

## Project Description: FOCO “Best Practices in Foreign Language Teaching”

University: Universidad de Salamanca

Project : “Repository FOCO”

### 1. Introduction:

Repositories of educational resources, including best practices repositories, have undergone a considerable development in the last 20 years. Nevertheless, there are still some challenges that need to be addressed regarding their implementation and adoption by the educational community in general and by language teaching professionals in particular. In this sense, FOCO has been created with the aim of providing a collaborative platform that compiles the most successful experiences in the teaching and learning of second languages with the use of ICT. FOCO proposes a redefinition of the concept of *best practices* based on the dynamic nature of the educational contexts and a reconceptualization of the traditional concept of *technology-enhanced learning*.



### 2. State of the art:

The first documented use of the term *repository* dates from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, it is mostly used to describe a place where educational practices are digitally stored and they are becoming more and more widespread. This is happening at a time when, on the one hand, the digital production of documents becomes universal and, on the other hand, new technologies appear, making the storage and recovery of those documents accessible and affordable to a larger amount of users. Thus, the repositories for educational resources have undergone a parallel development to the “open access” movement and have been linked to the emergence of new legal

formulae which allow their contents to be reused without infringing any copyright.

The first contents stored in repositories were the *learning objects*, defined as relatively small resources that can be reused for the sake of coherent and easily understandable learning (Wiley 2000). The quick proliferation of educational repositories leads to the appearance of meta-repositories (*object learning referatories*), which allows to search in more than one learning objects repository. The content of the repositories eventually adapts itself to the new types of shared materials, from open courseware to educational resources in all kinds of formats, such as photos, videos and audio files.

Other changes affect the large variety of institutions in charge of the maintenance of these repositories. An example can be found in the institutional repositories, that firstly specilise in gathering the resources created by the people working in the institution itself. Similarly, other repositories appear around a learning management system –for example, *Black board* or *Canvas* nowadays– and their community of users. All these changes have a double objective: to increase the number of resources that can be shared and to facilitate their reutilization. It is in the year 2000 when the reuse of material (whether learning objects, courseware, specific resources or experiences) gains momentum, thanks to *Creative Commons*. This is a non-profit organisation whose aim is to break down legal, social and technical barriers that hinder the sharing and reutilization of educational resources. The first version of their licences came to life in 2002. Since then, Creative Commons licences have become the standard used worldwide by authors that want to keep part of their copyright but also allow the public to reproduce, distribute, show and adapt those contents.

A list of important educational repositories can be found below:

Centro Nacional de Desarrollo Curricular en Sistemas no Proprietarios (CEDEC): <http://cedec.educalab.es/>.

OpenCourseWare Project del Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT-OCW): <https://ocw.mit.edu/index.htm>.

Open Educational Resources Commons: <https://www.oercommons.org>.

Open Educational Resources universitas (OERu): <https://www.oercommons.org>.

OpenStax: <https://openstax.org/>.

In the particular field which the project E-LENGUA is most interested in, the teaching of second languages with the help of technological means, also the following repositories must be mentioned:

Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL): <http://coerll.utexas.edu/coerll/>.

e-PEL. Portafolio Europeo de Lenguas Electrónico: <https://www.educacion.gob.es/e-pel/>.  
 Europeana: <https://www.europeana.eu>.  
 Languages Open Resources Online (LORO): <http://loro.open.ac.uk/>.  
 MERLOT. <https://www.merlot.org>.  
 Red de Buenas Prácticas 2.0 del MEC: <http://recursostic.educacion.es/buenaspracticass20/web/>  
 CCOLLECTION: Catalogue and open online-collaborative-community for innovative education and Best Practices: <http://ccollection.unia.es/>  
 Página web de National Best Practices Center (Educational Opportunity Association, USA, sede Minnesota): <http://www.besteducationpractices.org/steps-to-share>

Nevertheless, the FOCO repository aims to step forward and foster a bigger engagement by users and creators of educational material for the teaching and learning of second languages; the creation of collaborative activities by the different educational actors involved (including the learning evaluation processes), the promotion of an autonomous, meaningful and self-regulated learning; the documenting of teaching and learning processes with ICT (multimodal and multilingual linguistic repertoires for students, etc.) (cfr. Wiley y Gurrell 2009; Atenas y Havemann 2014; Hernández y Román in press).

FOCO is the first COLLABORATIVE, MULTILINGUAL portal devoted to ICT-Enhanced Foreign language instruction that fosters teaching excellence in any context and educational level, and for any target student population. It is an innovative approach in applied linguistics because it is multilingual, multisectorial and multimodal and it combines all type of contexts and uses of technological mediation (*Mooc, Wikis, Collaborative software, gamification, Mlearning, ULearning, Audio y video resources, social networks, Video conferencins, LMS platforms... etc.*).



### 3. Target groups:

We have designed an accessible and participatory repository. In line with the spirit of the E-Lengua project, FOCO addresses users of all ages, from different

social backgrounds, whether part or not of the academic world, or simply those who keep *life-long learning* in search for academical improvement, for going up the job ladder or just for self-fulfillment. The impact of the ICT in the teaching of languages has become a global phenomenon. Thus, apart from the vertical dimension we have mentioned, FOCO aims also for a horizontal and therefore spacial dimension. As a consequence, its results must benefit people from all over the world, without any geographical limitation, and reaching areas where ICT practices are not settled, but also getting to people who have not yet developed learning skills with these tools.

Any academic institution or teaching professional can collaborate with FOCO by submitting their BEST PRACTICES via the GET INVOLVED section of the website.

### GET INVOLVED



#### WHY SHOULD I COOPERATE?

Because FOCO is a repository created for all of us: OPEN, MULTILINGUAL, INTERNATIONAL, and with a COLLABORATIVE vocation. Here, you will be able to share your best practices regarding the teaching of foreign languages and ICTs, as well as to get in touch with other teachers and researchers and to share the experiences you like the most on social networking websites.

#### WHAT IS A 'BEST PRACTICE'?

According to UNESCO, a BEST PRACTICE in education develops a new and a creative solution, and has a positive and tangible impact that can have a lasting effect and serve as a model for developing actions, initiatives, and policies in other contexts.

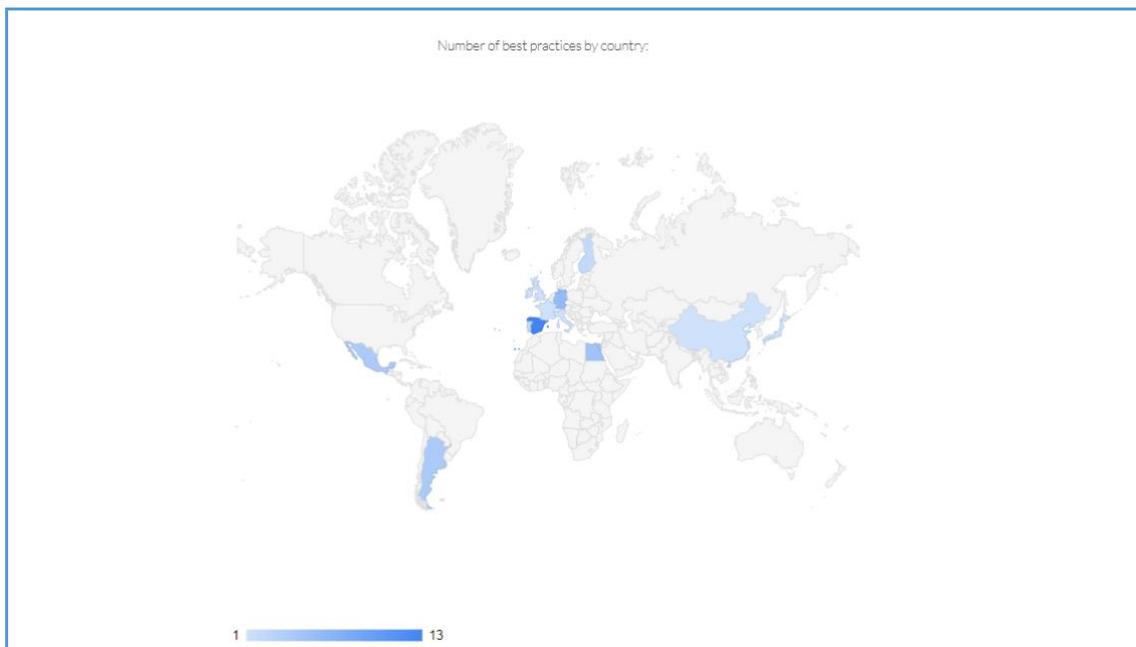
#### IT'S YOUR TURN!

If you want to share your best practice regarding the teaching of foreign languages and ICTs with this community, you can easily REGISTER here and check the SUGGESTIONS in order to complete your best practice. A COMMITTEE OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS will check it and, if the Committee's evaluation is positive, it will join our and FOCO's virtual community.

SIGN UP

COMMENTS

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS



The benefits from FOCO may belong to very different networks from international communities, which leads to a better teaching in general and specifically a better teaching of languages, especially in disadvantaged groups with a more limited access to training resources.

The CATALOGUE OF BEST PRACTICES includes examples of the application of technologies to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

#### 4. Methodology:

We have already highlighted the existence of many repositories that collect experiences and materials for the teaching of second languages. However, the amount of works that study from a critic and reflective point of view what we can really consider a good practice in this context. We assume that a good practice is any experience that can be shared with the educational community, but in fact it should also fulfill different characteristics or descriptors that attest the presumed quality evidence. Undoubtedly, quality control is one of the great challenges of virtual learning environments. The FOCO repository focuses therefore in the search of quality educational experiences that track and prove the reference standards with the definition of GOOD PRACTICES.

The UNESCO, in the frame of its programme MOST (Management of Social Transformations), has specified which are the attributes of a good educational practice and their characteristic features. Broadly speaking, a BEST PRACTICE in education develops a new and a creative solution, and has a positive and tangible impact that can have a lasting effect and serve as a model for developing actions, initiatives, and policies in other contexts (cf. Peters y Heron 1993; Román Mendoza 2018)

Therefore, the good practices should be:

- **Innovative:** they develop new and creative solutions.
- **Effective:** they prove a positive and tangible impact on the improvement.
- **Sustainable:** their social, economical and environmental demands allow them to linger with time and produce long-term effects.
- **Reproducible** (or transferable): they act as a template to develop politics, initiatives and actions elsewhere.

Other features usually taken into account in good practices are **feasibility**, which means the real possibilities for carrying out the described practice; a good cost/benefit ratio; THE multiplying and illustrative effect and **transversality**, which must spread as an intervention methodology which makes it possible for all actions to impact all organizations where they are developed, in order to consolidate.

In this respect, FOCO aims to collect examples of an inventory of best practices in foreign language teaching in any context and educational level and for any target population. Best practices need to relate to the use of ICT to foster teaching excellence, both as instructional tool and as an innovation in teaching methodology.

The FOCO repository is therefore accesible on the plataforma ([foco.usal.es](http://foco.usal.es)) and has already incorporated the 7 contributions and tools coming from E-LENGUA in the different project languages, while integrating good practices in the teaching of second languages with technological mediation from the experts and professionals community.

The catalogue will remain open after the project has finished so as to guarantee the continuity of future works and therefore its sustainability. Besides, FOCO meets one of the resolutions of the Berlin Declaration On Open Access To Knowledge In The Sciences And Humanities, underwritten by the University of Salamanca. This means all practices are published under open access and Creative Commons licence.



<https://foco.usal.es/en/contact/>

#### Creative Commons Licenses

All best practices are open access and are under a Creative Commons License Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike. An online reference is automatically generated for the PDF document (Last name(s), Name. (year). "Best practice title". Online: link. FOCO Repository [date accessed]). You are encouraged to share best practices via social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

We have developed a short protocol explaining the collaboration with FOCO ([https://foco.usal.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/recomendacionesFOCO\\_ingles.pdf](https://foco.usal.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/recomendacionesFOCO_ingles.pdf))

### **Steps to share a best practice**

First step: Sign up with FOCO by clicking on GET INVOLVED. The sign-up process is easy and straightforward. After registration, you will have access to your author/user page where you can manage all your practices.

Second step: Fill in the form SUBMIT A NEW PRACTICE. The collected data provide the community with information on how you implemented your teaching initiative (summary, objectives, results, resources...). It also allows users to perform searches in our catalog (language, institution, technology, tool...). You can access this form as many times as needed. You can also edit and modify it until you consider it is ready for submission. For your convenience, the form is available in, English, French, German, Italian Portuguese and Spanish.

Third step: Once the form is complete, send it to our committee made up INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS. They will send you their evaluation within a short period of time. If their evaluation is positive, your practice will be automatically uploaded to the repository. You will be able to access it on the Catalogue of Best Practices website and download a PDF document that you can share as a publication on educational innovation. This document will be automatically uploaded to one of the GREDOS communities (<https://gredos.usal.es>). GREDOS is one of the largest international document repositories accessible via the most important search channels (Google Academics, Europeana, OpenAire, Recolecta...).

In the event that the evaluation is not positive, the Committee will share with you a series of recommendations so your practice can be included in FOCO. During this process, you can rely on the support services provided by the editorial board at [foco@usal.es](mailto:foco@usal.es).

All best practices are evaluated by our Evaluation Committee of international experts from the seven universities involved in the E-LENGUA Project (E-Learning Novelties towards the Goal of a Universal Acquisition of Foreign and Second Languages): Universidad de Salamanca, Università degli Studi di Bologna, Universidade de Coimbra, Universität Heidelberg, Université de Poitiers, and Trinity College Dublin. Evaluators are selected based on the best practice language and topic. Evaluations are based on the UNESCO quality criteria: INNOVATION, IMPACT, SUSTAINABILITY, REPLICABILITY, FACTIBILITY, AND TRANSVERSABILITY.

Evaluation is either positive or negative. In case of a negative evaluation, the evaluation committee will let you know how to improve your practice so it can be

included in FOCO. The whole evaluation process is carried out via your FOCO user page.

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## 5. Development of the project:

FOCO's aim is to stablish good quality standards and to make suggestions to obtain better results in teaching, accessibility and pedagogical methodology in the teaching of second languages with technological assistance. It also

underscores the good practices concept as guarantee of quality and an essential qualitative leap in repositories as knowledge-democratizing tools.

This repository is coordinated by the USAL and will remain open also after the E-LENGUA project has come to an end. This will ensure its sustainability and enhance the impact of the results and the transfer of knowledge.

## 6. Chronogram:

1. In the frame of the analysis of the detected needs and the challenges of language-teaching in Europe, and with the aim of updating synergically the curricular design of ICT-assisted teaching of languages in Europe (German, Arabic, Spanish, French, English, Italian, Portuguese) the idea was to develop a collaborative repository-portal including the following components:



2. Design of the web to host the repository, the logo, etc.

3. Design of the template for the introduction of the good practice and self-assessment to eventually include to the FOCO repository.

### FORM TEMPLATE: BEST PRACTICES IN THE USE OF ICT IN SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

General Information	
*PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS	Created in: (Start typing...) Institution creating the practice. If it is not listed add it) Country:  Implemented in: (Institution creating the practice. If it is not listed add it) Country:
*TITLE	max. 250 characters including spaces
*IMAGE	Include an image or photo –CC license-that identifies the practice [ADD FILE]
*CONTACT INFORMATION	max. 250 characters including spaces
*THE TAUGHT LANGUAGE	- Spanish - English - French - Deutsch - Portuguese - Italian - Arabic - Other Which one? - Multilingual practice (Check ONLY in case the good practice has been carried out in more than one language)
OTHER LANGUAGES	- Spanish - English - French - Deutsch

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Portuguese</li> <li>- Italian</li> <li>- Arabic</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">Which one?</p> <p>Check ONLY in case it is a multilingual good practice. Check up to FOUR.</p>
*LEVEL (CEFR/ACTFL)	Beginner (A)/Intermediate (B)/Advanced (C)/ Multilevel
*TIMEFRAME	Beginning date: End date:
HUMAN RESOURCES/PARTICIPANTS	PROJECT MANAGER:  TEAM MEMBERS:
FINANCING	YES                      Which one?: NO
*AUDIENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Early Childhood Education</li> <li>- Primary Education</li> <li>- Secondary Education</li> <li>- Higher Education</li> <li>- Teacher Training</li> <li>- Lifelong Learning</li> <li>- Special Needs</li> <li>- Other</li> </ul> <p>(Check up to FOUR)</p>
*EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MOOCs, NOOCs and SPOOCs [Coursera, edX, Miriadax, Udacity, etc.]</li> <li>- Online publishing tools [blogs, web sites, robojournalism tools, curation tools, timelines, concept mapping tools and services, etc.]</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collaborative online tools [wikis, collaborative software, apps and services (Google docs, etc.), social bookmarking, question-and-answer social sites, etc.]</li> <li>- Social networks [Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Flickr, YouTube, Tumblr, Instagram, Google+, etc.]</li> <li>- Gamification [videogames, simulations, virtual worlds, massively multiplayer online games, competitive collaborative activities, etc.]</li> <li>- Devices [desktops, laptops, smartphones, tablets, TVs, video consoles, interactive electronic blackboards, etc.]</li> <li>- Audiovisual media development and implementation [audio (podcasts, etc.) and video (dubbing and subtitling), etc.]</li> <li>- Asynchronous and synchronous computer-mediated communication [videoconference, hangouts, Skype, email, forums, social networks, etc.]</li> <li>- Online/Hybrid course management platforms and authoring software [Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas, Sakai, etc.; online course authoring software and tools, etc.]</li> <li>- Assessment and feedback [questionnaires, learning analytics, surveys, pools, tests, etc.]</li> </ul> <p>(Check up to FOUR)</p>
*TEACHING METHODS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face-to-face learning/blended learning/online learning</li> <li>- Lectures/(Hands-on) practice/internships/Community service/Seminars/Oral presentations/Group discussions</li> <li>- Autonomous learning</li> <li>- Case studies-based learning</li> <li>- Problem-based learning</li> <li>- Project-based learning</li> <li>- Collaborative learning</li> <li>- Tutoring and mentoring</li> <li>- Assessment/Self-assessment/Peer assessment/Group assessment</li> <li>- Methods of teaching/learning data collection (questionnaires, surveys, tests, data mining and other learning analytics methods...)</li> <li>- Portfolios</li> </ul> <p>(Check up to FOUR)</p>
*DESCRIPTION	Planning and context, topics, implementation, evaluation and basic information about the practice (max. 1200 characters including spaces)

OBJECTIVES	General and specific goals (max. 1200 characters including spaces)
RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED TO REPLICATE THE GOOD PRACTICE	max. 700 characters including spaces
RESULTS	Describe the impact of the results obtained according to the established objectives (max. 5000 characters including spaces)
CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED / PROBLEM-SOLVING STRATEGIES	max. 1000 characters including spaces
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	Publications, links, etc. (max. 1000 characters including spaces)
COMPLEMENTARY MATERIAL	ZIP file
<b>SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRIC</b> (This section is intended to stimulate the autor's reflection on his/her good practice and to provide the evaluator(s) with a first guidance to his/her review)	
Please rate on scale from 1 (-) to 5 (+) to what extent the practice aligns with each of the following UNESCO descriptors	
INNOVATION Does the good practice implement creative working methods or strategies geared towards achieving better results?	- Check up ONE-

<b>IMPACT</b> Does the good practice have an impact on the educational system and/or the society at the micro or macro level?	-Check up ONE-
<b>SUSTAINABILITY</b> Does the good practice's organizational or technical structure allow for its long-term implementation?	-Check up ONE-
<b>REPLICABILITY</b> Are there possibilities of extending the good practice more widely, i.e., to other locations or educational contexts?	-Check up ONE-
<b>FEASIBILITY</b> Can the good practice be implemented with the available resources?	-Check up ONE-
<b>TRANSVERSABILITY</b> Does the practice promote the development of new competencies in addition to those related to ICT and second language teaching?	-Check up ONE-
	[Save Practice] [Return]

4. Contact with the digital innovation and production team to transfer the submission to digital format.

5. Inclusion of all changes and improvements in the repository/collaborative portal for the management of the intranet, users, etc.



The screenshot shows the FOCO (Portal Colaborativo BUENAS PRÁCTICAS EN LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS) website. It features a navigation menu with options like 'QUÉ EN SOMOS', 'E-LENGUA', 'COLABORA', 'CATÁLOGO', 'CONTACTO', 'ESCRITORIO', and 'SALIR'. Below the menu, there are language selection options (Español, Inglés, Français, Deutsch, Italiano, Português) and user actions (Añadir Buena Práctica, Escribirlo, Editar perfil, Cambiar contraseña, Salir). The main content area is divided into two sections: 'AUTOR' and 'EVALUADOR'. Each section contains a table with columns for ID, Buena Práctica, Estado, Decisión, and Acciones. In the 'AUTOR' section, there is one entry with ID 929. In the 'EVALUADOR' section, there is one entry with ID 1231.

6. Establishment and definition of tasks and operation of the international committee of experts and the editorial committee.

7. Inclusion and evaluation of the first good practices resulting from the E-LENGUA project.

### 7. Dissemination:

-Presentation of the different stages in the creation of the repository in the meetings around the E-LENGUA project and the booster events.

- Mailing to colleagues and professionals from the second language teaching field.

Example:

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Dear colleague,

The University of Salamanca has coordinated the E-LENGUA project, funded by the European Union, with the participation of one Egyptian and six European universities. One of its main results is the creation of FOCO, a multilingual collaborative repository of best practices in the use of TICs in foreign language teaching, in order to make them available to the educational community: <https://foco.usal.es>

We are contacting you because we would like you to collaborate in FOCO by uploading a best practice. Several prestigious experts and institutions have already published in FOCUS. The best practice can be sent at any time and will be evaluated by our international committee of experts, who will issue a report within a month. The reviewers are assigned by language and subject and will take into account the quality criteria for best practices set by UNESCO.

If the evaluation is positive, your practice will be published automatically in our repository, on the catalog website and stored in GREDOS, one of the largest international repositories of documents that allows access through high-impact search channels like Google Academics, Europeana, OpenAire or Recolecta. If the evaluation is negative, the experts will indicate the necessary improvements for its incorporation into FOCUS. All practices are published under a Creative Commons license and have an automatically generated digital reference that can be used in academic citations: Surname (s), Name. (year). "Title of best practice". Online: link. FOCUS repository [Date of query].

Therefore, we encourage you to share a best practice of language teaching and TICs. You can do this by registering on the website (<https://foco.usal.es/login-foco/>) and providing it yourself, or by filling in the attached form that (in Spanish, English or the language you prefer) so that we can register it under your name and attach it for you. You can find more information on <https://foco.usal.es/colabora/>.

Kind regards,

FOCO team  
<https://foco.usal.es>

With regard to the knowledge transfer, FOCO will be announced in international conferences, workshops and symposiums in which one or more members of E-LENGUA will take part.

### 8. Bibliography:

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