

Editorial

Narrative as a vehicle for teacher inquiry generated in the periphery, in particular, broadens the nature of stakeholders and its purposes. Because it is from and for more diverse professional contexts, it is generating new uses by creating alternative systems for making practitioner knowledge public. For example, Profile emerged in 2000 through the efforts of the National University of Colombia and was explicitly “created with the idea of disseminating works by school teachers doing action-research in a teacher development programme” (Cardenas-Beltran, personal communication, June 9, 2010).¹

I am very pleased to present this edition of our journal which, as always, brings about satisfaction and a variety of topics to share with our readership. As established in our mission, we are committed to gathering works by teachers of different educational levels and contexts as well as by teacher educators who engage in researching, innovating and reflecting upon English language teaching issues. The works we present do not deal with only the scientific features that should characterize an academic publication like ours, but experiences that have to do with paths travelled and stories that can be told. That is the reason for opening this editorial with Johnson and Golombek's quote.

I am very pleased that said authors took PROFILE as an example of initiatives that have emerged with the idea of disseminating works authored by teachers and which are the results of inquiry, reflection, and interplays between theory and practice. These elements are at the core of the professional development programmes the research group leading the journal fosters among practitioners as well as in the justifications raised by authors whose papers are accepted by our review boards.

Teachers as insiders, and as participants of events taking place in their teaching fields, face the challenge of reaching peers at a distance through the works they get published. In our particular case, the participation of writers with diverse profiles has helped us gain and work harder to maintain support of stakeholders who have to admit that beyond the positivist or prescriptive traditions in investigating in education, the narrative is a vehicle for teacher inquiry and that, as such, also works for the attainment of institutional purposes connected to research and the dissemination of knowledge.

This edition gathers twelve articles from and for diverse professional contexts. All of them contribute to making practitioner knowledge public, as Johnson and Golombek point out. Their kind appreciation for the nature of our work fits perfectly into the characteristics of the authors whose works are gathered here: two papers by Colombian

¹ Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (2011). The transformative power of narrative in L2 teacher education. *TESOL Quarterly*, 45(3), 486-509.

school teachers who took part in a teacher development programme carried out at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia in 2009-2010, led by the PROFILE Research Group which leads this publication; three articles by Colombian university teachers, four contributions from other countries, and one manuscript by novice teacher researchers. Additionally, we have two articles by teachers who report on the theses projects they developed as part of their master's degrees. An interesting point to note here is that both of them first studied a professional development programme at our University and then engaged in postgraduate programmes.

The *Issues from Teacher Researchers* section contains an account written by Mónica Duarte Romero, Luz Mery Tinjacá Bernal and Marilú Carrero Olivares, who conducted an action research project in a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. Their intention was to motivate sixth grade students to speak English through the use of songs. They describe the different activities and materials employed over a given period of time and endorse the concept that both songs and the pedagogical procedure followed helped students learn and pronounce new words freely and accurately. As confirmed by the authors, all of those teaching strategies have an impact on students' motivation, provided they are immersed in a non-threatening environment.

The discussion of intercultural communication, intercultural competence and teachers' attitudes towards regional differences in the English class are issues of interest and debate, as can be read in the following three articles. First we present two studies conducted in two different settings in Bogotá, Colombia. Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaquén tells us about a study with adolescent students at a public school with the purpose of exploring how learners made sense of the culture-based materials incorporated in the English lessons she taught. She also describes the students' perceptions about foreign cultures and provides hints for further applications in similar teaching contexts. This, I am sure, can be possible by examining the detailed account of the teaching procedures followed by the teacher-researcher. Then, Luis Fernando Gómez R. presents an account of an action research experience carried out in an advanced-English as a foreign language classroom of the language program at a university. The objective was to foster intercultural communicative competence through reading authentic literary texts within the framework of four constructivist approaches. The author highlights that we can engage learners to read authentic literary short stories, to negotiate meaning, to develop intercultural competence, and to construct cultural knowledge through social interaction.

Afterward, we can read about elementary school teachers' attitudes towards their students' use of code switching in a school district in the South Texas border region (USA and Mexico). Guadalupe Nancy Nava Gómez from Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México and Hilda García from the American Texas A&M University-Kingsville, report on regional differences and the reasons behind those teachers' views. The opinions of the teachers from the north schools and those of the teachers of the

south schools, which are predominantly Hispanic, are explained and connected to regional differences, teacher qualifications and the expectations of the society.

Subsequently we will find two articles carried out in two Colombian contexts and dealing with the topic of reading and speaking. Sergio Lopera Medina describes the effects of strategy instruction in an English as a foreign language (EFL) reading comprehension course carried out with undergraduate students at a university. The examination of data collected through the use of reading comprehension tests, teacher's field notes and self-reflection, and a learning perception questionnaire revealed that students improved in reading comprehension. Lopera also concluded that reading strategy instruction is not only beneficial, but a key element for promoting self-confidence, motivation and less dependence on the use of dictionaries.

An action research study carried out with a group of eighth graders with the purpose of enhancing their speaking confidence when participating in an online radio show is reported in the article by Nubia Consuelo Lemos Tello. This cooperative learning-based endeavour was documented via surveys applied to students, audio and video recordings and a teacher's journal. The goal of the project was not only attained thanks to the use of technology, but it also contributed to the improvement of the teacher's performance as well as to the improvement of students' engagement in decision-making.

Students' and teachers' perceptions of teaching and matters of learning is the common concern raised in the three articles that come next. Luz Edith Herrera Díaz shares with us a qualitative study conducted at a language centre of Universidad Veracruzana in Mexico. The idea was to examine students' perceptions of and experiences within self-access language learning, which was a new modality for them. The author presents the main themes that emerged from the study: ease and convenience of the no-class courses and their corresponding difficulties; expectations from this modality, experiences with autonomy, control over students, and preparation to face innovation, among others. Suggestions for a more contextualized and critical adoption of innovations in the EFL field are also given.

We have another contribution from Chile. This time, Claudio Díaz Larenas, from Universidad de Concepción focuses on a qualitative study which let him identify the disciplinary strategies claimed to be used by a group of secondary classroom teachers of English in public or semi-public schools in his country. Findings come from a semi-structured interview whose examination followed the principles of semantic content analysis and the grounded theory. The author concluded that some of the teachers declared using a rising tone of voice and scolding and expelling difficult students from the classroom as key disciplinary techniques. Likewise, other teachers claimed that disciplinary strategies helped them to accomplish the teaching aim in a lesson.

The next paper, by Ana Patricia Muñoz, Marcela Palacio and Liliana Escobar, presents the results of an investigation that sought to uncover teachers' beliefs about

assessment, in general, and about the assessment systems used at a language center of a private university in Colombia. The analysis of the data obtained from surveys, written reports, and interviews indicates a contradiction between what they say they do and what they believe. This suggests that teachers need opportunities for reflection, self-assessment and more guidance on formative assessment practices.

In the last paper of the first section, Italian researchers Gillian Mansfield and Franca Poppi shed light on the debate of English as a foreign language or as a lingua franca and make the point that it is important to sensitise teachers of English as a foreign language towards teaching English as a lingua franca. The empirical study carried out in an Italian university is used to show how teachers should take on board awareness-raising activities in recognition of other varieties of English which, albeit not exploited as benchmarks for language testing and certification, must nevertheless boast of a relevant place in the global scenario. The readers can find concrete examples in the corpus of Chinese English news texts and the illustration of simple concordance activities. I am sure this paper will contribute to the construction of knowledge about what is happening in countries where there is an urgent need to strengthen the level of English in schools and whose policies are issued on the basis of globalisation.

The second section, *Issues from Novice Teacher Researchers*, contains a paper written by Tatiana Méndez and Andrea García who made a critical discourse analysis study as part of the fulfilment to opt for their B.A. degree in languages. These novice researchers delved into the characteristics of elementary school students' power and solidarity relations in an English as a foreign language classroom in a school in Bogotá, Colombia. The project was carried out while the pre-service teachers were doing their teaching English as a foreign language practicum. The findings suggest that there are different forms of exercising power and solidarity in the classroom. As the authors conclude, their findings allow us to be aware of the complexities of the English language class. It is also interesting to read that power can be resisted, challenged, or exercised by means of reproaches. Solidarity, on the other hand, can take the form of taking sides to protect friends.

Lastly, the *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations* section contains a work by Colombian schoolteacher Omar Yezid Lizarazo Jara, whose innovation project concentrated on the use of a blog as a means to guide beginner students of a public school to understand and use adjectives appropriately when writing descriptions in English. This difficulty, commonly found in EFL contexts, was faced by combining in and out of class practices, and backed with different activities and worksheets. Contact time, extra-curricular activities and exercises in the school's resource center contributed to the improvement in the majority of the students' descriptions and handling of the use of adjectives.

As always, I am delighted to present a new product of the work led by the PROFILE Research Group. It is hoped you will enjoy reading this first issue of PROFILE 2012 and

feel motivated to send your contributions for future issues. PROFILE also hopes that the update of our guidelines for authors is more complete so that contributors have quite clear the parameters followed in our evaluation processes. Needless to say, we are counting on your collaboration in spreading the word about our publication.

Melba Libia Cárdenas B.
Journal Editor