

Editorial introduction

The present issue is released at a time when most countries in the world are undergoing an unprecedented crisis. The impact of coronavirus on our hyper-connected societies cannot be overstated, since its effects are unbelievably disruptive on all levels of our very social fabric. The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase, governments create and impose new measures to mitigate the pandemic until a vaccine or an effective cure are developed, schools and shops remain closed, many of us have lost our jobs or are learning to work from home, a lot people are stranded away from home, travelling is banned, scholarships interrupted, funding postponed. All this has a tremendous toll on the global economy and on our life plans.

The pandemic has had a major impact on research and on education, two of the activities in which our authors are engaged. In the same way coronavirus experts are intensifying their research in response to the outbreak, educators and linguists find themselves in new scenarios that also demand inquiry. As teachers engage in the design of online classes directed to students who may have limited or no access to the internet, educational institutions are adapting to current conditions as fast as possible, both technologically and in terms of new e-learning strategies. In poorer communities, the possibility of resorting to new apps that would allow teachers and students to continue learning clashes against the material limitations of costs and bandwidth.

In order to respond to these new circumstances, we are launching a call for articles on **Teaching languages in unprecedented contexts**, for a **Special Issue** to be published in November 2020 and May 2021 alongside with our regular Applied Linguistics articles. Through those articles we intend to offer proposals and highlights about new ways of working during this time. We invite prospective authors to read our updated guidelines to become familiar with the many different genres included in AJAL and choose the one that best suits the content they wish to communicate.

This issue is especially rich precisely in genre variety. In the research article “The Use of Legal Cases as a Way to Enhance Law Students’ Cognitive and Communicative Competences in the English Classes”, Gladis Arias Rodríguez and Eliana Roberto Flórez show the results of a descriptive case study in language teaching designed to encourage students taking Legal English to analyze legal cases to foster their communicative skills. Their results show how the use of legal cases “made students improve their English

communication skills, expand and appropriate knowledge of their own field of study, which are all relevant aspects in the training of future lawyers.” In our second research article, “Collocations and phrasal verbs: A way to improve EFL learners’ writing skill with a focus on attitude,” Laya Heidari and Seyedeh Mousavi investigate the effect of the teaching of collocations and phrasal verbs as language chunks in the development of the writing skill in Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Their findings show a positive impact on the students’ writing skill and on learners’ attitudes in the course of their research.

This issue also includes a reflective article, “Including poetry in the language classroom: advantages and a lesson plan proposal,” in which Juan José Santillán and Fabián Rodas analyze the advantages of including poetry in lessons at all levels and make a lesson plan proposal. As the authors say, their article “attempts to answer the following questions: a) What are the advantages of the inclusion of poetry in language-learning contexts? c) What are the stages and features of a lesson plan that incorporates such practice?” No doubt they make a valuable contribution to present day teachers working in different contexts who may still be doubtful about whether and how to include poetry in their foreign language lessons.

Readers will also find two book reviews of two very different publications. Santiago Sedrán shares his reading of *Raise Up!*, a coursebook with a strong political positioning which includes lessons visibilizing processes of historically forsaken non-hegemonic groups. About this book, the author states: “Not only do the authors teach by example showing English teachers ways to become critical and active social players, but also they contribute to remove prejudicial labels surrounding ELT practice.”

As editors, we were honoured to review *Content Knowledge in English Language Teacher Education*, edited by former AJAL editor Darío Luis Banegas, a book addressed to teacher educators which offers brilliant insights into how teachers may make it possible for their students to acquire proficiency in language use and build knowledge about the language and its pedagogy as part of the same educational programme.

We are proud to publish our first **academic event report**, an article contributed by Eugenia Carrión Cantón and Lidia Casalini on *Towards curriculum diversification of English teaching at higher education in Argentina*, a three-day seminar sponsored by the British Council Argentina and held at Universidad Nacional de La Plata from February 26 to 28, 2020. This publication starts a new section in our journal: with these reports we intend to share views about the many activities that are organized and developed in Latin America in the field of Applied Linguistics, highly relevant academic gatherings showcasing new perspectives and proposals in diverse contexts. Prospective contributors may read about these reports in our guidelines for authors.

We wish to thank Darío Banegas for his work as editor of this journal since the moment it was founded in 2013 until its second 2019 issue, and to María Alejandra Soto and María Laura García for their invaluable work as materials review editors during that same period. No doubt their talent and their commitment to this publication have made it what it is

today, and they deserve to take a well-earned rest after so many years of disinterested collaboration, for which this journal will always remain grateful. Our thanks also go to Estela Braun and Leonor Corradi, who have extensively collaborated with AJAL as reviewers in previous issues and offered insightful feedback to our authors, and to Claudia Naom, who proofread some of our articles.

Finally, we hope the perspectives we share in this issue will help our readers better navigate their work during this unusual time.

María Susana Ibáñez and Flavia Bonadeo