



## Beliefs in initial English Teacher Education: an interpretative study

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study aimed to explore the cognition (focusing on beliefs) of English teacher educators, from a state university in Paraná, about different aspects of initial teacher education (e.g., linguistic, theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge). In this sense, teacher cognition is adopted both as a unit of analysis and as the theoretical foundation (BORG, 2003). For such purposes, a semi-structured interview with open questions was administered in the aforementioned context. Results reveal three dimensions: Linguistic Command (in terms of homogeneity, heterogeneity and expectations); Affordance (including agency, theoretical-methodological advancement, expectations in didactic-pedagogical and curriculum terms, identity factors, linguistic advancement and curriculum factors); and Hindrance (encompassing no agency; didactic-pedagogical factors; theoretical-methodological and linguistic gaps and physical and human factors). It is expected that this research can contribute to theoretical and methodological reflections in the scope of language teacher education, given that teaching practices are significantly based on the set of beliefs of individuals in such scenario.

**KEYWORDS:** Initial Teacher Education; Beliefs; English Language.

### CRENÇAS NA FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES: UM ESTUDO INTERPRETATIVISTA

#### RESUMO

Este estudo de caso qualitativo teve como objetivo explorar a cognição (com foco nas crenças) de professores de inglês, de uma universidade estadual do Paraná, sobre diferentes aspectos da formação inicial de professores (por exemplo, conhecimento linguístico, teórico e didático-pedagógico). Para tais fins, uma entrevista semiestruturada com perguntas abertas foi feita no contexto acima mencionado. Os resultados revelam três dimensões: Comando Linguístico (em termos de homogeneidade, heterogeneidade e expectativas); Recursos (incluindo autonomia, avanço teórico-metodológico, expectativas em termos didático-pedagógicos e curriculares, fatores de identidade, avanço linguístico e fatores curriculares); e Obstáculos (abrangendo não-autonomia; fatores didático-pedagógicos; lacunas teórico-metodológicas e linguísticas e fatores físicos e humanos). Espera-se que esta pesquisa possa contribuir para reflexões teóricas e

metodológicas no âmbito da formação de professores de língua, dado que as práticas docentes são significativamente baseadas no conjunto de crenças dos indivíduos em tal cenário.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Formação Inicial de Professores; Crenças; Língua Inglesa.

## **CREENCIAS EN LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DOCENTE: UN ESTUDIO INTERPRETATIVO**

### **RESUMEN**

Este estudio de caso cualitativo tuvo como objetivo explorar la cognición (centrándose en las creencias) de formadores de profesores de inglés, de una universidad estatal de Paraná, sobre diferentes aspectos de la formación inicial de profesores (conocimientos lingüísticos, teóricos y didáctico-pedagógicos). En este sentido, se adopta la cognición docente tanto como unidad de análisis como fundamento teórico (Borg, 2003). Para tales efectos, se administró una entrevista semiestructurada con preguntas abiertas en el contexto mencionado. Los resultados revelan tres dimensiones: Dominio Lingüístico (homogeneidad, heterogeneidad y expectativas); Affordance (incluyendo agencia, avance teórico-metodológico, expectativas en términos didáctico-pedagógicos y curriculares, factores de identidad, avance lingüístico y factores curriculares); y Obstáculo (que abarca la no agencia; factores didáctico-pedagógicos; vacíos teórico-metodológicos y lingüísticos y factores físicos y humanos). Se espera que esta investigación pueda contribuir a reflexiones teóricas y metodológicas en el ámbito de la formación de profesores de idiomas, dado que las prácticas docentes se fundamentan significativamente en el conjunto de creencias de los individuos en tal escenario.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Formación Inicial Docente; Creencias; Inglés.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

This study is centered on initial teacher education, aligned with an English language teaching and learning realm. In this respect, this qualitative research is inserted in the area of Applied Linguistics, focusing on teacher cognition (more specifically on beliefs) (Borg, 2003).

According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), beliefs are relevant in the initial teacher education context, since the previous knowledge and experiences of future teachers go hand in hand with theory. In view of this, the research is stimulated by the teaching-learning process and the education of English language teachers, which encompasses several beliefs that underlie teaching-learning practices and thus have a significant influence on such context (Silva, 2005). In this study, this basis of cognition (beliefs) will be analyzed according to the professor's standpoint, that is, teacher educators' beliefs about the teacher education process.

Aligned with such tenets, we intended to answer the following questions: What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' linguistic knowledge? What are the teacher educator's beliefs about the English language teaching-learning process in the teacher education program? What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' theoretical and

didactic pedagogical knowledge? What is the teacher educators' evaluation of their student teachers' education process in general? In concert with these research questions, the goal of this study was to explore the cognition (with a focus on beliefs) of English teacher educators about different aspects of initial teacher education (e.g., linguistic, theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge).

The justification of this research resides in the fact that our study focused on the alignment of linguistic and theoretical-methodological issues for (language) teacher education, that is, it sees teacher education both in the linguistic aspects of the undergraduates (their linguistic knowledge to teach the language) and in the theoretical-methodological aspect (their knowledge to be teachers), this differs from the studies presented in the literature review, since they focus more on linguistic aspects, such as: "initial education of English language teachers"; "connections between learning and teaching experiences"; "Language variation and learning"; "teaching and learning approaches to English listening and speaking comprehension"; "Digital Technology in teaching-learning English"; "Information and Communication Technology in the English Language program"; and "informal English teaching in higher education". Complementarily, the teaching-learning process and English language teacher education are topics that commonly encompass several beliefs, both of students and educators. With this in mind, the research may contribute with reflections on the theme that can potentially influence different actions in the investigated context, as the teaching practice is grounded by the set of beliefs of such individual (Borg, 2003).

In addition to this introduction, this research is composed of a literature review section, encompassing empirical studies in the theme, with a time scope of 10 years. Complementarily, there is a methodological unit that exposes the methods and context were approached throughout the systematic analysis of data generation, which, in turn, also has a section that summarizes the results found. Finally, some final considerations are proposed.

## **2. COGNITION, BELIEFS AND INITIAL EDUCATION OF ENGLISH TEACHERS**

As previously mentioned, the unit of analysis of this research is teacher cognition. In this respect, cognition is related to observable and non-observable domains (Birello, 2012) within the teaching-learning process, therefore, it refers to what individuals think, believe, know and do (Borg, 2003). According to Freeman and Johnson (1998), in the late 1970s, this field of research began to explore the actual thought processes that teachers engaged in while planning and carrying out their lessons. With this in mind, it is safe to state that cognition reflects directly on teaching practices (Borg, 2003; Freeman; Johnson, 1998).

Additionally, cognition is always linked to a context, that is, it is constituted by the influence of the social environment (Senefonte, 2018a; Reis 2005; Birello, 2012; Barcelos; Batista; Andrade; 2004). Therefore, cognition can only be understood if the context is taken into consideration (called situated cognition or contextual cognition). In other words, cognition is not only about mental processes, but likewise it "encompasses social variables" (Senefonte, 2018a, p. 82).

According to Senefonte (2018a), cognition is a broad term that includes several fields, such as: concerns, reflections, knowledge, perspectives, beliefs, perceptions, and others. However, among these various fields, we focus on beliefs that are a complex field due to the existence of different concepts used to refer to them (Pajares, 1992).

Almeida Filho (1993) refers to beliefs as an "approach or culture of learning", which is defined as ways of studying and preparing for the use of the target language, transmitted as inheritance, through time, in a naturalized and implicit way. From this perspective, Moscovici (1961) describes beliefs as "a universe of opinions that are peculiar to a culture, a social class or a group, concerning the objects of the social environment" (p. 16)<sup>1</sup>.

Barcelos (1995; 2001; 2006) uses the term "Culture of Language Learning" to refer to beliefs, in other words, beliefs, formed through learners' experiences, consist of knowledge made up of beliefs, myths, cultural assumptions and concepts about how to learn languages that students and teachers hold.

Birello (2012), Barcelos (2001; 2004; 2006) and Senefonte (2018a) states that beliefs are not only cognitive concepts, that is, there are social aspects in their composition. This is due to the fact that beliefs are formed through students' and teachers' contact with other concepts and, also, the experiences they have had during their learning process.

Taking into consideration the tenets exposed, we adopted Barcelos' (1995; 2001; 2006) concept, since it is close to the purposes of this research, whose aim is to investigate beliefs of teacher educators, in initial education, about the process of teacher education and English language teaching-learning.

Finally, Castro (2006) states that the investigation of student-teachers' beliefs in initial education has occurred in some contexts of language teacher education. However, it is always important to insert more systematized practices as to the conceptions/beliefs that teacher educators bring in relation to theory and practice. Additionally, Barcelos (2007) claims that in the aforementioned context, "understanding teachers' beliefs helps to understand not only their

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<sup>1</sup> In Portuguese: "Um universo de opiniões próprias de uma cultura, uma classe social ou um grupo, relativas aos objetos do ambiente social" (p. 16).

choices and decisions, but also the divergence between theory and practice"<sup>2</sup> (p.112). Thus, it is correct to state that in addition to investigations into beliefs reflecting on (in) direct changes in students and teachers (and their practices), there is also a need to theoretically address the concept of such changes.

## 2.1 Research on Teacher Educators' Beliefs

By using the terms "beliefs of English teacher educators", "beliefs of English professors", "beliefs of university English professors" and "beliefs in initial education" (in Portuguese and in English), in the main national database platforms, namely: CAPES (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education in Brazil), SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) and Google Scholar, with a time scope of the last 10 years, the following studies were found: Bonfim (2018), Blum (2018), Camargo and Kluge (2019), Camargo (2020), Fadini (2016), Finardi and Pimentel (2013), Machado (2012), Senefonte (2018a). With these studies under consideration, we build our literature review, as illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1** - Research on teacher educators' beliefs

<b>Study</b>	<b>Type of Research</b>	<b>Context</b>
Bonfim (2018)	Ethnographic case study	A Private Higher Education Institution in Brasilia
Blum (2018)	Ethnographic case study	University of Mid-Western Brazil
Camargo and Kluge (2019)	Case study	A public University in the region of Curitiba, Paraná.
Camargo (2020)	Case study	Two federal Universities in the region of Curitiba, Paraná
Fadini (2016)	Ethnographic study	Federal University of Espirito Santo
Finardi and Pimentel (2013)	Case study	Not given
Machado (2012)	Interpretative study	Federal University of Santa Catarina
Senefonte (2018a)	Case study/ documentary study	Two state universities

**Source:** The authors.

<sup>2</sup> In Portuguese: "a compreensão das crenças dos professores ajuda a entender não somente suas escolhas e decisões, mas também a divergência entre teoria e prática" (Barcelos, 2007, p. 112).

Bonfim (2018) aimed in his ethnographic case study to analyze the beliefs of a teacher educator, from a Private higher education institution in Brasilia about the initial education of English language teachers and, likewise, to identify possible connections between learning and teaching experiences, beliefs and actions of individuals. To collect the data, the researcher used the contextual approach, which makes use of oral narratives, semi-structured interview, class observation and reflective sessions. With this in mind, the results suggest that teachers' cognition is socially formed throughout their life experiences, furthermore, he claims that the role of context, in relation to beliefs and action, "is crucial, since beliefs are related, in a complex way, not only to each other, but also to the context, resulting in either consistency or dissonance between beliefs and teacher action." (Bonfim, 2018, p. 216, *translated*)<sup>3</sup>.

On language variation and learning in response to digital age developments, Blum (2018) did an ethnographic study that endeavored to explore beliefs of two Brazilian university professors from a University of Mid-Western Brazil. The data was collected through joint informal interviews (Coffee Breaks at the Café), classroom observations, and email exchanges and shows that both teacher educators express the belief that their students are learning English to connect with others who have learned English as an additional language. However, one of the participants signaled that his beliefs ground his teaching practice in an idealized standard, while the other tries to encourage his students to develop communicative competence beyond such a standard. In the practice inside the classroom, it was possible to notice that both teachers understand their students' learning process, which encompasses openness to change in methodological approach, activities that encouraged language polysemy, and stimulation of the development of students' critical thinking skills and ideas about grammatical norms.

In order to investigate two teacher educators' beliefs, from a public university in the region of Curitiba, Paraná, about teaching and learning approaches to English listening and speaking comprehension, Camargo and Kluge (2019), through two questionnaires with open- and closed-ended questions and through observation of and lessons taught by teacher educators, examined teachers' beliefs and the relationships with their classroom practices. The results show that the teachers advocated for the importance of teaching listening comprehension and, likewise, the importance of raising a phonological awareness in learners, that is, a reflection on pedagogical issues such as conceptions of language implicit in the activities, methods and teaching approaches regarding listening comprehension and aspects of sound production.

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<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese: "é crucial, visto que as crenças se relacionam, de maneira complexa não apenas entre si, mas também com o contexto, resultando ora na coerência ora na dissonância entre crenças e ação do professor." (BONFIM, 2018, p. 216).

Following this same line of thought, Camargo (2020), by means of an interpretive study, investigates the beliefs of three female teacher educators and compares them with their teaching practices about learning listening comprehension. The results, based on the data collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and class observations, showed that, once again, beliefs influence teaching practices. Another noticeable point in the beliefs is that listening comprehension is not seen by the teachers as a specific skill that needs a specific treatment, since it happens simultaneously with other communicative skills during the conversation practices.

Fadini (2016) endeavored to raise reflections on teacher education in the 21st century regarding the roles of the English language and digital technology in the teaching-learning of English through the analysis of an undergraduate program and the beliefs and practices of teacher educators and English teachers in courses named Supervised Teaching Practicum I and II at the Federal University of Espirito Santo. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires and the results indicate that the research participants, teachers-in-training, showed no resistance to the use of digital technologies in education, although they do show some concern about how to incorporate them into teaching methodologies in a meaningful and conscious way. The teacher educators, on the other hand, did not show resistance to this use, but revealed some drawbacks, mainly due to the difficulty in accessing/availability of resources in the institution where they work/teach.

Regarding the use of social media in education in general and in English language teaching, Finardi and Pimentel (2013), with their qualitative quantitative study, investigated teachers' beliefs through a questionnaire with open and closed questions, which signals that technology is a positive factor for English language teaching, however, Facebook is recognized as an extra support that can somehow help student-teacher interaction, but it is not yet seen as a relevant resource to support teaching in general (including English language teaching).

Focusing on analyzing the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the undergraduate program in English at Federal University of Santa Catarina, Machado (2012) explored the beliefs of teacher educators and students regarding the use of ICT tools in such program. In addition to beliefs, the author aimed to relate the use of ICT tools to teachers' and students' beliefs. Through online open-ended questionnaires, online semi-structured interviews, and self-reports, the results show that teachers use a number of ICT tools in the courses they teach. Furthermore, the majority of teachers and students expressed positive beliefs regarding the use of ICT tools, since, according to the participants, such tools facilitate communication between teacher and students, provide good quality input and help to improve listening skills, and finally, motivate students and complement the contents in the course. However, some

students reported not having benefits from the way some tools are employed. Finally, a good degree of consistency was shown in the relationship between the use that both teachers and students reported making of ICT tools and their beliefs regarding this use.

Senefonte's (2018a) goals were to explore seven teacher educators' beliefs about informal English teaching in higher education in terms of possibilities of informal English teaching in higher education and (dis)favorable factors for informal English teaching, focusing on teacher education (for basic education). The data from the case/documentary study was generated and collected by means of two questionnaires with open and closed questions, two semi-structured interviews and a documentary analysis of 54 syllabi. The results show that the research participants have a positive view for informal English teaching. In addition to the teacher educator's appreciation for the informal English teaching, they see students' positive appreciation as well. On the other hand, the participants point out factors that are uncontrollable or marginalized, such as

the curriculum, the cost (or lack thereof) (students' negative appreciation, few opportunities to practice informal English, and teachers' source of informal English), methodological issues, language insufficiency (which applies to both teachers and student teachers), no clarity of the concept of informal English, and scarcity of IE in formal studies and research (Senefonte, 2018a, p. 257).

Furthermore, teacher educators, in Senefonte's investigation, demonstrate an idealization of a balanced teaching method, including both formal and informal language.

Taking into account the studies analyzed, we can assume that university educators hold many beliefs, this is due to the fact that all individuals have had previous experiences and contacts (with other beliefs) that caused these beliefs to be formed (Barcelos, 2001; 2004; 2006). Furthermore, it can be seen from the literature review that studies, in the last ten years, have focused on issues such as: "initial education of English language teachers"; "connections between learning and teaching experiences"; "Language variation and learning"; "teaching and learning approaches to English listening and speaking comprehension"; "Digital Technology in teaching-learning English"; "Information and Communication Technology in the English Language program"; and "informal English teaching in higher education". In other words, they focus more on linguistics aspects.

With this in mind, our study upholds a view that is more focused on the alignment of linguistic and theoretical-methodological issues for (language) teacher education, that is, it sees teacher education both in the linguistic aspects of the undergraduates (their linguistic knowledge to teach the language) and in the theoretical-methodological aspect (their knowledge to be teachers), which can significantly enrich the literature in this topic.



### 3 METHODOLOGY

According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), the basic division of research types is between qualitative and quantitative, referring to them as the two ends of a *continuum*. With this in mind, our research is anchored in a qualitative perspective, since, according to Bogdan and Bicklen (1994), "[...] the direct source of data is the natural environment, with the researcher as the primary instrument" (p. 47 *translated*)<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, this type of research profile aims, among others, to explore and analyze actions in the way individuals think, act or say in the groups they belong and in the social contexts they are inserted.

In this regard, Flick (2009) asserts that the analysis in qualitative research cannot be reduced to simple variables, but rather, in their entirety, within their everyday contexts. Moreover, he points out that the goal of qualitative research is to explore, to a lesser extent, what is already well known and, to a greater extent, to know the unknown in order to develop empirically grounded theories. Complementary, Dörnyei (2007) states "Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive, which means that the research outcome is ultimately the product of the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data" (p.38). Therefore, such definitions are consistent with the methodological purposes of this research. Additionally, this investigation is a case study, that is, it consists of an instance, usually a single unit, that explores a principle or theory in a given context (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2000). Therefore, each instance is unique, given that it comprises singular individuals in specific contexts. In this regard, the authors state that this type of research provides people with a clear understanding of reality rather than abstract concepts of a particular theory/principle. Complementary, it is understood that case studies do not simply equate to explaining events in a particular context, but "it concerns systematic and rigorous data generation and analytical procedures." (Senefonte, 2018a, p. 101). Thus, all assumptions and statements voiced by case studies must be substantiated with hard evidence (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2000).

Aligned with this nature, our research concentrates on the initial education of English language teachers, taking cognition as the unit of analysis (Borg, 2003), with a focus on investigating the beliefs of four teacher educators of an undergraduate program in English/Portuguese at a state university in Paraná about the process of English language teacher education, centering on the linguistic and theoretical-pedagogical aspects of such process.

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<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: "[...] a fonte direta de dados é o ambiente natural, constituindo o investigador o instrumento principal" (p. 47).

For ethical reasons, in order to preserve the participants' names, in the Informed Consent, there was the option for the educators to be referred to by their real name or pseudonyms, and they all chose to be addressed by pseudonyms. In this respect, they are: Elizabeth, Sophia, Robert and Tiffany.

Elizabeth has a degree in Portuguese/English (2004) and Education (2009). She is a specialist in Philosophy and Sociology Teaching Methodology and in English Language Teaching. She holds a master's degree in Teaching from the Graduate Program in Teaching (2018) and is currently pursuing her doctorate in the Graduate Program in Language Studies. She works as a collaborating professor in an undergraduate program investigated.

Sophia is an adjunct professor. She holds a doctorate (2020) and a master's degree (2008) in Language Studies. She holds an undergraduate degree in Portuguese/English (1996) and a specialist in Teaching Didactic Methodology (1997). She has experience in English language teaching in basic education and higher education.

Robert has a Ph.D. and an M.A. in literatures from a state university in São Paulo. He has also graduated from a Licentiate degree program in Portuguese and English Language and their respective Literatures. He works as a collaborating professor educator in the area of English Language in the context of this study.

Tiffany is currently working on her PhD in literature and holds a master's degree in teaching Humanities, Social Sciences and Nature, with research focused on literature. She is also a collaborating professor and a member of the research groups Linguistic and Literary Studies in English and Literary Criticism and Reception.<sup>5</sup>

The participants make up a group of English language faculty from a university in northern Paraná. The group is composed of 7 professors, of whom 1 is the co-supervisor of this research and 4 volunteered to participate in the data generation.

Thus, the first contact with the teacher educators was to explain our research intentions, to explain about the interview (appendix A), which aims to explore the participants' beliefs; and for the signatures of the Informed Consent (IC)<sup>6</sup>. In this way, we granted the participants the right to preserve their identities. To generate data for the interview, we employed a semi-structured interview with six open questions, audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Additionally, the questions in the interview were designed with the research aim and questions in mind, as illustrated in Table 2:

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<sup>5</sup> The participants' data were collected from their résumés at Lattes Platform (<https://lattes.cnpq.br/>).

<sup>6</sup> Based on Senefonte (2018).

**Table 2** - Relation Between Data Generation Tools and Research Questions/Aims.

<b>Research question/goal</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' linguistic knowledge?	1
What are the teacher educator's beliefs about the English language teaching-learning process in the teacher education program?	2 and 3
What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' theoretical and didactic pedagogical knowledge?	4 and 5
What is the teacher educators' evaluation of their student teachers' education process in general?	6

**Source:** The authors, based on Senefonte (2018a).

The data generated was analyzed following the precepts of the Content Analysis (CA) methodology, that is, a grouping of instruments of methodological nature in constant improvement that applies to issues, speeches and diverse contents (Bardin, 2011). In this regard, the data are reduced into analytical categories that connect with each other forming a group that explains the analyzed phenomenon. Furthermore, it is certain to state that Content Analysis fully understands the data/units after being addressed, since it is not simply a description and exposition of data, but an understanding of theoretical concepts raised during the analysis.

Finally, this research is subsumed under a research project entitled "Teaching, Learning and Education of Foreign Language Teachers for Brazilian Basic Education", duly submitted to the Ethics Committee of the university with which the project is affiliated and approved<sup>7</sup>, accordingly.

#### **4. BELIEFS OF ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATORS**

As previously explained, the data analysis was done by means of the Content Analysis theoretical-methodological framework (CA). In addition, we emphasize that the data generation was done through a questionnaire with open questions. In other words, the beliefs were verbalized (materialized) through answers which in turn were transcribed for the analysis.

By deploying an inductive-deductive exercise, the analysis resulted in three main dimensions: **linguistic command**, **affordance** and **hindrance**. Each one includes some analytical categories and subcategories, as illustrated in table 3.

<sup>7</sup> Certificate of Ethical Approval (CAAE, acronym in Portuguese): No. 30089420.9.0000.8123.

**Table 3** – Beliefs of English Teachers Education.

<b>Linguistic Command</b>	<b>Affordance</b>		<b>Hindrance</b>	
<i>Homogeneity</i>	<i>Agency</i>		<i>No Agency</i>	
<i>Heterogeneity</i>	<i>Theoretical-Methodological Advancement</i>		<i>Didactic-Pedagogical Factors</i>	
<i>Expectations</i>		Didactic-pedagogical		Theoretical-Methodological
	<i>Expectations</i>	Curriculum	<i>Gaps</i>	Linguistic
	<i>Identity Factors</i>		<i>Physical Factors</i>	
	<i>Linguistic Advancement</i>		<i>Human Factors</i>	
	<i>Curriculum Factors</i>			

Source: The authors.

For a better understanding of the dimensions and categories presented in Table 3, we present our analytical classification in different subsections. Each domain is exemplified with excerpts from each participant.

#### 4.1 LINGUISTIC COMMAND

The **Linguistic Command** dimension concerns the professors' beliefs about their students' general knowledge of the English language. In this dimension, we identify a *Homogeneity* category, which refers to the generalization of the students' linguistic knowledge, that is, regarding linguistic knowledge, their students, in general, were seen to have the same level (or very similar levels). Within this category, two processes were perceived, they are: *Fixed* (refers to a fixed, stagnant development of linguistic knowledge) and *non-fixed* (refers to a continuing process of linguistic knowledge).

Regarding the fixed *Homogeneity* category, only Robert expressed such belief, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

*In fact, my students at {name of the institution deleted} were surprisingly good at English, ok? (Robert. L. 310 and 311).*

*So, in general, they were very good, surprisingly good, ok? (Robert. L. 313).*

*but they all were very good, in general. (Robert. L. 319 and 320).*

On the other hand, with respect to the *non-fixed* domain, it was possible to notice that Tiffany holds this belief, as follows: “I think my students have some difficulties with the English language in general. They are learning how to speak, how to write and how to read in English, and, sometimes, they have a lot of difficulty with the language itself.” (Tiffany. L. 425-427).

By comparing Robert’s and Tiffany’s beliefs, we can detect that apart from the difference regarding fixed and non-fixed domains, respectively, their beliefs bespeak an antagonist sphere, since Robert sees a positive aspect in students’ linguistic command and Tiffany, a negative one. In this regard, we mention Senefonte’s (2018a) study which was carried out at the same university as ours and arrived at similar results. Nonetheless, the author named these pairs as sufficiency and insufficiency (p. 150).

The *Heterogeneity* category, in turn, is concerned with the plurality of language knowledge that students have, that is, when asked about students' language knowledge, different levels of knowledge were noted. Similar to the *Homogeneity* category, *fixed* and *non-fixed* attributed were also evidenced in *Heterogeneity*.

With regard to fixed *Heterogeneity*, participants Elizabeth, Sophia and Tiffany hold such belief:

*I guess, the new students, now, I can see they have kind of a good level of English, not all of the students [...] (Elizabeth. L. 13-14).*

*Because, (...) some of them are faster, are more dedicated, because knowledge, learning of a language, of any kind of knowledge depends on the students dedication, as well. (Sophia. L. 176-178).*

*[...] we have this different level of students [...] (Tiffany. L. 436-437).*

At the opposite pole, non-fixed *Heterogeneity*, only Sophia expressed such category which we can be seen in the following excerpt: “So, I would say that all of them are (...) evolving, are developing something good.” (Sophia. L. 173 and 174) “So, what I can see that most of them are developing, in a stage of development.” (Sophia. L. 180 and 181).

In view of the above categories (homogeneity and heterogeneity), it is correct to assume that there are binary pairs in the general linguistic knowledge of teacher educators, since the two categories, when compared, demonstrate opposability, that is: homogeneity refers to uniqueness, and heterogeneity, to plurality of knowledge. Such a polar pair ratifies the study of Senefonte (2018a) that also derived both categories.

Finally, the last category under Linguistic Command concerns *expectations*. In this category, throughout the analysis, we noticed that teacher educators project on students a certain linguistic level to be reached, as well as a certain agency in the language learning process:

*But I would say, Leandro, that, for (xxx) Letras course {Letras is a undergraduate program in English in Brazil}, the students should be more prepared, and they should use more English. (Elizabeth. L. 18- 20).*

*[...] students are looking for (...) improvement, strong improvements, throughout the course [...]* (Robert. L. 335).

In view of the statements above, it is noticeable an expectation of the participants about the student's autonomy in the English language teaching-learning process. Thus, for Santos (1999), autonomy is an educational goal in societies. According to the author, the learning process is incomplete until the individual can operate as an independent member of the society in which he participates. Therefore, she cites some factors for this to occur, such as: autonomy, knowledge, material, and learning. With this in mind, autonomy, in the English language learning process, manifests itself when the student is actively involved with the use of the target language, not limited to the language presented to him/her by the teachers through the textbooks, but going beyond that, producing something relevant. In addition, Vilaça (2010) states that it is important that students have to transcend their practice from inside the classroom to the outside, since linguistic knowledge is better achieved when there is the learner's autonomous practice/study.

## 4.2 Affordance

Regarding the contributions of the undergraduate program in the process of teacher education, the **Affordance** dimension is subdivided into 6 analytical categories, as follows: *Agency*, *Theoretical-Methodological Advancement*, *Expectations* (in terms of *Didactic-pedagogical* and *Curriculum*), *Identity Factors*, *Linguistic Advancement* and *Curriculum Factors*. *Agency* is a category that focuses on student autonomy over language. In this regard, Elizabeth and Tiffany believe that such agency is afforded by the program:

*[...] I can see that some of them are like more willing to use English, more willing to try to speaking English. Today, they were speaking here before the class [...]* (Elizabeth. L. 13 - 15).

*[...] that they changed their belief that (...) they changed about English itself, they see English as a language that they can speak. (Tiffany. L. 477 - 478).*

Tiffany, in the excerpt above, believes that students have undergone a change (for good) in the belief they had about their ability to speak English. Such view, according to Vilaça (2010), is connected to negative experiences and previous beliefs that individuals have had contact with. In the case of the belief exposed by the participant, there was a change with regard to the ability to learn to speak the language, that is, it shows that students now have positive contexts, experiences and beliefs about this aspect (speaking skill). Furthermore, the author states that such beliefs underlie the importance of studies aimed at the student's autonomy, since linguistic knowledge is cumulative, and even though the content addressed over the semesters is important, students need to go beyond this, because grammar rules and other theoretical contents are not enough.

The Theoretical-Methodological Advancement category refers to an advance, in terms of perspectives, in the field, which in turn impact the quality of the classes offered by the program. In the following excerpts, Elizabeth and Sophia make a theoretical-methodological comparison between present and past teaching-learning practices and such advance can be evidenced, as follows:

*I would say that they are much better than it used to be when I was a student, because, that time, I used to have like two classes a week, and now, we have different disciplines, we have (...) estudos linguísticos {one of the courses offered by the undergraduate curriculum. In English, Linguistic Studies}. So, the students are going to study grammar, they usually write, speak, listen, they have (...) how can I say? Habilidades Integradas {In English: Integrated Skills}. So, the students can talk about genres, they can study different kinds of genres. So, it's kind of better than it was in the past. (Elizabeth. L. 29-36).*

*Now, we have more space than we had in the past for English, for English classes, in terms of hours, teaching hours, in the course, it was a gain for us. (...) But I also would say that (...) there is room for improvement, (...) in several ways, because in terms of didactic material, in terms of time exposure to the language, in terms of use of technology, the use of technology. (...) I think we should dedicate more (...) to this point. (Sophia. L. 187-191).*

It can be seen that the statements above are based on the experiences that the participants had throughout their education process, such a characteristic ratifies the studies of Freeman and Johnson (1998) and Bonfim (2018), one of the studies that make up our literature review, which state that the knowledge and previous experiences of future teachers go hand in hand with theory and practice. In view of this, in the excerpt "I think we should dedicate more (...) to this point." (Sophia. L. 192 and 193), Sophia declares that it is necessary to have an attention about the contact students have with the language, the proper use of new technologies and the materials that guide the classes. Since beliefs are in conjunction with theory and grounding

teaching practices (Borg, 2003; Freeman; Johnson 1998; Bonfim 2018), the excerpts most probably reflect in the participant's actions within the classroom.

In terms of **Affordance**, *Expectations* were also evidenced, which relate the perspectives to possible changes within the courses/program, whether in curriculum or didactical-pedagogical terms. In this regard, the *Expectations* category is subdivided into two sub-categories: *Didactical-pedagogical* and *Curriculum*.

*Didactical-pedagogical Expectations* refer to the structure and development of the lessons, as shown:

*I couldn't say it's perfect, yet. Because of the format of some classes, for example, we use a book that is not so (...) new, the book needs to be changed. (Elizabeth. L. 36-37).*

*I consider the class, (...) the classroom itself, as a space for sharing, sharing (...) opportunities, sharing fears, mistakes. So, it's the place where you can be comfortable. (Sophia. L. 199 - 201).*

As to *Curriculum Expectations*, Sophia expressed a need for new programs aimed at teaching practice, namely:

*And think it's in terms of programs (...) like PIBID {It is an acronym in Portuguese that results from the name of the internship program: Institutional Teaching Initiation Scholarship Program}, for instance, or residência pedagógica {Pedagogical Residency program}, I think (...) if we had opportunity to have more programs, more projects, involving practicum, it would be, it would make a difference in teachers' education, that's my opinion. (Sophia. L. 261 - 266).*

The *Identity Factors* category, in the **Affordance** dimension, is focused on how much students are prepared to act as teachers. Robert's statements, again, tend to ratify the studies on the experiences that students have throughout their education:

*I think (...) the main starting point for any student that is going to be a teacher, every one of the teachers, is by imitation, right? So, you know? And he or she is going to watch his or her professor, not only his or her professor (...) singular, but many of them throughout his or her life, and [...] he or she is going to adopt those practices, that he or she thought, or thinks that works for them. (Robert. L. 406 – 410).*

Such data are in line with the studies of Borg (2003), Freeman and Johnson (1998), and Bonfim (2018), given that Robert expresses the belief that students act according to how they experienced teaching practice throughout their education. That is, they tend to act, as teachers, the same way their teachers acted within the classroom. In other words, taking into account the experiences that individuals have during their lives in the classroom, whether positive or



negative, in some way, these experiences influence their practice. Complementarily, this contact shapes students' professional identities, since, according to Nóvoa (1995), these identities are constituted through life experiences, narratives and representations. In addition, Elizabeth and Tiffany also demonstrate *Identity Factors* beliefs:

*The teacher program, the teacher education program has contributed to their (...) how can I say? (...) to their autonomy, sometimes, to their sense of how to teach, to their sense of (...) they have to study more English. Unfortunately, they know this is not enough. Unfortunately, no, I would say fortunately, or not. [laughs] They have this (xxx) that they have to study, not only at the university, they need to research, they need to look for more information, for extra information. But I think the program is helping them with this sense of autonomy. They learn the reality here [...]* (Elizabeth. L. 112 - 118).

*On the other hand, we have to show these students, that teaching English is a good career and they are not just studying Portuguese. So, we need more teachers.* (Tiffany. L. 478 - 180).

Tiffany's excerpt, in addition to the *identity* content focused on teacher education, includes students' autonomy, so it can also fit in the *Agency* category, discussed earlier. With this in mind, it is noticeable the interconnectedness of analytical categories, which, according to Bardin (2011), is one of the characteristics of the Content Analysis (CA) methodology.

Likewise, when talking about the identity of the teaching profession, some factors are highlighted, as they influence the formation of the identity of the English teacher. In this regard, Senefonte (2018b) lists these influencing motives, namely: "Images society has created of teachers"; "Expectations from other entities"; "Life experiences and personal ideologies and beliefs"; "Sources of knowledge"; "School subject"; "Educational Context"; and "Personal life" (p. 60 - 61).

Another category subsumed under the **Affordance** dimension is *Linguistic Advancement*, and it refers to a program's provision for the linguistic development of students:

*The terms of development, I think the students have more chances to expose their questions, for example, at least, I try to create an environment inside the classroom, where the students can feel free to ask, to make mistakes, to work on the language more, to work in groups, to support themselves. So, in this sense, and in (...) through certain kinds of activities, for example, in habilidades linguísticas {one of the courses offered by the undergraduate program. English: Language Skills}, the program is more focused on (...) a certain kind of literacy, that technological literacy, for instance, I am going to give an example. Last semester, the students had to prepare a blog, and then, they had to research on this text genre, to write, to prepare in advance, 'cause it is an oral genre, and then, they had to prepare a video, to study how to do it, how (...) to study the features of this genre. So, in a certain way, they were being (...) how can I say? Educated, in several ways, in the technological*

*sense and linguistic aspects (...): they had to check the pronunciation of all the words, all the sentences, things more related to oral language, like (...) connected speech, for example. So, in this tense, the students have several chances to develop, in several ways. (Sophia. L. 215 -229).*

*I think that (...) the fact that we are (...) in the program that offers students English language helps its students to improve their English. (Tiffany. L. 444 - 445).*

It can be seen that teacher educators have employed more technologies to teach in the classroom. This is due to the fact that New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs) have brought contributions to the contemporary world, enabling changes in various areas of society, such as the economy, education, culture and linguistic communication of individuals (Barton; Lee, 2015).

Complementarily, Bates (2016) states that the NICTs have been influencing, increasingly, the ways of teaching, that is, technologies are progressively more present within the classroom, then, consequently, influences the way teachers/students think and act (Borg, 2003). Therefore, it is correct to say that New Technologies have influenced, not only the way of teaching, but also the beliefs of the individuals who participate in these contexts in which they are inserted. This is because beliefs consist of "Ideas, opinions and assumptions that students and teachers have about the processes of language teaching/learning and that they formulate from their own experiences. (Barcelos, 2001, *translated*)<sup>8</sup>.

The category for affordance is *Curriculum Factors* and it refers to the efficiency of the program's curricular organization. In this regard, only Sophia expresses such view as follows:

*[...] because we have some branches in the course. In the teaching education program, for example, literature, (...) the work that has been developing with literature and language itself, and abilities and teacher formation classes. (...) They (...) compose a set of different (...) aims and different ways in the education of English teachers. So, I think, in terms of program, we have a solid program, solid aims. (Sophia. L. 273 – 277).*

In view of this, it seems safe to assume that Sophia sees positive points that are efficient for the students' education in the program. In other words, the program covers several areas so that the student can, through his/her experiences and influences, form his/her identity (NÓVOA, 1995).

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<sup>8</sup> In Portuguese: "Idéias, opiniões e pressupostos que alunos e professores têm a respeito dos processos de ensino/aprendizagem de línguas e que os mesmos formulam a partir de suas próprias experiências" (BARCELOS, 2001).

### 3.3 Hindrance

The **Hindrance** dimension refers to challenging aspects within the Portuguese/English undergraduate program. With that in mind, such hindrance comprises 5 analytical categories, the first is *No Agency* that refers to students' unwillingness to develop their language/professional skills autonomously:

*[...] some of the students, for example, the 4<sup>th</sup> year, they are kind of tired, they were in the pandemic. So, in the middle of their undergraduate program, they were kind of more (...) nervous, maybe, or anxious, like I would say. (Elizabeth. L. 16 - 18).*

*And, in Brazil, (...) students, (...), in general, even in private courses, they have (...) small spaces, (...) not many chances of speak in English to be exposed to the language out of the classroom. (Sophia. L. 192 - 194).*

The next category, in the same dimension, is the *Didactic-Pedagogical Factors*, it, in turn, concerns the organization of the teachers' classes and the teaching materials used in them:

*It's kind of complicated for the professors to prepare classes, to have time to organize everything, I would say. (Elizabeth. L. 38 - 49).*

*I hate the book {name of the material/book deleted}, right? So, I think it's [...] ok. So, (...) I am not a professor anymore there. I think, I am going to use the most precise words that I have here. So, I think it's a stupid book, ok? It's all the things you see, ok? So, you know, they are silly (...) they deal with artificial subjects, and the subjects are repetitive. So, (...) there's no sense of progress, unless you get the first book and complete. So, otherwise, you will not have a sense of progress. Every semester, they are studying the same thing. So, I think it's like, in pairs to motivate the students. So, I think it's a bad material. (Robert. L. 349 to 356).*

In the excerpt expressed by Elizabeth, besides the didactic-pedagogical issues, there is, imbricated, the physical time factor, which will be another category detailed later in the **Hindrance** dimension. Referring now to some missing or challenging elements in the program, there is a Gaps category with two subdivisions: *Theoretical-Methodological* and *Linguistic*. Regarding *Theoretical-Methodological gaps*, some participants expressed them in terms of knowledge in the teacher education process:

*Sometimes, it seems for me that they are, because they are future teachers, it seems for me that they are learning, learning (...) as students, only. Sometimes I miss some more preparation for being English teachers, you see? So, sometimes, it's like they are having like a second part of the high school. So, they are studying the language, they are trying to speak, they are trying to understand the grammar, but, sometimes, we can see that they are not being*

*prepared to teach after the undergraduate studies, you see? I miss that. I see a lack of education on that, for example, we have a course formação do professor de língua inglesa {English Language Teacher Education}, they were supposed to use more English, into the discussions, when sometimes it's not possible [...] (Elizabeth. L. 54 - 63).*

*I'm afraid, we have to work more on it, because (...) there's a room for improvement, as well. But they think theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge are facing some problems in the course (Sophia. L. 236 - 238).*

*So, you don't read, you don't explain the text with the students. (...) So, I think that is a problem. Although, I know that there are some subjects that deal with these questions, but I haven't taught that, ok? So, (...) I don't know, it's a (...) very specific subject, in applied linguistics. So, (...) how to teach and by what means that's not discussed, at least, not (...) in the situations in which I lived with the students, right? (Robert. L. 387 - 392).*

From the excerpts above, we can raise a discussion regarding content knowledge and didactic knowledge, types of knowledge that teachers are supposed to have. With this in mind, Shulman (1986) calls attention to the importance of content-specific knowledge among the knowledge teachers are supposed to possess. In addition, Shulman (1986) values content-specific knowledge, but stresses that the teacher needs to translate this content into pedagogical format so that his or her students can understand it. To do so, the teacher needs to master and transform very well the background knowledge into Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK).

Additionally, Shulman (1986) states that the teacher must have mastery of the specific content at three levels: content knowledge itself, curriculum knowledge of the content, and pedagogical knowledge of the content. Bearing this in mind, our results signal that the program has placed emphasis on the content knowledge itself (the English language) and neglected the pedagogical knowledge.

Moreover, there were participants who revealed beliefs as of gaps in the construction of students' lesson plans. These gaps, in turn, corroborate the studies focusing on experiences reflected in beliefs and teaching practices (Freeman; Johnson 1998; Barcelos 1995; 2001; 2006; Bonfim 2018). This is because the beliefs described show that the way students experienced English language teaching in their education process is how they put it in the lesson plan they produce in the practicum course, as shown:

*Most of the students, they are still tied to an English just based only on grammar. So, they prepare their activity focused on grammar, you see? Just some exercises of filling out with the incorrect information, put the correct verb tense in here (...). So, we have no big time to deal with these kinds of problems, and they go to the class, sometimes, they don't have a support there [...] (Elizabeth. L. 95 - 99).*

*My evaluation is: I am teaching your lesson plans, from your 4<sup>th</sup> year and I am very disappointed, because and you teach English the same way that was taught in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. You are repeating the same (...) methodology, the same ways, the same thing, the same belief (...) that English was not the language for you, you are repeating it. And I think that we have to look for us as professors and see “where you are making a mistake?”, ok? That is my evaluation (...). That is my evaluation. But we are failing in some point in our course, we have to pay attention to it, I take my part of it. (Tiffany. L. 457 - 464).*

Regarding the *Linguistic* gap aspect, which refers to an insufficiency in the students' linguistic knowledge, the participants expressed the following beliefs:

*Their English level is not that ok for further discussions, and in the other courses, they are learning just the language itself, but they are not being prepared to be future teachers, do you see? (Elizabeth. L. 63 - 65).*

*Sometimes, they are eager to start learning during their undergraduate program. And, (...) sometimes, the program, itself, is not sufficient, ok? And they (xxx) don't understand that. So, there is no progress, at all. (Robert. L. 337 - 339).*

*[...] last English language class I taught was academic writing, and they had a lot of difficulties, because they didn't have the language, the grammar, the structure, they didn't know how to read the text or this kind of thing. (Tiffany. L. 438 - 330).*

With respect to the factors that impact or make the process of teacher education difficult, there are *physical* and *human* factors. As of physical factors, it was evidenced *internal* and *external* aspects related to time, connected to the duration of the classes, availability of the teacher educators/students and course workload. Therefore, the internal domain is related to the participant himself and external, to students, the program etc.

In this respect, external *Physical factors* are voiced by Elizabeth, Robert and Tiffany, as indicated in the following data:

*I would say that we need to reorganize this schedule, reorganize this curriculum, and, maybe, in (xxx) this practicing of the courses, because you are students that are coming to the university, because you work during the day and live in different cities and it's difficult for you to come here, when it's not in the evening. (Elizabeth. L. 102 - 106).*

*But they think theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge are facing some problems in the course, because I was talking to another colleague and she was saying (...) that the lack of time is interfering a lot. (Sophia. L. 237 - 239).*

*Ok. my evaluation is that is highly flood, ok? So, that, during the practicum, students had to deal with bureaucracy more than anything, ok? So, they don't have time to study theoretic, theoretical issues, in applying linguistics, and the*

*teaching of the English, and they are more worried with, you know? Fulfilling the requirements, like the schedule, (...) the time amount you need to fulfill the program, the teaching practicum. (Robert. L. 396 -401).*

*I think that the teaching program, the teaching practicum, is more concerned about the documents, the bureaucracy (...) that (...) the teacher-student education itself. Because we have to (...) ask for many documents, the bureaucracy is so big and the teachers that receive our teacher-student here, they don't want to. Just we have to question it, because we are having a lot of problems with it. (Tiffany. L. 468 - 472).*

Concerning internal *Physical factors*, only Elizabeth expressed this belief, reporting an unavailability (of time) for better attention and support to students: “That’s what I was saying, yes. The time is one barrier, because, for example, me, as a professor, I don’t have enough time to help them [...]” (Elizabeth. L. 92 - 93).

Furthermore, Robert and Tiffany’s statements are based on the difficulties that students face in the supervised practicum during their education. Among some obstacles that the student may face in the internship process is the bureaucratic issue of documentation. This issue is also discussed in Rosenberg’s (2008) study. The author states that bureaucracy can cause some negative consequences in the student's education, such as: interfering in the construction of identity, in the education and preparation of the teacher. He also concludes that this experience (the practicum itself) can be a rewarding event in the path of education, if there is the proper guidance and approach.

Finally, in the **Hindrance** dimension, there are *Human Factors* that are subjective aspects of the individuals involved in the context investigated. With this in mind, there are two contexts that were witnessed within the analysis: *Basic education* and *undergraduate program*. *Human Factors* in the *Basic education* context are evidenced in Elizabeth’s beliefs that point to a lack of support from the in-service teacher when students need to do their practicum in the classroom, and, also, the lack of help when they are already regular teachers: “[...] some teachers just abandon them into the class, they don’t help them, they don’t have time, so I think the time is the biggest problem.” (Elizabeth. L. 99- 101); “They learn the reality here; they know that they don’t have all this support in public education.” (Elizabeth. L. 119 - 120). Here again, although the category is *human factors*, there is a physical factor (time). This proves how dynamic qualitative analysis is, so and we cannot categorize data into distinct little boxes, data are dynamic and encompass more than one category at a time (sometimes). As of *Human Factors* in the *undergraduate program context*, Tiffany expresses the following belief:

*[...] it is difficult, because some of the students say “Oh, I don’t wanna teach English”, and I say “But you are in a program that is Portuguese language and English language” and they have some beliefs from the high school that*

*English is a difficult language and English is just for people that is travelling.*  
(Tiffany. L. 446 - 449).

In such statement, although it has the focus on human factors, we can also observe an *Identity* factor, which, in turn, is negative. That is, it indicates that some students do not identify with the English language or the English teaching career, even though the program grants such degree. A study by Duarte (2018) shows that the fact that some students do not identify with both languages (Portuguese and English) may cause dissatisfaction and end up generating antipathy for the area that does not interest them. In addition, for Gardner (1985), considering that motivation/identification is a decisive factor for language learning, it (the language) becomes an influential device in the interest to seek knowledge, in the same way that the lack of affinity can harm the process, by inverting the relationship.

Still in the *Human Factors* category, Tiffany also expresses the following statement: I am feeling a bit frustrated about it. “That's the word. Because (...) and all (...) I'm always questioning (...) always asking myself how I can, as a teacher, contribute. How my research, how the way I learn it to teach English again?” (Tiffany. L. 493 - 496). In the excerpt, the teacher educator demonstrates an uncertainty of what in fact the teacher needs to know and do, which is aligned with Shulman's study (1986 and 1987), the teacher's necessary knowledge.

#### **4.4 Return of Data Analysis**

Once the data analysis was done, the analytical report was sent to the participants. This procedure, according to Senefonte (2018a), serves to ensure validity, ethical stance, as well as empowerment purposes, since it gives voice to the participants. That is, when research participants agree with the analysis done by the researcher, such analysis becomes consistent and valid. In this sense, the research strived to be an empowering study, since it allows the participant to edit the analysis and feel that they are participating in the knowledge construction process mediated by the study (Cameron, 1992).

With this in mind, in December of 2022, a questionnaire with open questions was sent, via e-mail, for the participants to show appreciation (in the sense of agreement, disagreement, suggestions, etc.) with the data analysis of this study.

The four participants returned the questionnaire and their responses showed that they were in total agreement with the data analysis done, and even expressed their eagerness to see the full paper. Thus, the final analytical report for this research was legitimized by the participants.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Aiming at investigating teacher educators' beliefs about different aspects of initial teacher education (e.g., linguistic, theoretical, and didactic-pedagogical knowledge), this study was conducted at a state university in Paraná. By means of interviews, the research involved four English professors (teacher educators) and the results are expressed as answers to the research inquiries:

- A) What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' linguistic knowledge?

Based on the analysis, it is possible to realize that educators, in general, see students at different linguistic levels. Although the participants expressed a homogeneity and heterogeneity domain in this aspect, taking into account the unique context, in sum, there is a plurality of students' language levels. Moreover, another noticeable point in the beliefs of the professors was the university teachers' expectations of language levels, showing a dissatisfaction about the level of linguistic knowledge of some students, a dissatisfaction that is based on the belief that their students should be at a certain level, since they are being educated to be teachers. Finally, it was evidenced that university teachers express beliefs that there are students who are developing linguistically, each at their own pace, level.

- B) What are the teacher educator's beliefs about the English language teaching-learning process in the teacher education program?

In terms of linguistic development, the professors expressed binary poles, as both positive and negative points are expressed in this regard. In this respect, in a positive prism, the teacher educators express that within the undergraduate program, students have the opportunity to "express questions", "make mistakes", "work in groups and in the language" and "feel free to question". These are factors that, according to the teacher educators, are in favor of linguistic development. On the negative side, in contrast to the previous one, the participants exposed a gap in terms of linguistic development, stating that there are some reasons that result in this gap, such as the insufficiency of the program, in the sense of time itself. That is, time is not enough for a good language development, for a better autonomy from students within the academic context, leading to fatigue and difficulty in the execution of activities. Complementarily, there were binary pairs regarding students' agency, which is an important fact for language learning (Vilaça, 2010). In other words, some teachers



expressed beliefs that the program contributes to students' autonomy, while some teachers showed a contrary perspective to this.

- C) What are the teacher educators' view of their student-teachers' theoretical and didactic pedagogical knowledge?

About the theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge of the student-teachers, the teacher educators, for the most part, showed dissatisfaction and "disappointment". That is, the professors exposed that the students lean toward a theoretical and didactic-pedagogical knowledge gap. This is due, according to the teacher educators, to the fact that the undergraduate program leaves practical activities (such as the practicum) in second place. Furthermore, the teachers showed dissatisfaction with the program's preparation for education in this topic, that is, according to the data from the analysis, students are being prepared more to be students than teachers, which was classified by the teachers as a "lack of education".

- D) What is the teacher educators' evaluation of their student teachers' education process in general?

Regarding the student teachers' education process, in general, it is possible to perceive, again, binary pairs in this respect. That is, there were professors emphasizing positive and negative contributions of the education process, such as: preparation/non-preparation of the student as autonomous of his/her own knowledge; Sufficiency/non-sufficiency in the education of the student as a future teacher; and Contributions/no contributions of the program curriculum.

With this in mind, it is noted that the participants manifest divided beliefs for each of the dimensions that were analyzed. These divisions, called binary pairs, reflect the fact that beliefs are formed according to the experiences that each individual had in their education process, even as a educator in the academic context. The same way it happens with students' identity aspects, which are constituted through contact with other people/identities/beliefs. Therefore, it is correct to state that the process of teacher education effectively contributes to the construction of new professional identities, however, whether they will be positive or negative, will depend on the experiences that these students have in this process.

Also, the professors showed a more concerned view about their students' autonomous role in their English language learning and education process. In this respect, a gap was evidenced about this aspect. Having said that, we may assume that this lack of students' agency will lead to a certain insufficiency, as far as general knowledge is concerned, since, in order to have a more effective learning, autonomy has a primordial role.

Throughout the analysis, we can also see how dynamic the qualitative study is, that is, the categories, very often, connect and also go beyond a single meaning. In other words, the selected and categorized excerpts can sometimes encompass more than one category in their content.

Finally, we know that studies about beliefs in initial teacher education have already been happening in some contexts of teacher education, as we can see in the literature. However, it is salutary the need to include more systematized practices about the conceptions that teacher educators bring about some aspects of the teacher education process, because it is through the materialization of the educators' beliefs that one can potentially encourage different (transformative) actions in the investigated context, since the teaching practice is grounded by the set of beliefs an individual holds (Borg, 2003). With this in mind, we hope that this research contributes to the discussions raised about the theme and also contributes theoretically to future investigations in the area. Therefore, it is expected that this research can further enrich the knowledge and consequently teaching practices about the theme.

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## Appendix A: Data generation instrument (interview script)

### Interview Script

- 1- What is your evaluation of your students' knowledge of English in general? Explain.
- 2- What is your evaluation of the English language classes in the teacher education program?
- 3- In what ways, if any, has the the teacher education program contributed to your student-teachers' English language development? Give examples.
- 4- What is your evaluation of your students' theoretical and didactic pedagogical knowledge for teaching English? Explain.
- 5- What is your evaluation of the classes aimed specifically at teacher education (for example, the teaching practicum) in the program? Please give examples.
- 6- In what way, if any, has the teacher education program contributed to your students' education as English teachers? Please give examples.

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*Received on June 28, 2023*  
*Approved on April 8, 2024*  
*Published on April 19, 2024*