was grouped into different categories (species, physical features, habitat, body size, diet, reproduction, remaining species and reason of their disappearance). The teams with students with learning difficulties or with lower competences in English were given a picture of each animal as a scaffolding tool.

Considering the complexity of the reading task and the English level of each class, the research was implemented in two classes of sixth graders made up by a total of 45 students. The pupils were grouped in 12 different heterogeneous groups composed of three or four children each. Groups were heterogeneous regarding strengths and weaknesses in the subject. Our research goal was to determine which strategies pupils could develop to solve reading comprehension challenges in a foreign language. The research instruments used to collect data were six devices employed to record students during the whole hour they devoted to solving the task. The recordings provided data for our study for each working group. After doing a rough transcription of all the data and a preliminary analysis of all the transcription, one group was finally chosen to analyse. This group was selected because, as a team, students managed to overcome comprehension challenges by using different learning strategies in a natural way. After selecting the group to analyse, their interaction was transcribed in greater detail, taking into consideration kinetic, gestural and visual aspects that left an observable trace in the verbal production (see transcription conventions on appendix 2). A transcription is a selective method to limit the social reality of the study (Bucholtz, 2000) to a particular moment in the data. After reviewing the interaction several times, several excerpts in which pupils used problem-solving reading strategies cooperatively were selected to be presented here. In CA-for-SLA data must be presented sequenced, as it was produced. As we have opted for numbering the first turn in each excerpt with number 1, to help readers understand when the exchanges we analyse were produced, we provide the information of the timing.

In the next section, we analyse the main learning strategies pupils in the study applied when solving the reading task at hand. First, we will analyse the reading

comprehension strategies students used when they started the task, then we will focus on comprehension challenges they had to face during the reading process, and finally, we will observe what they did to complete the task.

**Analysis and discussion**

Our study departs from the view that learning a foreign language is a social activity and that, in the case we present here, the development of students’ interactional competences cannot be analysed separately from the process of gaining scientific knowledge (Yang, 2005). In this context, Conversational Analysis for Second Language Learning (CA-for-SLA) was chosen as a method of analysis (see chapter 23 in this same section). CA-for-SLA might be understood as a theoretical and methodological apparatus that takes into consideration the social aspects —interaction— of language use and language learning (Masats, 2017).

***Reading comprehension strategies used at the beginning of the task***

Most groups opted for reading the statements aloud before taking decisions on how to manage the task. This can be observed in excerpt one below:

**Excerpt 1. Starting the reading activity: Organizing themselves.**

Original	Translation
1. S1 (03:17): ((reading aloud clue number 1)) The first, the second and the third animals are mammals. ((to Student 2)) <b>Tú traduces   Sergi_</b>	1. S1 (03:17): ((reading aloud clue number 1)) The first, the second and the third animals are mammals. ((to Student 2)) <b>You translate, Sergi_</b>
2. S2 (03:26): <b>Mira   ya tenemos una pista   El primero, el segundo y el tercero son mamíferos</b>	2. S2 (03:26): <b>Look   we already have a clue   The first, the second and the third are mammals</b>
3. S1 (04:31): <b>El mammal va aquí   no/  </b> ((Looking at the other members of the group)) <b>El Sergi no se entera</b>	3. S1 (04:31): <b>The mammal goes here   right/  </b> ((Looking at the other members of the group)) <b>Sergi doesn’t get it</b>
4. S3 (11:05): ((Looking at S1)) <b>Por qué lo tienes que escribir todo tú /  </b>	4. S3 (11:05): ((Looking at S1)) <b>Why is it you who has to write everything/  </b>

In the first turn, we can see that student 1 adopts the role of the leader, since she is the one who starts reading the clues aloud and she also distributes and manages team work. In this case, this natural leader assigns a concrete responsibility to another member of the group (S2) who translate the sentence S1 had read (turn 2). Adopting roles should contribute to the organization of the task,

however, as we can see in turn 4, not all the students agree with the roles others take.

The task proceeds and the group soon realises that they can skip the clues they cannot use and re-read them again later. That is to say, they start selecting the most relevant information by skimming the text. Learners use Spanish as their vehicular language to verbalise their actions and to come to agreements, but do not seem, at this point, to have problems in understanding the meaning of the sentences they read.

### **Excerpt 2. Starting with the reading activity: Following an order**

Original	Translation
5. S1 (12:06): <b>La Sea Turtle puede estar aquí o aquí</b> ((Pointing at the grid, positions four and five))	5. S1 (12:06): <b>La Sea Turtle can be here or here</b> ((Pointing at the grid, positions four and five))
6. S2 (14:20): <b>A ver   saltamos las que no sepamos   No sabemos dónde está   no sirve de nada saber dónde vive si no sabes dónde va</b>	6. S2 (14:20): <b>Let's see   we skip the ones we do not know   We do not know where it is   Knowing where it eaves is useless if we do not know where it goes</b>

### ***Comprehension challenges faced during the reading process***

When students engage in the task of filling in the grid by decoding the information in the 30 sentences, comprehension challenges arise. In the next excerpts, we will observe the strategies they used to solve them.

Even though pupils were provided with dictionaries during the reading activity, the use of this tool was something circumstantial. When they faced an unknown word, learners relied on their abilities to deduce and predict meaning based on the context in which those words were used, as we can see in excerpt 3. In turn 7, S3 addresses S4 with a request for help to understand the meaning of the phrase “remaining (species)”. In this case, S3 solves the problem by addressing his request to someone in the group he believes has the knowledge.

**Excerpt 3. Doing the reading activity: Difficulties with vocabulary.**

Original	Translation
7. S3 (07:02): <b>Qué es</b> remaining/   ((Looking at S4))	7. S3 (07:02): <b>What is</b> remaining/   ((Looking at S4))
8. S4 (07:07): <b>Son las que quedan</b>	8. S4 (07:07): <b>They are the ones left</b>
9. S1 (08:30): <b>Mira  pone que el primero vive en Rusia  China   North Korea y Far East  Tiene que ser el tigre   Cuál creéis que es el número cinco/  El Polar Bear aún no lo sabemos</b>	9. S1 (08:30): <b>Look  it says that the first one lives in Russia   China   North Korea and the Far East   It must be the tiger  Which do you think it's number five/  We do not know about the Polar Bear yet</b>
10.S4 (19:27): <b>Si éste es el Eagle  ((Pointing at position number four)) éste tiene que ser la Sea Turtle  ((Pointing at position number five)) Los otros son mamíferos y estos dos no</b>	10.S4 (19:27): <b>Yes this is the Eagle  ((Pointing at position number four)) this must be the Sea Turtle  ((Pointing at position number five)) The other are mammals and these two are not.</b>
11.S2 (20:14): <b>{@La Sea Turtle no es mamífero   porque pone huevos}</b>	11.S2 (20:14): <b>{@the Sea Turtle is not a mammal because it lays eggs}</b>

In turns 9 and 10, S1 and S4 are solving the reading task by making predictions. After reading all the countries mentioned in the clues, S1 realizes they are related to the tiger. Nevertheless, she has trouble in placing another animal in the grid, the polar bear. Again, she asks her mates for their opinion (**Which do you think is number five?**). S4, in contrast, guesses the information by discarding clues. However, as we will observe in Excerpt 4, students' deductions are not always correct.

In Excerpt 4, students switch into their L1 to decodify the information in clue 13. Again, S2 makes a guess but in this particular case, he associates the English word 'rates' with the Catalan word for 'rats' and nobody in the group is able to repair his mistake. Instead, S1, the leader, diverts the focus of attention and tries to follow the order in which the information is provided.

#### Excerpt 4. Doing the reading activity: Using L1 to make guesses (false friends)

Original	Translation
12. S2 (22:54): ((Reading clue number 133, which gives information about reproduction rates of one of the animals. Rates in Catalan means 'rats')) The animal that goes before     <b>no sé qué rates</b>     <b>¡Dice que come ratas \</b>	12. S2 (22:54): ((Reading clue number 133, which gives information about reproduction rates of one of the animals. Rates in Catalan means 'rats')) The animal that goes before... <b>I do not know what about rates</b>   <b>It says it eats rats \</b>
13. S1 (23:06): <b>Mira déjalo eso   mejor  </b> ((Looking at S2)) <b>Vamos a por el primer animal   que es el tigre   Veis las fotos /   Primero vamos a la información del tigre y después a la otra</b>	13. S1 (23:06): <b>Well leave that   it's better  </b> ((Looking at S2)) <b>Let's go for the first animal   which is the tiger   Do you see the pictures /   First we tackle the information about the tiger and then the other</b>

Facing linguistic challenges was something they had to do during the task. In those situations pupils are not able to use the target language to manage the task and express their ideas. We can see this in excerpt 5. During this phase, pupils used a lot of reading strategies to carry out the task. Firstly, they made deductions based on their previous knowledge (see turns 14-16). Occasionally, they looked for the teacher's approval (turns 17-19) to confirm their guesses. At this point, it is important to notice that they mostly used English to make these guesses. Yet, when S1 addresses the teacher in excerpt 5 (turns 17-19) the girl makes an effort and mixes Catalan and Spanish in the same sentence, probably because in front of the teacher she tries to use as much English as possible. Finally, in this same excerpt, we can observe that in the group, there is a student who adopts the role of leader in order to manage the task. S2, in turn 19, reminds his mates of the importance of following an order to get better results. This student suggests they could review previous information, by re-reading the needed clues they previously had skipped. In this kind of task, re-reading is practically compulsory, since the learners must constantly go backwards and forwards to select the most relevant information, presented in the form of clues.

**Excerpt 5. Going on with the reading activity: Mixing L1 and L2, Asking the teacher for help**

Original	Translation
14.S3 (23:33): <b>Cómo sabes que es el tigre/</b>   ((Looking at S1))	14.S3 (23:33): <b>How do you know it's the tiger/</b>   ((Looking at S1))
15.S1 (23:36): <b>Porque es carnívoro</b>	15.S1 (23:36): <b>Because it is carnivorous</b>
16.S3 (23:40): <b>Pues este es el Polar Bear porque es carnívoro también   Aunque coma pescado es carnívoro</b>	16.S3 (23:40): <b>But this is the Polar Bear because it is also carnivorous   Even though it eats fish, it's carnivorous.</b>
17.S1 (23:47): The Polar bear <i>menja</i> fish/   ((Asking the teacher for help))	17.S1 (23:47): The Polar bear <i>eats</i> fish/   ((Asking the teacher for help))
18.T (23:50): Exactly   It eats fish   so it is carnivorous	18.T (23:50): Exactly   It eats fish   so it is carnivorous.
19.S2 (24:01): <b>Primero vamos a buscar la información del tigre   va   Vamos por orden. Sabemos que el tres es el oso polar   porque pone que el animal que va después del rinoceronte vive en el Arctic Circle     Tiene que ser éste  </b> ((Re-reading clue number 19))	19.S2 (24:01): <b>First let's look for the information about the tiger   come on   We do it in order   We know that number three is the polar bear   because the animal that goes after the rhino lives in the Arctic Circle     It must be this one  </b> ((Re-reading clue number 19))
20.S1 (25:03): Artic Circle is <i>el Cercle Polar</i> , Miriam/   ((Raising her hand to call the teacher))	20. S1 (25:03): Artic Circle is <i>el Cercle Polar</i> , Miriam/   ((Raising her hand to call the teacher))

Interpreting the clues also triggered interesting discussions in which learners shared contrasting opinions and looked for the strongest argument. Again, they used the knowledge they already possessed to defend their viewpoints. In turn 21 in excerpt 6, S2 asks a question looking for his partners' approval. From turn 22 to turn 25, S2 and S4 engage in a discussion on which animal clue 21 is referring to. They provide each other with arguments to support their views. Although the discussion is conducted in Spanish, their arguments demonstrate that they understand the English text, in this case, the meaning of clue 21, and can relate it to their previous knowledge about polar bears and tigers:

## Excerpt 6. Going on with the reading activity: Contrasting opinions

Original	Translation
21. S2 (26:12): ((after reading clue number 21)) <b>Es el oso polar   no/  </b>	21. S2 (26:12): ((after reading clue number 21)) <b>It is the polar bear   right/  </b>
22. S4 (26:16): <b>No   es el tigre_</b>	22. S4 (26:16): <b>No   it's the tiger_</b>
23. S2 (26:24): <b>Pero el tigre no es de colorines</b>	23. S2 (26:24): <b>But the tiger isn't multicoloured</b>
24. S4 (26:28): <b>Dice que es naranja   negro y blanco,   no de colorines  </b>	24. S4 (26:28): <b>It says it is orange   black and white   not multicoloured  </b>
25. S2 (26:34): ((Looking at S4)) <b>Tú has visto alguna vez un tigre de colorines/  </b>	25. S2 (26:34): ((Looking at S4)) <b>Have you ever seen a multicoloured tiger/  </b>

### Completing the reading task

When the session was about to finish, students felt the need to select and synthesize the information they had collected to wrap up the whole writing part.

## Excerpt 7. Ending up the reading activity: Synthesizing

Original	Translation
26. S1 (38:22): <b>Buscad el tigre y sintetizamos la información  </b> ((Pointing at clue number 23)) <b>Mirad aquí  </b>	26. S1 (38:22): <b>Find the tiger and we synthesise the information  </b> ((Pointing at clue number 23)) <b>Look here  </b>
27. S2 (39:15): <b>Aquí dice un animal   no dice el primero_</b> ((Disregarding S1))	27. S2 (39:15): <b>Here it says an animal   it does not say the first one_</b> ((Disregarding S1))
28. S3 (44:38): <b>Mira   horns son cuernos   Esto es el rinoceronte</b> ((Focusing on clue number 28))	28. S3 (44:38): <b>Look   horns are horns   This is the rhinoceros</b> ((Focusing on clue number 28))
29. S4 (45:16): <b>Vamos a por otro animal   que ya tenemos el tigre   El rinoceronte dices   no/  </b> ((Looking at S3))	29. S4 (45:16): <b>Let's go for the other animal   we already have the tiger   the rhinoceros you mean   do you/  </b> ((Looking at S3))

In excerpt 7, students demonstrate that they are skilled at comprehension, since they select key words to make inferences when reading (turn 28), disregard superfluous information (turn 27) and organize and sequence the task (turn 29). As pupils drew closer to the end of the task, their strategies became weaker as they (presumably) started getting tired.

**Excerpt 8. Ending up the reading activity: Asking the teacher for help and getting distracted**

Original	Translation
30. S1 (48:02): ((Looking at the teacher)) <i>Què vol dir global /   Vol dir que no pot viure a cap altre lloc/  </i>	30. S1 (48:02): ((Looking at the teacher)) <i>what dos global mean /   Does it mean they can't live elsewhere/  </i>
31. S2 (49:05): <b>Pasamos la reproducción que es más difícil_</b>	31. S2 (49:05): <b>Let's skip reproduction because it is more difficult_</b>
32. S4 (50:08): <b>Bueno  esto ya lo hemos estudiado</b>	32. S4 (50:08): <b>Well  we have already studied this</b>
33. S3 (52:33): <b>Yo ya sé para qué es el móvil </b> ((Touching the mobile phone before the teacher gathers up all the devices)) <b>es para evaluar el trabajo en grupo</b>	33. S3 (52:33): <b>I already know what the cell phone is for </b> ((Touching the mobile phone before the teacher gathers up all the devices)) <b>to evaluate group work</b>

In this last excerpt, we can observe that pupils start to get distracted. In turn 30, S1 tries to deduce the meaning of a word and asks the teacher for help. S2 ignores the request and suggests a change of focus of attention. Immediately after, S3 is off task (turn 33) and is more interested in discussing why there are recording devices on their tables. Again, students mostly speak Spanish to manage the task, except when they address their teacher. In this case, they switch into Catalan (turn 30).

**Concluding remarks**

As we have observed, the reading task students had to solve collectively triggered their need to interact. Success was related to the quality of the group interaction. Children had to communicate to negotiate meaning, to make guesses, to discuss ideas and to scaffold their learning. Our findings highlights the importance of collaborative work and the role of the leaders in the group. During the entire reading task, students demonstrated that they employed more than one strategy either to comprehend the clues or to deduce the meaning of lexical items. From the beginning, they paid attention to the task at hand: reading a text to complete a grid. Hence, they organized both themselves and the work to be done. They assigned roles and they opted for reading the clues in order. Later on, they applied different techniques to understand the clues that were needed to complete the grid. When they encountered new words they had not heard before, they relied on their previous knowledge to decodify meaning or used

a variety of procedures to overcome that language barrier, such as asking the teacher for help or deducing and skipping information.

Students succeeded in getting to grips with a text written in English but they did not use the target language to conduct the task. Instead, they switched into Spanish to manage the task and overcome language barriers or into Catalan if they addressed their teacher. These findings coincide with other studies conducted in Catalan classrooms with young learners of English (see Masats, 2008, as an example), but we still need to investigate how educators can push their learners to use English to communicate during group work tasks.

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# Annex 1. The problem-solving reading task

Group (number):  
Date:

## READING ACTIVITY:

### LET'S DISCOVER FIVE SPECIES IN EXTREME DANGER OF EXTINCTION

Complete the grid with the provided information (clues):

SPECIES	Type	Physical features	Habitat	Body size	Diet	Reproduction	Remaining species (number)	Reason of their disappearance
1.								
2.								

## INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT FIVE SPECIES IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

- The **first, the second and the third** animals are mammals.
- There are about 3,000 remaining species of **Sea Turtles**.
- Sea Turtles** are hunted by sharks, but also by people. Their meat is offered in luxury restaurants.
- Today there are only 5,000 **African Black Rhinoceros in the world**. They are dying out because of habitat changes, illegal poaching and competing species.
- The **first animal** lives in Russia, China, North Korea and the Far East.
- Polar Bears** on all fours are 1 to 1.5 meters tall. They are 2.2 to 2.5m in length from head to rump and males weigh around 300-700 kg.
- Sea Turtles** live in oceans, except in the polar regions.
- The **first, the third and the fourth** animals are carnivorous.
- Iberian Imperial Eagles** have dark feathers, a strong beak and sharp claws and measure 80cm in length and weigh between 3.5 and 5kg.
- Siberian Tigers** are hunted as trophies. Parts of their bodies (bones, eyes, whiskers or teeth) are used as remedies in Chinese medicine. Today only 350-450 tigers live in the wild.
- The **fourth animal** lays their eggs for about 44 days. Baby birds start flying 75 days after being born.
- The animal that goes before the **African Black Rhinoceros** gives to birth from two to six cubs. Males do not help females raise their cubs.

13. The animal that goes before the **Iberian Imperial Eagle** has very low reproductive rates and a gestation period of about 60 days.
14. The **third animal** has strong legs with large, flattened feet with some webbing between their toes to walk on ice and swim.
15. **Sea Turtles** are omnivorous. They eat plants and animals when they are young. When they are adult, they become herbivorous.
16. There are about 20,000 specimens of the **animal** which is disappearing because the consequences of global warming.
17. The largest species of **Sea Turtles** is 2 to 3 meters in length, 1 to 1.5 meters in width and weigh up to 700kg. Most species are smaller.
18. The **animal** that lives in East and South Africa is herbivorous.
19. The animal that goes after **African Black Rhinoceros** lives in the Arctic Circle and the North Pole.
20. The animal that goes after the **Siberian Tiger** lives in East and South Africa.
21. **One of the animals** has an orange, black and white striped and dense fur.
22. **African Black Rhinoceros** are 1.50-1.75 meters in high at the shoulder and 3.5 to 3.9 meters in length. Adult males weigh from 840 to 1,600kg.
23. The **animal** with orange, black and white fur averages about 3.3 cm in length, with a tail measuring 1 meter. Males can weigh up to 320kg and females up to 180kg.
24. The **last animal** is a reptile.
25. The **fourth animal** is a bird and lives in the Iberian Peninsula.
26. The **animal** disappearing because of the consequences of global warming is a mammal.
27. The **last animal** starts reproducing when they are 15 years old. Females bury their eggs in sandy beaches.
28. One of the **animals** has one or two horns. They are hunted because the horns are used for ornaments or traditional medicine.
29. **Iberian Imperial Eagles** are disappearing because of human encroachment, collisions with pylons and illegal poisoning.
30. There are only 150 pairs left free of the **fourth animal**.
31. The gestation period of the **second mammal** is 15 months. The mother and her calves stay together for 3 years.
32. **Polar Bears** go before Iberian Imperial Eagles.
33. The **second animal** measures from 1.4 to 1.8 m. high at the shoulder and 3.5 m. in length.

## Annex 2. Transcription conventions

Pseudonym of participants	ST (plus a number per student); T (teacher)
Rising intonation	/
Analysts Comments	((comment))
Speech unit boundary	
Interruption	text_
Laughter	{@text}

# Asking for volunteers: a teacher's strategies to enhance learning while organising participation

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## Introduction

It is known that interaction, motivation and participation are key interrelated concepts in second language acquisition. Consequently, we, as teachers, need to find tools, resources and strategies to engage children in using the target language to participate (orally) in classroom tasks. Furthermore, teachers need to bear in mind that when learning a language children need to be given ample opportunities for developing their communicative competence. Research has proven that one way of promoting authentic oral communication in the classroom is through engaging students in communicative tasks. According to Bygate, Skehan & Swain (2001: 11), “a [communication] task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective”. However, it must be acknowledged that even though young children are usually keen to participate in class, promoting participation in a language unfamiliar to them is not always easy. Consequently, new strategies/games could be integrated into the classroom to make students participate instead of limiting their interaction to only “answering questions to which their teacher already knows the answer” (Trong Tuan & Thi Kim Nhu, 2010: 31).

Thus, this article focuses on teachers/students interaction; in particular, how a teacher engages her pupils in various tasks by turning those moments in which she needs to give the floor to students into potential learning episodes. The excerpts analysed here were recorded in two first grade classrooms of a Catalan school which was taking part in an interdisciplinary telecollaborative project. We will not study here how the experience as a whole promotes authentic communication. Instead, we will focus on some of the strategies the teacher uses in face-to-face communication to ask for a volunteer. There is ample research on task-based classroom communication, but we feel it is interesting to observe if learning also takes place when students are getting ready to perform a task and not just while they are on task.

## Theoretical framework

### *Oral communication*

The main goal people want to achieve when learning a new language is to be able to communicate with others, both orally and in writing. According to Hymes (1972), the communicative competence is the ability people have to recognise a language and to use it. The acquisition of this competence is sustained by social experience, needs and motives. The Catalan primary educational curriculum<sup>1</sup> states that mastering the communicative competence involves knowing how to interact orally (speak, listen and express oneself), in writing and in the use of audiovisual languages. This competence is divided into three subcategories: the oral competence, the written competence and the audiovisual competence.

Mastering oral communication is about developing the ability to talk to others, to give and exchange information and ideas: to ask questions, to give directions, to coordinate work tasks, to explain and persuade and to participate in all kind of events. Face to face communication is significant when learning a language, because it is an interactive and real-time experience among participants that involves not only verbal language, but nonverbal delivery as well. Thereby, students need to talk in order to be able to use the language.

Along these lines, Hitotuzi (2005: 98) says that “students are not a *tabula rasa*” where teachers can record knowledge; students have knowledge and experiences of life and language which can contribute greatly to the learning process. Perhaps, if learners are given more opportunities to participate in the target language in the L2 classrooms, they would learn more, and would be more motivated for learning. For this to occur, teacher talking time should lessen, and students should be triggered to participate and become more involved in the lesson. Lei (2009) and Cullen (1998) propose that too much teacher talk deprives students of opportunities to speak and fully participate in the classroom interaction.

Furthermore, it is important and necessary that teachers make themselves understood; it means that input must be comprehensible for the learners (Cullen, 1998). When this occurs, pupils tend to participate more in the tasks and activities proposed by the teacher; and they follow the lesson more completely. Even if input is usually given by the teacher, that does not mean it has to be transmitted in a traditional fashion; depending on the classroom context the teacher can use different strategies in order to promote understanding. Classroom talk helps students to learn, to reflect on what they are learning, and to communicate their knowledge and understanding. Students need authentic opportunities to learn how to listen and speak effectively in a variety of situations; consequently,

students must find speaking activities to be purposeful, interesting and meaningful and teachers should provide them with activities that get their attention and encourage their participation.

### ***Task-based learning***

As we have said, the importance of oral communication in the classroom is unquestionable. Yet teachers need to think about how to best promote communication in class. Research has proven that one way to achieve this is through task-based learning. This approach promotes language learning through communicative tasks. According to Martín Peris (2001: 65), “the task approach does not reply to a frontal learning scheme in which the conversation is always between the teacher and the student (unidirectional). Instead, tasks promote the interaction between pupils, and put them in situations of having to take the lead.” Candlin (1987:10) defines a task as “a set of differentiated, sequenceable, problem-posing activities involving learners and teachers in some joint selection from a range of varied cognitive and communicative procedures applied to existing and new knowledge in the collective exploration and pursuance of foreseen or emergent goals within a social milieu.” Richards, Platt & Weber (1985:289) suggest that a task is “any activity or action which is required as a result of processing and understanding language”.

If we think about reasons for using tasks in our English classroom, Gilabert (2007) declares that tasks can facilitate the learning of a second language or a foreign language. There are several arguments in favour of the task-based approach:

- a) Tasks can adapt to different rates of acquisition. Children do not learn a language at the same pace; for this reason, with tasks, students will be able to focus on things they are prepared to learn, and avoid other more difficult obstacles that may hinder them at that moment.
- b) Learners create, as part of their own learning process, provisional grammatical categories that they will have to confirm or disregard according to their experience in using the second language. As students receive input and interact with others, their knowledge of the language becomes more refined.
- c) Children can notice their gaps when they want to produce output and they do not know how to say something. So, children will need new input in order to solve this problem and fill the gap.

## **Methodology**

### ***Sample***

The analysed data comes from a telecollaborative project<sup>2</sup> carried out in a virtual platform between students of two first grade classrooms of primary education in a school located in Mollet del Vallès (Catalonia) and one second grade class from Ontario (Canada). The project in the Catalan school was mainly implemented in English classes by the English teacher and two researchers, but class teachers also took part in it: social sciences, arts and ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

Our data is composed of 10 videos of approximately an hour in length. They were recorded by Dr. Melinda Dooly and Dr. Dolors Masats, members of the research group GREIP<sup>3</sup>, who also designed and implemented the project from which the data in this study come. These videos contained the recordings of the two classes of first grade primary students from the Catalan school. There are around 24 students in each group.

The students in the Catalan school start learning English at the age of three, in early childhood education. Their teacher gives greater importance to the oral competence over the written one. Thus, most of the tasks and activities proposed are carried out orally in order to make children speak in the target language (English in this case). English is practiced three times a week: twice with the whole group and once with half of the group. As communication is the key to developing the lessons, the teacher only uses English to address the kids, although they may not use this language all the time. As we are interested in observing the teacher's strategies to promote learning, in the excerpts selected, the interaction in the class is between the teacher and the learners and vice versa; students in the selected excerpts always work as a group class and never on their own or in small groups.

### ***Data selection***

After viewing and analysing the raw data, five different excerpts were selected. They were chosen because they illustrate different strategies used by the teacher to manage the tasks she proposes during the lesson. We selected those excerpts in which the teacher selects a volunteer among the students to participate in the task she wants to propose. It is important to remark that the analysis is not focused on the process of the resolving of the tasks, nor on the role of the volunteer. We want to examine how different strategies used to select a volunteer can promote participation and can promote learning. We believe that the

excerpts selected can be useful for all teachers, not only English teachers, who want to reflect upon how they can manage the tasks set for their students while enhancing their learning. It is important to have different strategies, resources and tools to engage children in classroom tasks, and they can only be understood by reflecting on what happens in real classrooms.

### ***Data analysis***

The selected excerpts were transcribed using ELAN. The transcription conventions used are shown in the Annex. Conversational Analysis (CA) is the method we used to analyse data. Although we are not going to present data sequentially, that is, the excerpts will be presented as isolated fragments of communication episodes occurring at different moments, CA seems to be the most suitable method to analyse how learning takes place as talk-in-interaction unfolds (Masats, 2008).

As we said, the selected excerpts are sequences of talk-in-interaction occurring in different sessions. As the observed phenomenon is very specific, and we do not present the different excerpts in chronological order, it was not necessary to number the turns to indicate when the interaction took place during the lesson. Consequently, the first turn in each of the excerpts we present is turn one.

### **Analysis and discussion**

As teachers, we need to have resources, strategies and tools to be able to manage the different tasks and activities we propose to our students and to help them understand what they need to do. In addition, teachers require the participation of the learners to make the lessons enjoyable and profitable. These two goals can merge and teachers can ask for volunteers to help them model the task set or clarify the task instructions. Consequently pupils do not just sit and listen but learn by doing. Getting a pupil to model a task or perform an action in front of the group class is beneficial but is also a challenge. Broadly speaking, most primary kids are not reluctant to volunteer; still choosing who will participate is not a straightforward task as we need to ensure we give the same opportunities to all pupils. Pointing, staring or naming students to give them the floor may seem to be a simple task, but these actions do not promote learning per se. In this part of the article, five excerpts about how to select volunteers are analysed; they illustrate four different strategies to distribute turns and negotiate students' participation. We are interested in examining which of the strategies used by the teacher to choose a volunteer among all the students in the classroom to perform a task can turn into opportunities for learning if the teacher plans them carefully. A first analysis of the data allowed us to establish that the strategies used by the

teacher in the sample to ask for a volunteer can fit into one of these categories:

- Episodes which do not enhance learning;
- Episodes which provide input but no output;
- Episodes which enhance the production of short responses;
- Episodes which provide opportunities for practising vocabulary.

### ***Episodes which do not enhance learning***

Traditionally teachers ask for a volunteer to participate by asking students to raise their hand. According to Evertson & Emmer (2008:25) “requiring that students raise their hands gives all students an opportunity to participate and allows teachers to call on students who do not have their hands up, if the teacher chooses”. This is what we observe in the excerpt below.

*Excerpt 1.* The teacher is asking children what they know about Canada and where it is located. Thus, the task proposed requires pointing to Canada on a world map. Participants: Teacher (TEA); unidentified student (STU) and the researcher (Lola).

- T1. TEA: I need one volunteer because we have a problem Lola\  
where is Canada/ in the map of the world/| Ainhoa/|  
((students do not raise their hands))
- T2. STU 1: él siempre sabe/| ((he always knows all))
- T3. TEA: ((looking at Ainhoa)) do you have any idea where  
Canada is/ \come\_come here\ you will be my  
volunteer\_come with me\|

In turn 1, the teacher presents a problem: she needs to locate Canada on the map. Instead of providing this information, she first poses the question to the group (turn 3) and then she chooses the volunteer she wants. As we can see in turn 1, the absence of pauses indicates that she does not give children the opportunity to raise their hand in order to ask for permission to talk, because she decides to ask a particular student. Although the teacher engages children's participation in the construction of knowledge (locating a country on a map), the strategy she uses to give the floor to the children does not promote learning of any kind. It is a simple choice of a speaker, ignoring the proposal made by one of the students (turn 2), but we do not know who she is talking about, because she does not point at him.

### ***Episodes which provide input but no output***

Children love songs, rhymes and chants and their repetitive nature and rhythm

make them an ideal vehicle for language learning (Brewster, Ellis and Girard, 1992). According to Fleta (2007), these resources develop the control of vocal expression by introducing a range of tones and volumes and it is an excellent way of introducing and reinforcing vocabulary and grammar while improving learners' oral skills. This is what is analysed in the second excerpt.

*Excerpt 2.* Students are talking about Saint George and the dragon and they need to write the word “dragon” in the computer to find a picture of a dragon. Participants: Teacher (TEA); unidentified student (STU).

- T1 TEA: one volunteer to write dragon\|  
T2 STU: ((to one student who raises his hand)) *Oriol tu ja has sorti:t\\_ tu ja has sorti\|* ((*Oriol, you have already come (to the blackboard), you have already come (to the blackboard)*))  
T3 TEA: ((most of the students are raising their hands)) for example:e xxxxxxxx volunteers\_ Eenie, meenie, miney, moe, Catch a tiger by the toe. If he hollers, let him go. Eenie, meenie, miney, moe! ((she points to one student))

As in the previous excerpt, the teacher needs a volunteer to perform one of the tasks. She announces this in turn 1. Most of the students raise their hand to show their interest to perform the task. Again, one of the students intervenes, in this case, to state that one of his classmates cannot be the volunteer because he had already participated (turn 2). This intervention indicates that students are familiar with the technique of acting as volunteers to model an action or to carry out a task in front of the group, and that they are willing to do so. The teacher, once more, decides to choose the volunteer herself; in this case, she does so by reciting a counting rhyme (turn 3).

This strategy, unlike the one in excerpt one, provides students with the opportunity of receiving input in the target language. In this case, they are presented a typical example of a children's counting rhyme in the target language. In this excerpt, children do not repeat it, but, if this strategy is used as a routine to select volunteers and children hear it more than once during the year, they can learn it and incorporate it in their linguistic repertoire. Moreover, the teacher could ask the learners to repeat the rhyme for them to practice intonation patterns and stress.

### ***Episodes which enhance the production of short responses***

Traditionally, asking questions was viewed as an important constituent of teacher talk in the classroom context. The IRF pattern was proposed as the basic unit of classroom interaction, understanding it as a sequence of three steps. First, the teacher asks a question (**I**nitiation), then the student **R**esponds and finally the teacher gives **F**eedback. Questions are often used by teachers, as one form

of initiating interaction. By asking questions the teacher triggers responses from students in order to engage them in conversations. Yet, IRF exchanges initiated by questions are usually assessment sequences, because the teacher knows the answer and he/she is checking if the pupil also knows it. Therefore, the kids' goal is to respond by giving the correct answer in order to obtain positive feedback.

But questions may serve a different goal. In excerpt 3, questions are used as a strategy to give the floor to students. Although there is also an assessment goal, the question that the teacher poses has an extra value, because if a student answers correctly, he or she can be the volunteer to perform the task. Consequently, the whole exchange is an excuse or a strategy the teacher uses to get students to be on task.

*Excerpt 3.* Students are preparing a Power Point to introduce themselves and their village to their partners in Canada. At this point, they are deciding whether they want to include a picture of a traditional festivity in their Power Point. Therefore, the task is about looking for a picture of “sardanes” in the computer and writing this word in the Power Point. Participants: Teacher 1 (TEA 1); teacher 2 (TEA 2); unidentified students (STU).

- T1. TEA 2: do you want pictures of *sardanes*/ | | do you like photos/ | ((sardanes is a typical Catalan dance))
- T2. STU: yes\ | yes\ |
- T3. TEA 1: yes/ |
- T4. TEA 2: do you like *sardanes*/ | who writes *sardanes*/ |
- T5. TEA 1: one volunteer!
- T6. STU 1: jo\ |
- T7. TEA 1: one volunteer\_ aaa :who/ who is coming/ | |
- T8. TEA 2: okay\_who could tell me the name\_of the city/\_where our friends live in Canada/ |
- T9. TEA 1: what's is the name of the city from the boys and girls/ |
- T10. STU: city::/ |
- T11. STU 2: Tolonto:/ |
- T12. TEA 2: Toronto: |
- T13. TEA 1: very good come here\ |

In turn 1, one of the teachers involved in the task asks a question to the students to see if they feel like inserting a picture of people dancing “sardanes” in their Power Point. As they seem to be interested in looking for a picture (turn 2), the teacher tries to manage the task by negotiating students' participation: she asks for a volunteer to come to the front of the class and search for a picture on the Internet (turn 5). In this case, the strategy used to select the volunteer is asking them a question (Initiation move) about something they have learnt before in class (turn 8). The question is repeated (turn 9) in order to reformulate it with a different structure and other words, maybe to make it clearer for the children.

While one of the students is asking for the meaning of the word city (turn 10, note the raising intonation and the length of the pronunciation of the last sound in the word), another says the answer hesitantly (turn 11, response move, notice again the raising intonation and the length of the pronunciation of the last sound in the word). Immediately after, the teacher makes a phonetic correction (turn 12, Feedback move), which also serves to indicate that the answer is considered correct, because she prioritizes the content of the message over the form. In turn 13, the other teacher explicitly confirms that the response is accepted and the volunteer is chosen.

With this strategy the teacher can know whether children are involved in the class task and paying attention. Yet, this excerpt also illustrates a different way to use questions, as a strategy to give the floor to students. Moreover, using students as volunteers to perform the task encourages learning by doing instead of learning by imitation. Hence, the volunteer will learn how to use ICT to look for, select and download a picture from the Internet and the other students will see the process. The teacher is taking profit of every opportunity to give her students tools and resources which will allow them to be more autonomous when working in group or at home doing the same sort of task.

### ***Episodes which provide opportunities for practising vocabulary***

[...] play is a valuable learning tool. Play can be humorous and entertaining and, at the same time, play can be purposeful in its desired educational outcomes. The playing of games has been found to be a wonderful means of not only teaching and practicing vocabulary, but also of motivating students and increasing fluency. (Seberg, 2008:19)

Playing games allows students to use language in a meaningful context, and it is a great way to decrease frustration and anxiety levels. Games promote students' participation and involvement in the classroom. If the teacher uses the appropriate resources and strategies, children will be learning while having fun. Moreover, pupils may communicate both with the teacher and other classmates in the target language in order to take part in the game and also in the task or activity proposed. We can observe this in the following two excerpts.

*Excerpt 4.* Children are looking at different paintings in a virtual art gallery in a virtual world called *Second Life*. There are two groups, one formed by girls and another formed by boys, and they are taking turns to give instructions to the avatar to move to reach the painting. At this point, they are about to listen to another description of a painting and need to decide whose turn it is to locate

the painting in the virtual gallery. Participants: Teacher (TEA); teacher 2 (TEA 2); unidentified students (STU); Oriol (ORI); Ainhoa (AIN); Adrià (ADR); Carla (CAR); Roi (ROI); Yaiza (YAI); Chillida (CHI)

- T1. TEA: do you want to continue again/|  
T2. STU: ((shouting)) yes\|  
T3. TEA: yes or no/|  
T4. STU: ((voices saying yes and no at the same time))  
T5. TEA: a:ll right\_I think we will do one\and we shall finish\one finish\_bu: but\  
but\_let's see\who's turn is it\_ let me see\_it\_a veure qui comença\_perquè només falta  
un més\_((translation: *let's see who starts, there is only one left*)) you have to discover  
the number\_I will write\_I will write the number in the whiteboard and you  
discover | if you discover it's your opportunity to start\  
T6. TEA 2: XXX  
T7. TEA: no nothing\_because if the boys:: it's the boy's turn\ they will win\| [the teacher  
writes a number in the blackboard and hides it] all right ready! hello:/discover  
the number okay/|| boys Nil tell me a number\ from zero to twelve to  
at twenty\|  
T8. STU: tio\|  
T9. STU: a:nd\_cero/menys\_  
T10. TEA: one number\  
T11. STU: **un número**\| ((translation: **one number**))  
T12. TEA: from number zero\_ to number twenty\_one two three four five\  
T13. STU: eeee::  
T14. TEA: one number \|  
T15. STU: *el trenta* | ((translation: *thirty*))  
T16. TEA: in english\ from zero to number twenty no to thirty |  
T17. STU: **con el** / ((translation: **with him**))  
T18. STU: no un  
T19. STU: fifteen/  
T20. TEA: no\ Ainhoa/  
T21. AIN: ee:m two  
T22. TEA: no\ Adrià\  
T23. ADR: e::e *vint* / ((translation: *twenty*))  
T24. STU: one/  
T25. STU: eighth/  
T26. TEA: no\  
T27. STU: aght  
T28. TEA: Carla/  
T29. CAR: one/  
T30. TEA: no\ Roi/  
T31. ROI: one  
T32. TEA: no\ Yaiza/  
T33. YAI: ten  
T34. TEA: no Oriol/  
T35. ORI: three/  
T36. TEA: no\ Chillida/  
T37. CHI: ((laughs))  
T38. TEA: twenty! ta cha:n\ e::el:ev:en\ so its XXX to the girls! big ears XXX big ears

In turn 1 the teacher formulates a question to the students: she asks them if they want to continue the task they are doing. As the answers given are both positive and negative (depending on the students who answer; turn 4), she decides to please the ones who want to continue (turn 5). Therefore, she needs to know whose turn it is; this means that she has to negotiate students' participation again. In this case, the strategy used by the teacher can be considered a game, because she secretly writes a number on the blackboard and students have to identify the hidden number (turn 5). First, it can be thought that the goal of that game is to find out the number that the teacher has written; but through this "game", pupils are recalling how to say the numbers they know in the target. Thus, this strategy encourages children to lose their shyness and also helps them use the words to communicate with the teacher and with their classmates with a clear and authentic purpose. As the main task is fun for children and they want to continue doing it, the game proposed by the teacher to select someone to perform it eases the anxiety of the learners in regard to using the target language.

As we observe in turns 15 & 16, the game is an opportunity for learners to learn the target language. Unlike what happens sometimes when students work in group or they answer complex questions in the mother tongue, here, the teacher does not accept the L1. She wants to take advantage of the game to practice a specific vocabulary that pupils know; so, this time, she emphasizes the form and not only the content. If necessary, the game could be more difficult and adapted to other class levels (from 1st grade to 6th grade). The teacher, for instance, instead of asking students to name numbers, she could ask for words from other semantic fields (animals, pieces of furniture, fruits, among others) associated with the topics dealt with in the classroom. Probably, this strategy is an indirect way to verify whether boys and girls have assimilated the vocabulary presented in class, but such vocabulary practice has another authentic purpose.

The practice of a given set of words can be associated with the linguistic objective of learning and consolidating vocabulary, but can also serve other purposes. Excerpt 5 can be understood as an example of the use of an interdisciplinary strategy. Again, children are naming numbers but unlike what we observed in the previous excerpt, in this case we can associate English with mathematics, and not only with the need to practise the vocabulary learnt in the English class.

*Excerpt 5.* Students are writing an email to the Canadian students. The task is looking for a photo on the Internet with the computer. Participants: Teacher (TEA); unidentified students (STU)

- T1. TEA: all right\_let's change the game/ aa:h\_let's see\_the boy or girl that\_ will have\_ the ball\_ at number twenty\_will be our volunteer\_ all right\ ((she throws a small ball to one of the students)) one ((from now onwards students catch the ball, say the number and throw the ball to another classmate))
- T2. STU 1: Two\_two
- T3. TEA: three|
- T4. STU 2: four\|
- T5. TEA: five|
- T6. STU 3: six
- T7. TEA: seven\_ hmm ((she is looking at the student, because he is not paying attention))
- T8. STU 4: eight
- T9. TEA: nine
- T10. STU 5: ten
- T11. TEA: eleven
- T12. STU 6: twelve
- T13. TEA: thirteen
- T14. STU 7: sixty
- T15. TEA: ou:!
- T16. STU 8: fourteen
- T17. TEA: fourteen
- T18. STU 9: seventeen
- T19. STU 10: five\_
- T20. TEA 2: fifteen
- T21. TEA: fifteen| fifteen/|
- T22. STU 11: sixty
- T23. STU 12: seventy
- T24. TEA: e: sixteen\_ seventeen
- T25. STU 13: a:la! ((looking at the ball which has fallen down))
- T26. TEA: sixteen
- T27. STU 14: nineteen
- T28. TEA: sixteen
- T29. STU 15: seventeen\_
- T30. TEA: fantastic\| eighteen
- T31. STU 16: ninety
- T32. TEA: ninety ups\_XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX volunteer ninete:::::en
- T33. STU 17: twenty
- T34. TEA: ninetee:n twenty/| mister ethan stand up\ you're our volunteer\_okay/|

As stated earlier, students have to select different photos to attach in an email. Therefore, the teacher, who does not want to do the ICT tasks by herself, needs to invite a student to participate in the task by coming to the front and using the computer to search for a picture. This time the strategy for selecting a volunteer is different from the previous excerpt. In turn 1 the teacher explains to the pupils what the game consists of: they have to pass a ball to one another and say

a number counting from one to twenty, every time one of them catches the ball. The student who has to say the number twenty while having the ball will be the volunteer to perform the task.

It can seem a simple game, but it allows students to practice numbers and make their brain work. It has to be taken into account that these students are in the first grade of primary education and their level of English and range of vocabulary is not high enough to perform other types of counting activities. In this excerpt, it can be seen that a few of them still have problems to recall how to name numbers in English or to follow the order of numbers. In turn 14, for example, the student confuses number sixteen with number sixty, probably because they are pronounced similarly; but when this occurs, another student overcomes the obstacle (turn 16, example of peer-repair). Before concluding the game, the teacher congratulates the students for the job they have done so well when counting (turn 30). It is important to congratulate students when they do something as expected in order to increase their self-esteem and also their motivation to speak using the target language. Again, although the game triggers output and participation of most of the students in the class, it is the teacher who finally decides who will be her volunteer. In turn 32, she repeats number nineteen, because she is correcting the number provided by the student in the previous turn and then she looks at different kids and throws the ball to one of them. Although in the end she chooses the volunteer as in excerpts 1, 2 and 3, she turns this action into a learning task.

Again, we can adapt this game to students' class level (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade until the 6th grade). For example, if pupils are learning to count in order (1st graders) we will probably use the same strategy used in this excerpt, but if they are learning to multiply (3rd and 4th graders), we could ask them to count by twos, by fives and so on. Thereby, mathematics and English could be connected in this game, and pupils could practise both subjects. It is great to interrelate different contents in only one (interdisciplinary) task, because children will be activating the knowledge they have of both areas.

### **Concluding remarks**

This paper has examined the importance of preparing communicative tasks in the English classrooms, but also how the way teachers manage to organise turns can promote the use of the target language for learning. One of the more significant findings that emerges from this study is that teachers can use a variety of turn selection strategies to promote both learning and participation. We have seen that occasionally some of the strategies used do not trigger students output,

but still they are enhancing participation as they provide meaningful input. In other occasions, turn selection is negotiated through a game. In those cases, kids are learning while having fun. Games also favour the integration of contents from other curricular areas with an authentic and purposeful use of the target language. These findings enhance our understanding of the importance of the task-based approach when learning a language and, of course, of how different strategies can increase the amount of students' talk in those moments in which the teacher needs to address the whole group class.

A language is learnt when you use it, when you make mistakes and learn to correct them. Therefore, if we do not give students the chance to participate in class using the foreign language, they will never be able to speak it. The use of the target language is key to learning it; this is perhaps more important with very young learners. Therefore, it is interesting to become aware of which are the strategies teachers can use to give students opportunities to practise their vocabulary. The ones we have examined can also be used by other teachers, not only the English teachers. Research on the benefits of integrating language and content is ample and it is beyond the scope of this paper. Yet, we would like to conclude by stating that in order to promote cross curricular links, it would be interesting to apply the strategies examined here in other subjects and use English to do so, even though the courses are not taught through English. It may also be interesting to apply them in the L1 if the teacher does not know English. In this case, the collaboration with a colleague would allow the English teacher to connect contents from two curricular areas.

### **Acknowledgment**

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## Notes

1. Currículum educació primària. Generalitat de Catalunya; Departament d'educació. [Decret 142/2007](#), de 26 de juny, pel qual s'estableix l'ordenació dels ensenyaments de l'Educació primària
2. Research Project financed by the Secretaría de Estado, de Investigación, Desarrollo e Innovación del Gobierno de España entitled "la competencia plurilingüe, audiovisual y digital como vehículo para la construcción de saberes en comunidades de práctica multilingües y multiculturales" (PADS). Reference: EDU2010-17859
3. GREIP ([Research Centre for Teaching & Plurilingual Interaction](#)), recognized as a consolidated quality research group by AGAUR ([Agency for Management of University and Research Grants](#)) from the Generalitat de Catalunya since 2005.

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## **Annex: Transcription conventions**

Pseudonym of participants	ABC (three capital letters)
Rising intonation	/
Descending intonation	\
Analysts Comments	((comment))
Speech unit boundary	
Medium pause	
Interruption	text_
Incomprehensible comments	XXX
Lengthening of sound (according to duration)	:: ::

## NOTES ON THE EDITORS

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