

You are cordially invited to attend the
MSU Mathematics Education Virtual Colloquium



Anna Sfard

Friday, March 25, 2022

10:00-11:30 am

<https://msu.zoom.us/j/95816537441>

Password: 935673

The Devil in Details: Teaching as Managing Inter-Discursive Gaps

Abstract: Once teaching-learning events are conceptualized as inter-discursive encounters, it becomes clear that classroom talk is rife with invisible pitfalls. There are many types of unacknowledged discursive gaps, some of them necessary for learning, and some potentially harmful. Such gaps may exist also between the teacher's intentions and her own habitual moves, most of which are too brief and automatic to be controlled. Unknown to the teacher, her basic communicational routines may constitute invisible crevices through which the prejudice enters the conversation. In this talk, I will adopt a discursive ("commognitive") approach, arguing that if the devil is in the finest detail of classroom communication, it is the detail that must be considered in the attempts to exorcise the devil. The talk will begin with illustrations of these claims and will continue with commognitive conceptualization of the problem, and of the key notion of discursive routine. It will conclude with a reflection on how teachers may sensitize themselves to discursive pitfalls, how they and their students can benefit from those communicational gaps that are likely to generate learning, and how they can cope with those discursive collisions that hinder the process.

Anna Sfard developed a theoretical framework of mathematical thinking known as *commognitive* that has been used in studying the development and role of mathematical discourses. The results of this research have been summarized in her 2008 book, *Thinking as communicating*, and in many articles and book chapters. Currently Professor Emerita at the University of Haifa, Israel, Sfard served as the first Lappan-Phillips-Fitzgerald Professor at Michigan State University and as Professor of Mathematics Education in the Institute of Education, University College of London. She is a recipient of 2007 Freudenthal Award, a Fellow of American Educational Research Association (AERA), and a member of the American National Academy of Education (NAEd).