

**“Re-orienting semantic dispositions: the role of hybrid discourses”**

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Human beings constitute and are constituted by the social relations, interactions and structures they live in and through. Thus whilst we have the potential to shape, design and ‘invent’ our social world/s we are also constantly (often unconsciously) exposed to the shaping and structuring influences of the social world/s we inhabit. Hasan (2009) discusses the influences of patterns of language interaction (particularly in the early years of a child’s life) in terms of the semantic dispositions or orientations that they give rise to.

In this paper I consider how one’s semantic disposition may be re-oriented (or not) through the process of institutionalized learning. That is, as students appropriate and internalize concepts and perspectives from within and across different disciplines and, in some cases, apply these to personal and/or professional lived experience they are learning to reconfigure the world. And one could argue that, in so doing, their existing semantic dispositions are inevitably unsettled and re-formed – to a greater or lesser extent. So how does this occur? What role does language play?

In keeping with the conference theme I examine contexts of learning that activate meanings and wordings which can be seen as ‘hybrid’ from a number of perspectives. I will argue that such contexts and discourses (for example electronic ‘text talk’ within a health and social care degree course) have considerable potential for enabling students who inhabit a largely practical world constituted by specific lived experiences to enter into a predominantly theorized world constituted by abstract and generalized models of human behaviour. In sum, by expanding their semiotic resources, students become active agents in discursively extending, reclassifying and navigating between personal, professional and academic worlds.

Hasan, R. (2009) *Semantic Variation: Meaning in Society and in Sociolinguistics*, Edited by: Jonathan J. Webster. Equinox, London: UK.

Conference website: <http://www.lingue.unibo.it/esflcw2012>