

Enrollment of Students in Difficulty: A Practical Approach for Improving Academic Outcomes

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Abstract

Review Article

The enrollment of students in difficulty by teachers is a complex process that requires a pragmatic and adapted approach. This study arises from comprehensive and descriptive research on teaching activity in three schools (public, private, and confessional) in the city of Dschang. Students in difficulty have specific needs that must be considered to enable academic success. Conducted from the perspective of professional didactics, teachers play a key role in the identification and support of students. Through a detailed analysis of classroom interactions, we highlight the language strategies, contextual adjustments, and professional gestures mobilized by teachers to foster participation, engagement, and comprehension among students in difficulty. Openness, co-construction of meaning, and stabilization of engagement are each influenced by didactic, relational, and situational determinants. Considering these elements in teacher training could enhance the effectiveness of inclusion and remediation practices.

Keywords: Learning difficulties, students in difficulty, language and interaction, knowledge and didactics.

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INTRODUCTION

In classrooms in general, and particularly in primary education, student heterogeneity is a daily reality. Among the challenges encountered, the enrollment of students in difficulty that is, their active and sustained engagement in academic tasks is particularly crucial. Such enrollment does not occur naturally, especially when students face cognitive, linguistic, or socio-emotional obstacles. The objective of this study is to pragmatically characterize the different phases through which teachers lead students in difficulty to engage in classroom activities, as well as the determinants influencing this dynamic. Our approach relies on linguistic pragmatics, the didactics of situations (Brousseau, 1998), and the joint management of attention (Bruner, 1983; Sensevy, 2011).

This study allowed us to problematize the notion of enrollment through a descriptive and comprehensive analysis of approximately ten personalized support sessions conducted by three teachers with students in difficulty in CM1 and CM2 classes. We approached this professional teaching situation from the perspective of professional didactics (Pastré, Mayen, Vergnaud, 2006; Vinatier, 2009), which

focuses on the analysis of professional activities in real-life contexts, within the theoretical framework of conceptualization-in-action defined by Pierre Pastré and Gérard Vergnaud.

Given the linguistic specificities of teaching activities, particularly scaffolding situations (Bruner, 1983) observed in the personalized support sessions, we centered our approach on the pragmatic interpretation of speech acts (Austin, 1970; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008), i.e., through the characterization of teachers' intentions and the effects of their contextually situated utterances. The interpretation of teachers' speech acts can only be constructed through inferences between the observed didactic situations and pedagogical contexts.

The first part of this article establishes the theoretical frameworks of the research, notably enrollment and engagement; the pragmatics of interaction; didactics; and the didactic contract adapted to teaching situations, whose linguistic dimension has been informed by contributions from pragmatic linguistics. We then explain our choice of Bruner's framework of enrollment to describe student engagement in activities proposed by the three observed teachers.

Subsequently, the methodology is presented, including the phase of self-confrontation interviews, which allows reflective cross-analysis between the researcher's observations and the professional's representations of their own practice. Finally, the main results on the characterization of the enrollment of students in difficulty by school teachers, from the perspective of linguistic pragmatics—particularly situated speech acts—are discussed.

I- Theoretical Framework

From the perspective of educational sociology and cognitive sciences, enrollment is understood as the act of bringing a student into academic activity by mobilizing their attention, motivation, and understanding. For Bruner (1983), this process requires scaffolding from the adult, who continuously adjusts their support according to the student's current state. Pragmatics focuses on language use in context, particularly intentions, presuppositions, inferences, and mutual adjustments between speakers. Within the school setting, pragmatic analysis allows for the decoding of verbal and non-verbal means through which teachers attempt to involve students.

Engagement in activity presupposes an explicit or implicit didactic contract: the student must understand what is expected of them. Therefore, enrollment involves the progressive establishment of this contract, sometimes reconstructing it when it is disrupted.

I-1 CONTRIBUTIONS OF LINGUISTIC PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics examines, on one hand, context-dependent phenomena inherent in indexical terms, that is, those whose reference is determined by parameters linked to the enunciation context, as well as presupposition phenomena. On the other hand, it sometimes aims to theorize the inferences drawn from linguistic statements based on our general knowledge of the world and assumptions about speaker intentions.

The main works of Oswald Ducrot focus on presupposition, that is, the fact that certain linguistic expressions, to be appropriately used, require that interlocutors share certain beliefs (for example, to understand correctly "Paul also came," all participants must share the belief that someone else besides Paul has come). Ducrot also examined how some statements convey, beyond their literal meaning, implicit information. Pragmatics is also considered by other theorists as a science of communication (e.g., Swiss linguist Jacques Moeschler and Anne Reboul, *La pragmatique aujourd'hui*, 1998). In this broader perspective, it studies language use in communication and knowledge construction.

Teaching activities are largely language-based and rely on communicative skills that are rarely

addressed in initial or continuing teacher education (Bucheton et al., 2004). These linguistic specificities are amplified in individualized support situations with small groups. Therefore, we chose to complement our theoretical and methodological approach with the fundamental contributions of pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that considers context as essential for understanding speech acts (Austin, 1970; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008). We adopted much of our methodological toolkit from Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (2005) synthetic approach: data collection and transcription, rigorous interpretation, contextual indexing, and, of course, teachers' speech acts, always keeping in mind Austin's (1970) famous dictum, "when saying is doing" (*How to Do Things with Words*).

In our study, the focus was placed on teachers' speech acts for enrolling students in difficulty into a task or helping them engage cognitively and persevere.

I-2 Approach of Professional Didactics

Our descriptive and comprehensive approach falls within the perspective of professional didactics (Pastré, Mayen, Vergnaud, 2006; Piot, 2008; Vinatier, 2009), which primarily aims at analyzing professional competencies mobilized in situ, notably within the theoretical framework of conceptualization-in-action and the functional hypothesis of Piagetian schemes revisited by Gérard Vergnaud, complemented by Pierre Pastré's notion of pragmatic concept.

Professional didactics seeks to analyze work to train professional competencies; it relies on Piaget-inspired conceptualization-in-action theory. Its core hypothesis is that human activity is organized into schemes, whose central core consists of pragmatic concepts. It seeks a balance between two perspectives: a theoretical and epistemological reflection on the foundations of human learning, and the operationalization of its analytical methods for use in training engineering. Initially developed in industrial work, this work analysis has been extended to service and teaching activities. This work analysis serves a dual purpose: it provides a foundation for training design and, through its reflective dimension, serves as a major learning instrument.

Analyzing teachers' professional activity requires a cross-disciplinary and plural approach to better describe its complex pragmatic specificities, notably linguistic, pedagogical, and didactic. Methodologically, activity analysis is inferred from the examination of the teacher's "actual task" (Rogalski, 2003), in line with the distinction between the prescribed task (Leplat & Hoc, 1983) and the teacher's real activity, taking into account the specificities of pedagogical contexts and didactic situations.

Our research aligns with a relatively recent application of professional didactics to human interaction professions, particularly teaching activities (Piot, 2008; Vinatier, 2009), enriched by contributions from linguistic pragmatics.

Whereas enrollment, according to Callon (1986), refers to the mechanism by which a role is defined and attributed to an actor who accepts it, in the context of an open school, incoming teachers have no choice but to accept their role. If one refuses enrollment, the pressure from the project and the active core is so strong that the only alternative is to leave. Thus, the active core ensures the enrollment of convinced actors and the withdrawal of the reluctant. Forced enrollment ultimately leads either to interest and the formation of new alliances of varying strength, or to failure and the resignation of actors refusing forced enrollment.

Our professional experience with students experiencing “serious and persistent” learning difficulties guided our research problem toward one of teachers’ main professional challenges: effectively engaging the student in genuine cognitive mobilization. That is, as Lemoyne and Conne (1999) note, fostering increasingly autonomous cognitive activity, rather than merely applying “learned” procedures, which limit cognitive engagement and confrontation with one’s own ignorance, even if they initially reassure and reinforce the sense of competence (Bandura, 2003).

This issue of effective engagement led didacticians to the concept of devolution in the theory of didactic situations (Brousseau, 1998). “Devolution is the act by which the teacher makes the student accept responsibility for a learning situation (adidactic) or problem and accepts the consequences of this transfer themselves” (Brousseau, 1998, p. 303).

Although many studies have addressed, directly or indirectly, student enrollment—through disciplinary didactics or teacher professionalism (Perez-Roux & Troger, 2011; Masselot & Robert, 2012)—the originality of our approach is to specifically problematize enrollment from the pragmatic perspective of professional gesture, by characterizing the linguistic resources mobilized in situ by teachers.

II- METHODOLOGY

The analysis is based on the observation of classroom sequences in CM1 and CM2 (equivalent to 4th and 5th grades), with students identified by teachers as having difficulties in French and life and earth sciences (SVT). Teachers were expected to mobilize professional resources specific to scaffolding (Bruner, 1983).

Observations took place in three different peri-urban schools in the city of Dschang. During the 2022–2023 school year, each teacher (3 in total) was observed

during four support sessions, resulting in a total of 12 digitally recorded sessions, all of which were transcribed. Each teacher was interviewed about their pedagogical objectives and the didactic situations implemented, including the tasks proposed, the materials provided, and the specific difficulties of the students being supported. These initial descriptions contextualized the analysis of language interactions. An interview was conducted after each observed and/or filmed lesson with the teacher.

During each explication interview, we worked with the written transcription of the language interactions from the filmed personalized support session, which allowed us to identify the most interesting occurrences or exchanges in advance. The main objective was to have teachers describe the didactic or pedagogical goals targeted, often prompting them to reflect on each of their actions, verbal or non-verbal, in order to articulate them. Thus, it is the teachers’ utterances—their speech acts, from a linguistic pragmatics perspective—that constitute the raw data of this research, supplemented by auto-confrontation interviews and the filmed sessions.

III- RESULTS

The results highlight the complexity of enrolling students in difficulty. The teacher acts as a mediator between knowledge and the student, in a constantly adjusted relationship. Successful enrollment depends less on the instruction itself than on the quality of the interaction, the teacher’s posture, and the opportunities provided for the student to act within a secure framework

III-1 Three Phases and Five Main Determinants of Enrollment

Based on theoretical classifications, the initial exploratory phase of this research aimed to approach the illocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of the speech acts produced by teachers. The analysis began with the characterization and description of the teachers’ didactic and pedagogical goals. Subsequently, we examined the goals and resources that allow teachers to mobilize their students and enroll them in the proposed tasks. We conceptualized three main phases of enrollment for students in difficulty: framing the session, presenting the activity or task to be completed, and successive, more or less individualized prompts.

We then identified five main in-situ determinants of enrollment: building a trusting relationship and a calm working atmosphere; mobilizing attention; encouraging and valuing students; attributing a positive status to errors; controlling the pace of the session or task execution. These complement essential preparation and didactic mastery.

a. Presentation of the Work to be Completed

Teachers mobilized multiple routines and resources, whose linguistic dimensions we described, to present the planned activity. We noted the enunciative involvement of teachers, sometimes associated with a near future tense, which encourages students to engage in the proposed activity.

Examples:

- “We are going to work again on conjugation, grammatical agreements, and synonyms.”
- “We are going to study third-group verbs.”
- “We are going to analyze the text.”
- “We are going to find the answers together to see where they are in the text.”

Some teachers explained the purpose of the activities: these exercises are not difficult; they focus on conjugating verbs ending in “oir” (e.g., falloir, mouvoir, pouvoir) and “dre” (e.g., peindre, étendre, comprendre).

Formulating instructions represents a real professional challenge, as achieving cognitive clarity (Fijalkow, 1993) for each student is difficult. Student understanding of instructions is a *sine qua non* condition for engagement in the proposed task. During the observed sessions, we noticed that some teachers lingered on difficult words or expressions, asking students:

- “Are there any expressions or phrases you don’t understand?”
- “Did you understand the meaning of this word or sentence?”
- “Do you understand this sentence?”
- “What is language?”
- “An expression is speaking with someone else.”
- “Mourir d’envie means to really, really want something.”
- “Droit de naissance means being the older brother or sister.”
- “If someone tells you to take a nap, it means go to sleep.”

Key information could involve the number of questions in an instruction: “How many questions are there?”; a didactic variable compared to a previous exercise: “Did they include the construction points?”; an inducing word in a statement: “What is the important word here?”

Some teachers required students to reformulate the instructions through open-ended questions:

- “What did I ask you to do?”
- “What should we do here?”
- “What was the instruction I gave?”
- “Did you understand what I just said? Can you repeat it?”
- “What do you have to reproduce?”

- “What are we looking for?”

Students tried to restate instructions in their own words using synonyms, paraphrases, gestures, or facial expressions. For activities similar to ones previously encountered, some teachers treated the instruction as a cognitive and enunciative economy, relying on ritualized pedagogical routines familiar to students. Their utterances were often semiotic, implicit, or truncated due to habitual practices. For example, in a grammar analysis activity, simply reading the sentence was enough to start the task for the student.

b. Use of Personal Repetition

Enrollment is not limited to the initial phase of a session but requires multiple, more or less individualized prompts if the teacher genuinely aims to engage and cognitively mobilize each student. Prompting resources are fundamental for a “fragile” audience of students in difficulty, who are accustomed to making mistakes, sometimes abandoning or avoiding failure situations to preserve their face (Goffman, 1973), i.e., a not-too-negative self-image. These resources allow durable enrollment in the task.

We observed the use of reformulated instructions to better match students’ task completion level:

- “Use the words you need to make the response sentence. Go ahead, write.”
- “What is this number? How could we write it? Try to write it.”

Advice was also given to guide students toward self-correction and task completion:

- “Take that out / then correct your mistakes there.”
- “Go ahead / correct this line / okay?”

Encouragements were used to prompt students to restart and persevere:

- “Let’s do it again.”
- “You can try again.”
- “Take another strip and try to find a quarter.”
- “Start over then.”
- “You need to try again.”
- “Go ahead, try again.”

Teachers often did this without necessarily understanding the positive impact of cognitive engagement and perseverance on student motivational dynamics (Viau, 1994).

One of the most frequently used routines to promote enrollment is what Gérard Sensevy and Serge Quilio (2002) called “didactic reticence,” which consists of the teacher pretending not to know how to do something, thereby prompting students to engage. Teachers are frequently tempted to “tell the student directly what they should know,” even though they are

aware of the limited effectiveness of this purely declarative, transmissive strategy. Teachers must resist giving answers directly when the opportunity appears.

The most explicit form of didactic reticence observed was for teachers to tell students that they did not know the answer:

- “I don’t know, think about it.”
- “I don’t know. Maybe.”
- “I am waiting for you to teach me.”
- “I don’t know. You need to correct it.”

This didactic role-play allows students to engage cognitively, persevere, and, most importantly, not wait for the teacher to provide the solution without attempting it themselves.

c. The Course of a Session

In the didactic sequence, situating the session within its broader context is one of the first observable goals of certain personalized support sessions. The aim is to frame the session in terms of temporal continuity and coherence within the sequence, but above all, to position it relative to the student’s learning project. Students are made aware of how the current session builds on previous ones and prepares for subsequent sessions. The observed primary school teachers used open-ended questions to elicit children’s recollections of prior lessons:

- “What did we do last time?”
- “Who wants to explain what we did last time?”
- “Who remembers where we left off?”

These questions and the explanatory reminders that followed were mostly formulated with various forms of enunciative involvement (we/us/I).

Some of the observed teachers attempted, more or less consciously, to have students construct learning goals or projects. We cataloged different approaches through which teachers establish learning goals for their students, particularly via different types of questioning.

We observed questioning regarding students’ roles in these personalized support sessions, and sometimes more directly, explicit explanations by the teacher about their role:

- “Do you know why you are here?”
- “The solution was to meet in small groups since it’s not always easy in the large class, and to see if we can find a method or technique to help you.”

Some teachers occasionally directly stated their expectations and the links to upcoming sessions related to each student’s learning projects:

- “On Tuesday, I would like to assess you on the grammar lesson to see if you can manage it on your own and if it has helped you.”

- “I will give you a small task to see how you manage on your own.”
- Others attempted to ask students about their prior difficulties or errors made in class:
- “Do you remember your little difficulties?”
- “We had seen that there were small issues we had encountered.”
- “There were minor mistakes.”
- “We had noticed that we still had some difficulties.”

Enunciative involvement is again present with the use of the indefinite pronoun “on,” which is highly ambiguous and creates a pedagogical or “artistic” blur regarding the teacher’s integration into the student group. Some questions were more precise and personalized:

- “Ali, do you remember what was problematic on your diagram?”
- “And you, what was your biggest difficulty?”

Enunciative involvement is a linguistic, even pragmatic, device that expresses a routine based on the teacher’s presumed participation in the activity:

- “Together, we found the answers to these questions.”
- “We reviewed this last time.”
- “The other day, we already saw how many bones are in the human skeleton.”

This is a kind of role-play in which the teacher acts as if searching for solutions with the students, while the students know it is actually their task to work. This posture of involvement better enrolls students, who feel they are participating in a shared adventure with their teacher, with the added benefit of the mimetic dimensions of this strategy (Delannoy, 2005).

Sometimes teachers went further by asking students about progress achieved and progress still possible:

- “So we can see that this is not yet mastered. So, we’ll have to do it again and again. But on the other hand, it’s already better.”

These teacher comments relate to routines of encouragement and valorization, which contribute to building a positive status for errors, without neglecting explicit verbalizations of the postulate of educability:

- “I believe we will succeed.”
- “You can do it.”
- “I am sure you can do it.”

Without claiming exhaustiveness, we chose to present the five main determinants of enrollment for students in difficulty, which interact reciprocally to construct the complexity of teaching activity. Recall that, without underestimating their importance, our research problem does not focus on the primary didactic aspects of session preparation and environment arrangement

(Brousseau, 1998); it emphasizes the pragmatic and linguistic aspects mobilized in situ by teachers.

IV- Main Determinants of Student Enrollment

1. Work and Trust Relationship

Through numerous routines, teachers can build a calm working atmosphere and a productive work relationship. Some of these routines were observed and described in their linguistic dimensions. We noted the influence of politeness on the quality of teacher-student relationships. Drawing from Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2005), we use the paradigm of politeness as an "Arch principle," which mitigates the potentially threatening nature of speech acts by protecting the mutual desire of participants to preserve their faces (Goffman, 1973).

We sought to identify the teachers' language interventions that preserve the harmonious nature of interpersonal relationships. These strategies are varied; only the most significant examples from our observations are presented here:

- Polite requests:
- "Would you like to write on your slate?"
- "Please, André, would you write on your slate?"
- Thanking students:
- "Thank you, Ali."
- "Thank you, André."
- "Put your belongings in your bags, thank you."
- Affectionate nicknames:
- "Thank you, young man."
- "What do you want, Miss White?"
- Careful requests for help:
- "Please, André, can I also see what you are hiding?"
- "Would you like me to help you?"
- Humor respecting the student's "face" (Goffman, 1973):
- "Excellent, you are a brave boy."

These humorous remarks require reciprocal knowledge of students' habits and individual characteristics to avoid frustration. To soften directives, teachers also used the conditional:

- "Could you draw an egg?"
- "Could you give me the number of teeth of an adult?"
- "Would you be able to reread this one?"

To avoid pedagogical overpressure, some teachers familiarized themselves completely with learners:

- "Do you want to do your exercises alone, and then we'll check together if you understood?"

We also observed that, beyond the small support groups of two or four students per teacher, a calm working atmosphere was maintained through attention to

behaviors. Some teachers had to correct certain behaviors through verbal interventions:

- "Silence."
- "Be quiet."
- "We are learning; the game is over."
- "Wait."
- "Go back to your place."
- "Make less noise because your classmate needs to concentrate."
- "Calm down."

Explicit reminders of rules were sometimes necessary:

- "Raise your hand."
- "If we disagree, raise your hand."
- "One at a time."
- "Get used to counting in your head."
- "Don't look at your classmate's notebook."

To balance verbal participation among students, teachers implemented routines for distributing speech without long explanations, using gestures, nods, glances, or simply calling a student's name. They ensured equitable speaking time between proactive and shy students. These Non-Verbal Acts (NVAs), sometimes called "praxic" or "instrumental" gestures to express communicative intent, or "physical doings" (Goffman), are actions performed by non-verbal means. These praxic NVAs are semiotically meaningful only in context.

2. Focusing on Attention

Routines aimed at mobilizing attention are fundamental and come into play from the very first moments of student engagement. We observed very general warnings, often accompanied by voice modulation and gestures, which tended to accompany task execution rather than the initial stages of engagement ("Be careful how you write these words"; "Watch your sentence there"; "Attention"). We also noted attempts to focus attention on auditory or visual perceptions, using repeated questions, emphasis on key information through voice modulation, and pointing with a ruler, marker, or finger, which thus became real instruments (Rabardel, 1999). In terms of activity prompts, some teachers repeated students' statements in interrogative forms to challenge them and cognitively re-engage them ("Oh really?" "Are you sure?" "You can't?" "Oh yes? Do we add an 's'?" "With the compass?" "A rounded belly, do we draw it with the compass?").

3. Encouragement and Improvement

Sequences of valorization and encouragement were expressed through:

("It's better than last time, you put the right answer"; "There you go, you've started"; "I feel it's going better for you"; "It's starting to come, right?"; "We're beginning to get there"), either by highlighting even small or incomplete successes ("You had started

doing something interesting there”; “You placed the organs well on the skeleton”; “You’re working well”; “You did very well to place the liver below the heart”; “Once you have placed them correctly, you can explain the blood pumping diagram”; “Here, you’re placing your ruler correctly”), or through global but emphatic praise, notably with facial expressions or positive hand gestures (“Very good” or “Good” were widely used). Sometimes, teachers personalized encouragement by specifying the student’s name. This seemingly trivial practice of individualizing successes appeared to have very positive effects on students (smiles of satisfaction and stronger cognitive engagement in activities).

These interventions aim to reduce the negative impact of repeated failures on students’ sense of competence and self-esteem. The sense of competence (Bandura, 2003) is constructed by the subject within intersubjective interactions. Sometimes, success alone is insufficient for the student to develop a positive self-image. Teacher mediation is often necessary for students to become aware of their cognitive performance.

4. Accepting Student Mistakes

This principle aligns with both constructivism and the postulate of educability. Beyond declarations of intent, constructing a positive status for errors is a genuine professional act for the teacher. Errors thus become “a tool for teaching” (Astolfi, 1997). The linguistic resources that support constructing a positive status for errors present mistakes as sources of progress on the one hand, while also downplaying them as much as possible on the other (“You have the right to make mistakes, it’s okay”; “This is incorrect, it needs to be corrected”). Some teachers indicated in the explication interviews that they tried to implicitly convey a message to their students:

Your mistakes matter (“It’s good that you are already starting to understand; you know it’s not easy for you, so it’s already very important”; “We can make mistakes and then correct them; that’s how we move forward”; “What matters is that it serves as a lesson”; “Don’t erase your construction points”; “Don’t erase your calculations”).

These last two interventions by teachers may remain too implicit, but they clearly indicate that visible traces of student activity are important for understanding mistakes. Sometimes, this involves breaking with certain aspects of usual didactic contracts (“Just because I ask you the question doesn’t mean something is necessarily wrong”). Struggling students are more accustomed to being questioned when their solutions are wrong. As soon as the teacher questions them, they immediately assume they are mistaken. Some teachers tried to change these habits by also prompting students to articulate their successes.

5. ENSURING PROGRESS

For the teacher, it is essential to master the articulation between different phases of the lesson, between different pedagogical exchanges, and even among different elements of the teacher’s discourse in interaction, particularly those governing step-by-step guidance of logical reasoning. During their utterances, teachers regularly use elements that coordinate logical or temporal links, hence their designation as *logical-temporal connectors*. A single word, sometimes coupled with another, often amplified by rising intonation, can alone create the logical or temporal dynamics of a lesson, episode, exchange, or utterance, depending on the scale of analysis.

Some connectors posed challenges for pragmatic interpretation, as the same word can carry a wide range of meanings depending on didactic and pedagogical contexts. The use of logical-temporal connectors is highly dependent on teachers’ personalities. During our study, the main connectors observed were: *alors*, *donc*, *bon*. Their characterization would require a specific approach. The adverb *alors* was the most frequently used by the observed teachers. This word was employed to introduce a lesson, a new task, a different step in an exercise, or a reasoning process. From the pragmatic perspective relevant here, we can speak of genuine *discursive inferences*, that is, general inferences rather than strictly causal ones, insofar as they are constructed on a strongly didactic and pedagogical conversational background shared by both students and the teacher.

CONCLUSION

The engagement of students experiencing difficulties cannot be reduced to a simple injunction to participate. It is a dynamic, interactional process that requires the teacher’s constant vigilance and a nuanced understanding of the determinants of engagement. Training teachers in the pragmatic analysis of classroom situations could strengthen their ability to sustainably engage the most fragile students.

Based on the analysis of twelve personalized support sessions, this article presented a pragmatic characterization of the engagement of students in difficulty through the description of the three main phases, supplemented by five fundamental determinants, illustrated with examples of speech acts produced by teachers in situ. These speech acts are conceptualized as *linguistic* or *pragmatic resources* when articulated by teachers, whether during the action itself or in subsequent interviews.

Our study also highlighted difficulties related to the scale of analysis in student engagement. Teachers primarily target the engagement of the whole class, but it is the individual decisions to commit to the task and mobilize cognitively that guarantee the success of this

process. This underlines our aim to characterize successive, more or less individualized prompts. Social cognitive theory approaches human behavior in terms of the reciprocal effects of personal and environmental factors on one another. The bidirectionality of influence means that individuals are both products and producers of their environment (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 362): this concerns both the teacher and the students under their responsibility. It is more challenging for a teacher to engage a student with very low motivation for academic learning. However, provoking and then valorizing the success of such a student can contribute to strengthening their motivational dynamics, notably through the positive evolution of their perception of their sense of competence.

Our approach focused on the linguistic resources mobilized, but, as noted, the pragmatic reality of this process sometimes involves ritualized routines that are cognitively and linguistically economical for the teacher. Knowledge of students' learning profiles and a thorough mastery of didactic situations allow tasks to be adapted to their zone of proximal development and greatly influence the co-constructed and situated speech acts of teachers.

However, in the observed teaching situations, language was the primary vector for the teachers' pragmatic concepts. This professional specificity allows us to hypothesize a dual pragmatic dimension. Indeed, describing speech acts within the framework of linguistic pragmatics allows us to apprehend a portion of the teachers' pragmatic concepts, which are expressed in situ primarily through language. This dual pragmatic register led us to use the term *linguistic resources* to symbolize the potential of teachers' speech acts, which could thus be considered as genuine professional instruments. Awareness of these linguistic resources could enable teachers to mobilize them in situ within the perspective of genuine pedagogical and didactic communicative action.

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