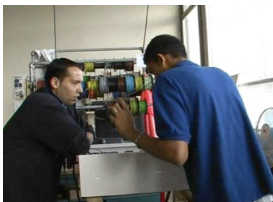




UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE



Recognising and sustaining the linguistic demands of the workplace

Contributions from a socio-pragmatic perspective

Laurent Filliettaz
University of Geneva
Department of Adult Education

Laurent.Filliettaz@unige.ch

<http://www.unige.ch/fapse/interaction-formation>



Overview of the talk

- I. Context of the study
 - The Swiss VET system
 - The case of a migrant apprentice
- II. The linguistic demands of learning through practice
 - Referring to the material environment
 - Responding to humour
 - Requesting guidance
- III. Theoretical implications
 - From linguistic demands to literacy practices
 - From linguistic demands to interactional competences
 - Linguistic demands and workplace learning
- IV. Implications for practice
 - Training mentors and workplace supervisors
 - Training learners in transition



I

Context of the study



The Swiss VET context

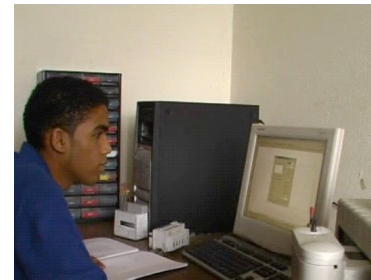
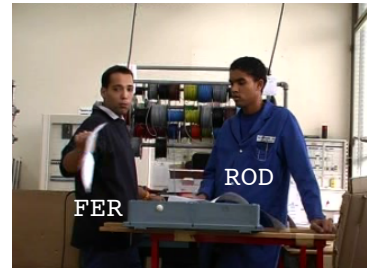


- A “dual” vocational training system
 - A long-standing tradition of apprenticeship programs
 - Integrating school and practice-based learning in the workplace
 - Developing “smooth” transitions from school to work
- Current issues and challenges
 - The difficult access to apprenticeship in a “market-driven” VET system
 - 70% of Swiss firms do not hire apprentices
 - **Young people with migrant background are significantly more enrolled in “bridge courses” preparing to apprenticeship**
 - The contested quality of a practice-based training system
 - 30% of apprentices drop out of the training system
 - In some trades, 60% fail at their intermediary or final exams



A case study

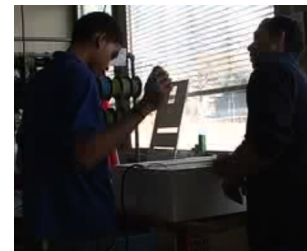
- The apprentice observed : ROD
 - 1st year automation specialist
 - Migration from Cape Verde
- The training company
 - Construction of electric boards for the building industry
- The training environment
 - The work supervisor : FER
 - Other co-workers : JUL, FRA, DAV
 - Direct immersion into work
- The tasks observed
 - Assembling electric boards : wiring electric devices, inserting frames into plastic casings, engraving plastic tags, installing electric sockets, etc.



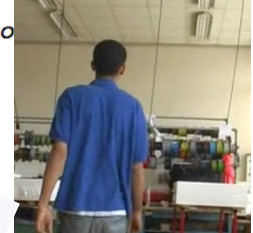
II

The linguistic demands of learning through practice

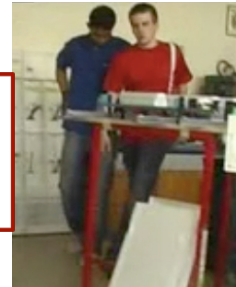
1. ROD : ((ROD plugs in the testing cable))
 2. FER : you: have to switch on these devices\ ((points to the devices included in the electric board))
 3. ROD : ((ROD switches on the circuit breakers included in the electric board))
 4. also the EFI/
 5. FER : this isn't an EFI\
 6. ROD : it's a: mmm: . a relay/
 7. FER : ((looks at ROD without speaking))
 8. ROD : it's a Multi-9/
 9. FER : ((continues to look at ROD in silence))
 10. ROD : it's- ((picks up his notebook and reads))
 11. it's a contactor\
 12. FER : OK\ ((hands on the testing device to ROD))
 13. ROD : a contactor\ . OK\ ((takes the testing device))
 14. FER : how shall we do the testing\
 15. ROD : I put one on the neutral and the other on a phase\
 16. FER : correct\ . so\ . you start at the beginning right/
 17. ROD : mmm/
 18. FER : you should start at the beginning not at the end\



1. ROD: ((enters commands on the computer))
 2. one two three/ .. OK\ ((enters commands on the computer))
 3. ROD: ((goes back to the workshop))
 4. ROD: the computer has a problem\ ..
 5. I went through all the procedure but it doesn't work\
 6. JUL: ((JUL leaves his workspace and joins ROD in the computer room))
 7. ((JUL and ROD stand in front of the computer))
 8. ROD: it says this\
 9. JUL: ((handles the mouse and inserts commands))
 10. did you go here/ ((inserts commands))
 11. ROD: yeah/
 12. JUL: ((inserts commands))
 13. ROD: no no less less less/
 14. JUL: wait a minute/
 15. ROD: no it's just one/ .. it's just one/
 16. JUL: **just one/ [Justin]**
 17. ROD: yeah\
 18. JUL: **Bridou/**
 19. ROD: you have to delete that\
 20. JUL: **Justin Bridou or:**
 21. ROD: just a layer\ . you have to set it with one layer\
 ((points to the screen))
 22. JUL: **not Bridou**
 23. ROD: **what is Bridou**
 24. JUL: **a sausage** ((continues to enter commands))
 25. two three four five that's it/
 26. ROD: yeah\
 27. JUL: OK two three four five OK\ .. now .. that' all right\
 28. did you set it vertically/ ((the printer starts to engrave the stickers))



1 ROD : ((ROD leaves the computer room and goes to the workshop))
2 ROD > FER : I have a problem/ . it doesn't work\
3 FER : of course it doesn't work\ . it can only function\
4 FER > JUL : you go JUL I've had enough
5 JUL > ROD : what's the problem now\
6 ROD : are those the T-shirts/
7 JUL : yes these are the T-shirts ((joins ROD in 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/
15 ROD : oh I always forget that
16 JUL : yes oh yes I know/ er because this is the second time I've had to come here/ <mhmm>
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\
((leaves the computer room))



Theoretical implications



From linguistic demands to literacy practices

Castanheira et al. (2001, p. 354ss)

- Literacy is **socially constructed** and **situated**
 - *Literacy is a socially constructed phenomenon that is situationally defined and redefined within and across differing social groups including reading groups, families, classrooms, schools, communities, and professional groups (e.g., educators, lawyers, administrators, and plumbers).*
- Literacy is **visible in the actions** members take
 - *What counts as literacy in any group is visible in the actions members take, what they orient to, what they hold each other accountable for, what they accept or reject as preferred responses of others, and how they engage with, interpret, and construct text (e.g., Bloome, 1983, 1991; Bloome & Green, 1984)*
- Literacy as a **dynamic process**
 - *Literacy, therefore is not located in the heads of individuals or a process that is the same for all people in all situations. Rather, it is a dynamic process in which what literate actions mean are continually being constructed and reconstructed by individuals as they become members of a new social group (e.g., classes, families, professions).*



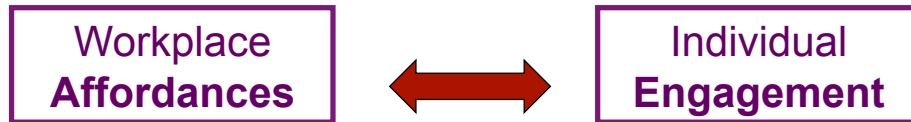
From linguistic demands to interactional competences

- **Pragmatic dimensions** of linguistic demands
 - The production of speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969)
 - Directives – Assertions – Expressives
 - The implicit and negotiated nature of speech acts
- **Socio-cultural dimensions** of linguistic demands
 - Workplace norms and values (Holmes & Stubbe, 2003; Holmes & Woodhams, 2013)
 - Membership and Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)
- **Interactional dimensions** of linguistic demands
 - Interactional competence as a capacity to engage in joint actions effectively and to make relevant contributions to situated social encounters (Mondada, 2006; Pekarek, 2006; Young & Miller, 2004)



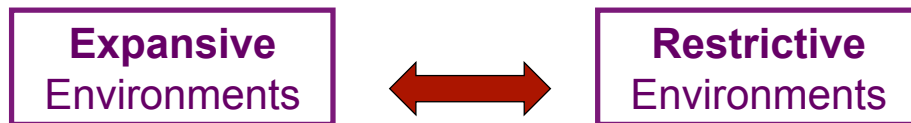
Learning the linguistic demands of the workplace

- The duality of learning at and through work (Billett, 2001)



Stephen Billett

- The Expansive – Restrictive continuum (Fuller & Unwin, 2003)



Lorna Unwin



IV

Implications for practice

Training mentors and workplace supervisors

■ Training contexts

- University programs for Adult Educators
- Government training programs for mentors and workplace supervisors working in initial vocational education

■ Objectives of the module “Interaction & Learning”

- Designing expansive work environments
- Understanding the role and place of verbal interactions
- Reflecting about language use at work

■ Pedagogical activities

1. Conceptual input (sociolinguistics; workplace learning)
2. Reflexive analysis of naturally occurring video data
3. Diagnosing expansive or restrictive forms of interactions
4. Practicing through simulations and feed-back



Training learners in transition

■ Training context

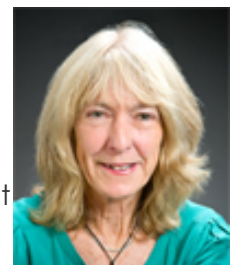
- Skilled professionals migrating to New Zealand
- The intercultural challenges of the New Zealand workplaces
- An extension from the Language in the Workplace Project (LWP) at Victoria University of Wellington (Holmes et al., 2011)

■ Objectives of the Skilled Migrant course

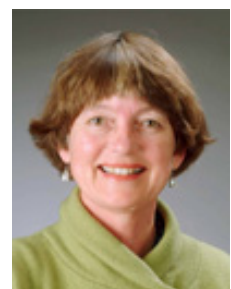
- Providing socio-pragmatic skills to migrant workers
- Developing analytical, reflective and critical skills
- Empowering rather than simply fitting into the local work culture

■ Pedagogical activities

- Analysing naturally occurring empirical material (scenarios)
- Developing awareness and reflexivity about socio-pragmatic aspects of communication
- Experiencing workplace interactions through placement and internships



Janet Holmes



Nicky Riddiford



Main References

- Billett, S. (2001). *Learning in the Workplace : strategies for effective practice*. Crows Nest : Allen & Unwin.
- Castanheira, M. L., Crawford, T., Dixon, C. N., & Green, J. L. (2001). Interactional ethnography: An approach to studying the social construction of literate practices. *Linguistics and Education*, 11 (4), 353-400.
- Filliettaz, L. (2010). Interaction and miscommunication in the Swiss vocational education context: Researching vocational learning from a linguistic perspective. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice*, 7(1), 27-50.
- Fuller, A. & Unwin, L. (2003). Learning as apprentices in the contemporary UK workplace: Creating and managing expansive and restrictive participation. *Journal of Education and Work*, 16(4), 407-426.
- Holmes, J. Joe, A., Marra, M., Newton, J., Riddiford, N. & Vine, B. (2011). Applying linguistic research to real world problems: The case of the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project. In Chris Candlin & Srikant Sarangi (Eds), *Handbook of Communication in Organisations and Professions* (pp. 533-549). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Holmes, J. and Stubbe, M. (2003) *Power and Politeness in the Workplace*. London: Longman.
- Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.