

Language Teaching Research Quarterly

2024, Vol. 39, 52–67



A Narrative Exploration of Diane Larsen-Freeman's Influence on My Professional Development: From Language Learner to Teacher Educator

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Received 16 June 2023 *Accepted* 25 October 2023

Abstract

Diane Larsen-Freeman has had a substantial effect on how language is comprehended and taught. She has contributed to the evolution of language, pedagogy, and has had a worldwide impact on language educators through her groundbreaking research, innovative understanding of teaching methodologies, and influential publications. This article will examine the profound impact Diane Larsen-Freeman's work has had on my professional growth. I discuss issues and concepts such as language teaching methodologies, grammaring, the person of the teacher, Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) in second language development, wicked problems, and transdisciplinarity. Initially, I contextualize English education in Mexico and my personal experience in English language learning. In the second phase, I examine the impact of Larsen-Freeman's work on my English teaching education in Mexico and the United Kingdom. I conclude by analyzing how her work has contributed to my current position as an applied linguistics professor in Mexico.

Keywords: *Reflection, Narrative, Teacher Educator, Grammaring, Applied Linguistics, English as a Foreign Language*

Introduction

In the 1990s, I first encountered the work of Larsen-Freeman. At the time, I was pursuing a BA in English language with a concentration in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in Mexico. The *Grammar Book, 2nd Edition, An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (1999) was provided to us as one of the materials to be used in one of my classes entitled "English teaching grammar". As I began to explore it, I was enthralled to learn that I could use it not only to better comprehend English grammar, but also to teach it. It was stated in the prologue that "[this book] is designed to help prospective and practicing teachers of English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) enhance their understanding of English

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<https://doi.org/10.32038/ltrq.2024.39.06>

grammar, expand their skills in linguistic analysis, and develop a pedagogical approach to teaching English grammar" (p. vi). When I read this, I felt that it described me. I needed to know the content of this book to enhance my English classes as I did not always have straightforward answers to the questions my students posed. Meanwhile, her work prompted me to reflect on my own experience as a learner of English as a foreign language in Mexico. At the time, I was focused on becoming a competent English teacher; however, the more I read and learned about the profession, the more I inquired about my experience as an English learner and my future professional goals.

This article aims to explore the profound impact of Diane Larsen-Freeman's work on my professional development. I offer a narration of past experiences as a language learner, then as a student-teacher and finally as an applied linguist and teacher educator. I can describe my journey from being an English language learner to becoming an EFL teacher and teacher educator using narratives and a retrospective perspective. I realize that my narrative project presented in this article is a story that illustrates the nature of EFL instructors who have witnessed changes in language education in Mexico and around the world since the 1990s. In addition, I hope that my personal narrative can be helpful for young scholars in understanding the importance of reflection at various phases of a teacher's career, including in-service teacher, applied linguist, and teacher educator. These narratives, framed by the work of Larsen-Freeman, may be useful in the comprehension and explanation of various concepts that have influenced my professional growth over the years. First, I contextualize English instruction in Mexico and my experience as an English learner. In the second phase, I analyze the influence of Larsen-Freeman on my English teaching training in Mexico and the United Kingdom. I conclude by analyzing the impact of Larsen-Freeman's work on my current position as an applied linguist and teacher educator.

Framing Teaching and Learning of the English Language in Mexico: Being a Language Learner

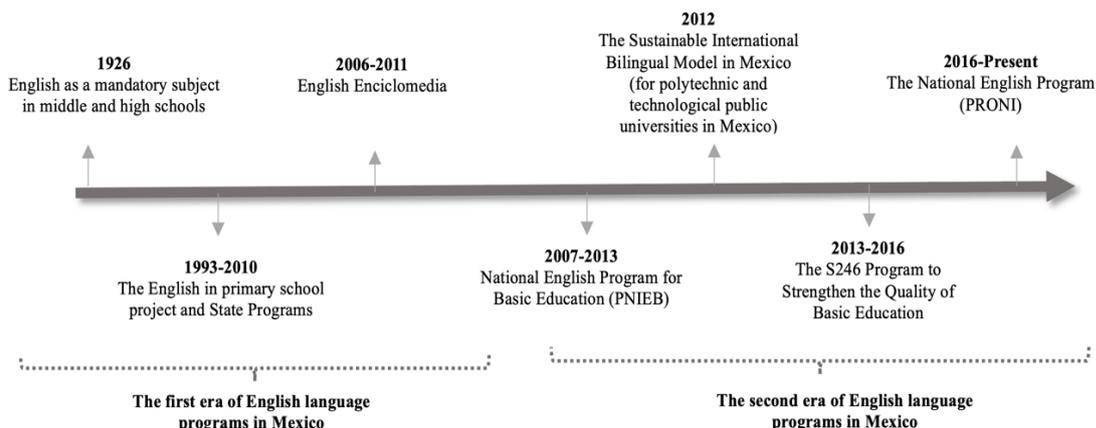
For many years, language instruction was associated with a process of information transmission, specifically the transmission of linguistic content through memorization and reproduction. According to Larsen-Freeman (2008), this practice would be forged on traditional language instruction in which the teacher is the classroom authority and presents language content, including grammatical structures and vocabulary items. According to this conception of education, students would be passive recipients of information (Malderez & Bodczsy, 2002). Richards and Rodgers (2014) suggest that language education reemerges as an important subject of debate and educational innovation at the turn of the 20th century. Even though language teaching has a long history, modern approaches were developed during this time period, seeking principles and procedures to devise methods and instructional materials that promote efficient and effective classroom experience. The need for acquiring English as a second or foreign language has witnessed an upsurge due to the effects of globalization, global integration, social networking, and the significance of English proficiency for employment opportunities. These factors have contributed to the rising necessity for individuals to learn English language skills in response to the various events and transformations experienced by countries (Geddes, 2016).

Since 1926, English has been included in Mexico's secondary schools and higher education institutions (Calderón, 2015). During this time period, teaching English in Mexico centered on a grammar-translation methodology (Davies, 2009). In the programmes implemented in 2005-2006, the *Secretaría de Educación Pública* (SEP, aka, the Ministry of Education) acknowledged the prevalent failure of the Mexican public ELT in lower secondary schools. Davies (2009) refers to these results highlighting that the most prevalent practices of teachers were reading aloud, translating, creating vocabulary lists, and reciting in chorus. Therefore, the majority of students who completed secondary school could not communicate in English.

English programs in Mexico can be categorized into two distinct periods: the initial era was characterized by the involvement of a limited number of states, whereas the subsequent era was marked by a nationwide endeavor to enhance English language accessibility for the majority of students. (Castillo-Nava & Mora-Pablo, 2022). During the first era, each state decided how to administer each program (SEP, 2016). Beginning in 2007, English initiatives in Mexico entered a new era (see Figure 1). The Mexican government implemented, with the main objective to strengthen English teaching and learning in public primary schools, the National English Program for Basic Education (PNIEB, in Spanish), the S246 Program to Strengthen the Quality of Basic Education, and the National English Program (PRONI, in Spanish) (SEP, 2016). The innovation of these programs was the incorporation of descriptors of the expected student levels. In this scenario, the programs projected that students would attain level B1 of English by the end of secondary school (SEP, 2015). According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), this particular level is characterized as an intermediate stage when learners exhibit autonomy in their language usage. Specifically, they possess the ability to articulate their thoughts and engage in conversations with more fluency, without relying on the guidance or support of an instructor (the Council of Europe, 2020). In addition, there was an attempt to include English language teaching and learning at the polytechnic and technological public universities with the Sustainable International Bilingual Model in Mexico (BIS Model) in 2012 and still continues to be implemented. According to this model, it is mandatory for first-year students to enroll in a first-semester course exclusively conducted in the English language, with the aim of acquiring proficiency in the language. This instructional approach is expected to enhance students' understanding of English-language material by the second academic term. Currently, the National English Program (PRONI) for basic education continues to be implemented.

Figure 1

Development of English Programs in Mexico



Note: Schematic development of national English programs in Mexico. Adapted from "English Learning and Teaching at a Polytechnic University in Mexico: Towards Bilingual Education?" by Castillo-Nava & Mora-Pablo, 2020, p. 187. Copyright 2022 by PROFILE, Issues in Teachers' Professional Development.

Each program had specific requirements for the teacher's educational profile, the curriculum, and the materials used. During the first years of implementing English into the curriculum (the first era), for example, the profile of the instructors was not defined. The subject could be taught by those who spoke the language, but native English speakers were preferred (Sayer et al., 2013). The academic requirements for teachers were not specified; candidates with a degree in any discipline were eligible to teach the subject if they spoke the language. In certain optimistic scenarios, Normal school graduates would teach English even if it was not their area of expertise (Ramírez-Romero & Sayer, 2016; Ramírez-Romero & Vargas-Gil, 2019).

Reflective Moments

In the context of teaching and learning English in Mexico, my first years as a language learner were founded on the traditional methodology, which is the grammar-translation method in secondary education (part of the first era represented in Figure 1) and part of my high school years. Nonetheless, I was privileged enough to have access to private classes at another institution in addition to the required English classes. This represented a significant improvement in my language proficiency. This allowed me to compare teaching methods and to see that some instructors went beyond the mere instruction of grammar and made a concerted effort to introduce new materials and communicative activities into the classroom. However, reality in secondary and high school classrooms was different. The classes were centered on the translation of texts, memorization of lengthy word lists, with no interaction or encouragement of communicative skills. Every new school year we started again with the verb "to be". In retrospect, I can say that the grammar-translation method had a significant impact on my initial beliefs as a language learner, as I thought it was the only feasible way to learn and teach the language at the time. However, I also used the other courses I took at the private institution as a point of reference. There, I observed pedagogical approaches that appeared more dynamic to me.

Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2013), who analyze various teaching methods and their implementation in the classroom, have produced one of the most influential works in the field of teaching English and teaching methodology. In this work, various language education methodologies are described, along with their key characteristics and classroom applications. Approaches, methodologies, and interaction styles employed in the instruction of foreign languages affect their effective acquisition. For instance, teaching programs that emphasize developing the pragmatic aspect of the language (e.g. communicative approach, content-based learning) are more effective at leading students to automatic language processing than programs that emphasize the study of the form or meaning of language: grammar and vocabulary (Brown, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 1987). Clearly, this was not the case when I was in secondary or high school. Students were relegated to a passive role in the classroom due to the prevalence of a traditional pedagogy that involved minimal communication and a focus on receiving information. Also, it was important to look at the role of the teacher. Numerous methods of language instruction emphasize the teacher's function as an effective communicator. For instance, Larsen-Freeman notes that one of the reasons The Natural Method (Richards & Rogers, 2014) was not more successful because the teacher who used it had to meet two requirements: on the one hand, possessing a high level of language proficiency and, on the other hand, possessing extensive training in pedagogy (Larsen-Freeman, 1987). Clearly, this presented a difficulty in Mexico. As previously explained, during the first phase of ELT in Mexico, the teacher's profile was undefined. Those who spoke the language could teach the subject, but native English speakers were preferred (Sayer et al., 2013). Anyone who could speak the language could become an English instructor; pedagogical expertise was not required.

After careful observation and comparison of my professors in different educational settings (the public school and the private institution), I made the decision to seek a degree in English teaching. At that moment, I thought I wanted to become an English instructor, but not like my middle school or high school teachers, but rather like my professors at the private institution. They sparked my interest in teaching English, and I desired to follow their footsteps. It was the time when I began my BA in TESOL at a public university in Mexico.

Becoming an English Teacher: Questioning Methodologies and Programs

Beginning in the 1980s, a shift occurred in which a variety of methods for teaching second languages were considered. The pedagogical approach to second language instruction underwent a transformation, moving away from the traditional method of explicitly presenting grammatical rules and engaging in repetitive behavioral exercises.

In their place, classes based on communicative activities emerged, with an emphasis on the expression of ideas rather than the analysis of formal aspects of the language (Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). In relation to internationally discussed English teaching methodologies, these new methods of instruction emerged in Mexico a little later and became apparent at the end of the first era and beginning of the second, as depicted in Figure 1. The national English initiatives (English Enciclomedia and PNIEB) that began to be implemented at that time envisioned a significantly more student-centered approach to education with the aim of improving communication skills. This was a breakthrough in the teaching of English in Mexico, as it constituted a departure from the standard grammar-translation approach. The

stronger realization of this communicative approach denied all formal grammar instruction and dispensed with the correction of errors in class (Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Spada, 2007). This could be viewed as a radical response to conventional grammar-translation and audiolingual instruction (Zanón, 2007). However, these extreme methods have also been criticized due to their outright disregard for the conventional examination of the structural aspects of the first language (Bell, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2003). This opened a debate on the use of L1 in the L2 classroom.

Although the acquisition of L1 and L2 are sociocognitive processes (Kramsch, 2002; Larsen-Freeman, 2002), the social conditions under which L2 speakers learn are considerably different from those under which infants acquire their L1. Similarly, additional components of complexity are required in L2 cognitive linguistics (Robinson & Ellis, 2007), L2 psycholinguistics (Godfroid & Hopp, 2022; Kroll & De Groot, 2005), and L2 sociolinguistics (Lantolf, 2006), in addition to those corresponding to L1. For several decades, models of second language acquisition (SLA) have placed significant emphasis on input and interaction (Dixon, et al., 2012; Gass, 1997; Gass & Mackey, 2020; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). As it is the case with L1, learners of L2 go beyond shaping the language by constructing forms through analogies and generating novel pattern combinations (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). The acquisition of L2 is hindered by the influence of L1's grammatical components, as the frequent occurrence of certain forms leads to their shortening, thereby restricting the range of perceptual possibilities (Ellis, 2006). This is notably true in the case of bonded morphemes, for instance. For learners to acquire these forms, their attention must be directed to them through explicit instructions (Ellis, 2001, 2005; Larson-Freeman, 2003). In the absence of such explicit instructions, the use of the language by a number of adults would typically result in a simplification, which would be most evident in the elimination of redundancy and irregularity, as well as an increase in transparency (Atkinson, et al., 2018; McWhorter, 2003; Trudgill, 2001).

Recognizing that neither the rigid approach of just relying on grammatical analysis nor the alternative approach centered solely on open conversation can comprehensively teach language proficiency, the teacher is confronted with the task of striking a harmonious equilibrium between these two contrasting pedagogical tendencies. Larsen-Freeman (2003) proposed as a solution something she termed *grammaring*. For her, *grammaring* means “the ability to use grammar structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately” (p. 143). In her work of 2001, Larsen Freeman states that:

We are not interested in filling our students' heads with grammatical paradigms and syntactic rules. If they knew all the rules that had ever been written about English but were not able to apply them, we would not be doing our jobs as teachers. Instead, what we hope to do is to have students be able to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. In other words, grammar teaching is not so much knowledge transmission as it is skill development (Larsen Freeman, 2001, p. 255).

She also argued that grammar can be productively viewed as a fifth skill in addition to a field of study (p. 143). Reading her chapter made me question the entire grammar-translation method and the way I was seeing the teaching of grammar now in my first years as an English

teacher. Her framework in the form of a pie chart with three central elements allowed to see the complexity of grammar: structure or form, semantics or meaning, and the pragmatic conditions governing use (Larsen-Freeman, 2001, p. 252).

The field of second language pedagogy has experienced a decline in the regular development of new popular methods. This shift can be attributed to the recognition of the fundamental significance of the teaching context and the acknowledgement that a singular approach cannot universally be deemed superior in all instructional scenarios. In this sense, Kumaravadelu (2003) identifies the post-method era and stresses that teachers must choose the combination of techniques that works best in their context and with the population they teach. The communicative revolution increased skepticism and raised questions about whose judgment would determine language standards for appropriateness or acceptability (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008, p. 155). The aforementioned challenges extended beyond the conventional definitions of subject-specific languages, so broadening the conceptual framework around the objectives and self-perception of language acquisition. During the 1990s, scholars in the field of critical theory put forward the argument that comprehending language requires an examination of power dynamics within the various practices and interactions that learners engage in (e.g., Norton, 1995). Additionally, some scholars, influenced by critical theories applied to literature, raised inquiries regarding the concept of individual identity and its relationship to the process of acquiring a foreign language. Specifically, they explored how learning a foreign language could either validate one's existing identity (Brown Mitchell & Ellingson Vidal, 2001) or potentially bring about a transformation in one's identity (Davis, 1997).

I was preparing for a career as an English teacher within this context of debate. Coupled with my experience as a language learner and now situated at the end of the first era and the beginning of the second one in ELT in Mexico (see Figure 1), it prompted me to consider the new teaching methodologies that I might encounter in new contexts and at different levels of education now as an English teacher.

Reflective Moments

In Mexico, where I was pursuing my BA in TESOL, I first encountered the work of Larsen-Freeman when *The Grammar Book, 2nd Edition, An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (1999) was provided to us as part of the required readings for my "English teaching grammar" class. As I began my career as an English teacher in a foreign language context, I realized that it was necessary to clarify any confusion and explain certain principles or concepts so that students could construct coherent sentences. In other words, I had to identify exceptions, explain when a term was used in one way versus another, and not just concentrate on the communicative aspect. The significance of form and structure stems from the fact that meaning is derived from them. The ideas are consistent with Larsen-Freeman's (2003) concept of grammaring, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of meaning, usage, and form in language. When designing classroom activities, it is essential to consider all of these aspects simultaneously.

This posed a challenge for me as a student teacher because I believed that simply teaching grammar would yield the same negative results that I had observed with my middle school counterparts. After reading more about grammaring, I was able to comprehend Larsen-Freeman's argument. In the classroom, it is imperative to incorporate communicative activities

that offer students the opportunity to utilize the language for their individual objectives. Nevertheless, it is fundamental that these activities are carried out in a manner that ensures students possess an in-depth understanding of proper grammar usage, including its specific application within particular situations, as well as the reasons behind for these usages in relation to form, meaning, and socio-communicative function. Nevertheless, Larsen-Freeman highlights the significance of considering the specific attributes and contextual factors of the subject matter being taught while implementing this instructional approach. The context in which I was teaching was Mexico, but within that context, new national programs were being devised and a very strong reluctance to teach communicatively persisted. Due to the proliferation of instructors without an academic foundation in education, the acceptance of more communicative approaches took longer to gain traction.

One of the most remarkable aspects of Diane Larsen-Freeman's work is her contribution to language teaching methodologies. Her prolific studies and influential publications have had a significant impact on the fields of ELT and applied linguistics. Her widely acclaimed book "Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000a) has become a cornerstone in teacher education programs, providing language educators around the globe with practical guidance and theoretical insights.

As part of my preparation to become an English teacher, I used this book as a resource to learn about the various teaching methodologies and to gain a deeper understanding of the teaching contexts that may arise in the context of teaching English as a foreign language. During the active period of the second era of ELT in Mexico, the national programs adopted the CEFR as a standardized criterion to assess the level of proficiency that students were required to achieve upon completion of the program. The primary objective, according to the SEP (2015), was to assist students achieve a B1 level of English by the end of secondary education. However, Larsen-Freeman's work, led me to the querying of these programs and the CEFR. "The fact that the CEFR descriptors are written as "can do" statements from the user's perspective, and that the document suggests users compare what they can do with what they want to be able to do in the new language encourages users to locate their competence as they perceive it and relate it to their own needs in the language" (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008, p. 160). According to this viewpoint, all language use is partial (or plural), and the user's intention may determine the degree of partiality. However, intentions can alter over time as a result of life experience. Instead of considering learning outcomes as a fixed end result, the CEFR and its related documents propose a perspective that emphasizes the ongoing and dynamic nature of learning. This perspective recognizes that the use of language and the views of language users play a significant role in evaluating these outcomes. Rather of prioritizing mastery of the system, the focus was shifted towards the utilization of language (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008). The preceding information enabled me to recognize that there was a genuine desire to enhance the teaching and learning of English in Mexico; however, the national programs did not reflect the reality that students and teachers observed in schools. There was still a strong inertia toward traditionalist teaching, and the implementation of the programs required the resolution of administrative and operational issues before they could operate as intended.

Becoming an Applied Linguist and Teacher Educator: Complex Systems and Wicked Problems

In addition to her contributions to language teaching methodology, Larsen-Freeman has also significantly influenced the field of applied linguistics. Her work has explored the intricate relationship between language and society, shedding light on the sociocultural aspects of language use. One of her more remarkable contributions is the discussion of the Complexity Theory, now known as Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) in the second language development (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; 2002; 2018, 2020). The CDST places significant importance on the interconnections between the many elements within a system, as it recognizes that a comprehensive understanding of a complex system cannot be achieved without considering its interdependent interactions (Larsen-Freeman, 2020). It may be inferred from this argument that there is a need for a cohesive relationship between the theories that form the foundation of the subject of investigation, including ideas pertaining to language, language usage, and language development, and the empirical evidence and observations gained from these occurrences (Overton 2013).

She has emphasized a learner-centered and holistic approach to language acquisition, challenging the notion that teaching is merely the transmission of knowledge. The "complexity theory" of Larsen-Freeman posits that language acquisition is a dynamic, nonlinear process influenced by a variety of internal and external factors. Her research on an "ecological approach" (Larsen-Freeman, 2018) to language instruction has led to a shift in pedagogical practices by emphasizing the importance of context, interaction, and the dynamic character of language use. Chaos and Complexity Theories (C/CTs) offer a potential resolution to the persistent debate around the conceptualization of language as a system vs language use (García-Ponce & Mora-Pablo, 2017). As a dynamic system, language is simultaneously a system and its use. As she explains, "researchers in the field [should] adopt an ecological perspective, whereby relations among factors are what is key to elucidating the complexity" (Larsen-Freeman, 2018, p. 1). Her research on the area of second language acquisition has provided valuable insights into the complex cognitive and social processes involved in acquiring a new language. The interdisciplinary approach of Larsen-Freeman has bridged the divide between theoretical linguistics and practical language instruction, nurturing a more comprehensive understanding of language and its applications.

In addition to this work, another concept emanated from the work of Larsen-Freeman. In a 2018 article (as cited in Hiver et al., 2022), she discussed the concept of *wicked problems*. Upon reading the literature pertaining to this particular notion, I found myself captivated by the contextual framework within which it was pondered. The authors of the study provided a description of these challenges, which aligns with the definition put forward by Crowley and Head (2017). According to their definition, these problems are characterized as social issues that cannot be effectively tackled by assuming, as science typically does, that they are easily manageable or harmless, or that they can be clearly defined, isolated, and resolved. For Larsen-Freeman and her collaborators, these issues are interconnected and intertwined across multiple social world levels. This has the effect of affecting many individuals in their daily lives.

The preceding information made me reflect on my own work in the area of bilingualism and transnationalism that I was doing at the time as an applied linguist in the context of teacher professionalization in Mexico (Christiansen, et al, 2018; Kasun & Mora-Pablo, 2022; Mora-

Pablo, et al, 2015). According to Hiver et al. (2022), multilingualism and Second Language Development/Acquisition (SLD) can be categorized as wicked problems due to their intricate nature, requiring a comprehensive understanding and utilization across various levels (e.g., individuals, institutions, societies) and domains (Larsen-Freeman, 2018). Larsen-Freeman and Freeman (2008) discuss that multilingualism elicits the image of a student or user who aspires to be proficient in all languages and all domains of activity. In contrast, an individual who possesses plurilingual abilities does not compartmentalize languages and cultures within their mind, but instead develops a communicative competence that incorporates all their language knowledge and experiences, allowing for interrelation and interaction among all languages (the Council of Europe, 2001). Consequently, users and knowers of (an)other language(s) are viewed as "successful multi-competent speakers, not failed native speakers" (Cook, 1999, p. 204). This shift from multilingualism to plurilingualism may appear minor, but it carries major ramifications for how we understand and implement the processes of learning, teaching, and acquiring proficiency in additional languages (Larsen-Freeman & Freeman, 2008)

Reflective Moments

After completing my BA in TESOL and while simultaneously teaching English, I pursued my graduate studies. First, a master's degree in applied linguistics at a renowned American university based in Mexico. During these years, I also taught university-level English in both public and private institutions. My research centered on the distinction between native and non-native instructors when providing written feedback to students. After completing my MA degree, I continued my education by pursuing a PhD in applied linguistics at a British university. Meanwhile, I continued to teach English and began training teachers. This allowed me to analyze ELT in Mexico from a different angle and to understand the challenges that my students faced when teaching in national English programs. During these years of study and involvement as a teacher educator, the following passage by Larsen-Freeman (1997) struck a chord with me:

There are many interacting factors at play which determine the trajectory of one's develop[ment]: the source language, the target language, the markedness of the L1, the markedness of the L2, the amount and type of input, the amount and type of interaction, the amount and type of feedback received, whether it is acquired in untutored or tutored contexts...age, aptitude, sociopsychological factors such as motivation and attitude, personality factors, cognitive style, hemisphericity, learning strategies, sex, birth order, interests, etc. Perhaps no one of these by itself is a determining factor, the interaction of them, however, has a very profound effect. (pp. 151-152)

She has advocated for a sociocultural perspective in applied linguistics research and emphasized the significance of comprehending language in its real-world contexts. As an applied linguist, I was required to inquire, move beyond superficial problematizations, and investigate classroom issues from multiple perspectives. In the words of Larsen-Freeman (2000b, p. 165), applied linguistics and second language acquisition share the characteristics of being multidisciplinary and empiricist. In terms of their objectives, applied linguistics focuses on language-related issues, whereas second language acquisition focuses on both the

general question of acquisition and the specific issue of why not everyone acquires a second language.

As a teacher educator at this stage in my career, I had to find a way to guide my students to work in national English programs, contextualize teaching-learning processes, and, most importantly, comprehend the complexities of adopting an ecological approach, as suggested by Larsen-Freeman (2018). Larsen-Freeman's complexity theory provides educators and practitioners with valuable insights. By recognizing the dynamism and complexity of learning, educational strategies can be modified to promote optimal conditions for self-organization and emergence. Incorporating authentic and real-world duties into the curriculum enables students to encounter meaningful challenges that improve their understanding and application of knowledge. The C/CTs acknowledge that learners actively participate in their own educational journey. Promoting metacognition, reflection, and adaptability empowers learners to navigate complex learning environments by fostering a sense of agency and self-regulation. The difficulty resides in the fact that national programs have not been evaluated for their efficacy in a number of years. In addition, at the university level, already in the second phase of ELT in Mexico, polytechnical and technological institutions attempted to implement bilingual programs (see Figure 1), facing other problems in their contexts.

When one embraces a perspective on language that is characterized by reduced mechanical tendencies and a greater emphasis on organic qualities, viewing it as a complex adaptive system, it becomes evident that each instance of language usage has the capacity to alter the linguistic abilities of the learner-user. These modified language resources thereafter become potentially accessible for future speech events (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), when viewed from a C/CT perspective, the processes of language use and acquisition are mutually constitutive and involve creativity, resulting in a merging and blurring effect rather than adhering to a uniform standard. Migration and globalization contribute to this linguistic border dissolution. The language user adapts, both to the environment and to the languages to which he/she is exposed. In this way, both the user and the context adjust, or as Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) refer to it, it is a "co-adaptation" process that leads to the formation of hybridities. In my work as an applied linguist in the field of transnationalism and the identity of return migrants who become English teachers, this concept of hybridities has come to the forefront in recent years (Kasun & Mora-Pablo, 2021; 2022). The concept of *wicked problems* becomes pertinent to research in this field. Hiver et al. (2022) suggest that "Wicked problems challenge approaches to research in the field that generates them because any attempt at resolution brings with it a call for changes in the way that field addresses them" (p. 9). When I became interested in concentrating my expertise on transnationalism and return migration, I gained an appreciation for the work of an applied linguist and the dedication required by the profession. Working with individuals who have challenged linguistic and geographical borders becomes indeed a *wicked problem* that deserves to be studied from a variety of perspectives. Regarding the future of research in our field of applied linguistics, one can foresee a shift from a discipline-driven paradigm of work to transdisciplinarity.

Transdisciplinary research is a strategy that places emphasis on the problem as the central focus of study, prioritizing it over concerns, theories, or methodologies related to a particular discipline (Leavy, 2016). This would lead us to address the problems, analyze them and

propose solutions from different areas, disciplines and approaches. As Hiver et al (2022) state, transdisciplinarity:

relies on a coalition of existing disciplines and requires scholars to draw on the resources in their discipline while also broadening their horizons. Transdisciplinary research is less about individual researchers gaining broad expertise in different disciplines, and more about researchers with deep expertise in their respective disciplines joining forces to tackle wicked problems of shared interest (p. 19).

As an applied linguist and teacher educator, transdisciplinarity is required to conduct research with an impact on the field. Looking back on my journey from language learner to applied linguist and teacher educator, I can say that Larsen-Freeman's work has accompanied me at various phases of my career.

In order to summarize the impact of Larsen-Freeman's work on my various phases of professional development, Table 1 provides a description of the events and ideas discussed in this paper.

Table 1
Professional Influence of Larsen-Freeman's Work

Professional stages	My encounter with Larsen-Freeman's work	Perceived influenced of Larsen-Freeman's work	Eras of ELT in Mexico
As a language learner	<i>Recent innovations in language teaching methodology (1987)</i>	Description of various teaching methodologies	First era. English as a mandatory subject in secondary schools and high schools
As a student teacher	<i>The Grammar Book, 2nd Edition, An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course (1999)</i>	Understanding grammar	First era. English as a mandatory subject in secondary schools and high schools
	<i>Techniques and principles in language teaching (2000)</i>	Language teaching methodologies	The English and Primary School Project and State Programs
	<i>Teaching grammar (2001)</i>	Grammaring	End of the first era
	<i>Teaching Language: From Grammar to Grammaring (2003)</i>	Grammaring	
As an applied linguist and teacher educator	<i>Chaos/complexity science and second language acquisition. (1997)</i>	Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) in second language development	End of the first era and full motion of the second era
	<i>Language acquisition and language use from a chaos/complexity theory perspective. (2002)</i>	Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) in second language development	
	<i>Language moves: The place of "foreign" languages in classroom</i>	Plurilingualism Hybridities	

teaching and learning.
(2008)

Looking ahead: Future directions in, and future research into, second language acquisition. (2018)

Ecological approach to language instruction

Complexity theory. Relational systems in interaction and in interlocutor differences in second language development. (2020)

Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) in second language development

Toward a transdisciplinary integration of research purposes and methods for complex dynamic systems theory: Beyond the quantitative–qualitative divide. (2022)

Wicked problems

Conclusion

In the courses that I teach in higher education, in BA and MA programs in applied linguistics and English language teaching, I believe that my dual role (as teacher and researcher) is essential for situating English language teaching within a broader context in order to comprehend classroom actions. I believe that more TESOL professionals can contribute to the development and implementation of national English programs in Mexico due to the influence of Larsen-Freeman's work and my experience as an English teacher. Larsen-Freeman (2018) points out the need to think differently about SLA. One of the recommendations she puts forward is to foster a reinvigorated recognition of the significance of context and the inherent limitations that influence a given context. The process of language acquisition is not isolated from the prevalent ideologies within a community, but rather, it is significantly influenced by them.

Larsen-Freeman's philosophies and conceptualizations have profoundly influenced my dual role, as a language and content specialist. She has made revolutionary contributions to English language teaching and applied linguistics, transforming pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks. Her holistic and learner-centered approach has enabled language educators to create meaningful and engaging learning environments for their students. Larsen-Freeman's contributions to the field of applied linguistics have been significant since she has placed a strong emphasis on the sociocultural components of language and has promoted a more dynamic comprehension of language acquisition. As a result, her work has not only enriched the field of applied linguistics but has also expanded our knowledge and perspective on language education. As her influence continues to shape language education, Larsen-Freeman's legacy will undoubtedly inspire future generations of educators and researchers to push the boundaries of English language teaching and applied linguistics.

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Acknowledgements

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Ethics Declarations

Competing Interests

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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