

Editorial

I am pleased to present the first issue of our twenty-first volume. With it we start a new epoch of our journal: the challenge to publish two issues per year so that we can move forward on making our contributors' works visible more rapidly. This decision has been supported by ASOCOP's Board of Directors plus the community present at our 48th annual conference, in October 2013, received this news with enthusiasm.

The response and commitment of our reviewers have been vital to make such change possible. Luckily, we have received positive responses from other academic peers, who have accepted our invitation to be part of our Editorial Advisory Board. These are: Yamith José Fandiño Parra (Universidad de La Salle, Colombia), Catherine Mazak (University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez), Mariza G. Méndez López (Universidad de Quintana Roo, Mexico), Jenny Alexandra Mendieta Aguilar (Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia), and Barbara Scholes Gillings de González (Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico). We welcome them all to this editorial project with the aim of reaching a wider readership and count on their support as well as that of the reviewers who have collaborated for the past few years.

I am very pleased to share with our readership the seven papers contained in this volume. They deal with the areas of language skills, pedagogical processes, and teacher education.

The *Research Reports* section gathers five works dealing with teacher education, literacy and autonomy. The first two articles present accounts of investigations carried out in two different BEd programmes at Colombian universities. We begin with the article by Angela Yicely Castro Garcés and Silvio Fabián López Olivera, which contains the findings of a study aimed at identifying the communication strategies used by four pre-service English teachers with A2 and B2 levels of language proficiency and, also, at examining how these communication strategies facilitate or hinder the development of communicative skills. The authors describe how the use of audio recordings, an open-ended questionnaire and documentary evidences let them portray the role played by communication strategies. The following article authored by Iván Aguirre Sánchez contains a report on an investigation

intended to explore the beliefs of a group of pre-service teachers (engaged in their practicum) regarding their role as teachers in some general pedagogical and emotional aspects of their primary school students inside the classroom. The use of classroom observation and log entries indicated that the participating pre-service teachers believe motivation and identification of their students' needs should be their main role inside the classroom.

We continue with an article concerning listening comprehension, written by Liliana Ballesteros Muñoz and Silvana Tutistar Jojoa. The authors inform about a study that explores the relationship between SMART goal setting (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based) and learning English in two Colombian schools concerning a foreign language learners' self-efficacy beliefs in listening. Among the results obtained from this investigation we can highlight an improvement in students' self-efficacy and a commitment to setting learning goals to improve their listening comprehension.

The next article contains information about the use of a virtual room to enhance writing skills in the EFL class. Dayra Piedad Ochoa Alpala and Nieves Medina Peña share the findings that emerged from an action research that sought to examine to what extent students from a Colombian high school shape their writing skill in English through the use of a virtual room. Data were gathered through interviews, students' artifacts, and journals. Interestingly, the authors conclude that the use of the resources contained in a virtual environment enriches students' learning processes and engages them in active communication with their classmates via their written pieces of work.

We close the first section of this edition with an article by Paula Andrea Bedoya, who reports on a study dealing with the exercise of learner autonomy in a virtual EFL course taught at a Colombian university. To do so, she used questionnaires, forums, and interviews. The results evidenced how students moved along a continuum: first, they manifested attitudes such as motivation and commitment that led to autonomy at the beginning of the course, but they also evidenced high levels of dependency and lack of self-confidence. Later, they became more confident and performed more autonomously. In addition, the author highlights that factors such as the course design, the platform, and the teacher's role influenced the students' exercise of autonomy.

The second section, *Reports on Pedagogical Experiences*, includes a contribution by Héctor Manuel Serna Dimas and Erika Ruíz Castellanos, who guide our attention towards the development of language activities and interaction variations with mixed-ability ESL university learners in a content-based course. The authors describe a pedagogical experience—carried out in a Colombian university—which entailed collaboration in the development of the course. The analysis of information provided by lesson plans, sociograms, and student feedback cards indicated an increase in students' involvement in class activities. This was closely related to their concern over taking part in activities that

resemble their future professional performance: to be able to diagnose and treat their patients' physical condition through interviews which require both careful language elaboration and therapist/patient interaction.

The third section, *Reflections and Revision of Themes*, presents an article written by Julia Zoraida Posada Ortiz and Eliana Garzón Duarte. The authors aimed at bridging the gap between theory and practice in a Colombian B.A. program in EFL by engaging in the analysis of the research component of the program. They also examined student-teachers' understanding of research as the bridge to link what they learn in class and their practice in school contexts.

I hope you enjoy reading the articles included in this issue as much as we enjoyed monitoring their editorial processes. As always, we invite school and university teachers, researchers and student-teachers to get acquainted with our publication and to send their contributions for upcoming editions.

Melba Libia Cárdenas

Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Bogotá
Guest Editor