

# L2 teachers' education qualitative research: the evolving interaction between the researcher and the data

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## **“L2 teachers' education qualitative research: the evolving interaction between the researcher and the data”**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The methodological choices made for a qualitative research project on language teachers' conduct are discussed in retrospect. The linguistic and pedagogical aspects proper to institutional language teaching settings are set aside; the focus is on the researcher and the teachers' collective endeavour to characterize teaching as complex, situated, social performance. The cumulative process of methodology conception, data collection and analysis, is characterized as an evolving cycle. The researcher's methodological position was modified throughout this cycle as the complexity of the research object unfolded.

**Keywords:** data collection, data analysis, L2 teaching, methodology design, motivated actions, researcher's positioning, triangulation

### **RESUMEN**

Este artículo evalúa la metodología empleada en un estudio sobre los estilos docentes de siete profesores de lengua extranjera. La importancia del diálogo establecido por el investigador con los profesores y de la manera en que el investigador interpreta los datos predomina sobre el comentario de los aspectos eminentemente lingüísticos y pedagógicos. El artículo presenta el carácter evolutivo y cambiante del proceso de diseño del estudio, recogida de datos y análisis. A lo largo de este ciclo, la posición del investigador se vio modificada, a medida que los datos obtenidos requerían correcciones en el protocolo del estudio.

**Palabras clave:** acciones motivadas, diseño de una metodología de observación, enseñanza de una L2, recogida y análisis de datos, postura del investigador, triangulación

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

“As qualitative researchers, our goal is to see the world through someone else’s eyes, using ourselves as a research instrument [...]” (Dickson-Swift et al., 2009: 62).

So the paradox goes like this: the qualitative researchers' human condition is a catalyst for them to do social qualitative research. To a certain extent, this is a guarantee, but also a trap. If we “see the world through someone else's eyes” (ibid.), do we see what someone else sees, do we look in the direction that someone else usually does, do we borrow someone else's eyes – hopefully not – to see what we are used to seeing with our own, to look in the direction that we usually do? If we “[use] ourselves as a research instrument” (ibid.), do we put ourselves in someone else's place, do we make someone else's background, experiences, ideas and prejudices our own, in order to make sense out of things, or do we remove someone else from a particular position, so that we may place ourselves in that position, in order to make sense contingent on our own background, experiences, ideas and prejudices? In other words, whose point of view, whose experience, whose stances do we characterize, describe, explain, clarify, when we say that we “see the world through someone else’s eyes, using ourselves as a research instrument” (ibid.)? Someone else's, ours, most people's...? Is it possible that qualitative researchers put their own subjective experience of reality aside in order to restore someone else's? Is it necessary, or appropriate?

This article presents a methodological appraisal of my PhD qualitative research on foreign language<sup>1</sup> (L2) teachers' conduct in classrooms. The aim of my research was to characterize L2 teaching as a specialized activity that concentrates a teacher's experience, habits, personal theories, principles (Breen, M. P., Hird, B., Milton, M., Olliver, M. & Thwaite, A. 2001), preferences, and technical know-how. L2 teachers mobilize these skills as they permanently co-construct the classroom context with the learners. This context is often said to be partly determined by an institutional agenda. Consequently, all classroom participants position

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<sup>1</sup> I will make no sociolinguistic distinctions here between a second language and a foreign language. Suffice to say that all the teachers I observed taught their native language in their native countries to speakers of other languages.

themselves *vis-à-vis* the *a priori* institutional nature of the classroom (Richards, 2006). I do not deal here with the linguistic and pedagogical aspects of L2 teaching. My focus is on the collective endeavour – mine and the teachers' – to characterise teaching as a professional activity. In order to accomplish this I designed data-collection instruments than drew on ethnographic L2 classroom observation (Cambra Giné, 2003) and what Borg (2009) describes as “teachers' cognition”.

I also consider my own response as a researcher to the unfolding complexity of my research object, as well as my stance on the data produced. Ultimately, the article illustrates how I moved from a positivist position to a more sceptical one. By “scepticism” I do not mean having doubts about the complexity of the research object I tried to account for, or about its validity. My “scepticism” addresses my own ability as a researcher to develop ways to fathom aspects of this complexity from data. Consequently, I appraise my methodological choices, and suggest alternative ways to collect and analyse data that may be appropriate for a collaborative, descriptive, ethnographic research.

## **2. BACKGROUND: MY PHD RESEARCH OBJECT**

The L2 classroom has been described as an institutional context: its discourse is specialized, the participation rights are unequally distributed, the participants are expected to comply with a certain protocol as well as to orient to activities designed to facilitate a specific objective – namely L2 learning (Seedhouse, 2005). Yet, not everything that is said or done within the L2 classroom is institutional or serves institutional goals (Van Lier, 1988; Richards, 2006). The *a priori* institutional nature of the classroom context accounts neither for the complexity of the participants' identity, nor for their capacity to act this complexity out (Mondada, 1999).

My PhD research analysed the L2 teachers' conduct in classroom. My experience as an L2 teacher certainly justifies my interest in this research object. As a language teacher I often asked myself by virtue of which intimate resources I came to construe “doing being a teacher” (Mondada, 1999: 27). I understand “conduct” as an ensemble of slippery constructs related with an individual's identity construction, development and characterisation (Lahire, 1998; Marc, 2005), as well as with the conduct choices that the participants to a social situation make. All participants' choices become visible as they deploy actions, which may be treated as (in)adequate by the rest of participants (Heritage, 2005: 200).

I consider identity to be a complex, dynamic, multiple construct that is partly defined by the individual's past experience and that may determine the individual's present capacities to participate in social organization. As for social organization, I distinguish between institutional and non-institutional contexts (Heritage, 2005b). The former may constrain the participants' capacities to co-organize society, insofar as their identity choices may be limited by activities usually associated with particular institutional contexts. This may define certain conducts, discourse-types or relations among participants as expected or legitimate, whereas others would be seen as unexpected or illegitimate. Ultimately, it is the participants' actual, observable, situated conduct that characterises the (non-)institutional nature of a given context (Schegloff, 1992: 116).

In my PhD research I tried to characterize the L2 classroom participants' stance on the L2 classroom context, how they collaboratively define appropriate and inappropriate, possible and impossible behaviour. I was particularly interested on L2 teachers. I attempted to determine whether the complex, dynamic multiple identity I assumed them to have, transpired in the *a priori* institutional L2 classroom context. In other words, I attempted to understand what the L2 classroom as a context, as well as what L2 teaching as an activity, meant for a group of seven L2 teachers. Thus, I positioned myself within the L2 teachers' cognition trend (Borg, 2009), whose analysis of teaching as an activity goes beyond the mere characterisation of a set of organisational, pedagogical, technical skills (Leinhardt & Greeno, 1986), as it seeks to take into account the L2 teachers' personal theories, beliefs (Pajares, 1992), attitude, and points of view.

Since I was interested in the participants' point of view, I adopted an emic, ethnographic and comprehensive approach (Cambra Giné, 2003; Markee & Kasper, 2004). In order to get a larger picture of what L2 teaching may have meant for the teachers I observed, I designed a data-collection protocol that comprised classroom observations and interviews with the teachers – the former systematically preceded the latter. I used this protocol in the four

university contexts where I did my fieldwork: I observed three English teachers in Glasgow, Scotland, in April 2006; two French teachers in Paris, France, from November 2007 to January 2008; and two Spanish teacher in Spain, the first in Malaga, in April 2008, and the second in Almeria, in October 2008.

I had originally only planned semi-structured interviews (Juan, 1999: 121). Right before I started my French fieldwork I decided to incorporate recall interviews (Aguilar Río, 2011) into my data-collection protocol. The recall interviews were thenceforth systematically conducted upon completion of the classroom observation transcripts – classroom observation systematically preceded the interviews. The time gap between the observation/semi-structured interview stage and the recall interview ranged from eleven months (Glasgow) to seven weeks (Almeria).

The incorporation of the recall interview into my data-collection protocol added up to the available sources designed to characterize teachers' conduct and motivated actions in L2 classrooms. Consequently, the complexity of an already complex research object increased. This came to modify my stance on the data produced. In effect, I set off from a positivist ambition (Cassell, 2005: 169), by virtue of which I expected to establish linear, causal relationships between the actions I observed and the principles teachers claimed to have. As the recall interviews were integrated as the third element in my data-collection protocol, I moved on to a position where my research object would have to be characterised by means of triangulation (Roulston, 2011: 79). Triangulation added up to the complexity of my research object, which made me understand the inadequacy of my earlier positivist ambition. Let me comment this transition in some depth.

### 3. POSITIVISM AND A PARADOXICAL DIALOGUE

The earliest draft of my data-collection protocol comprised two instruments – classroom observations and semi-structured interviews with teachers. I expected that the data generated from the classroom observations would allow me to characterize the observable actions deployed by the participants in the classroom, particularly the teachers'. For each teacher's observation a first set of data (Baude, 2006) was produced that contained a varying number of audio-recorded or filmed hours of L2 classroom interaction. I transcribed these data in the manner of conversation analysis (Ten Have, 1999; Seedhouse, 2004), which produced an analysis-friendly set of secondary data where verbal and non verbal interactive phenomena<sup>2</sup> were accounted for, as shown in the excerpt below<sup>3</sup>:

```
22   J:      what about AT WORK
23           (0.2)
24   CH:    sorry↑=
25   J:      =<at work>
26           (0.5)
27   CH:    I-I found {an}-o-o-other work (1.2)
28           I have {two work} now (0.4)
29           but eh I {spoke} Spanish in my wo-eh-work ((chu[ckles])
30                                     [#yeah#]
31   LR:    I found another WORK↑ +
32           is that right↑-another WORK↑
33           (0.2)
34   SG:    ((clears throat))
35           (0.3)
36   LR:    °no°
37   J:      not WORK {but} I found another↑
38   AF:    °job°=
39   AF:    =[job
40   J:      [JOB: + well done + job
```

This conversational analytic approach to data permitted to characterize how all classroom participants negotiated the interaction: topic selection, orientation to (dis)preferred actions and themes, turn-taking norms, possible actions and tone among participants. My analysis suggested different lines of conduct among teachers. Some teachers seemed at times to actively laugh at themselves and at particular classroom participants, which at times lead to episodes of laughter (Aguilar Río, 2009), as the following excerpt suggests:

<sup>2</sup> A transcript code can be found in the annexe section, at the end.

<sup>3</sup> In order to overcome possible linguistic barriers, only excerpts taken from the Scottish fieldwork will be presented as examples.

26 R: what does "ETERNAL" MEAN↑  
 27 (0.8)  
 28 AM: for ever  
 → 29 R: for ever + yeah + like-sometimes like + my grammar lessons  
 30 (0.7)  
 → 31 ((chuckles)) [{"#ok#"}] (.) ok  
 32 AM: [{"(laughs)"}]

According to my classroom observations, laughter was a rare phenomenon for some of the observed teachers, whose actions seemed more focused on reflection about aspects of the L2 and its practice, rather than on developing a particular rapport with learners (Aguilar Rio, 2010a).

I systematically conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers after I had completed the classroom observations<sup>4</sup>. I expected that the teachers' principles about teaching, as well as their personal theories would surface during the interview. Depending on the teachers' availability, the length of these interviews ranged between three hours, split in two sessions, and half an hour. All interviews were transcribed. Contrary to classroom transcripts, it was the content produced by teachers, rather than the form, that I was interested in. My approach to the analysis of interviews was thus content-based (Bardin, 1993) rather than interactional (De Fina & Perrino, 2011; Talmy, 2011).

I distinguish two parts in the semi-structured interview question list. The first part presented general questions about the teachers' training and teaching experience. The excerpt below is taken from the semi-structured interview with Janice; it illustrates the kind of information that was generally produced during this first part:

Int: so my first question is how long have you been an English teacher  
 J: eh: ++ about seventeen or eighteen years  
 Int.: right + and: how is it that you BECAME + an English teacher + how is it that you DECIDED + you wanted to be an English teacher  
 J: eh: + I was a teacher in a se:condary school in London↑ + I was teaching + French + and: + I decided that I'd like to go abroad + so I did a month's course in London↑ + in + International House + and: + and then I did some work at + International House and then: + I didn't go abroad for personal reasons I couldn't go abroad + so: + I did nothing with it + I went back to teach in secondary schools and: then + in the late + about nineteen eighty nine I picked it up again + and: + I started working in COLLEGES and then I worked in a PRIVATE LANGUAGE SCHOOL + I worked in + different parts of London  
 Int.: hmm

The second part addressed the teachers' own views on L2 teaching and learning, as well as the way(s) they thought about their rapport with learners. During this second part, I suggested five specific roles to the teachers, in order for them to decide whether these described adequately their teaching. The five suggested roles were "educator", "person", "acquaintance", "friend", and "counsellor". I chose these five roles; they somewhat represented the manner I chose to elicit among teachers an idea of teaching as a complex professional activity comprising different *savoir-faire* and *savoir-être*. In retrospect I think that asking teachers to come up with their own roles may have been more appropriate. The excerpt below is taken from the semi-structured interview with Candence; it illustrates the kind of exchange that generally took place between the teachers and myself during this second part:

Int.: Friend?  
 C: (breath intake) The, eh, I think, a teacher can become, a friend, I mean I, I, I've got many friends now who, who started out as my, eh, as my students, eh, and I think, perhaps, I would use the word friendly, I, I think the relationship that you can strike up with students is, they have to see that you are a friend an approachable person, and that in a sense is the first step towards becoming, a friend, (interviewer takes notes)

My original intention was to make these two sets of data converse – classroom transcripts and semi-structure interviews. Ultimately, I expected that some of the principles expressed by teachers during the interview may account for specific classroom actions that they displayed. My original plan was thus built upon a positivist stance to which I unwittingly adhered, and that went like this: the teachers' expressed principles would be at the origins of their observable classroom actions. The dialogue I intended to establish among the two sets of data soon proved paradoxical, if not simply impossible, for the causal relationship by means of

<sup>4</sup> The length of the observations was always negotiated ahead with the head of department in each institution.

which I intended to relate the principles and the actions mainly informed my subjective reading of two unique, non-related situations – the classroom and the semi-instructed interview – but not about any autonomous, self-sufficient truth.

During the semi-structured interviews, the teachers sometimes described their own practice in terms of how often they displayed (or failed to display) certain actions – the use of adverbs such as “often”, “always” or “never” was thus frequent. Yet, how could I appraise the validity of such general arguments by comparing them with observable classroom actions that teachers had accomplished in situated classrooms contexts with no actual diachronic dimension or continuity? The truth is I could not. I could not make the data produced during the semi-structured interviews – whose context was ill-defined, insofar as it dealt with an abstract, continuous, large part of the teachers' lives – converse with the classroom observations transcripts – that presented teachers' situated, locally displayed actions, as a reaction to the learners' actions. In other words, it was not empirically appropriate that I use the teachers' generalizations and idealizations about their own teaching practice to account for local, situated, specific interactive actions (Mondada, 2009: 27), of which the teachers were but one of the co-authors – the rest of the participating learners being also responsible (and accountable) for how the classroom encounter finally came to be.

This first stage of my research project – that I have called “positivism” – brought about a twofold, discontinuous characterisation of what being an L2 teacher meant for seven L2 teachers. The first element, the conversation analysis-like approach, produced a fine picture of the complex and multiple conduct that the L2 teachers showed in front of the learners in the context of the L2 classroom. This conduct comprised the teachers' orientations to actions of an institutional nature – the teachers gave instructions, organised the communication with(in) the group, decided on the validity of the learners' L2 productions – but also their orientations to actions that seemed to momentarily suspend the operational institutional regime – some teachers legitimated laughter, self and other derision, or failed to do so, they questioned specific aspects of the learners' or their own *savoir-être* (Aguilar Río, 2009), or did not do so. The second element, the semi-structured interviews, produced a general, seemingly idealized, rather context-free reflection on being an L2 teacher, which was co-constructed by each one of the teachers and myself. During the semi-structured interviews, the teachers formulated their principles, defined their vision of L2 teaching, expressed their preferences and dislikes, and sometimes made reference to ill-specified episodes that they presented as exemplary of their teaching practice. Taken separately, these two sources contributed to creating a complex characterisation of what being an L2 teacher meant for each of the seven teachers – the two sources supported being added up, but not blended. In order to suggest a clearer relationship between the teachers' principles and their classroom actions – one that may allow to bring the actions and the principles closer – I decided to incorporate the recall interview as a third source of enquiry into my research protocol.

#### **4. RECALL INTERVIEWS, COLLECTIVE CHARACTERISATION OF L2 TEACHING AND COMPLEXITY**

Concerning the recall interview, Pomerantz<sup>5</sup> (2005) affirms that video-recall may refresh the memory of those who participated in the situated interaction that is to be analysed – the participants may be reminded of what they thought or felt during the interaction. The commentaries that the participants may produce during the recall interview may point to zones in the original interaction that deserve a more accurate analysis. These commentaries may also serve to (in)validate some of the interpretations made by the analyst in the original interaction. For Pomerantz (ibid.: 113), the data produced during the recall interview must not prevail over the (conversation) analysis of the original interaction.

By incorporating the recall interview into my research protocol, I expected to bring forth aspects of the non-observable dimension of L2 teaching that may relate with some of the teachers' observable classroom actions. In effect, as a consequence of my alignment with the L2 teachers' cognition (Borg, 2009), I understand L2 teaching as an activity partially originating from a plan – previous to the encounter with the learners in the classroom – but

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<sup>5</sup> Anita Pomerantz self-presents as a conversation analyst – <http://www.albany.edu/~apom/research.html> (website accessed the 10 of June 2011). Even though hardcore conversationalists refuse to study situated interaction by means other than the secondary data produced from the primary data (Mondada, 2009) – i.e., the transcripts from the audio or video recordings – some conversationalists – at least one – seemingly accept to combine the analysis of transcripts and recall interviews.

also from the L2 teachers' responses within the situated context of the L2 classroom. These situated responses may have a pedagogical basis, or a more emotional, idiosyncratic one.

The fact that the recall interviews were incorporated into a research protocol already in motion explains the gap with the classroom observation/semi-structured interview stage. The biggest time-gap – eleven months – corresponds to my Scottish fieldwork. As for my second Spanish fieldwork, I managed to shorten the gap to two months. For each recall interview I chose a number of classroom transcripts that I showed to the teachers as stimuli. This is, of course, a major bias that I have assumed elsewhere (Aguilar Río, 2010b: 212-214). The transcripts I selected showed actions performed by the L2 teachers that I perceived as instances of their observance of a classroom institutional conduct, or quite the opposite, as examples of a conduct where more personal, idiosyncratic elements surfaced.

At the beginning of each recall interview, I explained to the teacher how I would like us to proceed: I asked him/her that we read together the transcripts, and that we listen to or watch the corresponding primary set of data. I originally asked the teachers to play and stop the audio/video recordings whenever they felt like. Since the recordings had been stocked in my computer, and thus had to be reproduced with pieces of software with which none of the teachers was familiar, I had to take command, always following the teachers' indications. I explained to the teachers that I was interested in their own understanding of the classroom situations; I asked them to say aloud what they figured out to be the logics beneath the observable actions, but also to react to what they read/listened to or watched, to say what these stimuli made them feel, and, if possible, to state whether or not they had kept a vivid memory of any of the situations.

I perceived the outcome of the recall interview to be unequal among the teachers. Some teachers seemed to find it easy to recall the actions they saw themselves display in the transcripts, as well as to suggest principles, decisions and feelings that may have originated these actions. I found that other teachers did not seem to have kept such vivid memories of the classroom situations I showed to them. Some of the teachers' reactions and responses during the recall interview took the form of generalizations and peripheral commentaries – such as unexplained critical reactions, or surprise. In such cases, I considered the recall interview to have failed to serve as a means to negotiate the likely causal relationships between the teachers' observable actions and their feelings, principles or decisions at the time.

The teachers are not accountable for the inconclusiveness of a given recall interview. Being in a position where it becomes possible to recall past (re)actions, feelings and states of mind depends certainly on the interviewee's being able to access a more or less remote moment – that he or she tries to experience anew – but, more importantly, on the interviewer's ability to set the right conditions for the recall to be possible. The attempt to recall may lead to reconstructing – and thus transforming – the past event that the interviewer and the interviewee try to restore. The technical know-how and the material conditions required by the recall interview are not to be taken light-heartedly (Aguilar Río, 2011).

As I mentioned above, I decided to incorporate the recall interview into my research protocol in order to bring closer the observable actions that the teachers displayed in the classroom situation and the principles they expressed during the semi-structured interviews. In this sense, it helped to bring about situated aspects of the teachers' own complex knowledge and understanding of their teaching practice. Yet, by incorporating a further layer into the description of what being an L2 teacher may mean from the point of view of these seven L2 teachers, my task to cross-read the different sources of characterisation became even more complex.

## **5. TRIANGULATION AND SCEPTICISM**

The three sources of enquiry I used produced three types of knowledge about the L2 teachers' teaching practice. The (conversation) analysis of the classrooms transcripts informed about the complexity of the situated actions that all participants – the teacher and the learners – displayed in the context of the L2 classroom. This analysis served to categorize the norms that all participants co-constructed, the goals, the attitude, the conduct and the behaviour that they treated as (im)possible and (in)adequate for such context. Concerning the L2 teachers, the (conversation) analysis of the classroom transcripts allowed me to clarify aspects of what

each of them considered to be their “self-presentation” (Goffman, 1959) within the context of the L2 classroom. As for the semi-structured interviews, they informed about the complex knowledge that they affirmed to have in relation with their own teaching practice. Such knowledge comprised their experience as teachers, as well as their personal theories – pedagogical and other – about teaching, learning and rapport with learners within the classroom context – these theories partly originated from their education and training as L2 teachers, but also from the contact with other fellow teachers. Finally, the recall interviews allowed to articulate some of the teachers' observed actions and possible reasons – pedagogical or other – that motivated these.

Put together, these three sources of information conformed an instance of research triangulation (Moran-Ellis et al. 2006: 47) intended to shed light on a complex object of study such as the characterisation of the seven L2 teachers' practice. Triangulation shed light on limited, scattered areas of my research object's fundamental complexity, but not quite on the likely relationships among these (ibid.: 51). Beyond the triangulation lingered my interpretive, subjective reading – which I sometimes co-constructed with some of the interviewees – of how (or whether) two elements of the triangulated outcome may be relate (ibid.: 55).

As an interpretative research method, triangulation allows that various sets of fundamentally different data be brought together, yet not quite added or integrated. This may in turn result in a larger, more precise depiction of the object that is being researched, which may account for the contradictions that are inherent to the interviewer and the interviewee who fuel the research process. According to Narcy-Combes (2005) the epistemologically responsible researcher must not ignore that his/her interpretative subjectivity may not be an appropriate, sufficient glue. The recall interviews with the interviewees may thus attenuate the researchers' subjectivity, in the sense that they may allow for the interviewee's subjectivity to participate in the interpretative research process, to align next to that of the researcher's. This is precisely the heart of the sceptical position where I stand today. The complexity of my research may partially correspond to my own subjective reading of it, to the subjective reading that the interviewee may make of it, to the contradictory alignment of the two, or even to all, or to none, of the above.

## 6. CONCLUSION

I set off to characterise seven L2 teachers' understanding of L2 teaching as a complex professional activity. I tried to account for both observable and non observable aspects of such activity, and to articulate both as motivated actions. I do not question that observable actions may be analysed in terms of their motives. However, these motives must be found within the context of the very actions that the researcher tries to analyse. The way that Filliettaz (2010) suggests in order to explore one participant's motivated actions seems interesting and promising. He analyses the classroom interactions between the trainers and the trainees in a technical professional college in Switzerland. Filliettaz stands on an ethnomethodological position insofar as he considers action as the result of a situated cognition co-negotiated by all participants in a given interaction (ibid.: 98) – be this institutional or not. What is particular to Filliettaz's approach is the analysis of what he refers to as “spontaneous instances of verbalized introspection”<sup>6</sup> (ibid.: 97) that some of the observed trainers addressed to the observer. According to Filliettaz, two sets of cognition may thus co-exist. The first one would originate from the institutional relationship between the observed trainers and the trainees. The second cognition would correspond to instances where one of the observed participants – a trainer – voluntarily addresses the researcher in order to justify his/her actions. According to Filliettaz, these “spontaneous instances of verbalized introspection” may grant the researcher partial access to one of the observed participants' motivated actions. However, he agrees that the epistemological validity of these “hybrid forms of introspection”<sup>7</sup> remains to be demonstrated (ibid.: 107-108).

The multiples way(s) that an L2 teacher “does being a teacher” (Mondada, 1999: 28) may change according to complex variables such the day, the time, an institutional plan, or the learners that are being taught<sup>8</sup>. Likewise, the multiples way(s) that and individual may think

<sup>6</sup> “Formes spontanées d'explicitation” in original French.

<sup>7</sup> “Formes hybrides de verbalisation de l'agir” in original French.

<sup>8</sup> These variables combine to produce (re)actions from all participants as they collaboratively co-construct the context where the encounter takes place.



about his/her “doing being a teacher” (Mondada, 1999) may also change, according to the context, the time or the person to/with whom he/she attempts to characterize aspects of his/her own personal vision of teaching. I think today that for a research project as mine – the characterization of teaching as a complex, multiple, professional activity – it would be more epistemologically valid to analyse what “doing being a teacher” (Mondada, 1999) means (as a professional activity) for a group of teachers in different contexts, as they co-construct local meaning with different interlocutors – not only teachers, but also interviewers –, rather than to collect different sources of data, at different times, in different contexts, in order to account for one single context – namely the classroom context where the encounter of the teacher and the learner takes place. This means taking into account the historical and geographical particularity of the situated contexts where the teachers' verbalized introspection has been produced in order to account for the complexity of teaching as a professional activity – that may be expressed or felt differently at different situated contexts, in front of different interlocutors. In the case of my research, this would entail treating the semi-structured and recall interviews as interactive events on their own, which bring about instances of verbalized introspection where teaching as a professional activity is depicted in a unique, particular, collaborative, interactive, and situated way by the interviewed teacher and the researcher. These instances of verbalized introspection will probably not relate to the way(s) that the same teachers materialized “doing being a teacher” (Mondada, 1999) during the classroom observation stage. Yet, both sources of characterization may contribute to rendering a complex picture of what being an L2 teacher meant for the observed and interviewed teachers.

I opened this article quoting Dickson-Swift et al., who affirm that as qualitative researchers we use “ourselves as a research instrument” (ibid.). I think that “ourselves” refers to any researcher's uniqueness as a human being, to his/her standing on the world. The researcher cannot ignore this when doing research, simply because it makes part of who he/she is (Devereux, 1980). However, the qualitative researcher willing to restore the perspective of those he/she observes must find ways to take into account his/her own subjectivity – which allows him/her to experience the world – in order to integrate critically it within the research process, and thus to surpass it.

## 7. annexe: transcript code

<p>Ⓒ: teacher  EM, FT, AF1, AF2: learners  (0.2): silence measured in tenth of seconds  +: silence shorter than (0.2) seconds  :, :, ::, ::: syllable progressively lengthened  ↑: rising intonation  (.): breath intake  ((fragment)): analyst's commentary, additional information  [Fragment]  [Fragment]: overlapping turns</p>	<p>/fragment/: phonetic transcription  (fragment): analyst's commentary, additional information  FRAGMENT: loud utterance  Frag-ment: self-correction, hesitation,  {fragment}: analyst is uncertain  °fragment°: whispering  #fragment#: laughter while speaking  XXX: incomprehensible  =: two turns linked without a pause  22: line number</p>
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