EDITORIAL

Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language: The Brazilian Context

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INTRODUCTION

In this edition of the *Brazilian English Language Teaching* (BELT) Journal, our focus turns once again to our traditional theme of teaching and learning English as an additional language. In this brief introduction, we would like to highlight the Brazilian context and reality, a central aspect of the scope of our journal. While we have no intention of providing a comprehensive overview by any means, we hope to touch upon some recurring themes in recent literature, which are also represented in the selection of articles showcased in the current edition. These themes include: (i) the role of the Brazilian sociocultural, political and institutional contexts in the language teaching and learning process; (ii) contemporary theories and the Brazilian context; and (iii) aspects of curriculum development in Brazil. These topics will be considered in turn in the respective sections below.

Before moving forward, we would like to present a clarification on our use of the term 'additional language', not only in this editorial, but in all publications by members of the research group UPLA (*Uso e Processamento de Língua Adicional*) at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS). Our decision reflects our agreement with the position expressed by Judd *et al.* (2001) in a document that is part of an 'Educational practices series' published by the International Academy of Education and the International Bureau of Education, institutes associated to

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UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). This position can be best illustrated by the following excerpt:

> ... we have chosen the last two words in this booklet's title 'Teaching additional languages' rather than commonly used terms 'second languages' or 'foreign languages'. Students may actually be learning not a second but a third or fourth language. 'Additional' applies to all, except, of course, the first language learned. An additional language, moreover, may not be foreign since many people in their country may ordinarily speak it. The term 'foreign' can, moreover, suggest strange, exotic or, perhaps, alien—all undesirable connotations. Our choice of the term 'additional' underscores our belief that additional languages are not necessarily inferior nor superior nor a replacement for a student's first language. (Judd *et al.*, 2001, p. 6)

Throughout this presentation, while we understand the terms 'foreign language', 'second language' and 'additional language' to represent different things, we use the latter term to refer inclusively to the first two, and the first two may be used for purposes of discussing the content of a particular bibliographic reference. Moreover, to avoid unnecessary repetition, we may resort to the abbreviations 'L2' to cover all three situations discussed above, and 'L1' to refer to the first, or native, language.

1 THE ROLE OF SOCIOCULTURAL, POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

While discussions on contextual variables in the additional language learning context often include aspects such as age, proficiency and motivation, other variables such as the sociocultural, political and institutional contexts are just as important. The acquisition of an additional language can be considered the acquisition of an additional culture as well, in that it is a new path to another type of cognition, another set of emotions, another identity and even a different filter of reality. Given this complex set of factors involved in the acquisition of an additional language, the environment created mutually by the teacher and students would ideally be one of awareness, tolerance, sensitivity and respect.

The factors affecting the language learning situation may also affect the extent to which the learner chooses to identify with the culture. Like the learning process, this identification is a dynamic process that may change over time according to the social and interactive aspects of the individual learner's experience. Individuals build their identities through language and, as second language learners, often find themselves having to build another one through the new language and the sociocultural lens of the second language context. This may lead to unintentional misperceptions when performance involves language errors and misunderstandings. Moreover, given the complex nature of sociocultural and political identities of a given nation, certain identities may be imposed on a learner due to social aspects such as power relations or inequalities of various types.

On the other hand, when in the foreign language context, the learner may only have limited contact with the cultural identity in question and the extent

to which the learner identifies with it is much more likely to be affected by factors such as motivation and desire.

Regardless of whether the student is learning the language in a foreign or second language context, other elements aside from nationality involved in identity include race and ethnicity, gender, family roles and multilingualism (Murray & Christison, 2011). All these factors are intertwined and influence not only the learner's but the teacher's understanding of the relationship between language and identity in its broad sense, which, in turn, influence the teaching and learning processes. As such, sociocultural context, including identity issues, is an important point of investigation to improve and facilitate these processes. Moreover, if the classroom is a critical point of departure for students to begin developing their identity in the target language, it seems like a setting conducive for such an investigation, which can lead to adaptations in such aspects as classroom discourse, material and activity selection, as well as a better understanding of teacher and student roles.

The language policies of a country have an important influence on how additional languages are perceived, offered and learned. Language policies often determine the language learning in institutional contexts. Each country has its own particular characteristics regarding this aspect, which is likely to result in variations in language learning outcomes.

In Brazil, institutions often assume, to some extent, the national curricular parameters, known as *parâmetros curriculares nacionais* (PCNs). The PCNs are the fundamental and essential guidelines presented by the Brazilian Ministry of Education to inform teaching in all subjects in public education, including language teaching (Brasil, 1998, 2008). These guidelines cover topics ranging from what should be taught, how it should be taught and whatever other aspects that need to be taken into consideration, depending on the subject in question. As such, it is an indispensable resource for public education institutions and teacher training programs.

Specific characteristics of the Brazilian context are particularly important in the development of these guidelines, in that sociocultural and political principles such as citizenship, inclusion and democracy are promoted in the content of the guidelines themselves. The incorporation of these principles is motivated by various difficulties faced in the area of education in contemporary society such as the lack of professional qualifications, the lack of quality teaching, exclusion, dropouts, among other factors. Seen this way, the purpose of the guidelines is not solely to lay down rules for the teaching process, but a more socially holistic view of education considering the Brazilian reality. The guidelines are thus updated every few years to reflect the evolving needs of society.

With respect to teaching foreign languages, the PCNs go beyond teaching grammar rules as they aim to address student interests regarding the expansion of their communicative abilities and cultural awareness, an understanding of different forms of communication with respect to dialects and social registers. Moreover, the four skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – are proposed to be practiced while considering the social reality of the learners. To this end, the topics suggested for learning and practicing the foreign language include: citizenship, diversity, equality, social justice, (inter)dependence, conflicts, values and regional and national

differences (Brasil, 1998, 2008). Given this perspective, teacher training would ideally involve not only cultural and linguistic knowledge of the target language, but an awareness and sensitivity to the potential conflicts that may arise in the incorporation and accommodation of this new knowledge in light of the sociocultural and political issues of the learning context.

In the following section, we discuss contemporary theories of language teaching, learning and research and how they relate to the Brazilian context.

2 CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AND THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

In this section, we present a selection of teaching methods over history (see Brown 2007 and references therein), although this is not a comprehensive review. We have organized these methods in Table 1 below, most likely in the order in which they appeared in language teaching pedagogy over time, while significant overlap is possible, and some which may still be in effect today.

Table 1: Overview of teaching methods (organized by the authors, based on information in Brown 2007)

#	Teaching Method	Characteristics
1	Classical method	focus on grammatical rules; memorization of vocabulary and conjugations; translations of texts; written exercises
2	Grammar translation method	focus on grammatical rules to translate from second language to native language
3	Direct method	imitation of first language acquisition; oral interaction; spontaneous use of language; no translation, no analysis of grammar rules; focus on modelling and practice; speech and listening are taught
4	Audiolingual method	many dialogues; mimicry; memorization of set phrases; structural patterns are drilled; little contextualized vocabulary
5	Cognitive code learning	more deductive rule learning; a mix of grammar translation and audiolingual methods
6	Communicative language learning	focus on interaction and communication; real communication; meaningful tasks; objectives adapted to learners; functions; notions; themes; tasks; form-function focus; fluency and accuracy; real world contexts
7	Task-based teaching	points learners beyond form to real world contexts; tasks contribute specifically to communicative goals; objectives organized carefully in succession; tasks engage learners; problem solving
8	Learner-centered instruction	learner needs, styles and goals; focus on student competence, self worth, creativity, and innovation
9	Interactive learning	genuine interaction; pair work and group work; authentic language; meaningful communication; practicing oral communication; writing for real audiences
10	Content-based instruction	integration of content learning with teaching aims

Leffa (2012) sees the evolution of teaching methods in conjunction with the evolving role of the professor over time. In an early stage of language teaching, the teacher was subordinate to the method, which was meant to be applied universally, despite the characteristics of the teacher, students or other contextual factors. Leffa (2012) associates this period with methods (1) through (5) in Table 1 above. He considers the subsequent stage to be that of

the post-method, in which methods in general were abandoned in favor of more teacher autonomy, greater focus on students and their reality, as well as associations with other areas of knowledge. A post-method approach would take into account the sociocultural, political and linguistic characteristics of the context in which students and teachers find themselves, thus leading to what Leffa (2012) refers to as a merging, or integration, of strategies, activities and types of knowledge. He associates this period, which refers to the present time, with the pedagogy of projects (Hernández, 1998; Machado, 2000; Almeida, 2002; Prado, 2009). This approach promotes more group work, more interactivity with the content and different areas of knowledge, as well as more significant motivation given the opportunity to work with different types of media. Despite only citing this post-method approach, the methods cited in (6) through (10) in Table 1 can also be included in this perspective (Brown, 2007).

Research focused on second language acquisition (SLA) is no longer directly focused on language teaching as it was in the early stages of the development of this academic area. As such, some questions that guide SLA research include how languages in general are learned and the relation with first language acquisition. The answers to these questions give us a deeper understanding of the nature of language and its complexities, which, in turn, may further aid in language teaching methodologies. Some milestones in the course of SLA research include: contrastive analysis, language transfer, error analysis, and universal grammar (Murray & Christison, 2011).

Contrastive analysis is based on the idea that learners draw heavily from their native language to learn the additional language, leading to the transfer of certain forms and meanings that may reflect differences in learner performance. This perspective relies on the notion of language transfer, in the sense presented by Odlin (1989), in which first language knowledge is transferred to a new language learning situation, which may help or hinder the acquisition process, depending on the similarities and differences between the languages in question. However, this approach is not always successful in explaining the errors in the target language, since expected transfers, whether negative or positive, do not always occur. As such, error analysis was an approach that arose out of the idea that understanding learner errors is an important part of teacher awareness to inform pedagogical development. Similarly to the problem with contrastive analysis, error analysis could not definitively identify the sources of the errors, as they cannot always be attributed to specific native and target languages involved.

Despite obvious differences, and the difficulties in drawing associations between the two, there is still a large body of literature devoted to investigating similarities and differences in first and second language acquisition. Both processes follow developmental sequences, thus shedding light on the nature of language in general. Finally, in line with the attempt to approximate different types of language acquisition, those who assume a cognitive view of first language acquisition may pursue the idea of language universals in SLA as well. In other words, assuming a Universal Grammar in first language acquisition, researchers aim to uncover to what extent this faculty may be active in second language acquisition as well. Moreover, certain views of Universal Grammar allow for a more constrained and predictable illustration of language transfer, focusing on a variety of components of the language faculty.

Considering the complexity of the phenomena being studied, a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives have been employed to address the issues discussed so far. The theoretical perspective chosen is directly related to the nature of the intended object of study, whether it is with respect to language form (phonology or syntax), language meaning (semantics, pragmatics or the lexicon) or language use (discourse and communication). Moreover, interdisciplinary questions may motivate interfaces with psychology, sociology or education, thus opening up the possibility to a broad range of methodologies[1].

3 ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Curriculum development is a complex process that often involves several stakeholders with frequently diverging opinions, despite guidelines provided either by PCNs or administrative heads. It is often an arduous process that needs to be constantly updated and adapted depending on the characteristics of the students and the types of courses involved. Brown (2007) presents an overview to curriculum development that is nicely illustrated by the flowchart below, in Figure 1 (taken from Brown, 2007, p. 151).
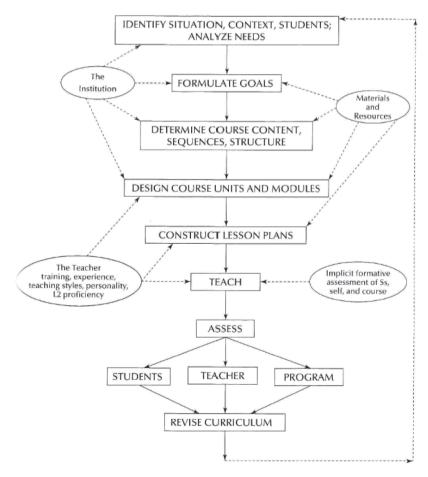

Figure 1: Second language curriculum development process (from Brown, 2007, p. 151)

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[1] See Gass and Mackey (2012) for an overview of theoretical issues relevant for L2 learning and teaching and Mackey and Gass (2012) for an overview of methodological approaches to SLA research.

As can be seen by Figure 1, curriculum development is not a straightforward or simple process and, as such, there are inherent complexities to this critical stage of language teaching. In addition to the difficulties referred to above, institutions often face the pressure of developing a curriculum for a short course adapted for a specific group of students from another, foreign institution, often with little more than one semester to prepare. The framework illustrated above can be very helpful in developing and executing a regular or one-off course.

Though all steps of the curriculum development process are equally important, we would like to highlight the topic of material selection, due to its relevance in the Brazilian context. Materials used at different levels of education may also vary greatly from one sociocultural and institutional context to another. To understand the motivation behind the evaluation and choice of materials, we must first understand the basic terminology used in them, namely: task, activity, procedure, practice and technique (Brown, 2007). Following Brown (2007), we assume that tasks often involve a focus on "the authentic use of language for meaningful communicative purposes beyond the language classroom" (2007, p. 180), while activities refer to anything that is actually done in the classroom environment. Procedures refer to the practices and/or behaviors a teacher may use in order to apply a particular method. Classroom materials, such as textbooks, often employ this range of techniques which must be adapted for classroom lesson planning. The choice and adaptation of textbooks need to be evaluated by institutions, departments and individual teachers according to student profiles as well as classroom and institutional objectives.

In Brazil, there is a national program for textbooks (*Programa Nacional do Livro Didático*, PNLD) that proposes criteria for selecting those textbooks across all subjects that more consistently adhere to the PCNs discussed earlier. For foreign languages, the PNLD began to publish criteria in 2011, decidedly late considering the respective PCNs for foreign languages had been published since 1998. Nonetheless, the social importance of the program cannot be overlooked as it provides a free textbook with audio CD to each student in public education, a critical step towards fulfilling its criteria of social inclusion.

The objective of the PNLD is to present public education institutions with the option of a series of textbook collections that have undergone a rigorous evaluation by selected specialists. Since its initial launch for foreign language textbooks, the PNLD presented in 2014 a new selection of textbooks based on nationwide feedback and updated research. Considering the importance of sociocultural and political factors in the public education guidelines, we can see how they are reflected in the criteria for evaluating foreign language textbooks, both at the primary and secondary levels of education, as seen in Table 2 below (summarized from PNLD, 2014, 2015). It is noted that the criteria were presented in more detail in the secondary education guide, as reflected in the table.

Table 2: PNLD Textbook Evaluation Criteria (organized by the authors, based on information in PNLD, 2014a,b)

Primary education	Secondary Education
Graphic and editorial design	Selection of texts: (i) representative of target language communities without prejudice or stereotypes; (ii) favors cultural, social, ethnic, age and gender diversity; (iii) contemplates a variety of genres; (iv) includes texts that circulate in the social world, with different origins
Selection of texts	Reading comprehension: (i) presents social and historical contextualization, to promote an understanding of the conditions of production and circulation of texts; (ii) discusses relations of intertextuality; (iii) contemplates text-reader interaction through pre-reading, reading and post-reading activities; (iv) explores reading strategies
Reading comprehension	Writing: (i) promotes interaction, defining communicative parameters, based on an understanding of context and discourse genres
Writing	Oral comprehension: (i) provides material in digital media with language characteristic of oral production; (ii) enables access to different types of pronunciation and prosody, with different intensities of required comprehension
Oral comprehension	Oral production: (i) provides activities that promote significant interaction in different communicative situations
Oral production	Theoretical-methodological issues: (i) the book in general prioritizes reading and writing activities as central to language learning in secondary education; (ii) promotes reading, writing and oral activities that can integrate the purposes of foreign language learning; (iii) links print and digital media; (iv) links material to other practices involving other types of knowledge, such as scientific, technological, cultural and experiential; (iv) favors interdisciplinarity; (v) promotes new connections between the foreign and native language through other types of knowledge
Linguistic elements	Linguistic elements: (i) proposes a systematization of linguistic knowledge
Theoretical-methodological issues	Sociocultural issues: (i) offers the opportunity to identify with the foreign and national culture through artistic productions; (ii) explores verbal, non-verbal and visual activities that contextualize a production historically and artistically; (iii) promotes extracurricular activities, allowing students to become agents of transformation; (iv) uses illustrations to represent ethnic, social and cultural diversity of foreign language communities; (v) links language learning to ethical behavior, awareness of human rights and citizenship, practicing respect and accepting others
Teacher's manual	Assessment: (i) proposes activities of evaluation and self-evaluation in pursuit of an integration of linguistic, discursive and cultural knowledge
–	Teacher's manual: (i) explains the organization of the book, its objectives and the theoretical-methodological position assumed; (ii) relates teaching objectives with guidelines for secondary education; (iii) explains interdisciplinarity as a teaching objective; (iv) explains contextualization as a critical element of the teaching practice: (v) offers supplementary references; (vi) presents complementary activities; (vii) provides cultural information to enrich teacher knowledge; (viii) promotes inseparability of theoretical and practical knowledge; (ix) suggests non-restrictive and culturally sensitive answers

While not mentioned directly in the PNLD publications, a quick perusal of the teacher's manuals make clear that these criteria are chosen and evaluated based on the perspective of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural and

interactional theory. This cognitivist theory explains general learning as being constructed through social interaction, which includes contact with the environment as well as with other social beings. As such, by emphasizing the learner's relationship with the environment and others, knowledge is consequently a cultural construction as well. Moreover, Vygotsky proposed the notion of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the theoretical space in which social interaction occurs by which learning thus becomes internalized. Extending this to language acquisition, language learners thus internalize the knowledge related to the additional language through social interaction, with classrooms thus being socially constructed events (Murray & Christison, 2011).

We can also see by the detailed criteria in the table above that a variety of discourse genres is preferred in oral and written activities so as to promote diversity in the broader sense, that is, with respect to culture, ethnicity, age, gender and society in general. Genres are compatible with the Vygotskyan perspective in that they are also socially constructed entities that, in the case of the language classroom, are proposed to facilitate learning.

Much research is dedicated to analyzing and providing critiques of how the textbooks address the four skills involved in the language learning process while assuming the larger commitment to sociocultural and political principles. Given the adjustments made from the first to second editions of the PNLD for foreign language textbooks, we expect that this research will only contribute to the positive development of the program.

4   THE ARTICLES OF THIS EDITION

Having provided a general overview of teaching and learning additional languages, in particular, English, in the Brazilian context, we are pleased to present the following articles that compose the current edition of BELT.

The first article of the edition, "Reflexões críticas sobre o ensino-aprendizagem de inglês como fator de inclusão ou exclusão social", is by Paula Graciano Pereira, in which the focus is on the socioeconomic and ideological implications of seeing English as a *lingua franca* and how this might reinforce social and political inequalities. As such, the author proposes a view of teaching that leads to a critical awareness of reality through the use of the English language.

In the second article, "Intercultural communicative competence in English language teaching: towards validation of student identity", by Angelica Galante, the aspect of intercultural communicative competence is highlighted among other sociocultural factors regarding its importance in English language teaching. Upon presenting a detailed model of this concept, Galante discusses the importance of students not only expressing their own identities and worldviews through the English language, but understanding and respecting those of others.

Authors Aline Fay and Augusto Buchweitz, in the article "Listening Comprehension: Explicit Training on Listening Strategies in Beginning L2 Learners", present the results of an experiment involving listening

comprehension tasks and the influence of teaching specific listening strategies on performance scores. Though the results are not entirely conclusive, they are suggestive of the idea that training students in listening strategies can be helpful in test-taking situations.

In the article entitled "Second Language Pedagogy and translation: the role of learners' own-language and explicit instruction revisited", Felipe Flores Kupske discusses translation as a tool for learning English as a second language, pointing out a series of advantages to using it for particular learning purposes. Despite longstanding criticisms regarding translation as a teaching method, the author proposes that, if treated in a contextualized manner in the classroom, it can promote language learning.

Feng Teng presents an experimental study in the article "The Effectiveness of Extensive Reading on EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning: Incidental versus Intentional Learning", which tests the effects of different types of teaching methods in extensive reading on learning vocabulary in English. The author found that a combination of methods was most effective in increasing productive vocabulary knowledge.

Deise Carldart Roscioli, Pâmela F. P. Toassi, Priscila Fabiane Farias and Raquel Carolina Souza Ferraz D'Ely are the authors of the article "The relationship between explicit learning and consciousness-raising tasks within a communicative language context", in which they present a study on whether awareness-raising tasks are capable of eliciting explicit learning, focused on superlative adjectives. Furthermore, the authors suggest that these types of tasks can be positively used in communicative contexts within a task-based framework.

Matheus de Almeida Barbosa and Larissa Santos Beserra address the topic of assessment in the article "Formative Assessment in the Foreign Language Classroom". As opposed to being a closed, one-off procedure, the authors claim that assessment is part of an ongoing cyclical process lasting the entire course. This perspective is proposed in better dealing with those students who might have learning difficulties.

Finally, this edition includes a review by Tanara Zingano Kuhn of Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English.

We would like to thank the authors for their contributions to this inaugural edition with a focus on English as an Additional Language and we wish our readers an enjoyable and fruitful reading experience.

BELT+ Editorial Team

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