

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON DESIGNING A STUDY OF INTERACTION

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Background

Not much is known on a scientific level about the interaction in instrumental teaching. Nor do we know how the teacher-student interaction affects the students' opportunities to learn. One reason for the lack of knowledge based on empirical studies could be the theoretical and methodological difficulties involved in studying such multifaceted data.

Aims

This paper discusses the theoretical underpinning of the methodological decisions made in an on-going Swedish research project on interaction and learning. Data consists of 12 hours of video recorded instrumental lessons in high schools and teacher training colleges. Video recordings create enormous amounts of multimodal data, and many choices have to be made about how to represent, describe, analyse and interpret data systematically.

Main Contribution

The perspective created in the study reflects the researchers' views and values concerning empirical research: Since instrumental teaching is a complex social phenomenon with a long history, it is difficult to study and discuss the outcome of music

teaching from theoretical perspectives that do not reach beyond an individual level. On the other hand, sociological macro models of explanation or theories about the historical context where the institutional routines have evolved, can not provide analytical concepts for analysis on a micro level, where teachers and students interact.

Implications

The main object of the paper is therefore to discuss how multiple compatible theories are combined in the current study for application to different theoretical levels. These levels show continuous movement from the close-up description of how teachers and students act and interact, over a systematic analysis of the patterns of interaction, and finally move on to an interpretation on a macro level of why they are interacting the way they do.

The paper discusses how the three levels of theories can be combined to elucidate our understanding of teaching and learning processes in terms of interaction.