

Entrevista

Pesquisa em interação e ensino/aprendizagem de línguas: entrevista com Joan Kelly Hall

Interaction and Second Language Acquisition research: Interview with Joan Kelly Hall

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Entrevistadora

Taiane Malabarba é Professora do curso de Letras da Unisinos e doutora em Linguística Aplicada pela mesma instituição. Atua desde 2001 com ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira e, em 2014, realizou seu doutorado-sanduíche na Pennsylvania State University sob a supervisão da entrevistada, com quem tem trabalhado em projetos diversos desde então. Seus interesses de pesquisa incluem análise da fala-em-interação, ensino/aprendizagem de inglês como língua estrangeira, formação docente e políticas linguísticas.

Entrevistada

Joan Kelly Hall é Professora Titular do Departamento de Linguística Aplicada da Pennsylvania State University e diretora do Center for Research on English Language Learning and Teaching (CRELLT). Seus interesses de pesquisa versam sobre o ensino/aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras, com especial ênfase na análise da fala-em-interação em contextos pedagógicos. É autora de inúmeros livros, capítulos e artigos na área de ensino/aprendizagem de inglês como segunda língua e atualmente coordena o projeto de pesquisa Corpus of English for Academic and Professional Purposes (CEAPP). Hall esteve na Unisinos em 2010, quando convidada a proferir uma palestra na segunda edição do Congresso Internacional Linguagem e Interação. A bibliografia completa da autora pode ser encontrada em <http://aplng.la.psu.edu/people/jkh11>.

Introdução

A vasta e consistente produção intelectual da professora Hall no campo da Linguística Aplicada e do Ensino/Aprendizagem de L2 (*Second Language Acquisition [SLA]*) justifica que ela seja a entrevistada desta edição da Calidoscópico. Hall é autora de inúmeros artigos em renomados periódicos, como o *Modern Language Journal* e o *Journal of Pragmatics*, e assina obras importantes na área, como o livro *Teaching and researching language and culture* (Pearson, 2011) e o livro *L2 Interactional competence and development* em co-autoria com John Hellermann e Simona Pekarek-Doehler (Multilingual Matters, 2011).

Na entrevista, realizada pessoalmente na Pennsylvania State University no fim do mês de abril de 2017, ela fala sobre o desenvolvimento da pesquisa em ensino/aprendizagem de segunda língua e sobre a entrada e influência da Análise da Conversa tanto nessa área quanto em seu próprio trabalho enquanto pesquisadora. Além disso, Hall revisita a noção de competência interacional e aborda o problema da distância entre os resultados de pesquisas acadêmicas e a realidade da sala de aula de línguas. Finalmente, comenta seu artigo mais recente, escrito em parceria com outros pesquisadores renomados, e discorre sobre seus projetos atuais e publicações futuras.

Agradeço à professora Joan Kelly Hall por aceitar prontamente o convite e por nos presentear com uma entrevista rica em fatos que, além de marcarem sua contribuição para a área de Aquisição de Línguas, abordam

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noções bastante significativas sobre língua, linguagem, ensino e pesquisa.

Taiane Malabarba (TM): Your publications show a shift from Sociocultural theory to Conversation Analysis (CA). For example, your presentation at Unisinos in 2010 was entitled *Interaction as method and result of language learning: A sociocultural perspective*. Would you please explain how this change happened?

Joan Kelly Hall (JKH): Let me start by saying that I never considered myself a sociocultural theorist as it is currently understood in second language acquisition. I really come from more of a sociocultural understanding of language and learning. This includes some of Vygotsky's work and, earlier on, Michael Cole's, Sylvia Scribner's and James Wertsch's understandings of Vygotsky's theory. It also draws heavily on Bakhtin's philosophy of language and Hymes' theory of language and empirical work in linguistic anthropology on language development including the work of Elinor Ochs and Dan Slobin and that of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger on learning. I think this term Sociocultural Theory has been appropriated in the field of second language acquisition to refer to just Vygotsky's work. And it is a very orthodox reading of Vygotsky. The acronym SCT is particular to second language acquisition, and to Lantolf's work and the work of his students, in particular. If you move out of Second Language Acquisition and explore research on learning in the American fields of education or psychology, for example, you will see a great deal of theoretical and empirical interest in Vygotsky's work but it is unlikely that you find much use of the acronym. During the time I was working on my dissertation, I was introduced to CA by two of my committee members. One was the founder of the journal Research on Language and Social Interaction (ROLSI) and another was the editor at the time and was publishing some of the work coming out of Schegloff's group. I was drawn to the empirical details about interaction that were missing from my work. Understandings of language in the field of SLA at the time were heavily influenced by Chomsky's theory, which offered no conceptual tools for explaining language use and, in fact, dismissed it merely as 'performance'. In contrast, I was heavily influenced by Hymes' theory of language and his notion of communicative competence and relied on his SPEAKING framework to frame the analysis of my dissertation study, which was on gossiping by women in the Dominican Republic. Hymes' framework formed the basis of many studies from the field of Communication in addition to Linguistic Anthropology during the 1980s and 1990s, many of which were being published in ROLSI. What drew me to CA were the tools the field was building at the time for talking about talk, which Hymes' framework lacked.

TM: That explains your support of Firth and Wagner's (1997) well-known piece in the special issue of Modern Language Journal. You were one of the scholars that supported their argument, which at the time was considered non-mainstream.

JKH: Let me give you some background to that paper: In 1996, the AILA conference was held in Jyväskylä Finland. Prior to that, I had published two papers (Hall, 1993, 1995) in Applied Linguistics, where I presented arguments for sociocultural understandings of language and learning for advancing SLA theory and research. My arguments drew heavily on the work of Hymes, Gumperz, Ochs, Vygotsky, among others. Apparently Alan Firth and/or Johannes Wagner, neither of whom I knew at the time, had seen at least one of those pieces because they emailed and asked if I would be on a panel they were organizing for the conference. I accepted their invitation and I believe there were two other respondents who participated in the panel. As it happened Sally Magnan, who was the editor of MLJ at the time, attended the session. At its conclusion, she approached us and asked us to consider submitting the paper and responses to the journal and so we did. She may have solicited responses in addition to the people that were in the panel, I cannot recall. In a later issue, Michael Long and Susan Gass also responded to Firth and Wagner's paper. While some disagreed with the perspective of SLA they critiqued in their 1997 piece, their paper certainly moved SLA into new intellectual territory.

TM: Then by the time Firth and Wagner published their paper, other scholars, like yourself, were using CA to investigate classroom interaction. Is that correct?

JKH: Work on CA at that time was coming primarily out of Schegloff's program at UCLA. It wasn't until 2000 or so that publications using CA appeared in applied linguistics. Jean Wong, a student of Schegloff's, published articles on NNS interaction in Applied Linguistics (Wong, 2000a) and ROLSI (Wong, 2000b) and in the same year Numa Markee, published a book on CA (Markee, 2000). Then, in 2004, he and Gabi Kasper edited a special issue of MLJ in which they made a strong argument for using CA to study SLA. The issue featured four studies using CA to study SLA and commentaries on the papers by Gass, Larsen-Freeman, Wagner and me.

TM: You were one of the first scholars in Applied Linguistics to talk about interactional competence (IC) and one cannot mention IC without referring to your work, principally the book you edited with John Hellermann and Simona P.D. in 2011. In a recent talk in Switzerland, however, you suggested that the term interactional competence be changed for *interactional repertoires*. I assume there will be a new paper coming up soon, but for now can you please explain what has prompted this change and what this new term entails?

JKH: Sure. So, just to clarify, the term interactional competence as it is currently used in the field of Applied Linguistics and particularly in Second Language Acquisition, has its roots in two places. It comes out of Linguistic Anthropology, and in particular the term communicative competence and it also comes out of Conversation Analysis. Claire Kramsch was the first to use the term in SLA in a 1986 paper in the *MLJ* in which she critiqued the notion of proficiency as used in American foreign language contexts and its lack of attention to communication skills. She did not cite Hymes or anyone from CA, so the source of her use of the term is unclear. The next use of the term in SLA I believe is by me, in my 1995 paper (Hall, 1995), a study of the classroom interactional patterns found in a high school foreign language classroom. My use of it links to Hymes's notion of communicative competence. I used the term interactional competence as a component of communicative competence. My intention was to add a term that went beyond speaking to capture the work that we do when communicating with others. The term also appeared in a paper by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurell the same year. Their paper updated the pedagogical model of communicative competence that Canale and Swain first proposed for SLA back in 1980. The use of the term became more frequent when CA became a popular research method in SLA. If you look at its roots in CA, you see its meaning is very different. Harvey Sacks, back in the sixties, was interested in what he posited to be an underlying interactional knowledge that we share as human beings to do the cooperative work of human sociality. And the story is that when he was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he went to a class by Chomsky, who at that time was building a theory of language that posited an innate, universal capacity for language, which he termed linguistic competence. Sacks took to the idea of some universal construct underlying language but, for him, it wasn't an innate language device. It was a universal interaction order, an interactional competence. He posited that social order is an interactional achievement, produced and visible at all points, in all venues. He further posited that what makes the achievement of social order possible are universal procedures or methods by which social life is organized. This universal set of methods is what constitutes interactional competence. CA's work has been to define the components of this competence. Research outside of SLA, from, for example, Tanya Stivers at UCLA and Stephen Levinson and colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics shows that there is something empirically real to this universal interactional order, some underlying interactional competence that we share as human beings. This includes the systems of turn-taking and repair, some forms of questioning and so on. These systems are pretty stable. What vary are the language-specific resources that we use to do this work and take other actions in our interactions with others. Recall,

the variability of linguistic resources is what underlies Hymes' concept of communicative competence. It's this knowledge - the variable objects of L2 learning that studies of SLA are after. However, as CA has become more popular in SLA, in particular in studies of L2 learning, the CA understanding of interactional competence has been conflated with the linguistic anthropological understanding of interactional competence giving way to claims such as 'learners use their interactional competence to develop their interactional competence'. In fact, this is how interactional competence is treated in the 2011 volume of CA studies of L2 development. While we trace the meaning of the term to Hymes' work, we keep the same term to refer to both the underlying universal interactional competence shared by all and to the variable objects of L2 learning. My understandings of the roots of the term have advanced since that volume. I now more fully grasp the distinctions and feel that if we really want the work that we are doing to have some applicability or advance understandings of L2 teaching and learning, we need conceptual clarity. At the keynote address I gave in Switzerland in January 2017, I proposed the term interactional repertoires to refer to this knowledge.

TM: Do you think this lack of clarity can explain why we don't see more recent conceptualizations of language and of what teaching and learning entails reflected in pedagogical material, say textbooks for example? It seems to me that despite all this growing body of research since the 90s looking at interaction, little has changed in how second and foreign languages are taught and learnt. Are we just talking to ourselves?

JKH: There are many reasons why there is a disconnect between the research we do on L2 teaching and learning and pedagogical materials. One is that at least in the U.S., academics are rewarded more for publishing research studies and far less for publishing pedagogical materials. So those who are writing the materials are usually not those who are doing the research. A second reason is that we do not make our research easily interpreted by others, outside the field. Just take the example of the conflated use of interactional competence. As I noted earlier, you'll often read in studies 'learners use their interactional competence to develop their interactional competence'. While we researchers may understand what this is meant to state, those unfamiliar with the different meanings in terms very likely do not. It's difficult then to take the findings from these studies to inform the development of pedagogical materials. A third reason has to do with the constraints of state-mandated curriculum standards, at least in the United States, for ESL and foreign language programs in K-12 levels of education. Textbooks are written to meet the standards, regardless of whether the standards reflect current understandings of language and learning. Making changes to the standards can take a very long time.

TM: Regarding your most recent publication, a ‘joint venture’ with 14 other people (the members of the Douglas Fir Group)³. The piece is an attempt to - and I quote - “design a more encompassing, integrative framework for understanding and doing SLA that would speak to both language teachers and researchers”. The paper is quite recent, but this discussion is not, right? It dates back to a colloquium organized by Dwight Atkinson in 2009, which also resulted in the book he edited named *Alternative Approaches to Second Language Acquisition* (Atkinson, 2011). I’d like to hear you talk about this integration, how it has been developing. Could this dialogue lead to a single “Alternative Approach” to SLA?

JKH: You are right, after Dwight Atkinson published a volume in 2011 on *Alternative Approaches to SLA*, he and others wanted to keep the conversation going, so he and Jim Lantolf organized a two day symposium held in May 2013 at Penn State. People who had contributed a chapter to Atkinson’s volume were invited as well as others, including me. The topic of the symposium was on how the approach we each identify with can inform second language learning and whether there are connections to be made across approaches. By the end of the two days, it was decided to continue discussions at the annual conference of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) 2014 meeting, which we did for three days. During that time, Heidi Byrnes, the editor of *MLJ*, and one of the group members, invited the group to submit a paper based on our discussions to be included to *MLJ*’s centenary issue, in 2016. I agreed to complete a first draft of the paper. In preparing the draft, I used the concept of transdisciplinary to produce a framework I thought best captured our complementary but distinct approaches to SLA. Transdisciplinary research addresses real world problems, like, for example, climate change. For me, language teaching in today’s world - marked by continual forces of migration, globalization and technologization - is a real world issue that needs the field’s concerted attention. Lourdes Ortega took on the task of preparing the final draft, after getting everybody’s feedback. Working on the paper really changed my understanding of the kind of work I do and the need to make it translatable to teachers. With that in mind, I enlisted Karen Johnson, one of the members of the Douglas Fir Group, to produce a textbook on SLA written specifically for L2 teachers and novice researchers. Discussions among the DF group continue. I presented our proposed transdisciplinary framework at AAAL 2016, at a colloquium organized by Heidi Byrnes. A group of us - Lourdes Ortega, John Schumann, Eduardo Negueruela and I - proposed a colloquium for the Second Language Research Forum (SLRF), to be held in October,

2017. And there has been discussion about whether we, the group, would like to do something at AAAL next year. And, to answer the final part of your question, no, I do not think the continued discussions will lead, or even can lead, to the development of one approach to SLA. What it *can* do, and has done so far, is lead to fruitful interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations on questions about L2 teaching and learning. The proposed colloquium for SLRF I mentioned earlier, is one such collaboration.

TM: The book you are writing with Karen Johnson, which is based on the Douglas Fir Group paper, appears to be an attempt to link the findings of research to classroom practice. Can you tell us more about it?

JKH: The book, to be published by Routledge, is entitled *A Transdisciplinary Framework of SLA: Essential Understandings for L2 Teachers*. Each chapter addresses one of the themes outlined in the DF paper by drawing connections between current understandings of L2 learning, as it relates to the theme, and understandings of and practices for doing L2 teaching. Each chapter will end with activities based on the multiliteracies pedagogical approach and, so, will be organized around the four knowledge processes of *experiencing*, *conceptualizing*, *analyzing*, and *applying*. The book is expected to be out early next year.

TM: How does this transdisciplinary framework impact the field of Applied Linguistics?

JKH: Applied linguistics has always been an interdisciplinary field. Interdisciplinarity brings scholars together from different disciplinary domains, who, while retaining their disciplinary borders, contribute their expertise in the exploration of shared themes. Transdisciplinarity differs in that rather than drawing on disciplinary foundations to identify research questions, transdisciplinary research aims to address and solve complex real-world problems. The aim is not to produce knowledge about theories and concepts but to contribute to the development of innovative and sustainable real-world solutions. Given this distinction, I think Applied Linguistics retains a heavily interdisciplinary identity. Whether the transdisciplinary framework proposed by the DF group will have a lasting impact on the field remains to be seen.

TM: Besides your involvement with the Douglas Fir Group and the book you are writing with Karen Johnson, what other projects are you working on?

JKH: I continue to direct the Center for Research on English Language Learning and Teaching. Thus far, we’ve collected over 100 hours of video-recordings of

³ Dwight Atkinson, Heidi Byrnes, Meredith Doran, Patricia Duff, Joan Kelly Hall, Karen Johnson, James Lantolf, Diane Larsen-Freeman, Bonny Norton, John Schumann, Merrill Swain, and Elaine Tarone.

classroom teaching from the intensive English program here at Penn State. We are combining this corpus of data with the corpus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) classrooms, organized by my colleague Stephen Looney, to create the Corpus of English for Academic and Professional Purposes (CEAPP), an online platform that would allow us to do research on teaching and do teacher training. Let me note that you have been key in the development of this platform. Stephen Looney and I hope to publish an edited volume on the embodied achievement of teaching and you and I and another colleague are working on a paper for the volume. My overall research question is whether, like the interaction order, there is a universal interaction order of pedagogy. There is already a great deal of research that suggests there may be. For example, we know that the IRF is a ubiquitous sequence of action in classrooms and that classrooms have a specialized turn-taking system. The search capabilities of CEAPP, once they are fully developed, will allow us to address such questions across a wide range of teaching contexts. Your work on EFL classroom teaching and learning in Brazil will help immensely in this task.

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