

Letter from the Editor

Following ASOCOPÍ's Board of Directors' action plans, which have been shared with our Association's affiliates in the annual assemblies, HOW has continued working towards meeting the standards of scientific journals. During the past four years we have endeavored to excel in the revision of publication policies and in the integration of the parameters established by Publindex-Colciencias, the Colombian research agency that monitors quality of this kind of work.

We have submitted our latest issues for evaluation and are waiting for the results of the Colombian ranking system for periodicals published by universities and academic associations. I am certain that the results will provide more opportunities to sustain our journal and to move forward!

I am pleased to share with our readership the sixteenth issue of HOW. The nine papers enclosed in this volume deal with the areas of current Colombian language policies in Colombia, critical thinking, self-assessment, reading comprehension, visual materials, teachers' knowledge base, literacy practices, communication through blogs, and bilingual education.

This volume begins with a discussion by Carmen Helena Guerrero of the spread of the symbolic power of English in Colombia through a National Bilingual Policy. The author raises awareness as to the role the different languages that exist in the country have played under such policy and the patterns that have prevailed in it. Attention is also given to the options individuals and social groups have as regards language learning and to the gap between the "haves" and the "haves not" in Colombia.

Sandra Patricia Torres Díaz then reports on the investigation she developed as an attempt to promote sixth graders' critical thinking through the use of portfolios and self-assessment. The use of a teacher's journal, students' portfolios, video recordings, interviews and a questionnaire showed that self-assessment fosters self-regulation

and evaluation skills as well as students' autonomy, self-examination and self-correction.

The following two articles address issues in the area of reading comprehension. The first one deals with research carried out by Nancy Gómez Torres and Jhon Jairo Ávila Constain and focuses on the examination and implementation of given strategies to help students improve reading comprehension skills in two elementary courses in EFL (English as a Foreign Language), in order to obtain better results in the middle and long term in class and on standardized tests. Then, Nery Yolanda Ruíz de Guerrero and Gladis Leonor Arias Rodríguez tell us about the effects of applying extensive reading to a group of students at the fifth level of English at a university. The findings show extensive reading contributions in the process of second language acquisition, extensive reading as motivation in the reading practice, and the importance of including extensive reading in the English program.

We continue with an article by Diana Benavides, Liliana Murcia and Mabel Niño who present the results of a research project developed with students of fifth and third grades with the purpose of describing the impact of working with visual material. The analysis of an interview, a survey, students' work, and journals kept by the student teachers shows the importance of the application of visual material in the teaching process.

Anderson Cárdenas and Juan Manuel Suárez Osorio inform about the outcomes of a study developed at a university to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions of knowledge base. Students' journals, a phenomenological interview and a survey let the authors uncover what prospective teachers considered as the most important elements of knowledge base needed to become English language teachers. The main results illustrate that the English language command, students' preferences and realities, and the control of a class are essential for teachers to do their job.

The next two papers concentrate on the area of literacy and new technologies. In the paper by Yakelin Salinas Vacca we can learn the findings of an exploratory study on some literacy practices in and out of the school context with a group of students from an extension programme at a public university. The author supports the investigation with studies conducted in the field of literacy in and out of school in international contexts and informs us about the way students construct knowledge. The results also account for some in and out of school literacy practices and the use of new information and communication technologies.

Afterwards, we have a paper by Andrea Castellanos concerning a pedagogical application carried out in a bilingual school. The author describes how communication was fostered among students from Colombia, Canada and Chile. This was done through an online platform hosted by a Colombian university. The experience lets us learn about the different tasks developed, the importance of networking for educational purposes, the place of new technologies in students' learning processes, awareness of cultural differences, and enhancement in the use of English as a foreign language.

We close this edition with an article by Sandra Patricia Lastra. She tells us about a project she developed to find out how a private-school community understands the concept of bilingualism and the conditions required to accomplish the goals of a bilingual curriculum. The results showed that bilingualism is associated with a high intensification of English classes and the necessity of having English-speaking employees. In addition, the findings portray some theoretical issues about bilingualism and conditions for implementing a bilingual program.

Lastly, I want to thank the Editorial Advisory Board for their collaboration along the editing of this volume. Their feedback and participation in the peer-review process have not only helped us meet the standards of our publication, but encouraged teachers and researchers to publish their work.

I hope the articles included in this issue inspire discussions, applications, reflections, and further research. ASOCOPI and HOW invite you to write reports of your works and send in your contributions for future editions.

Melba Libia Cárdenas B.
Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Sede Bogotá
Guest Editor