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Problems with English Instruction in tertiary sections "Brevet de Technicien Supérieur"
Confronting the representations of two social agents: companies and teachers.

The advanced vocational diploma is a qualified professional training which gives students the opportunity to enter the work force after having completed two years of studies after the baccalaureate. In 1997-98, 140,660 students were in tertiary programs "Brevet de Technicien Supérieur" over a total of 201,066 in combined sections. For 94% of them, English is the first language studied. We have considered the kind of correlation which exists between theories of learning and social representations which underlie the teaching-learning act and the nature of the needs of communication in English in the professional setting for intermediary personnel.

In the present economic situation: globalization of markets, growth of the European Union, the approach of a single money, companies cannot exclude languages from their policy. This structural change in the professional setting has already lead upper level management and company officials to be concerned about their mastery of English as well as the languages of their clients. We have come to believe that knowledge of English is also a growing concern for those intermediary persons for whom this ability is no longer simply something additional in their C.V., but an essential element of general culture. Language ability required by companies today greatly exceeds syntax and reaches as far as the meta-cognitive and intercultural levels.

The research which is the object of this paper attempts to examine the needs of companies as regards ability in English for personnel hired at a middle-management level, intermediary professions and employees, and on the representations of teachers of English in upper and tertiary technical sections. An analysis based on the results of a study done with 200 teachers from three different academies and from 120 companies in Ile-de-France, examines the representations of company officials (recruiters, training officials, service officials, directors) and teachers in charge of training students "Brevet de Technicien Supérieur".

This analysis is organized around the following questions:

- What kinds of English abilities are required in the professional practice?
- How does one define the communication situations in foreign languages in companies?
- How are the links between the companies' needs and the objectives of initial training perceived?