

Editorial

During the last 15 years, research in foreign language teaching and learning in Colombia has become an accepted and welcomed practice among dedicated teacher educators and classroom teachers. It has promoted reflection and contributed to thoughtful action through the implementation of participatory classroom studies at different educational levels from elementary to postgraduate levels. Action research studies are believed to be invaluable practices in education because they can positively impact *the teacher, the context, and the field*.

Action research is acknowledged for its contributions to teachers' own professional development. It can generate useful knowledge about a complex environment where teachers systematically learn to change the conditions of instruction to better support learners' particular and shared needs. Teachers' critical reflection on the learner in the classroom context can generate changes in how they perceive the learner, their professional identity and responsibilities, as well as contribute to the wider community (Rainey, 2000:67). Rainey believes that EFL teachers need to share the outcomes of their studies and not miss out on the opportunity that action research offers to emancipate themselves. Calvo, Camargo and Pineda (2008) also consider that pedagogic research is particularly valuable to the exercise of teachers. They claim: *"El maestro realiza investigación pedagógica; esto es, innova y sistematiza su práctica. En estos procesos produce y enriquece el saber pedagógico"*(p.9). Galvis' small-scale action research study on the use of videogame-based instruction in this issue, proposed a change from traditional forms of instruction that concentrate on the study of linguistic aspects to more engaging ways to learn the target language and culture with EFL learners. His reflection in regards to the need for teachers to emancipate themselves from traditional, dominant curriculum frameworks to propose ideas for curricular innovation in language teaching can be considered a valuable contribution to teacher professional development.

Action research has an impact in the educational context because classroom learning environments are transformed by the pedagogical innovations that teachers implement following action research. In this issue, four research projects by Colombian teachers address issues related to foreign language learning that focus on the use of graphic organizers to help EFL learners in text organization, cooperative structures of interaction to facilitate interpersonal communication in the EFL classroom, fostering reading comprehension in a content area through an approach called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), and a proposal to support EFL learning through the use of videogame-based instruction. A pedagogical innovation using multimedia as an autonomous learning tool for children to learn vocabulary by Francisco Moreno is also part of this issue in the pedagogical innovations section and an article by Antonio Gutiérrez-Piñeres entitled Two essential metaphors introduces a new section on literary perspectives that invite readers to think about the connections between language and literature. Parga's action research project on cooperative structures of interaction with 8th graders EFL learners in a public school in Bogotá serves to illustrate the changes in the educational context. He reports about how students raised awareness of the crucial factors involved in effective oral communication during the pedagogical implementation resulted in their improvement of the oral communication processes and a significant change in the classroom social environment for learning.

The implementation of action research by teachers can also impact the field of foreign language teaching and learning by bravely showing the community about the risks and benefits in the process taken toward innovations that have potential to change students' learning and their relationship with peers, teachers, and target communities in complex relationship to each other. No researcher has greater access than teachers to such sites of learning. Hence the collaboration between researchers in teacher educators and teachers allows

for not only teachers learning about student but also teacher educators learning about teachers in context. Together they show commitment to the field by their participation in public academic discussions and making contributions through publications like the CALJ that help move the field of foreign language teaching (FLT) to new understandings, and new practices. Alethia Bogoya's study of reading comprehension of fifth graders in a content area viewed from both the content and language perspectives represents a contribution to the fields of FLT and literacy in bilingual settings.

In addition to action research as a form of research used by Colombian practitioners, in this issue we bring you a study carried out by a fifth grade teacher, Alethia Bogoya, to foster reading comprehension promoted through Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) . She utilized a mixed methods approach to data analysis in order to be able to report both qualitative and quantitative results of students learning. Mixed-methods approaches to research have been widely used in the social sciences field but it more recently been adopted in educational research. Mixed-methods research has also been considered a strategy that helps researchers combine quantitative and qualitative techniques within the same framework to incorporate the strengths of both methodologies.

For Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) a mixed-method approach to research helps narrow the divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers. They consider that mixed methods research has a great potential to promote a shared responsibility in the quest for attaining accountability for educational quality (p.24)

In addition to research articles, the second section of this volume of the Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal offers a theoretical review or the state of the art of specific topics chosen by authors. This time the topic chosen focuses on writing with adolescents to propose alternative writing genres. The author, Jorge Orlando Amaya, focuses on three main parts: writing in the university context, writing in the high school years, and writing outside school.

The third section on pedagogical innovations presents an experience at Universidad del Chocó using multimedia as an autonomous learning tool for children to learn vocabulary. The results provide evidence of the effectiveness of multimedia sources to help children learn lexical items and pronunciation in the early years.

Finally, a new section on literary perspectives is offered to the readers to recreate Borges' and Schrodinger's poetry in Two essential metaphors. This is a contribution by Antonio Gutierrez-Piñeres from Universidad Tecnológica de Bolívar.

The editorial committee of the CALJ is very proud to present this volume which provides articles in both English and Spanish for its worldwide distribution.

References

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