Profiling academic research on discourse studies and second language learning

Perfiles de la investigación académica en estudios del discurso y aprendizaje de segundas lenguas

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Abstract

There is little profiling academic research on discourse studies in relation to second language learning from a regional perspective. This study aims at unveiling what, when, where and who constitute scholarly work in research about these two interrelated fields. A dataset was configured from registers taken from Dialnet and studied using specialized text-mining software. Findings revealed myriad research interests, few prolific years and the lack of networking. It is recommended to trace out our research as an ELT community locally and globally.

Key words: Discourse analysis, second language learning, research profiling, literature review, text mining

Resumen

Desde una perspectiva regional, poco se ha investigado el perfil académico de estudios que relacionan el análisis del discurso con el aprendizaje de segundas lenguas. Este estudio de perfil describe el qué, el cuándo, el dónde y el quién constituye trabajo académico-investigativo en estos dos campos interrelacionados. Se construyó una base de datos a partir de registros tomados de Dialnet que fueron estudiados utilizando software especializado para minería de textos. Los hallazgos revelan variedad en los intereses investigativos, poca producción bibliográfica en ciertos años y ausencia de trabajo en red. Se recomienda perfilar nuestra investigación como comunidad ELT a nivel local y global.

Palabras clave: Análisis del discurso, aprendizaje de segundas lenguas, investigaciones de perfil, revisión de literatura, minería de textos

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This review article has a twofold purpose. Firstly, this article aims at charting out research studies around the field of Discourse Studies in relation to Second Language Learning adopting a regional perspective. This, I will argue, will depict a plausible picture of research around these two interrelated fields in the Latin American context with a number of limitations I will also highlight. Secondly, this article attempts to situate within such a broad picture the research studies that collaborators have written for this special issue of the Colombian Applied Linguistic Journal.

My idea of tracing out this type of research stems out from the fact that little attention has been paid to profiling discourse studies in relation to applied linguistics to TEFL, especially in terms of the knowledge generated particularly in Colombia and more generally in Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain. There are certainly critical studies related to the relation of discourse analysis and general education using particular case studies (Soler, 2008). However, there is still a felt need to systematize the field and review regional contributions in order to introduce what constitutes scholarly work around the field. I also come from a previous experience gained with a recent project about profiling research on massively multiplayer online role play gaming (Castañeda-Peña et al (in revision)) which also has a discourse analysis component. The idea comes as well from my particular interest on feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis in regards to language learning and gender positioning (Castañeda-Peña, 2008, 2009 and 2010). Additionally, this initiative is rooted in my teaching experience at graduate programs in Colombia and UK where we discuss discourse analysis contributions to understanding L2 classroom interaction. That is why this review answers specifically the following set of questions regarding scholarly work on discourse studies and second language learning:

- What is being sought when researching discourse and second language learning?
- When has discourse and second language learning research been conducted?
- Who has researched discourse and second language learning?

In order to answer this set of questions, this review article is divided into four sections. In the first one, I will briefly outline the differences between literature reviews and research profiling studies. An argument about understanding both processes as research studies on their own will be made. Secondly, I will describe the steps to undertake research profiling studies using data mining procedures. I will argue about the possibility of conducting narrow and broad research profiling studies. Thirdly, I will present the research profile of studies relating discourse analysis and language learning. Findings suggest that it is necessary to boost the field with strategies to position the knowledge generated in Colombia and Latin America less locally and more globally. The article finishes with a reflection upon the research studies published in this special issue of the Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal.

Theoretical framework: Profiling academic research

As stated above, it has been argued that profiling academic fields is important to undertake more informed research processes (Castañeda-Peña et al, (in revision)). The main idea behind this claim is that both novice and more professional researchers see the trees but cannot see the whole forest (Porter et al, 2002). The rationale that supports such claim is based on a fresher view of what has traditionally been called the literature review in comparison to what is actually known as profiling academic research. Both approaches do the same with some quality differences. For example, literature reviews cover a shorter range

of references underpinned by a micro-perspective being very tightly restricted to the topic. Research profiling studies are more interested in finding out about patterns in the literature considered as a whole patterned body. In that sense, these types of studies take in not simply the topic but potential related areas. This last approach depicts data from both qualitative and quantitative standpoints. Table 1, adapted from Porter et al (2002), illustrates both approaches:

Table 1. Literature reviews vs. Research profiling studies (From Porter et al, 2002)
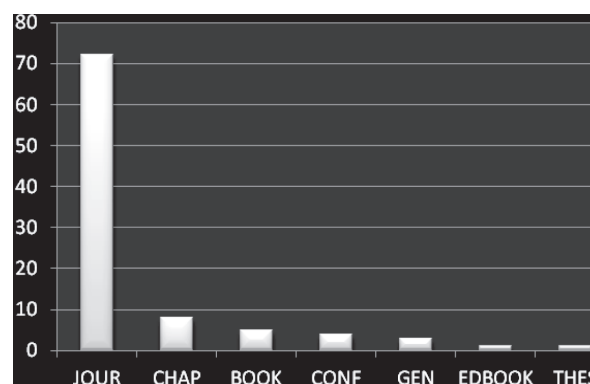
Old (traditional literature review)	New (research profiling)
Micro focus (paper-by-paper)	Macro focus (patterns in the Literature as a body)
Narrow range (~20 references)	Wide range (~20 - 20,000 references)
Tightly restricted to the topic	Encompassing the topic + related areas
Text discussion	Text, numerical, and graphical depiction

In very broad descriptive terms, research profiling implies answering questions related to what is being researched in a specific field. This approach also inquires about who has conducted such research. Finally, research profiling queries when and where this has been done. Losiewicz et al (2000) have expressed more detailed and generalizable questions to have a much clearer picture of what goes on in any academic field. They acknowledge aspects to be found in what has been named knowledge discovery in databases (KDD). These aspects also include inquiring about what has not been researched, levels of effort placed in different research streams, relationships between main areas and supporting areas of research and, finally, new research horizons. All in all, I would like to argue that both

literature reviews and research profiling studies are also research processes on their own. This in terms of the development of applied linguistics research has got little attention compared to, for example, needs analysis studies (see Long, 2005). Our field still needs a more consolidated rationale for literature reviews and research profiling studies. It also seems paramount to consider methodological issues to come to grips with what could be named as literature review research and/or academic profiling research.

Methodology: Text-mining databases

A bibliographic database could simply be understood as an electronic filing system that contains literature-related data easily retrievable. Databases are accessed via search facilities. For the purposes of research profiling studies, the researcher can adopt a narrow or a broader approach. This also depends on the capacity and characteristics of the database. For example, Castañeda-Peña et al (in revision) examined abstract records retrieved from 16 databases and two web-portals amounting, after a cleaning up process, approximately 2000 registers (see also Menéndez et al, 2011). This is a broad approach to research profiling as this encompasses a high number of information sources and registers.

Graphic 1. Resulting dataset used for the research profiling study

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However, this could be done in a more delimited way. Some studies that profile fields deal for example with one single database. Such an approach, I would like to argue, is narrower yet a valuable one. The types of questions asked by the researcher also shape to certain extent the nature of any research profiling study.

The present study, used as primary source of data information retrieved from Dialnet (http://dialnet.unirioja.es/). This is a bibliographic web-based portal with free access. Dialnet is committed to make more visible Hispanic scientific literature. Finding out about KDD derived from Spanish speaking countries is a great motivation as this could help systematizing what is known in the field in the region. The data base was first explored by Van Dijk (2011) who provided the ALED list (Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso – Latin-American Discourse Studies Association) with a dataset made out
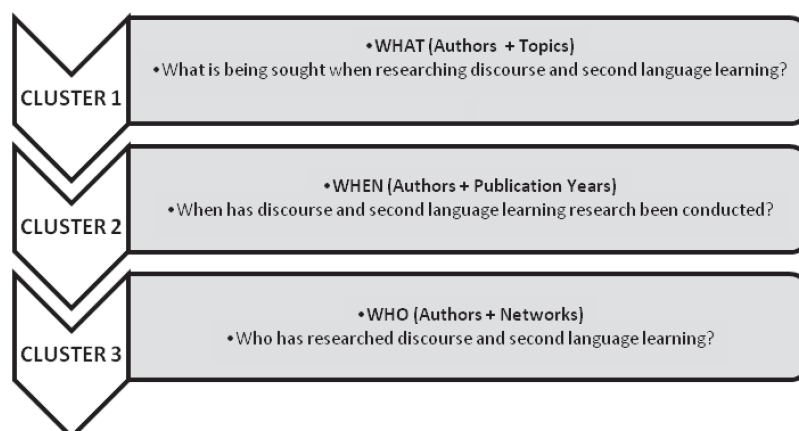

Figure 1. Correlational clusters used to research profiling discourse and second language learning

of approximately 2000 references related to discourse analysis, this means publications tagged with such key word. There are, of course, in Dialnet references related to Conversation Analysis and other sub-disciplines but this initial dataset only compiles those references tagged as indicated above. Dialnet also has incomplete references and does not include all published works by registered authors. This is indeed a drawback to the present study but this is also indicative that other strategies should be implemented to boost publications in the field coming from the Hispanic world.

In order to explore any database and to retrieve information, researchers use research phrases which are syntactically constructed using Boolean operators. The original dataset was approached using a combination of the following keywords: "L2, second language, inglés, English, discourse, discurso". The results implied a cleaning up phase as the 2000 original references qualified as being tagged by the word 'discourse'. References dealing with other subject areas (e.g. media studies) different from general education were eliminated. References related to education in combination with specific school subjects (e.g. physical education, math, Spanish as mother tongue, etc) were also eliminated. The resulting sub-data set amounted 94 references which constituted the actual corpus analyzed in this research profile. Graphic 1 illustrates the types of documents included in the dataset analyzed.

In this resulting dataset, 77% of the registers (72) were journal articles. 9% of the registers were book chapters and 5% were books. Each percentage represented by 8 and 5 registers respectively. The remaining 9% is embodied by 4 registers taken from conference proceedings, 3 generic references; 1 edited book and 1 thesis report. The resulting dataset was imported into Vantage Point® which is text mining specialized software. Following Bragge and Stordgårds (2007) a path of correlational clusters to answer the set of questions was designed. Figure 1 illustrates this methodological procedure. The clusters correspond to the researcher's decision which was primarily based on the bibliographic fields taken in by Vantage Point®. For the case of this study they included author, secondary authors, year of publication, abstract and title. This limits the research profile in terms of the scope. This happens because not all data bases make all bibliographic fields available to researchers or they are incomplete. This is Dialnet's case.
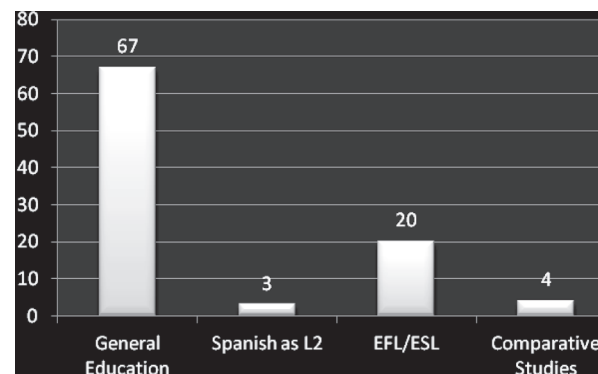
With these clusters in mind (e.g. authors + topics; authors + publication years and authors + networks) the dataset was 'drilled' down using Vantage Point® extracting quantitative information. The results will be introduced in the next section. For practical reasons it was decided to present the research profiling study on discourse and second language learning answering directly the set of questions posed above.

Findings: Drilling down the correlational clusters

What is being sought when researching discourse and second language learning?

As Graphic 2 illustrates, discourse studies related to general education take in a noteworthy percentage of the dataset. Out of 94 registers, 67 fall into this category representing 71%. Just 27 registers show a significant relationship between discourse analysis and second language learning representing the remaining 28%. These last registers appear to be divided into three main areas of interest. Firstly, 3% of the registers include studies related to Spanish as a second language (3 registers in total). Secondly, 4% of the registers are concerned with comparative studies totaling 4 registers. Finally, 21% of the registers draw on studies related to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or ESL (English as a Second Language) adding together 20 registers.

Graphic 2. Distribution of discourse studies areas of interest

General Education

This research interest seems to be characterized by four main areas of research. Children education appears to receive less attention compared to studies related to discourses around education professorship, curriculum and policy making. This research interest looks like the one getting more scholarship concern. Genre studies appear to be fluctuating between traditional approaches to academic discourses and emergent discourses around digital and information competences. Finally, there is a strong interest in classroom discourses and interaction. The registers listed on each research area below do not necessarily fall into a specific area. They were organized keeping in mind their more predominant content feature.

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Children education:

Scholar work on this research area address mainly children's discourses around short stories and fantasy tales (Albentosa Hernández & Moya Guijarro, 2001), special needs education (Acosta, Moreno & Axpe, 2011) and pre-primary education (Pargas & Hernández, 2005).

Discourses around education professorship, curriculum and policy making:

This research interest looks into general skills and competence development (Bolívar Botía, 2008; Domínguez Medina, Aciego de Mendoza Lugo, & Martín Cabrera, 2003; Fernández Rodríguez, 2009) and gendered and identity teachers' and students' discourses (López Valero, Madrid Izquierdo & Encabo Fernández, 2000; Essomba i Gelabert, 2008; Koller, 2008; Pérez Rubio, 2007). The sub-topic most treated in this research area is related to general discourses around curriculum and educational reform (Abratte, 2010; Alvarez Méndez, 1996; Bello de Arellano, 2004; Bernad García, & Molpeceres Pastor, 2006; Calsamiglia Blancafort & Tusón Valls, 2008; Carratalá, 2010; Coll, Onrubia, & Mauri Majós, 2008; Domínguez Chávez & Carrillo Aguilar, 2007; Figari, & Dellatorre, 2004; Giedelmann Reyes & Bohórquez Farfán, 2010; Graizer, & Navas Saurin, 2011; Graterol, & Delgado de Colmenares, 2008; Gutiérrez Vargas, 2002; Guzmán Lucero, Navarro Rodríguez & Jesús Guerrero, 2008; Ibarra Saiz & Rodríguez Gómez, 2010; Jódar, & Gómez, 2007; Larrauri Torreolla, 2005; McIntyre, Kyle & Rightmyer, 2005; Mejía Delgadillo, Orduz Valderrama & Peralta Guachetá, 2006; Meneses Oquendo, Muñoz Rodríguez & Londoño Muñoz, 2010; Nieto Martín, 2000; Pini, 2010; Sanchéz de Mantrana, 2004; Terrén & Carrasco Carpio, 2007; Torres, 2009; Van Dijk, 2002; Walter, Gómez Consuegra, Herazo Valdez & Pérez Martínez, 2008). Last but not least, this research area addresses textbooks as they make discourses available for learners (González, 2007; León-Donoso & Alvarado-Barría, 2011; Morales & Lischinsky, 2008; see also Soler Castillo, 2008).

Genre perspectives:

This research interest involves studies regarding emergent academic genres, moving from the paper format to the Internet age (García de Andrés, 2008; Gutiérrez Martín, Palacios Picos, & Torrego Egido, 2010; Marcelo García & Perera Rodríguez, 2007; San Martín Alonso, 2005; San Martín Alonso, Peirats Chacón & Sales Arasa, 2008; Tirado Morueta, Hernando Gómez & Aguaded Gómez, 2011). Studies around academic discourses are also part of this research interest (García de Sola, 2005; Martínez-Otero Pérez, 2004).

Classroom discourses and interaction:

This last general research interest encompass studies related to metaphor using (Bonilla, 1991), teachers' action zones (Tudor, 2002) and discourse elements in terms of how they affect learning as interaction (Camacaro de Suárez, 2010; Cros Alavedra, 2002; Cubero Pérez, R., Cubero Pérez, M., Santamaría Santigosa, Mata Benítez, Ignacio Carmona & Prados Gallardo, 2008; Escudero & Caballero Sahelices, 2005; Gértrudix Barrio, M., & Gértrudix Barrio, F., 2010; López Ferrero & Sancho, 1996; Rivera Román & Cárdenas, 2006).

It is within this framework of discourse studies and general education where scholarship work around language learning and discourse studies could be positioned. Tendencies and research areas are described below for the case of registers reported in Dialnet.

Spanish as L2

This growing area of research in applied linguistics is marked in the dataset by three main works. They are related to understanding the language of instruction also as the target language to be
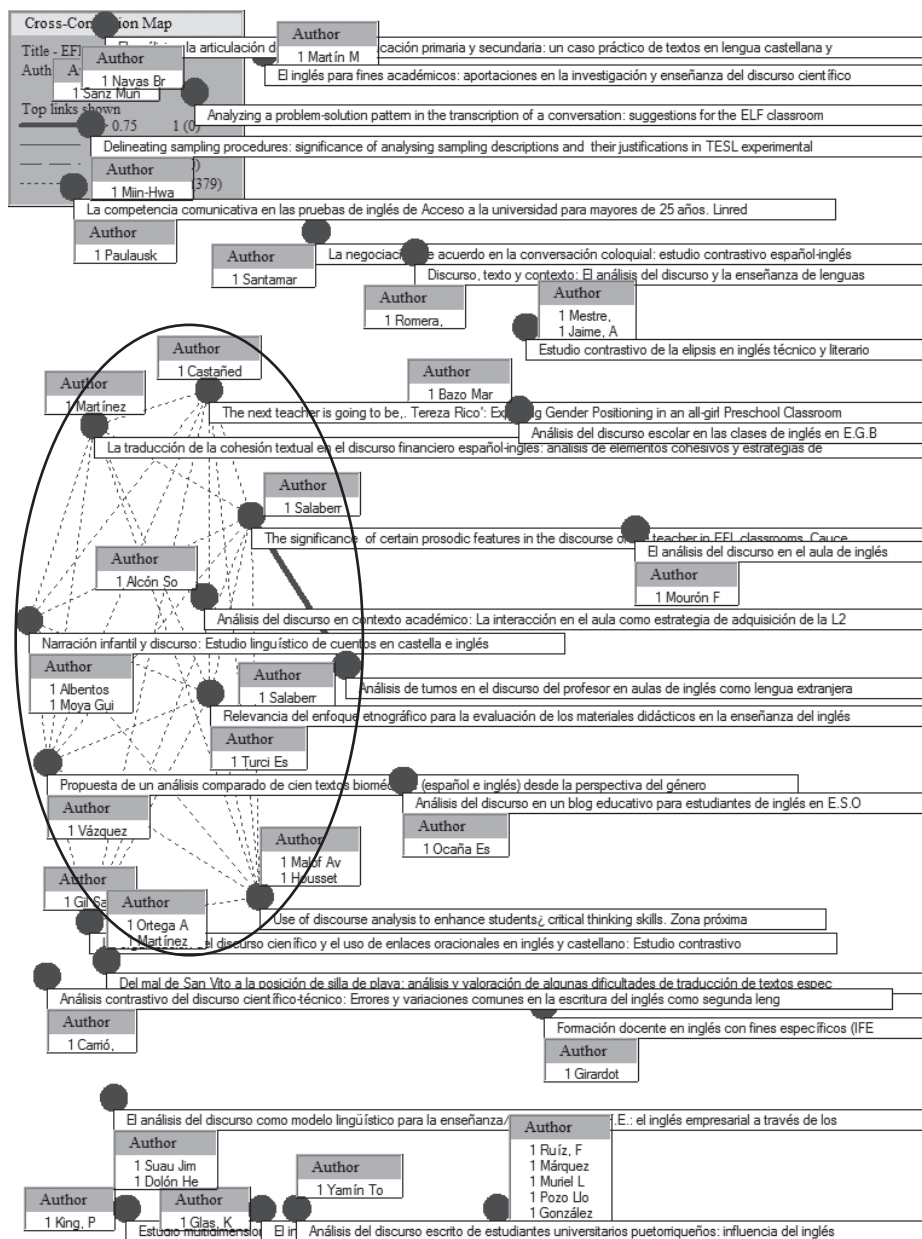
Figure 2. Correlation of EFL/ESL topics

taught and learned which affects pedagogical designs (López Pérez, 2007). Within a similar line of thought, Calderón Espadas (2011) traces out how a teacher of Spanish as a Second Language negotiates and constructs meaning in what could be considered classroom conversations.

Alternatively, Iñigo Mora (2007) examines learners' language use.

ESL/EFL

Figure 2 illustrates a correlational map where ESL/EFL authors and topics were tallied. It is interesting to see the low level of correspondence.

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The nodes are disseminated throughout the whole map showing not significant links. There is however, a number of scholarship works with some degrees of correlation which have been circled out on the left-hand side in the map. Salaberri's work (2001 and 2002) appears to be highly linked with a significant correlational value greater than 0.75. This is sound as he is authoring two studies related to L2 classroom discourse analysis. The other authors' work that has been circled out shows a less significant correlational value that approaches ≤ 0.25. It is however interesting to see how topics correlate. Conversely, authors' networking seems to be out of the whole picture (see section on 'Who researches discourse and language learning?' below).

The most correlated topics in the EFL/ESL area of research from a discursive perspective appear to include articles exploring the development of skills, socio-cultural and genre-based studies, material design, testing, teacher education and, finally, classroom and language education discourses.

Skills development, socio-cultural and genre-based studies:

It is necessary to understand that there are discursive approaches attempting to develop social skills, linguistic skills and learning skills in the context of L2 learning and teaching. This means that researchers are concerned either with the development of individuals that are community aware via the L2 regardless of levels of proficiency. There are other researchers who concentrate on linguistic attainment and proficiency regardless of a more community-based pedagogy. A few researchers combine discursive strategies as a way to reflect upon learning processes.

Malof Avendaño & Housset Fonseca (2009), research in the L2 context appraisal and

judgment. It seems that these authors do not focus on language accuracy learning. Findings are addressed towards citizenship education in the sense of creating social awareness regarding media texts following a critical thinking trend in education. From a socio-cultural perspective, that understands language learning as something occurring in the life world where communication strategies, discourses and myriad identities are also at stake (Castañeda-Peña, 2010; Norton, 2000), García-Cano, González, Ruíz, Márquez Lepe, Muriel López, Dietz & Pozo LLorente (2010) present how migrant families establish social networks, bilingual practices, own intercultural theories and cosmopolitan viewpoints as strategies to fit within new socio-cultural realities. Using a narrative and biographical standpoint, it was also found that research participants use to express themselves making sense not necessarily using high degrees of 'correctness'. Language registers and discursive strategies are valued as part of learning processes conducive to the development of culture awareness. I would like to argue that my own work follows these ideas. Based on the social turn (Block, 2003) in second language learning, Castañeda-Peña (2010) uses Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) to ascertain the moments in which language learners draw on discourses positioning others differently. This, of course, has consequences in the construction of language-learners' identities (Castañeda-Peña, 2008).

Scholars more concerned with linguistic development incorporate information and communication technologies in their research designs. Ocaña Escolar (2009) uses blogging, for example. This tool is mainly used to develop language students' L2 writing skills. It is argued that information about skills development can be traced out in the blogs which is useful to make students aware of weaknesses to overcome. In a similar line of thought, Carrió (2004) appears to

research on writing as a skill to be developed in specific academic genres from the perspective of contrastive analysis and error analysis. Others rely on the speech act theory (Suau Jiménez & Dolón Herrero, 1992) within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) frameworks.

Another genre-based study associated to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is presented by Martín Martín (2010). This researcher follows a historical path trying to (re)construct how ESP has transited from very descriptive discursive perspectives to rhetorical analysis, genre-based approaches and contrastive rhetoric. In the same trend, Miin-Hwa Lim (2011) examines, from a genre perspective, academic production of research studies around ESP analyzing how sampling is made and reported. It is proposed that this is useful to teach language students to undertake writing practices when reporting findings on a research paper. Yamín Todd (1995) presents a study in terms of comprehending the impact of the English language on how students write when there are languages in contact like Spanish and English.

There is also a concern related to the development of learning skills. Navas Brenes (2005) argues that oral skills can be fostered studying, via conversation analysis, authentic conversations. By using conversation a analysis elements, language students could be aware of how to construct talk-in-interaction when facing dialogues, conversations, mini-talks, etc., either in the L2 classroom or in a social encounter. Ortega Arjonilla and Martínez López (2005), examine, in that trend, the use of rhetorical figures in medical discourses from a comparative perspective (see also Comparative studies below).

Material design

Turci Esteller (1999) identifies in textbooks via ethnographic elements racist discourses made available to students within learning materials (see also Soler Castillo, 2008). This appears to be important in terms of general and language education as learners come into the language classroom with their own ways of seeing the world. In that sense, discourses can be endorsed, subverted, resisted or even ignored. It seems fundamental then to move from inquiring about discursive representations in language teaching material to researching educational practices when learning materials are actually consumed by both language teachers and language students. From a different perspective, King (2007) examines skills development (speaking) through textbooks' audio material (listening). Such an analysis comprises recorded language teaching material to examine levels of discursive authenticity. This assesses the type of language represented in the teaching/learning textbook according to pre-established English language registers and varieties. Using a comparative perspective Sanz Muñoz (2004) examines textbooks produced in Spanish and English.

Testing

Paulauskaitè (2004) demonstrates a critical view on language-placement examinations. The way how items are constructed draws on discourses which do not necessarily endorse more localized education discourses. The same holds for how rubrics are written. From the perspective of the communicative competence, it is judged if a placement test for university entry really measures up such competence in an informed contextualized angle. This is important as it shows how research about evaluation within a critical framework tends to be neglected and is much needed. It is also interesting to see, within the limitations of this research profiling study, that there is only one research study dealing with this sub-topic. The situation is alike to work on teacher education.

Teacher education

Girardot (2006) argues that there is a sort of consolidated knowledge regarding teacher

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education with respect to general language teaching. However, there is little research concerning ESP courses for language teachers. According to the author this area needs more growth because ESP courses require their own discursive and pedagogical perspective; language teachers need to be professionally developed in this particular area.

Classroom and language education discourses:

Classroom discourse analysis in general English lessons and contexts is proposed (Bazo Martínez, 1993; Mourón Figueroa, 1995) along with studies that question L2 acquisition from an interactional perspective (Alcón Soler, 1993). More political standpoints in terms of global and local perspectives regarding language educational policies are also assumed (Glas, 2008). Interestingly, this author sees how hegemonic discourses are represented in the media showing at the same time concern for low proficiency levels in both teachers and students; see also Romera (2001) for a related claim.
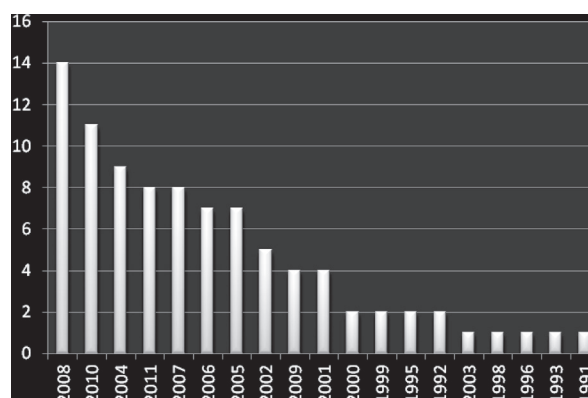
Comparative Studies

Gil Salom (2000) analyses the scientific text as a genre and how connectors are used in both Spanish and English. González, Gozalo Sáinz, Cuadrado Esclápez & Pellón Valdeón (1999) work on a similar research sub-topic along with Santamaría García's proposal (2006) of comparing conversations. Jaime & Mestre (2007) think of reading skills development studying textual features as a mechanism to make pedagogical innovations integrating also a genre-based approach.

Other topics which show no major correlation include translation issues (Ortega Arjonilla & Martínez López, 2005). This seems also a sub-topic that deserves more attention from the perspective of discourse studies as there is also a contemporary tendency to explain processes of language learning based on this approach.

All in all, a first conclusion in terms of what is sought when researching discourse and language learning includes major research areas that comprise, as seen in Dialnet, development of skills (e.g. social, linguistic and learning), socio-cultural and genre-based studies, material design, testing, teacher education and, finally, classroom and language education discourses. Spanish as L2 and translation issues also crop up in the results where some related work takes on a comparative perspective. Some of these research areas seem to be underexplored compared to others. This indicates to some extent that the combination of discourse studies with questions around second language learning constitutes a fruitful epistemological site to ignite academic research. The next section traces out the development of this growing area of applied linguistics according to publication years.

When has discourse and second language learning research been conducted?

Graphic 3 correlates number of registers in the area with their corresponding publication years. In Dialnet, the first register correlating discourse studies and education was printed at the beginning of the 90's. It would be interesting to argue that Bonilla (1991) pioneers the field but a caution note should be issued here as this finding depends highly on the register-cleaning up process followed.
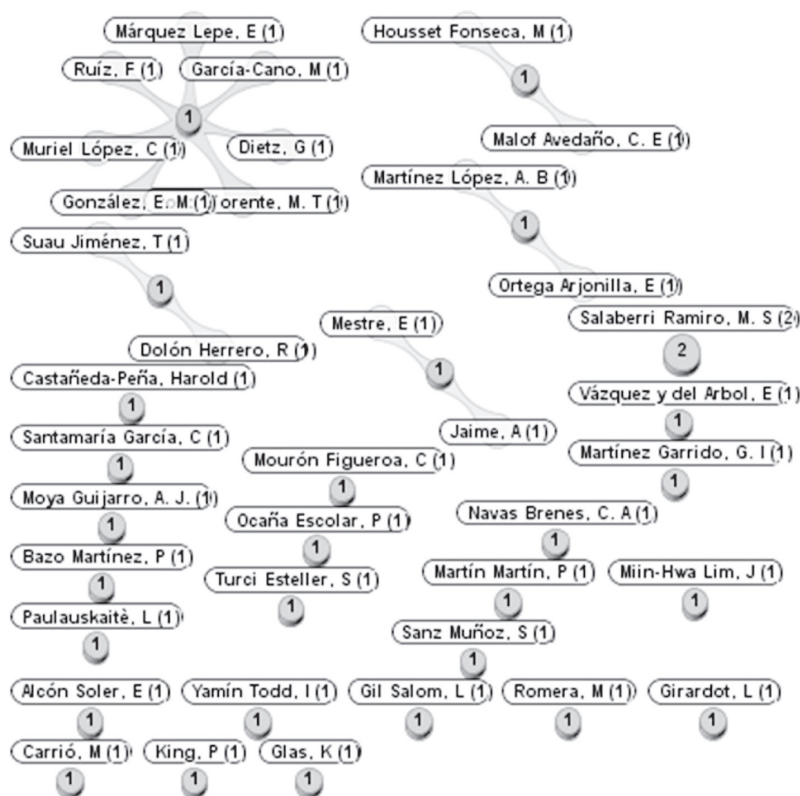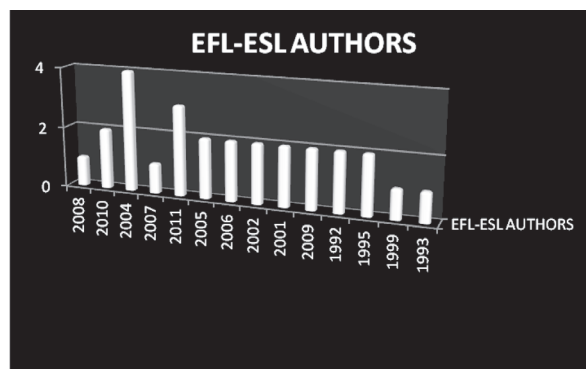
Graphic 3. Publication years

Figure 3. Aduna map of ESL/EFL authors

1993, 1996, 1998 and 2003 register only one publication. Two publications are recorded in 1992, 1995, 1999 and 2000. The turn of the XX Century suggests a strong movement in the field. For example, 8 records are documented for 2007 and 2011 each. 2004 registers 9 publications. The boost in the field appears to be 2008 with 14 publications. 2010 is also significant with 11 publications. This behavior appears to be similar in the field of discourse studies and second language learning as shown in Graphic 4.

Graphic 4 displays that 2004 and 2011 are the more prolific years for publications in the field. Other years are less abundant in publications yet this does not mean the field has not been active. The first registers were recorded in the early 90's (Bazo Martínez, 1992 & . Suau Jiménez & Dolón

Graphic 4. Publication years
for EFL-ESL authors

Herrero, 1992) followed by one single publication the year after (Alcón Soler, 1993). Thus founding topics are related to classroom discourse analysis and classroom interaction analysis. Then there

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is a gap in academic research that may well go unregistered in Dialnet's sub-data set until Turci Esteller's work (1999) about racist discourses in language textbooks appeared. As it occurred in general education (see above) discourse studies related to second language learning show growth after 2000.

Who has researched discourse and second language learning?

Figure 3 is an aduna map. Aduna maps are cluster maps that correlate a single analytical category. They simply visualize how a category is interrelated. In this case, this strategy was chosen to illustrate possible networks between authors. As explained in Figure 2 there is a number of cross-correlations between the topics discourse analysts or applied linguists deal with in relation to second language learning. Unfortunately, this

is not the situation for authors in the field. The dataset retrieved from Dialnet shows evidently research areas with sub-topics according to the analysis made so far. However, as shown in the aduna map (Figure 3), there appears not to be networking practices between experts in the field in spite of the fact that there is evidence of work starting more than two decades ago. This may well indicate that research practices need to be re-visited in the region or a research agenda needs to be set up at a regional level as a plausible strategy to boost the field. This undeniably is an assumption based on the data gathered from Dialnet. Thinking of a broader approach to research profiling studies, it is necessary to open the spectrum including in future studies other bibliographic databases to get a better profile picture. Findings are summed up in Table 2.

Table 2. Main profile findings

PROFILING ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON DISCOURSE STUDIES AND SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING	What is being sought when researching discourse and second language learning?	L2 skills development
		L2 socio-cultural topics
		L2 genre-based topics
		L2 material design
		L2 testing
		L2 teacher education
		Classroom and language education discourses
	When has discourse and second language learning research been conducted?	2011 and 2004 more prolific years
	Who has researched discourse and second language learning?	No networking

The goal of the profile presented was precisely to describe a research field that links discourse studies and second language learning in a database that makes visible research conducted in the Hispanic world. This has a number of

flaws though. Dialnet does not offer complete bibliographic references and not all work done in the region is registered there. Consequently, results are particular to the dataset obtained after the cleaning up process.

Final comments: Research published in this special CALJ issue

The first goal of this article was charting out research studies around the field of discourse studies in relation to second language learning adopting a regional perspective. I hope this narrow research profiling study has achieved such goal. The balance appears interesting in the sense that it leaves discourse analysts who do applied linguistics to the teaching of English as a second/foreign language with a number of issues. Firstly, it is necessary to wonder where our research as an ELT community is being published locally and globally. There are policies regulating knowledge production derived from research studies that could have affected negatively the academic work registered and filed in Dialnet. This is something that professional associations in Latin America and Spain bringing together experts on discourse analysis (e.g. ALED and regional chapters) and on applied linguistics to language pedagogy (e.g. TESOL regional branches) need to discuss. This could probably help in reaching the dream of (re) constructing an Epistemology from the South (de Sousa Santos, 2009).

The second goal of the present study revolves around positioning within the big yet restricted profile described above the research studies that collaborators have written for this special issue of the Colombian Applied Linguistic Journal. Before doing that, it is noteworthy to mention that most collaborators are alumni from the MA in Applied Linguistics to TEFL at Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas. This is significant as their interest in discourse reinforces the work of a newly born research line which is intertwined with a vibrant research environment that also encompasses research in teacher education, literacy practices and language teaching and learning through ICTs. These research directions are fruitful and make

part of the story of this graduate programme that celebrates 20 years of teacher education.

Exploring general English language classrooms, Lucero (this issue) situates his work in the ethnomethodological tradition seeking to understand classroom interactional patterns. Throughout a very in depth application of conversation analysis (CA) procedures, this author identifies regularities that reveal how talk-in-interaction between language students and their teacher is constructed. Finding out about classroom interactional behavior should inform the ELT community about second language learning processes and second language use as it was foreseen by Alcón Soler (1999).

Castañeda (this issue), Rondón (this issue) and Rojas (this issue) think of the language learning process from a gendered perspective. This is very innovative as this topic seems to be under explored (but see Castañeda-Peña, 2010). Considering one angle (e.g. gender) of language learners' multi faceted identities also brings in numerous ways of approaching such topic discursively. For example, Castañeda (this issue) goes for a 'synthetic approach' that puts together CA as there is a micro approach to the data and elements of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) looking at the data from a broader perspective. It is important to see how female students, in the particular context Castañeda (this issue) researched, construct solidarity in a language learning environment drawing on interactional strategies and on non-education-specific discourses. This follows the path of social group-strategy construction identified earlier by García-Cano, González, Ruíz, Márquez Lepe, Muriel López, Dietz & Pozo LLorente (2010) via autobiographical lenses. In the same line of thought but using FPDA, Rondón (this issue) unveils through short narrative episodes how LGBT language students contest and put forward discourses in which femininities, masculinities,

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sexual identities and sexual orientations are constructed in diverse ways within a relational perspective. This certainly questions how hetero-normative discourses influence language teachers' pedagogical designs and their ideas of what language teaching/learning should be about. Using the same methodological approach (e.g. FPDA), Rojas (this issue) debates how language learners experience power while performing classroom activities. This shows how identities are discursively shaped and change from moment to moment in talk-in-interaction. In that sense, it is argued that gendered identities are multiple and they are present in the language classroom affecting second language learning processes either positively or negatively as language learners position each other differently. This positioning is discursively driven and it is not fixed.

This idea of positioning in discourse is taken up by Montenegro (this issue). This analytical category (e.g. positioning) that is constructed discursively and in interaction is explored *in situ* in the context of group activities in the language classroom. It is important for language teachers to understand that their 'action zones' (Tudor, 2002) promote specific interactional behaviors which at the same time make language learners experience power relationships. Consequently, classroom participation structures are shaped, contested and resisted. This also appears to be the situation in Gómez's paper (this issue). The thought of considering language learners as multiple and within the life world is important to understand studies like this. Via the lenses of Critical Classroom Discourse Analysis (CCDA) it is possible to pinpoint instances where language learners' identities profile classroom interaction (re)constructing a sense of community. In the same trend of thought, citizenship and social awareness also complement the body of research presented in this special issue. Bello (this issue) identifies co-existing discourses in the language

classroom that were made available to students to foster their critical thinking and their sense of social actors who can have a positive impact in their communities very much in the line of the work presented by Malof Avedaño & Housset Fonseca (2009). Within such framework, one could argue that language learners do not learn a code in the language classroom simply with a purpose of correctness, rather it should be understood that language learners view reality critically and exert agency in relation to their social realities differently.

Following the works by Turci Esteller (1999) and Soler Castillo (2008), Herrera (this issue) presents an interesting analysis of discourse strategies used by language teaching/learning materials. This work unveils social representations of children as textbook content. In spite of the fact that children are seen as members of social groups they are still presented as passive subjects and as non-right holders. This type of research is important because it provides valuable information. It would be also interesting to work on research that moves from representation to educational practices in order to explore what happens when such social representations are actually 'consumed' by both language teachers and language students. This could also be done across ages and levels.

Soler Castillo (this issue) and Méndez (this issue) position their contribution in what was identified here as language education discourses. Soler Castillo (this issue) draws on self-identification and appraisal categories to understand how ethnic identities are (re)constructed by school children. It is noteworthy in this study to comprehend the grounded perspective adopted to identify discursive mechanisms. In that sense, research participants basically propose not only their own understanding of racist discourses but also their own theories and strategies to deal with those emergent discourses

in interaction. Méndez (this issue) studies in a context related to educational policy making how educators' resistance is interpreted according to discourses that subvert resistance in the nexus power-knowledge. This constitutes a special arena for studying teachers' subjectivities.

All in all, the research presented in both the present research profiling study and the articles published in this special issue hold a common concern: It is possible to get to know via discourse studies how (language) learning operates from different angles and this is a contribution for the continuous development of applied linguistics in general. The research commented on here proves this and is part of the knowledge produced regionally. There is still need for more studies that systematize this knowledge.

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