

## Introduction

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Welcome to the 2025 publication of e-TEALS, our peer reviewed journal specialising in the didactics of English as a second or foreign language, and which seeks to reflect the latest research in the field. The four articles here result from papers presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> TEFL conference held at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of Nova University, Lisbon, Portugal, in November 2024, and reflect the theme of the conference – Innovation in English language teaching: Adapting pedagogies to meet modern challenges. Increased diversity in the classroom, alterations in work and study patterns and the use (and abuse) of new technologies have significantly influenced the characteristics of language learning and teaching in formal educational settings in the last twenty years, and the objective of the conference was to focus on pedagogies in formal education that have contributed to successfully overcoming the challenges of our modern times.

Our first article by Kirsten Birsak de Jersey, Harriet Jeeves, Annika Kolb and Nurjona Pinguri focuses on how participation in the Erasmus+ INVITED project can develop teacher competences for implementing virtual exchanges (VE) in primary and preschool settings. The paper presents criteria for successful VE projects based on research review, a five-country teacher survey, and eTwinning quality standards.

In the second article, Nanna Jørgensen, Juljana Gjata Hjorth Jacobsen and Karen Lassen Brunt write about Danish lower-secondary students' and teachers' experiences with digital and analogue literary texts in foreign-language learning, exploring reading habits, motivation, and the potential of various media formats to enhance literary engagement. Findings show interactive texts are not a universal solution, and the article offers recommendations for motivating literary reading.

Our third article considers the topic of motivation, and in it, María del Carmen Arau Ribeiro, Ágnes Ibolya Pál, and Réka Asztalos examine how involving learners in collaborative materials design boosts motivation, autonomy, and creativity in language learning. Drawing on data from two European projects and 200 university students, it shows that co-creation fosters ownership, engagement, and critical reflection. Students shift from passive learners to active agents when designing their own materials. Practical strategies are offered for integrating collaborative autonomy into diverse educational contexts.

Our final paper by Asuka Nakagawa again returns to the topic of virtual exchanges and investigates a Kolb-based Preparation–Reflection model for integrating VE into SLA classrooms. A three-week U.S.–Japan exchange revealed challenges such as anxiety and uneven participation, addressed through structured preparation, mediation, and reflection. Student reflections show increased autonomy and metacognitive awareness. The model offers practical guidance for sustainable, experiential VE implementation.

Many thanks to our contributors.