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POSITIONING OF SPOKEN LANGUAGE BY A UKRAINIAN STUDENT

ABSTRACT. Daszkiewicz Michał, *Positioning of Spoken Language by a Ukrainian Student* [Pozycjonowanie języka mówionego przez ukraińskiego studenta] Studia Edukacyjne no. 74, 2024, Poznań 2024, pp. 121-135. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 1233-6688. Submitted: 1.10.2024. Accepted: 5.11.2024. DOI: 10.14746/se.2024.74.8

Resting on the fundamental premise that speech determines one's educational success, the paper presents a study of how a Ukrainian student (on an exchange program in Poland) positions spoken language from her own perspective. The key idea was to diagnose and understand her approach to speaking (its subjective positioning) in a comprehensive hybrid form. To this end, two (complementary) methods were applied: an attitude scale based on positivist grounds and a semi-structured interview observing constructivist rationale. By combining the two types of findings, the study showed how spoken language is positioned by the respondent on specific universal scales, on the one hand, and in her own self-defined conceptual space, on the other hand. The mixed study shows the notion of *positioning* as serving and reconciling positivist and constructivist methodologies, and as demonstrating the real character of how people approach things in a twofold manner (combining a closed-ended scaling with an open self-defined categorization). In educational terms, the paper shows positioning as complementing the notion of (knowledge) construction, and on the linguistic level, it provides data on what constitutes an enhancement or an obstacle to the student's spoken language.

Key words: positioning, spoken language, hybrid approach, mixed study, positivist-constructivist methodology, Ukrainian student

Introduction

Knowing how essential to one's overall educational success spoken language is, we need theoretical and methodological means of capturing a student's approach to speaking. This function was served in the study presented here by the notion of *positioning*, making it possible to examine one's approach to spoken language on particular pre-set scales, on the one hand, and to analyse it without any categories assumed prior to the study which

a particular person applies within one's own conceptual space. Despite the fact that speaking essentially underlies and "drives" learning (as well as teaching), in educational science the student's approach to their own speaking is rarely examined, with language altogether frequently being taken for granted as part of educational reality. This study offers a change in this respect and the eponymous notion of *positioning* serves as grounds for two types of diagnostic tools, yielding data which cannot be directly added up together but which jointly unravels how a particular student treats her or his own speech and where s/he places it.

Theoretical foundations

How and where we position spoken language is of paramount importance in education. The key role of language altogether is by no means a new discovery and it has long been known that – to put it in ERLA Association's wording – "language shapes our identity and our understanding of the world" (ERLA, 2018) and that words [...] are who we are, and [...] they define our place in the world and they define the world in which we are placed (after Calvert). Yet, it is only recently that the implications of this key position of language have attracted far more attention and various language-oriented publications and initiatives have been developed, moving us a couple of steps forward in this respect. As a result, we observe now a growing interest in and emphasis on the facts that (as presented along the lines of ERLA's premises) all education rests on language, which means that every teacher is a language teachers, which further implies that language – especially spoken – merits a special position in education. Such is the case with, for example, publications fostering (the notion of) *language-sensitive teacher education* (see Rossner & Bolitho, 2022), examining the link between language and student success (e.g. Crusan, 2017), analysing teachers-students interactions (see Elsherief & Masson, 2020), or developing notions such as *pluriliteracies teaching for deeper learning* (see Meyer & Coyle, (2017).

In our lives we – deliberately or unconsciously – position things on a daily basis: we place various facets, phenomena, issues, people etc. on our own hierarchies as well as in self-defined spaces. This is to say that ordinary human *positioning* has a twofold character:

- on the one hand, we place various concepts on multiple scales (when, say, we consider something less or more important or likeable), and,
- on the other hand, we locate the same facets within multidimensional spaces, rendering them constructs that evade any form of hierarchisation (when we assign to these facets any non-gradable attributes)

Accordingly, when approaching, for instance, our education or work, we naturally combine two “sub-approaches”: we assign to it a particular degree of importance or enjoyment, and, at the same time, we view and refer to it through the prism of a number of non-gradable characteristics. Hence, in our approach, our education or work is both a (scalable) concept and (rather than or(sic)) a (non-scalable) construct. The two processes constantly co-occur and it is simply human to position things, people, and phenomena in these two ways, whilst considering them in separation speaks against the very human nature. In other words, placing things on linear scales does not take place in our minds without locating things within our self-defined multidimensional spaces, and by the same token, it does not transpire as human to act conversely, that is to locate things, people, or phenomena, etc. within individual spaces without approaching them in any scale-based way.

The notion of *positioning* has been heavily exploited in many different fields, particularly marketing, where it refers to an overall strategy of making specific brands or products occupy a distinct position, relative to competing names or items – both objectively as well as subjectively in the mind of the customer. As Janiszewska & Insch note, brand *positioning* ‘determines the framework of visual and communication-related execution’ and ‘future brand development as [it is] the basis for gaining competitive advantage’ (Janiszewska & Insch, 2012, p. 9). We can say that the notion of *positioning* itself is positioned highly in the field in question, which is marked by, for example, the fact that dictionary definitions will mention this meaning as the first (or even) only meaning of the term, be it “the position held by a product in the opinion of customers, in comparison with its competitors’ brands” (Collins, 2024). What is worth emphasising here is the fact that so far the notion of *positioning* has not been used in the realm of education, which this very paper strives to change.

The notion of *positioning* (of concepts or constructs) ensues from today’s holistic treatment of people and their development. The traditional separations and divisions have come to be questioned by many different fields and sub-disciplines showing through numerous findings that no dimension – be it cognition or affect – exists in isolation or in a vacuum, but, instead, they permanently co-exist and call for their joint treatment. Needless to say, if such discoveries are made in the field of sciences which underlie education, today’s learning and teaching methods need to comply with them. Most notably, this applies to neuroscience, which has shown, for example, that the link between cognition and affect is so strong that entirely rational decision-making process practically does not exist and remains strongly affected (and essentially initiated) by affect (Beck, 2019, p. 177). Similar reasoning concerning the interdependence between various dimensions that have traditionally been tre-

ated in separation from one another is represented by the extensive thread of recent publications focused on a student's identity (e.g. Joseph, 2004; Jenkins, 2008; Fekete, 2021), linguistic identity (Haugan 2020), or holistic approaches to identity construction (Fekete, 2020).

By the same token, people's approach to things remains holistic, be it to their own speech as a crucial dimension of their overall educational and developmental functioning. When considering various comments made with regard to spoken language, we can recognise, on the one hand, those which place speaking on different personal scales ("I really like speaking/talking", "I find speaking important for my overall development", "I speak to myself a lot"), and, on the other hand, those which retain a multidimensional character and fall out of any rigid binary measurements ("Speaking is a natural part of learning, just like listening, testing, asking questions", "It's hard to imagine schooling without spoken language"). Considering this point from traditional lenses, we can note that the former types of comments fall into educational domains as known under the so-called multi-lateral education (cf. Okoń, 1967) as developed by its later proponents (esp. Niemierko, 2019), which the first part of the study presented in this paper will draw upon.

Methodology

The study made use of two different methodologies corresponding to two forms (sides) of positioning, that is an attitude scale built upon positivist grounds, and a semi-structured interview resting on constructivist rationale. The formation of the attitude scale and the interview rested on the juxtaposition of the positivist and constructivist methodologies respectively as outlined by Guba & Lincoln in their updated version of the premises of alternative research paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2014, pp. 285-287) as well as their list of currently valid issues (Guba & Lincoln, 2014, pp. 285-287). The two types of methodologies in the study to spoken language being referred to in two respective ways: as a concept in (positivist) Part 1 and as a construct in (constructivist) Part 2 of the study (cf. Measurement and Measurement Scales, 2024). The two research tools were applied separately, on two different occasions with a few weeks' interval, so as to prevent in the latter component the respondent's direct references to conceptual categories employed in the former part of the study. The attitude scale had been pre-tested with a group of 18 Erasmus students and the interview framework had been tried out with four of them. Yet, this paper addresses a subsequent analysis conducted with one student only, without any intention of generalization, but with a view to assign to the research proper some features of a case study by using methods

providing complementary data on a complex issue. Hence, the entire research path proceeded along the following stages:

Pre-test → Study proper Part 1 → Study proper Part 2 → Juxtaposition
with the two tools (with the attitude scale) (interview-based) of data from Parts 1&2

Part 1 (with the *positioning* of spoken language viewed from positivist lenses)

The aim of the first part was to establish how the respondent subjectively positions spoken language on a pre-set scale or, in other words, how high a status the respondents gives to spoken language. This overall position (scale/status) was assumed to be determined by four components (sub-scales) relating to the respondent's *beliefs* (how much she values speaking), *affect* (how much she enjoys speaking), *actions* (how much she actually speaks of her own will), and *thoughts* (how much she reflects on speaking). Although these four components constitute facets which cannot be – directly added up (for example, the subjective weight assigned to spoken language cannot be literally added to one's emotional attitude to it), they naturally co-occur in a person, which implies that the overall status can indeed be inferred and contrasted between different respondents (as in the case of, for example, one respondent considering speech to be an important element of learning but not really enjoying their own speech too much, and another respondent sharing the same view on the importance of speaking and also finding it most enjoyable to speak – here the latter respondent's overall status assigned to spoken language can be objectively regarded as higher than the position assigned to speaking by the former respondent).

At the same time, in order to achieve a still better picture of how the respondent positions speaking, (four) items relating to the said four components were formulated in such a way that in each block one item referred to speaking being used as a tool for completing different *tasks*, one item relating speech to learning different *subjects*, one item presenting speech as an educational *value* per se, and one referring to it as a personal *attribute*. This subdivision was prompted by the fact that (as the author's earlier studies show) there occur gross differences between students with regard to what roles they assign to speaking, all of which can contribute to its higher status (position) on the level of beliefs, affect, actions, or thoughts. Yet, this subdivision played a secondary function in the study presented here and helped to grasp and systematise various facets underlying a particular status of speech.

The 16 items relating to the positioning proper (and built by juxtaposing each time a particular component against a given role assigned to speech) were additionally accompanied by four items checking on the respondent's

self-assessment, with two items opening the attitude scale and relating to quantitative facets, and two items closing the tool and referring to qualitative ones. For all the 20 items the 5-point Likert scale was applied, covering 'Definitely NOT' (scoring 1), 'Rather NOT' (2), 'Hard to Say' (3), 'Rather YES' (4), and 'Definitely YES' (5).

Table 1

Part 1 of the study – items of the attitude scale

1	Self-assessment	quantity	I'm a talkative kind of person
2			I speak in the company of all the people I meet
3	BELIEFS	TASKS	I view speech as a way of dealing with all kinds of problems
4		SUBJECTS	I must be able to speak about an issue if I want to say that I've learnt it
5		VALUE	I see the ability to speak as an important educational goal
6		ATTRIBUTE	I believe that the way I speak is an important part of my personality
7	AFFECT	TASKS	When solving a task, I feel more comfortable when I can speak about it
8		SUBJECTS	Speaking out loud about what I know gives me pleasure
9		VALUE	I like speaking about the things which I'm learning about
10		ATTRIBUTE	I'm keen to develop my speaking abilities, in all the languages I know
11	ACTIONS	TASKS	When facing a problem, I speak with people about it
12		SUBJECTS	After I've learnt something new, I speak and discuss it with people
13		VALUE	I tend to talk to people just for the sake of my speaking abilities
14		ATTRIBUTE	I use conversations with people as a means of self-improvement
15	THOUGHTS	TASKS	Whatever task I'm doing, I think about how to put things into words
16		SUBJECTS	I tend to reflect on how much I can say about different issues
17		VALUE	I ask myself how much I can say about different things
18		ATTRIBUTE	I tend to wonder what kind of speaker I am
19	Self-assessment	quality	My general speaking abilities are good
20			I find myself a person nice to listen to

Part 2 (with the *positioning* of spoken language viewed from constructivist lenses)

The aim of the second part was to establish the respondent's positioning of spoken language relative to her own conceptual structure, that is without reference to any pre-set scales or dimensions. This was achieved by means of a semi-structured interview, which was built upon two fundamental principles:

- first, concerning TIME: in order not to impose on the respondent any specific categories, temporal references served as the organising concept for the subsequent parts of the interview, built of four parts of an increasing temporal reference (Section 1. "One situation" → Section 2. "These days" → Section 3. "Period of life" → Section 4. "Lifetime"); in order to facilitate the first section for the respondent, when the interview had been arranged, she had been requested to think of one specific conversation/talk which she had held/given recently;

- second, concerning ANCHORS: such an increasing temporal reference was meant to prepare the respondent for each subsequent part of the interview, meaning that, for example, the student's reflection on her current circumstances in Section 2 facilitated remarks on changes observed over time in Section 3, which, in turn provided conceptual grounds for Section 4. It needs to be noted here that each preceding section was less important in the entire interview than the following one, with Section 4 being most crucial as providing data on the *positioning* (proper) of spoken language the most – and thus including the highest number of questions so as to take advantage of the respondent having been prepared by the previous sections to remark on her *positioning* of speaking on a very general level. Additionally, the first section was preceded by two extra "pre-anchors" in the form of two questions concerning the respondent's impressions on speaking about speaking in an interview and in everyday life.

Hence, the interview was conducted along the following lines observing the two principles above:

Section "0" (pre-anchoring questions)

1. What are your thoughts when I say that I want to speak about speaking?
2. Do you think much about speaking?

Section 1 "One situation" (conversation/talk-oriented)
(instruction preceding the study)

Think of some conversation you've held in your native language recently.

1. Why did you choose this one? How did it proceed?
2. Was it a good talk? Why?
3. Can you say anything about the form?
4. Can you name any word, expression, sentence that you used? Why did you use it?

Section 2 "These days" (character-oriented]

1. Do you speak much?
2. When do you speak the most? Why then?
3. What kind of speaker are you?
4. What is your speaking like?

Section 3 "Period of life" (changes-oriented)

1. Have you observed any changes in the way you speak?
2. Were these changes intentional or just a result of maturing/development?
3. Has anything or anyone changed your approach to speaking? Why?
4. What's the difference between you as a speaker in the past and you as a speaker now?

Section 4 "Lifetime" (role-oriented)

1. What role does speaking play in your life?
2. Do you follow any rules when speaking?
3. Do you have some speaking role model/authority?
4. Would you like to change anything in the way you speak?
5. Can you say that speaking has led you to some achievements?
6. Has it been beneficial in any sense?

(Obviously, if in any of the four sections the respondent happened to remark on any of the later questions at an earlier stage, the relevant question was skipped and the issue addressed in greater detail instead.)

Analysis of results

The results from the two parts of the study were first analysed in separation and then juxtaposed against each other so as to arrive at a possibly comprehensive hybrid interpretation. The first part will be analysed only briefly here as with regard to an individual respondent it serves a secondary function and helps interpret data obtained in the second, constructively-grounded, part.

Part 1

Considered numerically, the respondent's overall *positioning* of spoken language is high, although not very high. Specifically, it reaches the level of nearly 74%, which can be read as an indication of the respondent appreciating spoken language, but not assigning to it a central role in her development. Interestingly, the respondent's markings in the 16 items (Items 3-18) checking on the positioning proper proved consistent with her self-assessment as a speaker, which had not been the case with most of the students taking part in the pre-test.

Perhaps the most intriguing finding, though, when it comes to the scale-based verification of spoken language positioning here is the respondent's markings were significantly higher on the level of linguistic beliefs and affect (36 points in total) than those relating to actions and thoughts (23 points in total). It appears justifiable to recognise these two pairs of sub-scores out of all four as the former seem to be somewhat more fundamental, fixed, or theoretical, whilst the latter more advanced, changeable, or practical. From this perspective the respondent's results seem to indicate that she does not practice what she preaches with regard to spoken language – she deems it important and finds it pleasurable, but does not put these views and likes into practice and does not reflect on her own speaking in a similar degree. This observation is additionally confirmed by the respondent's self-assessment relating to how much she speaks (Items 1&2), with the not-very-high volume of speech being partially caused by her not-too-high assessment on the qualitative end (Items 19&20). Although the numerical part of the study was not too extensive or advanced, it provides us with a highly consistent picture of the respondent's *positioning* of her speech.

Part 2

The – constructivism-grounded – interview started with marked hesitation on the part of the respondent, possibly caused by the unusual form of the two pre-anchoring questions (Q 1&2). The level of hesitation rapidly declined, though, as the timeframe became wider and the respondent could proceed along the path she chose for herself to present a personal internally-consistent approach. In fact, the decline in question was noticeable even within the very first reply loaded at the beginning with incertitude and reading *"I'm not sure if I'm considering the sentence of yours. We're just going to.. we're just going to have a normal conversation, like, that's what I'm thinking about. I don't feel pressure, I don't feel confused, pretty normal"*, but quickly moving on to reveal a very clear individual picture of facets determining the position of spoken language: *"I think we're going to disclose some of the patterns of speaking, because we speak differently in our native languages, at least I do, I really do, the conversations in my native language, it's always a problem I stumble upon – which language is my native? Because I come from the Russian-speaking region, which switched to Ukrainian, like, three years ago, but my family is still Russian speaking, but I'm obtaining my individual education in Ukrainian, yeah? (...) when I'm speaking in this diglossic Ukrainian-Russian language sometimes I don't express myself fully, I always have to second-guess the meaning. I always do when I try it. It's much more intuitive than in English probably. I suppose that's what speaking is."* (Throughout the paper the respondent's replies have been cited without any corrections or modifications.) Raging this kind of inter-linguistic struggle in herself, the respondent

additionally proved capable of critical self-assessment as she replies to the second question as to whether she thinks much about speaking: *"Unfortunately I don't but I'd better do, because I sometimes express myself in a very unclear ambiguous way. It's obvious for me, because I generated the thought, but I haven't articulated it just properly. It could be shortened, it could be just weirdly formulated."* This reply does not only show language to be of importance to the respondent and some of her biographical context highly important for our further analysis, but it contains some crucial wording (generating the thought, ambiguity etc.) upon which her positioning of speaking rests.

When asked at the beginning of the interview proper about one particular situation, she reflected on a conversation the choice of which was determined by the fact that she found it amusing. The focus of the respondent's account of what it concerned was put on the content rather than the form. Yet, when prompted to remark on the latter, she stated that *the sentences were formulated in a very simple way, not sophisticated by any means, they were just informative*. She could not recall any particular wording that occurred during that talk, which later clearly contrasted with her remarkable ability to remark on the lexical dimension of conversations from a more general perspective. As it transpired later, whilst in the case of one-off conversations personally significant were those talks that were funny and/or informative, on a more general level the form of the wording applied mattered a lot to the respondent and underlay her personal change.

In Section 2 of the interview the respondent referred to her *educational process* as providing her with *opportunities to speak*, particularly at the point of staying abroad in a Polish dormitory in isolation from her family and friends. Although she apparently likes to talk a lot, the respondent refers to herself as a *the most garrulous [but] very indirect speaker*, adding *I really struggle with the current of my thought, thoughts which I'm expressing, I'm lost it*, and, when prompted to say more, she continues saying *I'm not able to articulate them in a proper order, and I'm just jumping from one point to another, trying to synthesise them all in a logical way*. When asked to think of adjectives describing best her speaking style, the respondent referred to it as – without any hesitation at all – *chaotic*, and – after a bit of consideration – *expressive* – with the two descriptors clearly conforming to the sub-score obtained in Part 1 of the study with regard to her beliefs and affect concerning spoken language (as significantly lower than that relating to speech-oriented actions and reflection).

The third (change-oriented) section proved most revealing with regard to how the respondent positions her speech. This can best be seen through a perusal of her following uninterrupted words: *on the verge of puberty I discovered... Before the puberty kicked me, like, when I was about 7 to 11 I was extremely bullied in school, so I was not given the opportunity to speak, I was fighting all the time, and*

that was my kind of communication, I was physically aggressive, and then I realised that physical aggression doesn't serve me actually, and I'd better go into a more feminine way of aggression, more subtle aggression, verbal aggression, I realised I'm not so witty, I'm not able of a short comeback [?], so I could try to pressure people with words they were not able to understand and which could make them consider themselves stupid, and I'll be all-mighty, all-whitey and the case is solved. As these words show, a big change occurring in the respondent on the level of speech was quite intentional and it related to the form of the words used. In the course of time her approach and form of speech has changed radically, with the circumstances being different and the respondent not finding the need to be verbally aggressive any more – as she herself retells: I started to be more open, I stopped being so considerate about much speech, regarding its form, like I'm not afraid to use some words which are commonly used, because before that complexity was part of my identity, I'm bullied not because I'm mad, I'm poor, I'm dumb, but because I'm not understandable, not reachable, that gave me some safe space, but now I don't have to be complex, I'd better be simple, and this will simplify my life as well. So [I decided] to be more open and intentionally I started simplifying not only my way of speaking, but my way of thinking as well. As a result of simplifying the way she spoke, the respondent discovered herself to be more humorous, which was not an intended effect, but something that she started to recognise in her own talk, without knowing where this power came from.

In the last section of the interview the respondent assigned to speech a predominantly communicative function. She did not name any particular rule she tends to follow when speaking, but she admitted that when she happens to be talking to her friends, she does not use any *filters* which she applies when talking to strangers and in the company of her friends, she becomes *completely unhinged*. She did not name any 'speaking authority' or 'model' she might follow, but she proved clear about one quality of her speech which she would like to change, saying *I would like to be more reserved, because my openness doesn't turn me well (...) I probably would like to shorten the length of my speech, I would like to be able to express myself in a quicker way*. Finally, the respondent could not attribute any particular achievements directly to language per se, although she recalled one recent situation with a younger student praising her ability to respond to comments made during a conference which the respondent had attended.

Most interestingly, the respondent emailed some additional comments complementing what she had stated during the interview herself. In those comments she put into words two significant issues which could also be partially inferred from her answers to the questions posed throughout the four sections, but which add to our awareness of how she positions spoken language with her own lexis. The first point concerned the said change in how

she approached speech in the past – *as a weapon*, and how she approaches it now – *as an instrument*. The second point related to what the respondent owes to speech and how speech did in fact contribute to her achievements. She says: *I have built my reputation in university on the way I speak and present myself, I got into Erasmus thanks to my speaking abilities, I am able to explore cultural landscapes, try my fortune on different educational opportunities – all of that is because I am a direct and inexorable speaker. I will not evaluate it in a dichotomy of good or bad – that is basically how I am and who I am. I've received a lot of criticism and hate, being called annoying and unbearable, simultaneously I've received a lot of praise and admiration regarding my communication style. On top of that, in her emailed comments the respondent also returned to her overall self-assessment as a speaker, calling herself garrulous, loud, complex, and persuasive, and elaborating on differences between the languages she happens to use: It [my character as a speaker] strongly depends on the situation I am in and even more prominently it shows in whatever language I am speaking: English is more of a sophisticated way of expression with the inclusions of yapp:D, also, I have noticed the looseness and liberty of disclosing some of the vulnerable moments of my life while talking in English. Ukrainian – chaotic and random, heavily relied on jokes and context, Polish – rather reserved (reasoned by unsureness in language proficiency, but I was never ashamed of my Polish).*

Discussion and conclusions

When juxtaposed against each other, the results obtained in the two parts of study provide a highly interesting comprehensive picture of the respondent's positioning of her own speech. Most importantly, it transpires that – possibly due to biographical elements – she locates spoken language more in the axiological and affective spheres than in the psychomotor or cognitive domains. She assigns to speech numerous social facets which relate to her internal emotional experience, with the affective component “ruling over” her *current of thoughts*. Her approach to speech – as an important but not pivotal – dimension of education is well reflected by her self-assessment as a speaker both on the qualitative and quantitative end. From the instructional perspective, these findings suggest that the student's speech orientation needs to be boosted by references to how speech supports actions and reasoning, which she may essentially realise theoretically (as the scores in Part 1 would imply), but which she appears not to put into practice (as she also admits in Items 13 and 14 of the attitude scale, where she marked ‘2’ representing her ‘Rather NOT’ answer). The effect in question is most noticeable in the dimension of thoughts, with regard to which (in Items 15-18) three (out of 4) replies are

equally negative, with only Item 16 remaining “on the verge” of positive and negative positioning.

The respondent’s past *weaponising the speech*, as she put it, gradually converted into its *instrumentalisation*, with the respondent *becoming softer and relenting about wording choices, basically less mean* (phrases used in the message sent after the interview proper). The way she spoke on her positioning of spoken language makes it apparent that to her speech has always has a strong existential edge and determined her social status, her position in different-aged peer groups, or her female characteristics. In the light of the respondent’s positioning of spoken language being so heavily loaded with biographical elements (reflected by a very strong linguistic register), it is far from being surprising that in Part 1 of the study she marked ‘5’ against all items pertaining to her linguistic beliefs, confirming that the way and degree in which she positions her speech have very strong axiological and affective foundations.

What also matters for the consideration of how and how much the respondent reflects on spoken language (and thus how she positions it in a multidimensional space) is the fact that, as noted earlier, in the pre-anchoring questions she referred to the disclosure of speaking patterns across different language. It can be interpreted as an indication of such an approach to spoken language that reflecting on it needs to intersect different languages rather than pertain to one language only. The respondent’s answer to the question concerning ‘speaking about speaking’ can be viewed as falling into a very common stance, whereby the ability to speak one’s native language(s) is taken for granted and, consequently, not subjected to analysis, examination, research, or discussion, which, from the perspective of the educational role of language mentioned at the beginning of the paper, transpires as unequivocally detrimental.

The second part of the research also spoke against this detrimental tradition of confining analyses of speech and one’s approach to speaking to foreign languages only. Thanks to the anchoring applied in such a way that the respondent became prepared throughout the interview to make remarks of an increasingly wider temporal reference, she started off with comments concerning one particular situation and moved on to remark on her speech at a specific point of time, changes which have occurred since she had been a child, and, finally, on the most general scale, on how she positions spoken language in her life altogether. Without the use of such temporal anchoring and with the order of sections/questions being reversed, the respondent might have not been able to generalise on the position of spoken language over time as part of her overall existence.

Being relevant to both the positivist and the constructivist rationale, the notion of *positioning* It has proved to serve the holistic verification of how

the respondent approaches spoken language. In the first part it has provided data showing both those facets which boost its subjective positioning by the respondent as well as those domains where the position is spoken language is diminished, and in the second part – the respondent's own rationale underlying her approach to spoken language. Although these two types of data cannot be directly added up, they jointly build a comprehensive picture, the hybrid character of which chimes with people's natural approach to things. Owing to the omnipresence of language in education, the twofold data can be of significant and interest in practically all subjects and disciplines where (whichever) language – in whatever manner and degree – comes into play.

Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work.

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