
A collaborative ethnography committed to empower waiters and maîtres d'hôtel to act through their interactions with chef and customers in restaurant-schools

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Résumé

Anchored in the field of language studies, our research is involved in the area of vocational training, which has been developed over the last few years in the French-speaking sector (Filliettaz, 2014; Lambert & Veillard, 2017). The research works conducted in this field made it possible to better define the importance of language and interactions in the training curriculum, both as vectors for the transmission of vocational practice and knowledge and as subjects to be taught.

From a perspective inspired by the ethnography of communication (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972) and the language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986 ; Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2012) paradigms, our contribution is based on a collaborative ethnography recently conducted over two years within a vocational degree course (Bachelors) in Catering and Hospitality Management at the Institut Paul Bocuse (Ecully, France). With concepts and notions mainly borrowed from interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 1982) and microsociology (Goffman, 1959, 1967), the aim was to analyze, then improve the process of the transmission-acquisition of interactional skills in catering and restaurant service.

In this contribution, we aim at presenting how the study of interactions in three restaurants-schools at the Institut Paul Bocuse, brought interesting results for constructing tools intended to improve vocational training in this institution. Amongst these results, first we focus on the low level of taking into account the transmission of interactional skills in the training practices, whereas these competences are mainly required in the table waiting activity. To this end, we categorized the interactions in restaurants-schools between procedures, based on predetermined expected scripts that do not vary, and processes, premised upon open interactions that are not constrained by any pre-defined and particularly expected scripts. Second, we tackle the collective and shared dynamic we brought to light in the service practices shown in these restaurants-schools, which helps beginners to cooperate in the professional conduct of the activity and understand the different issues it covers for those involved. We then address how we conducted our training engineering work in close collaboration with

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the service staff instructors responsible for professional practice in the institution's training restaurants on the basis of above-mentioned research findings, and discuss the effects observed in students' service performance following the incorporation of the changes made to the training course. We conclude with the promising prospects that the study of interactions can bring to vocational learning and training and professional development.

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Keywords

Applied interactional linguistics; ethnography of communication; vocational training