







### The linguistic demands of workplace learning

Power and miscommunication in vocational training interactions

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SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER WISSENSCHAFTLICHEN FORSCHUNG

# Researching teaching and learning in VET

- Objectives and research questions
  - How do apprentices gain access to vocational knowledge and experience identity transformations during their apprenticeship?
  - What kinds of skills are required to teach or train apprentices in the various sites and activities where training occurs?
  - What are the main potentialities and limitations associated with the «dual» training system?
- Applying a linguistic lens on workplace learning
  - Conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1978)
  - Interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982)
  - Multimodal discourse analysis (Kress et al., 2001; LeVine & Scollon, 2004)
- Collecting empirical evidence of naturally occurring training practices
  - 150 hours video recordings
  - Three different occupations: car mechanics, automation, electrical assembly
  - 1 vocational school, 2 training centres and 7 training companies in the Geneva area



## Joining the workplace: A case study

- The apprentice observed: ROD
  - 1st year automation specialist
  - Migration from Cape Verde
- The training company
  - Construction of electric boards for the building industry
- The training environment
  - The work supervisor : FER
  - Direct immersion into work
- A problematic immersion into the workplace
- Addressed issues
  - What sorts of difficulties did ROD experience when interacting with his trainer and colleagues?
  - In what respect were these difficulties related to language use and participation in interaction?







Engraving plastic tags



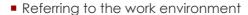
1. ROD: ((ROD leaves the computer room and goes back to the workshop)) 2. ROD: I have a problem. It doesn't work. 3. FER: Of course it doesn't work! It can only function! 4. FER: You go JUL, I've had enough! What's the problem now? ROD: Are those the T-shirts? 6. Yes these are the T-shirts. 7 . JUL ((moves towards the computer room)) 8. JUL: And what's your problem then? 9. ROD: It doesn't work. 10. JUL: What's the problem? What doesn't work? What's-11. ROD: I don't know it says this all the time. 12. ((ROD and JUL stand in front of the screen)) 13. JUL: But- ((starts typing on the keyboard)) 14. It's like last time, you have too many layers. You have to delete them, you see? Oh I always forget that. 15. ROD: 16. JUL: Yes oh yes I know er because this is the second time I've had to come here. 17. And why didn't you do it all at the same time? 18. ROD: Because there are some EFI breakers here and I don't know how to deal with that. 19. JUL: Right but 8 - 9 - 10 what's that? 20. ROD: 8 - 9 - 10 come before the EFI breakers. 21. JUL: Right I'll explain this to you another time. ((JUL leaves the computer room))



#### Observable difficulties

- Reshaping participation and asking for assistance
  - ((ROD leaves the computer room and goes back to 1. ROD: the workshop))
  - 2 -ROD:
  - I have a problem. It doesn't work.

    Of course it doesn't work! It can only function! 3. FER:
  - You go JUL, I've had enough!



- Explaining the "problem"
  - 5. JUL:
  - What's the problem now? Are those the T-shirts? Yes these are the T-shirts. 6. ROD: 7. JUL:
  - ((moves towards the computer room))
    And what's your problem then?
    It doesn't work.
  - ROD:
  - 10. JUL:
  - What's the problem? What doesn't work? What's-I don't know it says this all the time.
- Justifying ways of doing
  - And why didn't you do it all at the same time?
    Because there are some EFI breakers here and I don't know how to deal with that.
    Right but 8 9- 10 what's that?

  - 19. JUL:
  - 8 9 10 come before the EFI breakers.







#### Observable difficulties

- Delivering instruction in the workplace
  - Retaining instruction

14. JUL: It's like last time, you have too many layers. You have to delete them, you see?

15. ROD:

16. JUL:

Oh I always forget that.
Yes oh yes I know er because this is the second time I've had to come here.

- Acting in substitution of the apprentice
- Postponing instruction

19. JUL: Right but 8 - 9 - 10 what's that?

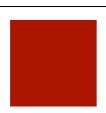
8 - 9 - 10 come before the EFI breakers. 20. ROD: 21. JUL: Right I'll explain this to you another time.

((JUL leaves the computer room))



Displaying negative attitudes towards the apprentice: "Of course it cannot work. It can only function!", "I've had enough", "What's the problem now?", "It's the second time I've had to come here!"





### Implications and conclusions

- The linguistic demands of the workplace
  - A matter of discourse
  - A matter of participation in interaction
  - A matter of power
- Practical implications
  - Understanding problematic transitions in VET pathways
  - Language use as "content" and "resource" for vocational learning
  - Better training for vocational trainers