

Editorial

In memory of Professor Orlando Fals-Borda, who taught us the following:
*“It is possible to produce serious, responsible knowledge apt to accumulate through group vivencias and symmetrical information exchange...”*¹

As you might know, Professor Orlando Fals-Borda, promoter of participatory action research and founder of our Faculty of Human Sciences at Universidad Nacional de Colombia, passed away last August 12, in Bogotá. Hundreds of people came to our university to express their gratitude to an outstanding human being, sociologist and educator. Messages and notes were also written to portray his contributions and outstanding work. His lessons and ideas have had a great impact in our University and abroad.

In my particular case, action research was the inspiring force to create the PROFILE journal, with the conviction that, as Fals-Borda (1997) stressed, “It is possible to produce serious, responsible knowledge apt to accumulate through group vivencias and symmetrical information exchange” (p. 108). As I have expressed in several forums, scientific publications should not only gather the works produced by experienced researchers who belong to recognized or well-known groups or institutions, but should include knowledge, teaching experiences, innovations and reflections that come from practitioners who face school realities in varied teaching settings. Hence, the need to see teachers not only as consumers of theories, other people’s experiences and knowledge, but as participants in solving problems; as producers of knowledge; and as agents of change.

This idea, highlighted by theoreticians and practitioners of action research, points out that we should know more than the necessities of a community. It is necessary to know its capacities in order to transform its own social reality to members’ satisfaction for, above all, it is the community who knows what is best for itself and for its members.

The speech Fals-Borda delivered in April 1995, in which he outlined four of his own guidelines for sociology researchers, has had an impact on social

¹ Fals-Borda, O. (1997). Participatory action research in Colombia: Some personal feelings. Chapter 5. In R. McTaggart (Ed.), *Participatory action research: International contexts and consequences* (pp. 107-112). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

sciences. Those guidelines have also inspired our work in English Language Teaching (ELT). In PROFILE, they have been vital in our attempts to promote the publication of papers by different teacher-researchers with different backgrounds. Those guidelines are as follows:

- Do not monopolize your knowledge nor impose arrogantly your techniques but respect and combine your skills with the knowledge of the researched or grassroots communities, taking them as full partners and co-researchers. That is, fill in the distance between subject and object;
- Do not trust elitist versions of history and science which respond to dominant interests, but be receptive to counter-narratives and try to recapture them;
- Do not depend solely on your culture to interpret facts, but recover local values, traits, beliefs, and arts for action by and with the research organizations; and
- Do not impose your own ponderous scientific style for communicating results, but diffuse and share what you have learned together with the people, in a manner that is wholly understandable and even literary and pleasant, for science should not be necessarily a mystery nor a monopoly of experts and intellectuals.²

Bearing in mind these principles, we motivate the publication of purposeful life experiences, classroom research, innovations and reflections, supported by academic knowledge, along with common teachers' wisdom and know-how, as well as works of experienced teachers and teacher-researchers.

As announced in issue 9, our journal will be published twice a year. This is, then, the second number of 2008, and to face this new challenge, we continue getting the support of our advisory and editorial boards, as well as the commitment of new collaborators. This time I want to welcome Professors Simon Borg (University of Leeds, U.K.) and Gerrard Mugford (Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico), who have started supporting us in our attempts to make teacher research and innovation in ELT stronger and more visible.

The eleven papers contained in this issue address topics about ELT, language policies and teacher education. Most of them derive from research and two of them are based on reflections on innovations or daily work in given settings.

We open this issue with a research report by Rosalba Velandia on the role of warming up activities concerning adolescent students' involvement in a public school in Bogotá and the impact these activities had on students' attention and on the processes of the class. This project was carried out while the author took part in a professional development

² Fals-Borda, O. (1995). *Research for social justice: Some North-South convergences*. Plenary Address at the Southern Sociological Society Meeting, Atlanta, April 8, 1995. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/si/falsborda.htm>

programme led by the PROFILE research group at Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

We continue with Carmen Helena Guerrero's report of a critical discourse analysis of the document issued by the Colombian government on the basic standards for competences in the English language. This analysis, informed by theory on critical discourse analysis and on symbolic power, presents what it means to be bilingual in Colombia, according to the said document, and adds to the discussion going on about ELT policies in the country.

On the basis of the new paradigm we are exposed to in our social and educational settings in which decision making becomes a key feature of individuals, autonomy is then addressed by J. Aleida Ariza, who writes a report on university students' understandings of autonomy as evidenced in their learning experiences while in the EFL classroom and outside of it.

In the following two articles we can get acquainted with issues belonging to the in-service teacher education area. Elizabeth González tells us how she worked with two English teachers in order to establish the relationship between what they understand about communicative competence and what they actually do in their English classes. She points out how difficult it is to define what communicative competence is in teachers' own words and stresses that teachers should make careful decisions to help them develop their language competence. Next, Sonia Jerez addresses the topic of reflective teaching through the development of reflective thinking skills within the framework of a research project with two in-service teachers of English enrolled in a professional development programme. The author also informs about teachers' attitudes towards reflective teaching, factors associated with it and some of the changes observed in their teaching practice.

These articles are followed by a paper dealing with the design and implementation of content-based courses in English with non-language faculty at a university. Fabio Alberto Arismendi, Claudia Patricia Diaz and Leidy Natalia Salazar report the findings of a study on the work of a group of professors from undergraduate programmes in hard sciences who participated in a multi-site case study to implement content-based courses in English. The authors also propose the implementation of a mentoring program that supports professors in the said experience.

We continue with David Alberto Londoño's article on error analysis which based its study on a written composition. This study, rooted in clinical elicitation (CE) research, tells us how he examined the data produced by a foreign language adult student, what kind of errors the learner made and what possible reasons can be identified to explain them.

In the Issues from Novice Teacher Researchers section, we include two articles. First, we can read Javier Rojas' account of the benefits, challenges, advantages and disadvantages experienced by teachers in a public school when working collaboratively to implement a language resource center in their institution. The results show that when overcome, difficulties and challenges provided good opportunities for teachers to develop further in their professional and personal life, as well as to improve the school environment and classroom practice. Then we have a study reported by Francia del Pilar Gavilán, which describes and interprets the dominant kind of language teaching technique –controlled, semi-controlled and free– within the context of two first semester English teachers of a languages teaching program.

The next paper belongs to the area of innovation in teacher education. Claudia Torres and Rocío Monguí share with us a narrative on the manner in which they fostered alliances to bridge the gap between universities and schools through the establishment of a professional development school. In the paper we can find the stages followed in the innovation, the action plans, the conditions and the obstacles the authors faced in achieving that goal. In the last article, Yamid Fandiño argues the importance of action research and critical reflection in the study of affective factors and language learning strategies in foreign language teaching, as well as the contribution of action research for developing teacher and learner autonomy.

I hope you enjoy reading this second issue of 2008 and feel motivated to contribute toward expanding knowledge in our action field by sending your contributions for future numbers or by helping us spread the word about the work we do via our publication.

Finally, I want to share with all of you the indexation of PROFILE in Publindex – Colciencias, in Category B. With this, the national indexing system for Colombian journals acknowledges our scientific and editorial quality as well as the visibility of our publication. Once more, I should express my gratitude to the advisory and editorial committees and to my working team, whose contributions were vital to achieve that goal.

PROFILE will continue promoting the dissemination of research in English language teaching, including action research, which is the approach that has given us the chance to work with schoolteachers for more than 12 years. In doing so, Fals-Borda's work will continue being an important point of reference.

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