Talk, Mobility and Materialities

Pedagogical Interaction When Learning to Cycle and Ski Cross Country

Mcilvenny, Paul Bruce

Publication date:
2012

Document Version
Early version, also known as pre-print

Link to publication from Aalborg University

Citation for published version (APA):

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The intersection of the quotidian practices of social interaction, learning and mobility outside of
the classroom – for example, the ways in which talk shapes how children learn to be actively
mobile – has been little studied until recently. This paper develops a social interactional approach
to analysing talk and mobile action in what are arguably two quintessentially Nordic mobility
practices, namely cycling and skiing. More specifically the focus is on investigating and comparing
how a child learns to cycle in a bike-friendly urban infrastructure, and how a child learns to ski
cross-country, both within the context of familial social interaction. Audiovisual data was
collected with mobile video cameras from family bike rides in Denmark and family skiing in
Finland, in which among other things a parent instructs and guides a child to bike or to ski. Using
an EMCA approach, the analysis locates similarities and differences in how specific materialities
are made salient in interactional practices. For example, caregivers talk about weather and surface
conditions as a resource for instructed mobile action. Also, a route, a trajectory or a line of
movement in a mobile formation is collaboratively constructed in interaction by the participants
as part and parcel of their kinaesthetic experience of the respective material environment and
infrastructure. Especially when skiing, the more malleable snowscape is (re)territorialised by
laying down tracks, which can be reused by participants, both in the same session and across
sessions. In this way, these tracks can shape and habituate future mobile actions and immanent
pedagogical activities, as well as provide a resource for interactional memory work, eg. for talking
about a prior instructed (inter)action. The paper also explores the affordances and limitations of a
more reflexive, auto-ethnographic approach to collecting data derived from video recordings of
activities in which, to different degrees, the researcher is an active subject.