

EXPLORING MAJOR THEMES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS: LOCAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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The diversity of themes investigated in Applied Linguistics reflects the needs of different contexts in which researchers operate. Rather than showing a weakness in the field, this diversity reveals an area that flourishes because of the new themes brought by different research agendas from around the world (Gitsaki & Baldauf, 2012). In Brazil, current research has also reflected the interplay between local and global themes, with researchers exploring issues that show a concern with the central role of language learning, language teaching, and language use.

Currently in Brazil, the central themes of Applied Linguistics are to be found in official documents that regulate language teaching in elementary and secondary education (often referred to as Basic Education) and higher education, namely, the graduate guidelines issued by CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and the curricular standards issued by the Ministry of Education. Some of these themes are critical literacy, internationalization, and the perspective of English as a lingua franca, and they have been fuelling research conducted at all educational levels.

Having in mind the scenario presented above, it is with great pleasure that we present the first issue in 2020 of *Ilha do Desterro*, a journal from the *Graduate Program in English: Linguistic and Literary Studies*, from the Federal University of Santa Catarina. Although its call for papers did not make reference to a specific theme in language/linguistics, we are going to show that the studies that we got in response to the call follow common threads of thought, representing major theoretical and educational concerns in the area of Applied Linguistics, and can also be connected to postulates from both *Documento da Área de Letras e*

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*Linguística*¹ from CAPES (Brasil, 2016a) and the document *Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC)*² from MEC (Brasil, 2016b).

From the 19 articles in this issue, 17 somehow have the English language as object of study and at least 7 address issues of globalization and/or English as an international language and/or as a *língua franca*. All of the 19 articles, directly or indirectly, can be linked to the area of Applied Linguistics, either because they are inserted in the classroom context and/or try to solve problems related to it, or because they try to solve social problems (Rocha & Daher, 2015), related to translation, for example, where language is involved. Moreover, at least 16 of the studies are inserted in the field of language teaching and learning or have implications to the field. From these 16, the majority of them (14) address English as L2 teaching/learning phenomena; one addresses Spanish as L2, and the other addresses Portuguese as L1 classroom issues.

The internationalization of Brazilian Graduate Programs is one of the requirements from CAPES evaluation program, carried out every four years. As posited in *Documento da Área de Letras e Linguística* from CAPES, the objective of internationalization is to

[...] collaborate with institutions and research centers abroad, at the same level of exchange and reciprocity. In other words, Brazilian graduate programs must participate internationally in knowledge production, giving effective contributions in this production and, at the same time, obtaining quality gains in the dialogue with peers (Brasil, 2016a, p.89, our translation).

A list of measures are cited in the document as to how internationalization can be achieved, some being considered *initial* and some being considered *advanced* measures. Among the advanced measures we can list a few achieved with the present publication: a great number of the articles included here (more than half of them) are published in English; some of the contributors are from universities or research centers abroad (e.g., Universitat de Vic - Universitat Central de Catalunya (Spain); Ghent University (Belgium); Universidade de Aveiro (Portugal)); and some of the studies are the result of collaborations with research centers abroad.

Another requirement from the *Documento da Área de Letras e Linguística* from CAPES, addressed by many of the studies here presented, is the partnership with Basic Education. According to the CAPES guidelines (Brasil, 2016a), this partnership has contributed to the continuing education of language teachers employed by regular schools, as well as to the improvement of curriculum and didactic resources for language teaching in regular schools. Although no direct partnerships are mentioned, many of the studies attend to issues that are relevant to this context such as critical literacy, didactic materials, the use of technology in the language classroom, English as a *língua franca*, English for Specific Purposes, and foreign language skills teaching and learning, among others. Some of the studies also have elementary or high schools as their context and *locus* of investigation.

The present issue of *Ilha do Desterro* also complies with the document *Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC)* from MEC in a number of ways. The Document brings the English Language as one of the curricular components under the superordinate ‘area of languages’, together with Portuguese Language, Arts, and Physical Education, for the final years of elementary school (*Fundamental II*), and under the area of Languages and its Technologies for the three years of secondary school. The teaching/learning of English is given a ‘formative’ character, under a linguistic education perspective, where awareness and critical abilities play a role and “where the pedagogical and political dimensions are intrinsically connected” (Brasil, 2016b, p.241, our translation). The BNCC document brings specific information about the teaching of English for the final years of elementary school. It proposes four strands to organize the curriculum: orality, reading, writing, and cultural dimension. These four strands should be connected by the perspective of language in use. In secondary school, the goal is to “expand students’ linguistic, multisemiotic, and cultural repertoires, promoting the development of awareness and critical reflection about the functions and uses of English in the contemporary society.” (Brasil, 2016b, p. 485, our translation).

The formative character of the teaching/learning of English postulated in the BNCC document is present in many of the studies here, be it through the view of language teaching/learning adopted; through the topics selected for the research such as critical literacy and critical pedagogy; or through the theoretical frameworks are brought as support for the studies, such as the socio-semiotic approach to language, the Grammar of Visual Design, the concept of social representations, critical discourse analysis, the notion of types of reasoning and of practices, among others.

In relation to the four strands proposed in the BNCC document to organize the curriculum, the research articles in this issue contemplate at least three of them - orality, reading, and the cultural dimension; and all of them see these dimensions from the perspective of language in use. The following paragraphs introduce the topics of the 19 articles that comprise this issue of *Ilha do Desterro*.

Miccoli, Bambirra, and Vianini, in their article entitled “Experiential research for understanding the complexity of teaching and learning English as a foreign language”, bring experiential research to the center of discussion, endowing the reader with 20 years of academic research in the area carried out in Brazil, with a focus on foreign language teaching and learning, presenting ‘experience’ from a Complex Dynamic Systems approach. Excerpts from both teachers’ and students’ narratives are brought by the authors as evidence to support the discussions on the complexities involved in this context.

Within a task-based perspective, “Enhancing strategic planning through strategy instruction: The effect of two types of strategy instruction on learners’ oral planned performance” is the title of the study by Specht and D’Ely, which investigates the influence of different types of strategy instruction – integrated in regular classes, isolated in a separate course, and no instruction at all – on

planned speech performance, as measured by the more commonly used tests of complexity, accuracy and fluency, and also by the addition of an adequacy test.

Having as the context of investigation the 8th grade of an Elementary School in Brazil, Sousa, Hübner, and Silva, in a study titled “Lexical-semantic integration by good and poor reading comprehenders”, examined the level of vocabulary knowledge and the lexical-integration skill of readers considered good and weak comprehenders, assessed by a battery of tests included reading comprehension, listening comprehension, decoding, vocabulary, lexical-semantic integration and incongruence detection.

In the study “Mechanisms for the development of (visual) critical literacy in English language textbooks” Kummer and Hendges bring together a threefold framework, consisting of principles of systemic-functional grammar, critical discourse analysis and the concepts of types of reasoning and practices, in order to provide the reader with a thorough analysis, regarding critical literacy, of reading and writing activities from an English as a Foreign Language textbook approved by the Brazilian National Textbook Program (*Programa Nacional do Livro Didático*).

Also addressing the topic of critical literacy, but using another framework based on the Task-based Approach and on Critical Pedagogy, and placing teaching and learning as ‘political acts’, “Critical tasks in action: the role of the teacher in the implementation of tasks designed from a critical perspective”, by Leonardo da Silva, explores the role of the teacher and their perception in relation to a task cycle that has not only communicative objectives but also critical ones. The context of the investigation involved a group with one teacher and 20 students from a technical public high school in Brazil and focused on the self-report diaries written by the teacher at the end of each class.

Adopting the view that images are a different and independent mode of creating and communicating meanings, and using a tripartite analytical framework based on the socio-semiotic approach to language, on the Grammar of Visual Design, and on the concept of social representations, Renato Caixeta da Silva, in his study “Representations of learning languages in visual narratives: What the images of English school sites show”, analyzes the discourse about foreign language (FL) learning portrayed by the images present in websites of FL private schools.

Language teaching and learning mediated by technologies informs the article written by Carvalho and Soares. The authors offer the reader a thorough review of the literature regarding the use of digital technologies in the FL teaching and learning context in their article entitled “Oral skill development through the use of digital technologies: a systematic review”, which focusses on four major objectives: first, presenting the teaching-learning approaches most often used in the area in the development of oral skills through digital technologies; second, unveiling the most used digital tools used to develop oral skills; third, revealing the most studied aspects of orality; and last, looking for possible advantages and disadvantages of the use of digital tools in this context as discussed in the studies reviewed.

Still in the field of language learning and technology, Turolo explores the subtle and yet important construct of ‘affordances’, seen as opportunities for action learners perceived as useful and engaging, in the context of distance education in her article titled “Affordances in the online interaction of English language learners in distance education”, which has as main objectives to identify and to categorize the type of affordances found in the discussions promoted by students in the online forums, in relation to their engagement with the environment, with others and with the English language.

Using the concept of ‘lingua franca’, defined as ‘a hybrid type of language spoken by individuals with different first language backgrounds’, “ESP teaching in contemporary medical education in Brazil”, by Gutierrez, Lindemann, and Menoncini, reports an analysis carried out with 43 selected public higher education medical institutions in Brazil, based on information found in their Political Pedagogical Projects (PPPs), in order to address the main objective posed in the study – whether and to what extent have medical undergraduate courses included the teaching of a *lingua franca* (English), as a result of the publication of the National Curricular Guidelines.

Having internationalization and mobility in higher education as the background for their study, Guimarães and Kremer, in the article “Adopting English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Brazil and Flanders (Belgium): a comparative study”, present a thorough analysis of the proposed scenario in both contexts, substantiating the discussion with academic documents related to language teaching/learning, including books and journal articles, and also official government documents and websites, as well as reports from international organizations.

The curriculum of language undergraduate programs is addressed in the study “Reflection on Training of Two Foreign Languages (English and another Language) by Chinese Universities and Proposal of English – Portuguese Translation Discipline for Bachelor Students of Portuguese Language” Hu and Roberto provide an in-depth discussion of the scenario in what concerns learning two languages in the context of Chinese universities, spotting major weaknesses, such as the lack of adequate materials and the lack of disciplines that integrate knowledge in these two languages, and offering a possible way to solve the latter problem by proposing an English - Portuguese translation discipline for the Chinese bachelor students of Portuguese.

Connecting translation studies with inclusive practices, Bardini views audio description as ‘a part of the audiovisual text and as a form of intersemiotic translation’, and motivated by media accessibility movements related to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the author, in an article titled “Audio description and the translation of film language into words”, delves into the field of audio description (AD). Grounded in Translation Studies the author discusses the specificities of AD and provides the reader with a detailed taxonomy of audio description techniques based on a functional approach to the translation of texts, using it in the practical context of a film.

Still in the field of translation studies, but now with a focus on technological developments, “Introducing COPA-TRAD version 2.0: A parallel corpus-based system for translation research, teaching and practice”, by Silva and Fernandes, offers the translation community of researchers, teachers and professionals an online computational system hosting a databank of source texts and their respective translations in up to six languages that include Portuguese, German, Spanish, French, English and Italian. The capabilities of the system include the following, among other possibilities: investigating professional translators’ practice; comparing human translation and automatic translation; creating one’s own parallel disposable corpus; and analyzing and classifying the parts of speech of a text.

Taking globalization as the background for translation practices Soares, in the study “Asymmetrical relations in audiovisual translation in Brazil: A corpus-based investigation of fixed expressions”, brings the concept of translation as being affected by a tension between centripetal versus centrifugal globalization, lying on a continuum with foreignization on one side, where the translated item keeps linguistic and cultural traces of the source text and domestication on the other, where the translated item is adapted to the norms of the target language and culture. In this scenario the author compares how fixed expressions are translated in dubbing and subtitling methods in two films and examines how employing domestication and foreignization can undermine or reinforce asymmetrical relations.

Turning to the oral component of language learning and use, Salves, Wanglon, and Alves see language development as a nonlinear process, made up of a multitude of linguistic and social factors that interact and make each situation unique for each learner. In this context, the authors present the results of a longitudinal study entitled “The role of L1 English speakers’ familiarity with Brazilian-accented English (L2) in the intelligibility of Brazilian learners of English (L2): a Complex Dynamic Systems approach”. The study was carried out with five pre-intermediate Brazilian learners of English, who provided speech samples, and four British listeners, who assessed the intelligibility of the samples produced. The main hypothesis posed in the study is that ‘the listeners’ growing familiarity with Brazilian English would have an effect on their intelligibility scores’.

Considering ‘intelligibility’ as related to word or sentence recognition, and not the same as ‘comprehensibility’, which would be related to a native speaker’s perception of intelligibility, the study by Bettoni and Rizzi titled “Comprehensibility and Brazilians’ perceptions on pronunciation instruction” sets to examine 24 English as L2 learners’ perceptions about the study of pronunciation and the comprehensibility of their speech as judged by four English speakers from different nationalities representing the three circles in Kachru’s World Englishes Model (1985).

The oral component, more specifically L2 intonation, and its interaction with language processing factors guide the article “Interactions between

individual differences and effects of explicit instruction on Spanish / L2 intonation”. Rodrigues and Ortiz-Preuss look into the interaction between explicit instruction and individual differences (ID) factors in the acquisition of declarative and interrogative utterances in Spanish / L2. The specific ID factors included as variables in the study are age, frequency of use, language experience, and attentional capacity and data was collected with 10 Spanish as L2 learners from a private language institute, by means of three instruments – a questionnaire of historical and linguistic proficiency; an attention control test; and tests of comprehension and production of sentences.

Post da Silveira, in the article “Retrieving L2 word stress from orthography: Evidence from word naming and cross-modal priming”, investigates the role of word stress representations during cognate and non-cognate naming, in a group of 15 English as a L2 learners, in Experiment 1 and in another group of 15 advanced English as a L2 learners in Experiment 2, being that, this time, participants named L2 cognates and non-cognates preceded by auditory primes. One of the main hypotheses posed in the study is that words of higher frequency in the lexicons would provide more lexical effects of word stress than low frequency words.

Finally, one article brings the contribution of cognitive grammar to the discussion about the status of the –ING construction. In an attempt to offer a more contemporary view on the subject, “A conceptual approach to the –ING construction: aspects of radially and subjectification”, by Almeida and Ulloa, invites the reader to consider a constructionist approach to the -ING construction in which its major functions are brought in connection with those found in other languages such as Spanish, for example. The authors rely on tenets from a number of related fields such as Cognitive Grammar, Construction Grammar, adopting a semantic approach to the –ING construction, describing it from a conceptual perspective, which also includes Prototype Theory.

The original studies that make up this issue report original and relevant research in the area of (applied) linguistics, being of interest to both graduate students and scholars from the fields of Linguistics, Psychology, Education, among other related fields.

In addition to the 19 original articles, this volume continues to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the *Ilha do Desterro* journal, which was first published in 1979 (Wasserman et al., 2018). We selected an article published in 1992, and authored by professor Malcom R. Coulthard, a long-standing collaborator of *Ilha do Desterro* and the *Programa de Pós-Graduação em Inglês*. The article “On the importance of matching relations in the analysis and translation of literary texts” illustrates two of the research strands that have represented so well the academic research published by *Ilha do Desterro* over the past 40 years: Translation and Literary Studies.

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Notes

1. Available at <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=Y2FwZXMuZ292LmJyfGF2YWxpYWVhby1xdWFkcmlldmFsfGd4OjQ2NTY0MTRhYzJjYz-M0OTU>. Retrieved 21 Jan 2020.
2. Available at http://basenacionalcomum.mec.gov.br/images/BNCC_EI_EF_110518-versaofinal_site.pdf. Retrieved 21 Jan. 2020.

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