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Oral Teaching: the Transmission of Written Knowledge and the Training of Instructors

It is at school that written knowledge is transmitted. Thus, work being done on social interaction in the classroom or on educational communication has, for the most part, neglected the subjects taught. On the other hand, educational research is, for the most part, unfamiliar with the written character of knowledge and the questions of verbal and non-verbal interaction in the classroom.

We have considered the class as a place of temporal accomplishment of a collective activity of the management of knowledge. In order to characterize the work of the teacher and the students, we have brought together a large corpus which allows for the temporal organization of the moments and spaces of interaction in such a way as to situate speech acts and objects of activity.

This paper will present the analyses made of several pre-school classes (a small section with the oral competence of a three-year old) and of the physical sciences (classes of high school juniors in which technical language is predominant). The number of meetings (6 at the pre-school and 8 at the high school) were filmed in their entirety, completely re-transcribed and placed within the corpus.

To begin, the first analyses show the definite character of the situations and the existence of diverse registers of communication interaction linked to the different phases of conceptualization as guided by the teacher. They also show, and this is less known, the close connection between oral teaching and the written character of the written knowledge being transmitted (whatever the level of instruction and the experience of the teachers).

This project is meant to offer a structure for the analysis of the "professional gestures" of instructors in which oral activities, linked to the transmission of written knowledge, play a fundamental role in educational communication and the construction of thought. What remains is the question of the ability to teach these "gestures" in the professional training of instructors.