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Training in Speech: The Interactive Treatment of Knowledge

In this paper, I propose to present a project that I am working on at the University of Mannheim. It concerns a sociolinguistic study, which rests on the methodological foundations inspired by ethnomethodology and anthropology. By analyzing three different corpuses of data, German, French and Spanish, the project attempts to locate that which can be considered as factors of “cultural” influence in the company setting. Thus, following the principles of ethnomethodology, it goes without saying that the culture of the company setting is a reality produced in a continuous manner by the very ones who participate in the company environment.

The linguistic material which makes it possible to study this factor is made up of verbal interactions in the company setting in the form of transcriptions. By using the transcriptions from three languages, I hope to show how the speakers treat their own knowledge, obtained in their professional activity, and how what can be called “official speech” of the company, intervenes in their linguistic acts. In referring to official speech, the speakers, for the most part management or heads of service, encourage their interlocutors to think about what they know and make it conform as much as possible to the normative level. It is therefore not only a question of a specific form of training, but also a dictated social convergence: superiors manipulate employee conduct.