DIDACTICS OF LANGUAGE AND APPLIED LINGUISTICS: TWO PERSPECTIVES OF CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHING OBJECTS

DIDÁTICA DA LÍNGUA E LINGUÍSTICA APLICADA: DUAS PERSPECTIVAS DE CONSTRUÇÃO DE OBJETOS DE ENSINO

DIDÁTICA DE LA LENGUA Y LINGÜÍSTICA APLICADA : DOS PERSPECTIVAS DE CONSTRUCCIÓN DE OBJETOS DE ENSEÑANZA

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ABSTRACT: In this text, we present an analysis of the way in which the construction of teaching objects by applied linguistics takes place, focusing on the teaching of grammar with the teaching of grammar as a thematic focus. The aim of this study is to identify if the way it proceeds is in line with the theoretical and methodological principles of general and language didactics. Two conceptions of linguistics are distinguished as applied science: a lato sensu applied linguistics, focused on the application of linguistic theories to language teaching, and another stricto sensu, which turns to the study of problems involving the use of language in real contexts. Initially, the fundaments of general didactics are presented, to which the didactics of language as a specific discipline must be connected. Next, we analyze proposals of applied linguistics lato sensu for a descriptive approach of grammar in basic education, highlighting the paradoxes that permeate them. It was concluded that the applied linguistics lato sensu ignores didactics as a science

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of the practice of teaching, in favor of applicationism, that is, the transfer of scientific knowledge to the school context and teacher training.

KEYWORDS: Didactics of Portuguese. Applied Linguistics. Grammar teaching.

RESUMO: Neste texto, apresenta-se uma análise da forma como se dá a construção de objetos de ensino pela linguística aplicada, tendo o ensino de gramática como recorte temático. O objetivo é identificar se seu modo de proceder se coaduna com os princípios teórico-metodológicos das didáticas geral e da língua. Distinguem-se duas concepções da linguística como ciência aplicada: uma linguística aplicada lato sensu, voltada para a aplicação das teorias linguísticas ao ensino de língua, e outra, stricto sensu, que se volta para o estudo de problemas que envolvem o uso da linguagem em contextos reais. Inicialmente, apresentam-se os fundamentos da didática geral, aos quais a didática da língua, como disciplina específica, deve estar conectada. Em seguida, analisam-se propostas da linguística aplicada lato sensu para uma abordagem descritivista da gramática na educação básica, destacando-se os paradoxos que as atravessam. Concluiu-se que a linguística aplicada lato sensu ignora a didática como ciência da prática de ensinar, em favor do aplicacionismo, ou seja, a transferência dos saberes científicos ao contexto escolar e à formação de professores.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Didática do português. Linguística aplicada. Ensino de gramática.

RESUMEN: En este texto, se presenta un análisis de la forma como se da la construcción de objetos de enseñanza por la lingüística aplicada, teniendo la enseñanza de gramática como recorte temático. El objetivo es identificar si su modo de proceder se ajusta a los principios teórico-metodológicos de las didácticas generales y de la lengua. Se distinguen dos concepciones de la lingüística como ciencia aplicada: una lingüística aplicada lato sensu, orientada a la aplicación de las teorías lingüísticas a la enseñanza de lengua, y otra stricto sensu, que se vuelve al estudio de problemas que involucran el uso del lenguaje en contextos real. Inicialmente, se presentan los fundamentos de la didáctica general, a los que la didáctica de la lengua, como disciplina específica, debe estar conectada. A continuación, se analizan propuestas de la lingüística aplicada lato sensu para un enfoque descriptivista de la gramática en la educación básica, destacándose las paradojas que las atraviesan. Se concluyó que la lingüística aplicada lato sensu ignora la didáctica como ciencia de la práctica de enseñar, en favor del aplicacionismo, o sea, la transferencia de los saberes científicos al contexto escolar ya la formación de profesores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: La enseñanza de portugués. Linguística aplicada. Enseñanza de gramática.

1 INTRODUCTION

The development of different scientific linguistic theories has drawn the attention of many researchers to the traditional grammar conceptual problems and, by extension, to the impacts of these problems on the Portuguese teaching in elementary education. In general, linguists attribute to these problems a theoretical and a methodological nature.

From a theoretical point of view, the scientification of grammar studies, based on new epistemological foundations, forged new conceptions of language and grammar (internalized and descriptive) and proceeded to a reexamination of the conceptual apparatus inherited by tradition. The emphasis on a naturalistic / realistic approach to language as a scientific study object contrasted with the conception of model language, the object normative grammar, and produced the opposition between real and ideal language. The redefinition of grammar on a cognitive / biological basis dissociated this object from reading and writing practices by conceiving it as a set of rules that structure the functioning of a language, and it was understood as a natural phenomenon.

From the methodological point of view, linguists criticize the centrality of the standard norm - codified in normative grammars - in Portuguese language teaching, to the detriment of the diversity inherent in any natural language, and a pedagogy oriented to the teaching and learning of terminology and grammatical taxonomy, orthographic norms, pronoun placement, regency, agreement, etc. The research developed mainly by sociolinguistics has evidenced the heterogeneous reality of the spoken language, and as a result, many linguists have proposed abandoning the normative perspective in grammar teaching in favor of a descriptive approach, which proposes to study the language "as it is," not as it should be.

In this text, I argue that the linguists' propositions for language teaching constitute the applied sphere of linguistics as a pure science, an applied linguistic *lato sensu*, which primarily takes the rules of modern scientific rationality as references for the construction of Portuguese teaching objects in elementary education, unlike what the language didactics proposes, a subject linked to general didactics, with which it articulates to produce a global theory of language teaching practice and didactic engineering. Thus, we would have two perspectives to construct Portuguese language teaching objects, with deep impacts on the understanding of what is or should be the teaching of this discipline in elementary education and teacher training in Language undergraduate programs.

In designating the theoretical linguistics contributions as an applied science *lato sensu,* I wanted to differentiate it from another notion of applied science, which I will call 'applied linguistics' *stricto sensu*, defined as an inter- and / or transdisciplinary branch of research on complex problems involving language in real contexts of use. This modality is called Applied Linguistics (AL) and it has as a remarkable characteristic: the refusal of theoretical application (MOITA LOPES, 1996, 2006; SIGNORINI; CAVALCANTI, 1998; CORACINI; BERTOLDO, 2003; KLEIMAN; CAVALCANTI, 2007).

As defined here, applied linguistics *lato sensu* (henceforth, applied linguistics only) does not constitute a coherent and systematic field of theoretical production and research on the didactic and pedagogical aspects that involve language teaching but a scattered set of proposals which originates in the subfields within linguistics or in different perspectives within the same discipline, without any obligatory connection or relationship between them. In face of this theoretical pluralism, which consequently generates a conceptual and methodological pluralism, some problems arise: how to arrange the different and scattered proposals of applied linguists in the same curricular project of language teaching? Do all the different scientific subjects handle all the language teaching contents for elementary education? What should the relation between scientific knowledge and educational policies be? How to define language teaching matters and its progression throughout elementary education?

The knowledge transfer to applied linguistics differs from didactic transposition, a term coined by Chevallard (1985) to designate the process of transforming scientific knowledge into didactic knowledge. Petitjean (2008) recognizes that Chevallard formulation reduces the didactic knowledge potential to the limits of its conceptualization by the scientific subjects, but he understands that it can be reconceptualized to explain the differences between scientific and educational objectives since the objects of teaching, despite their possible links with science (non-compulsory and without interdependence relations), are constructed by didactics, due to the educational objectives.

In this text, I present an analysis of the way in which the construction of teaching objects by applied linguistics takes place, with the teaching of grammar as a thematic focus. The aim is to identify if the way they proceed is in line with the theoretical-methodological principles of general didactics and language. In the section "General didactics and modern science", I discuss the fundaments of didactics as a general theory of teaching , to which the didactics of specific subjects must be connected. In the section "Didactics of Language as an Emerging Discipline", I present a brief outline of language didactics, its principles, objectives and problems to be faced. Finally, in the section "Applied Linguistics and Grammar Teaching", I analyze proposals of applied linguistics for a descriptive approach to grammar in elementary education, highlighting the paradoxes that cross them.

2 GENERAL DIDACTICS AND MODERN SCIENCE

The word "didactic" comes from the Greek term *didaskein*, which means to instruct, to teach. Taken in its specialized sense, in the pedagogy scope, the word derives from the expression *Techné didaktiké*, that is, the technique or art of teaching. This definition highlights the classical distinction between art (technique) and science.

Aristotle was the first philosopher to recognize the different types of sciences (episteme), distinguishing them between theoretical (speculative), productive and practical, according to the knowledge purpose produced by them. The theoretical sciences aimed at producing contemplative knowledge, knowledge for knowledge's sake. The productive ones aimed at useful knowledge for the production of handicraft or manual objects, engineering, architecture, besides diverse abilities of artistic or professional nature. The practical sciences, in turn, had the purpose of producing knowledge aimed at character formation and socio-political organization, in view of the socialization processes.

The Aristotelian classification of the sciences shows two general forms of relationship with knowledge. The first, within the theoretical sciences' framework, conceives knowledge as a detached phenomenon, which has as its end nothing but the mere understanding of the study objects. The second, encompassing the productive and practical sciences, defines knowledge inseparably linked to a *modus faciendi* that transcends it, that is, that goes beyond itself to form in the acts of the human creations that generate and transform nature, culture and mankind itself. In this second sense, knowledge inexorably presupposes the existence of contextual relations in which subjects activate and transform it in order to enable the necessary means to achieve certain goals. In this two-way street, didactics can only be guided by the second form of relationship with knowledge since aspects of different natures, such as epistemological (knowledge), axiological (values) and praxiological (technical and political), collaborate for constituting it.

Bacon's criticisms (1561-1626) of the Aristotelian conception of theoretical sciences as merely speculative, without any purpose that transcends them, have laid some important foundations of modern science, provoking reviews on the nature of these sciences and on the theory-practice relationship. Bacon postulated that the theoretical sciences should have as a purpose the production of the necessary knowledge to propitiate the control of nature. Comte's positivism (1798-1857) radicalizes the Baconian ideal and transforms the natural sciences into the only valid references of scientific knowledge, denying to the arts, a technical nature knowledge, the status of science. From then on, the notion of practice was reformulated and, moving away from the Aristotelian conception, became an object of another type of science defined in close relation of dependence with the theoretical science: the applied science. It would have the function of transferring to the practical life contexts the knowledge of the theoretical sciences.

However, as Santos (2017) points out, the applied sciences came to conceive the practice as a theoretical object that should be explained by the knowledge of the pure sciences, ignoring the dimension of know-how. Given this, it is necessary to recognize two meanings for the notion of practice:

> […] we can distinguish a first sense from practice, understood as a comprehensive activity, whose purpose would be to provide the theoretical basis that should guide action in a given context. In this perspective, the practice itself does not exist, but it is expected to result from the theoretical knowledge transposition, from the production context to the application context, remaining essentially unchanged. In a second sense, we can define practice as the technical competence necessary for the practice of a particular task, office or profession. In this case, theoretical knowledge, although important and indispensable, is insufficient to guarantee human action, which will always be subject to variations due to the social context contingencies and vicissitudes. (SANTOS, 2017, p. 154)

In the education field, as in other areas in which the two practice conceptions need to be articulated or triggered simultaneously, the context's complexity gives rise to equally complex study objects, hardly amenable to a monodisciplinary approach. The educational practice is composed of philosophical, sociological, psychological, anthropological, pedagogical and didactic aspects, taken as objects of different subjects that make up the educational sciences. Although each of them is characterized as interdisciplinary, since its composition encompasses theoretical and / or methodological aspects of a specific subject (sociology, philosophy, psychology, etc.) articulated to specific factors to the educational context, it is necessary to be concerned about ensuring an integration between all of them in educational practice, understood as a situated activity that involves specific goals and actors. This integrating task corresponds to the general didactics and to the specific didactics of the subjects.

We cannot fail to recognize that the distinction between these two spheres of didactics reflects the fragmentation logic and the knowledge hyperspecialization inherent characteristic of modern science, as it has been shaped since the nineteenth century. In Comenius's Magna Didactics (1592-1670), the first work of its kind, it was inconceivable to think of the art of teaching in a fragmented manner bounded to imagine the need for a general teaching theory and one specific to each subject. Comenius, as it was typical of his time, conceived didactics holistically, as it is evident in his work presentation to readers:

> We dare to promise a 'Didactica Magna', that is, a universal art of teaching **everything to everyone**: to teach right, to get results; to teach easily, so without teachers and students being annoyed or bored, but on the other hand having great joy; to teach solidly, not superficially anyway, but to lead to true culture, good morals, deeper piety. (COMENIUS, 2006, p. 13, emphasis added)

The current fragmentation stage and specialization of knowledge, even at a time when modern science is the object of many criticisms, together with the way in which the institutional division of academic work takes place, considerably hampers or precludes the elaboration of totalizing didactics in the work of Comenius. In the current scientific-academic configuration, general didactics is limited to the pedagogy field or education sciences, and the private sciences have discussions about the teaching of their respective theoretical objects in elementary education. Considering the scope of this text, it is necessary to investigate how the general didactics and the specific didactics of the language are formed to draw the connections between each other that will allow the elaboration of a global theory of Portuguese language teaching.

Libâneo (2013, p. 13) defines general didactics as "a subject that studies the objectives, the contents, the means and the conditions of the teaching process in view of the educational purposes". Indeed, this definition can be considered overly broad if, to the general didactics, is given the task of studying in detail all the constituent elements of particular subjects. However, judging by the author's treatment of the theme throughout his work, it can be concluded that it is not for the general didactics to establish, for example, the contents of all school subjects, but to set the parameters that each one of them must observe to define them. The same must happen with respect to the other elements that make up the teaching process.

Two trends characterize theoretical production in general didactics. The first one deals with the general subject outline, contemplating the education objectives and their relationship with teaching and learning conceptions, contents, teaching methodologies, classroom management, conceptions of evaluation and teacher training, considering the educational policies. Examples of this tendency are the works of Zabala (1998), Pozo (2002), Gimeno Sacristán and Pérez Gómez (1998), Libâneo (2013), among others. The second trend covers a set of works that take each component of teaching as a particular object of theory and research. Among them, I can mention: Dolz and Ollagnier (2004), Zabala and Arnau (2010), Gimeno Sacristán et al. (2011) and Perrenoud (2013), who focus on the education objectives; Coll et al. (2000), who turn to a teaching contents theory; Perrenoud (2000, 2001), Zabala (2002), Perraudeau (2009), Vianin (2013), Hartman (2015), Cohen and Lotan (2017), who reflect on the teaching of methodological aspects; Wesnstein and Novodvorsky (2015), who theorize about classroom management; Perrenoud (1999), Hadji (2001) and Luckesi (2011), who focus on evaluation; Garcia (1999), Altet (2000), Paquay et al. (2001), Perrenoud (2002), Tardif and Lessard (2014), which focus on professional teacher education.

As an educational practice science, didactics implodes the split between the basic sciences and the applied sciences that were established from the hegemonic perspective of relationship with knowledge represented by modern science. Consequently, new possibilities open up to reflect on the relations between theory and practice, especially when the superiority ideal of a priori theory is abandoned, presented as necessary and sufficient to explain and solve all practical problems, regardless of the contingencies and vicissitudes of the contexts in which human actions are developed, especially the educational ones. Thus, the notion of practice recovers the Aristotelian sense, configuring itself as a phenomenon simultaneously epistemological, axiological and praxiological.

Dealing with a phenomenon as complex as educational practice obliges didactic theorists to move through very diversified fields of institutionalized knowledge without abandoning the necessary social representations knowledge about education and its role in the socialization of the individuals, educational policies, forms of organization and functioning of educational systems and schools. This profusion of factors, while making didactics a science that requires scientific and political engagement, inevitably generates

divergent views about the educational process meanings and the most adequate means to attain its ends. However, the fact that didactics is a theoretical space for teaching does not give it the prerogative, *ipso facto*, to determine its purposes or how it should be defined, because it would not be up to the theorists themselves to determine which one should be chosen, among the various conceptions about each topic linked to teaching. This task behooves the educational policymakers. In this context, it is the responsibility of didactics, the general or the specific one, to accompany, assist and evaluate the elaboration of these policies, transforming them into objects of investigation and reflection to contribute to their improvement.

In order to adequately fulfill its theoretical and political functions in social settings that keeps changing all the time, didactics must turn to the task of constantly questioning itself, the educational policies and the educational practices. Questions such as the following need up-to-date answers due to the advances in research, social change (needs) and educational policies: what should be the education objectives? What are the knowledge and teaching methods needed to reach them? How should learning be evaluated? How should the teachers be trained to ensure the success of education?

In the current model of globalized educational policies, the notion of competency development has emerged as the primary objective of formal education processes in the West. This guidance was inspired by observing the new professional demands that occur in face of contemporary social and technological changes, including technical knowledge, personal, interpersonal and social skills. The competences, in this context, are understood as practical knowledge or higher-level skills through which the subject mobilizes specific knowledge necessary for proper action in a given situation, as Perrenoud (2013) says.

Due to the fact that its origin is linked to the needs of the world of work, the competence notion has been the object of criticisms according to which its adoption by public policies as a nuclear concept for the definition of educational objectives would represent a subservience of the school to the economy market or even the educational practice would become primarily technical. These issues have led to many controversies among several theorists, including Dolz and Ollagnier (2004), Bronckart and Dolz (2004), Gimeno Sacristán (2011), Pérez Gómez (2011), Rodríguez (2011), Santomé (2011) and Méndez (2011). These authors reflect on problems related to the epistemological status of the competences notion and problematize the impacts they can reflect on the teaching process. These reflections revolve around issues such as: how to define competences? How to establish the relationship between professional and educational skills? How to define educational competencies and what criteria should be used to select those that should be included in the curricula? Is it really necessary that the development of skills be the fundamental education objective?

There is another group of scholars who, although are not unaware of the controversies surrounding competences, have opted for a theoretical investment around the concept, with the purpose of making it operational in the general didactics field. Authors such as Perrenoud (1999, 2013) and Zabala and Arnau (2010, 2016), for example, present theoretical-methodological conceptions for a didactics of competences in which disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary knowledge are mobilized to solve problem situations. These kinds of knowledge are divided into two main types: the conceptual / factual ones of the specific subjects, after being transformed into didactic knowledge, and the transversal ones, composed of i) themes such as gender, sexuality, work, consumption, race, cultural diversity, environment, etc. ; ii) abilities (explain, describe, argue, compare, research, among others) and iii) attitudinal (values and norms). Transversal knowledge does not represent particular objects of any discipline in isolation, and therefore must permeate all school subjects.

In this conception, the curricular contents are selected according to the competences previously established and that represent the whole purpose of the educational process. This way of conceiving the educational objectives results in a new way of conceiving the contents (COLL, 2000), now subdivided into factual / conceptual, focused on teaching and learning facts and disciplinary concepts; procedural, focused on the teaching and learning of transversal skills, involving the conceptual / factual contents; attitudinal, also transversal, directed to the teaching and learning, values and attitudes. With such significant changes in the design of norms, teaching objectives and objects, all other components of educational practice, such as methodology, teaching-learning process management, and assessment, must also be reconfigured. All these aspects, as they materialize in new curriculum projects, should lead to changes in teacher education policies and practices.

These two didactic functions around the concept of competences, presented in the previous paragraphs, the critical and epistemological functions, are fundamental for the characterization of the subject as a science of practice that integrates, inseparably, epistemological, axiological and praxiological factors. Moreover, didactical criticism and theorizing allow this science to play a political role, informing public policy managers, universities, educational actors and society in general about the problems and possibilities of using social knowledge and practices in the elaboration of educational policies.

As already mentioned, the fragmentation and specialization of knowledge resulting from the hegemony of the modern scientific paradigm had as one of its consequences a new form of division and classification of sciences and academic work that is also reflected in the configuration of didactics as a scientific subject. Although its *modus operandi* contradicts several preconditions of modern science, especially as regards the dichotomies of pure science / applied science, objectivism / interpretation and theory / practice, the institutionalization of the most diverse disciplinary fields, correlated to the creation of undergraduate programs and to the legal requirement of specific certification offered by these programs as a condition for the exercise of the teaching profession in the different areas of knowledge, has posed some challenges for the integration between the general didactics and the teaching practice of the different disciplines. The main challenge to be overcome may lie in the complex task of transforming scientific knowledge into didactic objects, observing that: i) educational objectives are different from the objectives of science in relation to knowledge; ii) the school subjects contents are not identified, *ipsis litteris*, with the scientific subjects knowledge.

The need to observe these two conditions places general didactics as a theoretical production space responsible for establishing the foundations and principles that specific didactics must observe in the process of teaching objects construction, among which it is placed the didactic transposition. Without this relationship, general didactics would lose its *raison d'être*. Similarly, without the general didactics, particular subjects would not have a common reference to guide their own constitution as school subjects, owing to a construction of a subjects global didactics. This global didactics, unlike general didactics, is not intended to establish the theoretical-methodological foundations that all curricular subjects must observe in order to be constituted as components of basic education. But represents a particular science that, observing the general didactics foundations, it studies and establishes the elements that structure the teaching-learning processes of a specific subject in its entirety. Thus, the term "global" refers to the whole of a subject, while "general" refers to what is common to all.

In Brazil, the lack of specific didactics as institutionalized disciplinary fields has generated some theoretical and practical problems for teaching, with repercussions on teacher training and the elementary education quality. In the undergraduate programs, the academic and technical models of teacher training (SANTOS, 2018) have prevailed, separating the scientific knowledge from the specific disciplines and the knowledge of the sciences applied to education (psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy and general didactics) in watertight units, and then present them to future professionals without proper relations with the objectives, the specific teaching objects of the different subjects and their respective teaching-learning processes. Without a global didactics of the subjects, undergraduate programs function as if the technical knowledge presented in a fragmented way were sufficient to make the future professional capable of acting in the school context, as if there were an identity between scientific knowledge and didactic knowledge, and as if the future teachers were able, in isolation, to elaborate the necessary synthesis between dispersed disciplinary knowledge and didactics.

Within elementary education, the institutions of the government - Ministry of Education (MEC), State and Municipal Secretariats of Education - have assumed the responsibility of elaborating, if not the global didactics of each subject, at least a set of global curricular parameters and, largely organic, such as the National Curriculum Parameters (NCP) and the recent Common National Curriculum Base (BNCC), which incorporate general didactics fundamentals and a selection of subject-specific content to guide curriculum design and Political-Pedagogical Projects in school units. In parallel with this, the national teacher education guidelines emphasize the need for undergraduate programs to observe these official curriculum guidelines in initial teacher education. However, the predominance of the academic and technical models of vocational training, together with the lack of specific didactics, has been an obstacle to the effective implementation of these educational policies.

3 THE LANGUAGE DIDATICS AS AN EMERGING SUBJECT

In France, the problem of the inexistence of the subjects didactics began to be faced from the 1960s onwards, and I must highlight Chevallard´s work (1985) on the didactics of mathematics. Among other important formulations, his studies formulated two fundamental didactics concepts: the notion of didactic transposition, understood as the passage from scientific knowledge to didactic knowledge, and the notion of the didactic engineering, a designation attributed to the didactic situations research through experimental models of teaching, in order to understand the factors that interfere with the success or failure of the teaching-learning processes and intervene in the educational practice to improve it.

The didactics of languages began in the 1970s in French-speaking countries, inspired by the works of Chevallard. Petitjean (2008), however, considered that it is not possible to adopt the concept of didactic transposition to language teaching as narrowly as Chevallard's conception indicates for two reasons: i) in language teaching, the objective is the development of language use skills and not knowledge teaching; ii) the contents to be taught are not limited to the transposed scientific knowledge but must refract the social reference practices that define the didactic situations. In the author's words, "Applied to French language, this concept [of didactic transposition] shows that speaking, reading, writing, thinking, to varying degrees, are skills that develop and are exercised in non-school practices" (PETITJEAN, 2008, p. 21).

As the author understands it, in the case of language didactics, the construction of teaching objects is not in line with a restricted conception of didactic transposition since learning language uses is not limited to the scientific knowledge learning. To meet the educational objectives, language teaching should include social language practices taken as references for the organization of teaching situations. This broad conception of didactic transposition, oriented towards the didatization of social practices and not only to the scientific knowledge, makes the didactic engineering tasks more complex.

One aspect that deserves careful attention concerns the relationship between the space-time variables of didactic situations and the development of competences as central objectives of language teaching. After all, as defined by Bakhtin (2016), if the production of any textual genre must observe, in each communicative context, the thematic content (the ideas), the compositional form (the macro and micro-textual structure) and the style (the appropriate language resources selection), is it possible for the school to organize didactic situations capable of inserting the students in real communicative situations, contemplating all these elements in each genre that is object of teaching-learning processes? This would imply the use of pedagogical strategies that exceed classroom space limitations and time. Or would the social practices of reference be merely models to guide the elaboration of didactic situations that simulate social language practices in the school context? If so, how can we ensure that simulated activities, outside the real context, can ensure effective competence development? What criteria should be used to select genres? How to distribute them over the years of schooling and teaching units? How to establish its progression?

Another problem that poses difficulties for language didactics, focusing on the development of competences refers to the didactic treatment of the constitutive stylistic resources of the various textual genres. Most of the schooled genres, when in their real contexts, are produced by subjects who have already gone through elementary education and even specific training courses to enable them to write properly, using stylistic resources. As it is well-known, the school establishes a grammatical content progression over the years of schooling in a way that makes students come across textual production activities early before they build all the linguistic knowledge that the production activities of the various textual genres demand. However, if all goes according to the curricular structure, students will have mastered these contents only in the final years of elementary school education.

This set of problems, among others, highlights the importance of language didactics as a theory of practice that, articulated with the general didactics, should perform the critical functions of scientific knowledge, educational policies and curriculum, as well as theorizing and the political function exercise through didactic engineering. Dolz (2016) presents an appropriation of the didactic engineering concept for the language teaching study in the following terms:

> Didactic engineering aims to technically conceive students' tasks and actions to learn, coordinate teachers' interventions and develop devices that can solve language teaching problems. It organizes, transforms and adapts language knowledge and discursive practices for teaching. Engineering is primarily responsible for designing school projects and designing devices, activities, exercises, school materials, and new written, oral, and audiovisual communication technologies. To this aim, it imagines and plans the social forms of schoolwork of students. It is also in charge of inventing tools to facilitate learning and to guide the teacher's interventions and professional gestures. Finally, it conducts research on the innovations introduced, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of novelties. (DOLZ, 2016, p. 240, 241)

In Brazil, one cannot speak of Portuguese didactics as a subject or area of institutionalized research. Thus, the issues involving language teaching have been receiving fragmentary treatment in the applied linguistics field and even in AL, generally contemplating teaching objects or methodological suggestions, without the necessary didactic foundation and the empirical research development to evaluate the relevance of the proposals. It is important, however, to distinguish how the two modalities of linguistics as applied science have dealt with teaching so that we can understand the urgency of a didactics of the Portuguese language in Brazil.

AL calls itself an institutionally constituted disciplinary field that investigates problems involving language use in real contexts. In this sense, the questions related to teaching refer to themes that are, in general, beyond the scope of the disciplines of pure linguistics, such as (multi)literacy (ROJO, 2009; ROJO; MOURA, 2012; BUNZEN; MENDONÇA, 2006, 2013). Nevertheless, there are authors who define themselves as applied linguists, in a narrow sense. They link their discussions of grammar teaching, for example, with an approach aligned with the application model, completely or partially. This perspective includes works such as those by Travaglia (2009) and Antunes (2007, 2009, 2014), which seek to transfer theoretical constructs from pure linguistics to teaching. In these cases, given the lack of theorizing about grammar in the field of AL, when discussing grammar becomes necessary, the usual practice has been to resort to the theoretical constructs of pure linguistics or to other subjects of applied linguistics, such as textual linguistics. In these cases, even if they manage to go beyond mere applicationism, pedagogical proposals cannot overcome the problems common to any attempt to transfer scientific knowledge to language teaching without the observance of the didactics principles.

Applied linguistics, in turn, represents the counterpart of theoretical linguistics, whose knowledge seeks to transfer to teaching. It is a dispersed set of propositions motivated by the ideal of transference to the teaching of theoretical objects from the different subareas within linguistics, in a monodisciplinary way, without considering the possible articulation of these disciplines between each another and with the educational objectives, besides not observing the didactics assumptions. In the next section, I will present some aspects of this perspective and analyze how the construction of grammar occurs as a teaching object.

The two perspectives of applied linguistics have in common the fact that they do not represent cohesive bodies of theoretical production that find in general didactics and didactics of language the theoretical-methodological references for the construction of teaching and research objects about language teaching and learning processes. In these works, there are no discussions about competences as defining educational objectives, although Brazilian official curriculum guidelines, PCN and BNCC, align with this perspective. There is no explicit mention of conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents as resources for skills development. The concepts of teaching and learning that underlie the proposals presented are not mentioned. Without the explanation of these elements, the evaluation of the suggested methodologies is compromised. In addition, there are no discussions about learning assessment concepts - diagnostic, summative, procedural and formative.

4 APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND GRAMMAR TEACHING

The place and the meaning of grammar in Portuguese language teaching are controversial in applied linguistics and result from an epistemological critique of the theory of so-called traditional grammar. Such criticisms have generated a set of pedagogical problems around questions such as which grammar to teach, why and how to teach it. It is possible to relate the motivations of these pedagogical criticisms to the fact that the educational policies attribute to the Higher Education Institutions (HEI), the universities and colleges, the responsibility for the initial formation of the elementary education teachers. In Brazil, the requirement of college

education for teaching requires university professors to reflect on teaching, which usually happens under the aegis of scientific knowledge produced in higher education. This knowledge has guided the configuration of curricula of future professional training courses, putting them in contact with the epistemological and pedagogical criticisms toward the traditional grammar.

What I have called the epistemological critique of traditional grammar, however, is not a univocal discourse. On the contrary, it is based on a theoretical pluralism grounded on the functionalist, formalist and sociolinguistic paradigms, which have in common the use of descriptive methodologies. This pluralism, salutary in the field of pure science because it makes possible the language study from different perspectives, generates some impasses for applied science. One of them concerns the polysemy around the concept of grammar, naturally seen in the scientific context due to the different theoretical perspectives that guide the linguistic studies, but which proves to be quite problematic when transferred to the school context, where these conceptions add to the sociopolitical meanings historically associated with traditional / normative grammar.

Another conceptual problem has to do with the terminology to be adopted in teaching. Currently, normative grammars generally refer to the Brazilian Grammar Nomenclature (NGB), created in the late 1950s in order to standardize the terminology adopted in teaching situations and other social practices that require standard language knowledge. Being committed to pure science, applied linguistics, preserving the principle of knowledge fragmentation and specialization, transfers to its proposals for language teaching the terminological and conceptual pluralism of the various programs of scientific studies of language.

Thus, it is necessary a critical reflection, in the light of the general didactics and language foundations, about grammatical theories in pure linguistics and their relations with normative grammar, comparing their educational and sociopolitical articulations. It is an exercise of the critical, theoretical and political functions of language didactics, which is very necessary in the Brazilian context, where much of the debate on Portuguese language teaching and the undergraduate language programs are guided by the knowledge of applied linguistics.

4.1 THE GRAMMAR IN PURE LINGUISTICS

Linguistics owes its status as a science to the work of Ferdinand Saussure, who found in structuralism a way of giving language study scientific rigor equivalent to that of the natural sciences. Taking positivist objectivism as a model of scientificity, Saussure (2004) distinguished internal from external linguistics, recognizing only the former as worthy of being called science. With this, he sought to define language as a pure object: "our definition of language supposes that we eliminate from it everything foreign to the organism, its system, in one word: everything that is termed 'external linguistics'" (p. 29). A little further on, Saussure postulates the psychological nature of language: "the concrete object of our study is, therefore, the social product deposited in one's brain, that is, language" (p. 33). To complement the language characterization as a study object of internal linguistics, he also says: "language is a system that knows only its own order" (p. 33).

External linguistics, in turn, would deal with the socio-anthropological factors of language related to the practical aspects of the language social functioning around issues such as civilization, nationalism, writing and dialectation. Saussure does not deny that these factors affect language in various ways, but he understands that this does not negate the possibility of studying it as a pure object. Moreover, the distinction between internal and external linguistics imposes on Saussure the need to explain the relations of convergence and divergence between the notions of language, speech - natural phenomena - and writing - cultural product.

For Saussure, writing is foreign to the internal system: "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs" (p. 34). Thus, he rightly concludes that changes or alterations suffered by one of these systems do not necessarily affect the other. The same is not true of speech, which is mutually implicated with language: "language is necessary for speech to be intelligible and to produce all its effects; but it is necessary for the language to be established " (p. 27). With these postulates, Saussure laid the foundations of linguistics as a pure and descriptive science that continue until the present day. As a descriptive science, linguistics is concerned with language as it is and not as it should be, contrary to normative grammar. A scientific investigation then seeks to describe and explain

the rules of language functioning that are inherent in the system, excluding rules derived from sociocultural values or norms, as with writing, which is inseparable from these values and norms.

Saussurian structuralism inaugurated not only a new language study methodology, descriptivism, but it also opened the way for new conceptions of grammar:

> We must carefully distinguish grammar, as postulated mental structure, from linguist grammar, an explicitly structured theory that aims to accurately express the grammar rules and principles in the ideal speaker's mind. The linguist's grammar is a scientific theory, correct in that it corresponds to the internally represented grammar. [...] It is common to use the term "grammar" with systematic ambiguity, so that the context determines whether we are referring to internalized grammar or linguist theory. (CHOMSKY, 1981, p. 166)

It is curious that linguistics uses the term grammar to refer to the mental structure that makes the human faculty of language possible (internalized grammar) and the work of linguists describing this structure (descriptive grammar), because, etymologically, the word grammar, grammata, which means "letter", is directly linked to reading and writing practices. In Chomsky's generative linguistics, mental grammar, in its early stages, presents itself as a potential structure that allows the subject to learn any language as long as he/she is exposed to it. Once acquired at least one language, universal grammar becomes the internalized grammar of that language. To study this grammar, the linguist develops a scientific theory called descriptive grammar.

The historical and linguistics epistemological development would give rise to new subjects within it, which eventually transformed it into a large area with diverse subjects that take different language aspects as objects. Sociolinguistics, for example, came up to explain linguistic change (LABOV; WEINRICH; HERZOG, 2006). Two problems were fundamental to its emergence: i) if language is a system that only knows its own homogeneous order, how can one explain the fact that all languages change? ii) Assuming that languages do not change abruptly, but gradually over time and at different structural levels (phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic), how can we explain that they remain functional as they change?

To answer these questions, Labov postulated the need to adopt a language study methodology that would relate language structure and social structure. With this procedure, he would reaffirm the Saussurean thesis that language is a social product deposited in the human brain, adding that the structures that cause social differentiation (social classes, age, gender, race, etc.) also cause differentiation or variation in language. Three conclusions derive from these premises: (i) there is a causal relationship between social differentiation and linguistic variation, so that it is not possible to explain the rules of language functioning solely by describing its internal order; ii) language order should not be coupled with homogeneity, which results in the language conception as heterogeneous and ordered system; iii) linguistic change is characterized by a causal relationship arising from the interaction between social differentiation and linguistic variation.

Despite the differences between Saussure's structuralism and Labov's structural-functionalism, two defining points of linguistics as pure science remain common to both: the conception of language as a mental structure and the idea of mutual implication between language and speech, except for the writing.

4.2 LINGUISTIC AS A SCIENCE APPLIED TO THE GRAMMAR TEACHING

In the previous section, I broadly characterized linguistics as a science aligned with the positivist paradigm, as a pure science that isolates its object from any subjective, axiological, or praxiological influence. From the definition of language as an innate, homogeneous or heterogeneous mental product, linguistics contributed to language and grammar becoming polysemic notions also in the processes of teaching objects construction elaborated by applied linguistics *lato* or *stricto sensu*.

If we consider only the scientific rationality rules that guide the knowledge production in theoretical linguistics, we conclude that its *modus operandi* is quite consistent with the normal procedures of modern scientific practice. Problems arise when one intends to transfer the scientific knowledge produced according to the proper rules of this context to others that follow different rules of

constitution and functioning, through a vertical relation based on the presupposition of the superiority of science, without considering the specific aspects that regulate the relations with knowledge in the target contexts, such as language teaching in formal education institutions.

The focus on the normative approach has been the main object of applied linguistics' criticism to grammar teaching. Referring to the language conception as a pure object, mental product deposited in the brain of speakers and sociolinguistic research, applied linguists have postulated that teaching adopts a descriptive approach. That is, the language should be studied as it is and not as it should be. This paradigm shift redefines the grammar teaching aims, advocating the abandonment of traditional grammar theory, much of its conceptual and terminological apparatus, and its teaching methodology. Consequently, it would be up to the applied linguists to construct new teaching objects, new methodologies and assessment strategies, as well as the production of pedagogical grammars and didactic materials in accordance with the descriptivist approach.

It is important to remember/bear in mind that: descriptivism is based on some basic principles established by Saussure: language and speech mutually implicate each other, but writing is a different semiotic system, with no implication relationship with the previous ones. This is, however, a problematic postulate for applied linguists because a grammar teaching grounded on science should ignore writing, which is absolutely inconceivable in a literate society such as ours. Thus, how have applied linguists dealt with problems arising from the ideal of guiding grammar teaching and, consequently, writing from a naturalistic scientific perspective, which has speech as its study object?

Perini (2010, p. 18), for example, considers that "[…] grammar is a scientific discipline, such as astronomy, chemistry, history or geography; it must be studied because it is part of the students' scientific formation". And it states its practical uselessness: "Studying grammar does not lead to, it has never led anyone to develop their reading and writing or speaking skills, not even their practical knowledge of standard written Portuguese" (p.18). However, despite the fact that his grammar proposes a description of Portuguese spoken in Brazil, even without presenting a spoken language *corpus* for the analysis tasks, the author makes numerous criticisms of the normative grammar, which, as we know, has as its description object and standardization the standard written language.

The *Brazilian Portuguese Short Grammar*, by Castilho and Elias (2012), is defined as descriptive and pedagogical. The authors choose the objective of grammar teaching the Brazilian Portuguese description as a natural language:

> [...] how are we going to teach a language that speakers already know well, at least in oral mode? The fact is, we are not going to teach this language the same way we would teach a foreign language. What we will do is unravel the knowledge we already have about it, knowledge that is stored in our minds. The Portuguese teacher's job is to walk along with the students in this discovery process. (CASTILHO; ELIAS, 2012, p. 14. my emphasis)

The purpose of describing language as a mental product brings together the two works mentioned. However, unlike Perini, Castilho and Elias do not completely exclude the possibility that studies in descriptive grammar contribute to the learning of writing:

> It is evident that we can and should teach the written modality, and also how to handle the language in its cultured, standard mode. This is the State's language, which we must appropriate because it socially promotes its users. We do not neglect this, on the contrary: we are convinced that reflection on language opens a more effective path in this direction. (CASTILHO; ELIAS, 2012, p. 14)

Despite this intent statement, the methodology for language study presented by the authors makes it clear that grammatical studies have the explicit purpose of describing language as a scientific object. Castilho and Elias (2012, p. 45-46) present a research methodology to be adopted in grammar studies at school, with the following steps:

i. *Study material-gathering*: recorded conversations and various written texts;

ii. *Working hypotheses*: in language studies, hypotheses create the scientific object;

iii. *Analysis units*: phoneme, morpheme, word, phrase, sentence and text;

iv. *Transcription*: In the case of recorded conversations;

v. *Analysis of work writing*: the research projects report.

These authors' proposals for dealing with grammar at school, affiliated with the sociolinguistic, formalist and / or functionalist paradigms of language studies, replace the teaching idea with study idea, reaffirming the thesis that speakers, because they already know the language, do not need to learn it, but study it. Thus, they ratify the conception of language as a mental structure that has natural rules of operation, and the teacher assists students in the task of making them explicit by using the scientific method. This perspective is in line with Castilho and Elias's statement that reflection on language leads to improvements in learning from standard writing since, because it is unnatural, writing needs to be systematically taught.

These contradictions show differences between the science objectives and the educational objectives, characterizing a theoretical-methodological conception of school treatment of grammar that I will call pure descriptivism. In this sense, we seek to maintain language purity, as defined by theoretical linguistics, by adapting the scientific methodology to the school context, excluding from its scope the systematic teaching of standard writing.

There is, however, another type of descriptivism among applied linguists: the *relativist*. This approach is more clearly associated with the sociolinguistic paradigm, which conceives linguistic standardization not as a neutral linguistic process of uniformity, but as an issue that reflects and refracts a series of problems related to domination and social exclusion. From this perspective, the standard norm would represent an artificial linguistic ideal that does not correspond to the real uses of the most educated people, defined as language-educated speakers, according to the criteria established by the Cultured Urban Norm Studies Project Spoken in Brazil (NURC). To these real language uses by people with a higher degree of education, linguists have attributed the designation of cultured norms, expressed in the plural because they are heterogeneous.

Paradoxically, relativistic descriptivism is a linguistic of norm that, even assuming normative positions about how society should relate to language, refuses linguistic normatization based on social criteria. The variationist research that results on so-called cultured speech are used as grounds for the thesis that the teaching of the idealized written pattern should be replaced by a linguistic variation pedagogy (ZILLES; FARACO, 2015), a controversial conception about language study, because at the same time it establishes that educated norms should be the teaching objects, it is not assumed normative. In fact, if it is natural for educated speakers to use educated norms, the same cannot be said of other Portuguese-language speakers, who should learn these norms through school. Therefore, the selection of a norm as a teaching object, from any angle, will always be a normative action.

It should also be noted that sociolinguistic research on cultured norms disregards the educated speakers' history, who have gone through long systematic study periods of the standard norm. That is, it is necessary not to ignore that the educated speaker only speaks the way verified in the studies because he studied the standard norm, although it deviates from it in some aspects, especially in the spoken language. Thus, accepting that someone is considered a cult speaker only after concluding the higher education period implies recognizing that his speech is the result of the normative teaching systematic processes.

Two factors prevent relativist linguists from assuming normativism: unrestricted obedience to the principles of theoretical linguistics, which is assumed to be a descriptive science, and the impossibility of determining a unified cultic pattern as a reference for teaching since cultured norms are heterogeneous. Given this, linguists can only assume normative relativism, classified in two ways by Boudon:

> *Good* relativism drew attention to the fact that representations, norms, and values vary across social backgrounds, cultures, and times. *Bad* relativism has concluded from this that representations, norms, and values are without foundation: that they are human constructions inspired by the environment, the spirit of time, passions, interests, or instincts. Attributing objectivity to representations, values, and norms would always be an illusion. (BOUDON, 2010, p. 7, emphasis added)

According to Boudon, good relativism recognizes the need for social norms, while bad relativism denies them. Relativistic descriptivism rejects the standard norm, which is social, because it considers the standard norm ideal, in favor of cultured norms, understood as the actual, natural language uses. In refusing to recognize the standard language as a socially legitimate norm, relativistic descriptivism is traversed by a paradox: it argues for the need to replace the standard norm with educated norms in teaching, an undeniably interventionist gesture, but it rejects the social intervention possibility in the language, for the purpose of standardizing its use in specific situations, because if this occurs there will be an interference with the language nature. This fact draws attention to the distinction between organic or biological norms and social norms, according to Canguilhem's (2009, p. 119) formulation: "If social norms could be perceived as clearly as organic norms, it would be folly conform to them. Since men are not mad and there are no sages, it follows that social norms must be invented and not observed".

Judging by Canguilhem's words, if linguists do not allow the intervening possibility on language to regulate it, it is because they conceive it as a natural organism, which follows its own rules, and the researcher is solely responsible for observing and describing tasks of its operation. This refusal to accept language as a phenomenon subject to normative processes based on social values evidences the link between relativistic descriptivism and theoretical linguistics - we seek to transfer the conclusions of speech studies to writing, ignoring the incommensurability between these different semiotic systems - and with bad relativism, when one assumes that social representations, norms, and values have no valid foundation.

Even without solving its paradox, relativistic descriptivism remains firm in its study conception the language-oriented teaching to the variationist description. Works such as the writings publications organized by Bagno (2001, 2010), Mattos e Silva (2004, 2005), Vieira and Brandão (2007), Faraco (2008), Bortoni-Ricardo *et al.* (2014), Martins, Vieira and Tavares (2014), Zilles and Faraco (2015) present theoretical and methodological proposals for a variationist teaching about grammatical topics such as agreement, conduction, pronominal placement, relativization strategies, among others, in which predominate spoken language analyzes according to the principles of sociolinguistic research applied to the school context.

In general, to promote the development of reading and writing skills, descriptivists propose that grammar studies should be complemented with reading and textual production activities of various genres. This orientation, by separating the study of grammar on the one hand, and the development of reading and writing skills on the other, leaves an unanswered question: what is the purpose of studying descriptive grammar if students can learn to read and write through working exclusively with genres? Would the study of grammar not be an end in itself, something that already happens with the much-criticized teaching methodology of normative grammar?

Relativistic descriptivism presents yet another paradox. The socio-educational hegemony criticism of the standard norm is largely due to the social values attributed to it, which, assuming an understanding of social structure as divided into dominant classes and dominated classes, would represent the ideology of the classes with the most access to the cultural, economic and educational goods. The idea of replacing the standard norm with cultured norms as references for language teaching and use invalidates all social criticism used to reject the former since cultured norms are forged according to the same criteria as the standard norm, which is considered to be elitist and excluding. After all, aren't the ruling class members all educated speakers, according to the criteria established by the Brazilian sociolinguists?

Understanding this paradox led Bagno (2017), who had been advocating in favor of relativistic descriptivism until then (BAGNO, 2003, 2010), to the following observation:

> If the traditional standard norm excludes all social classes in practice - because it is not based on any authentic linguistic variety - the 'real cultured norm' would in turn exclude *all* less literate layers, which correspond to nothing less than 75% of the Brazilian population, almost 150 million individuals classified as *functionally illiterate*.
> The impossibility of "teaching the cultured norm" is also due to the fact, acknowledged by Faraco himself (2016, p. 267), that it is a "soapy fish: every time we think we have it well held in our hand, it escapes us. (BAGNO, 2017, p. 104, author's emphasis and quotation marks)

Given this, the author concludes:

> [...] wanting to institute the "royal cultured norm" as a teaching object instead of the traditional standard is an extremely difficult undertaking [...]. Given this, it may be less utopian to postulate for teaching the continuous and uninterrupted learners *literacy*. Frequent contact with writing, the constant reading *practice and reflection on language* (reflection that also includes the debate on variation and change and the values attributed to it) inevitably lead the person's educational process to be aware of the existence of countless textual genres, which manifest themselves according to multiple norms of discourse configuration, synchronously variable norms and genres that change diachronically [...]. (BAGNO, 2017, p. 106-107, emphasis added)

In fact, if things go according to the social analysis of linguists, it would be very naive to believe that the power-holding social class would relinquish the linguistic norm that it uses as one of its power mechanisms. The educated norm, therefore, does not represent a viable proposal for a solution to the problem of ideological and socioeconomic domination by the ruling classes. To solve this paradox in language teaching, Bagno proposes a radical descriptivism, which denies the centrality of any reference standard for Portuguese language teaching, whose methodology would consist of fostering learners' continuous literacy, through which reading, writing and reflection activities about language would promote knowledge of the various textual genres, linguistic variation or change and the values associated with it. In this proposal, the grammatical meaning as an object of teaching / study becomes even more nebulous.

5 COMING TO A CONCLUSION: IN SEARCH FOR A DIDACTICS OF THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE

The objective of transferring scientific knowledge to teaching, without observing didactic theory, gives rise to a list of blind spots in the different proposals:

1.   Education aims to promote the socialization of new generations, which includes socio-political development, socio-cultural, personal, interpersonal and professional skills. In this sense, the teaching-learning processes related to grammatical knowledge must be related to the development of reading and writing skills, considering the fact that we are in a literate society. In the descriptivist proposals, however, the scientific study of language, understood as a natural phenomenon, arise as a central objective. Thus, the statement that the school should promote student literacy is not consistent with the teaching methodologies presented. In addition, no empirical research was conducted to prove the viability of the proposals.

2.   The proposals take as reference the scientific studies of pure linguistics focused on the speech description, understood as the natural language expression, whose results seek to transfer to writing, cultural code. Linguistic naturalism rejects the possibility of intervening in language to place it among the human facts subject to valuation and normatization like so many others. Thus, pretending that the written uses conform to the spoken uses, besides expressing a paradoxical posture (it would not be up to a descriptive science to adopt a normative posture about which norm should be the reference for teaching), it means to deny the specificities of writing, the social values attributed to it in a literate society like ours and disregard its panchronic character.

3.   The pedagogical proposals, didactic materials or grammar books elaborated based on the descriptive research, given their focus on the spoken language, do not contemplate all aspects that involve the teaching of writing. None of them deal, for example, with spelling, accentuation rules, punctuation marks, rules of agreement, regency, and pronominal placement relative to writing. A good mismatch example between speech and writing concerns the forms and uses of the demonstrative pronouns. Descriptive studies state that, in spoken Brazilian Portuguese, there is no longer a distinction between first-person statements - this/this - and second-person statements - this/this - prevailing the use of second-person forms either in reference to the first or to the second person. However, in normative grammar and textual linguistics, these forms are seen as functionally distinct: the first-person pronoun has cataphoric value, and the second anaphoric one.

4.   The theoretical pluralism adopted in descriptivist studies, including pedagogical grammar books based on pure linguistics, generates uncertainty related to the grammatical terminology to be adopted in teaching since each linguistic inquiry paradigm - formalist, functionalist or sociolinguistic - is guided by different conceptual nomenclatures.

5.   The descriptivist proposals do not address the relationship between competences and content - conceptual, procedural and attitudinal - nor do they explain the teaching-learning conceptions that guide them. Thus, it is possible to state that the adaptation of scientific methodologies to the language study proves to be inadequate to achieve educational objectives. Moreover, the proposals do not indicate any perspective of learning assessment.

In this text, I presented a brief characterization of didactics as a teaching practice theory and its transformations in an academic context structured according to the fragmentation principles and knowledge specialization inherent to the modern scientific paradigm. I also pointed out some particularities of didactics related to the relations it establishes with knowledge, highlighting its epistemological, axiological and praxiological nature. Thus, certain fundamental dichotomies of modern science, such as objectivity / subjectivity, theory / practice, and pure science / applied science, make no sense in the field of didactics.

I have also shown that disciplinary and academic logic has transformed general didactics into an incomplete discipline, which develops a general theory of all elements involved in educational practice, but it cannot theorize about the objectives, teaching objects, methodologies, and evaluative practices of particular subjects, what highlights the need for the specific didactics of each subject. In this sense, I assumed that specific didactics must be in conformity with the theoretical-methodological principles of general didactics.

Based on these postulates, I undertook a *lato sensu* analysis outlining a proposal of applied linguistics for the teaching of grammar. I justified the choice of object based on its relevance in the discussions and proposals for Portuguese language teaching, given its importance in the social imaginary and in the educational and sociopolitical practices that involve the standard language as a unifying and constitutive norm of the style of various textual genres. At the same time, the requirement for higher education degree for teaching makes the issue relevant to the professional education of teachers, who must be trained to work in elementary education in accordance with the educational policies for this level of formal education.

The analysis of the different descriptivism perspectives - pure, relativistic and radical - evidenced the distance between the ways of conceiving Portuguese language teaching by applied linguistics, moved by the ideal of the knowledge transfer from theoretical science to the school context, and the didactics of language, perspective of teaching objects construction still non-existent in Brazil as an institutionalized area. As a result, the promoting task the articulation of general didactics with the specific knowledge that makes up Portuguese as a curricular subject in elementary education has been performed by educational policy managers, as it has happened in the PCN and now in the BNCC.

Applied linguistics, consistent with the positivist paradigm, finds its raison d'être in the uncompromising defense of scientific knowledge as a solution to the language teaching problems in general and grammar in particular. Adhering to scientism, applied linguistics promotes separation between teaching and didactics by disregarding the differences that characterize the forms of relationship with knowledge in the science and education fields, as well as the distinguished nature of its objectives. This problem is evident when we find that attempts to transfer scientific knowledge to teaching occur in a fragmentary way, with each linguistic subject elaborating proposals in isolation, considering only the theoretical-methodological, conceptual and terminological aspects related to its own field. In this context, who should promote the articulation of these different proposals in the elementary education curriculum? This problem, by itself, would be sufficient to highlight the need for a didactics of the Portuguese language as a subject responsible for thinking teaching globally.

On the other hand, the goal of thinking about teaching in all its complexity requires from didactics a constant dialogue with the other basic or applied sciences that address, directly or indirectly, aspects related to teaching. Regarding the relationship between language didactics and linguistics, theoretical or applied, it is up to the didactics - taking into account the language teaching objectives as a social practice and a fundamental element for citizenship constitution, thus promoting critical actions and knowledge research - to assess their relevance in the teaching objects set that make up the school curriculum.

Therefore, it is not up to linguistics as an applied science to determine what should be the Portuguese language contents as a curricular subject, although the importance of its reflections to assist didactics in its critical, epistemological and political functions is not denied. The lack of clarity regarding the relationship between linguistics and didactics is at the root of the lack of dialogue between the academic discourse that guides the training of Portuguese-speaking teachers, the educational policies and the teaching practices in elementary education. For these and other reasons, establishing Portuguese language didactics as an institutionalized field of knowledge production about language teaching in the country is urgent.

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