To put the world into words. An analysis of the conversation spaces in Thau school of Barcelona from the perspective of Lluís Duch's educational anthropology.

Mar Quingles Daví. Tutor: Dr.Caterina Sugrañes Ernest.
Blanquerna URL - FPCEE. Primary Education degree. TFG

Resum

Aquest article presenta una investigació sobre el paper de la conversa a l'escola Thau de Barcelona com a experiència d'emparaulament basada amb l'antropologia educativa de Lluís Duch. Els objectius d'aquesta recerca són: relacionar l'antropologia educativa de Lluís Duch amb una pràctica pedagògica que promogui l'emparaulament dels alumnes; identificar espais de conversa a l'escola Thau de Barcelona i analitzar si s'afavoreix que els estudiants emparaulin el món; conèixer la percepció dels mestres sobre el paper de la conversa a l'escola; i descriure si la crisi d'emparaulament afirmada per Lluís Duch existeix a l'escola Thau. La recollida de dades s'ha fet amb un diari de camp etnogràfic basat en l'observació d'espais de conversa a una aula de 4t de Primària durant les meves pràctiques a l'escola. També s'ha realitzat un qüestionari als mestres de Primària de l'escola per conèixer el seu punt de vista sobre el tema. Els resultats obtinguts mostren que hi ha poques converses al dia a dia escolar perquè els alumnes problematitzin i expressin les seves experiències i interpretacions de la realitat per tal d'entendre i representar el seu món. Com a conclusió d'aquesta recerca, es pot afirmar l'existència de la crisi d'emparaulament declarada per Duch a la pràctica pedagògica de l'escola Thau.

Paraules clau: conversa, emparaulament, Lluís Duch, antropologia de l'educació.

Abstract

This article presents an investigation on the role of conversation in the school Thau of Barcelona seen as an enwording experience based on the educational anthropology of Lluís Duch. The objectives of this research are: to relate Lluís Duch's educational anthropology with a pedagogical practice which fosters the enwording of the students; to identify spaces of conversation in Thau school of Barcelona and analyse if they encourage students to put the world into words; to know the teachers' perception about the role of conversation in school; and to describe if the enwording crisis affirmed by Lluís Duch exists at Thau school. The data collection has been done with an ethnographic field logbook based on the observation

of conversation spaces in a 4th grade class during my teaching practices in the school. A questionnaire has also been carried out for the Primary teachers of the school to find out their point of view concerning the subject. Results show that there are few conversations in the school day-to-day so that students can problematize and express their experiences and interpretations of reality in order to understand and represent their world. As a conclusion of this research, it can be affirmed that there is an existence of the enwording crisis stated by Duch in the pedagogical practice of Thau school.

Keywords: conversation, enwording, Lluís Duch, educational anthropology.

Introduction

The subject of my research is the role of conversation in the Primary Catalan school. The aim is to analyse if conversation is utilised as an educative experience for children to enword the world. That is, to put their experiences and interpretations of the world into words, with others, to understand them, represent the world and give meaning to their existence.

As claimed by the Catalan anthropologist Lluís Duch, nowadays there seems to be an enwording crisis in education, due to the lack of conversation in the school understood as a direct, immediate and synchronic communication between the interlocutors to build a world of representations. Hence, opportunities to let children bring up their experiences and interpretations of the world to put them into words and understandings. Nonetheless, although there are some studies whose objective is to compile Duch's work and examine the main bases of his thinking, there does not appear to be any existing research about the analysis of conversations as enwording experiences that can be directly found in school.

In this context, the purpose of my dissertation is to identify conversation spaces in a Primary school setting, specifically at Thau school, and analyse whether the embedded pedagogy helps children enword the world. I shall apply Duch's educational anthropology to explore the extent to which the enwording crisis exists in the school. Also, I will examine a contemporary pedagogy which I think fosters conversation to enword the world. I believe this research can be relevant to the educational field, as it provides some evidence about the nature of the crisis in a Primary School, a study that until now has not been done within a real pedagogical context. Thus, it may contribute to raise awareness of the problem among teachers so they enhance their didactics to provide more enwording experiences to minimise the problem.

Consequently, the theoretical framework of my dissertation will be mainly underpinned by Duch's educational anthropology. It will be complemented with the research on children's conversations of Neil Mercer, a well known psychologist and educator who speaks of the use of language to think together, understand our experiences and create knowledge for individuals to insert themselves in a community. Lastly, the third relevant author of my study is the Italian pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi. From my understanding, his pedagogy favors the enwording, as it is based on listening to children to let them express their experiences and ideas of the world to create significant knowledge from there and find existential meaning.

Regarding the structure of the article, first I will expose my theoretical framework, in which I shall explain what is the enwording crisis, its origin according to Duch, and to call for the use of conversation as a pedagogical experience for students to enword the world. Secondly, I will make a brief comment about conversation at the Primary school. Next, Duch's approach to conversation will be related with Mercer's theory. Then, I will define how conversation should be from Duch's perspective so as to prompt the communication of the world. Finally, Duch's anthropology will be linked to Malaguzzi's pedagogical model to justify how, in my opinion, it fosters experiences to enword the world. After that, the research objectives and hypothesis will be specified, as well as the method I have followed to fulfill the aims of my research. Finally, I will discuss the obtained results and finish with some conclusions.

Theoretical framework

I.   The crisis of the word by the anthropologist Lluís Duch

According to Duch (CCCB, 2011), in the current postmodern society there is a pedagogical crisis which affects all spheres of our society. It is considered a grammar crisis, because it results from our incapacity to enword the world and express the trascendental questions of life. From my understanding of Duch's educational anthropology, *emparaular el món*, hereafter to enword the world, is the ability to put words or communicate our experiences and perceptions of the world, using any type of human language, to interpret and give them meaning for our existence, in an attempt to represent our insight of the world. Thus, putting words to create bridges between our inner experiences and our external world presence, so as to transform the absence in presence and shape the symbolic construction of our understanding of reality. As Mèlich (2011) defines it, the enwording is the attempt of every human being to cosmetize the environment.

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When Duch (2002) talks about the ability humans have to enword the world, he refers to the innate human capacity to symbolize reality with language, which was acknowledged a long time ago by Cassirer (1945) in an attempt to define humans. He reported that man is a symbolic animal that depends on symbols to represent reality and communicate with others. Mèlich (2011) asserts that the inevitability of symbolization results from our incapacity to immediately understand or reproduce reality with empirical facts, as symbols are needed to explain certain experiences, such as death, love, evil, suffering… that inevitably depend on biographical perceptions and interpretations. That is why we need the mediation of a system of symbols, resulting from a large number of languages, to interpret and translate the world into our mental schemes. Thus, "the symbolic and social construction of reality makes it possible for humans to install themselves in their everyday world" (Duch, 2002, p.22).

Pagès (2020), an expert in Duch's anthropology, notes that the enwording is possible by the "immediate word", which arises from a direct, immediate and synchronic interaction between the interlocutors, with an attitude of alterity and reciprocity, so as to build a consensual world of representations, without which reality shatters. Conversation, then, is one of the essential tools to express the world, for which words are at the disposal of these constructions. In the CCCB conference (2011) Duch defines by word everything that acts as a translator between the interiority and the exterior of men. Thus, as a neologism of any form of expression of the human being that results from our variety of languages, not only oral, but also gestures, art, music, literature, ethics... which allow us to communicate our presence in the world.

Based on a diagnosis of today's civilisation, Duch (1997) attributes the cause of the crisis of the word to the characteristics that define our society. In particular, he highlights that due to the excesses of the mass media, humans are constantly bombarded with information, which keeps us continually connected to a fragmentary discourse of reality within a certain point of view. This causes a decrease in direct, immediate and synchronic communication between people, so a decline of interactions to share experiences and views to reach consensus on the representation of the world. Moreover, in the conference of the CCCB (2011) Duch considers our capitalist society a very competitive world marked by an economic tempo and with a fast pace of life that prioritizes individual success and productivity. Thus, the language valued in this social context is the scientific-technical, literal and denotative language with a predominance of the referential function coined by Jakobson (1989), leaving no time for face-to-face conversations about the meaning of life or our existence. He writes: "The tragic reality of our day is that there are very few communities that, at least intentionally, seek this immediate encounter, face to face, heart to heart, of their members" (Duch, 1997, p. 22).

As a result, Duch (1997) argues that this technological culture with a relentless mass dissemination of data can also be reflected in the school, in which language is mainly used as an instrument with the main purpose being the interchange of referential information, with a lack of pedagogical practices that value the importance of conversation to jointly build an understanding of the world. Therefore, he announces a deficit of opportunities for children to put words to their experiences and interpretations of the world, to discuss them together and convey with a multifaceted language the fundamental questions of their existence, oriented to a human construction of their own biographies. In this case, as stated by Cols and Esteve (2000), language needs to be more evocative, allusive, symbolic and narrative, since this language, being typical of the religious, literary and philosophical expression, is the vehicle, but also the place, of the most human experiences, those more inexplicable and closer to us. This is, in my opinion, the language that better helps us to express our insight of the world.

In this way, Duch maintains in the CCCB conference (2011) that to privilege an economically-centered language as a practical dimension of what to say and think has caused a broad and intense perversion or devaluation of the various modalities of the human word. Duch (1997) adds that currently there is an exhaustion of the evocative and invocative power of words, which have an inability to give guidance, confidence and existential orientation to individuals in the world. This has led to difficulties in using language to communicate or enword the world, and that is why the enwording crisis is a grammar crisis.

Likewise, Sherry Turkle, a North American specialist in the interaction between humans and new technologies, claims the lack of conversation due to the impact of technology in human relationships. In particular, in her book *Reclaiming conversation: the power of talk in a digital age* (2015) she explains that we are immersed in a digital culture and a constant state of connection, which has led to a decrease in face-to-face communication and, thus, the abandonment of conversations. From my point of view, attributing it only to the massification of technology may be somewhat radical, but I think her study is so interesting, as it explains how technology in the recent years has taken humans away from the daily experience of direct conversation with others. According to her research, this has caused a decrease in the ability of introspection, creativity, self-expression, and above all of empathy and being able to listen and put oneself in the place of others and understand their viewpoint.

In addition, Duch (1997) reports that the lack of conversation has caused a transmission crisis since, as I also notice, people talk less, share less, and do not spend much time on deeper conversations about the sense of the world. So, there is not enough transmission of tradition, words, meaning and cultural narratives that until today have helped us to represent

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the world among people and configure the coexistence of human beings. Hence, it has caused what Duch calls a "crisis of trust", because when the transmitted words are not enough to help us understand and build our symbolic world, words lack meaning and individuals feel helpless, so trust with others is lost, trust in the world explained by others. That causes, then, what the German author Schütz called "a rupture of the world taken for granted", as no longer can we demonstrate or understand the assumptions men have made up to now to organize and explain the world. Sense is not an evidence, but it is maintained through trust. Without a welcoming and trustful interaction to learn the language that has so far represented reality and made our living in the world possible, humans lack symbolic models to express and inhabit the world. That is why in an interview in TV3 (2013) Duch refers to the crisis of transmission as a crisis of trust; "they are two sides of the same coin".

To sum up, Duch (1997) analyzes that due to the nature of the current society, schools seem to lack conversations to let children bring up their life experiences and interpretations to understand them, construct their symbolic world and figure out their existence.

II.   Conversation at Primary School

What is more, Duch (1997) highlights that school institutions are primarily interested in transmitting scientific and technical competence to students, which does not help to create a trustful environment and opportunities for children to solve their existential problems and put the world into words. Based on my observations and experience in Primary School, it seems to me that teachers need to rethink the time they offer for conversation spaces to give children more voice and let them acknowledge their world. Duch (1997) may be correct in saying that schools should foster moments to interrogate and communicate the world, with a genuine exchange of experiences and opinions, so that children can deal with the foundational questions and give meaning to their reality. For him, conversation at school is essential, since "the meaning of life is not something that can be dealt individually, but it is built on communication, that is, through the community" (Duch, 1997, p.23).

In relation to current regulations, there seems to be no legislative norms that control the methods or intentions of the pedagogical use of conversations. In the Primary Curriculum (Servei d'Ordenació Curricular d'Educació Infantil i Primària, 2017). I have not found any section that specifically talks about conversation or its pedagogical implementation. Also, there seems to be no reference at all concerning the student's enwording or the value for students to express their world schemata to make sense of their own existence. However,

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the importance of conversation as a resource to learn collaboratively is indeed generally mentioned in all areas of knowledge, as well as the usefulness of all types of language as a means of expression. Furthermore, Thau's PEC (Escola Thau Barcelona, 2017) does not mention either the relevance of enwording conversations or their pedagogical application, although this does not mean they do not occur. What it does remark is that communication has to be encouraged, specially the oral. In my opinion, all this means that it still lacks more awareness on the value of conversation in our mass media society with its frenetic tempo.

III.   Conversation from Mercer's theory

It is a well known fact that it is of great value to pay attention to what the children have to say about their previous experiences and personal relationship with the world. I feel this generalized view is sustained more specifically by the psychologist and educator Mercer (1997), who has extensively studied children's conversations in detail. As I understand it, Mercer's thinking could complement Duch's emphasis on enwording conversations to build the meaning of life in community, because Mercer (2001) also declares the importance of making room for children to reveal their life experiences and prior knowledge in class.

Mercer (1997) describes language as a social way of thinking and lists two main functions. On the one hand, language is a means with which we represent ourselves and our thoughts to give sense of our experience. On the other hand, it is our essential cultural tool: we use it to share the experience and, thus, to give it collective meaning, so as to learn together and create common thinking. Mercer (2001) stresses that the meaning of words is jointly created by humans and new words can be created and combined when necessary to express new meanings. Thus, both Duch (1997) and Mercer (1997) defend the value of conversations to share thoughts, experiences and organize life in common as no other species can do, so that men can insert themselves into a community and a culture. Language permits humans to benefit from the enwording that past generations have done until today and, at the same time, as a means to enword the world with new experiences.

For this reason, as Mercer (2001) admits, the point of view of the adult is key for children to learn from the contact and experiences that adults have already had with the world to help them understand it. Duch (1997) suggests a very similar view, as he writes that teachers play a key role as reliable witnesses to the fact that humans can symbolize our insight of reality. I believe both viewpoints are important conclusions of my study, as they accentuate that teachers need to act as models with a cultural and expressive body of knowledge. Duch

(1998) adds that they should also be aware of the pre-systematic attitude they have, which is an attitude of hope for a collective future of coexistence and well-being for society. This attitude will instigate trust in students for a better future and help them to be supportive, sympathetic beings, willing to put themselves in the shoes of others to build a common future. Hence, I think it implies a readiness to talk to students with respect and faith.

Furthermore, Mercer (2001) demonstrates in his studies that when people share and discuss experiences, they think together and knowledge is created, so that learning is improved collaboratively. Mercer (1997) has realised that some of the most creative thoughts appear when people are talking in groups. Therefore, I strongly believe that the school would do very well to the students by offering them opportunities to involve other people in their own thoughts, and hence use conversations to figure out their own thoughts.

Finally, Mercer (2001) insists that waiting for children to discover or infer important cultural knowledge on their own or live without it is not good for them or society in general. Duch (1997) writes that an insufficient enwording of the world would shatter reality and provoke disorientation to understand the purpose of life. As a result, people could feel their life is meaningless and fall into despair and distress, leading them to violence and resignation in our society. Yet, Mercer (1997) found that the opportunities for conversation in class are quite limited, and the students' contribution is relatively small. He explains how in the history of education conversation has rarely been incorporated into the class because, traditionally, it has been considered hindering and subversive. Thus, another relevant conclusion of my study is, as reported by Duch (1997), the importance to provide experiences in school to enword the world, since children should know not only to figure out the solution of technical problems, but also their existential problems, so as to have human health and hope in life.

On the whole, I think that Mercer's studies are interesting for my research to complement Duch's work, as they corroborate that conversation to share knowledge and perspectives help people to better understand their life experiences and enword their relationship with the world. I think teachers should be aware of this so as to reconsider their pedagogical practice to foster more conversation to deal with children's background and mental schemata.

IV.   Conversation to enword the world from my insight of Duch's theory

To sum up, as a result of Duch's work and from my perspective as a teacher, I may possibly conclude that a conversation space to enword the world would be any moment in time in

which any type of dialogue is encouraged to put the world into words in an attempt to make sense of our experiences, putting language at the service of the transcendental questions and concerns of the individuals, so as to represent the world and find a meaning in our existence. Thus, these conversations can happen anywhere and anytime in the school. As stated by Duch (1997), transcendental questions are those that men ask themselves about the meaning of their existence to seek their place in the world. Questions to reflect on the origin and destiny of human beings. Where do I come from? Where am I heading? How can I find meaning? What is the purpose of my life? These questions are deciphered throughout life, but their approach is necessary to feel part of the world and find a purpose to live.

Another characteristic of the conversations to enword the world defined by Duch (1997) is that any kind of language (corporal, graphic, artistic…), as a multifaceted language, can be used to better express the world, since what one language does not allow you to express faithfully, another will do. For instance, a child showing the teacher a drawing of what he did over the weekend could lead to a conversation to enword the world. Moreover, the topics of conversations can be varied, but tradition should always be present to recover the words and concepts that have helped us to represent the world to this day. Also, issues on the meaning of life should always be encouraged to help children make sense of their existence.

What is more, according to Duch (1997), enwording conversations cannot be structured. If children have guidelines for what to say, the questions that really interest and come from them do not arise. While the conversation should ideally be spontaneous, its time slot can also be planned beforehand. However, the questions, content, language and course of the conversation cannot be controlled; they must be spontaneous, natural and arise from the interlocutors themselves. Hence, if the teacher follows very precisely the class schedule or the programming, there will be no room for conversations to enword the world.

Finally, Duch (1997) warns that the cultural level of the teachers and the willingness to contribute to the conversation as a cultural, historical and symbolic witness are fundamental, since they will influence the quality of the conversation's content and usefulness to enword. On top of that, the relationship of trust between the interlocutors is essential, because without a climate of trust the students will not validate the symbols and words of the teacher. Teachers should always be willing to talk with students, with an attitude of listening, respect, alterity and reciprocity. Pupils should feel welcomed and respected for their point of view on the foundational problems of life, as each has their own beliefs within a culture. Duch (1997)

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synthesizes that a school without conversation spaces is not a welcoming structure that allows children to be embraced and helped to be inserted into the world.

To illustrate it, I will give an example of a conversation to enword the world that I identified in Thau school. One day, while doing maths, a boy noticed that the plants they have in class had "weird things" on the stem, so he asked what they were to the teacher. Instead of ignoring the question and scolding the child for not doing maths, she took the opportunity to open up a conversation with the whole class. Children were able to express their concerns for the "weird things" in the plant, their interpretations of what they might be, and discussed similar experiences some children had had. Cristina even gave them magnifying glasses to take a closer look at the "things", which they concluded to be fungi in the plant, that was sick and dying. Thus, it was a spontaneous conversation that arose from the concerns of children who could put an unknown phenomenon into words to understand the world around them.

V. The pedagogy of Loris Malaguzzi and its proximity to Duch's anthropology

Lastly, one of my objectives for the theoretical framework was to relate Duch's educational anthropology with a contemporary pedagogy that could promote enwording. From my perspective as a teacher and my insight of Duch's work, I believe the Italian pedagogue Loris Malaguzzi draws up a pedagogical model beneficial for enwording, because it is centred on listening to the children and their ways of seeing the world. As Loris Malaguzzi did not write directly about his pedagogy, I will mainly refer to Alfredo Hoyuelos, who devoted himself to compiling Malaguzzi's thinking and pedagogical work, and his labor has become the world's largest archive on Malaguzzi's pedagogy (Iribarren, 2002).

Evidently, Malaguzzi's pedagogy is extensive, but I will focus on one of its cornerstones: the listening to children. Altimir (2006), a teacher who worked in Reggio Emilia schools, where Malaguzzi's pedagogy was born, explains that the pedagogue regards children as carriers of theories, interpretations and questions that need to be heard as a starting point to build knowledge. Hoyuelos (2004) claims that Malaguzzi rejects the image of a child *tabula rasa*, who learns by reproduction, but considers it within the socioconstructivist theory. That is, he sees the child as an active subject, autonomous, responsible, caring, with great potential of expression, predisposed to interact with the environment and learn while relating to it. For Malaguzzi, children need to find meaning in what they do, and at the same time they are producers of meanings, which they seek and find when they investigate (Hoyuelos, 2003). Thus, he believes children should constantly explore and experiment in contact with others

and later open up conversation spaces so that they can express, contrast and understand their previous judgements, experiences and feelings, which will be the basis to build knowledge and give meaning to their world.

In addition, in my view, one of the most important features of Malaguzzi's pedagogy that fosters the enwording is its artistic dimension. Hoyuelos (2006) argues that, for Malaguzzi, the best way to know how children interpret their world is through their artistic products. Art is the main product of children activity, and one of the greatest languages of communication, game, imagination, relationship, symbol and understanding. Experimenting with art allows the child to reflect the relationship with himself and with others, and express his way of interpreting the world. So, art is essential in school, as Duch would say, to help children enword the world. For this reason, Malaguzzi introduces artistic workshops in the school and an artist in the teaching team, to provide a more transgressive viewpoint on reality (Iribarren, 2002). As Hoyuelos (2006) admits, the arts workshop breaks with the tradition of a school linked to the oral word and literacy as the primary objective of the school.

Consequently, Hoyuelos (2006) reports that for Malaguzzi the school must be, above all, an aesthetic place, well-kept, with diversified, rich and stimulating spaces and objects with many colors, light, materials and textures with which children feel identified, to awake pleasure in learning and where children feel embraced to express their potentials. He adds that it should also encourage experimentation and communication, to share experiences, ideas, thoughts, senses and meanings. That is why Malaguzzi, as Hoyuelos (2004) explains, creates small schools, since he is convinced they are more warm and friendly, a place where everyone -children, staff and families- is known by their name, allowing children to have more opportunities to interact and represent the world with others. Also, Malaguzzi includes two teachers per classroom, because two people can expand the possibilities and bring greater complexity to the group, experiences, models, ideas, points of view, sociocognitive conflicts, illusions, strategies and attention to children in a more individual way.

What is more, Malaguzzi defends the work by projects in small groups, to increase the opportunities for children to interact constructively, cooperate and investigate together to contrast viewpoints and experiences (Hoyuelos, 2004). The school has the mission to make the most of its resources to provide endless opportunities for children to develop their full potential and languages, since Malaguzzi (2005) is deeply convinced of the limitless potential and creativity of children, manifested in their plurality of languages. The more languages and potential we recognize in children, the more we help them to act on events and make them meaningful. Malaguzzi is described in Hoyuelos (2004) to think that each

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child finds a context or project that gives meaning to the development of their potential, so he believes not all children should have to follow the same curriculum at school.

In conclusion, according to Hoyuelos (2003), Malaguzzi considers the school as a friendly, exciting, welcoming and communicative environment. A place that fosters research, dialogue and reflection, where learning comes out from the listening of the children, their experiences, artistic productions and conversations to collectively represent reality. In a nutshell, it is a pedagogy that encourages the enwording. Therefore, as far as I am concerned, it can help us rethink the current pedagogical framework to prompt more enwording opportunities and revert the shortage of conversation in school, stated by Lluís Duch, so that children can put the world into words with others and find meaning in their existence.

Objectives and hypothesis

The main question of my research is "Can Duch's statement on the scarcity of conversations for students to put the world into words be confirmed in the Thau school of Barcelona?", which leads to the following objectives:

1. Relate Lluís Duch's educational anthropology with a pedagogical practice which fosters the enwording of the students.
2. Identify spaces of conversation in Thau school of Barcelona and analyse if they encourage students to put the world into words.
3. Know the teachers' perception about the role of conversation in school.
4. Describe if the enwording crisis affirmed by Lluís Duch exists at Thau school.

The first objective, which has already been tackled in the theoretical framework, is considered as such because one of my aims was to provide the Education field with a brief discussion about the connection between the enwording crisis set forth from a contemporary educational anthropology with a pedagogical practice that, from my perspective, shall foster conversation to enword the world. Objectives 2 and 3 would be the research objectives of my field work, and the latter would be fulfilled by way of conclusion. Regarding the reviewed literature of the theoretical framework, my hypothesis is that I will indeed encounter few spaces of conversation in the school for children to put their world into worlds, and thus provide evidence to sustain the enwording crisis stated by Lluís Duch.

Method

Type of design: It corresponds to a descriptive research study, specifically an ethnographic work, since it is aimed to create a descriptive picture of the role of conversation in school from the perspective of the enwording crisis, based on my interpretations about the singularity of the phenomenon. The aim of this study is to analyse and describe a situation in the school to have a better understanding of an existing problem, it does not intend to judge or offer a final and conclusive solution to it. It is a qualitative research, since data has been collected from observation and a questionnaire with mainly open questions.

Instruments: Two instruments have been used to collect data. First, a field logbook to record all the conversation spaces I have observed during 4 weeks of my teaching practices in Thau. I designed an observation guideline (see annex), inspired by Duch's work, and validated by Dr.Anna Pagès (expert on the topic), to know what items to observe in conversations. Second, an online questionnaire (see annex) for all the Primary teachers in Thau with open and closed questions to measure their perception on the role of conversation in the school and compare it with the conversations I observe. The questions referred to the items of the observation guideline, so as to contrast the observed variables with how the teachers perceive them. These items are related to the space and time of conversations, participants and personal interaction, and the background, content and purpose of the conversations they include in their daily teaching practice. Thus, the field logbook is used to obtain data for the second objective of the research, and the questionnaire for the third.

Participants: The main participants are the students and the teacher of the 4th D Primary class in Thau, with 26 students aged between 9-10 years old. It is the class where I was assigned to do my teaching practices, thus where I have observed the spaces of conversation. The other participants are all the Primary teachers of the school who answered the questionnaire, specifically 13 teachers. This will help me in my study to add information about the enwording experiences at a more global level in the school.

Procedure: The first phase has been to collect data from observation using my observation guideline during 4 weeks of my teaching practices in Thau, in which I have recorded in my field logbook all the conversation experiences I have observed every day. The next phase has been to design the questionnaire with the Google Forms tool and send it by mail to the Primary school teachers. It was open for a period of 5 weeks. For ethical reasons, the aims of the research were explained to the teachers, with information related to the anonymity and confidentiality of the information, and the group treatment of the data. However, the students

and teacher under observation were not aware of their participation in advance, since the aim was to observe conversations that naturally occur in the day to day without them knowing so as not to condition the data. Nonetheless, at the end of the study, I told them the reasons to do it, the aims of the project and that the gathered data will never be exposed to acts or statements that may harm or be perjudicial for them. Finally, I have done the data analysis phase. With my tutor, we agreed that the analysis of the observation would be qualitative, going through the data looking for key results and keywords, highlighting the most relevant aspects. As for the questionnaire, some open answers have been analyzed qualitatively and others have been quantified and represented in graphs, like we were taught to do in Taller Metodològic, using keywords and the Excel, to obtain some quantifiable data to add more objectivity and empirical evidence to support my analysis and interpretations.

Results and discussion

The discussion of the results is organized based on the items to observe in conversations from the observation guideline, and not with the objectives, since I believe it is more logic to analyze each observed item or variable and progressively compare it with the teachers' point of view, rather than discuss first the observation and then the teacher's opinion. However, the overall analysis will give an answer to all the research objectives. These items are structured in the following three sections. There is a brief discussion of the results for each section and finally a global interpretation of all the results, since everything is related.

I.   Space and time of conversations

To begin with, in relation to the space and time of the identified conversations in Thau, most of them took place during the lessons in the classroom, although this data is not very illustrative, as it is where I spent most of the time of my teaching practices. However, when I was able to do research in the playground, I barely noticed any conversation between adults and children. In my research, I encountered situations where students went after teachers to ask them questions or seek conversation. For instance, situations in which children wanted to talk about their weekend, show the objects they were bringing to the playground, or explain experiences related to what they were working on in class. But teachers told them that "now it is not the time", they eluded conversation and sent children to run and play in the playground. My experience in school leads me to believe that this might be due to some

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teachers' will to rest from children and the responsibility of teaching them out of the class, to chat with adults or organize their work. I believe, though, that teachers should not forget that their task is to educate children anytime, and the playground should also be an educational space for teachers to be involved in. Also, despite not being able to be with children and collect data at lunch time, it was not a problem, as my study is focused on conversations in which students and teachers take part, and they are not together in the canteen either.

In addition, most of the conversations in class took place at the beginning and end of the lessons, and they did not come from children's spontaneous contributions, but they were intentionally prompted and tackled by teachers. At the beginning mostly to open the class, start the day or introduce new concepts, and at the end of the class to see what was understood. Some of them also happened at the time of starting and finishing a task. Yet I think the explanation for all this has to do with the purpose with which teachers allow conversations in class, thus it will be later further analyzed.

Moreover, much as my results show that most conversations happen in class, the amount of time set aside for them in relation to other pedagogical experiences is very low. In fact, on average, only about 20 minutes out of the 6 hours of class per day are spent in conversations, being the rest of the time allocated to other pedagogical practices not involving conversation. Consequently, the results show how conversation as an educative experience is very scarce. However, if we compare this data with the teachers' perception on the role of conversation in their daily teaching activity, the difference is remarkable.
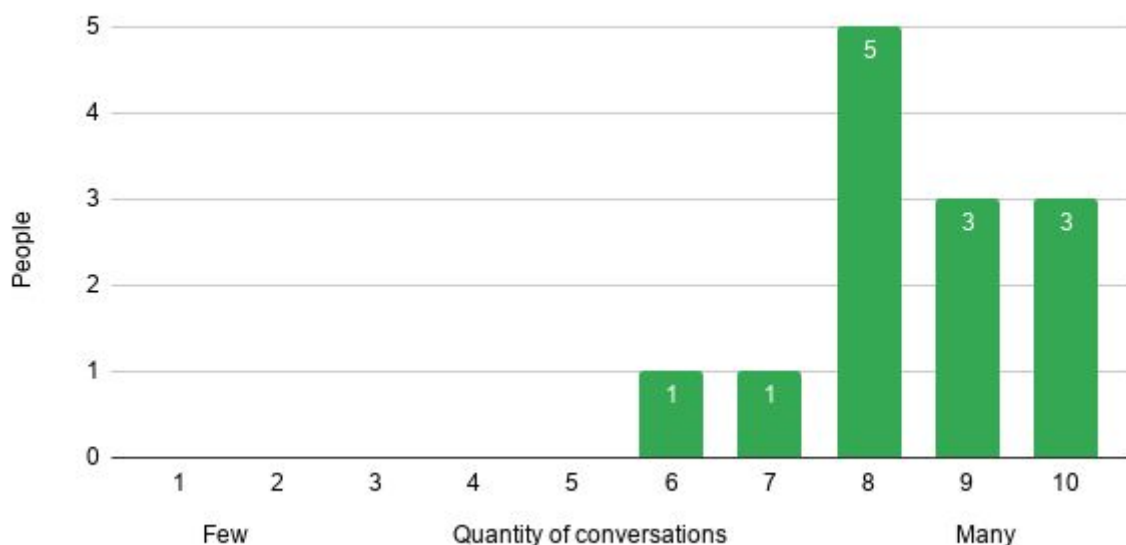

Figure 1. Presence of conversation in the teaching activity according to the teachers' opinion

As seen in figure 1, most teachers believe that conversation is very usual in the course of their teaching activity, when in fact the aforementioned data proves the limited amount of time given to them. The reason for this is not clear, but perhaps teachers have this perception because they listen to children and their explanations, but this does not mean they prompt synchronic and immediate conversations to be able to put the world into words. In any case, taking into account the importance of conversation to understand the world previously discussed in the theoretical framework, the ease with which they can be carried out, and their usefulness in all areas of education, I believe that these results should serve teachers to reflect on the low presence of conversation in school, in order to rethink our pedagogical task and try to include more conversation. In short, as Duch, Mercer and Turkle argue, in the case of Thau, the lack of conversation in school can be confirmed.

II.   Participants and personal interaction

First of all, as my observation was mainly done in the 4th D class, the participants in most conversations were the students and teacher of that class. As expected, not all students contributed in conversations, though they were all encouraged to take part on them. It is common knowledge that some children are quick to raise their hand and talk, but others are shyer and find it difficult to participate. According to my observations, which coincide with teachers' opinion, generally children show motivation, respect, and interest in conversations, and they usually pay attention to each other carefully. Some teachers, though, point out that in case of conflicts, children find it hard to listen to each other's reasons. Also, almost half of the surveyed teachers highlight that children love to share their experiences and thoughts, openly and spontaneously, and they often surprise them with their ideas and perception of the world. I think this data is relevant since it shows, as Mercer states, that pupils like to talk and can make very good contributions from which to learn and enrich everyone's knowledge.

I have also observed that in conversations, teachers have a general attitude of attention, respect, and receptivity towards the students, so what Duch calls a pre-systematic attitude of hope and trust with the students' capacities. As they indicate, they always try to encourage everyone to take part in conversations and involve those who find it difficult to participate, but always respecting the students' willingness to speak. I noticed they mostly act like guides and moderators of the conversation, listening to children but redirecting the conversation towards the aspects they want to work on. As seen in figure 2, my observations coincide with the teachers' opinion, since 100% of the respondents (13) believe their main role is to be a

moderator, 12 in 13 a guide and 7 in 13 both a model and an observer. However, only 6 out of 13 teachers believe they transmit information in conversations. This does not coincide with my observation, that reveals how the aim of most conversations was to introduce a topic to find out and learn new information. In addition, it surprises me that a teacher marked the role of imposing information as being important, because I precisely think that a conversation ceases to be one when information is imposed instead of being discussed.

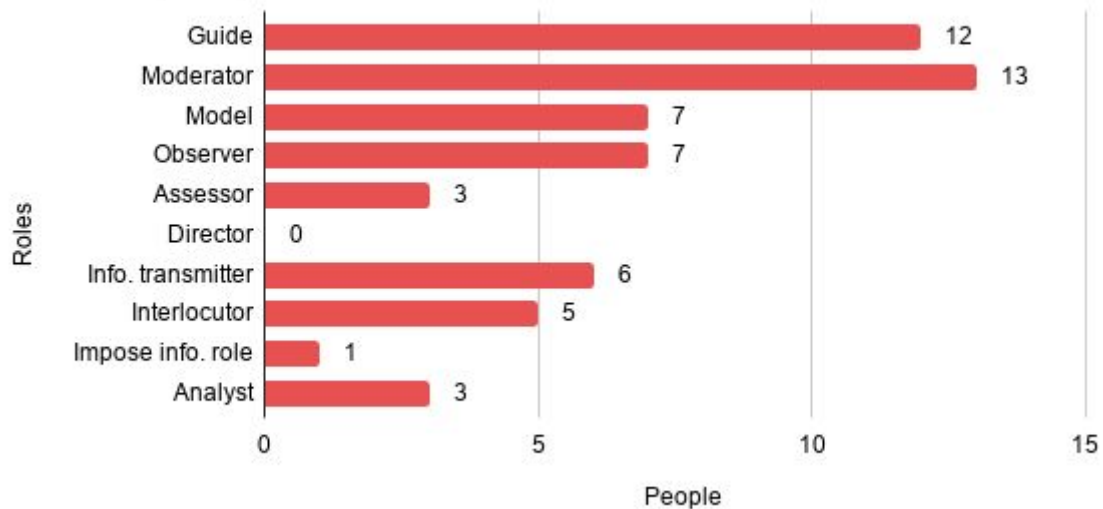Teachers' perception of their role in conversations

Figure 2. Role of the teacher in conversations according to the teachers' opinion

Finally, all the teachers in the questionnaire say they are open to listen to the opinions and concerns of the students anytime, since they consider it important that children can express themselves, how they feel, and one even says to find their place in the world. Only few teachers recognize they are sometimes so overwhelmed with work that they feel forced to reject or postpone conversations. For instance, it was common to hear "what you explain is very interesting, but now it is not the time", or "now we have to move on, you explain it to us another day", or "we will talk about it later" (and then it was not done), or even "if we talk so much, we will not have time to finish all the work for today". According to my data, teachers are rarely open to spontaneous conversations to tackle student's questions or concerns, with the possibility to enword the world, but rather only sometimes allow conversations they think are appropriate for the topic they are teaching. The reason for this might be related to the purpose for which they allow conversation in class, which will be analyzed in the next point.

III. Background, content and purpose of the conversations

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As I said, the data of my observation reveals that most conversations were planned by the teacher and took place at the start or end of the lesson or a task, as the aim was to know what children knew about a topic or see what they had taken in after the lesson. Nearly all of them arose from the questions of the teacher, who arranged the moment to happen and for what reason, and guided the conversation towards the objective set for them. Thus, they were not the result of casual questions or comments of the students. If we compare it with the results of the questionnaire, a common vision among the participants is that they always set aims for conversations, related to what they want to work on, and for this reason they direct conversation towards these aims. They also say that when the goal is to see what children know or say about a topic, they let the conversation flow more freely.
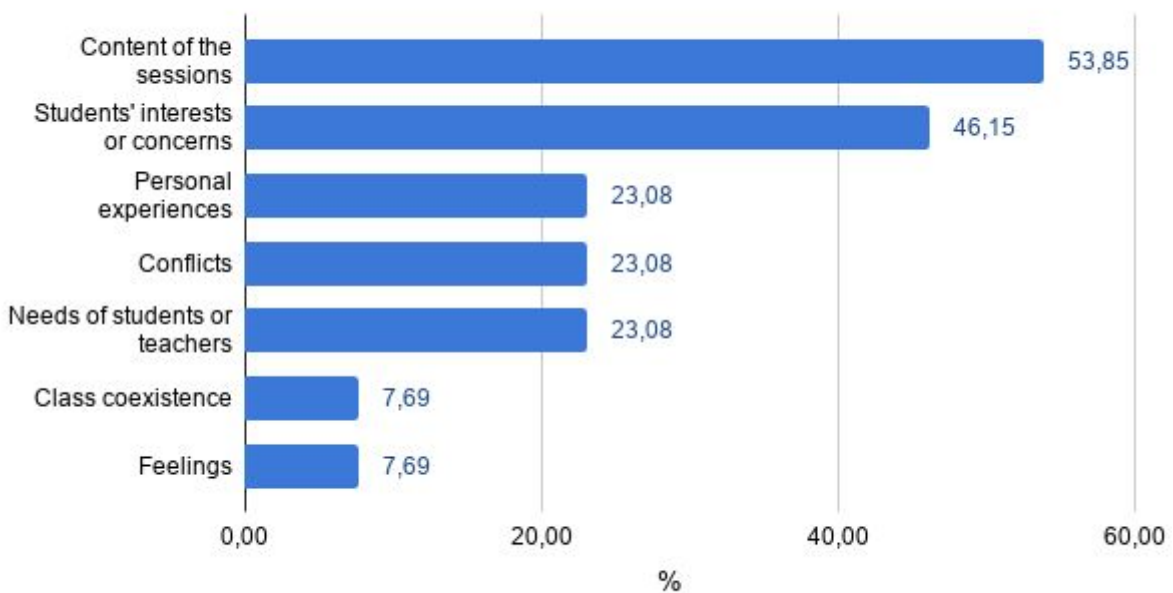
Most frequent topics of conversations

Figure 3. Most frequent topics of conversations according to the teachers' perception

In relation to the topics of the conversations, as depicted in figure 3, 54% of teachers believe that most conversations deal with the content of the sessions, 46% with the students' interests or concerns, 23% with personal experiences, conflicts or students' or teachers' needs, and only 8% with class coexistence or feelings. These results are quite consistent with my observations, although according to my data, the vast majority of conversations dealt with class content, a lot less frequently with the students' interests, concerns or personal experiences, and even less with other issues. I suppose teachers perceive it this way because in the tutoring or philosophy class they discuss experiences, interests, feelings,

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needs, conflicts… but only one hour a week and, in the case of my class, many of these hours were removed and destined to keep on with the content of the subjects.

All these results may be explained by the fact that, as I observed, teachers let children ask questions, but tend to avoid conversation by giving closed answers and carry on with the class. For example, while reading a book called "El Zoo d'en Pitus", a girl asked "what does *fer salat* mean?". The teacher, instead of opening a conversation to let children figure out the meaning together, gave the answer with a synonym and went on with the class. Or, when we went to light one of the four advent wreaths and sang around it, a girl asked what it meant, and the answer was "to celebrate the approaching Christmas". There was no conversation about the origin of the tradition or their experience with it. Only when teachers thought the conversation would be useful for the topic they were working on, it was allowed. This is why most topics of the observed conversations resulted from what was being taught at the time. To exemplify it, most took place to clarify the meaning of words, such as folklore or climax, or to find out what children knew about a topic, like the water cycle, but not so much to seek their opinion, experiences or feelings.

In addition, during my research, it was interesting to identify moments when a conversation for children to enword the world could have been opened, but the opportunity was not used. For instance, I came across many situations where children had to work on a reading comprehension by reading the text and answering questions afterwards. There was no contextualization or moment to talk about the meaning or how it related to them. From my experience, probably the reason teachers often avoid conversation is because, as some explained in the survey, they are always overwhelmed with work and lack time to do everything, either due to the pressure to follow the curriculum, the school's program, from the directive board or from parents. Then, teachers prioritise other methodologies they consider best for this society with a frenetic tempo that, as Duch says, values what can give economic benefits. Overall, the result is the lack of simple conversations that come from the children's need to understand things based on their experience, which allow them to express their world and give it meaning. Nevertheless, although few, I cannot deny that I also witnessed interesting conversations to enword the world, like these brief examples below:

"November 20th was the World Children's Day, and to commemorate it the newspaper Ara was published with drawings made by children, some of them from Thau, that replaced the usual photographs. When the teacher arrived in the morning, instead of teaching maths as scheduled, she brought the newspaper and opened a conversation space around the day's event and the special edition of the newspaper. Children had a very interesting conversation about what it meant the World

Children's Day for them and about the opportunity to take part on a newspaper. Together they looked through the pages of the newspaper and discussed the way to represent reality with drawings, what they meant, which were the news for that day, which knowledge or experiences they had had about the topics in the news, etc. It was a really nice experience for children to put words to what was happening that day and to give meaning and represent today's world."

"On March 6, while children were doing Catalan, the word folklore appeared, and some students asked what it meant. The teacher, instead of giving a quick explanation to carry on with the class, she allowed the children to discuss what it meant to them, what they knew about the Catalan folklore, which experiences they had had with the folklore, etc. Children mentioned very interesting things, from the traditional dances of their villages to language or artwork. Children were greatly enriched by everyone's contributions and were able to understand and express the concept and relate it to many of their experiences they had previously had in order to represent their world."

To sum up, we can conclude that the results give an answer to the aims of the research, since the role of conversation as an experience to put the world into words in Thau school has been analyzed and compared with the teachers' perception, in order to create a global picture of the enwording crisis in the school stated by Lluís Duch. On the whole, the results indicate that there is scarce presence of conversation in Thau for children to reason and express their learning in relation to their experiences in order to understand and represent their world. Therefore, we can consider as true the hypothesis raised for this investigation and affirm the lack of conversation in the studied school for children to put their world into words. Thus, we can confirm the existence of the enwording crisis in the school stated by the Catalan anthropologist Lluís Duch.

Conclusions

According to the Catalan anthropologist Lluís Duch, today we live in a society oversaturated with information, with a frenetic tempo, that prioritizes individual success and economic productivity. This has caused the enwording crisis, i.e., a shortage of spaces for people to exchange "immediate" words, share experiences and represent the world together. At school, this has resulted in a lack of conversations for students to put the world into words, thus to express their experiences and interpretations of the world together in an attempt to understand and represent their symbolic insight of the world.

In this context, the present study was designed to analyse the role of conversation in a Primary school setting to verify whether Duch's statement on the lack of experiences for

pupils to enword the world could be confirmed in Thau school. A field logbook was used to record all the conversation spaces I identified during my teaching practices in the school. Besides, a questionnaire was administered to the Primary teachers to discover their point of view on the subject.

The results reveal that in Thau school there is scarce presence of conversation for students to communicate their experiences and share their cultural, historic and symbolic body of knowledge with others to represent their world. Therefore, these results confirm the existence of the enwording crisis in the school stated by Duch. In my opinion, a pedagogical rethinking is needed to promote more conversation for students to express their world in order to build their symbolic cosmos and find meaning in their existence. I think we focus on language as an instrument whose technique we have to know and master, and we undervalue its usefulness in exchanging experiences to better understand the world and give it a joint meaning. I believe the school has to be a more meaningful and democratic place where to learn from the experiences, questions and concerns of the students and help them formulate and mature their concretions.

The limitations of the research refer to the sample, as the study was done in a particular school, and so the reality in other centers may be different. Time was another limitation, since to provide more reliable evidence, the research should have been elaborated for a longer time and in the entire school. Moreover, as my study is very qualitative and was done in my teaching practices school, I am aware that my results may not be fully unbiased, since my affection could have influenced my perception on the study. Still, I tried to be honest and objective with the observation so as not to affect the data and the results. As a prospect for future work, the sample could be expanded in other courses and schools to have a general view and more conclusive results on the current enwording crisis in education declared by Lluís Duch. Also, the student's perception about feeling heard, about conversation in school and its effect on their personal development could also be further studied.

To sum up, may I conclude by saying that the intention of my study was to analyse real life pedagogical practice through the lens of Duch's understanding of the world. I think my work could be a call to reflection on the scarcity of school experiences to put the world into words. Personally, it has been a challenge to fill the existing gap in the relationship between the school and Duch's anthropology. Nonetheless, having studied his anthropology, I venture to say that I have been able to bring to life this link into the school context so as to contribute to examine the actual education framework from a more existential and humanistic view.

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Annexes

I.   **Observation guideline for the field logbook**

Identification of the conversation spaces in Thau
Observation items. Variables that will be observed and analysed
Space and time
When does the conversation occur?
Where does it take place? (class, canteen, playground, kitchen, …)
Is it formalized and planned or is it informal and spontaneous?
How much time is spent on the conversation?

Participants and personal interaction
Who are the people involved?
Which is the teacher's attitude? Are they open to conversations with the possibility to enword the world?
Which is the student's attitude?
How is the teacher-student relationship like? And between students?
Structure, content and purpose of the conversation
How is the conversation addressed? Is it delimited and structured?
Which type of language is used? (oral, corporal, musical, visual arts, …)
Which is the topic/content of the conversation?
What happens during the conversation?
Is tradition / culture present in the conversation?
Does the teacher act as a witness and bring up enwording experiences? Does the teacher show in the conversation a cultural, historic and symbolic body of knowledge?
Is the teacher's pre-systematic thinking present? (hope, recognition of the other, solidarity)
What resources are used in the conversation to encourage the enwording?

II. Questionnaire for teachers

Questions:

Space and time of conversations - *Espai i temps de les converses*

1. How would you quantify the presence of conversations in your daily teaching activity? *Com quantificaries la presència de converses en la teva activitat docent diària? (opcions: molt poques - 1 … 10 - moltes)*

2. When and where do the conversations usually occur? - *Quan i on acostumen a produir-se les converses?*

3. Do they usually emerge spontaneously with the student's initiative or rather, as a teacher, do you make them emerge with a specific goal? Why? - *Acostumen a sorgir de forma espontània per iniciativa dels alumnes o més aviat, com a mestre/a, les fas sorgir amb un objectiu concret? Per què?*

4. Do you think that you are open and available to have conversations with children at any time of the day? Why? - *Creus que et mostres obert i disponible per establir converses amb els infants en qualsevol moment del dia? Per què?*

Participants and personal interaction in conversations - *Participants i interacció personal en les converses*

5. Usually, who are the participants in conversations? - *Habitualment, quins són els participants en les converses?*

6. What do you think is your role in conversations? (guide, moderator, observer, model, adviser, director, interlocutor, information transmitter, impose information, analyst...). - *Quin creus que és el teu rol en les converses? (opcions: guia, moderador, observador, model, assessor, director, interlocutor, transmissor d'informació, rol d'imposar informació, analista...).*

7. What attitude do you think you usually show during conversations? Why? - *Quina actitud creus que mostres habitualment durant les converses? Per què?*

8. How do you think your attitude conditions the conversation? - *De quina manera consideres que la teva actitud condiciona la conversa?*

9. What do you think is the attitude of children in conversations? - *Quina creus que és l'actitud dels nens i nenes en les converses?*

10. How do you think the teacher-student relationship is in conversations? And among students? - *Com creus que és la relació mestre/a-alumne/es en les converses? I entre alumnes?*

Structure and content of conversations - *Estructura i contingut de les converses*

11. Do you structure conversation with a pattern to follow to guide it towards a specific aim, or do you rather let its direction be more free? Why? - *Estructures la conversa*

amb una pauta a seguir per guiar-la cap a un objectiu concret, o més aviat deixes que la seva direcció sigui més lliure? Per què?

12. What is the type of language commonly used in conversations? (oral, corporal, artistic, graphic ...) - *Quin és el tipus de llenguatge normalment usat en les converses? (opcions: oral, escrit, corporal, artístic, gràfic…)*

13. What topics are usually covered in conversations, and what do they depend on? - *Quins temes es tracten normalment a les converses, i de què depenen?*

14. For what purpose do you give space for or allow classroom conversations? - *Amb quina finalitat dónes lloc o permets que hi hagi converses a l'aula?*

15. Do you use any resources or strategies to improve the effectiveness of conversations? Which? - *Utilitzes algun recurs o estratègia per millorar l'efectivitat de les converses? Quin/s?*

16. Do you think conversation is a good pedagogical experience or strategy? Why? - *Creus que la conversa és una bona experiència o estratègia pedagògica? Per què?*