

Anni Borzeix
Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
Centre de Recherche en Gestion, Ecole Polytechnique

Genesis of a Network, Effects of a Perspective

“To paint the portrait of a network”... I propose to begin with a quick introduction of its origins (1987), its composition (interdisciplinary and federative), its goals (creation of links between the sciences and language and the sciences and work), these missions (production of knowledge, structuring of a scientific milieu and social intervention), its status (Groupe de Recherche of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique for four years) and its activities (research, meetings: study days, colloquiums, publications of the *Cahiers Language et Travail*, training).

I will then evoke our specific area of research (analysis of language practices in workplace situations), our empirical objective (which might be expressed in several ways: “verbalizations”, “linguistic interactions”, “communication”, “acts of language”), the theoretical horizon from which we will explore (vast nebula at the crossroads of socio-linguistics, also called constructivist or interactionist, conversation analysis and ethnomethodology, etc.)

I will complete the portrait with a few problematic and methodological options which bring together: work—all work, from the factory worker to the engineer including the teacher and student—conceived as a situated activity, an accomplishment practice, often collective; *language* in all its forms (oral, written, non-verbal, gestural, etc.) as a multidimensional object (instrumental, cognitive, collective, emotive) which concerns us because it *is* action and because it articulates meaning; *cognition* as a social process (and not only mental); *meaning* as the result of a co-construction (between transmitter and receiver); *empirical observation*, micro-analysis, recording and gathering of data in what are called “natural situations” (and not experimental) fixed in an institutional context.

In short, a network composed of a central core, a second circle of collaborators and assistant researchers, in addition to the 500 names of “interested sympathizers” on record. United by a common history (more than by rules) and common commitments, which have more in common with the “invisible college” than with the research unit or the inter-disciplinary or inter-establishment “group project”, than with the school of homogenous thought.

Non-analytical catalogue of subjects/notions/and concepts on which work—always relative to activities and workplace situations—has been done for the past ten years. I will develop two or three of these with the help of some examples which I find relevant given the subject of this colloquium (“issues of training”):

categorization and cognition? Knowledge in the work-place, communication abilities, language(s) and utterance, coordination of action, interaction, interpretation and contextualization, lexical generation and terminology, learning, rules and organizational memory, work-place documents and service relations.