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# **Speech, the project : socialisation and entry into writing**

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## **1. Introduction**

This chapter presents research carried out by a French team in the framework of a Leonardo European project dedicated to illiteracy and its prevention. A first part introduces the basis of the research and the people involved. Following this the results are presented and then commented. They are in the order of the pedagogical strategy experimented and considered as effective by the innovation and research group (GIR). These strategies are based on explicit theoretical choices.

In a learning situation, within the group of pupils, a special importance is given to oral language over and above its ordinary function of communication. Certain ways are suggested to better take into account this dimension in the teaching process.

Lastly, a conclusion in the form of a proposal closes the chapter.

### **1.1. Research framework**

The research we are presenting here was under the auspices of the Leonardo European project which was completed in June 2005 and the objective of which was to make a contribution to the fight against illiteracy through prevention with a schooled public and through remediation with an adult public. One of the means consisted in ensuring the articulation between the theoretical reflex, coming from different domains which sometimes ignore or avoid each other, and effective practice, weakly disseminated and of which the theoretical basis remains implicit. The project brought together nine partners from six different countries: universities, teacher training centres and associations. Each piece of work produced by one or several of the partners was validated by the whole project group.

The French partner worked within the framework of a GIR (innovation and research group) supported by the Brittany Rectorate who put their head of science at the disposal of the academic pilot group in the fight against illiteracy. The accommodating body was the Brittany university institute of teacher training (IUFM).

### **1.2. Those involved**

The French team is made up of professionals from various horizons of initial, further and adult education.<sup>1</sup>

Certain of them work in various fields in secondary schools and colleges, others in further or adult education to first or second degree cycle, at the 'Mission Générale d'Insertion' or at the head of the SEGPA which deals with students with learning difficulty and inmates at the Rennes detention centre. This diversity represents a rich variety intended from the moment of recruitment. Each participant has a considerable experience in their domain and the first concern was to pool this experience, made up to a large extent of instruments and approaches, but also to question, renew and develop these tools in order that they be more effective for an illiterate public, for young people in difficulty (MGI, technical college, secondary school, etc) and for teachers.

At first, experience and culture was exchanged and this led to the development of theoretical thought as well as projects and practice. Further to the input of participants experience the team looked to gain benefit from more theoretical exterior sources: conferences, readings, reports from various courses and meetings as well as theoretical works. The group also invited the seminar participation of personalities whose experience in terms of fighting illiteracy has been proven through work with gypsies, prison inmates and in connection with the legal protection of young people, etc...

In this way, apart from developing pedagogical worksheets the GIR bring together the experience of these different parties, as well as that of other people invited to present their work, in order to propose approaches which better take into account the overall aspect of the individual. There is also the question of offering a new approach in teacher training to deal with the pupil in difficulty or with adults on a more general basis, all of this explicitly based on the knowledge resulting from the research.

The first acquisition comes from the shock of the meeting of different cultures all engaged in the same task. The advantages drawn from this experience are recognised by all the participants who have come to know the work done in prisons, at the SEGPA or in secondary schools and colleges and thus have a greater awareness of the shortcomings of the school system concerning the taking in hand of struggling pupils and the absence of teacher training in the prevention of illiteracy.

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence Allain, Jean Claude Baudet, Alain Boutes, Nicole Busquant, Daniel Cario, Thierry Chevolet, Emmanuella Lebrun, Nathalie Martin

The other significant point is the synergising of experience confronted with different publics leading to reflection on the overall educational system, the trainee's approach, whether they are pupil or inmate.

The third point was the forming of a network around the group which enables further learning and, at the same time, transfer of what has been built. Dissemination and validation by others represents encouragement and recognition for the team's work.

## 2. Theoretical bases

### 2.1. Articulating theories and practice: table of restraints

In order to reach its objectives to build instruments of teaching and training the team decided to take stock of the theoretical work and reporting of effective practices. This survey gave forth to a synthesis in the form of a table bringing together the varied aspects of entry into writing, more specifically, learning restraints.

This table is built around ten major headings and now represents a tool as much designed for the identification of restraints as for remediation. It is used in teacher training and has been validated through these respective applications. It is also available to the general public on different web sites and was presented at various public functions (forums, colloquiums, etc). This table appears in a condensed form in an appendix. There are different sub-headings within the major ones and each item is given its theoretical field of reference.

Thus; *Learning* refers one to work on cognitive psychology; *Language* to the field of linguistics and connection with language; *School* to factors relating to representations of practitioners as well as those of the institution itself and its methods; *Culture* refers one to works of sociology and anthropology, and finally; *Psychology* concerns that which studies the affective individual, their difficulties within the school system or outside it where it effects learning and does not concern cognition. A succinct bibliography with references for these domains is included.

The drawing up of this table has enabled the materialisation of the necessity, founded largely on reports of effective practice, to take into account the overall aspect of the individual and not just certain dimensions as does school which only takes into consideration skills or tests which give importance to knowledge and can be classed as cognitive.

The classification within the table should also allow the structuring and homogenisation of illiterate typologies.

## **2.2. Which psychology**

In reading work on illiteracy, as on reading learning, it becomes apparent that cognitive psychology is dominant and reacts predominantly in the spheres where the official educational instruments and decisions are made. It is obvious that contributions in this domain are important for understanding the learning process and brain functions in this matter. However, it would seem that we can no longer limit ourselves to the dimension which can be defined as technical or cognitive process. In addition to these aspects, should we not also take into account the contributions of socio-constructivism which, on the one hand, considers that knowledge is built and, on the other, that each person builds their own, at a rhythm and in a way which is not necessarily the same as that of other people? The social dimension is also present, particularly in confrontation with the other learners. Social aspects are also important in terms of the past social and cultural history of each individual when they enter the learning context and the respective formal teaching institution. Sociology from this point of view is concerned when it accepts school or the classroom as a social environment to be studied as with any other social space outside of the school walls. Social interactivity, such as that developed by Bruner, for example, from work by Vygotski, enables us also to take into account the social dimension of both language and the construction of thought, the way in which knowledge and culture is transferred in each society. Language is a social fact and not just situated in the cognitive order. So, we have to consider the words of experts and the mediation of the teacher and trainer in the community of learners and as directed at each individual learner.

## **3. Speech and illiteracy**

### **3.1. Restraints on learning and speech**

If we refer to the table of learning restraints (appendix) we see that many of the boxes are concerned with the dimension of oral language. Without affirming that this aspect of language learning is crucial, it can be noted that it is heavily present in the school career of the learner. Certain works consider that proficiency in spoken language is a pre-requisite for successful written learning. Though it is important to work on the former it is, however, necessary to

admit that in certain cases pupils who have no speaking difficulties can refuse learning relative to writing. The restraint may also be of a cultural nature, either that of their family in relation to school or writing or concerning their relationship with knowledge and writing. (Le Cunff, 2004, *Speech, knowledge, socialisation*). One cannot work exclusively on oral proficiency while imagining a direct and simple effect on learning linked with writing.

If we refer to the table of restraints headings we can note that the « following cases » are concerned:

First of all, in an explicit way in heading 2, « Access to meaning », 2.2. Language and relation to language.

Then in 3, « Language and relation to language »

3.2. *Language is not perceived as listening to and discovery of others*

3.3. *Language is reduced to a utility function*

3.5. *Distance between the family language and that of school.*

3.6. *Insufficient proficiency in speaking*: here we are talking about school oral language (sociolinguistic dimension, connivance)

3.7. *Difficulty in entering the symbolic dimension of language*: in the table we are talking about writing but before this, speech, the relation to language and therefore culture were concerned

3.8. *Lexical and syntax shortcomings*: obviously it is mainly vocabulary and syntax of the school variety. We are dealing with the failure to take into account or even the stigmatisation of varieties other than the legitimate or dominant type (Bourdieu) by the school and its representatives.

We find in heading 6. « School: representations »:

6.1. *Relationship with knowledge and school*: teaching takes place through way of oral language (and writing) which implies a sociolinguistic dimension, the management of sharing speech in class, etc. We are immediately confronted with the question of school situations.

6.2. *School rules*: these particularly concern the participation in class exchanges which determine the posture of integration/exclusion in the class and in school (Le Cunff et al. 2002, *Integration/exclusion at primary and secondary school: the role of oral language*). The family culture does not always prepare for the identification and respect of school rules. These are implicit rules on which school is founded for learning time. The connivance as defined by Sirota (1988, *L'école primaire au quotidien*, Paris, PUF) functions on the basis of these speech rules.

6.3. *Social clivage* : (cf Bourdieu, 1982; Bachmann, 1993). Speech is analysed in terms of *power*, of *capital* and of *linguistic market* so: language and legitimate culture are those of school and thus create differences in social posture depending on whether one is within this language culture or not.

Concerning heading 7, « School and functioning » : 7.1. *The School/ exterior world*: the meaning of school, in terms of abstract learning, is built up by the pupil through what is conveyed by the teacher's words concerning situations and activities. However, a major part of the functioning remains implicit and is therefore only perceived by pupils through connivance.

Finally, in heading 10, « Personal psychology » : 10.4. *Relational problems within the school syste* : Failure and alternative culture creates problems for the construction of identity, a condition for building a learning project according to our hypotheses. Exchanges are attached to the construction of relationships with others, with teachers and with other members of the establishment.

In this breakdown concerned with speech in different forms the role of oral language in the construction of relative knowledge is not present. However, it goes without saying that verbal interactions in their various functions are implied. This taking into account of speech is recent in the French school system as is the case further up the line in didactic research in French.

### **3.2. Research on speech and school failure**

#### ***Background***

In the history of didactics as with French school programs, the oral/written relationship has particularly evolved since 1992. Until then, except for a brief period when speech found its place in instruction concerning the class, writing was the business of school, not oral language. Since 1992 it has been different. Oral language has gradually become an object of teaching and not just an instrument of communication. Its components have become defined and we now start to see reference in official texts to speech as allowing access to knowledge, identity and socialisation. (Le Cunff, Jourdain, 1999)

It is recognised not just as an academic skill but also as a component of class community functioning which on the whole still remains to be analysed through research.

However, we feel reluctance to teach it within the milieu. Bourdieu would no doubt have an explanation for these school restraints and in particular for the resistance of its main protagonists to question themselves (return to the literary, difficulty to accept the transversal nature of French in primary school as declared in IO 2002...)

### ***Work relative to oral language in its relationship to school failure***

We traditionally associate *school failure* with failure and difficulty in entering into written language. This is why work on speech started in infants school before spreading up to cover all levels of school and colleges. Gradually, it has been added to written language as an object of learning and means of interaction and integrated into various fields of discipline within the school program and also into the questions of citizenship, identity, self construction and the class as a discursive community.

The silent children in infant school were the first subject of the work of A. Florin (1985), or of the CRESAS<sup>2</sup>, after the series of educational works of L. Lentin, classic references of teacher training of the years 1975-85.

Pioneering research teams in 1989 (for example at the I'UFM<sup>3</sup> of Créteil), worked first of all on this question of silence and withdrawal of certain children in infant school and brought to light the complexity of instigating speech, basing their efforts on cited works as well as those from sociolinguistics. Then, the role of the teacher's speech was the subject of much research which renewed work coming from sociolinguistics through the integration of research from the psychology side inspired by Vygotski and Bruner, social interaction. The research project of the Oral-Créteil team '*Speak better, succeed better*' (Le Cunff 1997) constitutes an example of work from this period. The place of the meta-linguist found itself re-enforced, especially by this research but also by following research such as the action research carried out within a class of pupils very much in difficulty in a ZEP<sup>4</sup>. The pedagogical strategies put into place by the teacher allowed validation of the hypotheses developed with ordinary classes in ZEP and elsewhere with other groups of students in most difficulty, (Le Cunff, Cabiron, 1997)

All of this work such as that of E. Nonnon at the IUFM of Lille or the team of B. Schneuwly in Switzerland has enabled identification of restraints on speech, components of speech for

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<sup>2</sup> CRESAS : Centre de recherche de l'Education Spécialisée et de l'Adaptation Scolaire, Institut National de Recherche Pédagogiques

<sup>3</sup> Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres

<sup>4</sup> Zone d'Education Prioritaire



learning and also of language interaction in class. Many teachers or researchers are at present working on oral dimensions of the classroom as can be confirmed by the numerous communications on the subject at the colloquiums of Bordeaux and of Montpellier in 2003, at Arras in 2004 on discussion and of the AIRDF at Quebec in 2004 on language in relation to learning.

Therefore, in different places a didactic of discursive conduct and integrated speech has been built up beyond the meaning of oral language as supported by other disciplines. Methods proposals and teaching projects integrated into life projects (active education) have been published, relayed by the CRDP<sup>5</sup> all over France. We therefore have at our disposal instruments which can be used in terms of remediation or prevention of illiteracy through work on speech, taking into account speech of both the teacher and the pupil. The most fruitful hypotheses would be to consider that there is an overall oral/written language skill which has to be helped through its transfer from one domain to another, for example by building discursive conducts towards writing it is possible to aid in speech construction and vice versa, particularly with younger students.

As one thing leads to another the didactic of speech has built fundamental concepts developing the notion of backing up (Bruner, 1983) to language or even meta-linguistic interaction. Social interaction now has its place alongside cognition (Fayol, Gombert) and socio-construction in the analysis of didactic situations and in the construction of teaching methods.

The emergence and continuing construction of the concept of *discursive community* shows the greater taking into account of the social dimension of oral language in class, the goal of which being of course learning, but also « socialisation », that is to say the building of a community which shares the speech of life experience at least for the duration of a lesson. This construction is, according to our hypotheses (Bernié 2003, Caillé 2004, Le Cunff 2004), a condition for enabling learning whether it be in terms of writing or in other orders of school learning.

### **3.3. Complexity of speech in class**

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<sup>5</sup> CRDP : Centre Régional de Ressources Pédagogiques

After a short history of the emergence as a problem of oral language and its integration into didactic questions we need to further specify the nature of this speech and of the differences between pupils which school, through its normal functioning, transforms into inequality.

Speech, of course, is first of all a means of communication in all school subjects; this has often overwhelmed the others. It was thought that it was sufficient just to create motivating situations of communication in order that the pupils speak and thus progress. Oral language also became a form of alternative, recreation work with less marking to do but, as we know, with the danger of things getting out of order. Furthermore, speech is used as an evaluation mode, class participation, oral exam, etc., for which the implicit rules are not taught.

Speech<sup>6</sup> also needs to be considered as a means of teaching without reducing language skill to the language itself that is to say, to the type of language spoken by the school and its staff in its standardised form, which is written language. Language experts have taught us that written and spoken language are different and each with their varied forms.

As with writing the pupil needs to understand the importance and constraints of different school situations in order to accomplish the language task asked of them. We speak of French as a transversal subject. As with the oral form, it needs to be thought of not just as a mode of communication but also as specific discourse; forming hypotheses, explaining and justifying are not done in the same way in science as they are in reading.

Speech is also a means of constructing one's thoughts. Writing allows the ideas to be accomplished but oral language is perhaps more fundamentally linked to ideas in construction and the application of intellectual processes. This is reflective speech or speech for learning. Didactic in science recommends that pupils verbalise their ideas and thus confront their conceptions in order to build knowledge. The final objective being that exchange allows interiorisation. The teacher's words play an essential role in the construction of knowledge, leaving students speaking time and guiding each individual's ideas and formulation with their speech.

Lastly, the final level of speech is to allow construction of social personality, one's identity. Speaking in front of the class is not without risk. The child who speaks to the group exists as a person and a future citizen but they are exposing themselves. Listening is also learnt as with working in groups, based on exchange and sharing in speaking.

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<sup>6</sup> Extracted from the article in Cahiers Pédagogiques n° 400, 2002, C. Le Cunff

The significance being that the difference in ordinary exchanges outside school and those within it, school conversation if we use the terms of Stubbs (1983), is precisely found in the types of discursive conduct. These are more or less close to what the child is familiar with in their family or social background in general. These discursive conducts are only partly described in research. Certain specialists prefer working on the development of objects to be taught based on those which circulate in society as a whole rather than describe those which circulate in the classroom, (Dolz, Schneuwly, 1998).

Pupils' skills in mastering discursive conduct (either in the pragmatic or the linguistic dimension) are unequal. Particularly in terms of meta-linguistic competences and this, according to our hypotheses shared by Lahire (1994), is where we find the main differences which generate inequality between students in schools, inequality which is fundamentally social and non-psychological (in terms of cognition).

### *Didactics in context*

Didactics in writing as in other disciplines gain from taking into account the context, the social dimension, and not just cognitive construction. This is the hypothesis used by certain works adjacent to practices in the field of fighting illiteracy and also in current research trends (mainly active) in language didactics. Research started recently relating to the discursive community of learners is of this order (Bernié, 2003). This leads us to suggest work first in the relationship with language as well as the pragmatic aspect right from the age of two years. Concentrating in particular on those pupils in difficulty, in class situations need to be verbalised, that is to say make the discursive situations where the learning takes place clear and explicit. Recent official instructions from the French primary school authority use these concepts. Language functions as they are manifested in the pupils' school and school situation skills have to be constructed and subsequent action taken.

The social dimension also includes socialisation, the rules which regulate relationships with others, integration and the discursive community under construction in each class. Work underway on the setting up of an integrated teaching of civility (Le Cunff, 2004), on the taking into account of others' speech and on giving everyone the possibility to speak are going in this direction. In the same way that we teach how to differentiate writing depending on the subject and who we are writing to, giving a correct distance to the other person accordingly, this same technique should be taught in terms of class discussion. This is a pre-

requisite for school to sufficiently integrate all the pupils into a culture built to this effect, in order to enable learning, particularly in writing.

## **4. Socialisation: the project for learning<sup>7</sup>**

### **4.1. Project pedagogy.**

In terms of illiteracy prevention project pedagogy seemed a favorable framework for many members of the GIR team. Pupils in difficulty, it is true, must find remediation to a certain number of their personal problems in this mode of training. The project can either be individual or in a group.

#### ***Individual project.***

The development of an individual project is a strategy used as much in MGI with young adults in difficulty as it is with prison inmates or even by specialist trainers of the PJJ (legal protection of young people).

In this type of project the conception stage is very important. With an individual project the learner is asked to set themselves a certain number of objectives to be reached and to develop the necessary strategies to succeed. They do this by adapting their self-knowledge in order to build a personal didactic of actions, a timetable for them to be carried out before a certain deadline, a series of intermediate evaluations which assess the level of acquisition as well as a final evaluation in order to see if the original goals have been achieved overall.

However, these preliminary lines should not represent an unchangeable obstacle which could subsequently discourage the trainee if things do not go as planned. The project is designed with the help of the teacher. They must help the learner through making them aware of the difficulties, by helping them to set goals which are neither too ambitious nor too modest, and in giving support for the construction of a timetable. Throughout the project they must act as a guide, a moderator of overhasty enthusiasm and an instigator during the phases of encouragement. They must also regularly bring the objectives back into perspective and

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<sup>7</sup> This chapter is based on the substantial work of Nicole Busquant, Emmanuella Lebrun and Daniel Cario, members of the GIR.

prevent them diverging too much from as originally intended. Obviously they are also involved in helping with the assessments, being careful not to substitute their own evaluations which would go against the nature of this type of pedagogy, it is essential that the learner be capable of auto-evaluation in order to be aware of their own progress and failures.

It is obvious that this type of practice requires a differentiated pedagogy which is easier to set up within a smaller body. Here we are confronted with one of the limitations of the individual project, a group class does not always allow for each individual's work pattern to be effectively followed.

### ***Group project.***

Amongst other things the group project will develop the notion of socialisation. Each individual must give their effort for the benefit of all, must react according to those around them and be able to adapt without becoming inconsequential. In fact, each member has to find their place, to become aware of their usefulness and their strong points which will further the progress of the group but also become aware of their weaknesses and possible dependence on the qualities of their partners. For someone in a situation of failure the aim for them is to re-build a positive image of themselves, to socially re-integrate as a potentially capable participant and to re-define their identity. The group also develops concession learning, both personal and reciprocal: what should be accepted and can be expected from others.

The project is defined in terms of projection, it develops a life-cycle, an awareness of the present but also a constructive hypothesis of the future over which the individual can have influence or can even master to a certain extent. All these dynamics lead to an improvement in self-image, a major contribution to the prevention of illiteracy within the school system and subsequently the prevention of post-school illiteracy.

## **4.2. The place of the project within the MGI**

The interview between the trainer and the learner helps build the link between the learning process and the personal project and/or vocational project of the latter. This interview can take several forms: interview in-situ, diagnostic, guidance, follow-up or taking stock. For those in great reading and writing difficulty the role of the interview is above all to set down the framework for the training programme. A trusting relationship can be built up from the moment the person in difficulty feels that they are being listened to and heard (the role of

verbalisation). The idea is to lead the person to understand why they are in this situation and thus set them off on their project.

The trainer must be « available », so that the accompanied person feels an empathic presence. Trainer, or adult guide, whatever the term used, the regular practice of accompaniment carried out by these people enables the prevention of a certain number of school dropping outs because it puts the learner into the role of the subject or player as they are questioned about ‘*how?*’ and not about ‘*what?*’. Through listening the teacher helps the learner to clarify the situation then they develop proposals and possibilities and help in the decision making by identifying all the important factors but avoid taking the decision in place of the learner.

### **4.3. Drama and illiteracy: in technical college**

Recent<sup>8</sup> research in the field of education recommends a greater use of the role of drama and of creativity in the school environment in order to have a positive effect on learning. This is what participants in the GIR have noticed from their experience in vocational secondary institutions. According to one teacher responsible for a predominantly drama-based Art Workshop, theatre can give young children and teenagers alike the possibility to explore realms of imagination and sensitivity, to renew one’s relationship with oneself and to deeply modify one’s self image. Drama can help acceptance of the differences of others and their image of you. It can encourage one to be more at ease with one’s body and give a greater awareness of space. It stimulates curiosity for the past and the need for memory. As a ‘civil art’ it also gives the possibility to exercise a critical mind, to discover team spirit, sharing and solidarity. It guarantees awareness of the world and of the meaning(s) of existence and, furthermore, it is an excellent vehicle for language learning.

One can therefore suppose that drama activities articulated with other convergent actions can play an important role in strategies of illiteracy prevention in primary and secondary school.

#### ***Recovering self-esteem***

Keeping to the same testimony, outside of the classroom in the drama workshop, another completely different story unfolds which shakes up the usual established roles of the dunce and the top of the class and gives everyone a second chance. In theatre everything always starts from scratch. Rehearsals are never an exact repetition of what went before. Each

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<sup>8</sup> This chapter owes much to the work of Nicole Busquant.

rehearsal involves re-inventing everything and finding new resources in order to be *right* and not just miming lifelessly and without interest for those who watch. The playing must be rooted in the present of body and emotions. It is not possible to cheat as this can be seen. For all these reasons « good » and « not so good pupils » are at the same level here because they are all sharing the same experience of the risks taken when entering acting. One exposes oneself, one has to dare to let certain things show about oneself whether you intended or not, this is incredible risk-taking particularly for teenagers. So, drama class does not reproduce everyone's roles as they are often fixed in other classes, no more good or bad students, no more intimidated or confident ones...self-image can therefore be changed as well as one's views of others.

### ***Recognise and actualise each person's knowledge***

According to Anne Vin  rier, *illiterate* is not synonymous with someone who has no ideas, who does not think. Numerous exercises allow participants to express their personal experience, an emotion, hopes or something intimate from the basis of a word or a very simple narrative frame. Improvisation allows for a re-appropriation of someone's personal history in an « unthreatened » space due to an absence of diagnosis or value judgment. Every illiterate person has a knowledge which improvisation games allow them to express and will thus be recognized. Then we are able to see the child or teenager otherwise than in terms of lacking. The group construction of a show permits the participants amongst other things to actualise the knowledge of everyone involved: building sets, designing make-up and directing lights, sound and publicity. In technical college it is an opportunity to build a multi-disciplinary project which will give meaning to all their learning. At school, it is the opportunity, why not, to invite a carpenter father or a dress-making mother...

### ***Building meaning***

Bentolila writes that « functionally illiterate reading is supplied generally by the product of a partial and mainly random picking of clues from the text ». Putting aside the absence of reading goals, he insists on the lack of knowledge concerning the obligations of those who read towards the person who writes in order to explain approximations, misunderstandings and abandon. However, the approach to a classic text, which can of course be memorised without the need for a written script, necessitates extreme attention to words, punctuation and rhythm. The game is to gain contact with the author's proposition, to test the multiple meanings of words and then finally, to negotiate sense through choice of interpretation.

### ***Remedy uneasiness with language.***

Bentolila also writes that functional illiteracy is the manifestation of an overall uneasiness with language, whether it is written or oral. Thanks to the act of communication which develops bonds between characters one can re-learn through playing that speech is made for saying things and holding opinions about things. Misunderstandings which have often been painfully integrated into the language can also be re-visited and it can be discovered that understanding others does not necessarily « go without saying ».

The inability to conceive others who are distanced from oneself also participates in the uneasiness of language. This is why exercises when they are designed in a way to go « from the closed to the opened up, from the downward look to a shared look and from solitude to meeting others » allow one progressively to approach others thanks to listening and sharing of speech which becomes a bond.

#### **4.4. And within prisons**

Even<sup>9</sup> within the prison system or in workshops for basic skills training individuals always gradually end up by forming a sort of group, even at a basic socialisation level which consists in saying hello, assessing others work or being the others' public for written production. At the beginning everyone comes for their own benefit. Socialisation takes place through oral interaction work carried out by the teacher.

## **5. Conclusion in the form of proposals**

The confrontation of results of research in the field of oral didactics together with those emanating from research in educational sciences on the one hand, and the experience and remarks of practitioners in the field of basic skills training (prevention and fight against illiteracy) on the other lead us to the proposal of several ideas for action and for research in the areas remaining in the dark.

Indeed, established ideas from cognitive psychology are important and deserve to be included in searching for solutions as can be born out through their inclusion in the table of restraints.

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<sup>9</sup> This paragraph owes much to work carried out by Thierry Chevrolet (GIR)



However, it comes to light that the different institutions particularly those to which members of the GIR belong do not sufficiently take into account the social and psycho-social dimension of learning. The personal development of the learner, their place within a group, and the sharing of speech and learning situations must be the object of reflection by trainers and teachers in this direction.

At the same time it seems that the school establishment does not prepare the learner for independence under the auspices proposed by the European Council on life-long learning. The representations and the place of the teacher need to be re-thought and transformed. This development in the framework of primary school will simply lengthen roads opened up by the conceptions of innovative teaching. Even so, the problem seems more difficult to deal with in secondary education given the trouble it is taking to evolve representations as much of those involved as of their institutions, except in crises areas and situations where anything goes, however daring. The question of speech touches the formal education system and its values, over and above its practices.

What the GIR have obtained is important. We are not going back over the results. It is without doubt more important in terms of a group work in a European framework which brought into play those involved in initial education and those working with adults in difficulty. This has led to the building up of a network of people and institutions around the problem of illiteracy to underline the weak points and to make proposals.

One can refer back to the conclusions of the previous GIR research report which put into doubt the functioning of *school* as an institution on different points. The table of learning restraints is a major advance already well disseminated and validated by others than the members of the GIR and completed, notably, with remediation columns which the group created and attempted to fill in through use of experimentation. Articulation between theory and practice was one of the tasks but the boxes remain empty despite fruitful suggestions from different contributors.

The knowledge is there, the tools exist which the GIR and others have for the main part listed and analysed even if they have their weak points. In particular, all that is *cultural* or «*psychological*», relating to identity must be the subject of further research. We are especially concerned here by everything with regard to the practices of maintaining or even observation of learners and «sensitisation» of parents.

Each of these fields is connected to speech and verbal interaction. This oral dimension of teaching and training enables the giving of significance to certain successful experiments. Furthermore, the teachers working with a functionally illiterate public have know-how which we at the GIR have identified and brought to the table but it still remains to transpose it to school, notably by the training of its staff in particular. The management staff and those dealing with school affairs in establishments should also be made aware and trained in such a way as to better support the prevention action sometimes instigated by the teachers.

We have to be insistent about the serious mistake which consists in considering illiteracy or difficulties in learning related to writing just in terms of cognitive psychology. This is an aspect written in the restraints table, an important dimension but not unique nor isolated from the rest: the social and cultural context. In the same way the tools, whether they be computing or others, are only effective in the perspective of an overall approach to the person which the GIR adopted. As in the health service, the question is set down concerning the language of the teacher or the trainer towards the student in difficulty and the illiterate adult and also towards the family, particularly in the institution of school.

We ask ourselves about teaching a form of speech which avoids exclusion. Research has to be set up on this theme as it does also on the theme of family relationships at least for school institution. It is the institution and its values which are being questioned. Discussions with the other players in the field in the fight against illiteracy in Brittany where we work (PJJ, prison workers, MGI) have convinced us of the hypotheses that first of all we have to work towards the person feeling recognized in order to let them conceive a project to escape illiteracy.

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## APPENDIX Table of restraints

Restraints	Domains
<b>1. Decoding / Coding</b>	
Inability to understand a word as a whole which can be broken down into sound syllables	Learning
1.2. Incorrect association of letters with their verbal form	Learning
1.3. Difficulty in detecting acoustic similarity in words	Learning
1.4. Deficiency in graphic representation system	Learning
1.5. Deficit at the level of phonological mediation and the resorting to resonant imaging	Learning
1.7. Connection problem between the systems of graphic and semantic representation	Learning
1.8. Deficit in the automation of identification	Learning
<b>2. Access to meaning</b>	
2.1. Poorly automated decoding : all effort is invested in this, so meaning remains out of reach	Learning
2.2. Inability to identify and understand words	Learning
2.3. Inability to understand a simple sentence	Learning
2.4. Invention of meaning through piecemeal understanding	Learning
2.5. Inability to understand a little information in a short text	Learning
2.6. Inability to fully understand a short text	Learning
2.7. Weakness in identification instruments which enable appreciation of the exact meaning of the text	Learning
<b>3. Language, relation to language</b>	
3.1. Cognitive difficulty in recognising speech as a succession of units without meaning**	Learning
3.2. Language is not perceived as listening to and discovering others	Learning Language Culture
3.3. Reduction of language to a utilitarian and vocational function	Language Culture
3.4. Difficulties with textual cohesion	Language
3.5. Distance between family language and that of school	Language Culture
3.6. Insufficient proficiency in oral language	Language
3.7. Difficulty in entering the symbolic dimension of language	Language
3.8. Limitations of vocabulary and syntax	Language
<b>4. Writing</b>	
4.1. Inability to master handwriting movement	Learning
4.2. Lack of skill in forming and joining-up letters	Learning
4.3. Deficient ability to break up words	Learning

4.4. Lack of proficiency in basic spelling (writing)	Learning
4.5. Deficient occupation of page space (writing)	Learning
<b>5. Practices and representations relative to writing</b>	
5.1. Lack of everyday reading and writing practice	Culture
5.2. Difficulties in identifying different types of text.	Culture
5.3. Lack of consciousness of the importance of reading	Culture
5.4. Indistinct representation of the functions of reading- writing and its le	Culture
<b>6. School : representation</b>	
6.1. Relationship with school unfavorable to the process of learning	Culture
6.2. Relationship with knowledge unfavorable to the process of learning	Culture
6.3 Rules of life and school-work perceived as external constraints imposed by adults	Culture
6.4. Social divisions in school milieu	Culture
6.5. Avoidance strategies	Culture Psychology
<b>7. School : functioning</b>	
7.1. Relationship between the school world and that outside	School
7.2. Reading methods	School
7.3. Teacher training	School
7.4. Teacher conception of the learning act	School
7.5. Lack of help to overcome first learning difficulties	School
7.6. Insufficient soliciting of the knowledge being acquired	School
7.7. Children move on to the following stage without basic skills (20%)	School
7.8. Random distribution of remedial means without real analysis	School
<b>8. Culture</b>	
8.1. Refusal of competition as a school value	Culture
8.2. Absence of a demanding but well-meaning mediator to help progress	Culture
8.3. Parents develop no accompanying activity around writing	Culture
8.4. Parents little involved in educational follow-up	Culture
8.5. Inherited behaviour	Culture Psychology
<b>9. Motor deficiencies</b>	
9.1. Problems with sight	Motor
9.2. Problems with hearing	Motor
9.3. Dyslexia and other « physical » problems (articulation and neurological)	Motor
<b>10. Individual psychology</b>	
10.1. Feeling of being useless	Psychology
10.2. Fear of the blank page	Psychology
10.3. Absence of pleasure associated with writing	Psychology
10.4. Psychological problems : family, relationships (within the school system or without)	Psychology