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Working Language, Working through Language

The first ergonomics studies dealing with language considered it as a coding system of information which needed to be optimized like any other coding system. Later, an interest in technical language appeared with the objective of more efficient man-machine systems of communication. This trend allowed for the emergence of the notion of operative language, with the idea of spontaneous development, along side and interacting with professions and professional language, veritable tools of the workplace. Two actions are therefore possible, one dealing with operative language itself (for example, to remove all ambiguity from it), and the other with the instruction of operative language, the acquisition of which becomes an acquisition of the competence.

Current studies are interested in service situations and in the interactions which they result in. In these situations, language is particularly central, the realization of objectives depends totally on the success of the interaction.

Three ideas will be developed:

- The inequality (but also the mutual complimenting) of knowledge requires that each operator adapts his language to the other.
- This adaptation is based on a model of others, in great part constructed within interaction, upon the foundation of meta-cognitive abilities by which the language of the other is indexed in a body of knowledge.
- Service interactions, seen as situations of cooperation, result in conceptual and linguistic learning which target not only the realization of the task but also the transformation of the other.