

English Teaching Assistants in Brazil: conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach*

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach of two English Teaching Assistants from the United States who work in Brazil at the CAPES/ Fulbright Program, named English Teaching Assistants (ETA), which supports Languages Without Borders. The theoretical bases are teacher cognition (or teacher thinking) and conceptions (PRATT, 1992, FREEMAN, 1996, BORG, 2003, LAM & KEMBER, 2006; BURNS ET AL, 2015). The data were collected through interviews and the analysis is based on Freeman (1998), whose elements are naming, grouping, finding relationships and displaying. These elements are used to avoid what is called the "impulse to teach", since the teacher educator is also the author of the study, and intends to do an analysis without any previous interpretations. The results show the way the conceptions of the interviewed teachers are related to each other, revealing aspects of their practices and previous educational experiences.

Keywords: English Teaching Assistants. Languages without Borders. Teacher Cognition.

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Professores Assistentes de Língua Inglesa no Brasil: concepções de conteúdo, ensino e formação de professor

Resumo

Este artigo discute as concepções de conteúdo, ensino e aprender a ensinar de duas professoras assistentes estadunidenses de língua inglesa, que atuam no Brasil por meio do Programa da CAPES/Fulbright, denominado *English Teaching Assistants* (ETA), que dá suporte ao Idiomas sem Fronteiras. As bases teóricas discutem os conceitos de cognição do professor (ou pensamento do professor) e concepções (PRATT, 1992; FREEMAN, 1996; BORG, 2003; LAM & KEMBER, 2006; BURNS ET AL. 2015). Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas e a análise baseia-se em Freeman (1998), cujos elementos são nomear, agrupar, estabelecer relações e *display*. Esses elementos são utilizados para evitar o que se denomina “impulso do ensinar”, já o formador de professores é também autor do estudo e pretende fazer uma análise sem interpretações antecipadas. Os resultados revelam a maneira pela qual a concepções das professoras entrevistadas estão relacionadas entre si, revelando aspectos das suas práticas e experiências prévias de formação. **Palavras-chave:** Professoras Assistentes de Inglês. Idiomas sem Fronteiras. Cognição do Professor

Profesores Asistentes de Lengua Inglesa en Brasil: concepciones de contenido, enseñanza y formación de profesor

Resumen

Este artículo discute las concepciones de contenido, enseñanza y aprender a enseñar de dos profesoras asistentes estadounidenses de lengua inglesa, que actúan en Brasil a través del Programa de la CAPES / Fulbright, denominado English Teaching Assistants (ETA), que da soporte a Idiomas sin Fronteras. Las bases teóricas discuten los conceptos de cognición del profesor (o pensamiento del profesor) y concepciones (PRATT, 1992; FREEMAN, 1996; BORG, 2003; LAM & KEMBER, 2006; BURNS ET AL. 2015). Los datos fueron recogidos por medio de entrevistas y el análisis se basa en Freeman (1998), cuyos elementos son nombrar, agrupar, establecer relaciones y *display*. Estos elementos se utilizan para evitar lo que se denomina “impulso de la enseñanza”, ya el formador de profesores es también autor del estudio y pretende hacer un análisis sin interpretaciones anticipadas. Los resultados revelan la manera en que las concepciones de las profesoras entrevistadas están relacionadas entre sí, revelando aspectos de sus prácticas y experiencias previas de formación.

Palabras clave: Profesores Asistentes de Inglés. Idiomas sin Fronteras. Cognición del Profesor

Introduction

In 2011, the Brazilian government established the Science without Borders (SwB) research and exchange program, an extensive scholarship program geared towards expanding science and technology actions, innovation and competitiveness through international mobility of scholars.

In order to help applicants to become proficient in English and study abroad, as a public policy, the government also started the English without Borders Program (EwB) – now Languages without Borders (LwB). As part of the EwB initiatives, there is the English Teaching Assistant Program (ETA). In partnership with Fulbright Commission, recently graduated college students from the United States come to Brazil in order to teach English to eligible SwB candidates.

However, not all of them are prepared to teach English, because a teaching certificate is desirable, but not a requirement to apply for an ETA grant. In this regard, it is worth analyzing the origin of the teaching practices that they bring to their students at Federal Universities of Brazil. Since not all of them have studied to be teachers, do they teach as they have been taught? (LORTIE, 1975; BAILEY ET AL, 1996). This paper aims at responding the questions related to their conceptions regarding the contents they think they should teach, how teaching should be done, and how learning to teach is supposed to happen.

The organization of the paper

This paper begins with a brief overview of the Brazilian partnership with Fulbright and the purposes of the ETA Program. Afterwards, there is the theoretical background on **conceptions** and **teacher cognition** (or **teacher thinking**). The research methodology is stated hereafter, where the participants of this study are presented, and data were collected and analyzed. The English Teaching Assistants who were interviewed have different educational background, and the way they understand the contents they are supposed to teach, and how teachers teach and learn to do their jobs may differ, which

offers the opportunity to study their conceptions and thinking on this topic. To this end, the study examined the question: ***What are the ETA's – who worked at a Federal University in Brazil, in 2016 – conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach?*** I am interested in their perspectives on what the students need to learn English; the best methods/ approaches/ techniques to teaching English; and the best way(s) to learn to teach. I analyze the findings from the interviews, taking into account the aspects that connect their conceptions, against a backdrop of the year in which they were granted by Fulbright to work as ETA in Brazil.

Brazilian government partnership with Fulbright: purposes of the English Teaching Assistant Program

Students, scholars, teachers, professionals, scientists and artists are eligible for Fulbright's scholarships. Founded in 1946, the commission provides up to 8,000 grants a year and operates in over 160 countries. Cooperating organizations, such as the Institute of International Education (IEE), help to administrate Fulbright, and the US Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs sponsors the program.

The Fulbright's English Teaching Assistant Program in Brazil is a partnership with the Federal government. Fellowships are offered to recent college graduates, master's and doctoral candidates from the United States to spend nine months in Brazil teaching, assisting and observing English classes at Federal Universities. This partnership was firstly established in order to strengthen the SwB Program. The role of the ETA in the SwB Program, according to the Call for Applications 2014-2015, is to help Brazilian students and researchers to become proficient in English through conversation classes, certificate courses, and skills-based classes (reading, writing, speaking, listening). The Call for Application also mentions another purpose of the Program, which is to promote the United States historical, social and cultural contents in the Education of future Brazilian teachers, students and researchers as well as to give support to the implementation of new curricular proposals for teacher education. Howe-

ver, not all of the ETA who come to Brazil are prepared to teach English. The Federal University of Sergipe (UFS), for instance, received, in 2015, three ETA whose degrees of study were International Relations, Urban and Regional studies, and Global and Environmental studies. In 2016, on the other hand, one of the two ETA had a Master's degree in Education. This means that the Program gives preference to candidates who studied to be teachers, but that is something desired, although not required.

Therefore, promoting the Fulbright Brand and the United States culture seem to be the main focus of the ETA Program. Since the Teaching Assistants' tasks depend on the Host Professors' requirements along with the ETA's educational background, each university may conduct the program the way that best suits their needs. On one hand, it may be productive, because the ETA and the Host Professors are free to decide what to do during the grant. On the other hand, if they do not see the role of the Program in a more critical, in-depth way, it may reinforce a colonialist perspective still rooted in our relationship with the United States. Daisy, who is one of the participants of this research, taught a certificate course that tried to demythologize most of the aspects of the United States' culture still deeply legitimated by some of the Hollywood productions:

What I found is that, here [in Brazil], but also in other places I've had conversations with people who think that the United States is like, "oh, all the street are paved with gold, everything is great, everybody is white, everybody is rich, you all have iPhones, everything is fantastic!" and it's like "hmmm, no, no, no, no...that's a very, very small snapshot". You know, people think that the United States is what it looks like in the movies, and I say: "ok, some of that is true, but it's also not ... it's also not the dreamland that you think it is [...] So, if I had to say, like, the most important thing that I want to teach students and that I have been so far, like, what real life is like for real Americans [...] And I'm, like, "no, Americans are not all white, they're not all blonde", you know, it's a very diverse country as well, and I don't think that's equally represented in the kinds of media that people consume here. And so, yeah, reality. Get in touch with it (EXTRACT FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

Theoretical background

Conceptions and teacher cognition (or **teacher thinking**) are the main theoretical basis of this paper. The core idea of conceptions is the meanings we make of the world we live in and our representations about this world. Those meanings – here related to subject matter, teaching and learning to teach – are phenomena that mediate our response not only to how we think about them but also the way we do them. We view the world through "the lenses of our conceptions, interpreting and acting in accordance with our understanding of the world" (PRATT, 1992, p. 204). Accordingly, when we talk about teaching and its components, conceptions can be seen as beliefs that guide a teacher's perception of a situation and will shape actions (LAM & KEMBER, 2006). This means that teacher's cognition or what they think about teaching cannot be dissociated from their actions in the classroom.

Burns et. al. (2015) mapped research on language teacher cognition – which can also be named teacher thinking – and found out that those terms have been in circulation for more than three decades. Teacher thinking and conceptions may have close relationship if we take into consideration that the former also acknowledges not necessarily what teachers do in the classroom, but what they think when they act or know and believe while doing specific things. It is the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching (FREEMAN, 1996; BORG, 2003). The notion that teachers might be engaged in meaning-based cognitive activity that was shaped by the social context of their classroom was supported by theories in Psychology – from the cognitive revolution, and Anthropology – from ethnographic approaches (BURNS ET. AL., 2015).

Language teacher cognition research has emerged through a framework grounded in analyses of mainstream educational research. Borg (2003) presents a schematic conceptualization of teaching within which teacher cognition plays a pivotal role in teacher's lives. To him, teacher cognition – just like conceptions – relates to beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, conceptions about teaching, learning, students, subject matter, instruction, classroom

practice, activities, self – to name a few, all of them influenced by contextual factors.

Research methodology

I interviewed two ETA who worked at one of the Federal Universities in Brazil, from February through November 2016. The questions were previously planned, but I also allowed the interview to unfold spontaneously, depending on the topics that emerged from the questions and answers. The first interview was held in the beginning of the grant and, the second one, at the end of it.

Throughout the paper, in order to protect the interviewees' identities, they are going to be called Maria and Daisy. Maria was born in the State of California, she was 22 years old in 2016, she has a Bachelor's degree in History and Latin America Studies, and taught English at one of the Offices for Refugee Resettlement, in the United States whereas Daisy was born in the State of Pennsylvania, she was 24 years old in 2016, she has a Bachelor's degree in Spanish and Latino Studies, a Master's degree in Education, and taught English for two years at a Foundation Academy, and in Peru, she also taught Spanish for two years at "Teach for America"³.

The data analysis was done through four elemental activities proposed by Freeman (1998): naming, grouping, finding relationships and displaying. I decided to do so in order to avoid what the author calls "the impulse in teaching" (ibid, p. 99), which is to say "I know what this means", "I know why the teacher/student said this or that". The four elements are explained as follows:

Naming involves labeling the data in some way. These names are called "codes": in qualitative research they can come from three basic sources: from categories outside the data such as the setting, the research question, previous research, and so on; from the data themselves; or they may be created by the researcher [...]

Grouping involves reassembling the names you are giving to parts of the data by collecting them into categories. As with codes, the categories can be grounded, emerging from the data, or they can be a priori, from outside [...]

Finding relationships among groups or categories is like putting cross-braces on the scaffolding, which strengthen it so it will be less likely to twist or shake [...]

Display sets out the patterns and relationships you see among the categories. These displays make the interpretation concrete and visible; they allow you to see how the parts connect into a whole. Data displays are both processes and products, which means that making them is as important as having them completed (FREEMAN, 1998, p. 99-100, my emphasis).

After having followed those four steps for data analysis, I came up with a concrete and visible display with each of the ETA's conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach. They are connected by two important categories related to educational background, previous experiences, readings, and self – which are going to be discussed in details further on.

Conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach

Teacher 1 – Maria

Maria's conceptions of subject matter are mostly related to the development of communicative skills: interaction, conversation, pronunciation, and fluency were the topics that guided her answers to questions that focused on the contents she was supposed to teach. Her teaching should guide students to master their vocabulary. Her efforts, she argued, were finding ways to engage them in interacting:

I really like to get people on their feet interacting with each other and not so much just listening to me talk [...] I taught conversation. I teach people how to speak more than I teach people how to write, for example [...] So, that's been my favorite thing, it's coming up with creative ways for people to interact with each other practicing their English skills (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

Concerning one of those creative ways to improve her students' speaking during the classes, Maria works with

songs. Her beliefs might be consistent with songs as a means of expanding vocabulary as well as teaching and learning how to pronounce the sounds of English – which highlights her concerns on the phonetic aspects of the language:

I'm always playing music, and I really believe that music is a really terrific way to teach language [...] I think it helps tremendously with pronunciation, fluidity, and it just expands vocabulary immensely [...] and you separate the individual sounds, and you'll place the sounds, like, where, in the mouth, they're happening (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

The previous extract represents conceptions of subject matter that can be associated with Maria's conceptions of teaching as well. Her background in Theater and Arts connects her to teaching practices directed towards sounds, images and communication. To her, a hands-on teaching style leads her classes to a more visual and performative environment:

So, I bring a lot of my background in Theater to teaching [...] I think it's been really kind of artistic in a way. For conversation classes, I've had a really good time [...] You can use images, I used a lot of images for teaching new vocabulary [...] So I did a lot of flashcards, I would print just the image [...] Drawing a lot, you know, using visual representations instead of writing (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

Maria's identities as an educator are "kind of artistic in a way", as she points it. We need to bear in mind that her background both in High School – where she studied Theater – and College – where she studied History with emphasis in Latin America – are not related to teaching, which can make her a performative ETA. This means that she takes to the classroom techniques she learned at High School and College, such as critical cultural studies, critical thinking, politics and social issues:

I also like to teach critical thinking because I studied History and I love working with a lot of the theories that I learned in History classes, like critical cultural studies, for example, looking at elements of culture in a more in-depth way, and sort of connecting things. I like music and found

TV, two more serious things, like politics or, you know, their sort of social issues...uh... That's sort of been the identity that I've kind of cultivated here as an ETA (EXTRACT FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

On that account, Maria is an experience-based teacher. She did not have any formal training to teach English before coming to Brazil, or even in the United States, where she had taught English at an Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) – an organization that works with minors who are detained as illegal immigrants. During the interview, she was asked if she had ever used one of the techniques or methods from their former teachers in the US. She answered it affirmatively and gave an example of her French classes in High School and how she was inspired to teach the same way as an ETA in Brazil:

A project that we would do in French, in High School, to memorize poems. So, we learned a poem that I still remember it. It's just this idea of language being very musical, and learning language as a very artistic and a very scientific standpoint, but the way that you pronounce things and you learn your own physical anatomy, to me, it has a lot to do with performance. (EXTRACT FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

Hence, her conceptions of learning to teach seem to be based on the historically acknowledged thought that student teachers will initially teach the way they were taught (LORTIE, 1975). Maria also suggested that her views about learning to teach were based on the observations of classes at the ORR. In the extracts below we can identify one of her conceptions, in which teaching is learned through observing a more experienced peer:

The best way to learn how to teach is working with someone who has done it, and has a method that works [...] you know, has a method that has results. You can see people's progress [...] She [her supervisor] taught English that was based on sounds and images, and the sound that you make when you see the image of a chicken or something and phrases, like, associating a phrase, like: "what time did you get up?" [...] So you hear the phrase and you see the image and you're, like, kind of linking those two [...] So, yeah, I kind of transferred that over

too. That's how I think about teaching English now (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS).

Before taking over her supervisor's English classes at the ORR, Maria observed some classes, took notes and planned her lessons based on what she had observed, and that is how she thinks "about teaching English now".

Teacher 2 – Daisy

Daisy's conceptions of subject matter, on the other hand, seem to be driven by some of contextual factors of teaching English as an ETA in Brazil. Unlike Mary, she studied to be a teacher in the United States, and has around four years of experience in teaching both English and Spanish. During the interviews, her understanding of the contents that an English student is supposed to learn ranged from speaking to vocabulary or grammatical structures.

I guess conversational English topics, right? So, how to introduce themselves, those are the standard things because if they land in the United States tomorrow they have to be able to chat with people, and feel confident, they have to be able to survive, so, I guess survival English is something important to focus on [...] When it comes to, I guess, the structure of how I lead discussions, and different activities that I use to practice vocabulary, and different grammar topics when I touch on them (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

The idea of landing "in the United States tomorrow they have to be able to chat with people" may drive her conceptions of subject matter to an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) perspective. The point is, not everyone will have the chance to land in the United States someday. Even so, English continues to be necessary regardless of the ESP demands. However, Daisy is also interested in discussing issues of inequality, both connected to race and socioeconomic factors. In the extract below, we can observe how she planned her lessons through contents that focused on social matters:

But I think that it's been one of the most rewarding parts of my time here, being able to talk

about a real picture of what the United States is like in terms of racial inequality, and not just racial inequality, but socioeconomic equality, and... and... giving people a real picture of what life is like in the United States [...] My favorite class, in the series of three, was the second one in which we talked about the Colin Kaepernick protests, it's going on in the United States right now⁴, and we were able to talk about issues of race and inequality through lens of sports, which was sort of the purpose of the course (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

Concerning Daisy's conceptions of teaching, since she has a Master's degree in Education, she seems to call upon some of the teaching methods she learned. To her, the Blayne Ray's TPRS method (Teaching Proficiency through Reading and Storytelling) can be pretty efficient. Moreover, reading and speaking are not the only skills to work with. She argues that the students have to practice the four language skills in every class:

I used a lot of Blaine Ray's TPRS model, which is Total Physical Response, and, essentially, that involves teaching students language through storytelling, and very active storytelling [...] So, you tell a story completely in the target language, and you have different gestures and markers that go along with the story that help them memorize the key vocabulary that you've identified in the story [...] I try to include all of the language learning competencies. So, in every class, they read something, in every class, they speak, in every class, they listen, in every class, they write. I usually try to hit every single one of those in every class (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

The fact of trying to "hit every single competence with her students in every class" pulls up the unobservable part of Daisy's teaching (FREEMAN, 1996; BORG, 2003), which is how she planned her lessons. That might be another way of understanding the conceptions of teaching that drive her work:

I usually start with, what's the point, right? ... like... what do I want students to walk away

with when they leave class? What is it that I want them to get? And so, from that idea, the rest of my lesson I structure on how do I get them there, and so, usually [...] I scaffold the conversations so that when it comes time to speak in front of the whole group everyone has something to say, and to make sure that not only one student is participating, or 'cause, you know, in every class, there's that one or those two students who are the first ones to raise their hands, are the first ones to blurt out the answers, they're the ones who want to show off their English skills, but I'm not necessarily concerned with reaching them as I am to people who are more reserved [...] I will regularly call on people who try... [Laughter] make them uncomfortable, and I found that, for a lot of students that, when you prepare them and you give them things to talk about, even though they don't want to, at least they feel prepared, and, like, they can handle it. And I find that, students who have done that, too, since the beginning, they still come to class, and they are still reluctant to participate but not nearly as much as they were when they started (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

Teaching, for Daisy, comes along with planning, with defining clear objectives, and getting students to interact through different procedures and strategies that she started to have learnt during her master's course in the US. In spite of acknowledging the importance of theories, coursework and textbooks, Daisy also believes that teaching through experience is quite valid. Her answers to questions about the best way of learning to teach varies from doing research to taking courses, using Google or self-teaching. She considers herself "drastically overqualified" for working as an ETA, as mentioned below:

A lot of my teaching in the very beginning was in the classroom, I mean, my program "Teach for America", which is what made me into a teacher [...] It also helped that I was doing Master's coursework while I was teaching, so I got the theoretical side and the pedagogical side simultaneously being able to put it into practice [...] A lot of the tips and tricks that I have for being a successful teacher are self-taught, you know, I had to read books on my own and...use Google [...] you know, nothing really prepares you for being in front of students, like, actually tea-

ching [...] I was drastically overqualified for this job. I was a teacher for 4 years, I have a Master's degree in Education, I did "Teach for America", like I said, so teaching and learning and figuring out best practices for how to reach learners has been my life for the past five years [...] I've been able to use a lot of the materials and, just, English teaching tools that I reuse with my fifth graders here at UFS to teach students. It's been really, really cool. I've been able to reuse worksheets [laughter] and different practice examples because the level is more or less the same (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

How their conceptions are connected

When I was recalling relationships, patterns and themes during the display phase of data analysis, there was something that clearly connected Maria's and Daisy's conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach. Those conceptions were obviously contextually driven, since the interviews and my research questions are directed towards the time they spent in Brazil working as ETA.

Maria's conceptions are connected through affective experiences: adrenaline, nervousness, gratitude, and vulnerability are examples of the feelings and emotions that may help us understand her experience of being an ETA at UFS:

At first, I felt kind of **lost**. I think I felt pretty **lost**, at first I wasn't sure what was the best way to approach the students [...]

Uh... I feel like I have a lot of **adrenaline** because I've got a lot of energy [...]

Sometimes right before class I'll get **nervous**, almost like **stage fright**, like I'm about to perform [...]

Sometimes I can get really **emotional**, depending on what we talk about, like, a lot of our classes we end up talking about some really heavy topics [...]

When my students are really **vulnerable** with me, like, I feel really **emotional**, it makes me wanna **cry** sometimes [...]

I feel very **grateful** all the time. I feel like, this **feeling of gratitude** [...]

Oh, my God, that was so **fun**, you know, like I feel so **energized** (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA'S INTERVIEWS, my emphasis).

Her feelings and emotions emphasized above can also be connected to her educational background. The “stage fright” she feels as if she were about to perform and the fact that she helped her students to take closer looks at elements of culture and critical studies may be evidence. The following extracts links her background knowledge to her teaching:

I love working with a lot of the theories that I learned in History classes, like critical cultural studies, for example, looking at elements of culture in a more in depth way, and sort of connecting things [...] I had a background in Theater when I was in High School. [...] I’m very performative, I use a lot of the techniques that I learned from theater as well [...] This last class was about folk music and freedom songs, so, we looked at the music of Bob Dylan, Paul Simon and Sixto Rodriguez. So, how international relationships built through music and can have political impact, and we sang a bunch of songs together, we sang Bob Dylan’s song and John Lennon and Bob Marley (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA’S INTERVIEWS).

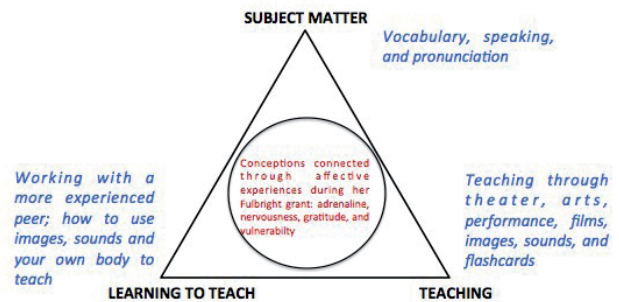
When she was asked about theories, methods and readings she did in order to prepare herself for teaching English in Brazil, Maria reported her contact with Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal’s theories:

I think the only theorist that I’ve really read is Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the oppressed, placing power as a shared resource in the classroom [...] not just having the teacher be the sole person holding power over everybody else, but, like, using the classroom as a space for people to feel free and to find freedom [...] And another Brazilian educator, I guess, is Augusto Boal, who created theater of the oppressed. I was using a lot of Augusto Boal’s suggestions for creating movement and a space to help people feel more comfortable in their bodies using exercises and games [...] have people moving around the room, uh...using their bodies in different ways creating rhythms with their bodies (EXTRACTS FROM MARIA’S INTERVIEWS).

Figure 1 below summarizes the research understandings when it comes to Maria’s conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach as well as the way those conceptions are connected in her interviews:

Figure 1: Research understandings on Maria’s conceptions

MARIA



Source: Interviews

Daisy’s conceptions, on the other hand, seem to be connected through constant comparison between her time as an ETA in Brazil and her previous teaching experiences in the United States. In Brazil, she believes that her work is fun, but not purposeful. She feels like she is not working towards a larger goal whereas, in the US, she felt like a real teacher, who was an integral part of her students’ education:

When I was teaching at Urban Education I was in an everyday feeling, like, I was making, like, I was working toward a larger goal, like, I was an integral part of the formation of my students, and, like, it was my job to see them do well. I used to feel very invigorated, I felt really passionate about what I was doing, I felt like my work was purposeful and I was driven to go in there every day, even when I felt sick, even when I didn’t feel like it. I was very passionate about what I was doing, whereas here, it’s fun, but I don’t feel like I’m working towards a larger goal, and it’s a complete shift from the type of teaching that I’m used to doing (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY’S INTERVIEWS).

During the interviews, Daisy reiterated that she did not use to “feel like a real teacher” during the period of time she worked as an ETA in Brazil, even though she argued that she had learned a lot from this experience:

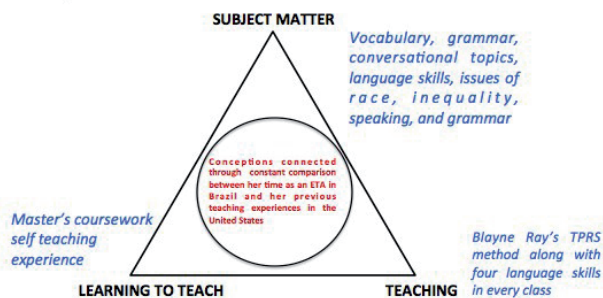
Here, I just don’t feel as passionate. It’s nice, it’s fun, you know, it’s great to have friends of a different culture and it’s great to be here doing a different type of teaching, but I don’t really [...] I don’t feel like a real teacher, I feel like an

activities leader, like, what am I doing here? I'm leading activities. I feel like I'm more leading discussions and isolated activities than, actually, enhancing anyone's teaching. You know, I would feel different if I were teaching a structured course [...] Although I don't really feel like as a teacher, I advanced, you know, I definitely learned things from this experience, but there are more areas of personal growth and stuff like that, but I didn't feel like I picked up any new teaching methods. I feel like this was just a good way for me to demonstrate the competences that I already had as a teacher (EXTRACTS FROM DAISY'S INTERVIEWS).

Figure 2 below summarizes the research understandings when it comes to Daisy's conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach as well as the way those conceptions are connected in her interviews:

Figure 2: Research understandings on Daisy's conceptions

DAISY



Source: Interviews

A Closing caveat

I conclude this paper with a caveat: the ETA's conceptions of subject matter, teaching and learning to teach are a significant, but not representative focus on their experiences as ETA at Brazilian Universities. As for the two interviewed teachers, I did not observe their teaching practices, nor did I interview their students. The focus of this research resided on the conceptions of Teaching Assistants about being an ETA in Brazil, and how those conceptions were narrowly connected. Not only do the results draw our attention to those teachers' educational backgrounds, but they also say something about their teaching practices. The research methodology used, ba-

sed on Freeman (1998), was rigorously followed in order to avoid anticipated interpretations, especially as a result of my role as a Professor and Teacher Educator. Possible developments of this research may be in the impact of ETA's practices in the education of candidates for the SwB Program, and also of undergraduate students with a degree in English Language Teaching.

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3 Teach for America is a nonprofit organization that recruits College students around the United States to work as teachers in public schools of low-income communities.

4 Those protests happened in the second term of 2016, when some of the interviews were recorded.

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