

TEACHING ENGLISH TO CHILDREN: CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME AND KNOWLEDGE TO MASTER*

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ABSTRACT: English language teaching to children (ELTC) is in constant expansion in the Brazilian and international educational context (ROCHA, 2007; TONELLI, 2007; LINGUEVIS, 2007; TONELLI and CRISTOVÃO, 2010, CAMERON, 2003). Despite this growth, flaws in the teacher education of this area (CRISTOVÃO and GAMERO, 2009), as well as lack of parameters to guide this work (BENEDETTI and SANTOS, 2009) are witnessed. This paper intends to analyze the curriculum of the public universities in the state of Paraná that offer English and/or Portuguese/Languages course in order to look for changes that try to meet the needs of this specific educational area, as well as to investigate some of the knowledge teachers need to master in order to work with ELTC. Results show that the modifications in the universities' curriculum were not significant. Moreover, data show that there is specific knowledge and a particular profile that are desirable for this teacher.

KEY WORDS: Desirable knowledge for English teachers to children; English language teaching to children; Languages courses curriculum; Particular profile.

Introduction

Foreign languages are gaining space in the Brazilian curriculum, especially the English language, as it is the main language of communication of our times. Besides its

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educational role, it also has the purpose of building the economy and knowledge in our globalized society. Therefore, it is natural that English is taught increasingly earlier in schools. English is characterized not only as a foreign language, but also as an additional language (SCHLATTER and GARCEZ, 2009). Additional languages bring benefits to the individuals because the learners will be able to communicate effectively to the world as they acquire a language that is not their first one. It also makes them grow and evolve as global citizens.

Globalization has brought the English language to its current status; it is nowadays spoken by two thirds of the world's population (RAJAGOPALAN, 2009). As a consequence of such scope, importance and function, this language is influencing the educational area, including English language teaching to children (ELTC) (ROCHA, 2007a; TONELLI, 2007; LINGUEVIS, 2007; TONELLI and CRISTOVÃO, 2010).

For the purpose of this research, it was considered important to define what a child is. According to the Child and Adolescent Statute¹ (BRASIL, 1994), a child is a person that is under 12 years old; therefore, this paper will discuss teaching English in Brazil to individuals that are under 12 and have specific needs which differ from other age groups.

The 5th paragraph of the article 27 from the document that structures the functioning of the Brazilian educational system² (BRASIL, 1996) states that "In the diverse part of the curriculum it will be included, mandatorily, since the 5th year, the teaching of at least one modern foreign language, the choice of which will be the responsibility of the school community, within the institution's possibilities."³. Although the teaching of a foreign language is not mandatory before the 5th year, there is an expanding number of schools that are implementing English in their curriculum in non-obligatory stages of education, either in pre-school (children under 6 years of age) or in the first stage of primary

¹ *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (ECA).

² *Leis de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB).

³ The authors translated this quote and all others.

education (children from 6 to 11 years of age). This phenomenon happens both in private and public contexts.

According to the educational laws that establish the National Curriculum Guidelines for Elementary School of nine (9) years⁴ to be observed in the curricular organization of educational systems and their academic units (BRASIL, 2010), at the resolution CNE/CEB 7/2010 (p. 9), “If the schools choose to include foreign languages in the initial years of primary education, the teachers are required to have specific education in the curricular component”. This optional characteristic of implementing foreign languages in the curriculum leads to an exclusion mechanism (BONETTI, 1997 *apud* ROCHA, 2007a) in the sense that foreign languages are already part of the private schools curriculum from pre-school to high school, so the schools that do not implement the same measures are considered excluded. In this case, public school children are the excluded ones.

Another issue to be considered is that the documents that offer guidelines for the children educational parameters do not specify what content should be explored in English classes, nor the objectives of this subject, let alone the theoretical and methodological knowledge a teacher must have in order to work with this audience.

In spite of the literature, which shows that English language teaching to children is part of the Brazilian educational reality, flaws have been witnessed both in literature and languages undergraduate program undergraduate and post-graduate courses related to this field of knowledge⁵ (ROCHA 2007a; CRISTOVÃO and GAMERO, 2009; TONELLI and CRISTOVÃO, 2010). Tonelli and Chaguri (2012), interpret these flaws as one of the consequences resulting from the lack of legal and methodological guidelines for the work carried out with children.

In this paper, we present the results of a study that aimed at investigating whether the public higher education institutions in the state of Paraná are or are not

⁴ Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais Gerais para a Educação Básica.

⁵ In this text, literature and languages undergraduate program is referring to English and/or Portuguese/English undergraduate courses.

adapting their curriculum proposals both in undergraduate and post-graduate courses of the literature and languages undergraduate program to prepare their professionals to work with ELTC. In order to achieve this objective, an online curriculum survey was conducted in those programs, also in post-graduate *stricto sensu* (Masters) and *lato sensu* (Specialization) courses in the same universities.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was applied to the participants of a project⁶ which aims at offering extra education to English teachers that intend to or already work with children. From the answers provided to the questionnaire, it was possible to analyze the participants' background experience in the field and explore their opinions about the knowledge required from ELTC teachers.

To be coherent with the research objectives, this paper intends to answer two questions:

- Are the languages undergraduate courses in the public universities in Paraná state adapting their curriculum in order to prepare student-teachers to work with children?
- What knowledge should an English teacher have in order to work with children?

The latter was our biggest question when the first author of this article started working with children since she had no specific formation during her undergraduate course to teach children and did not feel prepared to deal with this audience. She was offered the opportunity of teaching English to children after graduating in the English literature and languages undergraduate program at the State University of Londrina⁷ in 2012. As she did not know what to do in her classes or what to study in order to learn about this specific context, she became a collaborator in the project previously mentioned where she had the opportunity to have the specific education in this area. As her research

⁶ Project number 08379 entitled *O trabalho do professor no ensino-aprendizagem da língua inglesa para crianças: uma proposta de formação docente*, in which the first author of this article participates and the second author is the coordinator.

⁷ Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL).

developed, we realized that the other participants of the project shared the same doubts about what specific knowledge ELTC teachers should have.

This article is divided into 4 parts. In the first one, a literature review is presented in order to expose the niche of our research. In the second part, the methodology of this research is described along with the data collection procedures. After that, the data analysis and results are presented and analyzed. Finally, in the last part of the research, a conclusion summarizes the main topics of the research and presents reflections upon the results.

1. Literature review

Teaching English as a foreign language to children is a reality not only in Brazil, but worldwide (CAMERON, 2003; ROCHA, 2007a; TONELLI, 2007). It is important to consider that one of the purposes of implementing English to early ages is to provide positive experiences to the students, since the language, here in Brazil, will be part of their curriculum in later stages of education and in their lives. Despite this fact, ELTC has been reaching public and private school contexts in different ways, creating gaps between these two educational contexts. This is to say that while it is a fact that private schools have already incorporated English classes in their curriculum since primary stages, not all public schools have been following these changes at the same rate, leaving many children excluded and without equal learning opportunities (ROCHA, 2006).

Despite the importance that the English language has acquired in our society and the space it has conquered in children schools' curriculum, in Brazil there are no official parameters that give specific orientation to the offer of foreign languages to children, as stated by Benedetti and Santos (2009).

The inexistence of official parameters to guide teachers in their practice may raise certain issues. For instance, there is no regularity in the curriculum, so if a child changes schools, s/he will be confronted with a different concept of the target language, with different learning objectives; that is, there is no linearity. Instead of helping the child

to build confidence and identity through the teaching/learning of a foreign language, this discontinuity may create negative feelings and uncertainties towards that language.

In addition to the lack of parameters, researchers of the area recognize that there is a major gap in this area as there are no specific subjects in the Pedagogy nor in the literature and languages undergraduate courses to prepare teachers to teach foreign languages to early learners, a gap that brings educational consequences. Lima and Margonari (2010, p. 192) state that

We lack disciplines in the undergraduate courses that approach how to use adequate strategies and activities with children; that bring in their programs specific practices of teaching English to children, considering their characteristics as English learners.

Such lack of disciplines may affect the teacher's educational process since some desirable knowledge an English teacher should have in order to teach children might not be developed leading to a situation of uncertainty. Concerning the desirable knowledge for such teachers, Tonelli and Cristovão (2010) mention: master of the target language; a solid theoretical basis; master of the methods and approaches to work with children; etc. In the same way, Lima and Margonari (2010) state that the knowledge on approaches and methods to work with children are essential for the teacher who works with this audience. Pires (2007 *apud* MAGALHÃES, 2013) believes that knowledge on early childhood education and the target language are essential for this work. In that author's opinion, if one of the aspects previously mentioned are not contemplated, it is better not to teach English to children at all.

It is not our intention here to affirm that it is possible to fully explore all the peculiarities of the ELTC area during undergraduate courses, but from our point of view and in accordance with other research carried out on this issue, it is desirable that universities provide pre-service teachers with the opportunity of having contact with this area, as it is constantly expanding and in need of more professionals.

As stated by Magalhães (2013, p. 255), for children to profit from English classes, teachers should have a “solid knowledge of the foreign language and the adequate profile”. From the author’s perspective, a solid knowledge of the foreign language is a basic requirement for all English teachers, including ELTC ones. Although it is not the only variable involved in this equation, it cannot be neglected.

In order to carry out her research, Magalhães (2013) developed an online questionnaire with 96 English teachers who worked with children from 2 to 12 years old in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the teachers' formal education and beliefs. The research revealed that only 1% of the interviewees considered that the mastery of the language is not important at this stage as it is in other age groups. 39% of the interviewees believed that language knowledge must be extensive, as the teacher is the student's role model.

Also, according to Magalhães (2013, p. 240) it is necessary for teachers of children to know “the characteristics of the physical, social, emotional, linguistic and intellectual development in the different age groups”. The knowledge mentioned by this author enables teachers to develop self-consciousness towards their practice, for instance, to better choose a specific age group to work with and to select appropriate activities for their classes.

There is also other specific theoretical knowledge in this area that will benefit English teachers of children. Magalhães (2013) affirms that for teachers to work with ELTC it is imperative to study Vygotsky and Piaget, as these authors explored the different phases of children’s development, which would be ideal for all teachers of children to be acquainted with.

Without the theoretical knowledge, teachers tend to work with “intuitive theories” based on their instinct and previous experience. This may not be beneficial as it can lead teachers to erroneous conclusions about their own performance and that of their students (BRUNER, 2001 *apud* MAGALHÃES, 2013).

We believe that theoretical knowledge *per se* is not enough to educate and prepare teachers. We advocate for the articulation between theory and practice, a constant relation and a never-ending process.

In addition to a proper academic education, the knowledge of the language, and specific theoretical knowledge, it is also necessary to enjoy your professional activity (MAGALHÃES, 2013). Since young learners are highly influenced by external sources, including the teacher, the teachers' motivation and feelings may influence their learning process (UR, 1996 *apud* MAGALHÃES, 2013).

Concerning the teachers' feelings towards their classes, it is important to take into consideration the children's profile too. Teachers of children cannot expect their students to be completely silent (MAGALHÃES, 2013). Students' conversation and energetic attitude is an integrant part of the work and may culminate in negative feelings if the teacher is not prepared to deal with these aspects. As part of the characteristics of childhood, it is not typical of children to keep their focus on one single activity for a long period, nor to be spontaneously quiet.

That is to say that a particular profile and specific characteristics are expected from English language teachers to children. As for the former, Benedetti and Santos (2009) offer us some data collected from five teachers in a qualitative research during interviews and reflective sessions. The results reveal that some of the characteristics required to teaching English to children are: to use methodologies appropriately for the teaching of the language; to be dynamic; to enjoy the area of teaching English; to have theoretical knowledge on children development; etc. This means that beyond the general profile for the English teacher, there should be a focus on children development.

Rocha (2007b), for example, believes that during the teaching/learning process of the ELTC there are important aspects to be taken into consideration, such as "the intellectual development of the child; the adequacy of the process to the child's focus of attention (generally short); the stimulus of all the child's senses during the process; the respect to the affective factors in teaching and, finally, the authentic and significant usage

of language (ROCHA, 2007b, p. 283)”, yet another time, the knowledge on children development shows itself as primordial

In accordance with Rocha (2007b), Lopes and Carvalho (2009, p. 624) present us their conceptions on the ELTC teachers' profile

The English language teacher who works with children education must have a different perspective that involves lots of affection, understanding, commitment to the process of educating people, respect for children's attitudes, and having ideas for them to grow confidently in an education that is valid and will make a difference in our society.

The authors mentioned in this article were chosen since they discuss not only the desirable theoretical knowledge teachers should acquire to work with children but also desirable aspects of the ideal profile for this professional. For instance, affection, patience and creativity are part of the work and cannot be ignored.

Despite the requirements of the work, there is every likelihood that and Pedagogy undergraduate courses are not preparing these professionals according to researches on such thematic (ROCHA 2007a; CRISTOVÃO and GAMERO, 2009; TONELLI and CRISTOVÃO, 2010) and from what can be seen from the curriculum of these courses. On the one hand in Pedagogy undergraduate courses, the specificities of children education are explored, but the linguistic knowledge necessary for English teachers is not provided for those student-teachers. On the other hand, in the literature and languages undergraduate courses, the study of the target language is offered but there is no contact with the subject of children education. That is one of the reasons why we advocate for the implementation of disciplines during the undergraduate languages courses that deal with ELTC.

Clearly, being an English teacher to children is not an intuitive task. It requires the teacher to master the language, to have the profile to act in this context, to build specific theoretical and practical knowledge, as it was briefly presented before.

2. Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative. This could be considered an exploratory research as it intends to understand a problem. In this case, the curriculum adequacies in the field of ELTC and also the knowledge a teacher should have in order to work with English to children are explored, according to teachers that participate in the project already mentioned.

Data collection required different tools, as there are two questions to answer in this paper. As to answer the first question, "Are the literature and languages undergraduate program in the public universities in Paraná state adapting their curriculum in order to prepare student-teachers to work with children?", an online survey into those curricula was carried out to verify whether they were adapted or not to better educate teachers that may work with children in the future. 18 universities with such courses were identified, from which 3 of them did not make their curricula available. Also, we did not develop a survey on the private universities of the state.

To answer the second question "What knowledge should an English teacher have in order to work with children?", a mixed questionnaire that consisted of 9 questions, out of which 6 were open-ended questions and 4 were closed-ended questions, was developed to ask teachers about their opinions on the topic. This questionnaire was applied to student-teachers that participated in the project "The work of the teacher in the teaching/learning of the English language to children: a proposal of teacher education"⁸. All the participants in the project are either students or former students of the English Letters course at UEL, and they were, at the time data was generated, teaching English at Colégio Estadual Professor José Aloísio de Aragão at UEL⁹ to the 1st and 5th years of primary education.

⁸ O trabalho do professor no ensino-aprendizagem da língua inglesa para crianças: uma proposta de formação docente.

⁹ Colégio Estadual Professor José Aloísio de Aragão, also known as Colégio de Aplicação da UEL, is a school which belongs to the State University of Londrina and offers all levels of Brazilian regular basic education: from Kindergarten to High School. It is a public school, therefore students are not charged to study there and the

In the next section, we present the analysis of the data and results of the research we developed for this paper.

3. Data analysis and results

3.1 Public universities in the State of Paraná and the teaching and learning of the English language to children

In order to answer the first question – "Are the literature and languages undergraduate program in the public universities in Paraná state adapting their curriculum in order to prepare student-teachers to work with children?" –the curricula of the public universities were analyzed. To identify the public universities in Paraná, two sources were used: the website *Portal Brasil* and *Wikipedia*. Unfortunately, the *Portal Brasil* website was not updated and it did not list all the state universities, so other sources were searched and, in this case, *Wikipedia* was chosen because it had a more complete list of the universities in Paraná. It is important to state that *Wikipedia* was only used as a source from which the list of Paraná public universities was collected.

In this survey, it was possible to identify 14 public universities in Paraná that had English or Portuguese/English literature and languages undergraduate courses in 18 different *campi*, as some of these universities had more than one *campus*¹⁰.

This research presents flaws in the sense that some of the universities that were investigated did not make their curriculum available online. The curricula that could not be accessed were from the following universities: FAFIPAR¹¹, FAFIPA¹² and FAFIUUV¹³.

University's employees' children have priority on the enrollment in this school. However, children from the local community can also attend the school. Ideally, the Colégio de Aplicação should be a place where researches led by the University Professors in association with the class teachers could take place contributing to the improvement of the educational quality of that school.

¹⁰ This survey was carried out on the 20th and 21st of October 2013.

¹¹ Universidade Estadual do Paraná, campus de Paranaguá.

The universities investigated are presented in the chart below.

Chart 1: Disciplines related to the teaching of the English language to children in public universities of Paraná

UNIVERSITY	Disciplines related to the teaching and learning of the English language to children
<u>UFPR</u> Universidade Federal do Paraná	X
<u>UTFPR</u> Universidade Tecnológica do Paraná	X
<u>UEM</u> Universidade Estadual de Maringá (campus Maringá)	X
<u>UEM</u> Universidade Estadual de Maringá (Online Education)	Teaching English to Children and to People with Special Educational Needs ¹⁴
<u>UEL</u> Universidade Estadual de Londrina	X
<u>UEPG</u> Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa	X
<u>UENP</u> Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná (Campus Cornélio Procópio)	X
<u>UENP</u> Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná (Campus Jacarezinho)	X
<u>UNICENTRO</u> Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste Paraná (Campus Irati)	X
<u>UNICENTRO</u> Universidade Estadual do Centro-Oeste Paraná (Campus Guarapuava)	X
<u>UNIOESTE</u> Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (Campus Cascavel)	X
<u>UNIOESTE</u> Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (Campus Foz do Iguaçu)	X
<u>UNIOESTE</u> Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná (Campus Marechal Cândido Rondon)	X

¹² Universidade Estadual do Paraná, campus de Paranavaí.

¹³ Universidade Estadual do Paraná, campus de União da Vitória.

¹⁴ Ensino de Língua Inglesa para Crianças e para Portadores de Necessidades Especiais Educacionais.

UNESPAR Universidade Estadual do Paraná	X
FAFIPAR Universidade Estadual do Paraná (Campus Paranaguá)	NO ACCESS
FAFIPA Universidade Estadual do Paraná (Campus Paranavaí)	NO ACCESS
FAFIUV Universidade Estadual do Paraná (Campus União da Vitória)	NO ACCESS
FECILCAM Universidade Estadual do Paraná (Campus Campo Mourão)	X

Source: the authors

It was possible to diagnose that only one of the public universities offer a discipline to deal with the demands of ELTC. This university was UEM, and it offered a subject about teaching English language to children and to people with special educational needs that covered 34 hours of that undergraduate course.

In addition to the previous data, we also searched for post-graduate courses in the listed universities that offered specific courses in the area of ELTC; however, none was found.

Despite the amount of research that suggest the importance of including disciplines in the university curricula (MAGALHÃES, 2013; RINALDI and FERNANDEZ, 2013; LIMA and MARGONARI, 2010; ROCHA, 2007a; TONELLI and CRISTOVÃO, 2010; etc) it is possible to state that until the completion of this research work, no universities, but UEM, offered such disciplines.

Teaching English to children is a relatively new area in Applied Linguistics (SANTOS, 2013). The number of studies in this area is significant but could grow immensely if the universities offered space where researchers of this field could dialogue and develop enquiries. The university is the ideal site to do that; however, if it does not provide space for the area to be explored and grow, it is unlikely that ELTC will expand as it should.

In the next section, the other research question will be addressed.

3.2 The ELTC teacher profile

In the next section, we will explore the profile of an ELTC teacher's group, inside the teaching, research and extension project previously mentioned. Additionally, we will examine some of the knowledge a teacher should have in order to work with ELTC according to those teachers who study and work within this area.

3.2.1 The project

The project "The work of the teacher in the teaching/learning of the English language to children: a proposal of teacher education" has its nature in the triad of teaching, research and extension. Its main goals are: a) to offer continuing education for the participants who search for specific education in the teaching and learning of the English language to children, and b) to socially include the children from the public schools where those teachers work as part of the project activities. The project was initiated in 2013 and will last for 3 years. Meetings happened once a week for one hour and a half and in those meetings, the participants discussed the theory that is needed in order to work within this context. Also, they prepared lessons, produced materials, developed research and discussed their practice.

Each pair of participants was responsible for a group of the 1st cycle of primary education at the state school professor José Aloísio de Aragão¹⁵, situated within the premises of the State University of Londrina (UEL), once a week for 50 minutes. Some participants also taught at the center of early education¹⁶ at the same university and at the University Hospital twice a week for 50 minutes.

¹⁵ Colégio Estadual Professor José Aloísio de Aragão

¹⁶ Centro de Educação Infantil

3.2.2 The participants

In order to identify aspects of the group's profile and beliefs, we used a semi-open questionnaire to collect data. One of the group's participants did not answer the questionnaire. The author of this text and the coordinator of the project were not required to answer it. Therefore, we analyzed 10 questionnaires. These questionnaires were sent to the participants by email and were answered from November, 2013 to February, 2014.

The group was formed by the coordinator¹⁷ and 12 female participants, and it was heterogeneous in terms of previous experience and background education. Seven of the participants had already finished their undergraduate courses.¹⁸ Six people were taking or had taken a post-graduate course, some of them more than one course, and most of these courses were related to the teaching of foreign languages. Also, five participants were taking literature and languages undergraduate program at UEL, being from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th years. In order to preserve the participants' identities, they were named P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9 and P10.

Based on the answers to the questionnaire, it was also possible to define the group's profile in the sense of their previous experiences towards teaching English to children before taking part in the project. Six people worked with children before participating in the project, three of them were undergraduate students. Despite the lack of specific education for this job, they have worked in private language institutes and in regular schools as part of their practice.

In the chart below, we compiled the data we discussed up to this point.

¹⁷ Prof. Dr. Juliana Reichert Assunção Tonelli.

¹⁸ They majored in Portuguese language at UENP – Universidade Estadual do Norte do Paraná, Portuguese and English language at Centro Universitário da Fundação de Ensino Octávio Bastos, English language at UEL – Universidade Estadual de Londrina, and trilingual secretariat at FECEA – Faculdade Estadual de Ciências Economicas de Apucarana, being the latter currently taking the English course at UEL.

Chart 2: The participant's profile

The participants' profile										
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
Undergraduate student	X				X		X	X	X	X
Graduate		X	X	X	X	X	X			
Post-graduate student		X		X			X			
Post-graduate				X	X	X				
Had previous experience in ELTC before taking part in the Project	X	X		X		X	X	X		X

Source: The authors

This chart presents the background of the project's participants in relation to their previous experience with ELTC and their academic education. The teachers who participated in the project were not novice-teachers only. Experienced teachers also presented the need to find academic environment where ELTC was the main subject. The project was, and still is, a rich environment where different professionals with different academic and practical backgrounds could/can dialogue about ELTC and also develop research. More initiatives like this project should be created in order to enable the teachers that choose this field to expand and disseminate their knowledge, their experience, their research and their findings.

3.3 Expected knowledge from the ELTC teacher to the ELTC teacher

In order to answer the question "What knowledge should an English teacher have in order to work with children?" we analyzed one of the questions from the questionnaire. This question was "In your opinion, what knowledge should an English teacher have in order to work with children?"

It was decided to present data in charts yet another time, as it presents information effectively. In the following chart, we chose to divide the knowledge mentioned by the teachers in two different groups: *To be* and *To know*, since we judged it was possible

to categorize data in those groups according to some words and expressions used, by the respondents by a semantic analysis.

Chart 3: What the ELTC teacher has to know

TO KNOW
Knowledge of the language; theoretical knowledge of the area; practice in the area; control over feelings.
Methodologies to teach English to children; the specificities of children's different stages of development; theories about evaluation; theories about classroom management; general characteristics of children; children basic needs; child psychology; ludic activities; the literacy process; pedagogy basic concepts; children's cognitive functions and development; children's psychomotor functioning.
Teaching English to children is hard work; children need routine; children need rules; children are still developing; children are discovering the world; it is the teacher's role to engage children in the learning process.

Source: The authors

It is possible to say that teaching English to children is not as simple as some may believe. By only looking at what the ELTC teacher should know according to the respondents, it becomes clearer that a lot has to be mastered, not just language studies, nor only knowledge related to children. The answers collected agree with research in the area. That is why it is fundamental that the universities that offer literature and languages undergraduate program include in their curriculum disciplines that focus on ELTC. We advocate that students from that course are not completely competent to teach children unless they have the minimum education to do so, a contact with the theory and practice of this area is imperative. It is the universities' role to offer this background.

Also, there are characteristics required for this teacher. To show these data, we now present a chart of the *To be* category:

Chart 4: What the ELTC teacher has to be

TO BE
Receptive; creative; affective; patient; a leader; open to the unexpected; extroverted; an artist.
Fond of children.

Source: The authors

It is possible to say that the participants agree that the ELTC teacher must have a specific profile. Not all teachers naturally have the characteristics mentioned above, another reason why universities should make it possible for student-teachers to get in touch with this context. Some people do not have the ideal profile to work with children. As soon as this is diagnosed, there is the possibility for the student-teacher to invest in other areas, or, if the teacher feels that this is an interesting area, s/he can search for specific education and try to adapt him/herself for this work.

In summary, our data showed that the teachers who participated in the project were in compliance with the literature disseminated in the area. The participants that studied and worked with ELTC understand that being an English teacher to children is complex and requires a great deal from the teacher. It was stated by the participants that it is necessary to know about the children's universe (needs, feelings, social and cognitive development, etc.); to know the English language; to have specific theoretical knowledge (on methodology, evaluation, ludic, classroom management, etc.); and to have a specific profile (to be creative, affective, patient, a leader, extroverted, etc.) Just like the general English teaching profession nowadays, teaching children is still much undervalued and has not yet conquered its space inside the university. This reality should not be maintained, as from our perspective, the ELTC research area should be explored and expanded in such spaces.

Final remarks

Despite the unquestionable role that the English language represents in our society, there are still no parameters for the teaching of this subject regarding children education in Brazilian laws. In fact, this teaching is not mandatory yet. These are some features that lead to exclusion mechanisms and unequal opportunities.

One of the aims of this paper was to research on the curricula of public universities in the state of Paraná as an attempt to identify if they offered or not disciplines related to teaching English to children, if they changed their curriculum, in this sense. During this research, no major change was identified, concerning the issue that no specific education on ELTC is offered in undergraduate, nor in post-graduate courses. Therefore, along with no parameters to work, the teachers do not receive proper education in this area. As ELTC is not part of the universities' curricula, the number of research, events and publications in the field are still limited. This reality could change once the academic circle offered more opportunities for its expansion. We, as teachers and researchers, need to claim our space, to develop more work, to disseminate our knowledge and to expand our area.

Another aim of this article was to define some of the knowledge teachers must have in order to work with English language to children. According to the participants of the research, it was possible to consider that different types of knowledge are required from the professional, e.g. Academic education and a vast knowledge on the children's world and peculiarities. The professional also needs to have a specific profile because patience, love for children and for the job, creativity, leadership, among others, are part of this work. Knowledge in the English language itself is also necessary. It is time that these professionals were recognized and that universities provided more spaces for them to grow as teachers and as researchers.

We hope that this article offered some contributions to the readers that are interested in teaching English to children, as well as some contribution to this field of research, a field that is new, but promising and in constant expansion. We also hope that

the researchers of the area keep disseminating and expanding our work, and that we will soon be awarded with more space in the academic community, due to our contribution to the applied linguistics area. Lastly, we hope that this work was able to demonstrate that the ELTC teacher's *metiér* must be respected and valued, as not any English teacher is able to perform this work.¹⁹

ENSINO DE INGLÊS PARA CRIANÇAS: DESAFIOS A SEREM SUPERADOS E CONHECIMENTOS A SEREM APROPRIADOS

RESUMO: Atualmente o ensino de língua inglesa para crianças (LIC) se encontra em constante expansão no contexto educacional brasileiro e internacional (ROCHA, 2007; TONELLI, 2007; LINGUEVIS, 2007; TONELLI e CRISTOVÃO, 2010, CAMERON, 2003). Apesar desta expansão, testemunhamos falhas na formação de professores desta área (CRISTOVÃO e GAMERO, 2009), assim como a falta de parâmetros para guiar este ensino (BENEDETTI e SANTOS, 2009). Este trabalho buscou analisar os currículos das universidades públicas do estado do Paraná que oferecem cursos de Letras com o objetivo de buscar mudanças curriculares que busquem ir ao encontro das necessidades específicas desta área. Também buscamos investigar alguns aspectos dos conhecimentos que o professor precisa dominar para trabalhar com o ensino de LIC. Os resultados mostram que as modificações nos currículos das universidades pesquisadas não são significativas. Além disso, os dados revelaram que existem conhecimentos e um perfil específico desejáveis para este professor.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Conhecimentos desejáveis aos professores de língua inglesa para crianças; Ensino de língua inglesa para crianças; Currículos dos cursos de Letras; Perfil específico.

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¹⁹ This research is being expanded on the dissertation of the first author under the supervision of the second author.

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