Book Review

Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras en Educación Secundaria y Obligatoria, **edited by Dolors Masats and Luci Nussbaum**. (2016) Síntesis, 262 pages. Paperback €22.00, e-Book €16.63. ISBN: 9788490774199 (paperback), 9788490779590 (e-book).

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> *Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras en Educación Secundaria y Obligatoria, edited by Dolors Masats and Luci Nussbaum,* contains a lot of useful and innovative information regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages in today's classrooms.

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> *Enseñanza y Aprendizaje de Lenguas Extranjeras en Educación Secundaria y Obligatoria, édité par Dolors Masats et Luci Nussbaum,* contient de nombreuses informations utiles et novatrices concernant l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues étrangères dans les salles de classe d'aujourd'hui.

In recent years, several volumes have been published on language teaching (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009; Larsen & Freeman, 2011; Martínez, 2014; Nunan, 2015; Harmer, 2015; Cammarata, 2016; or Linares & Morton, 2017, to mention a few). Most of these books tend to revolve around one main topic within the big field of language teaching. To exemplify, whilst some of them describe and/or suggest innovative methods and materials to teach and emphasise the teaching of foreign languages, others describe how to teach the different skills and competences or focus on an individual language skill. A big advantage of the present volume is that it combines and integrates varied topics normally treated in separate books in

one single volume. Furthermore, this volume is different to most of the recently published language teaching books since it focuses on one particular educational level, Obligatory Secondary Education (known in Spain as ESO), rather than describing general aspects to teach foreign languages to people of all levels and ages.

The present book consists of nine chapters, each of which are written by different authors including Melinda Dooly, Cristina Escobar, Dolors Masats, Emilee Moore, Artur Noguerol and Luci Nussbaum. To begin with, it may seem that each chapter revolves around a separate topic and thus, one could read each one separately; nevertheless, once we become familiar with the main contents, we find that the ideas described in some chapters are interrelated and the authors are continuously referring to aspects described in previous or posterior parts.

Every chapter follows the same structure. Firstly, the author(s) provides a general introduction to the topic to be discussed; afterwards, extremely useful lists with keywords to understand the chapter, as well as their corresponding definitions, are included. Thirdly, the main contents of the chapter are then described, divided into different sections and sub-sections. In broad terms, it could be said that this book follows a theoretical perspective; however, within most of the (sub)sections, we can find very useful and creative practical activities to put into practise the notions/concepts/ideas outlined. For this reason, I believe, then, that the present volume will be of interest to foreign language teachers, not only for those who teach at secondary education level, but some chapters could also interest language teachers at other levels of proficiency, for instance, primary education or university.

In general terms, four main topics can be distinguished: a) plurilingualism: a topic described in Chapters 1 and 4; b) projects: Chapter 3 focuses on the projects teachers have to design before teaching a foreign language whereas the emphasis in Chapter 7 is placed on students and project work; c) interaction (Chapters 2 and 5) and communication (6, 8); and, d) materials design, which is the main topic addressed in Chapter 9. For reasons of space, I will use these thematic areas as the main structure of this book review in the following paragraphs, instead of outlining each chapter separately.

As would seem feasible, the first chapter can be considered as a general introduction to several topics which will be discussed in further detail later on. In this case, the main focus is placed on *plurilingualism*, a topic which is developed in much more detail in Chapter 4 which addresses *CLIL*. In Chapter 1, the authors review some important concepts one should

not confuse when referring to plurilingualism, such as *superdiversity, multilingual, foreign/second/additional language*. Afterwards, the concept of Lingua franca is introduced, focusing mainly on the spread of *ELF*. Special attention is also paid to some educational and economic problems which have arisen due to the fact that only one language is considered somewhat "universal". The next section within Chapter 1 addresses the so-called *plurilingual competence* where some ways in which students and teachers can take advantage of plurilingualism are outlined. Section number 1.4 is, to the best of my knowledge, very innovative in the sense that books on language teaching do not normally include information on stereotypes and cultural identity whilst stressing the idea that thanks to learning different languages, the learners modify their cultural identity and can "adoptar nuevas visions del mundo" (p. 30). Finally, the last section within this first chapter describes the gradual move within the language teaching field from approaches in which each foreign language was treated and taught separately, towards methods in which students are exposed to more than one language at once in the classroom. A detailed reference is made to four main approaches: a) *language awareness*; b) *inter-comprehension*; c) *intercultural approaches*; and, d) *integrated teaching approaches*.

As previously mentioned, Chapter 4 focuses on *CLIL*. I would say that this chapter is one of the most interesting ones from a pedagogical point of view since it contains many practical teaching ideas. More particularly, it begins with a brief description of the origins of CLIL and an explanation of the features this method shares with other programmes such as *EMI, immersion programmes* or *content-teaching* in the USA; furthermore, reference is made to the important distinction between content-CLIL and language-CLIL classes. The following subsection, called *one day in a secondary-school CLIL classroom*, will be without doubt of most interest for many language teachers. In this part of the book, the author outlines the main steps one should consider when designing a CLIL activity; to do so, she uses an example of a task in which students have to build a lever while practising contents in 3 different subjects: Technology, Maths and English. In the remaining sections, readers can find: a) a guide on how to plan teaching sequences, that is, some ideas to decide the objectives and assessment criteria or to select the content-based tasks; b) some steps to choose and design learning tasks; and, c) some strategies to determine whether a task is good.

The second big thematic field which can be found in some of the chapters within this volume is *projects*, namely the educational centre's *linguistic project* (Chapter 3) and *project-*

work (Chapter 7). The former begins with the description of some models that have greatly influenced the language-teaching field. Firstly, the so-called formal and functional models are thoroughly distinguished; afterwards, readers can find a section on task-based learning and another one on project work. The remaining three sections within this chapter specifically address educational centre's linguistic projects. In the first of them, section 3.2, readers can find information on four challenges teachers may face when designing this project, more particularly, deciding: a) which languages should be taken into consideration; b) the best way to achieve skills-integration; c) the procedures to be followed for each language included; and, d) the methodology that is to be used as well as the people who will be involved in the teaching process. In section 3.3, one can find thorough explanations regarding three main domains which must be considered when designing these projects: a) the educational centre and its surroundings; b) the centre as a plurilingual learning space; and, c) how to guarantee progression throughout the learning-contents. This chapter ends with another extremely useful and practical section in which three different case scenarios are presented and fully described: a) a centre that has not yet created a linguistic project; b) one in which the project is based on a mixture of projects within the same educational cycle; and c) a centre with a general project which integrates linguistic contents with contents from other content-subjects.

As mentioned above, attention is paid to *project-work* in Chapter 7. In broad terms, this chapter is, together with numbers 4 and 9, highly practical. It is based on four main sections. In the first one, readers can find the main reasons why using project work is beneficial; namely, it motivates students, helps them develop interactive competences, enhances cooperation and collaboration and allows them to get familiar with varied genres. I would strongly recommend teachers who want to use project-work in their classrooms to read sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4. In the former, one can find a list of ten characteristics any project should have to "promover un aprendizaje significativo" (p. 174) as well as explanations on how to achieve these goals. Some of these features include being student-focused, to be based on research-tasks or enhance collaboration and telecollaboration among students. Part 3 addresses project-design; here, four basic principles teachers need to acknowledge when planning projects are outlined: a) to encourage students to start planning by thinking about the project as a whole, rather than planning every part separately; b) think about students' possible needs and challenges; c) save time for revision; and, d) decide how, who, when and what will be assessed. Finally, in Part 4, solutions to some problems students may face when

developing their projects are given. For instance, we can find some ideas for dealing with students who are less fluent than others or that speak in their native languages instead of using the foreign one.

As previously mentioned, Chapters 2 and 5 address *interaction* whilst numbers 6 and 8 focus on *communication*. In Chapter 2, quite a lot of attention is paid to distinguishing between cognitive and sociocultural approaches to the teaching of languages. Moreover, an extensive historical review of previous approaches can be found in section 2.2.3. Section number 2.3 introduces the concept of *communicative competence*; afterwards, another two historically-based subsections are included: a) the first one which focuses on the changes from considering native speakers as perfect models who learners should imitate, towards the notion of communicative competence; and, b) the need for taking into account plurilingual and multilingual resources, thus, moving from the communicative competence to the so-called interactive one. The last subsection introduces the readers to four main areas within communicative approaches, areas which are further developed in other chapters: a) CLIL (Chapter 4); b) task-based learning (Chapter 8); c) project work (Chapter 7); and, d) discourse-analysis for learning languages. Treating the classroom as a social space is the main topic at the beginning of Chapter 5. This chapter then continues with a section on managing the use of several languages inside the classroom. Within this section, 5.2., I would like to highlight the author's description of errors; more particularly, we can find nearly four pages devoted to this topic where aspects such as the fact that teachers should avoid over-correcting their students, auto-correction and the fact that correcting a student does not necessarily mean that they will interiorize this mistake are discussed. Afterwards, a section on methods to enhance students' participation like IRF, questions, answers and comments, interaction between students and teachers and interaction between students can be found. Finally, the last section focuses on observation; descriptions on why to and what to observe are given, as well as an interesting subsection on different methods and resources one can use to observe like recording, diaries or transcriptions.

Chapter 6 addresses managing communication inside the classroom. It begins with a brief introduction to the changes regarding the role that teachers have played in the classroom, changing from someone who teaches concepts to a person who has to "crear unas condiciones que favorezcan la adquisición de la lengua meta y a guiar a los alumnos" (p. 144). Reference is made to different types of communication, namely: a) face to face versus distance; b)

synchronic and non-synchronic; and, c) multimodal. I believe subsection 6.1.4. will be extremely useful for language teachers, since readers will find not only quite a long list of teaching functions (such as stimulating participation and assessing the language learning and teaching process), but also very detailed ways for fulfilling these functions. Moreover, within this chapter readers can find, among other topics, theoretical and/or practical ideas so as to: a) enhance participation (by using the pyramid method or debates, for example); b) decide who, what, when and how to assess students' communicative competence; c) organize the classroom (in groups, pairs…); and, d) use collaborative and cooperative learning.

Two indications in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001) were that attention should be paid both to *productive and receptive skills* in the classroom and that teachers should try their best to teach the different skills in an integrated way. These are topics addressed in Chapter 8. At the beginning of this chapter, different definitions of communicative competence are given; afterwards, a small subsection is devoted to differentiating between four speaking contexts (namely, personal, public, professional and educational) and to introducing the main 5 communicative skills (spoken production, spoken interaction, reading, listening and writing). The next two main sections overview receptive and productive skills, respectively. Within the former we can find interesting explanations on factors which may influence students' understanding of a text, techniques and micro-skills to help students understand texts better like scanning or skimming, different reading models (top-down, bottom-up, discriminating sounds, abbreviated words, using the context), etc. The latter subsection begins with references to the need for people to engage in dialogue in order to learn how to produce texts and interact with each other; afterwards, focus is placed on *competence-integration*, more specifically, how to activate and assess the different competences.

Finally, Chapter 9 is one of the shortest chapters but at the same time one of the most useful for language teachers to read. The main focus of this chapter is *teaching materials*. An innovative feature within this chapter is that, apart from describing textbooks (as the main teaching material that continues to be used in language classrooms), two other types of materials are also distinguished: a) working-materials like chalk, blackboards and flashcards; and b) materials for checking meaning and other contents, such as, encyclopaedias and dictionaries. The focus then turns to the procedures teachers should follow when creating their own materials. Afterwards, a lot of information is given on two types of materials: authentic

versus pre-designed, including the advantages and disadvantages of both types. Finally, as would seem feasible due to the technologically-based world we live in, the last section is concerned with using ICTs in the classroom. To the best of my knowledge, this section is completely innovative since the author goes beyond simply outlining some technological resources that can be used in the classroom and a section addressed at how to create technologically- based materials is also taken into account.

Future editions of this volume may include a small number of modifications. Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction to this review, the chapters are written by different authors. To the best of my knowledge, the identity of these authors is only given in the introduction (pages 12-13); in other words, their name is not explicitly present in the different chapters, making it more time-consuming to find out the exact author(s) of a certain part so as to quote a particular chapter/section within this book. Similarly, I think that ascribing numbers to the different activities included would also make it easier for researchers to extract information from this volume. Content-wise, I would have appreciated a table summarising the main problems and corresponding solutions given in section 7.4, similar to the highly useful tables present in other sections like 3.1.1., 4.3.1. or 6.3.2. Likewise, other sections which I believe would be easier to follow if they included a table are 4.2. or 7.2, by summarizing the different steps for creating sequences within a CLIL lesson and the main features teaching projects should have, respectively. Perhaps a chapter or section on the biological, socio-cultural and psychological factors which may affect how teenagers learn languages would be useful in a volume like this one, following, for instance Szpyra (2015: 41-45). Finally, in order to improve Chapter 9, I would recommend that the author include a list of the most important resources currently available for teaching languages, for example, the main learner-dictionaries for learning English, Spanish, French or German.

The previous shortcomings by no means undervalue the great value of the present book from a didactic point of view. It indeed contains a lot of useful and innovative information regarding the teaching and learning of foreign languages in today's classrooms, ranging from different teaching methods such as project-work and task-based learning, to approaches and guidelines towards using more than one language in the classroom and ways to enhance interaction, communication and participation, not only between the teacher and students but also between the students themselves. I would like to finish by giving my warm

congratulations to the editors of this volume and to each of the authors who contributed by writing one or more chapters –chapters which I enjoyed reading very much.

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