

Editorial

It is with pleasure and a sense of accomplishment that I present Volume 7 of *Matices*, an online journal for foreign-language professionals. I thank the authors of the articles that make up this volume and who eagerly sent their contributions to share with readers worldwide. Every time I read articles written by people interested in foreign languages, I see how their academic inquiries move across a continuum that goes from their personal experience in language learning and teaching to their conceptualization of language. The field of language studies is broad because most people across the globe speak at least one language; they may learn other languages through migration, travel, study, or intermarriage, or they simply live in multilingual communities. The sociocultural phenomenon that is tied to language makes language studies a dynamic field. As foreign language educators, scholars, and/or learners we have experienced the difficulties of learning not only our native language but also one or more foreign languages. Added to this great effort of learning a foreign language, many foreign language professionals opt to teach their second/third learned language(s) to others, or to teach their native language to foreign language learners. Learning or teaching a foreign language, doing research, and reporting findings on issues of foreign language learning are demanding endeavors.

This issue of *Matices* has a compelling diversity of authors, languages, and contexts. There are six articles: four research articles and two reflections by foreign-language educators. The authors of the four research articles are from Chile, Colombia, Italy, Mexico, and Venezuela, and the authors of the two reflections are from Argentina and Colombia. Three of the articles in this volume use a quantitative methodology to explore various language issues such as stylistics, genre biases, and learning strategies. In the first article, *Jules Verne's Phrase and Its Rhythm*, José Gregorio Parada investigates the length of phrases and their rhythm in Julius Verne's novels, essays, and news stories to find a stylistic tendency in Verne's various literary genres. José Gregorio compared the language used in these genres by using taxonomy called textometrics- employed in discourse

analysis—to calculate short and long words/phrases and the segmentation within a phrase according to its punctuation. The second article, *Gender Representations in the Dialogues of a Textbook of Italian as a Foreign Language*, by Greta Marianari, also uses a quantitative method of discourse analysis. In her article, she explores the underlying genre biases represented in a textbook of Italian as a foreign language. Her findings show how the language used by the diverse characters in the textbook portrays gender stereotypes. The third article, *Strategies used by Successful English Learners in a Chilean University*, written by Martha Catalina del Ángel Castillo and Ida Esther Sessarego Espeleta, focuses on learning strategies employed by successful undergraduate students in the *English Language Program* of a university in Chile. They analyzed the answers of 185 students who completed a survey to indicate the strategies they frequently used to learn English as a foreign language. Chile, like most Latin American countries, has been pressed to educate their student population in English to compete economically in the global market.

The fourth research article in this volume of *Matices* is a qualitative study by novice researchers Juan David Ríos and Paula Andrea Murillo Serrano: *Blogging as a Tool to Socialize Cultural Contents in a Class of German as a Foreign Language*. These writers, who happen to be native speakers of Spanish, challenged themselves to conduct research on a problem they found as instructors of German as a foreign language (GFL). By writing about Colombian myths and legends in a blog in GFL for a writing composition class, different questions emerged about foreign language writing. In addition, these instructors found that blog writing is still not very popular among undergraduate students of GFL at the Colombian university where this study took place.

The two articles that complete this volume are pedagogical reflections from authors with long trajectories in foreign language teaching: José Eduardo Rosero Pantoja and Livia Carolina Ravelo. José Eduardo is a Colombian educator who has taught Russian in Popayán and Bogotá for many years. He writes a reflection on the teaching of the Cyrillic alphabet to Spanish-speaking learners. Livia Carolina has extensive experience in foreign language teaching in English and Spanish. In her article, she reports on her teaching practice using the Argentinian comic strip *Mafalda* in a Spanish-language class for students

in Israel. The authentic text offers natural language and cultural semiotic representations that are challenging both linguistically and culturally for foreign language learners.

In all the articles in this volume, I dare say, the cultural identity issue is latent, although not expressed directly. Aspects of language, culture, and identity are combined in the writers' words and reflections. *Matices*, Volume 7, puts forth the inquiry of writers interested in problems of language, culture, literature, ideology, language learning, and pedagogy. Some of our writers are novice researchers and some are foreign language educators (both novice and experienced). They all share a particular interest in languages. It is motivating to know that people from various parts of the world are in resonance with issues of foreign language and contribute with their voices to enrich the field of language inquiry. This reinforces the philosophy of *Matices*: We want to incorporate different voices that express plural and multicultural interests in foreign language from diverse perspectives to understand differences and similarities between the *local* and the *global*.

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