

Editorial

With this issue we join the celebration of ASOCOPI's 50th anniversary

The development of ELT (English Language Teaching) in Colombia has been possible thanks to the participation of different stakeholders and the commitment of academic communities who, despite socio-economic constraints, have engaged in various endeavours aimed at reaching better conditions for the teaching of English in the country. This is the case of ASOCOPI (Asociación Colombiana de Profesores de Inglés—the Colombian Association of Teachers of English), an initiative envisioned in 1966 by seventeen scholars who set up in Bucaramanga a non-profit professional organization. As such, ASOCOPI's mission is to contribute to the betterment of ELT in Colombia by promoting quality educators and playing a leading role in the promotion of quality teaching and social responsibility in our country.¹

Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, regional and national projects, conferences, professional development activities, and academic organizations contribute in one way or another to pre- and in-service teachers' preparation and are expected to have an impact on the improvement of ELT at different educational levels (Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez, 2010; González, Cárdenas, Álvarez, Quintero, & Viáfara, 2009). In adhering to this line of thought, ASOCOPI has played an important role in the development of the profession via its annual conferences, its sustained presence in regional workshops which are nurtured by joint efforts of local scholars and the Association's Board of Directors, and its participation in projects like the one conducted by González et al. (2009) with the purpose of diagnosing the teacher development programmes offered in Colombia.

Networking has been the steering force in ASOCOPI's life. Along the road, the Association has discovered companions from different institutions, regions, and countries whose company has been vital in the journeys heading towards the attainment of short and long-term goals. Joint efforts have allowed the *HOW* Journal to strengthen and exist as a publication that connects prospective teachers, practitioners, teacher educators, teacher-researchers, educational authorities, and publishers to the realities we become faced with in our profession.

¹ <http://www.asocopi.org/mission.html>

HOW's main objective is to keep up communication among teachers of English both in Colombia and overseas by offering opportunities for the dissemination of knowledge gained from educational and research practices that concern English language teaching issues. The rationale behind its mission stresses that knowledge is not only produced in hegemonic centres. Although international concepts, theories, methods, and paradigms are recognised in our studies, local knowledge needs to be considered too. This stance goes against the rather poor conception of who teachers are and what they are able to do and questions their "invisibility" in language policies definition and implementation (Guerrero, 2010) regardless of the crucial role they play in the society.

Local knowledge is context bound, community-specific, and "generated ground-up through social practice in everyday life" (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 4). In view of this, we believe that persevering with a publication that gives opportunities to local and international scholars from different backgrounds and with different teaching agendas lets us learn about their teaching realities and the contextual factors that have a bearing on ELT. In doing so we acknowledge that teachers can go beyond the assumption of being mere consumers of knowledge. Instead, as agents of change, we can also be producers of local knowledge and add understanding to English language teaching practices, teacher education, and language policies, among others.

As our readership can witness in the following pages, we do what we preach, that is, in tune with our view of local knowledge, we gather works that resemble how scholars systematise their teaching and research experiences and put them on paper to reach national and international communities. In this edition, we include seven articles and a book review. The main contents are presented below.

Before introducing the contents of this number of *HOW*, I am pleased to share with you two important pieces of news. First, as our readership may have noticed in the first number of this year's volume, the journal shortened its title to *HOW*. This was done in order to comply with the official title as found in the ISSN registry. Therefore, the information on how to cite each article already reflects the change. We would appreciate all readership and authors to take this into account whenever they refer to the journal from now on. Second, we have decided to include book reviews on current publications in the areas of English language teaching, to wit: learning, teaching, teacher education, and research. Book reviews also go through evaluation processes and the focus is mainly on research and reference books or on textbooks designed for language teaching and teacher education.

Four pieces of work have been gathered in the *Research Reports* section. We open this section with the article by Colombian authors Paula Andrea Bedoya, Luz María Valencia, and Juan Carlos Montoya. They inform us about an investigation on the needs perceived by professors from an English as a foreign language program concerning demands, interests,

and lacks based on the methodology. Next, Ornella Ochoa Delarriva and Enrique Alejandro Basabe, from Argentina, tell us about a qualitative study that sought to examine the applicability and usefulness of reading logs. Interestingly, the analysis also reveals the need to promote diversity in literature teaching in English language teacher education.

The third article, authored by Astrid Núñez Pardo and María Fernanda Téllez Téllez, reports on an action research study aimed at examining the role of reflection on teachers' personal and professional growth. To do so, the researchers focused on the methodology used in a postgraduate course at a Colombian university. The results confirm that reflection is critical in raising teachers' awareness of personal and professional growth as well on their affective dimension.

We close this section with Eliphelet Rivera Cuayahuitl and Celso Pérez Carranza's work on the influence of contextual factors on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Mexican teachers' beliefs and the use of textbooks. This article presents the findings of a study about the contextual factors that a group of experienced Mexican teachers believe shape their lessons. The study shows that factors such as the length of courses and lessons, the school facilities, the institutional practices to select textbooks as well as the institutional procedures to supervise teachers' practices and assessment were explicitly raised as the most influential on the teachers' lessons.

In the second section, *Reports on Pedagogical Experiences*, we can read an account written by Colombian teacher Hernán A. Avila. He shares with us a pedagogical intervention that allowed the teacher to face his students' lack of interest or attention. As explained in the article, a set of creative activities was designed to help students improve oral and written production in the English classroom.

Next, we present two papers in the *Reflections and Revision of Themes* section. They come from Iran and Colombia and contend with syllabus design and implementation, two curricular issues that are always raised in ELT scenarios.

In first place, Iranian teacher Sasan Baleghizadeh focuses on procedural and task syllabuses which, despite their fundamental differing characteristics, are often used interchangeably and synonymously. Perhaps one of the most important contributions of his work can be found in the sense that these two syllabi differ from each other in terms of task selection, task gradation, task implementation, and input nature.

Then, we can read an article dealing with the development of autonomy through syllabus design. In his article, Colombian teacher Alexánder Ramírez Espinosa departs from the assertion that research on how to foster autonomy in the language classroom lacks guidance on step-by-step processes to design syllabi and curricula. Hence, he sought to document and report on the way he came out with a proposal, as a result of a pedagogical intervention at university level.

Finally, we include a book review. This time we concentrate on the publication authored by Martin Wedell and Angi Malderez, entitled “Understanding language classroom contexts: The starting point for change.” I am sure you will find their work relevant for the expansion of our understanding of contextual issues which have a bearing on our attempts to change and sustain reforms in language classrooms.

With this edition we want to join the celebration of ASOCOPI’s 50th anniversary. As usual, we hope novice teacher-researchers and prospective teachers find the contents of *HOW* useful. Let us keep in mind that ASOCOPI is everybody’s responsibility and that publishing our works is one way of contributing to our profession.

Melba Libia Cárdenas

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