

Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing 1266

Álvaro Herrero · Carlos Cambra ·  
Daniel Urda · Javier Sedano ·  
Héctor Quintián ·  
Emilio Corchado *Editors*

# The 11th International Conference on European Transnational Educational (ICEUTE 2020)



 Springer

# Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing

Volume 1266

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Editors

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*Editors*

Álvaro Herrero  
Grupo de Inteligencia Computacional  
Aplicada (GICAP), Departamento de  
Ingeniería Informática, Escuela  
Politécnica Superior  
Universidad de Burgos  
Burgos, Spain

Carlos Cambra  
Grupo de Inteligencia Computacional  
Aplicada (GICAP), Departamento de  
Ingeniería Informática, Escuela  
Politécnica Superior  
Universidad de Burgos  
Burgos, Spain

Daniel Urda  
Grupo de Inteligencia Computacional  
Aplicada (GICAP), Departamento de  
Ingeniería Informática, Escuela  
Politécnica Superior  
Universidad de Burgos  
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Javier Sedano  
Technological Institute of Castilla y León  
Burgos, Spain

Emilio Corchado  
University of Salamanca  
Salamanca, Spain

Héctor Quintián  
Department of Industrial Engineering  
University of A Coruña  
La Coruña, Spain

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## Preface

This volume of *Advances in Intelligent and Soft Computing* contains accepted papers presented at ICEUTE 2020 conference held in the beautiful and historic city of Burgos (Spain), in September 2020.

The 11th International Conference on European Transnational Education (ICEUTE 2020) has been a meeting point for people working on transnational education within Europe. It has provided a stimulating and fruitful forum for presenting and discussing the latest works and advances on transnational education within European countries.

After a thorough peer-review process, the ICEUTE 2020 International Program Committee selected 44 papers which are published in these conference proceedings achieving an acceptance rate of 41%. Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the ICEUTE 2020 edition was blended, combining on-site and on-line participation. In this relevant edition, a special emphasis was put on the organization of five special sessions related to relevant topics as: Role of English in Transnational Education and Teacher Training, Personalization and ICT: a Path to Educational Inclusion, Innovation and Research Findings in Engineering Higher Education, Practical Implementations of Novel Initiatives, Innovation in Computer Science Higher Education.

The selection of papers was extremely rigorous in order to maintain the high quality of ICEUTE conference editions and we would like to thank the members of the Program Committees for their hard work in the reviewing process. This is a crucial process to the creation of a high standard conference and the ICEUTE conference would not exist without their help.

ICEUTE 2020 has teamed up with “Research Papers in Education” (Taylor & Francis) and “European Journal of Education” (Wiley) for proposals of special issues including selected papers from ICEUTE 2020.

Particular thanks go as well to the conference main sponsors Startup Ole and the IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Society—Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Italian Chapters, who jointly contributed in an active and constructive manner to the success of this initiative.

We would like to thank all the special session organizers, contributing authors, as well as the members of the Program Committees and the Local Organizing Committee for their hard and highly valuable work. Their work has helped to contribute to the success of the ICEUTE 2020 event.

September 2020

Álvaro Herrero  
Carlos Cambra  
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# The European Foreign Language Teacher Training Programme: A Comprehensive Proposal

María Amor Barros-del Río<sup>(✉)</sup>

University of Burgos, Burgos, Spain  
abarros@ubu.es

**Abstract.** Mobility has been a key and central concept for the Bologna Process. Labour mobility of the teaching and learning community within the European borders is in continuous growth. But so far, despite this dynamic reality, there is no unified format for teacher training at a European level. In the light of this, a virtual solution for a comprehensive and coordinated training for foreign language teachers in Europe is needed. Within the frame of the VIR\_TEACH Erasmus+ project, this article outlines the creation of a digital tool to improve the postgraduate certificates on Masters on Education (Foreign Languages), and to provide teachers, researchers, student teachers and policy-makers with open-source tools and resources.

**Keywords:** Teacher Training · Language Teacher · European education

## 1 Foreign Language Teacher Training in Europe: An Overview

Labour mobility within the teaching and learning collectives is in continuous growth within the European borders. This fact is clearly detected in the Eurydice report on teacher mobility which states that:

In half of the education systems surveyed, less than a third of all teachers appear to be transnationally mobile. In the EU, Executive Summary 13 12.4% of respondents reported that they had gone abroad solely when they were already practising teachers, whereas 5.9% had done so only during their Initial Teacher Training, and 3.6% only in both cases. In all countries surveyed except Iceland, modern foreign language teachers are the most transnationally mobile, compared to teachers of four other main subjects [1].

Many factors contribute to this situation, among which we can point to a constant increase in opportunities for university study abroad [2], which favours the

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internationalisation of teacher training, and a static labour market resulting from the last years of economic crisis [3], which impels graduated students to seek jobs beyond their frontiers.

Despite these trends, there is no unified format for teacher training at a European level. Added to that, university trainers do not usually have a space where they can share their worries and advances in their education practice. This lack of common environments also affects teacher students who miss unified digital tools that cover their supervision and tutoring needs, especially during their internship phase. In terms of educational policy, national agencies tend to design and develop their lines of work on teacher training in each country separately.

The evident unbalance between nationally-oriented training and international practice demands urgent action towards the internationalization of the teaching profession as a whole. Within the European Higher Education Area, this may be facilitated thanks to the possibility of homologation of university degrees. However, so far there is no unified format for teacher training at the international level. At the level of educational policies, there is also a need to converge towards a more unified and coherent set of principles among the different European countries, particularly in terms of curricular content and experiences of internships. In general terms, Initial Teacher Education (hereinafter ITE), suffers from an excessively local projection that limits the future teaching exercise of teacher students beyond their borders. Hence, a greater degree of internationalization and convergence of the training of future language teachers is an urgent need within European borders.

## 2 Data Gathering: Consultation and Report

As Freeman et al. affirmed in the prologue of their famous volume *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* [4], “in order to better understand language teaching, we need to know more about language teachers”. Hence, before addressing the construction of a coherent proposal for foreign language teacher training, we deemed necessary to collect the opinions and experiences of the stakeholders involved in the matter. This, would help build consensus on the lacks and needs of current foreign language training programmes, and improve them coherently at a European scale.

For these purposes, in October–November 2019, a survey was passed among stakeholders to test the perception of language teacher training in Europe.

The main objectives of this survey were to detect current weak aspects regarding language teacher training and to implement positive measures for the advancement of foreign language teacher education in Europe. In particular, this survey sought to:

- Collect comparative data.
- Build consensus during the project.
- Fix potential issues.
- Improve methodological approaches, materials and resources.
- Prioritise intellectual outputs, contents and events’ main topics.

The survey was launched in November 2019 and was open for 3 weeks. It reached a total of 508 participants from different gender, ages, countries of residence and profiles, which ensured the heterogeneity of the sample.

The survey was intended to offer a national and international picture of the current situation of foreign language teacher training in Europe. For this purpose, the survey was conducted in several European countries. The countries of residence of the participants were closely related to this fact, with 41,6% of respondents living in Portugal, 27,0% from Spain, 12,0% from Romania, 10,5% from Poland and 5,6% from Belgium. Other countries of residence such as Finland, Iceland, Germany and Turkey, also participated in the survey but with a much smaller percentage (less than 4% in total).

The procedure and results of this survey have been published in detail elsewhere [5] with the following conclusions:

1. There is an urgent need to move towards homogenization of teacher training.
2. Digital platforms are particularly useful tools for internationalisation of foreign language teacher training.
3. The contents of the training programmes need modernisation and upgrading, providing tools, skills and resources to help professionals adapt to the continuous transformations taking place in a changing and dynamic society.
4. Investment in ITE, particularly in the financing of student and teacher mobility, is essential.
5. Feminisation of the teaching practice is related with a low status of the profession and unappealing salaries. Governing bodies and universities should invest in attracting high quality people into the profession, irrespective of their sex/gender. In the medium term, these measures should impact on gender balance in teaching and learning.

### **3 Language Teacher Training Through a Virtual Learning Environment**

In order to move towards language teacher training homogenization, virtual learning environments seem to be particularly useful tools for sharing and learning successful teaching formulas specific to this field of higher education. This way, cultural diversity and geographical distance could be overcome by a multi-national alliance of higher institutions. Moreover, this solution would facilitate cultural adaptation and favour international communication, two essential elements for teaching at an international level. However, a lack of coherence between teaching digital platforms that promote mobility and digital tools that guide the needs of students in their training and internship phases is problematic. As pointed out by Townsend and Bates [6], it is a set of tensions and pressures, inherent in an unstoppable process of globalization that makes a dent in the quality of teaching. This issue becomes more acute, if possible, in the training of language teachers, whose orientation towards communicative teaching requires the implementation of a series of strategies and predisposition to interaction and mutual understanding.

As Stanley [7] has affirmed, language learning with technology provides a wide range of interesting and useful activities, shows how any teacher can use technology, and offers a range of activities, which are suitable for all levels of proficiency to both novice and experienced teachers. Hence, in order to create a European Foreign Language Teacher Training Programme, it seems mandatory the development of a multinational dynamic and lasting over time environment that offers useful tools for the training of future teachers of languages. In the light of these reflections, a communicative approach seems a mandatory element to infuse in the training of 21st century language teachers. For this to happen, prospective teachers must acquire a reflective and critical training [8], oriented towards social commitment [9]. This implies the construction of a critical teaching identity among the candidates during their training process [10]. Added to that, the critical pedagogy received must be closely linked to a culturally receptive teaching practice [11, 12], especially in the multinational contexts in which future professionals of the teaching of languages will have to move. Finally, in a changing and global reality, future language teachers must know how to manage and apply to their teaching the digital technologies that best adapt to their teaching-learning objectives. In the same way, teachers that had been exposed to a learning process through MOOCs “expressed positive attitudes towards their learning experience and a desire to participate in more courses in the future” [13] showing not only gains in content knowledge but also in pedagogical knowledge, which is fundamental not only to the MOOC course design, but also to the overall future teacher’s learning process.

#### **4 Design and Methodological Guidelines for a European Language Teacher Training Programme**

The creation of an open digital space to promote the exchange of methodologies and good practices that inspire a common, comprehensive and effective training of future professionals of language teaching at European level. This idea must be reflected in the design and development of a platform for online courses, the development of coherent levels of competence at the international level and the advancement of methodologies for better regulation in education policy. In addition, it must promote a greater degree of transparency of the training processes and the creation of a series of digital tools that favour the convergence of educational systems and the exchange of good practices.

Likewise, it must offer a consistent functionality in progressive, significant and cumulative learning sequences developed through a wide variety of learning resources. These must incorporate in turn the diversity that new technologies offer today. Therefore, these resources will have multiple formats, among which videos, readings, infographics, discussion forums, and so on, can be counted. Besides, the design of the exercises will seek to prioritize the interaction through formulas such as multiple choice, open questions with peer review, drag and drop, etc.

Added to that, the implementation of digital tools that facilitate coherence and follow-up between the phases of training and practice in the education of future language teachers should be considered. This measure should include a common protocol and interactive communication spaces. In addition, as indicated by the Finnish Institute



for Educational Research, the training of future language teachers should contemplate competences related to pedagogical, communicative and reflection skills. Furthermore, attention to diversity and collaboration with colleagues and peers should be contemplated too. Therefore, the practical phase, or Practicum, must be oriented towards a reflection on the action that the future teachers carry out in the classroom [14]. For this purpose, it is appropriate to incorporate a digital tool that, based on a predetermined protocol, allows to monitor the internship period and to facilitate communication between the different agents involved: the teacher students, their respective mentors from the educational centre, and their academic tutors. As a result, the role of the mentors is expected to acquire more relevance and professionalism in the learning process, a concern addressed in numerous studies [15, 16]. Besides, this tool will allow the establishment of more intense interaction and support among the participants, an issue that brings positive outcomes according to Tomaš, Farrelly and Haslam [17]. Particularly, this virtuous communicative triangle will greatly facilitate the interaction between the aforementioned stakeholders, displaying a reflective, dynamic and enriching learning experience for all parties.

Also, the establishment of international networks that facilitate mobility and exchange among future teachers in training would be desirable. Although there are previous experiences of networks that have been pursuing the internationalization of educational practice, such as the Thematic Network on Teaching Education (TNTEE) and the Policy of Teaching Education in Europe (TEPE), one of the main challenges has been the lack of communication, cooperation and collaboration between the actors of the different countries. The VIRTEACH project tries to fill these gaps through the establishment of organized professional groups and networks of teacher educators.

At the same time, this question poses an enormous challenge that goes beyond the purely academic sphere, bringing into play factors such as intercultural communication or the development of the ability to adapt. As demonstrated by He, Lundgren and Pynes [18], the integration of teaching-learning experiences of languages abroad, included within a study program, offers future teachers a unique opportunity to develop empathy and innovative strategies for instruction. In order to collect the best results from this type of experience, it is advisable to follow up through open reflection journals, in which teaching beliefs and previous intercultural experiences are included, as well as the development of individual goals [19]. For these purposes, the European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) is an adequate tool for reflection and self-assessment of the knowledge and didactic skills necessary to teach languages [20]. It is an instrument that takes as reference the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and that allows future teachers to connect their experiences with their teaching practices, so that these same reflections serve as evaluation and self-assessment tools. With permission already granted by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, VIRTEACH will adapt EPOSTL to the requirements of the virtual environment to maximize its functionality.

The design of protocols and lines of action common to the European Higher Education Area in relation to the training of future language teachers. In this respect, it is necessary to point out the necessary collaboration of the political institutions with competences in educational matters. From the universities themselves, which are the

immediate training entities, to the competent councils and governmental delegations, it is necessary to work on the convergence and coherence of curricula for the training of future language teachers with an international perspective, oriented to intercultural communication and that promote a collaborative, empathetic and reflective learning.

To finish, the national and international recognition of this training is essential and can be an interesting pilot project that ultimately would result in good teaching professionals who are dynamic and capable of adaptation and improvement.

## 5 Final Remarks and Conclusions

The previous sections have dissected the current state of Foreign Language Teacher Training in Europe and shed light upon a comprehensive proposal for convergence and quality enhancement in this field of education.

The suggested measures are expected to improve the quality of language teacher training programs and the coordination among the different stakeholders, through the design of comprehensive but coherent and converging curricula for ITE in the Member States of the European Union. The combination of open courses and teaching practices of a transnational nature must combine with a personalized orientation of the learning process. Coherence between theoretical and practical training, and the exchange of good practices, are the hallmarks of this proposal.

All in all, the final goal is to foster a more exigent training and selection of future educators of languages at an international level, to raise the quality of language teaching programs within the European Union, and to strengthen and unify European educational policies.

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