

INTRODUCTION

Language teacher education in contemporary society: scenarios, challenges and possibilities

Language teacher education has attracted the interest of researchers whose written production has increased significantly in recent years. From an initial model of teacher education based on a mimetic movement that granted priority to the mere imitation of “good” practices, we advanced to the professionalization of teachers by means of a process of recognition of pedagogical types of knowledge, culminating, more recently, in the idea of teacher’s agency.

If, on the one hand, the research in the area of teacher education has received great contributions, including the understanding of the complexity that the teaching process involves, corroborating, also, for the legitimacy of the professional teacher, on the other hand, today’s globalized, digital, and interconnected society is accompanied by the emergence of constant new knowledge production in the area with the aim to encompass the diverse manifestations of languages, meaning making processes and their implications for language teacher education.

Besides the implications brought about by the post-typographical society, other complexities of the contemporary world also need to be taken into account. Among them we envision the challenges in dealing with differences and the urge to promote the construction of a teacher knowledge that surpasses an epistemological field so as to provide some support for the language teacher with some meanings that come up to the surface in his/her classes.

Taking into consideration the daily working environment of the teacher, a space in which the school/academic contexts interlace with the social political contexts, new challenges are regularly presented to professors involved in language teaching as well as in language teacher education, once they have to face the emergence to perceive, to learn and to teach what is involved in the process of meaning making in a faster, more watchful and critical way.

The Brazilian society has not only increased its relations with the globalized world and the worldwide capital, but has also intensified its political and economic presence around the globe, being a target of a stronger and deeper capitalist logic. Under such influence, the

emphasis in the consumption seems to unchain an increasing sensation of disengagement from what has been called a “common good”, emphasizing the individualism and the exploration of the other and the planet in the name of the capital. Political, economic, social and historical consequences for the Brazilian society will depend on how citizens read and interpret the events that surround them and predominantly how they react to such events.

It is important to mention that one of the global influences that is present in the current Brazilian society is the neoconservative and neoliberal wave that has devastated different countries around the world, whose politics are generally marked by a poignant threat to the achievements of the social movements and the academic research of the last decades in regard to the legitimation of the rights of minority groups in favor of an ethical, democratic and just society.

The consolidated sociocultural paradigm in language and language education studies in the last few decades – whose language conception acknowledges the social and political function of the word-world, in Freire’s terms – has received harsh criticism derived from some strictly cognitive-oriented educational policies that advocate neutrality and objectivity in the subject’s interpretative processes, by means of effacing the contributions of Sociology, Anthropology and Critical Theory.

In this regard, language teaching and teacher education have faced a great challenge to perceive, to study, to learn, to teach and to consider forms of use of languages that can account for realities and truths, either proposed or imposed in contemporary language policies. With the aim to embrace this challenge, this special issue intends to enhance the existing discussions on the above themes by assembling works that approach the complexity of the lifelong language teacher education in today’s rapidly changing society.

Setting aside particular differences regarding goals and theoretical perspectives, the core of this special issue entails seeing language as a social practice. In other words, its social and political function cannot be disregarded. Thus, the contemporary language teacher education in this special issue deliberately assumes a socio-cultural conception of language and sees its users as subjects who are situated in a particular social and historical context. By acknowledging the situated subject, critique and agency become essential elements for disclosing unequal power relations, which, therefore, causes teacher education to be reexamined.

The first article of this special issue is entitled *How does one educate an English teacher? Reflections from a curricular change in a language teacher education program*, written by Cristiane Carvalho de Paula Brito and Fernanda Costa Ribas, from Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) - (Federal University of Uberlândia). This paper aims to reflect upon English teacher education from the analysis of a curricular change in an English Language Teacher Education Program, in a public university in Minas Gerais.

The subsequent article, *Pre-service language teacher education and critical literacy: a fruitful dialogue?*, is proposed by Jhuliane Evelyn da Silva, PhD student at Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) – (Federal University of Paraná), and Marco Antônio Margarido Costa, from Universidade Federal de Campina Grande (UFCG) – Federal University of Campina Grande. With postmodernity as a backdrop, this article demonstrates how student teachers in a pre-service language teacher education program engaged in problematizing practices during their classes at the university.

Studies on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) has also received a contribution from Jacyara Nô dos Santos, PhD student at Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA) – Federal University of Bahia, and Domingos Sávio Pimentel Siqueira, professor at the aforementioned university. In the paper *Contemporary challenges in English teacher education: some contributions from the studies of English as a lingua franca*, the authors discuss the importance of integrating ELF studies in teacher education, taking into consideration the challenge that such integration may represent due to the fact that the process of learning and teaching English is still oriented by the construct of the native speaker.

Lucas Araújo Chagas, PhD student at Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) – Federal University of Uberlândia, in his paper *The education of teachers of Portuguese for foreigners in the contemporaneity: scenarios, challenges and possibilities*, proposes reflections about the teaching of Portuguese for foreigners, as well as evaluates contemporary historical contexts that gave rise to this new modality of language teacher in the Brazilian context. The author also defends the necessity to create courses in higher education that regulate the professionalization of teachers of Portuguese for foreigners.

In the next paper, *The place of language policy in pre-service German teacher education*, written by Dörthe Uphoff, from Universidade de São Paulo (USP) – University of São Paulo, we will be able to recognize the importance of the political dimension in pre-service language teacher education programs. The author states that the political dimension

cannot be considered a secondary aspect of language teaching, but rather should be seen as a basic element that not only determines but also structures the conditions under which language teaching takes place in a given context.

In-service teacher education is also approached in this special issue by Adriana Cristina Sambugaro de Mattos Brahim, from Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) – Federal University of Paraná, in her paper *Continuing professors education: the outcomes of a study group*. In it, the author explores how the creation of a study group has become a relevant space to discuss in-service foreign language teacher education with teachers from the professional higher education courses.

The following article, *What the eyes don't read, society feels: the critical reading of news reports in classrooms*, written by Ana Paula Rezende de Mello, Camila de Souza Santos, graduate students at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) – Federal University of Minas Gerais, and Danúbia Aline Silva Sampaio, professor at the same university, aims at the teaching of reading in the Brazilian Basic Education. By doing so, the authors intend to contribute with language teachers to accomplish the effective and critical reading of news reports in classrooms.

An essential and important relation between Basic and Higher Education is also found in *Ecology of knowledges in language teacher education: the use of new technologies in the contact zones between basic and higher education*. In this study, Souza Mizan, from Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP) – Federal University of São Paulo and Yan Borgens Alcantara, undergraduate student at UNIFESP, explore the development of new pedagogies, new processes of construction and diffusion of different types of knowledge, and new social commitments, on local, national and global levels, by creating contact zones between basic and higher education.

Fernando da Silva Pardo, from Instituto Federal de São Paulo (IFSP) – Federal Institute of São Paulo, closes this special issue with his article entitled *Decoloniality and language teaching: perspectives and challenges for the construction of embodied knowledge in the current political scene*. Pardo discusses the relationships of submission, subordination, and exclusion promoted by the recent educational policies in Brazil. The role of education to develop critique, the importance of rethinking the role of English in our contemporary society and the teaching of English itself as a political task are some of the key aspects treated in this last article of this special issue.

The non-thematic section of this issue starts with the contribution of Orison Marden Bandeira de Melo Jr, from Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) – Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. His article *The teaching of literature written in English: a dialogue with methodological proposals based on the dialogical analysis of literature* displays a very compelling study on the teaching of literature written in English in Brazil.

Authored by Rodrigo Marcelino, graduate student from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) – Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the article *Analytical speech: epistemological essay in discourse theory* presents a technique of interpretation used in the French, Anglo-Saxon and Brazilian traditions of discourse theory.

In the article *Searching for death: an analysis of The story of a mother, by Andersen*, written by Daniela Maria Segabinazi and Jaine Sousa Barbosa, researchers from Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB) – Federal University of Paraíba, a very delicate theme is addressed: death in children's literature. The authors traced back the theme in literature, in general, and in children's literature so as to approach it in a short story written by Hans Christian Andersen.

A review and a translation are also part of this publication. Bruno Alves Pereira, from Universidade Estadual da Paraíba (UEPB) – State University of Paraíba, reviews the book **Horizontes (im)possíveis no estágio: práticas de letramento e formação de professores de língua**, published in 2018. In the sequence, *Mexican English teachers' experiences of international professional development in Canada: a narrative sequel* is an article written by John L. Plews, from Saint Mary's University, Yvonne Breckenridge, from University of Alberta, Maria-Carolina Cambre, from King's University College at Western University and Gilmar Martins de Freitas Fernandes, from Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) – Federal University of Uberlândia, who also translated this article, which was published in 2014.

In the miscellaneous section of this edition, readers will find three short stories: *Era Negro*, by Paula de Sousa Costa, *Futuro do pretérito*, by Dayane Campos da Cunha Moura and *O músico da madrugada*, by Wellington Amancio da Silva and a poem: *Presente na luta!*, by Ariana da Rosa Silva. In all these literary texts, our readers will be able to perceive how the authors demonstrate their sensibility in the narratives and also to appreciate the way poetics may lead us to take a stand.

We hope that our readers enjoy the articles collected in this special issue dedicated to language teacher education, as well as expect its contents may unfold new reflections and studies in this area. We also desire that all the contributions gathered in this third number of 2019 help *Revista Letras Raras* maintain its main goal, which is to encourage and promote reflections on outwardly distant domains, but that ultimately and underneath are interwoven by the thread of the language studies.

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