

# **“INTERPRETING WITH RESPECT TO WHAT?” THE HERMENEUTIC APPROACH IN CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Interpreting a historical text is a complex task which involves different cognitive aspects regarding previous knowledge of students. From the classroom it emerges that the most relevant factors are not strictly cognitive: they involve didactical contract and are heavily connected with personal students' motivation. With the aim to facilitate students' learning, teachers can highlight specific points of an original and express the required performances. In this way the generic task “interpret the historical document” is clarified but at the meantime it becomes more complex.

Students are not alone in front of historical documents, being accompanied by teachers. I mention *Gadamerian philosophical hermeneutics* and its analysis of history and tradition. I like to consider that teachers have a role inside tradition, as a bridge between historical document and students. Making the choice to use a specific text in class, teachers show to have elaborated a preliminary type of interpretation about: mathematical content, educational goals, level of difficulty, students' involvement that it might produce.

Even if teachers do not insist on accepting an interpretation which has to be shared by everybody, introducing class activities they can orient students' interpretation of the original. I will also consider *Task Design in Mathematics Education* as a research perspective in order to analyse connections between historical document and students' performances.