

Pour une interprétation des silences dans le témoignage de souffrance. Une approche interactionnelle

For an interpretation of silences in the testimony of suffering. An interactional approach

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Abstract: In this study we adopt an approach that is both discursive and interactional in order to interpret the silences in testimonials about suffering. Using a corpus of testimonies from battered women who were subjected to domestic violence, we analyse the duration and location of silences in various discursive sequences. We identify the types of silence and their discursive functions, with a focus on their value in the expression of pain. In testimonials, silences allow speakers to assign a structure to their discourse, plan ideas, and, simultaneously, draw attention to the verbal expression of suffering. In addition, in an inter-turn-taking position, silences help to manage the interaction, while in an intra-turn position, they emphasize the emotional dimension of the testimony of suffering. Their interpretation relies on the discursive context.

Key words: silence, suffering, testimony, interaction, discourse.