

Editor's Notes

How many times has the apparently dichotomous stances of 'to teach or not to teach grammar' appear in public debate concerning language education? In an almost seemingly recurrent cycle, the issue of how to ensure literacy and good writing skills across the board in society crops up in policies, research and media. However, the dichotomy itself is not so clear. It is not so much a question of whether to teach grammar as it is a question of how to teach it. Education reform in many countries in the late 1980s and 1990s has emphasized the need for contextualized learning of language forms (in which students are engaged and guided through the writing process) versus the teaching of grammar in isolation (see Flood, Jensen, Lapp, & Squire, 1991; MSBE, 1994; NCTE, 1996; Romano, 1998). Still, the debate rages on as if the learning of language and the learning of grammar were two separable events. This monograph takes a look at some recent studies into relevant aspects of this debate, with the goal of contributing to more thought on how to improve teaching and learning in this area of language education.

Melinda Dooly
3 June 2014

Works Cited:

- Flood, J., Jensen, J.M., Lapp, D., & Squire, J.R. (Eds.). (1991). *Handbook of research on teaching the English language arts*. New York: Macmillan.
- Michigan State Board of Education. (1994). *Assessment frameworks for the Michigan high school proficiency test in communication arts. Part I: Writing*. Lansing, MI: Michigan Department of Education.
- National Council of Teachers of English and International Reading Association. (1996). *Standards for the English language arts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Romano, T. (1998). Breaking the rules in style. In C. Weaver (Ed.) *Lessons to share: On teaching grammar in context* (pp. 184–208). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Special Editor's Notes

This year's monographic volume of *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and Literature* deals with the teaching and learning of writing. Over recent decades there has been a growing interest in the process of teaching writing at all educational levels. Some of the issues that have received significant attention are the roles of teachers and students, academic writing in higher education, the adoption of the concept of 'discursive genre' or the role of grammar in the teaching of writing.

This volume presents a set of articles that explore these issues. The authors take diverse perspectives from various contexts, as reflected by their different posts at different educational levels (primary, secondary and university). Four of the articles are the result of research students' work in the Master of Research in the Department of Teaching Language, Literature and Social Sciences of the Autonomous University of Barcelona.

In what refers to higher education, two papers analyze academic writing from two complementary perspectives. Martins addresses some issues on the development of teachers' conceptions concerning writing at the Simon Bolivar University (Venezuela), based on the construct of Beliefs and Knowledge Representations (BKR), proposed by the research group PLURAL (University of Barcelona). Corominas-Subirats explores resources for writing, looking at a set of first-year Journalism students' data. Her study shows how the need to refer to the exact wording of a reference text may constitute an obstacle for improving the mastery of academic writing and its content. Also in higher

education, Miriam Casco presents research into teachers' conceptualizations of students' discursive practices. The study focuses on three faculties (Social Sciences, Veterinary Science and Engineering) at the National University of Central Buenos Aires (Argentina).

Regarding compulsory education (up to age 16 in Spain), Gema González analyzes the way in which two junior high textbooks conceive "discourse genre". The author concludes that these books adopt the term 'genre' in reference to the concept of text types. The author proposes that by placing the task of writing within defined communicative contexts, the teacher can help flesh out the notion of genre. She suggests that this is the type work being done as indicated in the teaching sequence model developed the GREAL group (Autonomous University of Barcelona).

Likewise, the guest author in this issue, Dr. Madalena Teixeira, presents a state of the question of the relationship between teaching grammar and writing instruction in current curricular provisions of compulsory education in Portugal. The author shows some of these documents to be problematic when integrating these two areas of language education.

We also include an interview with Dr. Debra Myhill, who has developed in the last decade innovative research on the teaching of writing and the role grammar can play the grammar in the context of primary and secondary education. Finally, we close the monographic with a review of the work by Joan-Lluís Lluís wherein he provides reflections on the social uses of minority languages.

This monograph is a reminder that there are no recipes that automatically lead to a good command of writing. According to recent research, the learning of how to write occurs when we abandon the idea of texts as hermetic, static and decontextualized linguistic units and delve into writing as a tool of human communication, inserted in specific discourse communities. We hope that from this starting point, this volume will offer new ways of thinking in order to improve teaching and learning practices of written composition.

Marina Casadellà, Pre-doctoral candidate (PIF scholarship with Research Group GREAL)

June 2014

Acknowledgements:

I would like to thank the research group GREAL, especially Xavier Fontich, for their support and help in the elaboration of this monograph.

Credits:

Illustrations for the covers of each issue are designed by students of EINA (Escola de Disseny i Art, Barcelona) studying in the postgraduate course 'Il·lustració Creativa', under the direction of Sonia Pulido, teacher of Illustration for Publishing Media.

Reviewers for Volume 7.2

The editors would like to thank the following reviewers for their contribution to the preparation of Volume 7.2:

Montserrat Bigas (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Marilisa Birello (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Mariona Casas (Universitat de Vic), Xavier Fontich (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Oriol Guasch (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Marta Milian (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), Carmen Rodríguez (Universitat de València) and Mireia Torralba (Fundació Universitària del Bages).