Teachers and students’ representations about writing in vocational school

A contrasting perspective
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I. Introduction: the reasons why we work on writing representations
II. Methodology
III. Analysis – students, teachers: different representations
   A. Representations of vocation school teachers about their students and students’ statements
   B. About the writing functions
   C. Writing in class
IV. Discussion
I. The reasons why we work on writing representations

- The benefit of « rapport à » in teaching studies

- Potential influence of teachers’ representations on their teaching practices

- Why investigating if the representations of teachers and students match or not

- Some studies about convergence between teachers and students and the way it can influence their learning → No study (to my knowledge) about their divergences and consequences on teaching / learning
II. Methodology: a case study in two vocational classrooms

- **Ecrire@lp**: an action-research project
  - The high school:
  - 2 classrooms: 30 students 15 - 18 years old
  - One hour of writing workshop per week with groups of 15 students

- **Profile of the students**
  The G.A classrooms:
  - Nearly 30% of students have parents who are not French
  - 31% of recently graduated don’t find a job
  - A high academic failure rate
  - A majority of students didn’t choose this vocational guidance
  - School-related problems
  - Writing problems
II. Méthodology

- 2 surveys:
  - For the teachers:
    **Survey 1**: Representations of their students: their language practices, their literacy practices, their skills, their problems
    5 teachers who work on the project + 6 teachers who don’t work with us
    **Survey 2**: 5 teachers more or less involved in the project Ecrire@lp
    = 3 French and History teachers and 2 vocational teachers
    Questions about the teachers’ literacy practices, their personal representations about writing and their teaching practices
  - For the students: 1 survey in 3 parts to do at home
The students’ survey

- 3 parts:

  39 students interviewed

  - Part 1: Language and literacy practices
    > 29 answers
  
  - Part 2: Representations about writing
    > 20 answers
  
  - Part 3: Feelings about writing workshop
    > 25 answers
The comparative perspective

- Similarities:
  - Questions about literacy practices
  - Questions about definitions of writing and functions performed by writing in class
  - Questions about the writing workshop

- Questions in «mirror effect»:
  - Teachers’ view of the students skills / students’ answers to the self-assessment items
  - Teachers’ view of the students literacy practices / students’ answers
  - Teachers’ view of the students language practices / students’ statements
III. Contrastive representations between students and teachers

A. Representations of vocation school teachers about their students and students’ statements:

- About literacy practices:
  - 10/11 teachers who think that their students don’t read at home
  - 7/11 teachers who say that their students don’t write at home
Literacy practices: students’ declaration

Declarations of writing practices
- Students who declared a writing practice: 41%
- Students who declared no writing practice: 59%

Declarations of reading practices
- Students who declared a reading practice: 45%
- Students who declared no reading practice: 55%
About language practices

- For teachers: 27% of the teachers’ statements about the causes of the problems of their students are linked to the sociolinguistic realities: «language barrier», another «language at home», «parents who don’t speak french»

- For the students:

  ![Language practices graph]
  - Students who only speak French: 50%
  - Students who speak a foreign language at home: 16%
  - Students who learn a foreign language at school: 34%

  ![Students’ mother tongues graph]
  - Students whose mother tongue is French: 92%
  - Students with a foreign mother tongue: 8%
About the relation to writing of the students

Teacher's point of view

For student's, writing is ...

- Difficult: 67%
- Stressful: 11%
- Irrelevant: 22%
- Important: 0%
- Easy: 0%
- Engaging: 0%
About the relation to writing of the students

- Students’ point of view

Writing, is .... for me

- difficult
- stressful
- irrelevant
- important
- easy
- engaging
- no answer
- other answer

12%
B. Teachers and students’ statements about the writing functions

- Definitions of writing:
  - For teachers:
    Writing = translate oral speech or a way to express yourself
  - For students:
    No definition or only one function: writing = storage

- Function number 1:
  - For teachers: thinking and learning
  - For students: keeping some important information
C. Writing issues: teachers’ and students’ view

- About the difference between « rédiger » and « écrire »:
  - For the teachers -> a quality difference
  - For the students -> no answer / « écrire » = « rédiger » or a quantity difference
For teachers: real problems

For students: « I don’t know » / « I’m good at writing » = « I’m bad »
About writing issues

- For teachers: focus on grammar

Linguistic problems

- Grammar: 49%
- Spelling: 19%
- Punctuation: 14%
- Vocabulary: 19%

- For students: focus on spelling
IV. Discussion and prospects

- Do representations of teachers about their students influence teaching or learning?
  → The Pygmalion effect

- Do divergences about writing functions in class can create misunderstanding?
  → A more explicit way to teach?

- Does the absence of explanation about the writing workshop create other problems for teachers and students at vocational school?

- Ecrire@lp’s prospects
Thank you for your attention
Some references


