



Editorial

Views on Language and Sociopolitical Agendas in ELT: A Commitment to Publication

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The field of English teaching in the Colombian context has undergone a trajectory that appears to be accommodating to the changes of different time periods, generations, and norms ([Bonilla-Medina & Samacá-Bohorquez, 2020](#)). In this line of thought, as editors of this journal, we have witnessed that the field has been broadening its intellectual worldview precisely because the prevailing perceptions of language have changed. With time, they have shifted to show more connection with the social world (Pennycook, 2020). Naturally, this had been claimed by various scholars before; however, it is only recently that the scholarship has demonstrated a tendency to overcome that traditional stage.

Understanding language in connection with the social world has implied a movement from static perspectives of language education to an exploration of the ways in which contextual, historical, and situated constructions give meaning to language teaching and learning ([Nuñez-Pardo, 2020](#)). Language teaching needs to be the product of careful reflection upon the characteristics of the actors involved, as well as the socio-cultural, historical, and economic conditions of a learner's context, and the circumstances beyond the subject matter and its didactics. This appears to have already been analyzed within the broader context of language policy, which has seen an increase in policies demanding multiculturalism, intercultural relationships, and multilingual practices, recognizing the value of languages in the construction of societies and individual identities. For instance, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Culture Organization) highlights the prominence of adopting a plurilingual policy that promotes appropriate conditions for social-intellectual interaction, favoring international communication and fostering plurilingual education and democratic access to knowledge in any language (1999). Therefore, there is a degree of consciousness in the role of language not only as an individual factor but as a cultural asset that nurtures more equitable social conditions and access to knowledge.

However, returning to the topic of language in relation to the social world, globalization has revealed that the pursuit of multicultural and pluricultural equity in education, both at the macro and micro levels, is often undermined when English is prioritized over other languages and certain cultures are presented as superior to others. [Guerrero-Nieto \(2009\)](#) explains how the symbolic power of English as a dominant language results in the neglect and marginalization of other languages. Similarly, [Kubota \(2020\)](#) exposes the presence of epistemological racism within the academic world, where language power dynamics perpetuate a dominance of English and uphold a white-male-centered perspective, otherizing and discriminating against ethnic and female contributions. Therefore, as part of the interest of this journal, we see language teaching, learning, and use as central to the analysis of the contextual implications of language so as to find new ways of challenging the perpetuation of unequal power dynamics.

Contextual implications of language use, learning, and teaching are well discussed by Zavala (2019) in her article titled "Justicia sociolingüística para los tiempos de hoy" ("Sociolinguistic justice for today's times"). Zavala illustrates how language teaching and education in general have been developed under racialized parameters, which have perpetuated hierarchical relationships that primarily confine underprivileged linguistic groups to an

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inferior role. Through her analysis, Zavala offers insights into how an approach language education rooted in social justice involves intensifying the connections of language, context, and social practices towards valuing locally produced knowledge and cultures, thus promoting critical intercultural relationships and democracy. Moreover, she draws attention to the particular features that provide meaning within specific sociolinguistic situations and to specific individuals, the acknowledgement of which is necessary to stand up for the rights of those who have been jeopardized by injustice.

Like Zavala, we seek to emphasize that the key point of applied linguistics in ELT is addressing language in relation to society, particularly shedding light upon the critical conditions prevalent in specific circumstances, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the power dynamics that shape individuals' interactions. In this vein, we recognize *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal* as a valuable platform for sharing contextualized experiences of authors researching ELT areas. Their contributions offer unique insights that allow us to perceive reality from different perspectives, moving beyond the static historical views of linguistic and cultural dominance. We acknowledge these authors' endeavors as attempts to decolonize the field by disengaging from dominant discourses that perpetuate power dynamics and by proposing alternative approaches.

In this issue of *CALJ*, those critical intentions are part of the authors' commitment to writing. Indeed, they are devoted to understanding the contextual characteristics that shape English educational practices from critical perspectives. In this fashion, Foad and Alboghobiesh, as well as Muftah, address the implications of disciplinary contexts in relation to language structures. Both articles concern the sphere of language, but Foad and Alboghobiesh focus on understanding that, as part of the discipline, they are also shaping what language users do. In the same line of thought, Muftah provides a comprehensive analysis of linguistic errors within an Arabic context and how they could be addressed pedagogically in the classroom.

This issue presents articles that shed light on the role of technology in language learning within the realm of the EFL classroom. A noteworthy contribution is the work by Battle and Gonzalez, which goes beyond viewing technology as a mere tool that facilitates language acquisition and recognizes it as a contextual space where students' experiences as language and technology users converge and transform their views. Gamification is thoroughly examined from learners' perspectives, emphasizing its significance in enabling them to transcend the mere task of language learning and transform it into a rich and immersive life experience. Another article of interest is the contribution by Romero and Alfonso, which explores the internet as a meaningful domain. They raise questions about the nature of online materials and their potential as extensions of classroom tools that can offer more practical applications for language use and learning. One of their main arguments states that, despite the long-standing focus on materials design, there is a pressing need to understand authentic online materials in order to develop specific pedagogical approaches that incorporate critical perspectives.

Regarding the features of context and its importance in EFL, Muñoz and Soler have contributed an article that highlights the growing awareness of diversity in EFL. They argue that this aspect has been overlooked and undervalued due to the fact that transmission and unilateral teaching and communication models continue to be at the core of educational practices. They also propose alternative ways to challenge and overcome those enduring power dynamics. In the same vein, Velasquez draws attention to the efforts taking place in certain regions of Colombia to incorporate English teaching methodologies that strive to disrupt traditional language skills and structures, advocating for the adoption of context-sensitive practices. In her insightful analysis, she argues that this process shapes the way teachers perceive language and teaching situations.

Mosquera presents another case study where materials development is influenced by context, revealing a well-informed framework for developing writing material from a context-personalized practice. Building on this, Rico, Pluvinet, and Villanueva in their article underscore the importance of bridging the gap between the academic and the personal contexts of pre-service teachers. This mediation enables them to deepen their pedagogical

reflection. Indeed, as pre-service teachers deliberate on their own inner conflicts, they discover routes to becoming educators and realize that their experience fosters the development of an autonomy model for their professional decision-making.

In an exploration of the macro levels of educational contexts in ELT, Gaspar offers a critical analysis on how childcare policies designed for the benefit and well-being of infants are negatively affected when the planning and organization of bilingual policies are driven by globalization and competitiveness. Finally, McDougald, Duarte, Quesada, and Sánchez scrutinize CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), questioning European models in language teaching that fail to consider the unique contextual characteristics of the Colombian context.

Upon examining the contributions presented in this issue, it becomes evident that the journal serves as a platform for featuring situated reflections and studies that shed light on the critical realities of the field. Moreover, it is worth noting that several articles in this issue draw attention to the Colombian context. We acknowledge the increasing interest in our context to express critical views and to promote a shift towards better practices in the light of social justice. With this in mind, we build upon these claims to stress the necessity of utilizing this journal to continue showcasing more particular experiences and highlight those that challenge superficial views of pluricultural practices that perpetuate subordination on educational actors and are rooted in underlying ideologies of English dominance.

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