



Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada

ISSN: 1676-0786

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Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
Brasil

Greggio, Saionara; da Silva, Marimar; Ceni Denardi, Didiê Ana; Gil, Gloria
Systematizing studies in the area of language teacher education at the English Graduate Program at
Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina
Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada, vol. 9, núm. 1, enero-junio, 2009, pp. 245-263
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais
Belo Horizonte, Brasil

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Systematizing studies in the area of language teacher education at the English Graduate Program at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

Sistematização de estudos na área de formação de professores de línguas no Programa de Pós-Grauação em Inglês da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to show the results of a systematization of studies in the area of English Language Teacher Education carried out at the English Graduate Program at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Fifty-one studies were systematized and five research foci identified. Thirteen published studies of two foci of research were analyzed. Two themes were identified permeating the studies: (1) teachers' beliefs and the contexts of teaching-learning as important mechanisms to shape teachers' pedagogical practices and to determine learning outcomes; and (2) contexts of learning to teach as appropriate and important places for teachers' reflection on their beliefs and knowledge of practice. Most

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analyzed studies suggest that opening room for reflection in (continuing) teacher education programs may provoke changes in teachers' pedagogical practice.

KEYWORDS: systematization of studies, EFL teacher education.

RESUMO: Este artigo visa socializar os resultados de uma sistematização de estudos conduzidos no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina na área de formação de professores de inglês. Cinquenta e um estudos foram sistematizados e categorizados em cinco tópicos de pesquisa. Treze estudos de dois tópicos de pesquisa foram selecionados para uma análise detalhada de seus resultados. Dois temas foram identificados permeando os estudos analisados: (1) as crenças e os contextos de ensino-aprendizagem como mecanismos importantes para dar forma à prática pedagógica dos professores e para determinar os resultados de aprendizagem dos alunos; e (2) os contextos de formação de professores como lugares importantes e apropriados para a reflexão sobre as crenças e o conhecimento da prática pedagógica dos professores. A maioria dos estudos analisados sugere que abrir espaço para reflexão em programas de formação (contínua) de professores pode provocar mudanças na prática pedagógica do professor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: sistematização de estudos; formação de professor de inglês como língua estrangeira.

1 Introduction

A great amount of studies in the field of English Language Teacher Education has been conducted in Brazil in the last years. However, there are very few studies which systematize what has been done in this field until now. The present study views to contributing to the English Language Teacher Education (henceforth ELTE) field in Brazil by systematizing the studies in ELTE conducted at the English Graduate Program¹ at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

2 The trajectory of Teacher Education Research in Brazil

According to Moita Lopes (1996), until the 1990s, there had been a strong tendency to investigate classroom interaction in the area of language teaching-learning in Brazil. Two main tendencies in teacher education programs were identified at that time: 1) language teaching/learning was seen as a product of linguistic analysis, and 2) teaching methods, pushed by the editorial market, were the main guides for teachers' work in the classroom. The investigations suggested a gap in teacher education programs since they did not promote

¹ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês (PPGI).

teachers' reflectivity on teaching-learning processes. Thus, in the late 90s, there was a shift in focus from the classroom to the teacher, which triggered out studies on teacher education.

Studies in this area identified a new gap between theory of teaching-learning and classroom practice (GIL, 2005). Thus, Applied Linguistics broadened its perspectives and opened a new trans-disciplinary area, in which educational issues weigh heavier, to include language teacher education as a new area of investigation. Language teacher education is, then, a field in Applied Linguistics which investigates pre or in-service discursive practices in teacher education (hereafter TE) programs.

Gil's (2005) study, a preliminary systematization of TE studies in Brazil, shows seven main foci of investigation in this new field: (1) TE and reflective practices/critical awareness; (2) TE and beliefs; (3) TE and the construction of teacher's professional identity; (4) TE and new technologies; (5) TE and textual genre; (6) TE and reading/literacy; and (7) TE and ideologies.

In relation to research methods, Gil (2005) points out that the empirical studies in TE use qualitative-interpretive analysis and the instruments for data collection are interviews, questionnaires, diaries, reflective sessions, and data from video/audio-taped classes, among others. In addition to that, Gil identifies three basic researcher participation: the researcher as an insider of the researched context, as the researched, and as an outsider of the researched context.

Among other aspects, Gil (2005) also points out that a significant amount of studies in English Language Teacher Education in Brazil are not related to each other, which, according to the author, weakens the research value of this area. Thus, she suggests a wide systematization of the studies conducted in ELTE in different regions of Brazil. With a view to contributing to the teacher education field in Brazil, this study systematizes the ELTE studies at the English Graduate Program at UFSC.

3 Method

In order to reach the goal of this study, theses and dissertations defended by students of the English Graduate Program, from the beginning of the program, in 1972, until 2007, and articles published, from 2002 to 2007, in books and journals by Professors and students of that program, in the area of ELTE were selected for systematization.

Concerning data analysis procedures, the following aspects were firstly identified in each study: 1) title; 2) author(s); 3) objective(s) of the study; 4)

methodological approach: contexts, participants, data collection and analysis, and researcher role; and 5) foci of investigation. The studies were then grouped according to their foci of investigation. Five categories were identified. In this article, due to space constraints, we focus on the analysis and discussion of thirteen published studies of two foci of investigation, which are among the current research topics in the ELTE in Brazil.²

4 Results

4.1 Contexts and participants

The fifty-one systematized studies encompass macro and micro contexts of investigation. The macro context refers to the *Letras* Undergraduate Teacher Education Program at UFSC and the PECPISC.³ The micro context refers to the language classrooms spread in the State of Santa Catarina, mainly in the state and municipal classrooms in the Great Florianópolis and in the language classrooms of the Extra-Curricular Language Course at UFSC.

The participants of the analyzed studies include: a) teacher-learners of the *Letras* Undergraduate Teacher Education Program at UFSC; b) teachers of the PECPISC program; and c) teachers working either in regular elementary and high schools in the region of the Great Florianópolis or at the Extra-Curricular language course at UFSC.

4.2 Methodological approach

The researchers of the studies were outsiders of the researched context, who privileged qualitative interpretive analysis and used several sources of information to validate their findings. However, in some studies the researchers added some type of quantification to the qualitative analysis to better visualize and validate the findings as well.

² In a study which aimed at investigating the current research topics in the ELTE field in Brazil, Denardi, Da Silva, Greggio, and Gil (2007) identified nine topics: (1) teachers' competence; (2) teachers' reflection; (3) teachers' beliefs; (4) continuing education projects; (5) educational policies; (6) teachers' discourse analysis; (7) teachers' professional identity; (8) analysis and/or production of didactic materials; and (9) mappings of studies in ELTE.

³ PECPISC refers to a continuing teacher education program for English teachers in the State of Santa Catarina (Programa de Educação Continuada para Professores de Inglês de Santa Catarina).

The instruments of data collection and analysis consisted of transcriptions of audio or video taped classes, structured or semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation, field notes, and transcriptions of audio taped discussion/reflective sessions.

4.3 Foci of investigation

The fifty-one studies were grouped according to their foci of investigation. Five categories were identified. The results are shown in TAB. 1.

TABLE 1
Foci of investigation and systematized studies

Foci of investigation	PhD theses	MA dissertations	Published studies
<i>Teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice</i>		Barci (2006) Buschle (2000) Carazzai (2002) Da Silva (2003) Finardi (2004) Malatér (1998) Moreira (2001)	Carazzai & Gil (2005) Da Silva & Fortkamp (2003) Da Silva (2004 & 2005) Finardi & Gil (2005) Massarollo & Fortkamp (2002) Moreira & Gil (2005) Rauber & Gil (2005)
<i>Teachers' reflection and pedagogical practice</i>		Biazi (2002) Souza (2004)	Biazi & Gil (2005) D'Ely & Gil (2005) Gil & Biazi (2005) Greggio, Da Silva, Denardi & Gil (2007) Sousa & Gil (2005)
<i>Teachers' reflection and discourse and pedagogical practice</i>	Dellagnelo (2003) Gil (1999) Malatér (2005) Reichmann (2001)	Almeida (2001) Eckel (2003)	
<i>Teacher-student interaction and teachers' pedagogical practice</i>		Bergsleithner (2002) Braga (2000) Callegaro (2004) Cipriani (2001) Denardi (2002) D'Ely (1983) Greggio (2004) Leffa (1979) Mundim (1987) Rodrigues (2005) Tambosi (2006) Trevisani (2004) Wolf (1995)	Bergsleithner & Gil (2005) Callegaro & Gil (2005) Denardi & Gil (2005) Greggio & Gil (2005) Trevisani & Gil (2005)
<i>Teachers' competence</i>		Fernandes (1983) Klein (2002) Manara (1999) Matos (1999) Nóbrega (2002)	

As stated in the method section, in this article we focus on the analysis and discussion of thirteen published studies of two categories: *Teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice* and *Teachers' reflection and pedagogical practice*. In what follows, we review the analyzed articles.

5 Reviewing the analyzed studies

5.1 First category – *Teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice*

Eight, out of the thirteen selected studies, fit into the first category: Carazzai and Gil, 2005; Da Silva and Fortkamp, 2003; Da Silva, 2004 and 2005; Finardi and Gil, 2005; Massarollo and Fortkamp, 2002; Moreira and Gil, 2005; and Rauber and Gil, 2005. These studies investigated the relationship between English as a foreign language (EFL), teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practice.

Carazzai and Gil's (2005) study investigated English teachers' beliefs on grammar and grammar teaching and the sources which influence such beliefs. Data analysis revealed that grammar and grammar teaching should be used as facilitative devices of the learning and teaching processes and that teachers' beliefs are influenced by three interactive sources: contextual, experiential, and cognitive.

In the same line of investigation – English teachers' beliefs – Finardi and Gil (2004) investigated the relation between teachers' beliefs on playful language and its use in the English as a foreign language classroom. The qualitative analysis revealed that teachers' beliefs seem to influence their practice more than the academic theory itself.

Broadening this scope of investigation, Massarolo and Fortkamp (2002) investigated English as foreign language teachers' and learners' beliefs regarding teaching, learning, and the evaluation of speech production. Data analysis revealed that the main belief of both analyzed groups is that speaking a foreign language is a difficult task for teaching, learning, and evaluating, and that speech production is a process which does not have the possibility of effective intervention if TE programs do not provide moments for reflection on teachers' and learners' beliefs about the process of the teaching-learning of foreign language speech production.

Also bringing students to the scenario of investigation, Rauber and Gil (2005) examined English teachers' beliefs on grammar error correction and how students view such practice in a communicative language teaching approach. Data revealed that teachers used explicit correction for grammar

correction and that students appreciated and considered it highly important for their language skill development.

Teachers' perceptions of the use of the mother tongue (Portuguese) in English classes in public schools were investigated by Moreira and Gil (2005). The data analysis revealed that teachers' main reason for using the mother tongue was the belief that the mother tongue can help foreign language learning and so they use it as a teaching strategy, mainly to check comprehension and to explain new topics.

In the same vein i.e., English teachers' beliefs influencing teachers' teaching strategy choices, Da Silva and Fortkamp (2003) investigated how the beliefs of an English teacher influenced her practice regarding the teaching strategies she used to foster students' communicative competence. The qualitative analysis revealed that, in theory, the participant teacher's beliefs influenced her teaching strategy choices, but in practice, there seemed to be a mismatch between them. That is, during the interview, the participant teacher revealed that it is essential to teach English in English to develop the learners' communicative competence. However, the recorded classes revealed that Portuguese was the language chosen by the teacher as a strategy to teach English.

And finally, Da Silva's (2004 and 2005) studies report an investigation of how teacher-learners perceived the teaching of the four skills in English as a foreign language. The analysis revealed that the teacher-learners' perceptions concerning the teaching of the four skills stem from two types of knowledge: the theoretical and the experiential knowledge. Moreover, the teacher-learners' perceptions work: a) as tenets for them to interpret and understand their teaching; b) as filters through which the theoretical knowledge is viewed; c) as a source of their knowledge; and d) as triggers of conflicts and dilemmas.

In short, teachers' beliefs and perceptions,⁴ which have been constructed and shaped by different sources and teaching-learning experiences, influence teachers' teaching practices, and, as a consequence, learners' learning.

A common theme permeates the studies in the first category: *Teachers' beliefs and the contexts of teaching-learning as important mechanisms to shape teachers' pedagogical practices and to determine learning outcomes*. In what follows, we present the reviewed and analyzed studies of the second category.

⁴ Despite the fact that some authors define beliefs and perceptions differently, in the present study they are used interchangeably.

5.2 Second category – Teachers' reflection and pedagogical practice

Five studies fit into the second category: Biazi and Gil (2005); D'Ely and Gil (2005); Gil and Biazi (2005); Greggio, Da Silva, Denardi and Gil (2007); and Souza and Gil (2005). Biazi and Gil's (2005); Gil and Biazi's (2005); Greggio, Da Silva, Denardi and Gil's (2007); and Souza and Gil's (2005) studies investigated teachers' pedagogical practice and their reflective process in the macro context of a continuing teacher education program (PECPISC). In turn, D'Ely and Gil (2005) investigated teacher-learners' reflections in the *Letras* Undergraduate teacher education program at UFSC.

D'Ely and Gil's (2005) study aimed at determining the impact of an English language teaching methodology course on teacher-learners' actual practices and their beliefs concerning teaching. The analysis revealed that the methodology course was a potential source of raising the teacher-learners' awareness of their own beliefs concerning teaching; provided some changes in their pedagogical practices, at least verbal changes; and was perceived as a meaningful experience.

Gil and Biazi's (2005) and Biazi and Gil's (2005) studies aimed at investigating English teachers' learning experiences at PECPISC to understand how the teachers interpreted and gave meaning to what they experienced in the program. The results showed that the teachers tried to connect and reshape their existing knowledge and experience to what they learned along the program.

Investigating the same continuing teacher education program, Greggio, Da Silva, Denardi and Gil's (2007) study aimed at finding out whether that type of program could be used as a helpful mechanism to encourage English teachers to reflect upon their own pedagogical practice. The study shows that the process of observation of one's teaching allied to collective reflection contributed to the participant-teachers think critically about their work as teachers in their teaching contexts, relate their pedagogical actions in relation to teaching, understand better why they teach the way they do, and reflect critically on the conditions which influence their work in the classroom, for instance, the lack of didactic materials in English.

Souza and Gil's (2005) study, also carried out at the PECPISC program, aimed at finding out whether the discussions in the program could unveil teachers' main concerns and whether or not the teachers' concerns pointed out reflective processes on practice. The results show that teachers' major concerns were on classroom activities, i.e., what activities should be

selected and how they should be developed in class. Moreover, teachers were aware that teaching decision-making was their responsibility and that their development is a life-long process that can be better achieved in collaboration with other teachers. Therefore, the findings indicate that continuing education programs may be used as contexts/places to stimulate teachers' reflection on their practice.

Although all along the analyzed studies reflection appears mainly in the technical and practical levels (ZEICHNER; LISTON, 1987),⁵ this finding cannot be interpreted as a negative one. These two levels of reflection have led teachers to establish some connections between teaching-learning and pedagogical practice. In this sense, it is possible to say that the technical and the practical levels of reflection may provoke changes in teachers' pedagogical practice, therefore, useful awareness mechanisms in the education of the language teacher in (continuing) teacher education programs.

Similarly to the first category, a common theme permeates the studies in the second category: *Contexts of learning to teach as appropriate and important places for teachers' reflection on their beliefs and knowledge of practice.*

So far, the two themes which emerged from the scrutinized studies corroborate, reinforce and complement each other. This suggests that teachers' reflection on their beliefs and pedagogical practice in teacher education contexts may turn out to be an effective mechanism in (re)shaping processes that have been constructed and shaped by various sources and experiences.

⁵ According to Zeichner and Liston (1987), three levels of reflection - technical, practical, and critical - were identified by Van Manen (1977). At the technical level, reflection is concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of the means used to attain ends. At the practical level, reflection is concerned with the assessment of educational goals, how they are achieved, and the results. The critical level encompasses both the technical and practical levels. However, it is also concerned with the worth of educational goals, how they are going to be accomplished, and who is benefiting from the successful accomplishments of the educational goals. At the critical level of reflection, the teachers' analysis of their actions takes into account the context in which their actions take place. Moreover, the one who reflects is concerned with the moral and ethical aspects of teaching, and the institutional arrangements in which she/he takes part (GIMENEZ, 1999; ZEICHNER; LISTON, 1987).

6 Discussion

From the two themes which emerged from the studies reviewed here: (1) *Teachers' beliefs and the contexts of teaching-learning as important mechanisms to shape teachers' pedagogical practices and to determine learning outcomes*, and (2) *Contexts of learning to teach as appropriate and important places for teachers' reflection on their beliefs and pedagogical practice*, we can infer that in the learning to teach process there are, at least, three powerful forces interacting: (a) the learners' own processes of apprenticeship; (b) the knowledge teacher education programs consider important teacher-learners to know and how that knowledge is best learned; and (c) the social contexts teacher-learners live and work. These three forces approximate the three dimensions for teachers learning in foreign language teacher education, namely "the teacher as a learner of teaching, the contexts of school and schooling, and the activity of teaching-learning", proposed by Johnson and Freeman (2001).

Regarding the first force, the teacher-learners' own processes of apprenticeship, the literature acknowledges, and the present study corroborates, that teacher-learners learn to teach by observing other teachers teaching; by reflecting on their own teaching practices; and by studying academic theories in teacher education programs. In view of this, teacher-learners' learning processes in contexts of teaching-learning can be comprised, at least, in three general sources: apprenticeship of observation,⁶ apprenticeship of practice, and apprenticeship of academic theories.

Concerning the second force, the knowledge teacher education programs consider important teacher-learners to know and how that knowledge is best learned, the literature also acknowledges that there are no conclusive findings. What some studies in TE field have pointed out, which is also corroborated in this study, is that teachers teach and learn what they believe is meaningful for them.

The third force, the social contexts where teacher-learners live and work, influences the culture of teaching-learning. However, this is not a one-way force: teacher-learners also deeply influence the cultural context of teaching-learning. In view of these three forces, we may agree with Johnson and Freeman (2001) that the process of teaching-learning is highly subjective, interpretative, socially (de)(re)constructed and (de)(re)structured; and it is an exceedingly complex and dynamic interplay of factors.

⁶ The term apprenticeship of observation was coined by Lortie (1975).

Although the participant-teachers involved in the analyzed studies, for example, in Da Silva (2004 and 2005) and in D'Ely and Gil (2005), recognize the importance of academic knowledge in the form of theories and approaches to language teaching-learning in the teacher education program at UFSC, they also recognize the need for the program to open more room for their voices to be heard. That is, during the program there is no room for them to reflect on the processes of learning they went through and the resulting knowledge and beliefs on learning and teaching. In this sense, the program seems to adopt a more interventionist model (GIL, November 2005, personal communication) for teacher-learners' knowledge. The program provides a model for language teaching-learning, pre-determines changes in teacher-learners' teaching knowledge and beliefs, but disregards the knowledge teacher-learners bring to the program, which triggers conflicts and dilemmas in relation to how the English language should be taught and learned. Thus, in order to minimize conflicting situations in teacher education programs, teacher-learners' voices should be heard and investigated.

In turn, the PECPISC program for continuing teacher education investigated by Biazzi and Gil (2005), Gil and Biazzi (2005), Greggio, Da Silva, Denardi and Gil (2007); and Souza and Gil (2005) seems to adopt a semi-interventionist model (Gil, November 2005, personal communication) for teachers' knowledge. According to the analyzed studies, the PECPISC program provides a model for the teaching-learning of English through interdisciplinary projects, but neither pre-determines changes in teachers' teaching practices, nor works under the undefeated assumption that teachers are ready to apply that specific approach in their teaching contexts. Besides that, teachers' knowledge and experiences about teaching-learning are taken into account along with the academic knowledge provided by the program. The analyzed studies also show that the participant-teachers of the PECPISC program acknowledge that academic theory informs practice and time for reflection on pedagogical practice is essential to integrate academic theory consciously into practice. The participants of the PECPISC also suggest that working collaboratively and having a learning community of teachers help construct theoretical knowledge and promote teachers' professional development. In short, what they acknowledge is that learning to teach is a life-long process which is better conducted when collaboratively constructed.

As the thirteen analyzed studies show, learning to teach does not mean equipping teachers in advance, in the beginning of their careers, for all what

they are going to know and be able to do throughout their teaching lives (JOHNSON; FREEMAN, 2001; RICHARDS, 1998). According to Johnson and Freeman (2001), essentially to understand teachers' learning and teaching is to examine the activity of teaching through teachers' perspectives. In other words, to understand the process of learning to teach and teaching requires involving teacher-learners, teachers, and teacher-educators in research, and most important, giving them voice in order to "arrive at what they know, how they use that knowledge in the classroom and school contexts and how they make sense of and reconfigure their classroom practices over time" (p. 63). Moreover, how teachers learn to teach and how it is best learned require, besides knowledge about content, school life, and contexts in which teachers live and develop their work, knowledge about the constitution of the self-as-teacher, as suggested by Telles (2002). The constitution of the self-as-teacher, in turn, requires an investigation about teachers' learning experiences, the knowledge about language and language teaching-learning, how that knowledge was constructed and structured throughout time, and the resulting beliefs of such imbricate interrelation of factors and forces.

The present study shows that opening room for reflection in (continuing) teacher education programs seems to be essential, a *sine qua non* condition for the construction of professionals able to construct their own understanding of language teaching, integrating academic theory and research with reflective studies on their beliefs and pedagogical practice, as suggested by Johnson and Freeman (2001).

Last but not least, the present study reveals that *Teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practice; Teachers' reflection and pedagogical practice; and teacher-student interaction and teachers' pedagogical practice* are research trends in the field of Language Teacher Education at the English Graduate Program at UFSC. Other systematization of studies in different regions and universities may contribute to a wider view of research trends in the ELTE field in Brazil.

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Recebido em agosto de 2008. Aprovado em outubro de 2008.