

# Editorial

It is an honor and pleasure to be invited to write a few words for this issue of *Íkala, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*. Very briefly, my intention here is to highlight the valuable contributions *Íkala* is making to the professional knowledge base of second language (L2) teaching and to share a few examples of how it has helped my own work as an L2 teacher educator and university-based researcher.

I first learned of *Íkala* during the stimulating and well-received presentation, “Challenges and Tensions in EFL Teacher Education in Colombia (1995-2005)” given by Dras. Adriana Gonzalez Moncada and Amparo Clavijo-Olarte at the 2006 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Convention in Tampa, Florida (USA). Their invited presentation was part of the annual Academic Session organized by the Teacher Education Interest Section (TEIS). In addition to sharing their research and teacher development projects, Dras. Clavijo-Olarte and Gonzalez introduced audience members to *Íkala*, its mission, purpose, and progress since its inception in 1996, and invited us to visit the journal’s website and browse the contents of recent issues. I am so glad I did! The journal is a valuable addition to the field, epistemologically, conceptually, and pedagogically.

The articles in *Íkala* consistently present insightful, timely perspectives and critiques on some of the most pressing issues in second language teaching and teacher development. One such current debate in the field is ownership of and participation in the professional knowledge base for English L2 education, broadly defined to include teacher education, curriculum development, learning processes, and pedagogy.

The export/colonization model that prevailed during most of the twentieth century—and unfortunately, has continued into the twenty-first century, assumes that “expert knowledge” is created in higher education learning communities/institutions where English is the first language and then exported to or imposed on EFL contexts. When these methods/concepts flounder or fail in their new contexts, the explanation tends to focus on the local “*mis*” interpretation, often questioning local capacity to understand and implement them, leaving the methods/concepts

unchallenged or under critiqued. In recent years, this model has been highly contested and the knowledge base has been enriched by diverse L2 communities around the globe who are producing and theorizing curriculum/policies grounded in analysis of local context and political realities. *Íkala*, its mission and its content, has been an active contributor to this debate. Two excellent examples are “Teachers acting critically upon the curriculum: Innovations that transform teaching” (Clavijo-Olarte, Guerrero Nieto, Torres Jaramillo, Ramírez Galindo & Torres Mesa, 2004) and “The professional development of foreign language teacher educators: Another challenge for professional communities” (González Moncada & Sierra Ospina, 2005). The spirit of these articles is consistent with Suresh Canarajah’s assessment of the field’s key issues. In *TESOL Quarterly*’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue he writes:

Teachers in different communities have to devise curricula and pedagogies that have local relevance. Teaching materials have to accommodate the values and needs of diverse settings, with sufficient complexity granted to local knowledge. Curriculum change cannot involve the top-down imposition of expertise from outside the community but should be a ground up construction taking into account indigenous resources and knowledge, with a sense of partnership between local and outside experts (Canarajah, 2006, p. 20).

More recently, Gonzalez’s (2007) critique of EFL teacher development in Colombia, in particular the imposition of the European English frameworks, captures the challenges and realities of “glocal development,” the dialectic tension of the global and the local (Weber, 2007 p. 280), that is present in many educational reforms in this era of globalization.

The work of L2 scholars in Colombia and the dissemination of their efforts through scholarly journals such as *Íkala* has had valuable implications for my own perspectives and practices. I am writing this editorial from Mexico where I am spending four months as a visiting professor of TEFL at the Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes (UAA) in the Department of Languages. I am supervising ten student teachers in the final semester of their English teaching degree program. Six of these students and I are also engaged in an experimental “research practicum.” While I like to think that I have always valued local knowledge and resisted

blind imposition of any theory/concept, in my work at UAA I have made a more conscious effort to infuse my curriculum and discussions with readings and activities that explicitly value local knowledge and scholarship. This has meant including L1 readings on Mexican education, policies, and practices as well as language and literacy research conducted in Mexico by Mexican scholars. This has been invaluable for several reasons, including helping my students find more Mexican professional resources than they knew existed and watching them use these local resources to develop new analytical lenses for their teaching. We have also created collaborative “praxis” teams where students whose practicum sites are similar (e.g., by grade level) work together to share ideas, suggestions, and perspectives on shared challenges. They observe in each other’s classrooms and have begun using their shared knowledge of local context as an analytical resource. It’s too early to tell what will happen over the course of the semester but some of these teacher learners are beginning to assert stronger professional voices, ones that indicate a growing sense of ownership of and participation in their own professional development. Some of the seeds now planted in Aguascalientes had origins in *Íkala*. ¡Qué padre!

I congratulate the editorial team at *Íkala* for their success and am grateful for this opportunity to express my support and appreciation of their good work. I look forward to reading and learning from future issues.

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