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Talk

**Perpetuating world views:
The (re)production of Discourses in educational space**

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In the current work on my Master's thesis I am investigating the interaction of language and power based on ethnographic research carried out through participant observation in two institutional contexts in Northern Italy. In my research, I have been focusing on (1) the powerful characteristic of institutional language that permits the transmission of knowledge and (2) the analysis of D(d)iscourses that circulate in schools, by investigating their structure and their effects.

Power in language is not always an overt top-down mechanism, but rather a subtle and often hardly perceptible one, aimed at achieving different goals (Foucault, 1971, 1972). The space in which power and language come together is big "D" Discourse. Constructing discourses (with a little "d")¹ (Gee, 2015) can be a matter of the social position in which we find ourselves (Bourdieu, 1982, 1993). Discourses, different visions, shapes of identities and behaviours fusion in very specific contextual circumstances, so-called chronotopes, such as oral conversations or a university lecture (Bakhtin, 1981). A particular place where these dynamics happen are educational spaces.

In my thesis, I am examining specific extracts from discourses in two Italian middle schools and one preschool. I aim to show how parts of Discourse are negotiated, reproduced, and transmitted in institutional spaces. The proposed excerpts include statements within (1) sociopolitical, (2) cultural and (3) religious themes. The aim is to unmask the selection of different discourses in Italian institutions that condition communication in the educational space, question them, and investigate how we can gain a more conscious view on the discourse-ideological machinery.

References:

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¹ Big "D" Discourse captures how historically and socially significant identities/ideologies are enacted through a combination of language, actions and interactions, values, and beliefs. The notion of "Discourse" composes the context for the analysis of "discourse" (with a little "d"), i.e., the analysis of language in use. A *d*iscourse is the space where *D*iscourses convey (Gee, 2015).