An Ethnographic Analysis of How Traditional Children are Caught Within a Cultural Intersection in Early Schooling in Rural Turkey.

Abstract: (150 words)
This paper gives a summary of an ethnographic study of classroom life in a traditionally oriented village in Turkey, which focuses on modernizing role of participation structures. It will provide analyses of participation both in classroom and in the village community in order to show how traditional children struggle in classrooms due to their traditional upbringing. I will discuss how, in classroom, the children receive the treatment of 'incompetent' beings as if their difficulties are marked by their biological nature rather than being a result of their cultural orientation. The findings will document the consequences of such circumstances on educational lives and life chances of traditional children, on social distribution of educational attainment within the larger society, and on the modernizing role of schooling in still traditional parts of the world. The paper will conclude with remarks on the taken-for-granted tendencies of teachers and the nature of teacher education programs.

Summary: (587 words)

This paper focuses on the cultural nature of social organization of participation in modern classrooms and its encounter with the interactional orientations of traditional communities. In order to convey socially constructed, thus culturally oriented, nature of classroom forms of participation (i.e. interactional organizations), the paper will draw on the analyses of Michel Foucault (1975) and David Hamilton (1989), on development of modern schooling and its pedagogy. Both authors focus on emergence of modern social organizational forms that provide more effective forms of management and teaching, which evolve in parallel with the demands of larger social and cultural transformations. Via presenting historically situated nature of the forms social organizations of schooling and its teaching practices, the paper intends to draw attention to socially distributed nature of the forms of interactional competences expected in modern classrooms. Thus, it aims to cause an awareness that individual students' chances for having the competence needed for effective participation in modern classrooms will be varied depending on their communities' position within the range of distance (both social and historical) to these historical cultural transformations, which have established in European history the pathway to modernity. Given this purpose, analyses comparing the traditional village children's participation in their school classroom and in the traditionally oriented affairs of their home community will be presented. Data is taken from a larger ethnographic study of 'early schooling and its modernization influence in traditional communities', which was conducted in a traditionally oriented farming community in southern Turkey.

The analysis follows the conceptualization and the procedures of the Conversation Analysis (CA), which is known for its focus on the practices employed, in interactions, in construction of meaning, and on how meaning thereby constructed becomes the driving force for an interaction (Moerman & Sack, 1988). Further, CA documents how meaning construction is jointly produced in interactions; and how the meanings thereby constructed are accomplished not only through variations in combinations of grammatical elements that constitute the content of any turn of talk, of any speaker in interaction, but also through the sequential connections between the turns that constitute any given interaction. That is, both – any given turn and the sequence of turns – are essential to meaning. Thus, CA is chosen in this paper as an analytic lens because of its power to provide analyses of *how meaning is possible in the first place*, as we all would agree teaching and learning is underwritten by common meaning.

The findings show that the village children struggle to participate effectively in classroom activities, and this results from their cultural distance to the modern institutional settings. On the other hand, the same children show highly competent participation in the affairs of the village community that reaches to levels which is unimaginable to the adult members of the modern world. Briefly, as school classrooms become *cultural intersections* in the traditional communities, the businesses of schooling are all effected – respectively, educational lives of the traditional children, their teachers' efficiency and the modernizing role of schooling. Teachers' tendency in general to take interactional competences for granted will be focused as a source that multiplies already inescapable difficulties which results from the children's cultural distance to the modern institutions and their participation structures. The paper will conclude remarks on the need for teachers, especially in the culturally distant communities, who approach their professional duties from a cultural standpoint, and recognize the need for providing cultural guidance to their students especially in the early grades. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications such findings have for the teacher education programs.

References:

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