

Bernard Gardin
University of Rouen

One of the most recurring themes in the speech of workers (including those at an intermediary level and even high up in the hierarchy) concerns the status of speech. Whether it is in the form of lament over the absence of time allotted to speech, the impossibility of speech due to technical mechanisms, the control of speech, the depreciation of each others' speech, formulated in terms of the depreciation of technical speech or utterances of socio-types or counter-socio-types, linguistic practices are the object of, often negative, evaluations. While the number of anthropologists and philosophers place at their origins an inseparability of language and work, the economic, social and technical dimensions of modern work complicate their relationships and make of them a troublesome couple, the aforementioned conditions act at once as factors of production and of rarefaction of work. Certainly, the cause is found in the dangerous potentiality of speech in the workplace, if one sees the work situation as world shaping at the same time as productive and transforming social and individual relationships, language, in this situation is at once a factor, a tool of this transformation and, at the same time, through its specific nature, a presentation, a performance of these transformations. And thus, also a medium for realization. Numerous theories and practices attempt to separate instrumental function from language practice and social function, but this is never done without mutilations, paradoxes and without leaving some marks. As for training, it should not attempt to reproduce these operations in only offering to those who have been trained an instrumental vision of workers' speech (as speech at work).