



AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND ACTION-RESEARCH: REPORT OF A RESEARCHER AND ENGLISH TEACHER

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.16907939



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Abstract

This article represents some of the results of the research and development for the Master's in Education at the Universidade do Vale do Rio Sinos, especially with regard to action-research, in autobiographical mode, about how a Portuguese language teacher develops her teaching practice in a bilingual school, based on the most memorable moments reminiscing from the days as a student to professional life, emphasizing the training paths that emerged from the multiplicity of languages and the diversity that was present in various activities, times and educational settings. In this study, the partial results showed that the experience of additional training in an English language course was important to contribute not only for teacher training for the degree course but also for the expansion of the perspective of the investigative teacher about her educational practices in professional development, given the opportunity to work in a bilingual school in the state of Mato Grosso. In addition to these findings and the possibility of integrating with the Centro de Estudos Internacionais em Educacao (CEIE) da Unisinos, it was possible to conclude that although specialized continuing education has proved to be essential for the advancement of the teacher in her teaching career, this is not a reality within reach of most professionals in the basic education network.

Keywords: action-research; autobiography; bilingual education; teaching practice.

1 Jaqueline Gisele dos Santos: from childhood to a bilingual teacher in constant training

Since my childhood, from the memories I can access from when I was 6 and 7 years old, I remember playing and pretending to be a teacher and simulating a little school, using a blackboard made by my father, which was placed directly on the concrete wall at the back of

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my house. When I was 12 years old, my older sister received a scholarship to study at a language school and I was able to enroll there, and from then on learning English became a goal in my life.

Along with my interest in English, the desire to be a teacher was taking shape and growing inside of me, of fundamental importance was the methodologies and attitudes of my teachers who were part of my academic evolution, either during elementary school and junior high school (in a private school), or in high school (in a public school).

The decision to become a teacher had some essential factors, the main and first being my family's educational background and training. Of my 12 siblings, 2 are teachers: one teaches history and the other is a pedagogue. The latter was responsible for teaching me how to read and write at home, due to my extreme curiosity and her willingness to teach, so that when I started school, I already knew how to read and write.

My contact with the English language took a little longer since the subject started to appear in my life only from the 6th grade (currently junior high school), but it was love at first sight, and ever since then I've been enchanted by this disciplinary component. From the beginning, the experience I had with the foreign language contributed as a motivating factor for me, contrary to what could be expected in a general context of education, to learn to speak and communicate through the English language.

So, when I finished high school, I had already decided for a long time about the profession I wanted to follow. Therefore, I took the entrance exams and was accepted into the degree program for Handwriting/English in 2004. After four years, in the same month I graduated, in August 2008, I was offered the possibility of starting my work as a teacher, teaching classes.

In the course of my professional trajectory, in which I worked with the first and last year high school students, and after graduating with a degree in Handwriting and Science Education, I started to reflect on how to promote pedagogical practices in the English language that permeate the enchantment that the language initially entails and that really prepares the student for real life, offering students the possibility that bilingual schools could



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contribute to their education and learning process and the development of their role in the world in which they are inserted.

At this stage, after graduation, I realized that I needed to expand my study cycle and knowledge of the English language, which made me seek new opportunities, looking for new concepts and ideas that culminated in my registration and acceptance to participate in an exchange program in South Africa, in the city of Cape Town.

This experience can be considered as the mark of the change in my perspective and understanding of languages, language and bilingualism, so that upon returning to Brazil, more specifically to the state of Mato Grosso, I sought to enter into a master's degree program in order to research and reflect on the topic of bilingualism, which I succeeded together with the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos).

When I returned, simultaneously with my admission to the master's degree program, I was also invited to join the Centro de Estudos Internacionais em Educacao (CEIE) da Unisinos, in recognition of my work within bilingual teaching practice in Brazil, since the center is returning to do research on academic production regarding internationalization in teaching.

The experience as an active bilingual teacher, both in the private and state networks, added to the knowledge acquired along my trajectory, in the realization that, even with the existence of bilingual schools, they are not yet on the official websites, made me question things about how the state of Mato Grosso, through the competent departments, has dealt with the topic.

This study, in a larger context, stems from the experiences lived in my history as a student at the national level, an exchange student in a foreign setting and a bilingual school teacher, which led me to state that, from this experience of studying the language internationally and working in public and private schools, I started a phase of my life to experience the practices learned outside the country in the classrooms, as an effective way to create opportunities for bilingual education.





This understanding is in line with the one done by Souza (2006, p. 137) that the adoption of "[...] training narratives as a research-training movement, whether in the initial or continuing education of teachers or in research focused on the memories or autobiographies of teachers" it is shown to be one of the appropriate ways, since, based on relationships that are being established by the professional between theory and practice, it influences and contributes to the way in which teaching practice takes place.

2 The approaches of autobiography and action-research to the development of academic-scientific research

Knowing the life trajectory and the academic and professional aspects that marked my career contributed to the understanding that the experiences during the complementary training in an English language course were relevant, because, in addition to contributing to the guarantee of a continuous training process in the area of teaching, made it possible to access the information that is being applied in pedagogical practices, giving the teacher the opportunity to work in a bilingual private school, in the state of Mato Grosso, which has as one of the requirements to hire a teacher with international experience who speaks Portuguese and English.

For Souza (2008), the use of the autobiographical approach proves to be a relevant scenario not only for the researcher to unravel his/her story a little more, but also to be able to perceive the context that formed it in the present, leading them to reflect on their daily lives and how to make changes in their performance to contribute to the transformation they want in society.

Agreeing with the author, conducting research focused on the autobiographical approach brought fruitful contributions to the understanding of school culture and everyday life, from the school's material memory [...]", that allow a deeper understanding of the context of what needs to be done to implement improvements that meet the contemporary needs of society (Souza, 2008, p. 45).



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And, as indicated by Minayo (2000), researchers begin to use this procedure --- from the autobiography --- as a means of complementing the documentary and theoretical contributions and the observations made, since it can add personal data and subjective views, taking into account their social and biographical place. Therefore, individual experiences are presented as a way of representing the educational reality experienced by the teacher, who translates their practices to the social collective.

This understanding can be synthesized from the manifestation of Souza and Passeggi (2011, p. 328) that "autobiographical research in education depends on the interpretation of those who build/live the history. In this sense, she has an interest [...] by the processes of biographization of teachers in training [...]". These experiences, which prove to be formative, allow the teacher to articulate his/her professional activity, sensitivity and affection, and ideal conceptions, which are built along his/her trajectory.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that, as pointed out by Esteban (2010, p. 67, Author's emphasis), it is up to the researcher to place himself/herself within the process of defining the topics addressed, since, according to him, "[...] we must be able to take the place of others. This decision is an interaction. It is a symbolic interaction because it is only possible for 'significant symbols', that is, language and other symbolic tools".

In the view of this perspective, the complementary choice for action- research is supported by Pereira (2016, p. 74), which adds that this methodology makes it possible to develop:

[...] processes of subjectivation and deterritorialization, as well as denaturalization of the self and of the investigated object, in order to lead the subject to produce what is not expected: a novelty, a new meaning, a full speech.

Thiollent, in his reference work in the field of scientific research, *Metodologia da pesquisa-ação* (1986, p. 14), indicates that this basically consists of:





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[...] a type of empirically based social research that is conceived and carried out in close association with an action or the resolution of a collective problem and in which researchers and participants representing the situation or problem are involved in a cooperative or participatory way.

This implies that, based on empirical research, which is based on the search for relevant data obtained through the researcher's experience, action research makes it possible to take into account the description of concrete situations observed and actions in socio-educational environments, without disregarding the theoretical research and the meaning given by its contributions.

Its relevance to the proposed study is also supported by the fact that, as it is a qualitative research, action-research gives the information collected a descriptive character, and therefore, rich in meanings, when considering the context in which the investigation is carried out.

Finally, by qualifying this study as an action-research, it is understood that there is an action on the part of this researcher, while inserting herself as a subject in the investigative process, with information relative to the scope studied (TRIPP, 2005).

The author's thinking seeks to update the concepts presented by Thiollent (1986) to encompass, within the concept of the term action-research, the processes that follow "[...] a cycle in which practice is improved through the systematic oscillation between acting in the field of practice and investigating it." (TRIPP, 2005, p. 445).

Thus, the use of action-research, together with autobiographical methodology, allows the research to develop in a reflexive, systematic and oriented way to solve situational problems experienced in teaching, with the driving force being the desire for change, transformation and improvement of the socio-educational reality.





3 Final considerations

The study made it possible to highlight a little of the trajectory of an English language teacher who works in bilingual education and to understand how the autobiographical reports present in research focused on the educational context are important to understand the nuances of the school trajectory, through one of its main actors, the teacher, whose motivations and challenges, contributing to the understanding of how to change classroom life based on experiences that marked their lives during their academic and professional trajectory.

In this partial stage of the master's degree study, it was possible to understand and reflect on the place of teaching and its experiences based on a continuous search for continuing education, through the approaches of autobiographical and action-research, as resources to revisit the main conceptions on the teaching practice in bilingual education and to seek improvements in the teaching and learning processes, based on experiences.

The incorporation of the teachers' experience, when carrying out a reassessment of himself/herself, his/her training process and performance in the classroom, a path to be followed in contemporary times, for the development of an innovative bilingual education, meant and imbued with the desire to transform and change the bilingual education system for the better, whether in the private or public sphere, in a recognized way in the state and national scenarios and with teaching quality.

When associated with action-research, the autobiographical approach is shown to be a socio-educational intervention strategy that provides the researcher with the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their own problems, in search of possible solutions for the transformation of reality.

Finally, it was also possible to expand the researcher's knowledge, helping to advance the research study for the master's degree and to fulfill the planned and proposed steps for the organization and development of the research.





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Recebido em: 11/06/2025

Aprovado em: 22/07/2025

Publicado em: 19/08/2025

