Teaching young learners English: Global practices from teacher perspectives

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With the globalization of English has come one of the world’s major educational policy developments – the teaching of English to ever younger learners. The concept that ‘younger is better’ and the belief that English is a critical element in international competitiveness has driven some governments to introduce English language teaching right from the first years of primary schooling. But what is the evidence that these policies are effective? What factors are implicated in this rapid introduction of the teaching of English to young learners? And what are the major issues that teachers are facing? In this presentation, I discuss the development of this move to teach English to young learners, the main policy and pedagogical factors that have been identified in recent research, and the challenges faced by teachers of this learner group. In particular, I report the findings of a major study conducted in 2010-11 that investigated globally the practices of teachers of young learners as reported by the teachers themselves. The study highlighted the challenges faced by the teachers but also some of the local pedagogical solutions they considered relevant in their contexts.