

ACTIVE METHODOLOGIES AND CONTINUING TRAINING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS: THE PERCEPTIONS OF TWO TEACHER TRAINERS

AS METODOLOGIAS ATIVAS E A FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA DE PROFESSORES(AS) DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS: AS PERCEPÇÕES DE DUAS PROFESSORAS FORMADORAS

METODOLOGÍAS ACTIVAS Y FORMACIÓN CONTINUA DE PROFESORES DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS: LAS PERCEPCIONES DE DOS PROFESORAS FORMADORAS



Letícia de Souza GONÇALVES¹
e-mail: lesogoncalves@ufg.br



Roberta Carvalho CRUVINEL²
e-mail: roberta.cruvinel@ufg.br

How to reference this paper:

GONÇALVES, L. de S.; CRUVINEL, R. C. Active methodologies and continuing training of foreign language teachers: The perceptions of two teacher trainers. **Rev. EntreLinguas**, Araraquara, v. 10, n. esp. 1, e024015, 2024. e-ISSN: 2447-3529. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.29051/el.v10iesp.1.19036>



| Submitted: 10/09/2023
| Revisions required: 10/11/2023
| Approved: 19/03/2024
| Published: 28/05/2024

Editor: Prof. Dr. Rosangela Sanches da Silveira Gileno
Deputy Executive Editor: Prof. Dr. José Anderson Santos Cruz

¹ Federal University of Goiás (UFG), Goiânia – GO – Brazil. English Language Professor at the Center for Teaching and Research Applied to Education, Federal University of Goiás - UFG, and faculty member of the Graduate Program in Teaching in Basic Education (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG) and the Specialization Course in Applied Linguistics (ELA/CEPAE).

² Federal University of Goiás (UFG), Goiânia – GO – Brazil. English Language Professor at the Center for Teaching and Research Applied to Education, Federal University of Goiás – CEPAE/UFG, and faculty member of the Graduate Program in Teaching in Basic Education (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG) and the Specialization Course in Applied Linguistics (ELA/CEPAE).

ABSTRACT: The objective of this article is to discuss the importance of integrating active methodologies into the continuing education of foreign language teachers. This approach aims to align learning environments with the demands of the 21st century, engaging teachers in pedagogical practices that contemporary society requires. The work is configured as an experience report prepared based on the use we made of active teaching and learning methodologies in a subject in the Postgraduate Program in Teaching in Basic Education (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG), and emphasizes, especially, the way they contribute to the continued training of foreign language teachers.

KEYWORDS: Active methodologies. Teacher training. Foreign languages.

RESUMO: *O objetivo deste artigo é discutir a importância de integrar as metodologias ativas à formação continuada de professores(as) de línguas estrangeiras, como uma forma de aproximar os espaços de aprendizagem às demandas do século XXI e de engajar o(a) professor(a) em formação continuada em práticas pedagógicas condizentes com aquelas que a sociedade contemporânea nos requer. O trabalho se configura como um relato de experiência elaborado com base no uso que fizemos das metodologias ativas de ensino e aprendizagem em uma disciplina no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ensino na Educação Básica (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG), e enfatiza, especialmente, a forma como elas contribuem para a formação continuada de professores/as de línguas estrangeiras.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Metodologias ativas. Formação de professores/as. Línguas estrangeiras.*

RESUMEN: *El objetivo de este artículo es discutir la importancia de integrar metodologías activas en la formación continua de profesores de lenguas extranjeras. Este enfoque busca alinear los entornos de aprendizaje con las demandas del siglo XXI, involucrando a los docentes en prácticas pedagógicas que la sociedad contemporánea requiere. El trabajo se configura como un relato de experiencia elaborado a partir del uso que hicimos de metodologías activas de enseñanza y aprendizaje en una asignatura del Programa de Posgrado en Docencia en Educación Básica (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG), y destaca, especialmente, la forma en que contribuyen a la formación continua de profesores de lenguas extranjeras.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Metodologías activas. Formación docente. Lenguas extranjeras.*

Introduction

Dewey (1979) informs us about the necessity of a theory of experience. The most essential principles in formulating this theory are those of continuity of experience and interaction. According to the author, the principle of continuity is the same as that of habit, meaning that every experience draws from past experiences and somehow affects the quality of subsequent experiences. The principle of interaction clarifies that both the lack of adaptation of the subject matter to the needs and capacities of individuals and the individual's failure to adapt to the subject matter can render the experience non-educative.

Based on this understanding, we proposed a course in the Graduate Program in Teaching in Basic Education (PPGEEB/CEPAE/UFG) aimed to: (a) discuss the theoretical and didactic-methodological principles that guide active methodologies in basic education; (b) identify the roles of the teacher and the student within the context of active methodologies; and (c) develop teaching units based on various active methodology modalities, such as the flipped classroom, blended learning, gamification, team-based learning, among others. Given that the program admits candidates from various fields, the course was designed to encompass different perspectives on what teaching and learning entail more broadly, so that during discussions, each teacher could reflect on these concepts in their specific pedagogical reality.

Although our area of training and practice is specifically in teaching foreign languages, we observed a general conceptual deficiency regarding active methodologies in contemporary times, especially after the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil at the beginning of 2020. The impossibility of in-person educational activities caused a demand for strategies and resources capable of enabling students to learn in a completely new and impersonal scenario. Consequently, the increased search for active strategies on social media and in teacher groups created a buzz of sometimes mistaken theories about what active methodologies are and how they were "innovative" for that particular time.

The course program was designed based on this premise, intending to bring together a group of teachers from different areas to reflect on their practice and the resources available in each context. Among the students, there were teachers from our area of foreign languages, physical education, philosophy, mathematics, Portuguese language, and early childhood education. The classes were developed through dialogic lectures by us, the teacher trainers, with presentations of seminars by the students, utilizing the mentioned strategies, in order to provide a real, practical opportunity for the use of active methodologies, as a way to prepare them to do

the same in their classrooms. The course had a total duration of 64 teaching hours, divided into 16 weekly sessions of 4 hours each, in an in-person format, and was attended by 11 students.

In light of these considerations, we propose in this experience report to discuss the importance of integrating active methodologies into the ongoing training of foreign language teachers as a means of aligning learning environments with the demands of the 21st century and engaging teachers in continuous professional development with pedagogical practices that meet contemporary societal needs. In addition to this introduction, the present article is organized into three parts.

In the first section, we discuss the theoretical assumptions upon which we base our approach, concerning concepts related to active methodologies, taking into account what it means to be active and innovative in education. The second section deals with the description and reflection on the studied context. For the third section, we reserve the final considerations. In this part, based on our experience using active teaching and learning methodologies, we mainly reflect on how they can contribute to the ongoing training of foreign language teachers in Basic Education.

Being Active and “Innovative” in Education: Understanding Concepts Related to Active Methodologies

Active methodologies are being introduced into the daily teaching routines of basic education as well as higher and postgraduate education. However, in recent years, especially since 2020, when educational institutions were forced to suspend in-person classes, there was a heightened search for methods, resources, and teaching strategies that could, in some way, facilitate the teaching and learning process in the new reality of remote education. To illustrate this search for publications on the topic and teaching strategies, we reference the study by Mattar (2020) on active methodologies in distance education. In the graph below, the author presents the increased search for the term “active methodologies” on Google Scholar from 2001 until the year his article was produced (2019):

Graph 1 – Term “active methodologies” on Google Scholar

Source: Mattar (2020, p. 4).

When conducting the survey that resulted in the above graph, the author did not anticipate a highly contagious virus that would, months later, lead to the immediate suspension of in-person classes worldwide. If we were to conduct the same survey of searches for studies in this area from 2020 to the present date of writing this article, it is highly likely that the incidence of searches would undoubtedly exceed the total sum of all entries for the term "active methodologies" in the academic search tool.

It would not be necessary to conduct such a survey to reach this conclusion, given that active methodologies brought ideas of "innovative" strategies, as never seen before in education. We put "innovative" in quotes precisely because the large number of publications in the field and the increased searches for strategies considered "active" reflected a pedagogical shortfall among teachers, coordinators, and other individuals in school management, who saw in these methodologies something that would solve many of the problems of remote teaching.

Perhaps one of the reasons for this illusion of educational "innovation" is the mistaken association between active methodologies and the use of digital resources in teaching. Looking at the current academic scenario, after the buzz about remote teaching and the "innovative" strategies of active methodologies, we can assert that, in education, as in other areas of knowledge, there are waves of false "innovations" in which many participants enter and are swept away by promises of improvements. Digital technology is present in our daily

pedagogical life in various ways, but it is not capable of transforming education in a broader sense.

We understand that quality education is established in the present moment on the grounds of schools, universities, and other educational institutions and in the daily lives of those directly involved, not in anticipation of some "innovative" solution that will come to our rescue. Numerous teaching methodologies are proposed daily, some successful, others less so, but all are tangible actions that demonstrate how complex the act of building knowledge collectively can be.

Therefore, what becomes evident is that the term "active methodologies" has acquired a new guise, incorporating the use of digital tools into an existing practice, namely, the deconstruction of hierarchies between teacher and student in the classroom and the redefinition of the physical spaces of educational institutions and the concept of learning, lessons, and other similar concepts. This new guise sometimes comes with implicit commercial objectives aimed solely at profiting from educational materials, tools, platforms, and publications, among other elements that present current teaching as obsolete and outdated, and what is to come as something capable of revolutionizing the way Education is conducted. Rousseau, in the preface of his book *Emílio ou da Educação*, originally published in 1762, already discussed this practice, as quoted below:

I will say little of the importance of a good education; nor will I stop to prove that the current practice is poor; a thousand others have done so before me, and I am not inclined to fill a book with things that everybody knows. I will merely observe that it has always been the case that everyone criticizes what is established, without anyone proposing something better (Rosseau, 1995, p. 5, our translation).

Contrary to what Rousseau presented, nowadays, everyone has thought of proposing "something better" for the field of Education, even those not directly involved in the pedagogical context. Plenty of experts point out flaws, assign blame, and suggest better ways and specific actions for change without even knowing what needs to be changed or who the stakeholders in this process are.

Reflecting on this reality in Education, particularly in the public school system, in this course offered to primary education teachers, we seek to engage in a dialogue about theoretical issues of teaching and learning, as a way to understand that the "new" may not be so new after all, and the "innovative" might bring traditional factors with traces of the trivial and commercial.

Specifically in the field of foreign language teaching, we can observe various technological resources that assist teachers, such as platforms for creating materials with an emphasis on different skills, artificial intelligence platforms capable of generating specific texts and interpretation questions, and websites offering nearly complete lessons on specific linguistic points. On the other hand, going beyond teaching linguistic aspects and making the student the protagonist of their learning primarily means rethinking our concepts of teaching, learning, and, most importantly, our concept of language.

Therefore, we intended to lead the group to reflect on recurring terms in the field of teaching and learning, discussing theorists who are not always directly associated with so-called active methodologies (Ausubel 1968 *apud* Moreira; Manzini, 1982; Vygotsky, 1998)³, but whose work underpins educational principles relevant to them. Moreover, we addressed the topic of "active methodologies" with some contemporary authors from various fields of training (Moran, 2015; Bacich; Tanzi Neto; Trevisani, 2015; Mattar, 2017; Moran; Bacich, 2018; Valente, 2018).

In this regard, we noted that studies on active methodologies span teaching and learning across different sectors, from large areas of knowledge to courses and workshops on everyday themes and popular knowledge. In this context, it is up to professionals in each field to observe what is relevant to their specific audience and context, because, as Prabhu (1990) states, when discussing the absence of a superior method for teaching foreign languages, teachers should possess a kind of pedagogical intuition, or an awareness of their surroundings, which the author calls a "sense of plausibility."

As we have mentioned, current studies on the topic are highly sought after, particularly those emphasizing strategies that deviate from traditional teaching, where the teacher holds the knowledge and the student is expected to absorb what is transmitted. In an effort to better understand today's students, educators and administrators delve into the realm of "innovations," based on a new way of learning in an increasingly fluid society in its relationships. Contrary to this trend, the bibliography selected for the course was designed to revisit some educational theorists who aimed not to "fill a book with things everyone knows," as Rousseau would say, but to reflect on students, teachers, teaching, and learning, indirectly working with this concept of "active."

³ The next section will describe how authors were explored in the discipline.

Among the authors and theoretical-methodological assumptions studied in the course were John Dewey, with learning through experience; David Ausubel, with meaningful learning; Lev Vygotsky, with socio-interactionist learning; Carl Rogers, with student-centered learning; and the Brazilian Paulo Freire, with the relationship between learning and autonomy. These authors were selected based on some conceptions that we believe coincide with the guiding principles of what we today consider "active methodologies," such as the focus on the learner, inquiry-based and problem-solving learning, and the learner as a subject endowed with various perspectives ranging from researcher to creator.

American John Dewey (1859 – 1952) played a significant role in the development of active methodologies, although many of his remarks align with the liberal and utilitarian perspective of education. His concept of "learning by doing" and the importance of individual experience in the knowledge-building process were essential for the direction of student-centered active teaching strategies. David Ausubel (1918 – 2008), in turn, has not been as closely associated with active methodologies as John Dewey, but his conceptions of meaningful and contextualized learning underpin principles now related to such theories. Ausubel emphasizes the importance of creating activities that prioritize the student's prior knowledge, make connections between their previous experiences and new content, and enable reflection and discussion about their learning process through practice.

When we think of active methodologies as they are currently viewed, we rarely associate them with psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934). However, Vygotsky's relationship with active methods is supported by some of his conceptions, such as collaborative learning and the teacher as a mediator in the construction of knowledge through the advancement of the student's zone of proximal development. Problem-based learning is directly related to Vygotskian theory, in that challenging activities and problem-solving in collaboration with peers stimulate learning.

Carl Rogers and Paulo Freire share intersecting points in their educational philosophies, and consequently, in the principles of active methodologies. With a more humanistic view of education, both emphasize student-centered education and the student's responsibility for their own knowledge-building process. Rufino (1985, p. 122) states that both Rogers and Freire "believe that the responsibility for the act of educating ultimately lies with the learner themselves, who is capable of using their individual and social strengths to grow, develop, self-assess, and self-direct."

Thus, working with these authors in the course facilitated the development of concepts regarding what is considered "activity" in its broadest sense and the discussion of some current active methodology modalities derived from this concept, such as the flipped classroom, gamification, and team-based learning, among others.

The revisiting of some of these teaching and learning theories, sometimes not associated with active methodologies, such as meaningful and contextualized learning, collaborative learning, and the role of the teacher as a mediator of knowledge construction, generated enriching moments of discussion with the group, as we moved from broader concepts to understand their ramifications in practical classroom activities. Therefore, through these discussions, we were able to reach other fields of practice, not just the area of foreign languages.

Integrating Active Methodologies in Continuing Teacher Education

We believe that the pursuit of integrating active methodologies in teaching and learning environments aims to enhance and enrich the educational process. However, this goal expands when it comes to implementing these initiatives in contexts of continuing education because it promotes, on one hand, the active participation of teachers as learners, and, on the other, the opportunity for them to observe and reflect, as teachers in continuing education, on how a class is organized from the strategies of active methodologies, what activities are proposed, and how they integrate into the dynamics developed in the daily classroom setting.

Regarding the organization of classroom space, in our reflections, we prioritize discussions about the configuration of the environment, that is, the various resources that can contribute to creating a more humane and meaningful atmosphere. Moreira and Masini (1982, p. 4, our translation) discuss this, explaining that the

Meaningful learning occurs when new material, ideas, and information, which have a logical structure, interact with relevant and inclusive concepts that are clear and available within the cognitive structure, and are assimilated by them, contributing to their differentiation, elaboration, and stability.

In terms of didactic-methodological aspects, the proposed reflections revolved around the nature of the requested activities, the degree of interactivity they foster, and the role of the teacher in the development of the activities. However, even with the discussions that took place, we observed that at certain moments, when the course participants applied some of the active

methodology modalities, there was a reproduction of traditional teaching practices, albeit in a new guise. On the other hand, collaborative work, through the exchange of experiences, carried out by most teachers, provided an appropriate learning structure.

On this aspect, the principles of Design Thinking, such as empathy, collaboration, creativity, and optimism (Rocha, 2018, p. 158), contributed to enhancing training in this course, fostering creativity and technique through collaboration in the development and application of the content presented. These principles guided the seminars proposed by teachers in continuing education, by creating a kind of collaborative path for them to organize themselves. The seminars addressed the different modalities of active methodologies and their peculiarities in specific contexts.

In this context, we noticed creativity and autonomy in the production of specific materials for the seminars, class engagement in the participation of dynamics proposed by the groups, and professional development in the sense of being able to transpose elements from theory to compose their pedagogical practice. Ultimately, those involved in the process learned to extract the best from the groups, starting from an understanding of the problems and challenges in the universe of linguistic education, whether related to the curriculum or the classroom.

It is important to note that creating innovative activities requires a new perspective on the world, and to reach this world full of possibilities, dedication, and constant vigilance are needed to break away from passivity, comfort, and a sense of impossibility. In this regard, we understand that autonomy and proactivity also matter. Herein, the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning leads to unlocking the student's potential, in this case, the teacher in ongoing training. This occurs because trainers who adopt this stance are committed to creating an environment of trust, appreciation, authenticity, understanding, and, above all, freedom.

This is where active methodologies connect with the Maker Movement proposed by Dougherty (2013). The author's idea stems from the importance of playing with technology to learn about it, but this concept can be expanded to any field of knowledge. Dougherty emphasizes that learners, in this approach, stop conforming to the role of information consumers and begin to take on the role of creators/builders of knowledge. Thus, both the trainer and the teacher in training see themselves developing processes of meaning construction.

It should be noted that both the trainer and their students, in this approach, need constant, permanent, and immediate access to various resources: both to diverse perspectives and to materials with which they can seek the information they need to make sense of the practices to

which they are being exposed. For this, both training and trainee teachers must be agents in the teaching-learning process.

Final considerations

Throughout this experience report, we discussed the importance of integrating active methodologies into the continuing education of foreign language teachers as a way to bring training spaces closer to the world beyond them and to engage teachers in ongoing training in pedagogical practices more relevant to human intelligence and more meaningful for the society of the 21st century.

To develop this discussion, we present perceptions about the course on active methodologies taught to basic education teachers. It should be noted that, although the authors' training is in the field of foreign language teaching, collective discussions, and integrative practices provided results relevant to all the fields of activity present. Both the presentation of seminars and discussions based on theories of teaching and learning generated positive exchanges of pedagogical experiences that went beyond reflecting on a specific and isolated context, surpassed the barriers of individual actions, and reached broader scopes. This applies to both the context of teachers in training and that of the training teachers.

We understand that continuing education in a graduate program needs to establish a dialogue between the empirical knowledge that teachers bring from their practice and the theoretical deepening that will enable them to expand their repertoire. Attitudes that discredit the daily practices of these teachers can promote the feeling that the intention in these spaces is to increase technical control over the teacher and their profession. On the other hand, it can be a space for involving the teacher in the process as an author and creator, giving opportunities for them to act and, by acting, build self-confidence, promote creativity, and awaken interest in research, science, technology, and learning as a whole.

Thus, we believe that, although there is no one-size-fits-all recipe for professional development, the course proposal presented in this article met the proposed objectives, namely: (a) to discuss the theoretical and didactic-methodological principles that guide active methodologies in primary education; (b) to identify the role of the teacher and the student in the context of active methodologies; and (c) to develop teaching units based on modalities that underpin active methodologies, such as the flipped classroom, blended learning, gamification, team-based learning, among others.

Finally, the expectation to contribute to the reflection on the practice of teachers in training was met, considering that the collective discussion and the exchange of experiences with colleagues from different areas encouraged teachers to rethink their actions and to better understand the origins of active roles and meaningful learning. Furthermore, we recognize that it is increasingly important to advance in the construction of pedagogical proposals that: (a) involve teachers more actively in their training process using active methodologies, in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice; and (b) consider the pedagogical practice, experiential knowledge, and the realities of teachers in training.

REFERENCES

- BACICH, L.; TANZI NETO, A.; TREVISANI, F. de M. (org.). **Ensino Híbrido: personalização e tecnologia na educação**. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2015.
- DEWEY, J. **Experiência e educação**. 3. ed. São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1979.
- DOUGHERTY, D. **The Maker Mindset, in Design, Make, Play**. Massachusetts: MIT Media Lab, 2013.
- MATTAR, J. **Metodologias ativas para a educação presencial, blended e à distância**. São Paulo: Artesanato Educacional, 2017.
- MATTAR, J. Metodologias ativas em educação à distância: revisão de literatura. **Revista Brasileira de Aprendizagem Aberta e à Distância**, [S. l.], 2020.
- MORAN, J. Mudando a educação com metodologias ativas. In: SOUZA, C. A. de; MORALES, O. E. T. (org.). **Convergências Midiáticas, Educação e Cidadania: aproximações jovens**. PG: Foca-Proex/UEPG, 2015. v. 2. (Coleção Mídias contemporâneas).
- MORAN, J.; BACICH, L. (org.). **Metodologias ativas para uma educação inovadora: uma abordagem teórico-prática**. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2018.
- MOREIRA, M. A.; MASINI, E. A. F. S. **Aprendizagem significativa: a teoria de David Ausubel**. São Paulo, Moraes, 1982.
- PRABHU, N. There is no Best Method – Why? **TESOL Quarterly**, [S. l.], v. 24, n. 2, jul. – set., 1990, p. 161 – 176.
- ROCHA, J. *Design Thinking* na formação de professores: novos olhares para os desafios da educação. In: MORAN, J.; BACICH, L. (org.). **Metodologias ativas para uma educação inovadora: uma abordagem teórico-prática**. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2018.
- ROSSEAU, J. J. **Emílio ou da Educação**. Tradução: Sérgio Milliet. 3 ed. Rio de Janeiro: Berthand Brasil, 1995.

RUFINO, M. I. M. **Carl R. Rogers e Paulo Freire: aspectos semelhantes e complementares que favorecem a compreensão da educação de adultos.** 1985. 182 f. Dissertação (Mestrado) – Departamento de Educação, Universidade Federal da Paraíba, João Pessoa, 1985.

VALENTE, J. A. A sala de aula invertida e a possibilidade do ensino personalizado: uma experiência com a graduação em midialogia. *In: MORAN, J.; BACICH, L. (org.). Metodologias ativas para uma educação inovadora: uma abordagem teórico-prática.* Porto Alegre: Penso, 2018. p. 26-44.

VYGOTSKY, L. S. **A formação social da mente: o desenvolvimento dos processos psicológicos superiores.** 6. ed. Tradução: J. Cipolla Neto, L. S. M. Barreto, S. C. Afeche. São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 1998.

CRediT Author Statement

Acknowledgements: We thank the Graduate Program in Teaching in Basic Education (PPGEEB - UFG) for allowing us to teach the course on which this text is based.

Funding: Not applicable.

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest.

Ethical approval: Ethical approval was not required as the work does not directly involve human subjects.

Data and material availability: As this is an experiential report, there is no availability of data and materials.

Author's contributions: The text was written and reviewed collaboratively. Author Letícia de Souza Gonçalves wrote the first part about the authors studied in the course and the principles of active methodologies. Author Roberta Carvalho Cruvinel wrote the second part about our perceptions regarding teacher continuing education.

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.
Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation.

