5th International Conference EDU-WORLD 2012 - Education Facing Contemporary World Issues

Students as actors in teachers’ socialization. A sociolinguistic Study within the Romanian context

Cristina Ungureanu\textsuperscript{a}, Andreea Stan\textsuperscript{b}\textsuperscript{*}

\textsuperscript{a}University of Pitesti, Romania
\textsuperscript{b}University of Pitesti, Romania

Abstract

The literature renders obvious the socialisation process oriented from educators towards students. So we question: Can we speak about teachers’ socialisation, with students as main actors? This study includes one questionnaire and semi-direct interviews with Romanian respondents. Students report in a higher frequency that, depending on how they related to learning, they have witnessed a change in the teacher’s attitude. This is also recalled in interviews with teachers, these ones underlining the importance of students’ positive attitude in teaching and in their professional development. Besides, teachers declare that they are influenced by students on a personal plan.

© 2013 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under CC BY-NC-ND license.
Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of the University of Pitesti, Romania

Keywords: socialisation, teachers, subjectivity, enunciation, markers

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Teachers’ Socialisation Concept

Teacher socialisation is “the process whereby the individual becomes a participating member of the society of teachers” (Danziger, 1971, cited by Zeichner & Gore, 1990:329) [1].

Teachers’ socialisation presupposes “the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and norms of both the teaching profession and the local school community” (Nasser-Abu Alhijaa & Fresko, 2010: 1592) [2].

\textsuperscript{*} Corresponding author. E-mail address: andreea_stan_2@yahoo.com
1.2. Students’ role in Teachers’ Socialisation

Teachers’ socialisation is considerably influenced by students. Students’ influence occurs in the global approach of the teaching and of the language used by teachers and also at the level of the specific methods used in teaching (Doyle, 1979). Larson (1986) emphasizes that the impact of students on teacher socialisation is observed especially on experienced teachers (cited by Zeichner & Gore, 1990) [1].

The teaching profession involves constant interaction with students. The authors point out the positive impact a quality teacher-student relationship has on both partners in the teaching and learning process. Focusing on developing positive relationships with students, in which they manifest their genuine interest towards these ones, teachers encourage pedagogical discussion which "hold the interest and imagination of young people" (Carr, 2005:265, cited by Aultman, Williams-Johnson, Schutz, 2009:637) [3].

Within a caring relationship, dialogue is the instrument through which a person constructs himself/herself and discovers himself/herself. Building a caring relationship between teacher and student is based on the trust that the student has in the teacher. Mutual trust is an important factor in the learning process, teachers are more inclined to help students, and students are more receptive to teacher observations (Kim, Schallert, 2011) [4].

Riley (2009) emphasizes the existence of dyadic attachment relationships between students and teachers. Students within this relationship manifest a need for a secure emotional base from teachers, which gives them the confidence to engage in new learning experiences. At the same time, teachers need students to form a professional identity [5].

Nurmi (2012) aims to identify those characteristics of students which have the greatest impact on teacher behaviour during class and on his/her methods of training and further research to focus on the changes produced by each student during the training process. The same author stresses the need for teachers to recognize the role that students have in teachers’ instruction. A series of psychological mechanisms of cognitive and affective order, can explain the impact students have on teachers. In relations with students during teaching, teachers develop belief in them (Borko & Putnam, 1996, Calderhead, 1996; Doyle, 1979, 1979b, cited by Nurmi, 2012) [6]. Meanwhile, students have an impact on teachers and on emotional level, causing some emotional reaction on their part. Based on these beliefs and emotional reactions, teachers adapt their teaching methods and the interaction with students [6].

Research Objectives and Methodology

The specific objectives of the study are the following:
• Identify features of students’ "subculture" (values, norms, ways of life) from students’ and teachers’ perspective;
• Study the perceptions of students and teachers on teacher-student relationship;
• Investigate expectations that students have from their teachers;
• Identify the perceptions of students and teachers on how students socialize teachers.
• Investigate teachers' perceptions about the role that students play in their professional development.
• Analyse the subjectivity markers in the semi-direct interviews.

The respondents of our study were students and professors at a university in Romania. The questionnaire was applied to 101 students, belonging to different areas of specialisation: Psychology (18.5%), International Relations and European Studies (40%), History (6.1%), Communication Sciences (7.7 %) and Accounting (27.7%). Students’ ages scaled from 18 to 31 years and two thirds were represented by female (67%) and a third by male (33%). The teachers’ sample included 20 teachers, among which 13 women and 7 men, having different specialisations, and aged between 31-70 years. The selected teachers have a minimum of 5 years’ experience in the academic environment.
The methods used were the questionnaire and the semi-direct interviews. After completing questionnaires and conducting interviews, the subjects’ responses were analysed qualitatively by the two authors. The authors noted recurring ideas in the participants’ responses and established codes significantly designed to illustrate the idea expressed (Gibbs, Taylor, 2005) [7]. Finally the authors carried out a linguistic analysis of the semi-direct interviews in order to emphasize enunciation subjectivity markers based on the language theories of C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1980) [8] and A. Mustatea (2010) [9].

**Linguistic Analysis of semi-direct interviews: aspects of subjectivity in enunciation**

Starting from the Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s theory of enunciation (1980) we proceeded to the analysis of the means of expressing subjectivity in the semi-direct interviews, studying the ways in which the speakers left their marks on utterances and how their subjectivity inscribed on the semantic content of utterances, whether implicitly or explicitly. Therefore, we considered the following tokens as linguistic resources for modalising discourse: deictics, modal verbs, verbs with positive versus negative semantic content, modal adverbs, evaluative adjectives.

As far as deictics are concerned we identified the following categories of markers:

- the speaker’s subjectivity is expressed only by *deictics* (1st person in the singular)
  
  “I am fully motivated to work better with the students when *I* see them serious.”

- the subject of enunciation is expressed by *deictics* (1st person in the plural)
  
  “Our communication with them is very important.”

- the subject of enunciation is expressed by *deictics* (1st person of singular) + affective modality
  
  “… I do not stand students with piercing …”

- the subject is expressed by *deictics* (2nd person of singular)
  
  “You have to keep your feelings under control.” “They stimulate *you*.”

- without formally expressing the subject
  
  “…not getting informed in time… “…inspiration to negotiation ….”

- the subject is expressed only by *affective modality*
  
  “This is a good method. “

Modal verbs express modality, and this is defined as “grammaticalized expression of the subjective attitudes and opinions of the speaker including possibility, probability, necessity, obligation, permissibility, ability, desire and contingency” (Bybee et all. 1994 : 176-181) [10]. This mark of subjectivity is also felt in our survey, reflecting the speakers’ attitude towards the content of the proposition. Part of our respondents make use of modal auxiliaries (*can, could, must, may, should*) but also of certain verbs which inherently convey meaning to do with obligation, necessity, inclination or probability (*want to, would like to, tend to, appear to, require, permit*).

Another category of markers expressing subjectivity is constituted by the verbs. We noticed the tendency of using verbs whose semantic content is of subjective nature. Therefore we divided them into two categories:

Verbs with subjective positive content: to encourage, to praise, to stimulate, to improve, to motivate, to impress, to mobilize, to involve.

Verbs with subjective negative content: to enervate, to irritate, to admonish, to renounce, to get bored.

The marks of subjectivity are not expressed only by deictics but also by other subjectivity indicators (modalisateurs). Modalisation of a text is the manner in which the speaker is going to let his views on the subject of his text. These markers relate to how the speaker appears in the text, how he comes into contact with the recipient/interlocutor and his attitude towards the topic of discussion.

These kinds of modalisateurs can be found in our study since one of the questions launched in the semi-direct interviews was if the interviewees (teachers) considered that the students had a role in their professional development. The answers contained to a higher extent such subjectivity indicators as *obviously, of course, yes definitely, certainly, without doubt, absolutely*. These are modalising adverbs expressing certainty. Three
respondents used several times in their explanations another significant subjectivity indicator - *maybe* - which is an uncertainty marker.

“They make me feel younger, *maybe*...” “*Maybe* they influenced me”

Modal adjectives are other markers of expressing subjectivity and our interviewees used to high extent evaluative adjectives: a very *good* feedback, *interesting* issues, *rigid* person, *inadequate* behaviour, *receptive* students, *profound* matters, *open* approach, *simple* method, *patient* person, etc.

### Data interpretation

#### 1.3. Students’ values

When faced with the situation of describing young people’s values, although most students emphasize education as the main value, they also point to a similar extent to the conversion of values, illiteracy, imitating negative patterns by youth. They also mention fun and friends as values. When study subjects are placed in a position to enumerate the things they themselves value, the *family* appears in most of responses, followed closely by *education*. Other values are listed such as *respect* and *friendship*. One can notice that, although *fun* is mentioned with high frequency among young people as valued when describing their own value system, students choose not to include it. The role of education in life is perceived by the study subjects primarily in terms of training and personal development (enrichment of general culture, maturity, adaptation in relationships with others, skills development and access to employment). Students’ point of view is not entirely shared by teachers, the latter declaring that the students’ value system includes, besides the issues declared by students (friendship, entertainment, family), also a strong inclination to materialism and pragmatism. Teachers say that students are oriented towards material gains and are interested in the practical usefulness of the studies. Another discrepancy between student and teacher responses is the fact that teachers do not see education as a value of youth. Indifference and impertinent behaviour of students lead teachers to create a negative image on the younger generation, who, as one teacher specifies, "does not value anything."

#### 1.4. Students’–teachers relationships and students’ expectations

Teachers describe relationships with students as very good, characterised by respect, friendship, partnership, professionalism. In contrast, students give more details of relationships, emphasising the positive aspects (mentioned also by teachers) and the negative ones. Thus, students emphasize the emotional side of the relationship, pointing also its bottlenecks caused by the attitude of superiority and extreme authority manifested by teachers, maintaining a distance from students, lack of flexibility and vision. Some students speak of a "strictly" professional relationship, weakly sustained on the affective level. Three students admit however that a quality relationship depends on both partners.

Students’ answers provide clues about their expectations regarding the relationship with teachers. The majority emphasises the need for emotional support from teachers and also the desire that the teachers should train and stimulate them in learning through modern methods, by explanation and correlation of theory with practice. Consequently, students’ expectations are both emotional and cognitive in as far as teachers are concerned.

#### 1.5. Students’ role in Teachers’ Socialisation

Another objective of this research was to evaluate students’ perceptions about the impact they have on teachers’ behaviour and attitudes. We asked students to give examples of situations in which they realised a
change in teacher behaviour. The respondents’ answers revealed two main aspects: the discipline (observing rules of conduct) and the degree of interest shown by students in teaching.

Teachers’ responses regarding the way that they perceive students’ influence on their behaviour, attitudes and values, can be classified according to two dimensions: personal and professional level.

On a personal level, subjects stated that students had a role in their evolution and change as individuals, so they learned to be more tolerant, flexible, patient, enthusiastic, honest, to accept different views and to be open to negotiation, to control their emotions, to behave exemplarily in order to provide models to students, urging them also to a self-assessment of their behavior in relation to the younger generation.

On a professional level, teachers stress the role of students in developing job specific skills, namely, continuous updating of expertise held, motivation to continue learning and improving, adjusting teaching methods to the needs and requirements of students. A teacher stresses the role of student successes in creating a sense of professional fulfillment.

Teachers declare that there are situations in which they make use of aspects related to students to justify/excuse their reactions and decisions. Thus, they claim that during their career, due to reduced level of preparedness of students they had to simplify the content taught and to lower standards of evaluation.

References