

English Language Teaching in the European Credit Transfer System. Facing the Challenge.
 María Luisa Pérez Cañado (ed.) (2009). Bern: Peter Lang.

Luciano García García
 University of Jaen

The future is already here. The process of convergence to a European Higher Education Area (EHEA), or The Bologna Process, had set up the year 2010 as the deadline to become fully operative. Now that we have reached that year, most of the 46 countries joining this endeavor are fully engaged in the official launching of the new model.

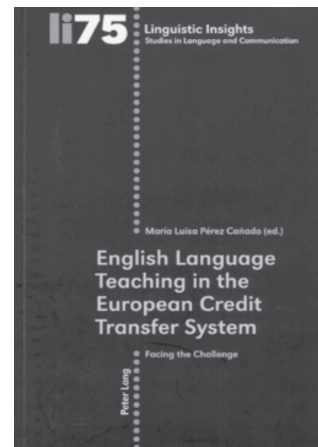
A great number of books of diverse utility and worth have been published in the last ten years addressing this initiative from different perspectives and fields. The book by María Luisa Pérez Cañado (ed.) should be placed at the fore of these publications. It offers full coverage of teaching and learning from a variety of perspectives, both theoretical and practical with the avowed intention of methodologically contributing to the success of the EHEA challenge.

Hence, the book is divided in four main sections termed challenges. They are a response to the new ways of teaching and learning brought about by the Bologna Process and are composed of a varying number of contributions (from two to five) by prestigious European researchers involved in the management and development of the new model during the last ten years, a key period during which the process has been piloted on an experimental basis.

The book inaugurates with a preface by Francisco Michavilla, Director of the UNESCO Chair in Higher Education Management and Policy. He hails the opportunity of its publication in the historical event of the construction of a unified and yet diverse Europe with the appended growing importance of language learning and teaching.

A very well documented and apt exposition of the state of the art of the EHEA and its methodological implications ensues by the editor of the volume. She has ample and well proven experience both in the practical issues of academic organization and as a teacher and a researcher in Applied Linguistics (see her curriculum in the volume) and every one interested in the history, main issues and prospects of the EHEA will benefit from its reading.

Challenge 1. Coordinating English Studies in the EHEA is composed of two chapters by Ian Tudor and Wolfgang Mackiewicz, on the one hand, and by Antonio Bueno and Jesús M. Nieto, on the other. They are interesting and very useful discussions on the organization and practical implementation of the process, going from the reference points in higher education as an invaluable aid to language policy development (Tudor-Mackiewicz) and a general and theoretical view of English teaching in the EHEA at a national and regional level plus a practical case in the design and implementation of teaching guides in the domain of the university of Jaén (Nieto-Bueno). Both Dr. Bueno and Dr. Nieto have been in the first ranks of the pilot project taking place in Andalusia and at the University of Jaén and possess a first-hand knowledge of the experience.



Challenge II. Fostering General and Specific Competencies in English Language Teaching dwells on this problematical didactic category as a fundamental tool in the new European horizons in language teaching. Mike Flemming, from a post-modernist view, deconstructs and yet retains the concept in order to make it more flexible and suitable to new challenges. Jesús Pérez presents a sound analysis of the three proposals of competencies underlying, in one way or another, the EHEA model (DeSeCo, European Framework of Reference, and Tuning projects), rigorously considering both pros and cons.

Challenge III. Adapting Methodologically to the ECTS deals with several key aspects of methodology that should go hand in hand with the EHEA if this model is to be successful. María Luisa Pérez and Paige D. Ware make an impressive case, very well documented with ample bibliography and solid research data, of the suitability of Telecollaboration to the new teaching and learning mode. Alfonso Ceballos and Carmen Fernández, on their part, present a very interesting experience on a cross-curricular tutorial to improve the performance of students at the University of Cádiz, again in line with the aims and procedures set up by the Bologna Process. Likewise, Barry Pennock-Spenn offers the valuable experience of implementing Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English Studies at the University of Valencia with the avowed aim to foster learners' autonomy and competence acquisition. Another very promising prospect is represented by the research on an automatic grammar checker conducted at the UNED (Spanish National University of Distance Education). This resource has already proved a very valuable instrument to the needs of the Bologna Process and is at an advanced stage of development. Two articles deal with this tool from different perspectives: Ruben Chacon-Beltrán, on its application to autonomous long-life learning and James Lawley who, taking as a starting point the realistic assumption that, given the context of economic crisis and restrictions, the aims of the new European model of Education will not be attainable without resorting to «variants of teaching that require less human assistance», proposes the UNED grammar checker as a tool and a model for further implementations, and exposes in a very lively way the valuable pedagogical principles underlying the design of this resource.

Finally, the book closes with a fourth challenge referring to assessment and ECTS. Here Kent Löfgren and Terence Karran discuss the bearings of ECTS to assessment in the new European context and address some of the problems arising within the new system, mainly from the students' concern. Daniel Madrid and Stephen Hughes present their experience in the implementation of the ECTS in Initial Foreign Language Teacher Training at the University of Granada in such areas as non-presential session handling, students' activities design and monitoring, itemization of assessment criteria, etc. The experience was followed up by means of a questionnaire handed out to participant teacher trainers and students in order to obtain their view on the process. This last part sheds much light not only on the favorable aspects of the new methods, but also on the risks and weak points if proper implementation of means does not come about.

All in all, the book is a well-documented, varied and informative exposition of the way leading to and the actual arrival at the new European conception of teaching and learning, leaning mainly on real cases and experiences.

If something is to be argued against the general tenor of the book, it is the full acceptance of the presuppositions of the new paradigm as *a fait accompli*. I personally think that the aims and teaching procedures proposed for the EHEA suffer from wishful thinking and unnecessary complication, and run the risk of failing in several respects, especially, if not properly sustained with personnel and funds. These pitfalls, however, are often implicitly or explicitly pointed out throughout the book, which does not lack a certain dose of judicious realism.