Moving with and beyond Vygotsky: Interdisciplinary Research Perspective

Applied Linguistics: This interdisciplinary, crossdisciplinary or "antidisciplinary" field of study on the move

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Views of A. L.

1st: second or foreign language teaching

2nd: language related problems in various areas where language plays a major role

Views of A. L.

- Critical applied linguistics - version with breadth of coverage, interdisciplinarity and autonomy
- Result: AL deals with language in professional settings: translation, speech pathology, literacy and language education;
- It is no longer merely the application of linguistics knowledge to the above settings.

Views of A. L.

- It is an interdisciplinary (or even antidisciplinary) "domain of work that draws on, but is not dependent on areas such as sociology, education, anthropology, cultural studies and psychology." (Pennycook, 2001)

Views of A. L. and method of work

- It does not follow a teleological path of analysis – adopted by the rationalist perspective of science (Signorini, 1998), but produces knowledge by listening to all the participants involved.

- This responsive attitude (Bakhtin, 1929) towards the participants aims at a joint production of knowledge taking into account the type of knowledge that is being produced, the context of production, the social responsibility and the reflection (Moita Lopes, 1998)

Two key elements:

- It is the challenge of the importance once given to the theory-practice dichotomy that places A.L. on a critical perspective (Fidalgo, 2006)

- In A. L. studies, language is at the same time, an instrument and an object of study. As an instrument, it can maintain or question the status quo.

Language

- It is within language and by means of language that the senses of who we are, our modus operandi, our experiences, our actions, our subjectivities become evident even to ourselves (communicative actions – Habermas, 1985). Also, it is through language that these can be challenged and reorganized in social contexts situated in history and culture.

Our contexts; our participants

- Public schools in the outskirts of São Paulo, Brazil
- School teachers – often working three shifts, with classes of 40 students each. Little time for further education.
- I speak from my the position as a member of a research group (ILCAE) which has worked with teacher education and has carried out investigations on A.L. for over two decades.
- The paper was published with Magalhães, who is the leader of LACE - another research groupo which has been working with teacher education for over 20 years.
- We bear in mind the socio-cultural-historical theory, and the methodology of critical collaborative work,

A. L. - our method of work

- the concept of collaboration is seen in connection to critical reflection, since (1) it is the former that allows for the latter to occur; (2) being critical has often been interpreted as the same as criticizing others, when it actually means working in the realm of *us* or *we,* rather than on the *I-plus-the-other* perspective; (3) collaborative work does not embrace a dualistic view of knowledge construction – rather it is the transformation of the *whole* (environment, group, etc.) that is at stake.

A. L. - our method of work

- Organizing contexts for teacher education within their school settings by bearing in mind a performative understanding of A. L.

- This means – introducing transformations in the social, cultural and political conditions of thinking and acting in schools; involves creating a *locus* for participants to learn how to look at, and organize language to analyze the issues at stake.

Data

4 moments of research

– all taken from research finalized by students.

- Paper has been published –written by Magalhães and Fidalgo

- Shows movements, transformation within the theories adhered to.

Data: first moment

- *C: What did you notice?*
- *V: In general, I noticed I need to work on reading. When I saw the film, I realized I need to emphasize reading a lot because in writing they're OK. Isn't that so?*
- *C: Hum.*
- *V: ... You see, Gina, she is copying almost everything. Her handwriting is OK, reading is a great problem.*
- C:... Well, when you choose an activity you have a purpose in mind, don't you?
- V:... Hum, hum
- C: When you watched the film, did you realize what they were actually doing? Did you feel you reached your aim? For instance, the activities you used...

Data: first excerpt

- *Vania' s answer revealed she was analyzing her teaching and her understanding based on traditional views of literacy development in first grade – reading as decoding and writing as copying – and students' difficulties with the written language as a problem within them. However, my second prompt revealed Vania' s conflict motivated by her awareness of her difficulty in reaching her students, of her lack of control over her teaching, and all her dissatisfaction with this situation.*

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- *V: Well, I do not know if it is the right method, but I feel a great consistency is missing. Some days I did not know what to do.*

(Magalhães,1998)

Data: first excerpt

- Magalhães worked with collaborative ethnography here.
- During the process, critical collaboration.
- Main concern was with the language that constitutes and is constituted by the zone of proximal development – seen as a zone of conflict in which people re-organize their reasoning with the support of others (intervention).
- Key concepts in this moment were *turn-taking, negotiation, lexical choices,* and the *types of linguistic actions – questions, assertions, etc.*
- Data were analyzed with a view to check the types of interactions that the linguistic choices would allow for.

Data: second moment

- *C13: What type of knowledge do you think was the focus of this lesson?*

- *B13: I think I wanted something like this: I started with listening and worked a little on the structure of the English language, but my real objective was the oral part to finalise, performing a role-play, a dialogue, so there was a whole process. The lesson didn' t finish, it was ended.*

- *C14: ...but then you can continue... (...)*

- *C15: do this in another lesson...*

- *B15: yes, it was as I said before, in the beginning I tried to get them to participate more. (...)*

- *C16: But why do you think this happened?*

- *B16: Because giving everything ready for the student instead of getting answers from them is a habit. I think it is something that teachers do, because I, even though we have formed an image of language, we still can' t really do things that way, we explain what it is, but then we see ourselves doing something different.*

Data: second excerpt

- This research path shows linguistic mediational tools that enable the exploring of the frame of collaboration for critical research and for critical reflection. The linguistic mediational tools can be seen in the following actions:

- *describing: by use of concrete verbs; first person of speech for teacher-student if the person reporting is comfortable with the discussion of their own actions; and/or use of third person if they need more distance from their own action; as well as little or no use of opinion expressions;*

- *informing: by use of expressions for providing explanations, technical vocabulary (which refers to theories).*

- *confronting: by use of opinion expressions.*

- *reconstructing:by use of future perfect, action verbs and verbs of "saying"*

The data presented focused on **informing.** Interacting participants are state school teachers in the final year of a continuing program of teacher

Data: second excerpt

- By looking at data from this period, we can see that agents either followed a script – therefore avoiding the establishment of contradictions and the creation conflicting situations - or clearly got involved in conflicts that they often saw as personal rather than a means for re-organizing thought. In other words, we often saw that as a result of the emphasis on critical reflection, many students began to understand critical reasoning as a means to criticize the actions of others

Data: third moment

- Socio-discursive interactionism (Bronckart, 1997)
- Analysis carried out in this period included concepts such as: *context of production, thematic content, types of discourse, prototype sequences, utterance elements* (modalization, positioning and deitic concord*), textualization mechanisms* (coherence and cohesion devices).
- the context of production, besides allowing us to see the physical space *per se*, allowed us to see the social roles taken by interlocutors – allowing for the emergence of issues of power to be viewed;
- we also used the type of discourse so as to verify the extent to which each participant is implicated in the discussion in which they take place. Bronckart and Machado (2004:149) state that, depending on the type of discourse used, it is possible to see the different effects of proximity, subjectivity masking and indication of distance between interlocutors. In our search for linguistic tools, we also came across Bronckart's concept of sequenciality (argumentative, descriptive, narrative sequences, and so on). According to the author, these are modes of language planning. Finally, we have the concepts of utterance elements - divided into utterance responsibility (deitic concord) and voices, plus modalization (Bronckart,

Data: third excerpt

Deontic	Pragmatic	Psychological	Epistemic
C63: (...) they _need to promote guidance_, (...); they _have to organize_ a course.	C11: Otherwise we are going to send the student to this regular class, and he will arrive there and will be unattended because _he will not be able to do anything_.	C13(…) They say: "_We are in no conditions to receive_ this student" and they reject the student.	C6: (...)_Actually_, the student comes here to be prepared to face the regular class. _(Fidalgo, 2006)_

Data: third excerpt

- This excerpt shows that the school principal assesses the state government as not fulfilling their part of the deal in educational inclusion; thinks that the student needs a period of adaptation prior to being included in the regular classroom; and is unable to discuss the professional possibilities (or lack thereof) in other schools (since, after all, she has said that the government has not provided them with continuing education).

Data: fourth excerpt

- The intervention work we carry out today has extra concerns: clear political and ethical views of our roles as researchers and teacher educators have led us to think of collaboration as a key concept for the design of critical research – one that is creative (because it is not a means for an end, but tool-and-result) and respectful of the school needs. Transformation is still essential to any collaborative work, but transformation does not mean *a priori* formatted work to be applied. Transformation requires from participants that all get involved in the creation of this *locus* for collaborative work rather than having one group at the receiving, and another at the giving end of the continuum – a significant change in labor division.

Data: fourth moment

Rules that regulate verbal interactions	Modes	Examples
Turn-taking management rules	Implicit/explicit super-imposition of speech	C: _Let me ask you:_ do they have time to do the problem…
	Super-imposition of speech	C: You are going to bring _the films_... P: _…the films._ I'm putting them on the board. (both C and P spoke together)
	Interruption	C:… and to rotate the film (unfinished sentence) P: _Within the group._
rules that regulate the structural organization of interactions (opening sequence, interaction, closing sequence)	Interchange sequence (questions-answers, clarification requests-clarifications)	C: _Are you speaking of book summary?_ P: _Yes, that's it._

Data: fourth excerpt

Rules that intervene in the personal relationship	Vertical relationship	Turn opening	C: *What is your plan for this week?*
		High/low position	P: Oh! Ok. Now *I have a question here: why do they use a dot in Portuguese?* I keep asking myself if for these students who are starting to work with the concept of thousands…
		Modalization	C: I actually do see things *a little this way*; social activity is actually [´…] actually what *I think* that we have to give them is…
		Positive assessment	C: *This is nice.* And how are you going to work with them?

(Miakovsky, 2008)

4th moment

- *The concept of collaboration, from the perspective of critical knowledge production implies the existence of conflicts and tensions that will promote other senses.*

Views of A. L.

- "This self-reflexive position also suggests that critical applied linguistics is not concerned with producing itself as a new orthodoxy, with prescribing new models and procedures for doing applied linguistics. Rather, it is concerned with raising a host of new and difficult questions about knowledge, politics and ethics." (Pennycook, 2001)

Views of A. L.

- *Researchers ask themselves what to do: should they take differences into account so as to negotiate consensus, or simply describe the state of the art, pretending that the presence of the researcher is not itself a situation of intervention? If we take the latter, and accept that the investigator's presence is already a kind of imposition and modifies the scenario, should s/he take a position of neutrality? Or should s/he accept that actions can never be neutral, and therefore, attempt to transform the environment and the agents? If the investigator takes the latter position, should s/he take a position of someone who theoretically creates knowledge to be put into practice by educators – in an experimental concept of knowledge construction – or should s/he work to create a locus in which everyone could re-organize themselves? Considering the latter position is taken, would our investigator take the position of a member of the group – who will also try to re-organize his/her own actions? If so, wouldn't this inevitably invert the theory-practice relationship that is traditionally seen in teacher education*

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