Didactic microgenesis in interactive storybook reading situations in a bilingual classroom for deaf children. [Dissertation Abstract]

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DIDACTIC MICROGENESIS IN INTERACTIVE STORYBOOK READING SITUATIONS IN A BILINGUAL CLASSROOM FOR DEAF CHILDREN

This PhD thesis, which is placed in the fields of both educational sciences and deaf studies, has multiple theoretical roots. It is based on literacy practices introduced in bilingual classrooms for deaf children; the rooted concepts of bilingual programs in the education of these children with concepts from the field of emergent literacy studies in the general population; and, among others, from the field of didactic microgenetic studies. It also includes bilingualism in deaf children and its multimodal characteristics, observed through classroom interactions. It reveals an important challenge for the literacy acquisition of deaf children and their cognitive development.

This research has a qualitative, comprehensive approach aiming at the following questions: How does an interactive learning process take place in the classroom setting? What do teachers and pupils do to understand each other? How do teachers and pupils make use of the two languages (French and French sign language) they have at their disposition? How do they profit from this bilingual setting to teach and to learn the French language using storybooks?

As we were interested in naturalistic classroom learning, we performed a series of microgenetic studies from a post-Piagetian constructivist perspective. We researched the question of construction and transformation of literacy knowledge in deaf students.

The students and their two teachers (one deaf and one hearing, working in pairs) were videotaped during interactive storybook reading situations. This resulted in about 30 videos distributed across three periods of the year, each starting with a new storybook. Only the videos made at the beginning of each period were analyzed in this research. The microgenetic analyses focused on the progressive construction of a zone of common meaning between teachers and students. The zone of common meaning is constructed around components of literacy knowledge (e.g., letter knowledge, lexical knowledge, syntactical knowledge, narrative knowledge). These components were apprehended in the classroom interaction by reciprocal adjustments made by teachers and pupils to negotiate their understanding of the story. In addition, analyses based on a bilingual approach aiming at the linguistic exchanges and positions regarding the two languages were carried out. The video data were completed by the pupils’ individual assessments of their literacy skills.

The results of the analyses show that the zone of common meaning between teacher and pupil is progressively established and needs to be maintained during the entire school year (it is an iterative process around the construction of meaning). The teachers appear to take the pupils’ emergent knowledge as starting point and allow the pupils to have a large
contribution in the co-construction of shared understanding. Both languages (spoken French and French sign language) are used for this co-construction, and both serve to give meaning or construct meaning from the pictures and what is read in the storybook. The utilization of both languages is recognized and appreciated and recognizes the individual ways of learning of these pupils ("different does not mean deficient"; Marschark, 2003, p. 466). The bilingual analyses underline the development of verbal repertories, which are individually distributed between the two languages. Finally, the assessments show that the individual literacy skills progress during the school year and that these concur with the observational data.

This study contributes to a clearer understanding of the construction of meaning in reading and writing skills in deaf children in a naturalistic classroom setting and the role played by the two languages used. It also elicits questions regarding the inclusion of deaf children in the regular classroom and the recognition of their bilingual capacities: How to take into consideration the capacities and skills of deaf children? How to teach them to read and write? and How to prepare teachers to be able to respond to the individual needs of these pupils?


REFERENCE


DYNAMIC TESTING IN PRACTICE: SHALL I GIVE YOU A HINT?

In this dissertation, the contribution of dynamic testing procedures to educational practice, in particular to assessment procedures focused on interventions and classroom recommendations, was investigated. One main theme concerned the identification of individual differences in children’s need for instruction based on dynamic testing instruments. A series of studies in special and regular education were conducted in which dynamic testing procedures were carried out, all including an intervention based on the graduated prompts approach. The minimum number and type of prompts children required during training was used as an indicator of their need for instruction, following the work of Resing (1990, 2000). Results showed that this procedure provided very rich information to describe children’s need for instruction. The levels of need for instruction varied between children with comparable pretest scores as well as between children with comparable intelligence scores, showing the additional value of the dynamic testing procedures compared to standard IQ tests. The addition of a reversal task to the procedures also contributed to describing children’s potential for learning. The construction of items showed children’s understanding, whereas observations provided more qualitative information regarding children’s individual characteristics. The question regard-
ing differences in need for instruction was further investigated with a training procedure including multiple protocols with each a graduated prompts structure. Outcomes provided very specific information regarding the need for prompts at each step in the problem-solving process; analysis of prompts provided in multiple protocols leads to four clusters of children, each with a different profile of need for instruction.

A second theme concerned teachers’ values regarding the application of dynamic testing outcomes in their classroom and in formulating educational plans. Teacher’s evaluations of psychodiagnostic reports and recommendations regarding children in their actual classroom were studied. Reports consisted of either the outcomes of dynamic or standard testing results. Teachers were observed in their classroom, they filled in questionnaires, and they were interviewed. Furthermore, an Internet survey was conducted regarding the information teachers generally appreciate in reports and recommendations. Overall outcomes showed that teachers appreciated the dynamic testing information. Teachers considered specific outcomes provided by dynamic testing (e.g., the type of assistance a child profits from, description of potential for learning, the progress after instruction) as valuable information for their teaching practice and for writing educational plans. Teachers’ appreciations thus support the use of dynamic testing procedures. On the other hand, teachers also judged information regarding a diagnosis or a child’s limitations as important. It appeared that a combination of both dynamic and standard information provided the best starting points for formulating individual educational plans. In addition, teacher’s experience and age also seemed to influence the evaluations or recommendations.

Dynamic testing procedures appear to contribute to the descriptions of a child’s needs for instruction and the outcomes appear to be of assistance to teachers in formulating individual educational plans and adapting instruction to the needs of students. These outcomes, interpreted from a needs-based assessment approach, imply that dynamic tests merit a substantial place in psychoeducational assessment procedures.


**REFERENCES**


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