

## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

*“Publishing is a way for members of the academic community to share ideas and possibly contribute something to the world’s store of knowledge. To publish is to engage in a dialogue with unseen and often unknown others”.<sup>1</sup>*

Education is constantly seeking change, innovation and higher standards. This can be possible if, besides other factors, teachers are committed and willing to achieve target goals. This is the case of teachers who have opted to expand their teaching role by writing their reflections on their daily job, by innovating current practices and systematising them or by being researchers who then share what they have found.

It is well-known that teacher researchers are uniquely positioned to provide a truly emic, or insider’s, perspective that makes visible the ways that students and teachers construct knowledge and curriculum together. They can also confront established theories against particular teaching conditions and, what is perhaps more important, come up with new foundations. This advantageous position gives validity to findings from classroom research, which in the end widens the scope of existing knowledge. Luckily, and despite difficult working conditions, an increasing number of teachers in Colombia have decided to base decisions on systematic inquiries whose results are then disseminated in formal or informal forums and, what is perhaps more important, through publications.

Before introducing the various articles in this issue, it is important to add that the PROFILE Journal is highly committed to encouraging novice and experienced teachers and teacher researchers to share the findings of their innovations and investigations as well as their reflections through publishing. This way, we are sure, we can validate theories and enrich pedagogical knowledge in English language teaching and teacher education.

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<sup>1</sup> Benson, M. J. (2000). Writing an Academic Article: An Editor Writes... *Forum English Teaching*, 32 (2), 33-35.

The articles included in this number cover a variety of issues. We begin with an article which reports on the first part of a larger research project in progress, whose main purpose is to investigate functions of language instructors' oral behaviours in the development of English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. The findings of this project reveal that teachers do most of the talking. The study also demonstrates that oral teaching strategies in the classroom affect the participation process of students. Then, two articles based on small-research projects concentrate on the evaluation of curricular issues in practice. One of them informs us about the implementation and evaluation of teaching practices in the area of oral communication and concludes that oral portfolios and debates help students develop oral proficiency and support their self-regulation processes. The second article reports on a collaborative research project. It evaluates if there were discrepancies or not among the methodology proposed in the English program, students' needs and what the teacher was actually doing in her classes at a rural school in Cundinamarca (Colombia). The analysis of data showed that there were matches and mismatches among those three aspects. A fourth article explores second graders' development as writers through different literacy activities and shows evidence of the significant growth in the type of texts written by children and in the quality of interaction they had when constructing texts.

Continuing with our initiative to promote the publication of research findings by novice teacher researchers, in the second part of this issue we have three articles related to projects carried out by teacher researchers while teaching English in public schools, specifically in primary and secondary levels. The tendency in Colombia to focus education on the development of students' basic competences

has motivated future English teachers to inquire about the way they could be fostered in the foreign language classroom. This is the case of a study carried out with 5<sup>th</sup> graders in order to encourage the development of children's oral communicative competence through play. After that, an article concerning the development of tasks intended to link English and science in a secondary school is presented. As the research study was carried out in a public school where English is just one area of the curriculum, we can find practical implications for the integration of other areas in the English classroom. Finally, we include an article concerning the effects teachers' attitudes and methodologies can have on students' self esteem.

The last section of our journal includes reflections and innovations which can shed light on three common concerns among English teachers. The first one has to do with the problem of grammar in communicative language teaching. The author highlights selected focus on form instruction and uptake research and argues that uptake shows that focus on form instruction does not offer sufficient attention to grammar for EFL students. Next, a teaching experience regarding an EFL reading programme for a group of 12 to 14-year-olds (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders), whose English levels varied from almost nil to semi-conversational, is presented. Finally, a school teacher reflects upon her experience teaching English in primary and high schools.

We hope that you will find the contents of this number relevant to your teaching context and cordially invite you to consider sharing your reflections, innovations, and research experiences through this publication.

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*Journal Editor*