Staging Competence in Front of the Camera: Practices of knowledge display among 6th grade German L2 learners ’under observation’

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As Goodwin (1987) and others have shown, displays of epistemic access are resources to manage participation statuses in everyday interaction. This holds for classroom interactions in an accentuated way: Here, displaying knowledge or understanding, showing ignorance or not-understanding are pivotal for the organization of participation (Koole 2010); this is done by use of different semiotic resources available in the respective ”contextual configurations” (Goodwin 2000). In teacher fronted classroom interaction, participation is heavily influenced by teacher control (Emanuelsson & Sahlström 2008). Yet interaction during group work is organized differently. Although orientation to institutional orders is not suspended, organization of participation is much more contested because a pre-allocated authority assessing knowledge while ”managing the interaction” (Schmidt 2009) is missing. Focusing on one episode of group work in a 6th grade German L2-classroom applying multimodal and conversation analysis, I show how linguistic claims and displays of knowledge are combined with the use of other available semiotic resources, especially the researcher’s camera, in order to secure specific participation statuses, and in order to stage ’competence’ not only of the individuals, but also of the group as a whole.


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