Introduction: 5 years of ELEUK

Amparo Lallana[1], Lourdes Hernández Martín[2], and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez[3]

We are delighted to be able to present to you this fifth anniversary volume which inaugurates a series of publications emanating from conferences organised by ELEUK, the Association for the Teaching of Spanish in Higher Education in the United Kingdom (www.eleuk.org).

Nearly a decade ago, Spanish Language Teaching (SLT) was going from strength to strength across higher education; however, there were hardly any conferences or professional development events within the UK dedicated specifically to the teaching of Spanish. University colleagues and language professionals got together to launch a space from where to promote the teaching and learning of Spanish, foster research in SLT, provide opportunities for teacher development, facilitate collaboration among its members, and enhance subject expertise.

In 2014, and after a series of symposiums and events in London and other parts of the UK, the association ELEUK was officially born with the purpose of becoming the academic organisation dedicated specifically to Spanish language instruction in higher education.

In the 5 years since its foundation, ELEUK annual conferences have been a forum for the exchange of good practice and research in SLT as well as a source of professional development and a platform for the dissemination of subject expertise, with hundreds of delegates participating in presentations and discussions on research and practice. More importantly, ELEUK has fostered a

1. Regent's University London, London, United Kingdom; lallanaa@regents.ac.uk

2. London School of Economics and Political Science, London, United Kingdom; l.hernandez-martin@lse.ac.uk

3. The Open University, Milton Keynes, United Kingdom; mara.fuertes-gutierrez@open.ac.uk

How to cite: Lallana, A., Hernández Martín, L., & Fuertes Gutiérrez, M. (2020). Introduction: 5 years of ELEUK. In A. Lallana, L. Hernández Martín & M. Fuertes Gutiérrez (Eds), *Five years of ELEUK conferences: a selection of short papers from 2019* (pp. 1-4). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2020.41.1070

© 2020 Amparo Lallana, Lourdes Hernández Martín, and Mara Fuertes Gutiérrez (CC BY)

sense of community among university teachers of Spanish L2, given confidence to budding researchers, and enabled collaborative projects among its members.

Pedagogic research and professional development around SLT continues developing at pace both in Spanish speaking countries and elsewhere. In that landscape, ELEUK has embraced current pedagogic debates and contributed to furthering knowledge by welcoming well-known linguists and L2 teaching specialists to its annual conferences. Over the years, scholars at the forefront on their specialism – from Enrique Martin Peris and Jane Arnold to Elena Verdía and Victoria Escandell to name just a few[4] – have delivered thought-provoking keynotes and hands-on workshops on their areas of expertise.

For the last ELEUK annual conference in 2019, the University of Edinburgh welcomed more than 80 participants. Nineteen delegates and guest speakers (M. Vicenta González Argüello, Begoña Montmany Molina, María Marta García Negroni, Fuensanta Puig, and Javier Villatoro) presented their work over two days of stimulating and rich debate on SLT research and practice, the conference's main themes.

This anniversary volume brings together a number of those proposals. Some reflect on normative aspects of Spanish or present teacher research on the learning and teaching process. Others suggest strategies to engage students in reflective learning or understanding assessment as well as activities to enhance learner agency.

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has been at the forefront of pedagogical thinking in recent years. **García Florenciano and Muñoz López** give an overview of the opportunities it provides to develop students' intercultural competence and language skills, as well as to foster learners' motivation. The authors describe several CLIL workshops and activities they designed for students in the Hispanic Studies programmes, based on a flipped classroom model supported by extensive use of digital tools.

4. See www.eleuk.org for a full list of presenters and keynote speakers.

García Negroni explores the complexities in the use of subjunctive verb forms, both relative to context and to tense sequencing. Furthermore, and from a corpus of recent texts published in Argentinian newspapers, this paper analyses the role of the speaker's positioning and finds evidence of what may emerge as a noticeable grammatical change in the use of subjunctive tenses.

In their paper**, González Argüello and Montmany Molina** describe their engaging professional development workshop scaffolded on game-design elements that trigger reflection on classroom dynamics. Through a gamified experience, teachers are encouraged to design activities that create the conditions for students to be protagonists in their learning.

In the area of pragmatics, **Saborido Beltrán** discusses speech acts in Spanish, and apology speech acts in particular. The paper describes an online teaching unit designed for learners to practice these structures. Data generated through engagement with its activities contribute to establishing the linguistic structures and the pragmatic strategies used by students to apologise.

The focus of **Acosta'** s paper is on developing students' critical thinking through Structured Classroom Debates (SCDs). Before taking part in a class debate, students not only work on their oral skills but are also encouraged to research, analyse, and reflect on the topic independently. The author describes the process of incorporating SCD to the class, an activity proven to increase students' participation.

Carvajal and Kanaki present the results of a longitudinal study exploring metalinguistic awareness in language learners through the use of learning journals. The authors discuss learners' approaches to establishing conscious comparisons with the L1 and suggest further strategies to enhance students' awareness of learning strategies.

Teachers using communicative language methods face an important challenge: the anxiety speaking tasks tend to cause in students. To mitigate that, **del Pozo García** designed a series of activities aimed at developing students'

oral communication skills while increasing their confidence. Familiarity with evaluation criteria and self-monitoring their performances were the main drivers of those activities.

Lecumberri and Pastor-González explore in their contribution the positive effect of introducing learner generated digital content to promote content acquisition in a Spanish for specific purposes advanced class. Challenged to take an active role in their learning and knowledge acquisition, students created digital learning materials and resources in different media which resulted in enhanced learning outcomes.

Institutional changes can offer unexpected opportunities to rethink teaching practices. When the institution decided to move from exams to continuous assessment, **Pla Fernández** took the opportunity to redesign her evaluation methods, integrating motivation triggers combined with explicit practice on learning how to learn. This paper details the reflective process for redesigning the assessment.

We believe these nine papers are testament to the vibrant spirit of enquiry present in the Spanish teaching community in UK universities today. Furthermore, this publication, the first of many we hope, proves that Spanish L2 instruction in higher education is well established in the UK and that it will continue to thrive with confidence and, certainly, with the dedicated support of ELEUK, our association.

To conclude, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to all presenters, delegates, organisers, hosts, and sponsors of this and previous conferences for their support. We would especially like to thank the Department of European Languages and Cultures at the University of Edinburgh, for hosting this fifth conference. Finally, we would like to recognise the invaluable assistance given by Sylvie Thouësny and Karine Fenix at Research-publishing.net, without whom this volume would not be in your hands.