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From understanding to participation: a relational approach to embodied practices

The paper presents some methodological considerations around the topic of the *AFinLA 2012 Autumn Symposium: Multimodal discourses of participation*. The aim is to shed theoretical and analytical light on embodied participation in material settings. The research is placed in a relational perspective in which entities (for example, the world, culture, society, organization and identities) emerge through entangled, layered practices in concrete circumstances. Understanding is not treated as a philosophical puzzle or as a purely linguistic phenomenon. Rather, it is conceptualized as an embodied, multimodal process in which language together with bodily senses (vision, hearing, touch, smell and taste) and a sense of place contribute to a phenomenon being recognized (as shared). Participation can result in inclusion or exclusion, a claim which is discussed with the help of a pilot study from a residential home where mutual understanding is an everyday challenge, namely the Danish Acquired Brain Injury Centre North.

Keywords: embodiment, participation, inclusion, exclusion, material settings

1 Introduction

The paper presents some methodological considerations around the topic of the *AFinLA 2012 Autumn Symposium: Multimodal discourses of participation*. The aim is to shed theoretical and analytical light on embodied participation in material settings that also exceeds the here-and-now situation. Theoretically, the research is placed in a relational perspective in which entities (for example, the world, culture, society, organization and identities) emerge through entangled, layered practices in concrete circumstances. Understanding is not treated as a philosophical puzzle or as a purely linguistic phenomenon. Rather, it is conceptualized as an embodied, multimodal process in which language, together with bodily senses, contributes to a phenomenon being recognized (as shared). Participation requires (some level of) understanding, and it is always accomplished locally, but can also exceed the local situation. Participation can result in inclusion or exclusion, a claim which is discussed with the help of a pilot study from a residential home where mutual understanding is an everyday challenge, namely the Danish Acquired Brain Injury Centre North (Senhjerneskadecenter Nord, SCN). With the Centre as a concrete case, multimodality can be discussed not just as affording action (participation), but also as always connecting different times and places, making local action more significant, especially for the future. The general aim of studying the everyday practices of people with acquired brain injury in their everyday environment is to get to know the communicative possibilities that the residents have in this specific setting (approach them as “how-abled”), rather than first and foremost thinking about them as lacking our “normal” ways of communicating. In pursuing this goal, an applied linguistic approach is helpful.

The Acquired Brain Injury Centre had its official opening October 2012 and has at the moment 16 residents who can call it their home and receive on-site institutional care. It is also a living lab, which places the centre in the recent innovation wave. The fact that the centre was built in times of economic crisis, from which the Danish municipalities have suffered strongly, shows that high hopes have been put on it. As a living lab it should not just show how people with acquired brain injury can have a high quality

of life, but also how Frederikshavn municipality can become a national and even international centre of research into acquired brain injury and a central agent in the economic growth that the home should bring to the region in the form of especially technical innovations. Thus, the centre is as important for the knowledge culture/economy (Knorr Cetina 2007) that the politicians want to help grow as it is for its residents.

In the following background section (section 2), the concepts in the paper's title will be explicated in order to prepare for a more general methodological discussion, including the consequences of participation (inclusion and exclusion). The focus in the general discussion (section 3) will be on theorising and analysing social situations as complex, emergent phenomena in which language is only one aspect of their constitution. Karen Barad's recent ideas on Bohrian theoretical physics and material-discursive practices will form the basis for discussing how applied linguistics and especially its discursive approaches can help analytically untangle the always entangled phenomena. To make the methodological discussion more concrete, some observations and a data extract from a pilot study concerning the everyday practices in the Acquired Brain Injury Centre are offered in section 4. The conclusion formulates a plan for forthcoming research.

2 Background

This section will clarify, also with the help of earlier relevant research, the specific relational approach employed: understanding and participation are multimodal and multi-layered communicative practices with consequences (inclusion/exclusion).

2.1 Understanding

In English, Finnish and Danish (among others) the word *understand*, *ymmärtää*, *förstå* can have at least two meanings: on the one hand, to comprehend, on the other, to show compassion. In the present article, both aspects are treated as interactional phenomena. For instance, when a research assistant visiting the Acquired Brain Injury Centre for the first time read aloud a letter

about the pilot project to a group of residents and occupational therapists, she also formulated what she saw on the page with her own words: *forskningsgruppen fra Aalborg Universitet Institut for Kommunikation – det er os* ‘the research group from Aalborg University Department of Communication – that is us’, moving the hand with the letter to “point” at the two researchers. By grounding the general description to the present situation (‘that is us’) she showed that she comprehended what she had just read, which could be compared to a turn-at-talk orienting to another participant’s previous contribution (here a text) and showing the speaker’s understanding of it (cf. Heritage 1984; for text-in-use, see Raudaskoski 1999).

An example of understanding as a display of compassion is likewise provided by the meeting at the Centre. Some of the people attending that meeting had to be helped to the room and to their places at the table. A typical fleeting moment was when an occupational therapist held her hands on the shoulders of one of these participants right after the resident had sat down. This way of touching another person shows empathy and compassion; it relays to the other that there is someone who cares, an understanding person, around them.

2.2 Participation

With participation we take a step further from being able either to comprehend or to show compassion. When we participate, we act, we are part of a community’s or various communities’ practices (for instance, having breakfast or voting in municipal elections). In Figure 1 an occupational therapist is reading aloud a permission sheet and explaining with her own words what she reads (cf. the research assistant in section 2.1).



FIGURE 1. Filling out a permission sheet.

When the research assistant was reading aloud the text and "translating" it, she of course not only showed comprehension, but was also participating in a meeting and "recipient redesigning" (Garfinkel 1967) the letter's formulations. And the occupational therapist who showed compassion was also orienting to another, this time through touching which conveys an understanding of the other's (inner) experience of the situation. But the occupational therapist in Figure 1 is doing her reading in order to help the person next to her to complete a contract specifying to what extent she allows the research group to use the video data. We could claim that the occupational therapist, together with the form to be filled out, the pen and the talk became a cultural tool or mediational means (Wertsch 1991; Scollon 2001) for the person to participate in the here-and-now situation, but, as will be discussed below, also in something that exceeds the here-and-now situation. So we have examples of two types of understanding: 1) showing comprehension of a text that is shaped to fit the on-going participation and 2) showing understanding of another person's here-and-now experience. Figure 1 shows an example of participation through a set of mediational means, one of which is a person reading out a text and showing her comprehension of it to the other participant (cf. understanding type 1 above) in order for her to take the next step in the local interaction, which is filling in the form.

It could be claimed that participation in relation to understanding is like the distinction between ethnomethodology and phenomenology. While phenomenology is a mind-oriented approach that tries to decipher how humans are able to perceive and comprehend the world, ethnomethodology takes a step further: people start acting in the world (and not just understanding it) on the basis of their interpretations, as eloquently explained by Heritage (1984) or discussed in a *Journal of Pragmatics* special issue on understanding (Koschmann 2011). Below, I will make a distinction between participation as a local accomplishment (cf. ethnomethodology) and participation that has elements that make it clearly not just here-now-as-reconstituting-the(-past)-order, but also future-oriented.

2.3 Relational approach

“Relational” is often associated with compassion (that, for instance, the occupational therapist’s nonverbal actions showed above), here-and-now feelings and dialogue in which two persons enter a genuine relationship (cf. Buber 1947). Open (minded) dialogue without preconceived ideas together with the ability to listen has been proposed as an *in situ* relational way to come out of conflicts and in general to help develop organizational or political activities (e.g. Hosking 2006). Another main take is to see the relational as having to do with emergence through which relational entities take shape. Thus, some neuroscientists claim that our senses, e.g. the sense of smell, are not only dependent on the firings of molecules between two physical or chemical entities but that, importantly, to be able to smell something also requires past experiences of smelling (Hosek & Freeman 2001). A processual approach to relationality at a more general level acknowledges the emergent nature of any social situation, but gives equal weight to examining how the here-and-now phenomenon connects to other places and times. Scollon and Scollon’s (2004) nexus analysis is a fruitful attempt to combine these two analytical interests. It is an ethnographic framework to locate central social actions the constitution of which can be dissected by concentrating on three semiotic cycles: 1) the historical body (the participants’ past experiences), 2) discourses in place (typical discourses in the setting; the use of artefacts and space) 3) and interaction order (how many participants accomplish which situated activity system). So, any social situation is made possible by the past socio-cultural histories of the participants, of the way of doing institutional and other practices and of the affordances of the material setting.

Of course, when further relevant properties are added to a situation it becomes increasingly complex relationally and also analytically. To give a complex definition of this complexity, a researcher within science studies and feminism, Karen Barad, whose ideas will be discussed in more length below, talks about “*co-existing multiplicities of entangled relations of past-present-future-here-there* that constitute the worldly phenomena we too often mistake as things existing here-now” (Barad 2010: 264, emphasis in the original).

2.4 Embodied practices

All communication is always embodied. The concept “multimodal” is often used as a shorthand for the “embodied in material settings” aspect of accomplishing practices, of which talk and writing are two important linguistic (and also materially different) aspects.

Practices are routinized ways of accomplishing everyday situations: we can recognize what is going on and we can participate in what is going on. However, this should not be mixed with “script thinking” typical of approaches that concentrate on the mental reasoning practices of human beings, a good example being artificial intelligence. There is always a possibility for exceptional, unforeseen things to happen, but participants or situations do not break down (as they might with scripts), they deal with exceptions as exceptions (cf. Suchman 1987). Little d and big D discourses (Gee 1990) remind us about the constitutive nature of all our actions in the world: in the “tiny things”, sayings, orientings, actions, we are also always part of making the world and the society emerge in some specific way, with some specific political, educational, or other big D discourses. In other words, “macro” is constituted through “micro”. Instead of discussing scales, we can talk about temporal layerings or layered simultaneity (as does, for instance, Jan Blommaert [2005] who has been inspired by Ron and Suzie Scollon’s nexus analysis and mediated discourse analysis): any situation encloses many types of pasts, but also anticipatory futures. We could claim that the big D discourses have mainly been interested in how the past has shaped the society such that certain types of little d discourses are made possible and keep recreating certain social orders. Similarly, we could introduce a participation/Participation distinction with which the focus changes from linguistic constitution (discourse) to multimodal and material situations (participation) which make future oriented Participation possible (cf. McIlvenny’s [2010] prefigurative discourse, which deals with similar ideas at a more general level).

2.5 The consequences of participation

Thus, emergence and multimodality are central concepts for understanding participation. Also, comprehension or perception (cf. phenomenology) is

needed to be able to participate – which is at the same time a “low” (here-now) and “high” level phenomenon (encompassing other situations). Participation is not only understood as a democratic ideal (as in participatory democracy) or a participatory method to gain research data (as e.g. in action research, as discussed by Phillips 2011), but it is depicted as an everyday bodily practice out of which certain identities, situations and material arrangements emerge.

We might be able to distinguish different types of Participation/participation if we ask: with what consequences? Even if we do not want to force phenomena into binaries, we can talk about two important types of results: inclusion and exclusion. This means that we want to have a theoretical framework that can help us deal with situations themselves as complex, not just in relation to language losing its stronghold when multimodal issues gain importance, but also other, especially future, times and practices becoming an important part of the here-and-now situations, whose outcome can be inclusion or exclusion.

3 Theories to tackle complexity and inclusion/exclusion

Karen Barad’s conceptualization of ‘apparatus’ is a promising way of approaching inclusion and exclusion as results of complex processes. Her theoretical ideas come from the world of quantum physics (from where she also received her PhD), and of discourse studies especially Foucault has influenced her thinking. Barad (2007) has brought in matter as a serious part of mattering (being of importance): matter and meaning are inseparable. As a feminist scholar, she has developed Niels Bohr’s ideas about the impact of the material measuring equipment for the results gained. Apparatuses (Barad 2007: 147) cover all phenomena, not just scientific experiments. Her version of the concept apparatus is thoroughly relational and covers the following: 1) specific material–discursive practices (which basically covers my take on the “relational approach to embodied practices”), 2) boundary-making practices that produce phenomena with certain differences that matter (that is, inclusions and exclusions result from apparatuses), 3) material configuring and dynamic reconfiguring of the world (the world is in continuous state of becoming through apparatuses), 4) that apparatuses

are phenomena themselves (apparatuses are dynamically [re-]constituted), 5) that they are open-ended practices (with no inherent boundaries) and 6) that they (re)configure the world also spatially and temporally (that is, space and time are also outcomes of apparatuses).

To give a summary, instead of theorising and analysing the possibilities of talk or dialogue, in the present article, communication is approached as a situation in which the material setting, as well as the embodied actions, talk included but not analytically prioritised, enable or “disable” or exclude possibilities for *in situ* participation which always carries many pasts, but also makes possible certain futures.

For Guy Cook (2005), applied linguistics (vs. linguistics applied) is there to solve concrete problems. What is radical about Barad is not just that she goes, with Niels Bohr, beyond Einstein and company in quantum physics. That is, she goes from the uncertainty principle to indeterminacy and complementarity: we do not know what is happening next, but we fix meanings and other entities as we go along, and by doing so leave certain other meanings out – and thereby also possibilities for action or participation. This actually sounds like a fruitful combination of conversation analysis, ethnomethodology and critical discourse studies, but Barad also provides us with the concept ethico-onto-epistemology in which matter, discourses and ethics are inseparable. We are responsible for the world’s material–discursive becoming, from our way of using language to our ways of doing other actions.

Barad is a highly (quantum and feminist) theoretical scholar whose ideas have gained popularity across sciences and humanities. She is clearly one of the “post”, be it (post)human or (post)modern, emphasising the continuous emergency of matters and materials, people and identities, politics and ethics. Many research articles have been inspired by her theoretically, with empirical materials often in the form of interviews, out of which the scholars then find out how people – through talk – conceptualize matters at hand. We can ask whether those analytical tools and methods really match the theoretical sophistication. If we are interested in how the detail of action is, for real, part and parcel of “big”, societal, political, cultural,

or organisational phenomena, then why not look at the intricacies of action instead of asking people what they think of them?

Detailed analyses of action and practices are essential in discourse studies such as ethnomethodology, multimodal interaction analysis, mediated discourse analysis and nexus analysis. As mentioned earlier, the discourse analyst Jan Blommaert has been advocating layered simultaneity: when we look at a here-and-now-phenomenon, any event is “encapsulated in several layers of historicity, some of which are within the reach of the participants while others are invisible but are nevertheless present” (Blommaert 2005: 130). For Barad, “phenomena cannot be located in space and time; rather, phenomena are material entanglements that “extend” across different spaces and times” (2007: 383). For her, also ““materiality” refers to phenomena” (2007: 211).

Thus, not only are our doings as human beings always related to the local circumstances but also to the socio-historical “layers” (Blommaert 2005), nor are the normally taken-for-granted materials there to be understood just as affordances that for their part shape whatever is going on – they are phenomena in Barad’s (2007) sense that could also be categorized as Blommaert’s event. The intimate relationship between actions and materials has been addressed, for example, by Raudaskoski (1999), who calls instructional texts and other stable elements in computerized action environments ‘frozen interaction’. Similar action/materiality correspondence can be found in nexus analysis (Scollon & Scollon 2004), where objects are deciphered as ‘crystallized design discourses’, and in Norris’ (2004) ‘frozen actions’, which refer to unfinished actions as material arrangements.

4 Case: Acquired Brain Injury Centre

After having gone through some theories that try to untangle the relational, emergent aspect of societal and other life, let us now turn to people whose lives have dramatically changed after an acquired brain injury and who – after a rehabilitation process – have been placed in a home: the Acquired Brain Injury Centre North in Frederikshavn, Northern Jutland, where 16 residents get help in their everyday activities by personnel ranging from

cooks to occupational therapists. Or, rather, let us turn our methodological gaze to the situations, situated activity systems, phenomena, or whatever we want to call the mundane material–discursive practices through which the centre keeps emerging.

4.1 Focus of research

The aim is to get to know the communicative possibilities that the residents have in this specific setting (approach them as “how-abled”), rather than first and foremost thinking about them as lacking our “normal” ways of communicating, that is, as dis-abled. Anybody conducting research into the practices of the Acquired Brain Injury Centre North inevitably places themselves in the common-sense, political and academic discourses mentioned in the introduction, as the centre is very much a result of the political apparatus that emphasizes especially technological innovation as the way to a better world (a trend which increasingly requires university researchers to primarily become members of a state-supported research and design section for the industry).

In academic discourse, the term ‘brain injury’ seems to be automatically categorised as belonging to neuropsychology, cognitive science and brain research. Figure 2 is a typical example of how acquired brain injury is visualised on various Internet sites.

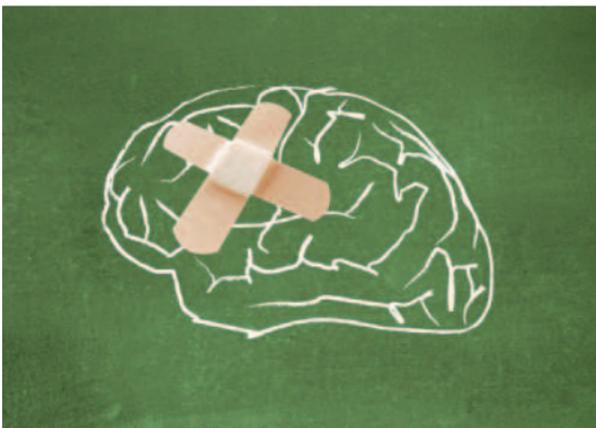


FIGURE 2. Image from the Frederikshavn municipality’s website about the Acquired Brain Injury Centre.

A group of researchers from Aalborg University wants to turn to the social and material side of what it is to live in the new home. The aim is to find out how the residents can better participate, with inclusion as a result, in the various aspects of everyday life. In fact, the pedagogical principle of the centre (and the whole disability section of Frederikshavn municipality) is social inclusion. So, if we had to visualise the project, it would be more like Figure 3 where a resident is, together with two other participants, partaking in an everyday social practice. With a heightened awareness of the difference between practices and Practices that we already discussed above, we can also get a better understanding of practices that people with acquired brain injury find more meaningful.

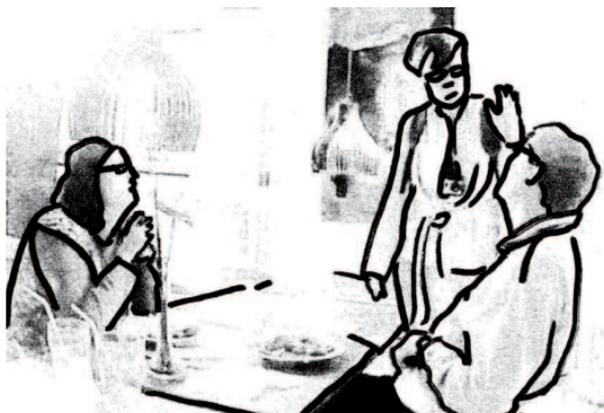


FIGURE 3. Having lunch in a supermarket.

Applied linguistics, especially a version that is interested in interaction and communication as a multimodal, multi-layered process, can well serve the need to understand the “between” of acquired brain injury and the quality of life that many institutions, including the new centre/living lab in Frederikshavn aim at bettering. Neurosciences and cognitive psychology often concentrate on the materiality of the damage, especially on the apparent plasticity of the brain to produce new ways of making the much needed connections for the brain cells to function in the necessary ways, whereas the quality-of-life research is often done with traditional sociological methods, for example, by using statistical questionnaires and qualitative interviews.

One of the differences of this research compared to neurosciences and quality-of-life studies is that even if our ability to function in this world as participants rather than observers (or those being observed) is very much dependent on the wet matter of the brain, to be able to understand how a person – after a major brain injury – might try to still be part of our surroundings is not just a matter of the injured brain. Instead, it is a matter of people accomplishing practices with certain life histories (that at least those who know them well still remember), in specific situations (alone, with somebody or in a group) and in certain concrete surroundings (for instance, in a new home). Indeed, it is the three constitutive foci of nexus analysis again that are deciphered here, a close analysis of which can benefit from Goodwin’s contextual configuration (Goodwin 2000), as recommended by Raudaskoski (2010).

A relational, interactionist study aims at looking for the ethnomethodological “seen but unnoticed” features of everyday life in a challenging life situation which might help understand better what a person is able to do, how they might try to communicate, and not just through a linguistic system such as spoken or signed language, but through all or some of the modal channels they have available. But, as importantly, the focus is also on how the environment enables or disables them in the on-going practices. Charles Goodwin’s work (Goodwin 2003) has set a good example by showing how an aphasic man who could only utter four words (*yes*, *no*, *oh* and *ah*) could participate through many other channels, including his wife who understood him best of all people. The research project at Aalborg University aims at examining the centre as a hybrid between home and institution (also as a living lab), in which the daily life goes on without close family members always present, that might be able to encounter the resident in a much more nuanced way, for instance, through the various senses (cf. Goode 1994). Through this kind of research, a person with brain injury might have a possibility for a better existence as someone who is part of an ecosystem that is called a “home” and who can participate in its functions from his or her particular perspective or specific wishes.

The definition of quality of life by the disability study expert David Goode can also be compared with the elements of nexus analysis: "Quality of life is experienced when a person's basic needs are met [cf. historical body as a living organism and with its present and past experiences] and when he or she has the opportunity to pursue and achieve goals [participation/ Participation as a situated undertaking] in major life settings [interaction order and discourses in place]" (Goode 1994: 148, my additions).

4.2 Participation: from intersubjectivity to interobjectivity

When understanding, participation and Participation are discussed, it is almost unavoidable to discuss intersubjectivity, or common/shared understanding between people. Does it help to examine the residents' ability to participate as an embodied, materially situated undertaking? Intersubjectivity has been successfully defined by conversation analysis as a sequential, procedural phenomenon (i.e. it is something we together achieve, rather than *a priori* have). Schegloff (1992) shows how detecting and repairing a problem with one's own or the co-speaker's turn in the interaction exhibits knowledge not only of what an independent actor is doing, but of an other-orientation that is crucial for a meaningful encounter. Schegloff concludes his article by saying: "When a source of misunderstanding escapes the multiple repair space, a whole institutional superstructure that is sustained through talk-in-interaction can be compromised" (Schegloff 1992: 1337). This quote is really interesting in relation to the Acquired Brain Injury Centre, in the daily practices of which identities and understandings emerge that constitute institutionality and/or private home: many a care worker is there exactly because it is hard for the medical authorities to diagnose shared understanding.

Intersubjectivity does not need to be defined as based solely on language. Some researchers are dealing with babies' intersubjectivity as a pre-linguistic phenomenon and, for example, the ethnomethodologist David Goode defines intersubjectivity as sensual, as a world-experienced-in-common where no language is needed "to participate in this level of sharing the everyday world" (Goode 2007: 9). According to Goode, intersubjectivity is the general base to all communication (conveying information to other co-

present subjectivities) and also to the more specific language that is “shared/ used only by those subjectivities who participate in the particular language system” (Goode 2007: 9).

However, we would not like to define participation only in terms of intersubjectivity (whether language-based or not). If we want to follow closer the mediational means (Scollon 2001) or, in Goodwin’s terms, semiotic fields (Goodwin 2000) – other than human language or embodiment – that the material setting includes for any action to take place, we can also turn to Latour’s (1996) notion ‘interobjectivity’: what makes humans specifically human and sociable is not so much face-to-face interaction as such, but all those concrete places with objects that “timeshift” the situation from being a merely complex one to being one of complicatedness. That is, we use and produce materials that exceed the here-and-now situation, for example, when we use or produce those frozen interactions, crystallized designs or frozen actions mentioned earlier.

5 Repair as initiative

To make the discussion so far (on emergent material–discursive practices, intersubjectivity and interobjectivity) more concrete, let us have a closer look, now with a transcript, at the situation as depicted in Figure 1, where one of the residents in the Acquired Brain Injury Centre, let us call her Rikke, was filling in the permission form with “Pia”, an occupational therapist. Rikke was very fast in anticipating transition relevance places, that is, when she could say something to Pia: Rikke was saying ‘yes’ even before Pia had finished her questions. Only once was there a fairly long, 4.5- second pause. This happened when Pia was writing down Rikke’s e-mail address. She had first produced a nickname, *nuttet* ‘ducky’, then the ‘at’ sign and after that *hotmail*.

Unlike Pia’s talk in Danish, Rikke’s contribution with her unusual pronunciation is represented with IPA symbols, and the English translation of what Pia says is in bold:

(1) Filling out a permission sheet

Rikke: ɔ[m]ɛIL

Pia: hotmail (.) ja,
hotmail (.) yes,
(4.5)

Rikke: ja-ʊʊ (ɛLLə)

Pia: nuttet snæbel a ((looks at a resident who is taken out of the room))
ducky at sign

Rikke: ai a-ʊʊ
(.)

Rikke: ja-ʊʊ

Pia: ((moves closer to Rikke)) hvad siger du,
what are you saying,

Rikke: ja-ʊʊ

Pia: [yahoo,]
[[straightens back]]
[nå jeg troede det var hotmail]
[oh I thought it was hotmail]
[[writes]]

We could claim that this repair sequence not only shows intersubjectivity but also interactional fluency and initiative (the lack of both of which is a typical diagnosis with acquired brain injury). Rikke would not let this important mis-resemiotization, that is, writing down her e-mail address (to use Iedema's [2001] concept), of her talk pass, and she made sure that the space for repair was established (cf. Schegloff above), and successfully so. We could claim that this was because she was participating, dealing with something that exceeded the here-and-now situation (the permission form) – she was part of an institutional undertaking: the living lab and its future research project. Thus, filling out the permission form was an example of interobjectivity, of Latourian "timeshift". It was important for Rikke that right information about her left the room.

One attempt at a recommendation we could draw already from this short analysis is that repair work – whether spoken or done through other mediational means (tools) – is a clear indication of not just intersubjectivity, but also of initiative. Thus, the residents should be given possibilities for participation that matters (i.e. Participation), in addition to or as a next step from the therapeutic encounters like occupational or physiotherapy.

Maybe one way to bring the possibility for Participation in the home is, indeed, through research projects like ours. If we want to be good applied linguistic researchers, we should help the centre with its possible practical problems with its pedagogical principle of social inclusion. Rather than taking for granted that some activities enhance inclusion (for instance, when one voluntarily attends activities in a culture and competence centre), we try to decipher how the socio-material system called the home could be made to function as an assemblage of people, practices and places such that membership categories like resident, citizen, friend, lover, and neighbour could emerge, without always being wrapped, through training or therapy, in the ethnomethodological membership category device 'disability'. It is, therefore, important to dig deeper into how and what kind of exclusion and inclusion emerge from practices that constitute phenomena.

6 From inclusion and exclusion to conclusion

Maybe our claim can be, with Barad, that when engaging in material-discursive practices we always participate, and make boundaries that include and exclude. However, we cannot assume that certain practices always result in certain inclusions: in the same way as the meaning of words and utterances gets fixed within phenomena, exclusion and inclusion are outcomes that need more careful analytical attention as results of relational and emergent practices. With nexus analysis we shall collect more data to navigate carefully, but also leave the here-and-now situation we have in the video recordings.

Now the task is to map the cycles of the people, places, discourses, objects, and concepts which circulate through this micro-semiotic ecosystem looking for anticipations and emanations, links and transformations, their inherent timescales, and to place a circumference of relevance around the nexus of practice.

(Scollon & Scollon 2004: 159–160).

In other words, the quest is for the layers in the layered simultaneity.

As researchers we cannot claim that we have access to how the residents decipher the participatory possibilities of the centre and the world

in general, nor whether from their perspective inclusion or exclusion result from the phenomena we capture on video. However, we find that doing this kind of on-site applied linguistic research into the multimodality of participation might help develop everyday interactional and professional practices, and design places, that make the residents-and-the-environment as the object of interest – especially from the social inclusion perspective. The focus is on the future oriented Participation and thus moved away from the residents' former selves or any other definition of normalcy. In that work, Barad's radical ideas help appreciate the already existing applied linguistic ones to approach acquired brain injury as a socio-material phenomenon, rather than a medical or psychological problem.

The following three points can serve as a short summary of the most important points of the present article: 1) here-and-now participation requires understanding and comprehension; participation results in (sometimes subtle forms of) inclusion and exclusion, 2) to be able to have an idea of how exactly the inclusion/exclusion boundary emerges, close multimodal analyses are needed to find out how comprehending/participation takes place and 3) a research project can on its part be an apparatus that matters and therefore enhance multimodal situated Participation that – often through material objects – exceeds the here-and-now situation, towards the future.

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