

# CARAC TERES

Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital

En este número participan ■ Elena Alcalde Peñalver, Leyre Alejaldre Biel, Consuelo Allué, Carmen Álvarez García, Eva Álvarez Ramos, Alessandra Anichini, Daniel Cassany, Viola Davin, Araceli García Rodríguez, Alicia Gil Torres, Raquel Gómez Díaz, Ricardo González-García Hugo Heredia Ponce, Antonia Olivia Jarvio Fernández, Ilaria Marchionne, Javier Merchán Sánchez-Jara, M<sup>a</sup> Isabel Morales Sánchez, Javier Puche Gil, Elsa Margarita Ramírez Leyva, Laro del Río Castañeda, Sonia Ríos Moyano, Manuel Fco. Romero Oilva, Marta Sampérez Hernández, Cristina San José de la Rosa, María Sanz Ferrer, Luca Toschi, Ignacio Vidal Franco

Dossier: Medios digitales y educación

Dossier: La lectura en y por la Educación Superior

## **Caracteres. Estudios culturales y críticos de la esfera digital**

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Dossier: La lectura en y por la Educación Superior

Coords. M<sup>a</sup> Isabel Morales Sánchez

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VOICE: THE ROLE OF  
ORALITY IN TRAINING COURSES IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

**LA IMPORTANCIA DE LA VOZ: EL PAPEL DE LA ORALIDAD  
EN LOS CURSOS DE FORMACIÓN EN LA ERA DIGITAL**

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**RESUMEN:**

Los datos recientes sobre la detección de las competencias de adultos y estudiantes muestran una creciente dificultad para leer y comprender textos. El fenómeno busca muchas preguntas. ¿Qué de hecho "no funciona" en los cursos de formación? Esta investigación pretende abordar este problema, a partir de una hipótesis: la falta de atención a la calidad de la comunicación oral en los cursos de capacitación. El sistema de prueba de hoy tiende a cancelar el momento de presentación oral que ha representado en la escuela de cada orden y la oportunidad de aprender "el arte de la palabra" y la capacidad de argumentación. La lección de los maestros está siendo reemplazada cada vez más por el estudio independiente de libros de texto o por la asistencia a

entornos en línea dedicados llenos de películas e infografías. Hemos analizado los hábitos de los estudiantes universitarios, investigando, en sus trayectorias educativas, la presencia de la voz, entendidos en el doble sentido de elemento pasivo y elemento activo.

**ABSTRACT:**

Recent data on adults and students' competences show a growing difficulty in reading and understanding texts. This phenomenon makes us many questions. What is not "working" in training courses? This research aims at analysing this point, starting from a hypothesis: the absence of attention to the quality of oral communication in training courses. Today the system of exams tends to cancel oral presentation that, in the past, was present in schools of every order and level as the only opportunity for learning "the art of the word" and the capacity to argue. The teacher lesson is increasingly being replaced by the study of textbooks or by attending online environments populated by movies and infographics. In order to better understand this situation, we analyzed the habits of students attending university courses, investigating the presence and the role of the "voice" in their educational paths.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:**

Comunicación generativa, universidades, herramientas digitales, oralidad, voz.

**KEYWORDS:**

Generative Communication, University, Digital tools, Orality, Voice.

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## **1. Read, write and... talk**

Nowadays, it is clear that a significant increase in the level of education does not correspond to an equally significant increase in the level of functional literacy or in the ability to read and to understand, to decode written and oral texts by young people and adults. In other words: the problem of functional illiteracy is deeply widespread. In Italy, for example, the data collected by ISFOL for the National Report on Adult Skills have confirmed a very compromised situation, verified by one of the latest OECD surveys (OECD, 2016). Beyond the goals of the OECD study, aimed at measuring the professional efficiency of employed adults, the problem of functional illiteracy afflicts Italy - adult population and young people - as well as many other European countries. Recent data on student competencies indicate a growing difficulty in reading and understanding texts. This is an increasing phenomenon that has profound social repercussions, predicting scenarios where the dream of a widespread popular culture vanishes miserably.

According to these data, the research we are presenting in this paper stems from a question, which is, above all, a consideration and a hypothesis that comes from the everyday life and experience, from the acquaintances with elderly people endowed with scarce alphabetical culture, grandparents, old uncles, peasant friends, practically illiterate. The main questions are: where did the deep intelligence of popular people, not literate, who were able to face knowledge experiences similar to those who enjoyed the privileges of literacy, matured? And why, in a world like the Western one where literacy is widespread as never before in history, the problem of a return to functional illiteracy is so worrying? How it is possible

that people who have never attended school or have not had any kind of contact with institutional training environments, are profoundly "intelligent", capable of reflection and critical thinking, and, vice versa, what is not working in the official education paths?

The answer we are trying to give finds support in a hypothesis: the doubt that our time - the age of communication and knowledge par excellence - is actually an era of "silent interaction", where the voice actually occupies a small space of our daily life. We are not referring to the roaring voice of those who scream in the squares of the Internet and not even to the low hum of a whispering multitude that becomes too often noise, but we mean the "voice" as the ability to listen and understand a pronounced speech, to express ourselves and to communicate, to establish a dialogue with different interlocutors and, of course, the ability to understand and be understood.

This is a hypothesis that presupposes two further observations: 1. that the innumerable forms of communication practiced today (especially dealing with social media such as Facebook, Instagram and others) are substantially "mute" (although pseudo-oral) in the sense of "written" in a form that is often reduced to purely visual language or that transforms words into slogans. 2. that in training courses, the space granted to orality has been progressively reduced to the advantage of a system of exams that eliminates, from classrooms and university lectures, the "heuristic discourse" as the main dialogical form of conversation, which was supposed to be the high objective for any kind of respectful training and educational system.

This secondary role assigned today to the "heuristic" orality is clear also from the fact that, at international level, there is not an assessment of students' oral communication skills. In Italy, the

"orality" remains in the evaluation documents of the secondary schools, next to the "written", for disciplines like Italian Language or Latin Language.

INVALSI, the national institute with the task of Italian students learning assessment, performs standardized tests on reading, grammar, scientific and mathematical skills but it doesn't pay attention to the verify oral competences. Noone teaches students how to understand an oral text or how to argue, even if besides the ability to read and to understand a text, it is implicit the necessity to have a good knowledge of the oral language. The Italian evidence framework, drawn up by INVALSI itself, speaks, among other things, about the ability "to generate meaning from written texts" which means to implement that "pragmatic-textual competence" that "consists in ability to reconstruct, from the text, from the context (or situation) where it is inserted and from the encyclopedic knowledge of the reader, the set of meanings that the text conveys (its meaning), and how they are conveyed: in other words, the logical-conceptual and formal organization of the text itself, however in relation to the context". Therefore, the ability to place any texts in a precise communicative context, practising the "inferential capacity" that is able to generate new knowledge starting from already possessed knowledge (Beaugrande de-Dressler, 1981).

Text understanding and thinking organization deal with the ability to listen and repeat aloud an information, a concept, to articulate it in a way that can be received by an interlocutor, both in written and oral forms. Written language and oral language constitute an inseparable system that feeds on mutual developments.

## **2. The characteristics of a new orality**

The idea that we are facing a new "silent era" may appear to be a paradox because our epoch has already been defined by the return of orality, due to the role of the media (first radio, then television and, above all, Internet) that have promoted a way of communicating which is linked to the immediacy of orality, with those characteristics that Paul Zumthor had defined in the 1980s. In particular, at the basis of every oral communication, of every dialogue there is a communicative pact: speaking implies listening, this is a dual procedure where the interlocutors ratify together the presuppositions founded on an understanding. Speaking among two or more people presupposes a series of norms and, above all, the presence of a common space that makes a verbal exchange possible and where the games of language are easily freed of institutional rules. The physical proximity has also a "moral effect": the impression, on the listener, of a less contestable loyalty than in written or delayed communication, of a more probable and more persuasive sincerity. (Zumthor, 1984:31).

So, oral communication appears as the most authentic form, that we tend to trust, because it is apparently informal and avoids official status. In this sense, speaking is related to spontaneity, as writing could correspond to formalism.

In Italy, moreover, history confirms this belief. From the beginning of our national language, indeed, we have witnessed a profound separation between the spoken and the written language: regional dialects as spoken languages, and Italian, as the abstract language and defined by writers and politicians. Andrea Camilleri, in a recent interview, stated that his writing, contained in his successful Montalbano series, is a perfect mix of the heart's voice

(the Sicilian dialect) and the mind's voice (Italian). Also at school, for our students, writing has always corresponded to "follow the rules", while speaking involves "freedom of expression".

Today Internet seems to replicate the informality of a face-to-face dialogue, offering a sharing space apparently free from formal rules, a kind of communication where the interlocutor feels confident. For Ong, as for other scholars, including Jack Goody or Ivan Illich, the absence of writing would have tended to weaken the reasoning faculties, argumentation and abstract thinking. The advent of writing would have marked, in the history of humanity, a deep caesura: the passage from the oral tradition to the written one, marks an epistemic fracture where the writing introduces a new cognitive style indicated as literary (or alphabetical) thought - an "argumentative thought" - which proceeds by analysis and synthesis and it doesn't work on concrete objects but on concepts (Illich, 1971).

Other scholars, including Ruth Finnegan or Harvey Graff, authors of a well-known history of literacy in the West culture, turned out to be more "doubtful" towards a completely "Western" development of culture, defending a sort of vitality of oral cultures. Ivan Illich himself, a staunch supporter of the written page, considered oral cultures characterized by "full" conversations, aimed at resolving immediate problems, more precise because they are based on the use of a timely and adherent vocabulary.

These are positive features therefore, which could be revived in a context of "return of orality" such as the one we are going through. The new orality could be synonymous to a greater communicative authenticity, the expression of a culture no less profound than the one that relies on writing: it is certainly sterile to conceive orality in a negative way, revealing its features in contrast

with writing. Orality does not mean illiteracy at all, which is perceived as a lack of values proper to the voice and to every positive social function (Zumthor, 1984:25).

The new orality, however, compared to the primary one, seems to be complicated by the existence of a medium between the interlocutors and which appears to “cool down” the communication: all these constraints limit the spontaneity of the voice in the sociality that, in the everyday dimension of existence, nourishes the living voice and turns such an event into a hyper-sociality circulating in the telecommunications networks, constitutive of a new collective bond, a sociality of synthesis, operating on separate elements and fragmented traditional structured groups (Zumthor, 1984:28).

Mediation, the technical medium that stands between interlocutors, is therefore the critical element of this new orality: it reduces its positive values and it is only apparently more immediate. The communication in presence could, in fact, possess a conservative and hierarchical brand, such as the one theorized by Ong, hiding from users the complexity of the rules and of the mechanisms that regulate their realization, the hidden grammars that guide the interactions between the subjects (Toschi, 2011:154).

So, is this kind communication an enrichment of cultural exchange? And how can we know if the dialogue in the virtual environments is an authentic one? What role do the users really have? Can they really express themselves? Above all, where do you learn how to "talk about ..." something establishing a conversation that gives you the opportunity to learn new concepts and new knowledge?

This is verified also in the University context. We are witnessing a change of communication paradigm between students,

teachers and the University itself. For example, in the last decades, University is trying to find its own way to promote its courses, thinking more about the quantity of students than on the quality of its training courses. This logic is the reflection of a prospective that has many risks: first of all to look at students as if they are “customers” who are always right and always must be rewarded (Toschi 2011:123). Being a place of knowledge, the University should be more attentive to what kind of relationship it establishes with all the different stakeholders, first of all students: starting from the creation of spaces where they can express their own ideas, learn how to listen to other opinions and understand the quality of sources, looking for the useful tools to recognize reliable information.

### **3. The voice in the “inside lab” of each student**

After these reflections, we introduce the results of a survey realized during the Academic year 2017-2018 at the University of Florence<sup>1</sup>. 56 students, divided in three different groups attending

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<sup>1</sup> The Center for Generative Communication (official website: [www.cfgc.unifi.it](http://www.cfgc.unifi.it)) was born in December 2016 as the result of thirty years of experience in research and education carried out by the Centro Ricerche e Applicazione dell'Informatica all'Analisi dei Testi (Center for Research and Computer Application in Text Analysis) (C.R.A.I.A.T.), the Laboratorio di Strategie di Comunicazione Generativa (Laboratory of Generative Communication Strategies) and the Communication Strategies Lab (CSL) of the University of Florence. The CfGC is a research and development center focused on communication, favoring interaction between knowledge and expertise in various areas of research and innovation. Its aim is to build, reinforce and develop societies, economies, and cultures in a sustainable way studying and experimenting the generative communication paradigm, conceived by Luca Toschi. The CfGC studies innovation in close contact with the needs of enterprises, institutions and citizens. The research group works within projects able to respond to real needs and to offer concrete solutions in collaboration with the other scientific and professional partners with whom they cooperate in a close network. The CfGC is active in many areas: from agricultural and rural development to education and training, from smart cities to cultural heritage, from international cooperation to robotics etc.

different courses, had been involved. The first group attended the first-degree course in Communication Sciences, the second one a master class of Theory of Communication, the third one, the post graduate course in *Pubblicità istituzionale, comunicazione multimediale e creazione di eventi*<sup>2</sup>. The main objective of the research was to investigate the value of the voice inside the courses, “voice” intended both in a passive meaning (related to what can be listened and understood through the words mentioned by others in all formal and informal contexts) both in a more active one (which is expressed using communicative and argumentative competences to discuss, comment and explain concepts).

With this aim, the subjects involved had been interviewed with a questionnaire composed by 17 questions (with multiple answers and open ones), decided as a result from a first analysis phase.

In particular, the questionnaire was divided in two parts: the first titled “La parola ascoltata” (in English: The listened word), dealing with the listening habits of students, and the second “La parola detta” (literally “The spoken word”), regarding the expositive skills of students relating to the studying phase before the exams.

The ordinary class - where a teacher speaks and the students listen to him - was the first focus that had been analyzed. In fact, In Italy the majority of the courses are composed of lectures held in the classroom, where the teacher explains all the contents to the students, anticipating the topics that they are going to find in the books that are part of the exam. In this role of active listening, each

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<sup>2</sup> Whose title can be translated in: *Institutional advertising, multimedia content production and events creation*



student establishes a relationship with the teacher explanation and his “voice” with the concepts expressed.

The first section of the questionnaire have been prepared in order to make the interviews express themselves about the added value of attending a class, the things they appreciate the most about teachers’ explanations, their active/passive role during the lesson and, in particular, their attitude to ask questions or the establish a dialogue in class.

The second section, instead, was dedicated to the individual studying phase and how students are used to prepare their exams. In this case, the questions were about the students behavior, in particular the habit of repeating aloud. In the end, the questionnaire asked students if they prefer written text or oral exams.

#### **4. The voice in the “inside lab” of each student**

##### **4.1. The added value of attending lectures**

Analysing the data emerged from the questionnaire, 66% of respondents says they "always" attend lessons during their educational path. The most relevant result, however, is that this percentage undergoes significant changes over time: if in the first cycle, the bachelor, 75% of students say they "always" attend classes and the 25% of them answer "often", in the second, the Master course, 43% of subjects "often" attend lessons and those who participate "enough" increase (14%). This disaffection becomes even more evident in the third cycle, the postgraduate course, when 12% of respondents say they "almost never" participate in the lesson event.

| How often do you attend lessons?                        |        |       |        |              |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|--------------|-------|
|   | Always | Often | Enough | Almost never | Never |
| Three-year cycle<br>(Bachelor)                          | 75%    | 25%   | -      | -            | -     |
| Master cycle<br>(Two years after<br>bachelor)           | 42.9%  | 42.9% | 14.3%  | -            | -     |
| Post graduate<br>course<br>(One year after<br>bachelor) | 64%    | 24%   | -      | 12%          | -     |
| Overall sample  | 66.1%  | 26.8% | 1.8%   | 5.4%         | -     |

Table 1. The answers to the question "How often do you attend lessons?"

These data must be presented compared to the results emerged from the questions "What do you think is the added value of attending lessons?" and "Do you feel involved by the teacher during the lessons?" presented below.

The 56 subjects interviewed underline the need to attend the lectures in order to better understand the concepts and contents that the teacher explains to them during class. The lesson then, through the mediation of the teacher, becomes the best moment to get directly in touch with the topics that are part of the student's training path.

It is not a coincidence that the elements that students appreciated the most are: the instructive clarity of the teacher and the synthesis he makes of the main contents of each subject.

The less relevant option, chosen by the sample, is the one referred to the teacher as a subject able to provide additional ideas and information, starting from specific requests of each student interested in deeply discuss a topic or an aspect of it.

More than this, two other data that emerged responding the question "What do you think is the added value of attending lessons?" are significant too: the first concerns the interest of students to receive, in addition to theoretical knowledge, tools to daily apply information learned in class, a sort of instruments perceived as 'professionalizing'; the second, directly affects the relationship between the teacher and the student. Indeed, the answer "establish a more direct contact with the teacher" is the least considered: only 28.5% assigned the maximum value (5) to this possibility. In conclusion, the crisis concerning the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and the students appears immediately evident.

#### **4.2. The crisis of the dialogue between teacher and students**

From the data discussed below, it seems clear that one of the most relevant results of this survey deals with the perception that students have not to actively participate during classes and, consequently, with the construction of a increasingly individual educational path, guided by single interests. Confirming this statement: only 41% of respondents say they feel involved with the teacher during lessons.

The percentage, completely in line with the trend presented in paragraph 4.1., shows a significant variation from the bachelor to the Master level: if 50% of learners feel involved, in the first case, in the second one the numbers fall to 29% and in the third to 36%. This perception corresponds to the drastic reduction of subjects who "always" and "often" attend reported above.

| Do you feel involved during lessons by the teacher? |        |       |        |              |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|--------------|-------|
|   | Always | Often | Enough | Almost never | Never |
| Three-year cycle (Bachelor)                         | 4,2%   | 45,8% | 33,3%  | 16,7%        | -     |
| Master cycle (Two years after bachelor)             | 28,6%  | 42,9% | -      | 28,6%        | -     |
| Post graduate course (One year after bachelor)      | 4%     | 32%   | 56%    | 8%           | -     |
| Overall sample                                      | 3,6%   | 37,5% | 44,6%  | 14,3%        | -     |

Table 2. The answers to the question “Do you feel involved during lessons by the teacher?”

The other result, that points out the dangerous crisis of dialogue and interaction between teacher and learners, is related to the number of students that intervenes during lessons asking questions to the teacher. In this case the percentages show an even clearer scenario.

| During the explanations of the teacher, do you intervene with questions to clarify what you haven't understood? |        |       |        |              |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|--------------|-------|
|   | Always | Often | Enough | Almost never | Never |
| Three-year cycle (Bachelor)   | 4,2%   | 8,3%  | -      | 62,5%        | 25%   |
| Master cycle (Two years after bachelor)   | -      | 14,3% | 14,3%  | 71,4%        | -     |
| Post graduate course (One year after bachelor)  | 4%     | 12%   | 40%    | 24%          | 20%   |
| Overall sample  | 3,6%   | 10,7% | 19,6%  | 46,4%        | 19,6% |

Table 3. The answers to the question “During the explanations of the teacher, do you intervene with questions to clarify what you haven't understood?”

Aggregating options "Enough", "Almost Never" and "Never", it emerges that: 87.5% of students in the bachelor, 71.4% in the second cycle and 44.4% in the postgraduate course do not ask questions or ask very few. There are many reasons for this result: shyness, embarrassment in stating in a public context showing not to have understood something, fear of being judged as unintelligent or careless, both by teachers and colleagues.

Dealing with this last point, the question about the places reserved for lectures would deserve further reflection: in recent years, in fact, the first-degree course in Communication Sciences at the University of Florence has classes with 120/150 students who often attend lectures in too small classrooms, this element significantly limits the creation of an effective dialogue between teachers and learners.

The interaction with the teacher, and in many cases also with colleagues, is systematically replaced with a search on the Internet launching free queries on the main search engines.

From the answers given by the interviewees, it emerges that when students face a complex and articulated topic, they prefer:

1. Searching for information online (43.6%);
2. Asking to a colleague (33.3%);
3. Waiting for the teacher to return independently to the subject or for the textbook to address this issue in a simpler and more understandable way (10.3%);
4. Asking the teacher directly during lesson or in a private reception (5.2%).

All the groups of interviewed prefer not to ask directly to the teacher but they look for other solutions to solve their doubts.

#### **4.3. The value of orality in the preparation of an exam**

The second section of the questionnaire pays particular attention to the topic of *the spoken word* during exams preparation in humanities courses. In this case, repeating aloud becomes the main tool to: verify the actual knowledge of the topics studied, simulate dialogue and comparison with the teacher during the exam, memorize the most important contents and individually revise the main concepts.

| During the preparation phase of an exam, do you repeat aloud? |        |       |        |              |       |
|---|--------|-------|--------|--------------|-------|
|   | Always | Often | Enough | Almost never | Never |
| Three-year cycle (Bachelor)                                   | 37,5%  | 25%   | 4,2%   | 25%          | 8,3%  |
| Master cycle (Two years after bachelor)                       | 14,3%  | -     | 24,9%  | 28,6%        | 14,3% |
| Post graduate course (One year after bachelor)                | 44%    | 8%    | 32%    | 16%          | -     |
| Overall sample  | 37,5%  | 14,3% | 21,4%  | 21,4%        | 5,4%  |

Table 4. The answer to the question “During the preparation phase of an exam, do you repeat aloud?”

In particular, aggregating the response options “Always”, “Often” and “Enough”, it emerges that 66.7% of students in the postgraduate course, 57.2% in the second cycle and 84% of students of the bachelor prepare an exam in the humanistic field repeating aloud and establishing a dialogue with themselves. In conclusion, 7 students out of 10 see in orality, a way to compare themselves with the contents of the course and with their own level of preparation.

#### **4.4. The strong oscillation between orality and writing in the moments of verification**

The last question is about what kind of exam students prefer: oral or written.

The sample literally split into two main categories:

| Do you prefer oral or written exams?           |         |       |
|--|---------|-------|
|  | Written | Oral  |
| Three-year cycle (Bachelor)                    | 62,5%   | 37,5% |
| Master cycle (Two years after bachelor)        | 42,9%   | 57,1% |
| Post graduate course (One year after bachelor) | 48%     | 52%   |
| Overall sample                                 | 53,6%   | 46,4% |

Table 5 The answers to the question “Do you prefer oral or written exams?”

On one hand, it is possible to observe that 53.6% of the interviewed prefer to deal with a written exam because, taking up one of the most illustrative motivations<sup>3</sup> given by a student, *“the embarrassment is completely absent. I feel more relaxed, as a result, I can reflect more clearly. I also have plenty of time to correct myself, thinking about the right words and going back having re-read what I wrote and, in case, I have the chance to correct me”*. And again, *“When I speak, I feel judged. This puts me in awe, not allowing me to concentrate properly”*.

From the answers given, it emerges that the written exam give the time to reflect and to organise thoughts more than an oral one.

On the other hand, the 46.4% of students prefer an oral test because *“Orality conveys better than writing the security of one's arguments”* and again *“It allows me to express myself better and to make more connections among concepts and topics”*.

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<sup>3</sup> The motivations are the transcription - translated from Italian to English by the authors - of the answers given by the samples.



Finally, orality also is helpful once the teacher stimulates the student, for example: *"It is useful to receive also" help" from the teacher if I'm in difficulty on a concept"*.

## **5. Conclusions**

Students declare their predilection for attending classes and the majority of the respondents considered it as a privilege. One significant point deals with the reasons why students prefer to attend classes. Firstly, the teacher is more appreciated when his/her "voice" represents an alternative to the reading of the texts they have to study on their own. From these statements, it comes out that the lesson is seen as a sort of substitute for the topics contained in books or a useful summary to better understand and assimilate what is required during the examination.

The fact that attending lessons is a way of establishing a relationship and a dialogue with the teacher or the other students is completely secondary. The students' responses reveal a low consideration of socializing or starting a constructive exchange with the teacher. Of course, the presence facilitates the comparison with colleagues and with the professor, but this is not considered by the respondents as a real opportunity.

What emerges is therefore a very traditional conception of education: a concept that sees the teacher as a disciplinary "facilitator", able to explain the contents to be learned, to anticipate data and information that must be acquired for the exam.

The profile of the ideal teacher corresponds to the one who declares in a clear and understandable way what is written in the books to be studied. There isn't any interest in considering the teacher as a source of knowledge who can arouse curiosity and

sometimes disorientation, in other words, who teaches “how to think” and not what to think, using a non-repetitive but dialogical rhetoric.

The conception of a lesson as a place of anticipation and repetition of information and concepts corresponds punctually to an overall passive attitude declared by the students themselves: the habit of asking questions is not very widespread and the lesson is never a participatory moment. A lesson that is, therefore, the place of listening and, sometimes of recording (even in a strictly technical sense) of the uninterrupted flow of teacher's words.

The second part of the questionnaire, however, helped us to understand how orality has another value when it is used as a tool to activate a dialogue with the students themselves and verify if they have learnt a series of concepts to be proposed to the teacher during the final exam.

Therefore, if in the relationship with the teacher the role of orality is reduced by the student to mere listening, during the individual preparation of an exams, it becomes an element central to memorize, re-elaborate and learn the knowledge necessary to pass the verification.

The survey presented is only the beginning of a research that would be really interesting to develop involving a greater number of students and also to widen the observation to courses belonging to scientific and technological areas.

In conclusion, looking at the data discussed in the fourth paragraph, we can confirm the hypothesis made at the beginning: there are always less spaces left to stimulate discussion and dialogue among students and students with teachers. The “voice”, which is present in the classrooms at university level, in fact, as well as outside, proposes a paradigm of communication that is

highly functional to the transmissive logic of knowledge, where the idea of knowledge is not associated to debate and conversation.

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