

Development of a French as a Foreign Language Teacher's 'Teaching Repertoire' in and through Retrospective Interviews and Reflection

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ABSTRACT

The retrospective interview carried out as part of foreign language teacher training in France constitutes a complex “polyphonic” (Bakhtin [1975] 1981) situation, where the trainee’s discourse is articulated as a component of “external dialogue” (Vološinov [1929] 1986) with that of the trainer – and sometimes also that of other participating trainees. Each of them refers to, as an element of “internal dialogue” (*ibidem*), what the trainee said or did in the classroom with and in relation to his/her students as well as what they said or did as action or reaction; that is to say, the classroom interaction in itself can be characterized as an “external dialogue” situation. In focusing on French as a foreign language teacher training, this paper aims to reveal, from a discourse analysis viewpoint, how three elements of retrospective interviews – discourses articulated in relation to each other, the trainee’s retrospective reflection on his/her classroom action and/or his/her students’ (re) actions, and the potential development of his/her ‘teaching repertoire’ – are related to one another.

Keywords: French as a foreign language, polyphony, reflectiveness, teacher professional development, teaching repertoire.

INTRODUCTION

The retrospective interview, often used as a clinical education method in a range of fields, for example in social work, job analysis, or professional training, in France, is a situation in which a trainee develops his/

her “working repertoire” with the assistance of a trainer. Undergoing a retrospective interview leads the interviewee to reflect upon the actions he/she has taken in his/her practice, whether solo or in collaboration (e.g., with colleague[s], client[s], student[s]); what he/she thought at the time; and what happened as a result. The trainer questions the trainee in order to verbally elicit these reflections.

In the present research, we examine in particular how trainees’ working repertoire, which can be characterized as a cognitive-psychological characteristic and in this sense hidden rather than explicit or concrete, reveals itself in teaching in the classroom (in § 1). In this light, our interest is on how the nature of the repertoire emerges through discourse during the retrospective interview between the trainee and trainer and on which specific interactive activities can be related to the development of the trainee’s working repertoire (explored in § 2). Last, we discuss the cognitive processes that underpin this development (in § 3).

We focus as an example of a working repertoire on the ‘teaching repertoire’ (*répertoire didactique*; Cicurel 2002 and 2011; Causa 2012; Tellier et Cadet 2014) of a teacher of French as a foreign language and its potential for development via retrospective interviews with a teacher trainer – that is, a pedagogical adviser or experienced teacher.

Our investigation is based on a corpus composed of interactions between a specific individual interviewee (trainee) and interviewer (trainer), compiled by the research unit IDAP (*Interactions Didactiques et Agir Professoral*, or *Teaching Interactions and Professorial Practice*), part of the research group DILTEC (*Didactique des Langues, des Textes et des Cultures*, or *Didactics of Language, Text, and Culture*) at the University of Paris III – with which we have been affiliated since the foundation of this unit’s predecessor in 1995. The data consist of audio-recordings taken in a classroom of French as a foreign language taught by the trainee and also of a subsequent retrospective interview conducted by a pedagogical adviser/trainer¹.

¹ This corpus is called the “Corpus Marie-Laure”, after the trainee. For more information on its structure and content, see the Appendix.

1. REALIZATION OF THE TEACHER'S TEACHING REPERTOIRE
IN THE CLASSROOM

1.1. *Teacher behavior and actions as a materialization of the teaching repertoire*

The 'teaching repertoire' is a notion proposed, elaborated, and developed within the French as a foreign language field by various studies carried out in France since the early 2000s, as part of the line of research called *Didactics of Language and Culture* (*Didactique des Langues et des Cultures*). It is generally defined as follows:

"The teaching repertoire" is a set of pedagogic knowledge (*savoirs*) and know-how (*savoir-faire*) of which the teacher can make free use for transmitting the knowledge on the target language to a given group of learners. This knowledge and know-how are formed not only on the basis of the *sociocultural reference models* (e.g., the role of teachers in a specific society and the representations deriving from it) and the *interiorized educational references* (concerned with all the teacher's personal past experienced as a student) that can be acquired during trainings, observations, and/or imitations, but also by means of *some new theoretical and practical reference models to be gained through pedagogical professional training* (involving for example training types followed and explicit discourses pronounced in a training situation or situations) which are proposed and made available during the training. [...] We can recognize some characteristics common to many teachers or particular to an individual, concerning the "repertoire", which are to be modified all along the teaching experience [...]. (Tellier et Cadet 2014, 289)²

Thus understood, the 'teaching repertoire' refers to the mental, cognitive, and psychological processes generated in the teacher's brain, which are essentially not perceptible in themselves but become so if and only if they are materialized in some form.

In a classroom situation, such forms, which Cicurel (2011) names "teacher behavior/action" (*agir professoral*), are principally composed of verbal elements (e.g., explanation of grammatical phenomena, announcement of tasks to be done, evaluation of students' utterances) and/or nonverbal ones (e.g., distributing the documents to be worked with). For Cicurel, a "teacher behavior/action" is:

[...] a set of verbal and nonverbal actions – sometimes preconceived and sometimes elaborated on the spot – executed by the teacher for transmitting and

² Our translation. The italics are in the original.

communicating some knowledge or an “ability to know” to his/her partners in a given situation. [...]n order to accomplish the profession, the actor – sometimes simultaneously and sometimes not – executes a series of actions generally coordinated and subordinated to the global aim, with a certain intention. (Tellier et Cadet 2014, 119)³

The perspective that Cicurel proposes allows us to examine a language teacher’s ability from the angle of the phenomenological sociology of Schütz (1987)⁴, which is not merely static, but dynamic and interactional. Interaction – especially verbal interaction – constitutes a situation where participants are required to verbalize themselves – their thoughts, beliefs, opinions, values – in response to one another in order to attain their objectives, which are, in the present context, for teachers and learners respectively, to transmit and receive transmitted knowledge (here, linguistic knowledge).

1.2. *Verbal interaction as a “polyphonic” situation composed of multiple participants’ behaviors/actions*

Bakhtinian utterance theory views a verbal interaction to be a form of “external dialogue” (as distinct from internal dialogue: see below; Vološinov [1929] 1986), that is, a dialogue in which at least two subjects participate (i.e., converse). In the language teaching/learning situation, it is the teacher and learners who construct such an interaction. The teacher, referring to his/her ‘teaching repertoire’ and manifesting it in the form of “teacher behavior/action”, explains grammatical phenomena to his/her partners, the learners; asks them some questions – “pretended” ones, in the sense that the teacher already knows the answer and is not trying to learn it but rather to elicit it from the learners and determine whether they can produce it; responds to their answers; and evaluates their utterances according to target-language norms, knowledge that he/she possesses in his/her teaching repertoire (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975).

In addition, the language classroom interaction can also be characterized by another Bakhtinian concept: that of “internal dialogue” (Vološinov [1929] 1986) or “polyphony” (Bakhtin [1975] 1981). According to Bakhtin, no discourse except the mythical one of “Adam” “could really have escaped

³ Our translation.

⁴ Schütz analyzes how the reality of everyday life is constructed, and purports to reveal and describe the tacit methods that people use to maintain social relations – especially in conversation.

from start to finish this dialogic inter-orientation with the alien word that occurs in the object” (Bakhtin [1975] 1981, 279). The classroom interaction is not an exception: all utterances refer more or less to what has already been produced, verbally or nonverbally, during the lesson, in preceding classes, and/or outside the classroom.

These phenomena can be illustrated by the following example from our corpus, where the trainee teacher, Marie-Laure (abbreviated as ML(Pr))⁵, conducts a French lesson using a theatrical text:

EXAMPLE 1

- 040 ML(Pr) [...] quand vous allez au théâtre vous allez voir quoi ↑
041 Af une pièce
042 ML(Pr) voilà une pièce (*elle écrit au tableau*) de théâtre alors est-ce qu'elle est en entier là cette pièce de théâtre à votre avis ↑
043 Af Non
044 ML(Pr) alors comment c'est quand euh c'est pas en entier
045 Af Extrait
046 ML(Pr) voilà c'est ce qu'on a vu l'autre fois un extrait (*elle écrit au tableau*) alors vous me dites c'est du théâtre [...]

[CS (ML)-3]

Here, Marie-Laure asks the class what is performed at the theater (in 040). In response to this (pretended) question, a learner gives an answer: “a theatrical play” (in 041); this response is taken positively into consideration by the trainee teacher (in 042), who uses it to formulate further questions: “is it a complete play?” (in 042), and, after the reaction (“no” in 043) by a learner, “how can we call it if it is an incomplete one?” (in 044); this is done to remind the students of the target word “extract” (*extrait*) (in 045), which they should have previously learned. In this sequence, we observe that Marie-Laure's utterances constitute both an “external dialogue” with those of the learners and also – in that they refer to the verbal and non-verbal actions produced in a previous lesson – an “internal dialogue” with those actions in that previous lesson, in other words a “polyphonic” situation.

⁵ For the meanings of the symbols and notation used in the transcript, see the Appendix.

2. RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWS: A COMPLEX POLYPHONIC SITUATION

2.1. *Reflection on the acts and utterances produced in classroom interaction*

Like the language classroom, the retrospective interview consists of interpersonal interactions; but the elements composing the latter can be distinguished from those of the former: the trainee teacher does not interact with students but with a trainer; the objective of their interaction is not to transmit/acquire linguistic knowledge – for instance, grammar – and know-how – or the usage of linguistic knowledge in situations – but instead knowledge and know-how related to *teaching* language; and the utterance's object is not language as an abstract structure but the communicative meanings and broader significances of the specific acts and utterances produced by the trainee teacher and/or students in the classroom, as we can see in the following example extracted from our corpus, taken from a retrospective interview conducted with Marie-Laure just after she had taught a lesson on grammar:

EXAMPLE 2

- 001 CP1 [...] c'était intéressant prospective rétrospective vous pensez que c'était trop compliqué comme euh: la même chose euh:
002 ML(Stag) ouai en fait j'pensais euh
003 CP1 regretter regretter reprocher parce que là aussi c'était intéressant par rapport aux pronoms dont on a parlé hier avec le texte je prétends QUE il prétend QUE je repense aux pronoms je regrette euh je regrette [...] vous vous rappelez y a eu la production tout au début et c'est drôle parce qu'ils sont pas revenus dessus euh y a quelqu'un qui vous a répondu avec et ça allait bien le conditionnel euh présent
[CC (ML)-1]

Interacting with Marie-Laure, who is now playing the role of interviewee (ML(Stag)), the pedagogical adviser expresses appreciation of the strategy that Marie-Laure chose to use to teach certain French prospective and retrospective expressions in the class (“it was interesting [to start by explaining] the prospective and retrospective [expressions]” in 001); this can lead us to call this utterance, following Filliettaz (2002), a “praxeologically polyphonic” one⁶. We observe also then that the trainer refers to what Marie-Laure had done in the previous day's lesson (“[the expres-

⁶ That is, a polyphonic situation where the utterance refers to an executed act.

sions related to] regret [or] reproach because also for these expressions it's interesting to take into consideration the pronouns that you treated yesterday using the text in the class" in 003) – where we can see that the “praxeological polyphony” is double-layered⁷ – and also to what the learners have just said in the current lesson (“you remember that there was an utterance just at the beginning [...] someone answered your question by using the conditional past mode” in 003) – where the utterances of the trainee's partners, the learners, constitute the “external dialogue” in the class and the source of polyphony.

We can point out in addition that in interaction with the interviewer, the interviewee reflects not only upon such acts and utterances produced in the classroom but also upon what she had conceived preceding the lesson but had not made manifest in the classroom. She reveals how and why she did not execute it:

EXAMPLE 3

005 ML(Stag) [...] j'aurais voulu faire travailler trois groupes sur des morceaux différents de textes pour varier un petit peu [...] [mais] il y avait un groupe qui avait la parole pendant longtemps [...] après dans ma conclusion pour en fait ce que je voulais c'était aller assez vite sur la compréhension
[CC (ML)-2]

Marie-Laure, who underwent the retrospective interview after a lesson she had given using an Émile Zola text (*Thérèse Raquin*, 1867), says she decided not to execute the activity she had prepared (“I [had] wanted to let three groups of students work on different pieces of text to vary the lesson just a little”) because of the unexpectedly profuse reaction to the text of some of the students (“[but] there was a group speaking for a long time”), which caused her to rush to complete the following activity (“after that finally I wanted to be in enough haste to do the comprehension activity”). The conception of the lesson that she had had when preparing is supplanted by a new one conceived during the lesson, in a pedagogical “palimpsest” (Ishikawa 2015).

⁷ Through reference to the activity on prospective and retrospective expressions done in the lesson just finished (constituting a first layer), CP1 is referring to the activity on pronouns that Marie-Laure had given her students in the classroom the previous day (a second layer).

2.2. Elements potentially related to the teacher's development of a teaching repertoire

If, as Tellier and Cadet (2014) state, the teaching repertoire is a cognitive one, which is to say an invisible reservoir of knowledge (*savoirs*) and know-how (*savoir-faire*) applied to the specific matter of teaching, an effective way to trace its modification should be by way of a retrospective interview in which the trainee teacher-interviewee is invited to verbalize what he/she thought about students' reactions to the pedagogical activity practiced in the classroom, how he/she decided to respond to those reactions, and specifically how he/she tried or did not try to modify his/her pedagogical activity in response to these reactions. That is to say, the retrospective interview is a device that can reveal the hidden dimensions of teachers' competence as well as changes to and development of it.

Indeed, we observe in the following example a "cognitively polyphonic" phenomenon where the trainee teacher's utterances refer to her thoughts in response to her students' reactions: playing the role of interviewee, she reflects upon herself playing the role of teacher in the lesson:

EXAMPLE 4

- 008 ML(Stag) [...] et y a aussi le coup du passé composé que j'ai laissé tomber
 009 CP1 oui euh
 010 ML(Stag) [...] parce que en fait déjà j'voulais éclaircir ces trois grandes lignes
 011 CP1 hum hum
 012 ML(Stag) et du coup j'me suis dis si je rajoute des ramifications donc dans celles qui étaient données effectivement il pouvait y avoir ben le conditionnel présent si j'avais l'impression qu'j'allais encore plus les: euh les
 013 CP1 les troubler
 014 ML(Stag) les noyer et les troubler et me noyer avec eux et euh en même temps euh ça m'embêtait aussi de ne pas tenir compte
 [CC (ML)-1]

Mentioning the answer of one student ("and there was an answer composed with the *passé composé* that I didn't take into consideration" in 008), Marie-Laure in the role of interviewee reveals what she wanted to, but did not, achieve in the lesson ("because principally I wanted at that moment to make these three main things clear" in 010) and what she said to herself, as well as her accompanying hesitation ("and so I said to myself if I add ramifications to the answers that the students have given certainly there could

be an answer composed with the *conditionnel présent* I feared that I would make my students more plagued and worry myself more with them – while at the same time not picking up their answers annoys me” in 012 and 014). Here we can see the trainee-interviewee reflecting upon her own ‘teaching repertoire’ – even parts not verbally realized in the classroom – in order to ask herself whether the decision she made in response to the students’ reactions was appropriate.

Recalling that the retrospective interview’s objective is to transmit/acquire pedagogic knowledge and know-how, our corpus data show that the pedagogical adviser’s utterances are marked by several pertinent characteristics, as follows.

- *Advice or instructions*

Referring back to the trainee teacher’s practice in the lesson, the trainer points out places where it was insufficient, and gives the trainee advice or instructions to improve his/her pedagogical practice:

EXAMPLE 5

255 CP1 [...] il faut aussi euh il faut aussi illustrer le le les les mots les mots un peu compliqués les les les en donner des images des des des définitions imagées [...]

[CC (ML)-2]

EXAMPLE 6

223 CP1 [...] mais alors là aussi moi je mettrais plus vite le dessin
224 ML(Stag) oui
225 CP1 le bras de la Seine et cætera vous voyez ↑

[CC (ML)-2]

The trainee’s utterance conveying advice here is marked by a deontic modality (“you have to illustrate little complicated words like those with some pictures that could define the meaning” in 255 in example 5) or by a subjunctive mode (“but also there [if I were you] I would show the picture more quickly” in 223 in example 6).

- *Diagnosis*

Analyzing the utterances produced by the trainee teacher in the classroom, the trainer brings out a problem that occurred in the lesson and diagnoses the reason why it happened:

EXAMPLE 7

156 CP1 [...] mais même le titre vous leur avez pas dit Thérèse Raquin le titre du roman + de qui s’agit-il ↑ c’est Thérèse

- Raquin i il faut comprendre qu'i qu'il s'agit d'une d'une
femme + [...]
- 157 ML(Stag) mmh
- 158 CP1 [...] vous avez oublié de le dire [...]

[CC (ML)-2]

In this example, we see that by saying to the trainee teacher “but you didn’t give even the novel’s title, *Thérèse Raquin*, to your students, and of what does it speak? the title is *Thérèse Raquin* your students have to understand that the novel speaks of a woman” (in 156) and “you’ve forgotten explaining it to your students” (in 158), the pedagogical adviser conveys to the trainee that the problem emerged because she did not explain that the title indicates the heroine’s name.

• *Maieutic utterance*

The trainer invites the trainee to reflect upon what he/she is not yet conscious of, by asking him/her a series of questions:

EXAMPLE 8

- 089 CP1 [...] mettez-vous à leur place mettez-vous à à leur place qu'est-ce qui est difficile pour eux + + on essaie de récapituler là
- [...]
- 095 CP1 qu'est-ce que vous auriez dû expliquer de plus + + ou quel est ce à quoi vous ne vous attendiez pas
- 096 ML(Stag) ouais ouais
- 097 CP1 mettez-vous à leur place
- [...]
- 102 ML(Stag) au niveau du vocabulaire au niveau construction tout ça c'est c'est vrai que c'est différent de l'habitude de l'employer et du coup euh + c'est un degré de plus dans l'étrangeté du texte quoi
- 103 CP1 oui oui oui

[CC (ML)-2]

Here, the pedagogical adviser gives the trainee teacher the instruction to “put yourself in the students’ position” (in 089 and 097) and questions the trainee – “what was difficult for them we try to sum up” (in 089) and “what should you explain more for them or what is the thing that you didn’t anticipate” (in 095) – in order to help her back up and reconsider what occurred in class, to find out why the students did not have the expected reaction. With this guidance by the pedagogical adviser, Marie-Laure succeeds in conceptualizing the reason: “as for the vocabulary and the phrase construction it’s true that they differ from those usually used so the expressions used in this novel are a little more unusual” (in 102).

3. CONCLUSION

As discussed above, the retrospective interview constitutes an externally dialogic and complexly polyphonic situation, and contains an interactional discourse that is linguistically, praxeologically, and/or cognitively reflective, referring not only to acts and utterances produced in classroom interaction – themselves “externally dialogic” – but also to what the trainee teacher thought but did not verbalize in interaction with the students. In such a reflective situation, the trainee teacher playing the role of interviewee is invited by the trainer to reflect upon himself/herself and his/her “teacher behavior/actions” in the classroom, in relation to the students’ reactions. The trainer gives advice or instructions to the trainee teacher, makes a diagnosis of reasons for any ineffectiveness or negative effect of his/her acts and utterances in the classroom, and/or leads him/her through maieutic questions to help him/her determine what he/she should have done in order to improve students’ comprehension and avoid comprehension problems, in short to promote target language acquisition.

Reflection-promoting utterances on the part of the trainer, like those presented above, aim to make of the trainee teacher a “reflective practitioner” (Schön 1983) or someone who can practice “critical reflection in action on oneself” in the classroom, without the trainer.

Between the classroom and the retrospective interview there exists a spatiotemporal difference that should never be avoided or neglected. To be an independent, autonomic reflective practitioner, the trainee teacher should be a self-critical thinker, which can be achieved by integrating the thinking or “voice” of the trainer and employing it from a critical meta-cognitive viewpoint in further reflection and meta-reflection. It is this autonomic critical reflection on the self that fosters development of professional identity.

This leads to a further question: How can we best develop this kind of meta-reflection in trainee teachers? Further studies are needed conducting linguistic-discursive, cognitive-psychological, and praxeological examination of acts and utterances in teacher training in French as a second language and other areas.

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APPENDIX

Constitution of corpus

The "Corpus Marie-Laure" consists of three audio-recordings of language classes conducted by the trainee teacher Marie-Laure and three audio-recordings of retrospective interviews with her conducted by two pedagogical advisers (trainers).

Transcript symbols

We adopt a simplified version of the transcript symbols used by IDAP, as follows:

	ML(Pr)		Marie-Laure in her role of trainee teacher
	ML(Stag)		Marie-Laure in her role of interviewee
	CP1		Pedagogical adviser
	Af		Unidentified female learner
	LES voitures		Majuscules indicate syllables pronounced with a stress
	↑		Rising intonation
	+, ++		Pause of which the number of "+" symbols is proportionate to the length
	euh:		Lengthening of the syllable
	euh:::		Longer lengthening of the syllable
	XXX		Inaudible elements
001	CP1	voilà	Turn-taking (numbered)
093	CP1	<u>plus vit</u>	Underlined parts in contiguous turns overlap
094	ML(Stag)	<u>ouais</u>	
	(<i>rires</i>)		Parentheses plus italics indicate description of non-/para-verbal elements and meta-comments

Freelancers or ‘Public Intellectuals’? Professional Identity and Discursive Representation of Chinese Independent Media Writers in a Fast-Changing Landscape

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ABSTRACT

Freelance journalists in China emerged in the early 2000s as a much-needed professional entity in a sector that had changed significantly since the media reform was launched in the country in 1978. When Chinese newspapers, which formerly survived thanks to state funds, had to adopt a business mindset, freelance writers became necessary to sustain these changes. They contributed in particular to the diffusion and standardization of the genre of the “commentary on current affairs” (*shiping* 时评), establishing themselves as new and original voices in a media system that is still tightly controlled. Building on an analysis of the linguistic features of a corpus of qualitative interviews conducted with Chinese freelance writers between 2008 and 2015, this paper studies their self-representation and understanding of their mission, discussing the extent to which they believe their independent opinions matter in the public arena, in a context that has been changing quickly, due to the decline of print media and due to a new political environment.

Keywords: China, civil society, commentary on current affairs, commercialization, discourse community, freedom, freelancers, genre, journalists, media.

1. NEW PROFESSIONALS IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

Freelance journalists in China emerged in the early 2000s as a much-needed professional entity in a sector that had changed significantly since the media reform was launched in the country in 1978 (Shen 2003; Lava-