Editorial

"The settings where research is conducted have also been expanded to include not only actual (and virtual!) language classrooms, but meetings and mentoring sessions. We now seek to examine not only what we are teaching, but what and how we think about what and how we are teaching. We now consider rich research data to even include conversations with learners about this wonderful process called language learning (p. 20)"[1].

The increasing interest in learning English has had an impact on the alternatives students are offered to study the language as well as on the particularities of classroom management teachers have to be aware of nowadays. Hence, our conceptualizations about a classroom have to include different kinds of learning and teaching settings such as traditional face-to-face work; virtual-learning spaces to allow the learners to build a study path while tutors monitor and assist students when necessary; face-to-face study periods combined with alternating tutoring sessions; and mentoring sessions to support autonomous, semi-autonomous or self-instruction learning. This, in turn, opens doors to questions concerning a variety of issues that are born in the midst of the complex realities we face in such teaching and learning scenarios.

Changes in conceptions of what an English language classroom entails are also in tune with the attention research is being given in teacher education programmes. Likewise, many practitioners are conscious of the importance of systematizing teaching and learning experiences, reflecting upon given matters, and carrying out classroom research, all with the purpose of sharing them through publishing.

As pointed out by Bigelow & Walker (2004), the settings where research is carried out have also been expanded. Research agendas and papers published in journals like PROFILE focus not only on what we are teaching. As our readership can see in previous publications and in this number, we are committed to including papers that deal with what and how we think about what and how we are teaching; what we conclude after pondering the role of theory in teaching practice; the way languages policies are presented to the general community; and the relationship between

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1   Bigelow, M., & Walker, C. (2004). Creating teacher community: Research an practice in language teacher education. *Creating Teacher Community. Selected Papers from the Third International Conference on Language Teacher Education* (pp. 1-26). Minnesota: Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

discourse in policies and what teachers and students face in real life. In all cases, the authors support discussions and findings about given phenomena with data gathered through the use of various instruments and the analysis of documentary evidence.

The sustained collaboration of the members of our editorial and advisory boards has made it possible to care for the standards of our journal. This number has also been backed up by other Colombian reviewers who kindly helped us evaluate manuscripts, namely: Professors Doris Correa, Jaime Usma and Clara Arias (Universidad de Antioquia), Carlos Rico (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana), and Elizabeth González (Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior – icfes). A word of gratitude to them is in order. In addition, from now on, we can count on the support of Professors José Luis Ortega Martin and Daniel Madrid (Universidad de Granada, Spain) and John M. Keller (Florida State University, usa), whom I welcome to our Advisory Board.

This issue includes eleven papers concerning English language teaching (elt), language policies, and teacher education. In tune with the mission of profile, all of them are based on research, reflections, and innovative experiences in different contexts.

The first section, Issues from Teacher Researchers, begins with a report in regard to oral communication. This is an action research project by Mireya Peña and Amparo Onatra, two public school teachers in Bogotá. The authors took part in a teacher development programme at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, which guided them to do the study. After some time, they decided to publish what happened vis-a-vis the oral production of the secondary school students who engaged in activities that followed the Task-Based Learning approach. The results of the study shed light on different demands transactional and interactional activities pose on learners.

The next article, by Carmen Tulia Zuluaga Corrales, Margarita María López Pinzón, and Josefina Quintero Corzo tells us about a research project developed in a teacher education programme with a group of pre-service teachers and advisors with the purpose of sensitizing the academic community about the importance of rescuing the cultural identity of rural school students in Caldas, Colombia. The results show how the school curriculum was innovated by integrating the coffee culture and the development of pre-service teachers' skills at designing content-based tasks. Prospective teachers also evidenced sensitivity to their educational communities' problems and particularities, as well as awareness of the commitment they should have with their teaching contexts. In addition, they acknowledged the impact contextualized teaching had on their students' motivation as well as on their own interest in teaching.

The third article addresses an issue of particular interest for English language teachers: interpersonal and transactional uses of L1 in the English as a foreign-language classroom. Sandra Higareda, Georgina López and Gerrard Mugford, from Mexico examine how new generations of language teachers in that country are using

the students' mother tongue, Spanish, not only as a pedagogical tool but to develop and reinforce interpersonal relationships in the language classroom in order to enhance the learning of English. I am sure the authors' arguments for a much more substantial and energetic role in the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom contributes to this ongoing debate. I hope other teacher researchers feel encouraged to write about this matter in future issues.

The next two articles have to do with the issues of testing and assessment in Colombian contexts. The article by Alexis A. López Mendoza and Ricardo Bernal Arandia addresses the problem of language testing in Colombia. The authors present the results of a survey study concerning teachers' perceptions about language assessment and the way they use language assessments in their classrooms. The outcomes point out that there is a significant difference in the perceptions that teachers have depending on the level of training they have in language assessment. As a result, they suggest that it is necessary to provide opportunities for all prospective language teachers to study how language assessment should be conducted, so that they can make informed decisions.

The reading comprehension program in English as a foreign language at Universidad de Antioquia in Colombia is the context Jorge Hugo Muñoz Marin focused on to carry out an exploratory study on teachers' practices for assessing reading comprehension abilities. Through documentary analysis and interviews, the author identifies and explains what happens with the different practices. Samples from the participants illustrate the use of quantitative instruments to evaluate qualitatively, students' lack of familiarity with qualitative assessment practices, teachers' lack of familiarity with alternative assessment, and teachers' concern for verification of achievement of learning objectives. His conclusions, as well as those presented in the previous article of this section, highlight the role in-service programmes may play in raising teachers' awareness of alternative assessment and in promoting its use in efl (English as a Foreign Language) programmes.

We close the second section of this number with a paper by Aleida Ariza and John Jairo Viáfara who tell us about the implementation of a model to foster autonomous learning among pre-service teachers at Universidad Pedagógica y Tecnológica de Colombia. Participants were tutees who attended tutorial sessions with peers in higher semesters. As the model was implemented, they collected information by means of multiple qualitative research instruments. Results indicate that tutees' learning process was strongly influenced by their personality and attitudes. Similarly, tutees expanded their views in regard to the English language, its learning, and their communicative competence. Likewise, investigators describe three stages in tutees' autonomous learning attitudes and practices. It is hoped that the model as well as the practical considerations described in the paper shed light on further applications in similar pre-service teacher education programs.

In the next section, two papers by novice teacher researchers contain the findings of investigations carried out in the last phase of their undergraduate programmes. First, the article on parental involvement in English homework tasks as a means to bridge the gap between the school and home, by Nelly Patricia Ávila Daza and Sandra Janneth Garavito, summarises a descriptive study carried out in a female public school. The findings of this investigation also showed the possibility of learning from each other and the importance of homework tasks as interactional and learning spaces among parents and children.

Rosa Alejandra Medina Riveros writes about the study she conducted, while working as tutor, in an EFL blended course that comprises part of the ALEX Programme at Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. We can find in this article the main characteristics of discussion boards, which were used as a main activity in the ALEX Virtual English programme at Universidad Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. Additionally, we can learn about some of the students' perceptions of the tool which, as can be read in the paper, was meant to ensure interaction among students and the tutors of the course.

The last section, entitled *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations*, contains three papers by Colombian teacher educators and researchers. To begin, and following with the idea of contributing to the discussion of ELT policies in Colombia, the article by Carmen Helena Guerrero Nieto and Alvaro Hernán Quintero Polo draws our attention towards English as a neutral language and a constituent of dominance in English language education. The authors analyse the way the English language is constructed in an official document issued by the Colombian Ministry of Education: the "*Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés*" (Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English). The examination of the text and the conclusions revolve around three forms of neutrality: prescription, denotation, and uniformity. They also show that English is a vehicle used to spread a hegemonic and ideological influence and to alienate teachers' beliefs and practices within English language education.

Intercultural competence is gaining more attention among teachers and teacher educators, as can be seen in previous issues as well as in other ELT journals. This time we include a paper by José Aldemar Álvarez Valencia and Ximena Bonilla Medina, who focus on the aspect of addressing culture in the EFL classroom. The authors describe and reflect upon a collaborative and dialogical pedagogical experience they engaged in while working with pre-service teachers at La Salle University in Bogotá. The results can be divided into two main areas: teachers' and learners' enrichment and the generation of a proposal. The bilateral enrichment of the pedagogical experience the authors led helped them, as teachers, to improve their language teaching contexts and fostered critical intercultural competence in FL (foreign language) learners.

Likewise, the experience impelled the construction of a theoretical proposal to enhance intercultural awareness.

Finally, Astrid Núñez Pardo and María Fernanda Téllez Téllez present an overview of materials development based on their experience as university teachers in Bogotá. We can read about the role of teachers as textbook developers and how they can meet materials development demands by integrating conceptual aspects, a set of principles, and essential components. All of this has the important purpose of achieving better teaching and learning conditions for university students.

We hope the issues contained in our journal inspire discussions, further applications, reflections, and further research.

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Journal Editor