Editorial

The Need to Pay More Attention to Ethical Issues When Publishing in Scientific Journals

In 2022, we shared an improvement plan for our journal (Cárdenas, 2022) with the purpose of strengthening the *Profile*'s editorial management and moving forward in our attempts to support communities of teacher researchers. The key areas of attention dealt with editorial management and visibility. In the same vein, between 2024 and the first semester of 2025, 68 scientific journals edited at Universidad Nacional de Colombia participated in a project sponsored by the Colombian Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation that sought to improve the journals' visibility and strengthen their editorial processes by aligning them with current international standards. The *Profile* journal was part of this project, which involved us in working on the four main areas of improvement set out as relevant for the said group of journals: policies on publication ethics, editorial management, digital marketing, and metadata quality. Here, we will focus on our experience adjusting the first area, publication ethics, as this seems the most relevant aspect to the wider community of the journal and pertains to all stakeholders.

Early on, we understood the importance of transparency and ethics for rigorous scientific communication, and so, together with the submission guidelines for authors, we designed a Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement, based on the recommendations of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, https://publicationethics.org/), "to facilitate and clarify the work of the editor, the authors, and the reviewers" (Universidad Nacional de Colombia, n.d.). The project served as a springboard for updating and complementing the ethics statement to offer clear information regarding the expected conduct of all stakeholders (authors, editors, and reviewers) and on how to address potentially contentious issues (e.g., authorship criteria and use of generative artificial intelligence tools).

For the authors, these ethical considerations are a continuation of the broader research ethics standards long accepted by the scientific community, and which must be borne in mind from the initial stages of a study, even from its design. However, the pressures to publish may result in a relaxation of such ethical principles (Ha, 2017; Paruzel-Czachura, 2021), and some authors may feel compelled to resort to so-called predatory journals, a phenomenon that is increasingly prevalent within the "publish or perish" philosophy.

Under these circumstances, it is of paramount importance for authentic scientific journals to distinguish themselves by upholding and reinforcing rigorous ethical standards, as this sends a clear message to authors that their submissions, and the studies behind them, should have been produced in accordance with the principles of integrity and transparency. Furthermore, readers and the broader academic community can better trust a source that has a public commitment to sharing relevant and reliable scientific knowledge and that has auditing and self-evaluation mechanisms in place.

Evidently, new ethical challenges emerge with technological innovation, as is the case with the incidence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools. Therefore, the discussion and review of ethics policies must be an ongoing and constant process whereby unexpected or new demands are addressed. At first, all stakeholders in the scientific publication process, from authors to editors, may be unsure about how to proceed when faced with specific issues not yet addressed in the policies. Here, it is important that journals offer opportunities for open communication to solve queries. The authors', reviewers', and editors' experiences can then be incorporated into the policies through cooperative work and permanent feedback. The point is to have a set of guidelines as comprehensive and detailed as possible, ensuring transparency throughout the entire publication process. Thus, we encourage authors interested in submitting their manuscripts to carefully review the journal's ethics policies and to contact us in case of doubts.

While working on the project activities, we managed to identify a series of issues that were not previously contemplated in the policies, were being managed internally, or were not clearly conveyed. For instance, there was no standing ethics committee in charge of supervising and managing all ethical issues that may arise during the revision and publication of articles. We also lacked clear guidelines regarding requests, complaints, and claims, as well as data sharing and availability, which is fundamental for the open-access movement and to facilitate, for instance, the evaluation of possible cases of fragmented publication (Ha, 2017). On the other hand, although we initially had a policy on the use of AI tools, this was reviewed and adjusted to make it more robust and better reflect the journal's position in this regard. Hopefully, the modifications will address the main concerns. In any case, we remain open to analyzing and incorporating any development in publication ethics.

Fortunately, over 25 years of uninterrupted publication, we have not faced serious challenges regarding unethical practices, except for minor misconduct, such as parallel submission and sloppy citation. They might be commonly attributed to authors' inexperience when they are starting their research paths (Freijedo-Farinas et al., 2024). Through time, we have adopted clear procedures and guidelines that have reduced instances of misconduct.

We are aware of the role we play in raising authors' awareness of ethical issues. This pedagogical aspect of scientific journals is often overlooked in favor of their most prominent aim as sources of scientific communication. While there have been calls for undergraduate and postgraduate curricula to incorporate aspects of publication ethics and scientific integrity (Freijedo-Farinas et al., 2024; Ha, 2017), we can argue that scientific journals also contribute

to the formation of researchers and the development of their authorial identity, as well as to the dissemination of the required ethical aspects to safeguard the transparency and integrity of research and the publication of results.

In This Issue

This issue features 12 articles: six from Colombia, two from Mexico, one from Vietnam, one from Türkiye, one from Spain, and one international collaboration between Spain and Portugal. This attests to the incorporation of representative voices from different parts of the globe.

The section *Issues from Teacher Researchers* includes 10 articles and opens with a contribution from Spanish authors Borja Manzano Vázquez and Manuel Jiménez Raya, and Portuguese author Flávia Vieira. They investigated the self-efficacy beliefs of preservice teachers, especially regarding the promotion of learner autonomy. These beliefs are shaped by personal and contextual factors, something that initial teacher education programs should consider when promoting learner-centered pedagogies.

Next, Turkish authors Müzeyyen Nazlı Güngör and Ayşegül Amanda Yeşilbursa report a study that used Vygotsky's genetic method to examine the identity development of a preservice English language teacher who was engaged in analyzing the behavior of fictional teachers from the *Harry Potter* film series. The findings indicate that teacher identity development, which can be consolidated through the use of cultural artifacts, is influenced by beliefs about language learning and teaching, possible selves, and inner dilemmas.

Vietnamese authors Son Van Nguyen, Hong-Anh Thi Nguyen, and Huoung Thi Lan Lam investigated the engagement in research activities of a group of EFL teachers and found that, although engagement was low, the participants moved within four main roles: lecturer, action researcher, EFL teacher, and impossible-mission accomplisher. The authors offer some recommendations to increase the teachers' involvement in research endeavors.

Colombian author María Eugenia Guapacha-Chamorro reports on an action-research study aimed at fostering the statistical literacy of doctoral candidates in applied linguistics. After a statistics course, the candidates showed improvements in critically analyzing and interpreting quantitative research studies. The introduction of statistical instruction early in the doctoral program seems to be beneficial for statistical literacy.

By combining multimodal interaction analysis and ethnography of communication, Colombian author Wilder Yesid Escobar-Alméciga examined the social dynamics inside an English language classroom. The paper delves into the norms of interaction and social roles that allowed the class members to configure a learning environment, as well as the semiotic resources and communicative modes that sustain the interactional, meaning-making process.

In their paper, Colombian authors Sandro Alfonso Echeverry, Angélica Arcila, and Dany Andrés Hoyos report a case study of the pedagogical implementation in primary schools of a non-formal education proposal based on translanguaging to deliver the contents and stimulate the acquisition of specialized knowledge. The authors highlight the impact of the proposal on promoting bilingualism among young learners.

Lina María Robayo Acuña, from Colombia, examined the understanding of a group of EFL teachers regarding oral fluency, how they promote it, and whether the textbooks they use are an asset in this regard. The participants demonstrated an awareness of fluency activities that have been proven beneficial by research, although the textbooks were perceived as not providing sufficient support. The recommendation is to help teachers establish connections between their cognitions of fluency and theoretical accounts.

In a contribution from Spain, Jardel Coutinho dos Santos and Gloria Luque-Agulló analyzed the convergences and divergences between the beliefs and practices of Ecuadorian EFL teachers regarding the teaching of speaking skills. Teacher education programs are called upon to address any discrepancy in prospective teachers' beliefs and practices so that they are better prepared to face classroom exigencies.

Mexican authors Irlanda Olave, Ana Cecilia Villarreal-Ballesteros, and Lizette Drusila Flores-Delgado examined the amount of teacher talk during online high school lessons. The authors found that teacher talk can either foster or hinder student participation, and they recommend that teachers model their talk to facilitate students' self-expression and full participation in meaning negotiation.

The first section closes with another paper from Colombia, in which authors Diego Fernando Macías, Carlos Alcides Muñoz, and Jhon Jairo Losada-Rivas report the perceptions of a group of preservice teachers regarding classroom incidents shared in peer support groups. The aim was to engage participants in reflection on their own experiences and those of others, and to prepare them to face similar incidents, acknowledging the complexity of the teaching activity.

The *Issues from Novice Teacher-Researchers* section contains one article by Mexican authors Jaime Marcial and Nora M. Basurto Santos. Using critical discourse analysis, the authors examined the ideologies underlying the participants' language teaching and cultural transmission practices and how these contribute to shaping their professional identity.

The closing section, *Issues Based on Reflections and Innovations*, also features one contribution from Colombia. Keiby Caro and Nayibe Rosado-Mendinueta reflect on the role of lexical competence in English language teaching and learning. Although this can be a daunting task for both teachers and students, the authors argue that incorporating explicit lexical tenets into the curriculum can be beneficial for developing the students' communicative competence in English.

We hope our readers find the contents in this issue engaging and that they can derive some useful ideas for their teaching or research practice.

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