

Teachers' Assessment Postures and Conceptual Metaphors

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Abstract

Assessment activity in the classroom does not escape being conceptualized through conceptual metaphors. In his role of assessor, the teacher is described, for example, as a *critical friend*, a metaphorical figure who refers to the benevolence of listening as well as to a requirement that does not undermine his accompanying relationship. The functions targeted by the assessor can be different, such as *expert*, *judge* or *philosopher*. This metaphorical language, present in the discourse, is revealing of the individuals' conceptions. Far from being naïve, metaphors form coherent systems according to which our experience is conceptualized. The sources of metaphors are usually unconscious. In an empirical study, we investigated the evolution of the use of these metaphors among future teachers. The general hypothesis was that there would be a better understanding of the different functions and purposes of assessment as the training progressed, with the result that several assessment postures would be identified within the same teaching sequence and that several postures would be mobilized more often simultaneously. Overall, the results confirm the hypotheses formulated at the outset. Thus, the increase in the number of assessment postures chosen and the more frequent use of several postures simultaneously suggest that, at the end of the training, the students have a better perception of the diversity and complementarity of assessment functions. The most frequently chosen postures all involve adapting teaching to the needs of the students and are thus part of a formative approach.

Keywords: Assessment postures, Conceptual metaphors, Evolution of conceptions, Teachers' conceptions, Teacher education