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Teachers' reproaches and the management of discipline in the classroom: when teachers tell students what they do 'wrong'[1]

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1. Introduction

In our vernacular culture, actions such as reproaching, admonishing or reprimanding are rather familiar to any competent member of our society. All these terms normally refer to a set of practices whereby speaker A addresses B to display a certain disappointment regarding something that B has done, and which A treats as not appropriate in a specific situation and, as such, reproachable. Reproach activity, therefore, focuses on the recipient's conduct as transgression and infringement of social expectations; thus invoking moral rules and appropriate behaviour.

Addressing co-participants with direct criticism about their conduct occurs in everyday activities in ordinary and institutional interaction also when speakers produce accusations (Drew and Atkinson 1979, Heritage 2002, Koshik 2003), complaints (Pomerantz 1986, Drew and Holt 1988, Sacks 1992, Drew 1998, Dersley and Wootton 2000 and 2001, Edwards 2005, Monzoni 2008, Heinemann and Traverso 2009), as well as reproaches (Macbeth 1991, Günthner 1996).

Reproaching seems to have a special relevance for classroom interaction, particularly in relation to the management of discipline. In part, this is connected to the constraints on the organization of talk in the classroom multi-party setting. One of the organizational problems which teachers face, especially in traditional teacher-lead approaches, is described by Atkinson and Drew as follows:

> " […] how to achieve and sustain the minimal conditions for everyone to be able to monitor
> one speaker speaking at a time in the face of the probability that the turn-taking system for
> conversations, if left unmodified, would provide for more than one conversation to take place
> at the same time. Anyone who has been anywhere near a classroom cannot fail to have

noticed that teachers spend a great deal of their time telling children to be quiet, stay in their seats, face the front, etc" (Atkinson and Drew, 1979: 220).

Thus, telling students what to do and what not to do, or what is right or wrong in the way they behave is linked to these constraints and to the necessity to achieve the minimal conditions to gain all the participants' shared attentiveness and to avoid that more than one conversation proliferates at a time.

To these purposes, teachers have a range of devices: they can use verbal and non-verbal behaviour to locate, point at, stigmatize, and sanction students' untoward ways of behaving, very often even without explicitly spelling out what they have spotted as inappropriate or 'wrong' in that conduct. For instance, one of the most frequent devices used by teachers to display that they have noticed a student's behaviour which is worth being exposed as problematic, consists in calling one student by name, when not done as a selection of the next speaker (Macbeth 1991). Through this practice, teachers locate the person whose conduct is understood to be the object of criticism and negative judgement, without explaining which specific aspect in the actual conduct is the actual source of the reproach. By contrast, on occasions where more than one person is talking at the same time or more than one type of behaviour is being addressed as inappropriate, teachers use other techniques like gaze, shushing (see Sahlström in this issue) or tapping their fingers on the desk to make the students stop that conduct. In other circumstances teachers may address the offender with an explicit request to have a proper conduct or to stop that behaviour (command). Other ways of addressing the social requirements in the classroom are also expressions of wish, requests for accounts and information-seeking questions (Günthner 1996)[i]. Also in these cases with a more elaborate verbalization, the reproachable is understood as having taken place just before the occurrence of one of these practices, or as being enacted by the person that is thus addressed; but the details of the conduct thus reprimanded are *not mentioned* or, in any case, these are not fully explained in the reproach activity. In this way, the students addressed, or those whose conduct is referred to, are cast by the teacher as they *should be able to understand* by themselves

what precisely the teacher is treating as offensive or inappropriate, without this being made explicit through a clear description of the misconduct.

Whereas all these practices rely on the technique of providing students with resources to *locate* the reproachable conduct in various ways, the technique that I will investigate here has the property of accomplishing reproach through an *explicit description* of the 'wrong' way of behaving. I will show two types of reproaches with a description-format, occurring in 6 and 7 grade classrooms. In one case, the description links the untoward conduct to its undesirable consequences by means of a *conditional construction*; in the other, the description is designed to display the speaker's *ironic attitude* (on irony see Piirainen-Marsh, this issue). The paper will demonstrate that, through these constructional features, this descriptive format exhibits the teacher's negative orientation to the behaviour as *self-evidently* problematic. If compared with the other techniques, the reproach with this specific format can be heard as edging towards an aggravated type of reprimand, almost resembling accusation. Another related finding concerns the relationship between the 'extreme' nature of this type of reproach and its use as the last line of defence in the management of discipline.

Fragment 1 reports a clear case of reproaches with a description-format, designed as a conditional utterance:

(1) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01  T:        ALLO:RA CRISTINA IO SONO QUA  SE TU  PARLI CON L'ELISA:, (.)
              now     [NAME]   I  am   here if you talk  to  [NAME]

02            HO DEI  PROBLE:MI A  COMUNICARE    CON  VOI DUE
              I  have problems  to communicate  with you both

03            (7.0)
```

The teacher addresses Cristina by name and gives an explicit description of the behaviour that has caused the reproach ('*you talk to Elisa*'), along with an explanation of the reasons why her conduct is treated as inappropriate ('*I have problems to communicate with you both*'). The second type is illustrated below:

(2) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01  T: →   sei     leggermente in ritardo
           you are  slightly     late
           ((to a boy who has just entered the room very late))
02         (5.0)
```

The contrast between the meaning of 'slightly' and the actual delay of the student in returning after the break (which is 'very' late) provides for the ironic flavour of the teacher's comment.

Cases like these differ from the other reproach formats because of the explicit description of the misconduct, as opposed to just locating the problematic behaviour. However, the analysis will highlight that such a portrayal of the students' behaviour works on similar basis as the non-descriptive formats. I will show that the moral force of reproaches with a description-format is based on the assumption that students are culpable because they have failed to consider the outrageous nature of their behaviour by themselves; thus, somehow forcing the teacher to explain what is wrong in their conduct by mentioning its negative outcome. The analysis of the sequential deployment of this type of reproaches will show that, although relatively infrequent, this way of dealing with undesirable activities plays an important role in maintaining classroom discipline because it represents the last line of defence when other attempts have failed, when students display resistance to adopt the requested behaviour or when they challenge the teacher.

The structure of the paper includes one section where I will describe some examples for each of the two varieties. I will then consider in more detail one occurrence for each of the two formats, analyzing their sequential deployment in the larger reproaching sequence in which they are produced, along with the aftermath of the reprimand.

The data are drawn from a corpus of 15 video-recordings, made of ordinary classes (50 minutes each) in a variety of different subjects. Three different year groups (2 sixth-grades, 1 seventh-grade) and their 10 teachers participated to the study. The recordings took place in two different secondary schools in one of the major industrialized northern towns in Italy in the years 2000 and 2001. Data collection was approved by the participants and their families who provided informed

consent to be recorded prior to the study. The data were transcribed according to the system devised by Gail Jefferson (Atkinson and Heritage1984) and analysed using Conversation Analysis (CA).

2. Explicit descriptions of students' untoward behaviour

In conducting their ordinary affairs in everyday talk, people normally describe their own conduct or those of other people, either to praise and appreciate that conduct or, on the contrary, to complain, accuse, reproach and criticize it as wrong or bad. In so doing, speakers produce evidence of the fact that our conduct is accountable, subject to interpretation as well as to moral evaluation (Drew & Holt, 1988; Drew, 1998; Schegloff, 2005). Portraying other people's conduct, describing the physical aspects of their behaviour, making references to places, timing, and other features of someone's conduct (Jefferson 1985, Pomerantz 1986, Drew 1978, Atkinson and Drew 1979, Drew, 1992 and 1998) is one way speakers have to express a stance on the object of their description, to evaluate it and to display that they have title to do so (Pomerantz, 1984).

Thus, also when descriptions are constructed without using explicit terms of evaluation, these can still have the pragmatic force of assessments insofar as, through them, speakers show their stance on what they are talking about. As Drew points out: "Insofar as descriptions are unavoidably incomplete and selective, they are designed for specific and local interactional purposes" (1998: 295). This is also the case for reproaches which employ the description of the conduct that is being reprimanded.

2.1 The use of descriptions with a conditional-format to legitimize reproaching

Extract 3 reports part of the teacher talk during the first minutes of an Italian lesson, soon after the mid-morning break. The majority of students have entered the class late and the teacher is setting the class to work. When fragment 3 begins, Cristina and Elisa, among other students, are engaged in a private conversation that has lasted for a while but for which the teacher hasn't so far reproached them.

(3) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01  T:      ALLO:RA CRISTINA IO SONO QUA  SE TU  PARLI CON L'ELISA:,  (.)
             now     [NAME]   I  am   here if you talk  to  [NAME]

02          HO DEI  PROBLE:MI A  COMUNICARE   CON  VOI DUE
             I  have problems  to communicate  with you both

03          (7.0)
```

The turn has a conditional structure: Cristina's conduct ('*talking with Elisa*') is reported in the conditional clause, whereas the consequences of the action are spelled out in the main clause ('*the teacher's 'problems to communicate with you both'''*). In this way, Cristina' behaviour is cast as the *condition* for a state of affairs which is described as problematic: namely, the teacher's difficulties in getting students' attention. This syntactical organization of the statement portrays Cristina's behaviour as a wrongdoing *because* it produces negative effects.

In this regard, the comparison with other types of compound sentences used by adults in the position of educators to comment upon children unprompted behaviour will highlight the negative evaluating force of the teacher's turn in fragment 3. Wootton (1986) describes two-part constructions in "rules statements" that take place in parent-child interaction, such as the following:

(4) Fo/Dh (4;0) [in Wootton, 1986:151]

```
M:          Well: when ↑you: go on a swing↓ you've gotta watch that
            its not anywhere Richard before you start moving
```

As Wootton observes, in rule statements of the type above, the main clause describes courses of actions that are recommended to avoid undesirable consequences. The first main difference with the previous extract concerns the type of perspective from which the action is described: instead of

recommending desirable courses of actions (as in 4), in extract 3 the teacher *states the undesirable consequences* of the student's behaviour. The second difference concerns the way in which the action is described in the subordinate clause. Wootton argues that in cases like fragment 4, the description of the child's fault takes specific features:

> These turns index what has occurred by giving an action description which *indirectly* describes what *recipient* was doing. In (11) [here example (4)] with *when you go on a swing* (not, for example, 'when children are swinging' or 'when Richard's near the swing' or 'when you went on that swing'); in (12) with (*An'*) *when you stand up on things*; in (13) *If you do a job*. These descriptions index the state of affairs which obtained at the time of the untoward event, and permit the rule to be heard as concerning those affairs, but they are not constructed as actual descriptions of those affairs. [...] These courses of actions are recognizable ways through which the untoward event which has taken place, and which may still be taking place, can be avoided. (Wootton, 1986: 153-54).

The indirect character of the description of the wrongdoing in Wootton's cases contrasts with the description of Cristina's fault in fragment 3, which depicts what the recipient is *actually* doing. The generic terms such as *things*, *job*, *a swing*, (even *you* can be heard in this context as a generic '*you'*) occurring in parent-child interaction, in the classroom example are replaced with lexical and grammatical resources which refer to Cristina's ongoing action directly, as the *actual* (not hypothetical) course of action. For instance, the statement prefacing the conditional clause, in which the teacher asserts her own physical presence in front of Cristina ('*I am here'*), contributes to the sense of *directness* of the successive description of the student's behaviour. The statement is designed to index a state of affairs that is taking place at that very moment.

A second observation concerns the manner in which the turn is constructed. The consequences of the student's wrongdoing ('*I have problems to communicate with you both*') and the other features concerning the event ('*I am here*') are depicted as circumstances that are plainly *self-evident*. In doing so, the teacher displays that Cristina's conduct is reproachable not only because it clearly has negative effects on others (here, on the teacher), but also because she has been unable to consider such unpleasant consequences of her behaviour by herself. These circumstances expose Cristina to a public reprimand, as well as forcing the teacher to formulate a direct reproach. In this regard, it can be observed that the teacher uses a high volume of voice throughout the whole

delivery of the turn; showing that she is emotionally involved in the activity. This contributes to build the aggravated character of the reproach (I will further pursue this aspect in the following section).

The rule-statement format analyzed by Wootton is again a very useful comparison. As Wootton argues, rule statements hold the recipient as being at fault for not taking the requisite measures or precautions; furthermore, by explaining what precautions the recipient should take, the speaker holds the recipients as not knowledgeable and, as such, as a person that has to be instructed. In classroom examples, rather than the precautions that should be taken, the teacher foregrounds the undesirable effects of the students' conduct. By referring to the consequences of the recipient's behaviour, the action is described as having already taken place, rather than as a perspective action. Furthermore, insofar as the untoward consequences and the circumstances of the wrongdoings are described as self-evidently negative, the format holds the recipient as being at fault precisely because s/he is unable to understand states of affairs s/he should have avoided. By stating something so plainly evident ('*I am here*'), the teacher underlines the students' lack of attention for the requirements of the event in which s/he is taking part. Thus, students are treated as they *ought to know* which consequences their conduct would have for the other co-participants and for the activity underway. It is this specific feature that characterizes the teacher's turn as accomplishing a reproach, rather than giving instructions as in example 4.

That the negative evaluation of the student's conduct concerns its being evidently 'wrong' is confirmed by the next case. Following the teacher's conditional clause, in which the reproachable conduct is described, one student completes the teacher's turn with an exclamation that provides an exaggerated negative evaluation and moves the class laughter.

(5)   [PM:SN: Saffi.4/3.12.01/artistica]
```
  01  T:            allora,
                    so now
                    ((raising her head and addressing to the students in the row behind from
                     where somebody hands out a piece of paper))

  02  T:     →      se DE:VO              sentire.
                    If I am constrained to hear
```

```
03              (0.2)
04   T:         TUTTE LE  PERSO:NE CHE PARLANO contemporaneam[ente,
                all    the people    speaking    at the same time
                ((she beats the rhythm of her talk with her right hand))
05   St:  (C)                                              [che ↑schi::f
                                                           how disgust
                ((she speaks turning backwards towards the students who have been
                reproached by the teacher))
06   Sts:       eh [ehe ehe ehehe
07   T:            [Cristina::
                   (NAME)
```

The fragment is produced at the beginning of a lesson on arts. The teacher is collecting the students' homework. In order to do so, she moves around and engages in a number of individual interactions with the students while passing by. During this procedure, students' chattering is tolerated. When the teacher is about to have finished collecting homework, lines 2-4 are produced.

As in fragment 3, the teacher uses a conditional clause to address the students' behaviour, with the reproachable conduct cast as the condition for some projected negative consequences. As Lerner (1991) has demonstrated, when a speaker produces an if–clause at the beginning of an utterance, s/he creates the conditions whereby the final component is expected and projectable by a second speaker, thus enabling the recipient to provide a suitable completion, in terms both of its timing and of its content. Thus, that the turn beginning in line 2 has been precisely designed to suggest some negative upshot is also Cristina's understanding. Before the conditional clause reaches its completion, the student produces an exclamation in line 5, in overlap with the teacher's prior turn. Cristina's completion moves the class to laughter and consequently causes the teacher to address her with an individual reproach in line 7. The utterance in line 5 works on the expectation that she (Cristina) will be censored. And, indeed, Cristina produces a completion that amplifies so much the projected deprecatory evaluation that challenges and teases the teacher. The expression used by the student ('*how disgusting*') has a double effect. First, it conveys an exaggerated negative evaluation of the consequences of the action being described by the teacher in the if-clause; second, being syntactically formatted as an exclamation ('*how disgusting*') it accomplishes an abrupt closure of the utterance, thus undermining the reproaching pragmatic force of the teacher's prior

turn. In other words, Cristina neutralizes the pragmatic force of the reproach because she manages to achieve the right of speaking, thus bringing the sequence to a possible closure through the production of the completion. By doing so, not only does she usurp the teacher's role, but she does it humorously. This results in the students' laughter (line 6), which causes the successive individual reproach by the teacher (line 7), to sanction the offence.

The exaggeration conveyed by the students' exclamation, on its turn can be viewed as prompted by the teacher's own prior use of an 'extreme case formulation' (Pomerantz 1986) to specify the students' wrongdoings. With the conditional clause '*if I am constrained to hear all the people speaking at the same time*', the teacher describes the situations as one in which *all* the students are doing the *same* action (speaking) at the *same* time. As Pomerantz explains (1986: 221), "Part of how a complaint is formed is to provide for the recognizability of the offender's wrongdoings". And indeed, in the case of fragment (5), the students' chatting and speaking aloud hasn't become any louder before the teacher's turn in line 1, and doesn't justify the production of the reproach at that precise moment and not, for example, some time before. By describing what is happening as though suddenly *all* the students were involved in the *same* type of wrongdoing at the *same* time, the teacher associates her negative comment to a state of disorder, thus legitimizing her reproach. However, owing to the fact that the teacher describes a state directly accessible to all the recipients, Cristina is in the position of remarking eventually different evaluations that cast the teacher's reproach as based on exaggeration and, thus, not reliable. This produces teasing and derisory laughter.

In the two above examples both teachers legitimize the formulations of the students' actions as reproachable by linking them to some negative situations. In example 3 the negative consequences of Cristina's continuing talk are explicitly expressed. In example 5 these are just projected, whereas the chaotic circumstances produced by the students' behavior are emphasized. Similarly, in the following example, the action is treated as reproachable precisely because it has

caused some undesirable effects. Fragment 6 is from an English lesson. A reading activity has already started when a couple of students enter the room quite nosily:

(6) [PM:RC:Saffi.7/English]

```
01  T:          ALLORA,  A:DESSO?
                so       now

02              (0.6)

03  T:          ↑LEGGIAMO. CON MOLTA ATTENZIO-
                let's read very    carefully

04              ((some students enter the class and reach their seats talking and
                 laughing loudly))

05  T:    →     allora::, (0.4) uh::- (0.4) stiamo, (0.6) ↓stiamo
                so now          uh              we are        we are

06              realmente perdendo, (1.2) l'atten↓zio::ne,
                really    loosing         attention

07              (1.0)
```

In lines 5 and 6, the teacher refers to the students' conduct by saying that it has negative effects for the ongoing reading activity. In this case, the actual source of the trouble (the noisy entrance of the students) is not explicitly referred to by the teacher. This can be due to the fact that, in contrast to the situations described in the two prior examples, the untoward behavior is accessible to all the participants and most evidently disturbing their ongoing activity. In the two previous cases, the organization of the setting is completely different and the untoward conduct appears to be less relevant for the ongoing activity. Whereas in example 3 the chatting was subdued and almost inaudible, in fragment 5 almost everyone was talking during the homework collection because the floor was very loose. In comparison to these, the circumstances in which the reproachable conduct in fragment 6 is produced contribute to make the misconduct accessible to/affecting all the participants. The teacher, therefore, passes directly to specifying the consequences in terms of the other students' loss of attention.

A couple of features are worth considering in the design of the teacher's turn. First, in this fragment, as well as in the two previous occurrences (fragments 3 and 5), the teacher includes herself among those who are affected by the negative consequences of the students' wrongdoings.

In other examples like the following, in which the conditional utterance packages the description of the wrongdoing in a different way, teachers use the third person and the category term ('*the teacher*') rather than the first person pronoun (as in the previous examples). A case in point is the following example, from a recording made in a primary school classes.

(7) [PM:LT.3/maths]

```
01  T:      allora. se la  maestra sta parlando? la  lasci   finire di
            now     if the teacher is  talking   you let her finish to

02          parla::re? e  poi  parli tu.
            talk       and then you talk.

03          (1.4)
```

Just prior to the fragment, one student has started to talk in overlap with the teacher. In portraying the situation, the teacher uses generic terms: that is, she describes the action as generally concerning students' conduct, not that particular occurrence of the infraction. For example, in line 1, the teacher is referring to herself as '*the teacher is talking*' rather than '*I am talking*'. She also adopts a perspective position on the action being described, suggesting a hypothetical and desirable course of action (Wootton, 1986). The student is thus held as person who needs instruction. By contrast, when the teacher uses the first person pronoun to refer to her/himself (as in Fragment 3) the teacher uses a different selection of words and grammatical constructions that index that s/he is describing the actual and ongoing behaviour. In this way, the teacher displays an orientation to the student as responsible for the untoward conduct, rather than recipient of instruction about desirable ways of behaving.

Returning now to fragment 6, a second relevant feature in the way in which the teacher refers to the consequences of the students' entrance is the progressive form of the verb ('*we are really loosing attention*'). By describing the gradual process whereby students are loosing their attention (as indicated by the progressive tense), the teacher demonstrates that she is in the position of describing the details of a course of action that is *actually* taking place, rather than referring to hypothetical circumstances[ii]. Finally, as in previous examples, the adverb ('*realmente*' / 'really') is used here to upgrade the undesirable effects on the reading activity which has been interrupted by

the students when entering the class. All these aspects in the teacher's talk characterize the utterance as being not just a report of some events, but as the result of the speaker's evaluation. Also the choice of '*really*' (among other possible ways of detailing the process being described, like for instance '*just about*', '*almost*', and the like) indicates that the teacher is formulating an evaluation, rather than just doing a report[iii].

To summarize the analysis of teachers' descriptions of students' untoward conduct that are shaped as conditionals, I have shown that, by linking the students' conduct to the effects of that conduct, teachers hold students culpable for their behavior and for the problematic consequences of their conduct. Thus, the reproach results as an attempt to legitimize the reproaching activity as accountable. However, the account casts the reproachable conduct as so obviously problematic that it should have been avoided; thus, aggravating the reproach activity.

2.2 The use of irony: alluding to the obvious side of misconduct

Indirect reference to the obvious reasons for the teacher's criticism is present also in the other format of descriptive reproaches. One such case is fragment 2, below reported. Recall that the extract is from the beginning of an Italian lesson. The bell, alerting the students that the mid-morning break is over, has already rung and the majority of the students have entered the classroom late. The teacher is now addressing the last latecomer, exactly at the moment when he enters the classroom.

(8) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01  T: →    sei       leggermente  in ritardo
            you are    slightly        late
            ((to a boy who has just entered the room very late))

02          (5.0)
```

The teacher addresses directly the student with a description of his conduct, and characterizes it in relation to its timing. Providing for the timing of the action being described is one of the ways speakers have to build the culpability of the person, thus legitimizing their claims in complaints, as demonstrated by Pomerantz (1986; 220). We may argue that 'being late' has an intrinsic negative value, but how this is strictly dependent on the context can also be very easily demonstrated by cases in which also the opposite can be treated as wrong, inappropriate or undesirable. In this case, the timing is further detailed by the adverb ('*slightly*') that indicates *how late* the student is. The use of a qualifying adverb provides a frame of reference for the evaluation of the action, implying that more fine measuring can be relevant in describing the action. Thus, owing to the fact that the student is the last students who enters the classroom, the statement acquires an ironic flavour, mainly played on the fact that the utterance describes a state of affairs (that of being '*slightly*' late) rather different from the actual one[iv]. Through the irony, the teacher emphasizes the circumstances of the student's behaviour whereby he is held at fault. This results in the silence after the teacher's turn. As in all previous occurrences, the teacher does not use any term or expression that directly expresses a negative evaluation on the student's conduct. Nevertheless, the utterance portraying the student's behaviour conveys a strongly negative evaluation of that action.

The relationship between negative evaluation and the self-evident character of the wrongdoing is also well illustrated in the following example.

(9) [PM:SN: Saffi.4/3.12.01/arts]

```
01   T:    →      la   sedia ha   quattro gambe per stare tutte appoggiate al
                  the  chair has  four    legs  to  be    all   laying     on
                  chairs have four legs that  must all touch the

02                pavimento.
                  floor

03                (1.4)

04   T:           non è stata fatta       per dondola'<>ne facevan
                  not (IT) has been done to  rock        (THEY) would have made
                  they have not been made to rock        they would have built

                  due      ↓se i bambini dovevano dondolarsi=eh?<
                  two       if children  had to   rock          eh
                  two legs if they were  designed for chidren to rock eh
```

```
05              (1.0)

06  T:          °chiaro?°
                clear

07              (.)
```

Here the teacher addresses a student who is rocking on the two back legs of the chair. The fragment is particularly interesting because the teacher does a parody of pedagogic talk; in this way, she highlights the circumstances of the student's conduct as so evidently reproachable that she can't avoid treating the recipient as if it were 'a child'. The feature characterizing the talk as a parody, rather than an authentic instruction activity, is the irony used to explain the reasons why chairs have four legs and not just two. By saying '*they would have built two legs if they wanted children to rock*', the teacher is using an absurd line of reasoning to draw attention to the offence.

The example shares with the previous occurrence the technique whereby a conduct is sanctioned by means of a comment that elucidates to the person that is reproached why his/her behaviour is held as inapposite. And it does it by referring to plainly obvious basis for such a comment. In this case, the argument used to make the student understand why he should not rock on the two legs of the chair isn't any untoward consequence (i.e. falling down, damaging the chair, etc.), but merely the rationale for making a chair with four legs, which is the ground for the 'normal' use of the tool.

However, in either ways – either by mentioning the untoward consequences of a conduct or by explaining the reasons why a certain behaviour is inapposite in relation to the circumstances, as is the case of the student who is late and the one who rocks on the chair – having noticed a certain behaviour, teachers legitimize their remark by highlighting its being *obviously* inapposite. In Fragment 8 the ironic comment about being '*slightly*' late works precisely on the assumption that the student himself must be aware of being very late in entering the room (recall that he is the last student to return after the midmorning break). The irony is thus built on the evidence that the student's conduct can be judged as reproachable by the offender himself, and very easily. In other

words, by using irony in her comment, the teacher assumes that the student is fully aware of the misconduct; therefore, and most relevantly, he is culpable because he is not innocent.

This type of assumption can stand also for the conditional-type reproaches. So, for instance, in fragment 3, the reproach is based on the evidence that having a private talk with a friend when the teacher is lecturing just in front of the class is an inappropriate behaviour. In this case, the teacher provides evidence by explaining the untoward consequences of such conduct, and by providing a description of the outcome as obviously problematic.

Concluding the examination of the two varieties of descriptive reproaches, I have shown that in all the examples teachers respond to students' untoward behaviour by detailing aspects and circumstances of it, such as the timing of a specific conduct, its consequences, and eventually, if the type of behaviour requires it, the properties of the tool used. According to the analysis, despite the different resources used in the description (irony, grammar, vocabulary), all the examples provide a representation of students' ways of behaving as *obviously problematic*, in the shape of explanation. That is, teachers highlight those aspects in the students' conduct that make easier for them to understand why their behaviour has been noticed and judged as negative. This results as a way for teachers to legitimize their claim as based on the students' failure to realize the obvious negative consequences of their behaviour by themselves and to avoid it. In addition, the reproaching activity thus seems to be characterized by a certain contrast between descriptions of the reproachable designed as explicit explanations (portraying the reasons why the conduct is treated as problematic and undesirable) and the very manifest nature of the problematic consequences and circumstances being mentioned in relation to the untoward conduct.

In the following section I will look at the sequential deployment of these reproaches. I will consider one example for each of the two formats (conditional and ironic description) as they occur in the larger sequence, starting from the point where the untoward conduct is produced and first remarked by the teacher.

3. The sequential deployment of reproaches with a description-format

Many aspects of the findings reported above concern the specific format of these reproaches and bear on the contrast between their being constructed as description and all the other practices that accomplish reproach without being explicit in saying *what* the students' wrongdoings exactly are. I have started this investigation by observing that this format depicts the action as an actually ongoing conduct by detailing its circumstances and its undesirable effects. But the reproaching activity can be otherwise accomplished also by simply locating an action, naming offenders, inviting students to adopt a more proper conduct, invoking rules of behaviour or expressing a wish for a desirable state of affairs: all techniques that avoid precise description the actual wrongdoing. Thus, bearing on the analysis of the turn design, the occurrences I am concerned on here, at first seem to display a major *directness* in referring to reproachable conduct than the other practices. Whereas in other reproach formats students are left to understand *what* in the behaviour that is noticed is held as reproachable, the occurrences of reproaches investigated here are precisely designed *to spell out* what the speaker treats as problematic. However, paradoxically, it is exactly *because* the teacher is brought to explain what is 'wrong' in the students' conduct that the reproached students are held culpable.

From the details in the turn construction of the two formats we have already begun to see that students are held as knowledgeable about the moral order on which reproaches are grounded and, consequently, culpable when showing that they are not aware of the untoward consequences of their behaviour. This negative moral evaluation reflects the assumption that, because the conduct thus reproached is so obviously inapposite, students are held as responsible for forms of conduct which they *should have judged by themselves* as not feasible and which they should have avoided. Thus, because the description points out what is self-evidently the case, it turns the students' action into something that is undoubtedly egregious. It is on this basis that the format seems to portray the

conduct as particularly offensive. In what follows, I will show that this is confirmed by the way in which these descriptions are designed as related to their source. I will start with the conditional format.

The extract below reports the talk that precedes former example 4, here occurring in line 37. Arrows indicate the successive attempts made by the teacher *before* she finally describes the conduct which Cristina is reproached for.

(10) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01        T:     a:lo::ra
                 so

02               (0.2)

03   T:          per adesso,  (.)  ↓gradirei (0.4) la vostra attenzione.
                 right now         I'd like        your attention

04               (0.8)

05   Ss:         ((C and E start talking very quietly and keep doing it all the time, until the teacher addresses them directly in line 37))

06   T:    1→    oke::[i¿

07   St:               [((another boy starts talking))

08   T:    2→    io aspe:ttoᵛ
                 I wait

09   Ss:         (2.4)/ ((students keep talking))

10   T:    3→    ((she puts on the desk a sheet of paper she was holding and crosses arms on chest))

11   T:    4→    disponibile      ad aspettare anche le  tre o::re (0.4) in silenzio
                 (and am) prepared to wait       even  for the three hours in silence

12               (0.4)

13   St:         bello
                 good

14   T:    5→    e    a comunica:re (0.2) ↓ai vostri genitori (0.2) quanto tempo ci
                 and to inform           your parents          how     long it

15               vuole per mettere a posto una cla[sse
                 takes to  get the class ready

16   St:                                          [oh state zitti basta
                                                   oh be quiet     stop it

17               (0.2)

18   T:    6→    io aspetto     eh¿
                 I   wait       eh

19   St:         c'abbiam    tre  o:re  con  te
                 do we have  three hours with you

20               (1.2)
```

```
21  St:          [sì:   tre   o::re
                 we have  three hours

22  St:          [due ore
                 two   hours

23  St:          due o::re
                 two hours

24  St:          tre::
                 three

25  St:          du:e
                 two

26  St:          tre
                 three

27  St:          due
                 two

28  St:          [tre
                 three

29  T:     7→    [allora [lo-
                 now     the-

30  St:                  [non vedete   che  vi sta aspetta[ndo
                          can't you see that she is waiting for you

31  T:     8→                                            [IO ASPE:TTO!
                                                          I   wait

32               (0.6)

33  T:     9→    E    POI  QUAL↑CU::NO SE NE ANDRA'::
                 and  then somebody    will leave

34               (1.4)

35  T:          PRIMA DEL TE:MPO:::
                 beforehand

36               (3.0)

37  T:    10→   ALLO:RA CRISTINA IO SONO QUA  SE TU  PARLI CON L'ELISA:, (.)
                now     [NAME]   I  am   here if you talk  to  [NAME]

38              HO DEI  PROBLE:MI A  COMUNICARE   CON  VOI DUE
                I  have problems  communicating  with you both

39              (7.0)/  ((the teacher keep gazing at the two girls who have stopped talking and have raised their gaze to the teacher
                        when she calls Cristina's name)
```

The sequence comes after several other attempts to get the class ready to work. Recall that the fragment is from the beginning of a lesson taking place after the mid-morning break. When the extract begins all the students have already sat down, but some are not yet focused on work. The transcript shows that the reproach with a description-format comes after nine previous attempts to

make the recipients realize (and, thus, stop that behaviour) that their conduct is object of the teacher's consideration and treated as problematic.

The opening of a new activity is indicated by the discourse marker '*allora*' (Raymond 2004, Bolden 2008), which introduces a preamble describing the desirable conditions for the lesson to start ('*I'd like to have your attention*'). Only a moment after this opening, two girls (Cristina and Elisa) start talking quietly in the back seats (line 5). Their talk is a soft chattering, almost not hearable by the other participants, but fully visible from the teacher's standing position, who directly faces the two girls. Other students are chatting too, as indicated in lines 7 and 9, but they stop their conversation when the teacher crosses arms (line 10). Only Cristina and Elisa continue their chatting in the back seats. From now on, the teacher's actions are designed to make the two students stop talking, but all her attempts fail. Cristina and Elisa keep talking, as though they couldn't hear anything of what is going on around them.

With the '*okay*' in line 6, the teacher re-issues the previous request for attention. But soon after, in line 7, another student can be heard talking. In response to this, the teacher declares her intention to wait. By describing what she does as 'waiting', the teacher challenges students in many ways. First, the beginning of the lesson has already been delayed by the late arrival of the group after the break and, thus, the expectation is for starting rather than delaying further the beginning of the lesson. Thus, the teacher's intention to wait is designed to produce some puzzlement. Second, she doesn't specify the reason why she is waiting, or what she is waiting for: these details are left to the students to understand. By not spelling out the reasons why she is waiting, the teacher implies that they are non-mentionable. Consequently, because the cause is not mentionable, it can be inferred that it must be an exceptional case; one in which the teacher has to wait for the students to stop talking before starting to lecture. Insofar as the teacher seems to allude to a situation contrary to the common sense, the utterance can be understood as ironic and challenging. However, this second attempt does not succeed either: in line 9 other students start talking.

The challenging nature of the utterance '*I wait*' is further upgraded in what follows. The teacher demonstrates that she will put into practice her declaration of intent: this is achieved by laying back a sheet of paper on the desk; presumably she was holding it because she had planned to read something aloud to the class. She then crosses her arms in a stereotypical representation of somebody who is interrupted and prepared to wait.

In line 11, the teacher elaborates further on the '*waiting*' issue, starting to boast about what she will do. By declaring that she is '*prepared to wait even for the three hours,*' she is referring to the *whole duration* of the Italian lesson of the day. The teacher is thus using an 'extreme case formulation' that, again, operates on the timing of the actions described (Pomerantz, 1986). The feeling that she is saying *something extreme* is further increased by the specification of *how* she would spend all that time: just in silence. Clearly, the statement embodies what the teacher considers a threat. From now on the situation escalates and goes rather out of control.

The student's response to the teacher's threat (line 13) shows that (a) he has understood the teacher's talk precisely as a threat, (b) that he does not see any danger e doesn't affiliate with the teachers' action, and (c) that he is being provocative. By giving a response contrasting to wha can be expected after a threat ('*beautiful*'), the student does a deliberate provocation and provides ground for the teacher's successive display of emotional conduct. At first, the teacher response is a specification of the punishment. In line 14 she explains that the students' behaviour will be reported to their parents; a circumstance that seems to worry only the student speaking in line 16.

In line 18 the teacher repeats the formulation of her own actions ('*I wait*'), re-enforced by the tag-token '*eh¿*'. This second occurrence transforms the declaration of intent into a reminder that the situation is problematic. This time the teacher seems to be putting into practice the intention of '*waiting in silence*'. As indicated by the pause in line 20, she does not answer the request for confirmation about the length of the lesson, which the student has addressed in line 19. The student's unanswered question initiates a sequence in which a couple of students start arguing about how long the lesson will last (lines 21-28). The arguing sequence has a very simple structure: each

student repeats his/her own version about the timing, which contrasts with the other. This characterizes the action as being deliberately produced to undermine the pragmatic force of the teacher's threat. In line 31 the teacher produces the *third* occurrence of '*I wait*'. The use of a higher volume of voice indicates a further escalation in the way in which the teacher manages to restore discipline in the classroom. In lines 33 and 35 she seems to suggest that the punishment will consist in sending the students out of the room before the end of the lesson. Again, it is not explicitly indicated which students should be punished and for what reason.

All the teacher's turns of the sequence, so far, *indirectly* refer to the students' inappropriate conduct without giving an explicit description of the reproachable action. During the whole sequence, from line 5 onwards, the two girls continue talking undisturbed, apparently unaware of what is going on in the classroom.

By drawing the students' attention to the fact that she is waiting, without making explicit the reasons why she is doing this, the teacher alludes to a critical situation. She clearly aims at making the two students realize *by themselves* that they are the cause of her reprimand, pursuing the cessation of talk. The way in which the teacher resists disclosing which behaviour causes problems and, thus, indicating the reproachable only as the last resource, displays that the teacher assumes students as potentially able to identify the source of the reproach by themselves. On the other hand, the fact that Cristina and Elisa do not show any awareness of the situation can be taken as a sign of their inability or, else, an indication of voluntary transgression. In the latter case, this circumstance increases the potentially offensive nature of the behaviour.

In this regard, it is worth considering what follows the reproach. The aftermath of the reproach in lines 37 and 38 is characterized by three features: (1) the lack of students' verbal response, (2) the cessation of the action being reproached, and (3) the teacher's sustained gaze post cessation. As for the first feature it can be observed that here, as in all the examples so far examined, reproached students do not produce any account of defence for their conduct. In the case of the sequence above, this can be related to the 'extreme' character of the teacher's reproach that is

achieved through the complex preparatory sequence leading up to the final direct formulation of the reproach. Through the repeated requests for gaining students' attention and the increased volume of voice, the teacher constructs the whole sequence as though she is brought to it, finally bursting into reproaching. These aspects convey a particular delicate situation and could prevent students from responding. However, the absence of any verbal defensive account characterizes also the other instances reported here. Indeed, also irony (as used in Fragments 1 and 7) has a similar 'extreme' connotation, insofar as it assumes students knowledgeable about the negative 'side' of their conduct and, thus, not innocent.

Despite Cristina and Elisa do not verbalize their response to the teacher; nonetheless the final reproach achieves the cessation of talk. Whereas, until then, they were looking at each other (their desks are one next to the other; thus, when talking together they look at each other sideways, and not in the direction of the teacher in front of them), they raise their gaze to the teacher when she calls out Cristina's name. Therefore, the cessation of the action being reproached is a re-organization of the students' behaviour and, indeed, can be considered as a response to the teacher.

Finally, with regard the sustained gaze that the teacher addresses to the two girls after the reproach, this is an indication that she treats Cristina's and Elisa's behaviour as intentional. By continuing to address the girls with a glare for so long after the cessation of their talk and, thus, unnecessarily, the teacher's action seems to edge towards accusation.

The sequence just described proposes that, under certain circumstances, teachers withhold explicit description of students' untoward conduct, displaying their expectation that students can be made aware of their problematic behaviour by merely locating the reproachable. In the sequence examined above, for instance, the teacher uses a range of devices to allude, imply, suggest, and indicate that some inappropriate behaviour is causing an unnatural delay in the beginning of the lesson, *before* saying what they do 'wrong' explicitly. When students fail to do so, this can be taken as an indication that they are knowledgeable offenders and, thus, being provocative because not innocent.

However, it is not always the case that explicit descriptions of students' conduct are produced with such a delay after the occurrence and/or the teacher's noticing that something untoward has/is happening. For instance, the ironic comment about the students being '*slightly*' late is produced exactly *when* the conduct that is mentioned is taking place. Recall that the student is the last one to join the group; when he enters, the teacher has already given instructions to start working. When the student enters the room he reaches his seat with a very relaxed pace.

(11) [PM:ET:Saffi.5. 3.12.01/Italian]

```
01              (9.0) / ( (all the students have taken their seats. One student enters the room and reaches one of the front seats displaying
                      nonchalance and lack of concern in the way he walks)

02   T: →   sei       leggermente in ritardo
            you are   slightly     late

03              (5.0)

04   T:     il berretto (.) si toglie. / ((to another boy))
            the cap         is to be taken off

05              (2.0)

06   T:     ( (she makes the gesture of taking the cap off, gazing at the boy addressed in 4 and then she repeats it) )
07   T:     ( (she addresses another boy with a gesture that invites him to turn back) )

08              (1.0)

09   T:     allo:'
            so

10              (2.0)

11   T:     vediamo, (0.4) di quanto tempo c'è bisogno per avere una
            let's see      how long it takes          to have     an

12          situazione, (.) a:-ccettabile.
            acceptable      situation

13              (2.6)
```

The excerpt contrasts with the previous example because the reproach is contiguous to the untoward behaviour. This position seems related to the circumstances that bring about the misconduct. As in fragment 6, when the student enters the room the remaining part of the group is already oriented to work. That the action of entering the classroom is treated as outrageous, is contingent to its timing (he is the last to go back to class after the break) and to what the group is doing at that moment (all seated and ready to start working). In addition to this, in the way he walks, the student displays his complete lack of concern; thus constructing his entrance as a

provocation. The irony is a measure to face this challenge: it shows the teacher's assumption that the student is fully aware of the disruptive effect of his conduct and, thus, even more culpable for this. In both cases (in the delayed conditional-formatted description and in the contiguous ironic comment) the teacher spells out what is 'wrong' in the students' way of behaving as the last line of defence in the management of discipline.

4. Conclusions

The paper has investigated two ways of reproaching students for their untoward conduct, as occurring in 6 and 7 grade group-classes in two Italian secondary schools. The corpus consists in a collection of cases where teachers address explicit comments to students about their ongoing conduct, in the shape of description of that conduct, telling them what they do 'wrong' in relation to the negative effects on the management of classroom discipline. This type of reproaches differ from the vast majority of other devices more frequently used in the class to this purpose, because they *explain in detail* what students do 'wrong', rather than just locating or pointing to the problematic behaviour.

These reproaches consist in explicit descriptions that take two formats: conditional utterances and simple statements that portray the students' improper conduct using an ironic colour. I have found that, despite their apparent more explicit reference to the wrongdoing, reproaches of this type works on similar assumptions as the other reproaching techniques. The way in which these descriptions are constructed displays the teachers' orientation to the moral requirements of the classroom social behaviour as something which students have the responsibility to know. Features of turn design and of sequence deployment show the 'extreme' character of reproach accomplished through these devices. Thus, when teachers spell out what students do 'wrong', rather than just

locating their untoward conduct or alluding to it, as is the case of this type of reproaches, they do it as though this were the last barrier, before edging into more aggravated types of criticism.

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[i]   The following fragments reports one of the reproaches in 'why'-format in my corpus.

Buongiorno [Saffi.6/4.12.01]

```
01     St:        bonGIO::::::RNO::::?/((a boy shouts in entering the class))
                  Goodmorning

02     I: →       s::: ma  perché hai fatto       così
                  s    but why     have you behaved this way
```

[ii] This device can be describes as an example of 'overdetermined' description (Drew 1998).
[iii] The difference in using formulations of action to report somebody's else conduct versus to evaluate that conduct is better understood if we consider instances in which students report to the teacher on other students' behaviour, as in the example below:

Book closed (PM:ST:2a/Italian language)
```
01     T:        allora chiudiamo  i   libri¿ sh::::: (   )
                 now    (WE) close the books   sh
                 now let's close the books sh

02     St:   →   [A::da:   non      chiude il  li[bro
                 (PR.NAME) does not close  the book
                 Ada doesn't close the book

03     T:        [((she turns round))
```

When the interaction above takes place, the teacher gives instructions on how pupils should recite a rhyme they are expected to know by heart. The repetition is to be done chorally without reading the book. The teacher clearly states the rule trough the command to close the books (line 1). In line 2 the student reports to the teacher on Ada's not complying with the request. In the recordings from the Primary School corpus there are quite a few such instances in which the misconduct is describes in very essential descriptive terms and formatted as a report that somebody is not behaving as requested. Typically, in this case the formulation of action is constructed in the third person and addressed to the teacher.
[iv] See Piirainen-Marsh, this issue.
[v] In Italian language both tenses, simple present and present continuous, can be appropriately used in this context. As a matter of fact, the present tense in Italian very often is used for intentions, future actions. In this case, the utterance conveys at least two meanings: it describes emphatically what the teacher is doing and expresses her intention to wait.