

Complexity and transdisciplinarity in Applied Linguistics: an interview with Maximina M. Freire

Complexidade e transdisciplinariedade na Linguística Aplicada: uma entrevista com Maximina M. Freire

Maximina M. Freire



Maximina.freire@gmail.com

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brasil.

Kleber Aparecido da Silva



kleberaparecidodasilva@gmail.com

Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brasil. (CNPq)

Abstract

Widely known for her pioneering work with complex and transdisciplinary approaches, researcher Maximina M. Freire generously accepted our request to do this written interview, which is divided into two parts. First, we aim to delve into the philosophical foundations and motivations that have guided her distinguished career, offering our readers an in-depth look at the forces that shape her research and theoretical positions. Next, we seek to inspire the next generation of researchers from the Global South by sharing her ideas on how to navigate the complexities of interdisciplinary research, the evolution of her theoretical perspectives, and her vision for the future.

Keywords: Applied Linguistics; Complexity; Transdisciplinarity.

Resumo

Amplamente conhecida por seu trabalho pioneiro com abordagens complexas e transdisciplinares, a pesquisadora Maximina M. Freire generosamente aceitou o nosso pedido em fazer esta entrevista escrita, que está dividida em duas partes. Primeiro, pretendemos aprofundar os fundamentos filosóficos e as motivações que guiaram a sua ilustre carreira, oferecendo aos nossos leitores um olhar aprofundado sobre as forças que moldam a sua investigação e as suas posições teóricas. A seguir, procuramos inspirar a próxima geração de pesquisadores/as do Sul Global, compartilhando as suas ideias sobre como navegar nas complexidades da investigação interdisciplinar, a evolução das suas perspectivas teóricas e a sua visão para o futuro.

Palavras chaves: Linguística Aplicada; Complexidade; Transdisciplinariedade.



10.23925/2318-7115.2025v46i2e73791



FLUXO DA SUBMISSÃO:

Submissão do trabalho: 16/10/2025

Aprovação do trabalho: 12/11/2025

Publicação do trabalho: 17/12/2025

AVALIADO POR:

André Effgen de Aguiar (Ifes)

Tatiane Molini Barros (PUC-SP)

EDITADO POR:

Luciana Kool Modesto-Sarra (PUC-SP)

COMO CITAR:

SILVA, Kleber Aparecido da; FREIRE, Maximina Maria. Complexidade e transdisciplinariedade na Linguística Aplicada: uma entrevista com Maximina M. Freire. *The Specialist*, [S. l.], v. 46, n. 2, p. 12–33, 2025. DOI: 10.23925/2318-7115.2025v46i2e73791.





Maximina Maria Freire é professora da Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. Tem experiência nas áreas de Linguística Aplicada, Educação, Tecnologia Educacional e Educação a Distância, Complexidade e Transdisciplinaridade, atuando em docência, pesquisa, extensão e orientação, principalmente, nos seguintes temas: formação de professores em/para contextos presenciais,

híbridos, remotos e digitais; planejamento, implementação e avaliação de interfaces digitais e ambientes digitais de ensino-aprendizagem; tecnologia educacional; CALL; CMC; educação a distância; design educacional complexo, abordagem hermenêutico-fenomenológica complexa de pesquisa; ensino-aprendizagem de idiomas; complexidade e transdisciplinaridade, transmídia e transletramento. É líder do Grupo de Pesquisa sobre a Abordagem Hermenêutico-Fenomenológica e Complexidade (www.gpeahfc.com), cadastrado no Diretório CNPq, desde 2010. É Diretora de Projetos e membro do Comitê Científico do Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas Edgar Morin, no Brasil e **nossa homenageada neste dossiê que comemora seus 50 anos de dedicação à educação e à pesquisa em nosso país.**

1. Career and Motivations

1.1 What inspired you to enter the field of applied linguistics, and how have your motivations evolved over your career?

Looking back over the years and reflecting on my journey, I would say that languages have consistently motivated my studies and influenced my decision to pursue a career as a language teacher and teacher educator. I have always been deeply interested in the human capacity to communicate through diverse linguistic codes, enabling the transmission of both objective and subjective aspects that shape words and their meanings for speakers across languages and contexts.

I began studying French and later English as part of the standard Elementary and High School curriculum. In this sense, my exposure to foreign languages did not occur in language institutes or private schools. As a student, I was particularly interested in learning new vocabulary and eager to use these words in oral interactions with teachers and classmates, as well as in my personal writing. I was intrigued by the individual, social, historical, and cultural meanings embedded in communication whenever one thinks or interacts through languages. This realization motivated me to pursue an undergraduate course in Languages. My goal was to fulfill my academic curiosity, broaden my theoretical and methodological foundation, and strengthen my linguistic knowledge and skills in preparation for a teaching career. At that time, General Linguistics was included as one of the disciplines in the undergraduate curriculum, but it involved no references to or discussions of Applied Linguistics. In the 1970s, Applied Linguistics was not yet part of university language programs.

When I started working as a language teacher, my curiosity began to extend to my students' learning process. I aimed to find new methodologies to shorten their learning paths and facilitate the development of their English skills. Initially, I was not fully aware of the research dimension of my teaching. However, I consistently sought to enhance my professional competence and address my students' challenges in communicating in English. In other words, although not aware, I was a teacher and a tacit researcher engaged in understanding how language knowledge was built and used, in identifying the roles it performed in an individual's life, and in finding ways to improve myself and others in linguistic terms.

Reflecting on that, I suppose that by associating research and teaching, I was performing the role of an intuitive, tacit applied linguist who had her actions restricted to the specific fields of teaching and learning. Although this perspective is now regarded as narrow and controversial, it provided a foundational framework for understanding Applied Linguistics and continues to serve as an important approach for distinguishing the roles and concerns of applied linguists. I should therefore highlight that, through my career development and consequently through continuous theoretical and methodological study and inquiry, my understanding of Applied Linguistics has evolved to recognize that it involves the systematic study of multiple interconnected dimensions of language. I now realize that the field aims to promote intelligibility in contexts where language is central.

My career followed this trajectory until I recognized a desire to pursue new challenges and embrace greater risks. This determination materialized when I learned about, decided to apply for, and received a scholarship for the *In-Service Foreign Teachers Training Program*, offered by the Japanese government's Ministry of Education. The program aimed at professional development according to the project submitted by the candidate.

This scholarship introduced me to a new environment characterized by distinct physical, historical, social, cultural, and linguistic contexts in a country with numerous challenges. Japan offered an ideal setting for my research into methodologies of teaching English as a foreign language. In this sense, living in Osaka for six months and in Tokyo for one year provided me with a wealth of life experiences and relevant linguistic motivation. It also left me with many answered and unsolved questions, along with a great deal of curiosity and a desire to continue investigating languages.

However, if my research target in Japan had a methodological nature, reality brought new perspectives and motivation to me. In addition to developing the intended project, I also had the opportunity to explore possibilities for introducing computers into the foreign language teaching-learning process. It was a new inquiry area that could be approached when computers represented the most important issue at that moment. As a teacher seeking new paths and innovative motivation, this opportunity was the right one to explore. Hence, my initial experience with computers marked a pivotal moment in my life, a meaningful turning point that revealed the intricate intersection of language, technology, teaching, and learning as a challenging yet rewarding field for exploration.

By discovering new possibilities, I began to explore the routes I could envision, even though I have never given up teaching. After returning from Japan, I resumed my positions in both public and private schools, continuing the professional path I had established before my international experience. Nevertheless, I recognized a need to further my studies. At this stage, my academic focus became clearly defined as Applied Linguistics. Since identifying this area of interest, I have consistently explored Applied Linguistics throughout my master's and doctoral studies, as well as in my professional and academic career. I continue to be deeply interested in exploring its potential interconnections, inherent challenges, and motivating factors.

1.2 Can you share any pivotal moments or key influences that significantly shaped your research direction or theoretical stance?

As I have already mentioned, my primary motivation was to understand how non-native speakers, particularly Brazilian teachers and students, construct and use their knowledge of English as a foreign language.

The second relevant motivation arose in Japan when I was introduced to the field of technology, particularly to *computer-assisted language learning* (CALL). Researching this area was intimidating at first, but it became quite intriguing as I explored it further and discovered more aspects to reflect on and understand. Computers sparked a new interest that not only impressed me as a teacher but also profoundly changed the path of my life, leading me to define Educational Technology as another research area. At that time, it was a brand-new area in Brazil, and even abroad. My curiosity motivated me to pursue this field further to understand how that machine could be integrated into the language teaching-learning process. For this reason, I deepened my research focus on this field and developed my master's studies at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP).

As a graduate student, I focused my research on the potential of computers as educational tools and their impact on the oral production of English as a foreign language. To reach these goals, my dissertation was theoretically grounded on Vygotsky's view of social interaction, associating foreign language development with the use of a computer simulation program (*SimCity*) as a tool to encourage High School students' oral production in English. This was the core motivation of my research titled "*Interaction and computer simulation: a proposal in CALL*" (Freire, 1992). My dissertation was the first Brazilian master's research on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) within the field of Applied Linguistics.

During my doctoral studies, immersed in linguistic and technological contexts, I broadened the research setting by focusing on the human-machine relationship and examining electronic business communication through computers. More specifically, I explored *computer-mediated communication* (CMC) and identified the genres conveyed through electronic media, as well as their features. My research aimed to examine how Brazilian professionals communicated in English through email in work-related interactions. This topic inspired me to study abroad, and

then, at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (Canada), I developed the thesis titled “*Computer-mediated communication in the business territory: a joint expedition through email messages and reflections upon job activities*” (Freire, 1998).

In addition to examining email communication in business settings, I encountered and accepted the challenge of employing a novel research methodology while developing my doctoral research: the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach (van Manen, 1990). At that time, this research approach was relatively uncommon, which contributed to its appeal for me. The significant and thought-provoking influence of van Manen’s proposal prompted me to explore how these philosophical trends might be interconnected to achieve similar emphasis and relevance. As a result, I formulated a comprehensive framework that offers a systematic and balanced methodological approach for interpreting lived experience phenomena (Freire, 2010, 2012).

My doctoral research was the origin of the methodological approach I have been building up since then, culminating in the foundations of what I now refer to as the *complex hermeneutic-phenomenological approach* (Freire, 2017). Reflecting on that, I understand that staying initially connected with van Manen’s methodological proposal and recognizing its scope and potential became not only a motivation but also a significant academic turning point. It awakened my desire to explore it further and seek its consolidation through other theoretical associations. This methodological proposition unquestionably represents the third meaningful motivation in my academic career.

Back in Brazil, as a faculty member of the Graduate Program of Applied Linguistics and Language Studies (LAEL) at PUC-SP, I got immersed in teaching, research, academic advising, and the design of extension courses that integrated Applied Linguistics, Educational Technology, and Research Methodology (with an initial emphasis on the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach, as outlined by van Manen). Although I had established a clear research trajectory, I remained committed to exploring additional theoretical perspectives. This ongoing inquiry prompted me to study the works of Edgar Morin. Through critical engagement with his research and that of his followers, I developed a deeper understanding of the epistemology of complexity and transdisciplinarity.

Consequently, I integrated this emerging body of knowledge with my established theoretical and methodological foundations. The emerging interconnections provided me with

the basis for coining and developing constructs that revealed themselves as intriguing and relevant: the *complex hermeneutic-phenomenological approach* (Freire, 2017), the *complex educational design* (Freire, 2013, 2020, 2024), and the *teacher self-hetero-eco-formation* (Freire, 2009; Freire, Leffa, 2013). Therefore, the epistemology of complexity, along with transdisciplinarity, represents the fourth significant motivation I recognize in my academic trajectory and potentially my third milestone — a meaningful life turning point.

2. Research Philosophy and Methodology

2.1 How would you describe the philosophical foundations of your research? How have these influenced your approach to language education and applied linguistics?

As I reflect on my theoretical and methodological development, I recognize that languages, technology, experience, hermeneutics, phenomenology, transdisciplinarity, and complexity have consistently served as foundational pillars guiding and supporting my studies and research in Applied fields.

Throughout my career, I gradually became familiar with these pillars, whose implicit and explicit interconnections, along with their recursive and reciprocal movement, formed an extensive knowledge network. Language serves as a foundational mechanism for integrating emerging assumptions and outcomes, interpreted through hermeneutic and phenomenological views within a complex and transdisciplinary framework. Moreover, this approach integrates computers and internet resources into my studies and research, thus revealing them as relevant mediation tools that impact interpersonal interaction, news broadcasting, and information storage.

Recognizing these pillars, their significance, and their interconnections has allowed me to move beyond a narrow perspective of Applied Linguistics focused solely on language teaching and learning. I now understand Applied Linguistics as a systemic, complex, and transdisciplinary field that examines how language both shapes and is shaped by social interactions. It influences communication, affects the negotiation of meaning, contributes to the construction and

expression of identities, and reveals prejudices, political positions, and various forms of intolerance and discrimination.

2.2 Your research often integrates interdisciplinary perspectives. How do you navigate these choices, and what advice would you give to researchers looking to adopt a similarly interdisciplinary approach?

I characterize my research as transdisciplinary rather than interdisciplinary because I purposefully integrate various fields of knowledge to examine the constructs and concepts under investigation and to identify their key intersections. In this regard, for instance, the conception embedded in the *complex hermeneutic-phenomenological approach* reveals a coherent methodological association, grounded in the meanings of the theoretical bases that constitute it. This approach, whose name suggests a transdisciplinary connection, is intentionally hyphenated and enables the investigation, description, and interpretation of complex phenomena of lived experience, allowing for the identification of themes that constitute their inner essence and give them identity. The significance of this philosophical and epistemological interconnection is established through language, which plays a crucial role in articulating relationships *across, through, and beyond* disciplines (Nicolescu, 1999), and shaping research outcomes. I argue that this dynamic is most effectively situated within Applied Linguistics, since language functions both as a medium and as a goal within this interconnected theoretical context.

By deepening my thoughts and reflections, I recognize that a consistent link can be established between the fields of Complexity and Applied Linguistics. Complexity mitigates fragmentation and disjunction by enabling multiple avenues for integrating knowledge from diverse fields through language. The resulting comprehension is both multidimensional and multi-referential, characterized as linguistically complex and complexly linguistic. This relationship is possible because language functions as an open-ended, contextualized system whose components interact in various ways, forming a network of unpredictable possibilities. Then, Applied Linguistics can be understood as closely attached to the Epistemology of Complexity through sustained systemic and transdisciplinary links. This association underpins the conceptualization of *Complex Transdisciplinary Applied Linguistics* as a comprehensive and multifaceted field (Freire, 2020a).

3. Contributions and Impact

3.1 Of your many contributions to the field, which do you see as the most impactful or significant, and why?

Identifying my most significant contribution is challenging, as the concepts and notions I have developed influence various areas within Applied Linguistics in distinct ways. Nevertheless, it is worth touching on three of them because they share a significant common thread.

The first is the *complex hermeneutic-phenomenological approach* that I have just mentioned. Despite its established definition and characteristics, this methodological orientation positions the researcher in a complex relationship with the investigation. It is characterized by both objective subjectivity and subjective objectivity, reflecting an inherently intricate perspective. Accordingly, researchers are required to engage in the investigation both objectively and subjectively. This dual engagement requires a unique methodological approach, which contrasts with research orientations that recommend a neutral and objective methodology.

The second contribution I can mention is the *complex educational design* (Freire, 2013, 2024; Freire & Sá, 2020): a methodological support that, by articulating three distinct but interdependent constructs (*preparation, execution, reflection*), generates a frame that allows the creation of complex and transdisciplinary courses/activities. These constructs should not be perceived as sequential steps or phases, as they intersect constantly like interconnected gears, thus providing recursive reciprocal feedback. The teacher or designer can move back and forth between and across the three constructs, creating a progressive movement that allows dealing with them individually, without losing sight of the inherent association that emerges from and interconnects them.

The third contribution pertains to the deliberately hyphenated term *teacher self-hetero-ecoformation* (Freire, 2009; Freire & Leffa, 2013). This concept envisions teacher education from a tripolar perspective, grounded in the individual who becomes responsible for his/her own development (*self-formation*), who is formed while forming others (*hetero formation*), in an environment conducive to teacher education (*eco-formation*). These three poles operate

concurrently and are associated with four distinct dimensions: subject, object, relationships, and interaction. From this perspective, teacher education is conceptualized not as a linear temporal continuum separating *pre-service* and *in-service* processes, but as an integrated frame that emphasizes individuals, their relationships, and the diverse contexts in which teacher education takes place.

In addition to the contributions mentioned, I emphasize *transmedia storytelling* and *transliteracy* (Freire, 2020b, 2022) as meaningful constructs that reveal complex and transdisciplinary intersections among Applied Linguistics, Technology, Communication, and Publicity. Transmedia storytelling refers to a work of transversal fiction that is systematically expanded across multiple media delivery platforms. The resulting narrative maintains stable, convergent connections with the primary narrative, remaining content-based and fostering a unified, coordinated experience that encourages audience engagement. This concept reinforces the emerging systemic characteristics of the narrative universe, which links the original fiction to its subsequent expansions. Highlighting the rhizomatic structure of this universe is crucial, as it indicates the presence of a “transmedia ecosystem” (FREIRE, 2020b, p.12) that encompasses not only the narrative itself but also its writers and readers, who are producers and consumers, respectively.

In its turn, *transliteracy* constitutes a distinct phenomenon that generates a non-linear movement across, through, and beyond both multiple media platforms and various forms of literacy. This process engenders a form of literateness that is fundamentally distinct from previously recognized types. By comprising multiple languages, transliteracy enables producers and consumers to engage within the narrative world and the transmedia ecology, thereby situating them within the domain of transliteracy.

Reflecting on the identified constructs, I can recognize that the epistemology of complexity serves as both an implicit and explicit foundation in my work. This foundation enables me to integrate diverse domains of knowledge, foster deeper understanding, and support the development of novel concepts from previously unexplored perspectives. Therefore, I consider my research on complexity from a Morinian perspective, and its broader implications, to be my most significant contribution to the field of Applied Linguistics.

3.2 How have your theoretical stances evolved, and what have been the major turning points or challenges in developing your critical perspective on language and education?

By revisiting and reflecting on my academic and professional trajectory, I can identify four primary motivations: languages, computers, the association between hermeneutics and phenomenology, and, more recently, the epistemology of complexity. I consider them powerful theoretical and methodological motivational forces because they had a tremendous personal impact. They provoked unique knowledge connections and life transitions that transformed my way of being in the world and approaching life, as I explained when I detailed my life's pivotal moments and key influences.

These motivations represent significant turning points that guided my transition from studying languages to investigating computer-mediated language learning (CALL) and computer-mediated communication (CMC). This trajectory progressed to the development of a methodological approach grounded in both hermeneutics and phenomenology. Initially intuitive and later explicit, I integrated knowledge from multiple disciplines throughout this process to deepen my understanding of complexity principles and transdisciplinarity.

Possibly, the third turning point may be considered the most influential, as it corresponds to a meaningful life transition by broadening my comprehension of how complex, intertwined all aspects of life are. The most significant discovery so far is recognizing the relevance of language in my path of development: I have moved from viewing it as a school subject studied for its inner structures to understanding it as an open complex system. This system both grounds and is grounded by situated social interactions, defining the roles performed by language users, and the meanings that are conveyed or collaboratively constructed. Such a perception is now shaping my sight as an individual, as a teacher, as a teacher educator, and ultimately as a complex applied linguist.

4. Future Directions

4.1 What emerging trends or areas of research do you believe are crucial for the future of applied linguistics and language education?

Reflecting on this question, I recognize the importance of critically examining the meaning and implications of language in the contemporary world. I concur with Edgar Morin's view that modern society experiences interconnected crises, or *policrises* (Morin & Kern, 2011), which function as complex transdisciplinary systems characterized by multidimensional and multi-referential actions, reactions, unpredictability, uncertainties, ambiguities, conflicts, and contradictions.

In the current global context, characterized by contested ideologies and various forms of tension, I observe ongoing efforts to maintain stability, develop strategies for managing the overwhelming volume of media information, and initiate actions to clarify issues resulting from the spread of fake news. I also notice the implementation of measures to counter prejudice and intolerance, address human rights violations, and protect diversity. Furthermore, I witness responses to negationist discourses and critical analyses of distorted forms of patriotism that are used to justify extreme actions. In other words, despite significant threats to its long-term survival, the planet persists.

Although certain measures have been implemented, I find them insufficient to address the ongoing abuse and atrocities occurring daily in both developed and developing countries worldwide. Reflecting on this situation, I acknowledge the influence of structural factors across political, economic, historical, ethical, cultural, and linguistic domains. However, instead of analyzing each factor in isolation or highlighting their interconnections, I choose to focus on what I perceive as their common ground: *communication, knowledge, and information*.

In my view, communication plays an essential role in both constructing knowledge and disseminating information. This connection poses challenges, including ineffective meaning-making, imprecise information transfer, and, thus, frequent misunderstandings and misinterpretations. These challenges are interrelated through a recursive feedback process that is directly relevant to Applied Linguistics and language education.

Language not only guides and materializes thought but also shapes and is shaped by human actions and interactions. It can initiate events and actions, accompany their progression, and document results and implications. This process enables recollection and reconsideration, as well as the evaluation of any outcome.

Therefore, it is essential not only to know a language but also to employ it strategically and appropriately within specific contexts, with an awareness of its potential effects. Such consideration is vital for ensuring clear communication and effective interaction among individuals engaged in socially significant situations. This issue is especially pertinent given the multiple overlapping crises, referred to as policrises, that define contemporary social contexts at both local and global levels.

These considerations highlight the importance of literacy as a comprehensive yet essential concept. In this field, the significance of multiliteracies and transliteracy lies in their potential to achieve adequate outcomes in each communicative situation effectively. In addition to exploring these constructs, the role of critical discourse analysis, combined with the principles of systemic-functional linguistics, is significant not only for analyzing and evaluating lexical choices but also for interpreting both conveyed and intended meanings, thus avoiding misunderstandings and the dissemination of fake news. In my opinion, the suggested aspects emerge as important issues to be examined throughout the teaching-learning process and the formal education of language professionals.

Building on my previous considerations, I emphasize that a thorough analysis of media communication must prioritize social networks such as Facebook and Instagram, as well as instant messaging applications, including WhatsApp and Threads. This approach can clarify key characteristics of synchronous and asynchronous informal communication and interpersonal interactions across diverse digital environments.

Having considered several alternatives, I highlight artificial intelligence as a pivotal focus within current research and analysis in language education and Applied Linguistics. Research in this area may have substantial implications for content creation, authorship, and the development of effective information curation mechanisms. Despite the broad applicability of artificial intelligence, there is also a lack of systematic research on its methods for browsing, organizing, and presenting information, the characteristics of texts it summarizes and generates, and its impact across various knowledge domains.

4.2 What advice would you offer to young researchers who wish to make a meaningful impact in the field of applied linguistics?

The first and perhaps most important advice I can offer to young researchers in Applied Linguistics and to those aspiring to be applied linguists is to preserve intellectual curiosity and remain genuinely open to the evolution of established boundaries. Knowledge is dynamic, and developments that appear unattainable today may become feasible in the future. In this sense, strict adherence to theoretical and methodological dogmatisms and inflexibility is not always justified. I recommend considering each theoretical perspective, bearing in mind its contextual and historical circumstances, to apply it carefully to specific research contexts and target situations.

As a researcher in Applied Linguistics, it is crucial to remain skeptical and open to new possibilities and unique explanations. It is important to remember that any study or research object involves distinct angles to consider, from which qualities and limitations emerge that may alter initial assumptions. At the same time, an applied linguist will be expected to be firm and convinced of his/her ideas and discoveries, but particularly in these situations, it is also relevant to be humble and open to critique.

In my view, because applied linguists engage directly with language, they become integral components of its situated open system, which is naturally complex. This complex system comprises interrelated, interdependent elements, including linguistic, personal, social, historical, political, ethical, and cultural factors, all of which dynamically interact recursively and reciprocally. Understanding these interconnections demands careful observation and objectivity. However, linguistic investigation and interpretation require subjectivity, which must be cultivated through objective means. Although this guidance may initially appear contradictory, addressing such contradictions is a possible and important feature of research in Applied Linguistics.

In addition, I would like to stress that an applied linguist's primary motivation should not be to influence specific domains of knowledge. Instead, meaningful impact emerges through sustained, rigorous scholarship grounded in reliable sources and a well-defined, clearly articulated interpretive and methodological framework.

5. Broader Implications

5.1 In your view, what role does applied linguistics play in addressing global challenges, such as linguistic inequality, education accessibility, or cultural preservation?

My understanding of Applied Linguistics and its possible interrelated areas has evolved through sustained engagement with influential scholars, including Antonieta Celani, Marilda Cavalcanti, Luiz Paulo Moita Lopes, Edgar Morin, Basarab Nicolescu, Maria Candida Moraes, Izabel Petraglia, Marilda Beherens, Maria da Conceição Almeida, and Edgar de Assis Carvalho. Their research has significantly informed my perspective on the relationship between language and social phenomena, as well as on their interconnected areas. Building on their contributions, I have critically re-examined and expanded my prior knowledge, thus becoming confident to reconceptualize and envision this domain as *Complex Transdisciplinary Applied Linguistics* (Freire, 2020a).

The emerging network of relations and implications among the three referenced constructs delineates a more comprehensive and inclusive system. The resulting systemic scope and its associated objectives facilitate a distinctive reinterpretation of Applied Linguistics that situates language use within contextualized, ecological frameworks across diverse contexts. This approach elucidates both explicit and implicit relationships and intentions, as well as the interconnected and interdependent meanings, by employing a transversal and transdisciplinary approach.

The systemic approach underlying this theoretical association demonstrates the feasibility of connections between Applied Linguistics and other related fields. This perspective posits that global challenges, such as linguistic inequality, educational accessibility, and cultural preservation, for instance, can be addressed through a linguistic framework that is simultaneously complex and transdisciplinary. Such a framework situates language within a complex systemic stance, enabling movement across, through, and beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries and research postures, thus overcoming pre-established knowledge frontiers to construct new meanings and/or create brand-new investigation areas.

5.2 How do you see the integration of applied linguistics with other disciplines evolving to address complex societal issues?

As I mentioned, my perspective on Applied Linguistics has evolved to recognize it as a complex and transdisciplinary field of study and research. This understanding supports the confrontation of different, distinct constructs and concepts, enabling exploratory approaches that, by going across, through, and beyond established boundaries, can reveal creative intersections and foster innovative areas of inquiry.

In this context, I emphasize that multiple forms of articulation between Applied Linguistics and other disciplines or fields of expertise are possible, in the comprehension of target issues that may also be of a social nature. This question highlights the Applied Linguistics' potential to engage both transdisciplinary objects and subjects within *a non-resistance zone* (Nicolescu, 1999) that encourages the interaction between previous knowledge of any field and new information of any source. This interplay gives rise to a continuously recursive movement of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, thus generating transversal knowledge that, by being innovative, may challenge pre-established or generally accepted concepts or definitions.

6. Engagement with Emerging Discourses

Professor Freire your more recent work/research, you have engaged deeply with concepts such as language, teacher education, complexity, and transdisciplinarity as transformed *práxis*, both of which are gaining significant traction within the fields of applied linguistics and beyond. These concepts challenge traditional notions of language use, identity, and power dynamics, particularly in multilingual contexts and developing regions.

6.1 Could you share your perspectives on how these concepts are reshaping our understanding of language education and applied linguistics?

Addressing this question requires reflection on the fact that both Applied Linguistics and language education treat language as both a tool and a goal. This perspective implies that understanding languages and their linguistic effects is achievable only through active engagement, specifically by using and interpreting language in context. Language consists of interconnected elements that create and communicate meaning, with this process shaped by the specific time, place, and participants involved. Therefore, language proficiency extends beyond

knowledge of structural features to include the ability to use language effectively within distinctive contexts and environments.

Language operates as an open and complex system that evolves to encompass the diverse connotations acquired by words and expressions over time. It is shaped by functional structure as well as social, historical, political, ethical, and cultural influences, which connect it to other social systems. Then, analyzing language without accounting for context, users, identities, intentions, relationships, or related systems may significantly distort its meaning.

Reflecting on these arguments, my understanding of Applied Linguistics and language education has shifted from a purely structural perspective to one that also takes historical, political, cultural, social, and ethical dimensions into account. This expanded perspective supports a transdisciplinary understanding of the diverse contexts in which language operates. Likewise, my view of language teacher education has developed to recognize that language, as a complex system, undergoes continual transformation in both form and content and is intrinsically interconnected with other domains of knowledge. I have progressed from merely knowing about language to understanding it as a phenomenon that arises within and is shaped by specific contexts and intentions. Consequently, I recognize that language must be learned in a situated manner to generate knowledge, relevant knowledge, that extends beyond linguistics and encompasses insights from various disciplines.

6.2 Additionally, how do you envision the integration of these ideas influencing future research directions and pedagogical practices, especially in addressing the complexities of language use in the Global South?

I believe that unity and diversity are essential, inevitable, and inseparable perspectives that coexist in the analysis of any system, leading to the recognition of its qualities and intrinsic contradictions. These constructs exhibit a dialogic relationship that emphasizes their antagonistic yet complementary characteristics. Therefore, unity and diversity can be understood as components of a single whole that establishes a reciprocal relationship with its constituent parts. Human beings may illustrate this view: each individual, as a unified system, is composed of distinct,

interdependent internal systems that function effectually and collaboratively to achieve and maintain a certain level of organization and organic stability.

Developing my reasoning, my arguments suggest that the North and South function as integral components of a unified territory, exhibiting complementary similarities and differences across historical, geographical and epistemological dimensions. Recognizing this interrelationship offers a coherent framework for understanding each component, appreciating its distinct characteristics, and valuing their complementarity.

This view, however, challenges the hegemonic notion that privileges one component over the other by recognizing that both constituent parts of the whole can make equally significant contributions to the construction of relevant knowledge. In other words, it is desirable to overcome any epistemological dominance attributed to a single region by actively and impartially valuing and disseminating epistemological and methodological advances achieved in and by other contexts.

Recognizing and impartially appreciating diverse perspectives, despite their origin, requires the development of a movement that addresses both the Global North and South. Such a movement should identify epistemic inequalities to prevent marginalization in scientific production, value local perspectives, and engage with relevant social issues, thereby promoting the decolonization of knowledge. To achieve this realization, it is necessary to adopt a transdisciplinary attitude, as suggested by Freitas, Nicolescu, and Morin (1994), and integrate *theoretical rigor, openness, and tolerance* to address the concurrent interconnected disciplines, among which Applied Linguistics would stand out by providing, through language, such a transversal, transdisciplinary scenario with relevant contributions.

A transdisciplinary approach that emphasizes situated content relevance rather than hegemonic perspectives shaped by prejudice, preconceptions or prejudgments can establish more coherent and equitable evaluation criteria for both Global North and Global South epistemologies. Such a shift is likely to foster a new ethical framework and encourage more rational local and global practices. Ultimately, this approach may help reduce the epistemological divide between the North and South by acknowledging complementary contributions.

Nonetheless, I recognize that achieving this ideal perspective demands substantial advancement in partnership, recognition, detachment, and solidarity as well as epistemological respect, civility, and deference. It is essential to acknowledge that each individual and context

possesses distinct strengths and limitations, alongside commonalities and contradictions. Meaningful growth and the construction of relevant knowledge occur only when both unity and diversity are recognized and valued. Unfortunately, considerable epistemological, humanistic and ethical progress is still required to reach this objective.

7. Reflections and Personal Insights

7.1 Looking back on your career, what do you hope your legacy will be within the field of applied linguistics?

Throughout my academic and professional journey, I have explored the teaching and learning of languages, the integration of technology in education, the scope and potential of teacher education, and, more recently, complexity and transdisciplinarity. My motivation has been driven by a deep curiosity about languages and computers as technological tools, as well as a commitment to expanding my knowledge and expertise both in theoretical and methodological terms. I strive to reflect on cognitive processes, on possible articulations of certain theoretical constructs, and their evolving interrelationships. Until now, I had not considered the extent of my achievements in teaching or the possibility of leaving a legacy. This question, therefore, demands recollection and deeper reflection.

I hope I have contributed to a better understanding of the situated role that languages play in social environments, where they shape and are shaped by interactants who simultaneously shape their identities. I also hope I have contributed to clarifying some issues regarding teacher education by providing original lenses to interconnect and develop their individual linguistic and pedagogical backgrounds in social and adequate ecological environments. I wish I had emphasized that computers and the Internet, although often regarded as central to the teaching-learning process or interpersonal communication, should primarily be considered as tools for mediation and interconnection. Their value lies in how effectively their potential is explored and understood.

Above all, I hope to be remembered as a curious professional who consistently sought new approaches, even when existing concepts and methods were effective. Upon discovering new

paths, I did not limit myself to a single direction but explored their interconnections, striving for a sense of completeness that, although unattainable, remained a compelling goal. Ultimately, I hope to be remembered as a language teacher and a complex applied linguist who always gave her best effort to help her students reach their goals and sought to clarify and expand the scope of Applied Linguistics.

7.2 How do you balance the demands of your professional life with personal interests or passions outside academia?

This is the final and most challenging question. I recognize that I am continuing to develop my ability to integrate these areas. I aim to align my personal interests with my professional goals by choosing research topics that reflect my curiosity and contribute to theoretical and methodological development. Although trade-offs are inevitable, I remain committed to bridging these domains and incorporating interests beyond academia, such as music, leisure reading, and travel for personal growth and private interests. I continue to explore and integrate both prose and poetry in alignment with Edgar Morin's metaphorical expectations. I am actively developing strategies to address both gains and losses and am satisfied with my progress so far.

Referências

Freire, M. M. *Interação e simulação computadorizada: uma proposta em CALL (Interaction and computer simulation: a proposal in CALL)*. Unpublished MA dissertation. Graduate Program of Applied Linguistics and Language Studies. Pontifical University of São Paulo, 1992.

Freire, M. M. *Computer-mediated communication in the business territory: a joint exploration through e-mail messages and reflections upon job activities*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Department of Curriculum, teaching, and learning. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 1998.

Freire, M. M. Formação tecnológica de professores: problematizando, refletindo, buscando (Teacher technological education: questioning, reflecting, searching). In: U. Soto; M. F. Mayrink; I. V. Gregolin (orgs.), *Linguagem, educação e virtualidade: experiências e reflexões (Language, education, and virtuality: experiences and reflections)*. 1a. ed. São Paulo: Cultura Acadêmica Editora, 2009.

Freire, M. M. A abordagem hermenêutico-fenomenológica como orientação de pesquisa (The hermeneutic-phenomenological approach as a research orientation). In: M. M. Freire (org.), A

pesquisa qualitativa sob múltiplos olhares: estabelecendo interlocuções em Linguística Aplicada (Qualitative research from multiple perspectives: establishing dialogues in Applied Linguistics). Unpublished e-book. GPeAHF/CNPq. São Paulo, SP, 2010.

Freire, M. M. Da aparência à essência: a abordagem hermenêutico-fenomenológica como orientação qualitativa de pesquisa (From appearance to essence: the hermeneutic-phenomenological approach as a qualitative research orientation). In: J. Rojas; L. S. Mello (org.). *Educação, pesquisa e prática docente em diferentes contextos (Education, research, and teaching practice in different contexts)*. 1ed. Campo Grande, MS: Life Editora, 2012.

Freire, M. M. Complex educational design: a course design model based on complexity. *Campus-Wide Information Systems*, Vol. 30 No. 3, p.174-185, 2013.

Freire, M. M.; Leffa, V.J. A auto-heteroecoformação tecnológica (The self-hetero-eco technological formation). In: L. P. Moita Lopes (org.), *Linguística Aplicada na modernidade recente (Applied Linguistics in recent modernity)*. 1ed. São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2013.

Freire, M. M. Uma abordagem metodológica e uma teoria do conhecimento: relato de um encontro e a emergência de uma tessitura (A methodological approach and a theory of knowledge: report of a meeting and the emergence of a framework). In: M.M. Freire; K.C.N. Brauer; G. Aguiar (orgs.), *Vias para a pesquisa: reflexões e mediações (Pathways to research: reflections and mediations)*. São Paulo: Cruzeiro do Sul Educacional. Campus Virtual, 2017.

Freire, M. M.; Sá, C.F. Design educacional complexo: uma proposta para o desenho de cursos complexos (Complex educational design: a proposal for the design of complex courses). In: V.J. Leffa et al. (orgs.), *Tecnologias e ensino de línguas: uma década de pesquisa em linguística aplicada (Technologies and language teaching: a decade of research in applied linguistics)*. E-book. Santa Cruz do Sul: EDUNISC, 2020.

Freire, M. M. Linguística Aplicada, Complexidade e Transdisciplinaridade: tecendo redes de sentido e articulando saberes (Applied Linguistics, Complexity, and Transdisciplinarity: weaving networks of meaning and articulating knowledge). *Educação & Linguagem* (online), v. 23, p. 241-261, 2020a.

Freire, M. Transmedia storytelling: From convergence to transliteracy. *D.E.L.T.A.*, vol. 36, p.1-22, 2020b.

Freire, M. M. Transdisciplinaridade e narrativas transmídia: uma articulação viável para propósitos formativos (Transdisciplinarity and transmedia narratives: a feasible articulation for educational purposes). *Letras (UFSM)*, v. 32/1, p. 181-197, 2022.

Freire, M. M. Design educacional complexo e atitude transdisciplinar: reflexões sobre uma tessitura pertinente (Complex educational design and transdisciplinary attitude: reflections on a relevant weaving). *Revista EntreLínguas*, v.10, esp.1, p.1-14, 2024.

Freitas, L.; Morin, E., Nicolescu, B. *Charter of transdisciplinarity*. Adopted at the First World Congress of Transdisciplinarity, Convento da Arrábida, Portugal, 1994. Available at <https://ciet-transdisciplinarity.org>.

Morin, E.; Kern, A. B. *Terra-Pátria (Homeland)*. 6th ed. Porto Alegre: Editora Sulina, 2011.

Nicolescu, B. Transdisciplinarity: The hidden third, between the subject and the object. *Human and Social Studies*, vol. I, no. 2, p.13-28. 2012.

van Manen, M. *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Ontario, CA: The Althouse Press, 1990.