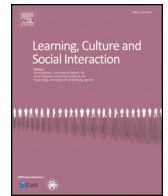




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Learning, Culture and Social Interaction

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/lcsi

Agency, accountability and affect: Kindergarten children's orchestration of reading with a friend

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 17 March 2016
 Received in revised form 2 August 2016
 Accepted 2 September 2016
 Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Peer interaction
 Directives
 Affect
 Situated learning
 Emergent reading

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate children's orchestration of their own learning activities. Using a combined framework of participation and situated learning, I focus upon children's embodied directives that are launched in response to a peer's inattention to the reading. The analysis demonstrates: a) that reading together is achieved through children's use of complex, embodied resources (e.g., bald directive forms and touch) that close off activities competing for a peer's attention and which are calibrated in response to the child's non-compliance, and b) that the social force of directives is dependent on the way children overlay verbal directives with affective displays. Attention is also given to the way the teacher emphasizes how children organize their bodies for peer reading. By considering the instructional context along with children's own practices for maintaining order, this paper argues that children creatively adapt aspects of the adult culture to fit the goals of the peer social group, effectively imbuing learning to read with the pleasures of human sociality.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Peer participation in situated, cognitive activity

Traditional views in educational psychology assume socialization and learning is unidirectional; important understandings, norms and values for development are guided and mediated by an adult or more knowledgeable other (Vygotsky, 1978). Such viewpoints (while acknowledging peer learning) imagine childhood as a period of apprenticeship for eventual competent membership in adult society. As a result, the focus of research in this tradition has tended to be on adult-child learning. More recent theories of childhood learning and socialization maintain that “children's peer cultures have an autonomy and irreducibility that make them worthy of documentation and study in their own right” (Corsaro & Eder, 1990, p. 200). This line of interpretive research has been critical in revealing how children collaboratively build their phenomenal and social worlds in ways that are sensitive to context and reflective of children's own personalities and the momentary goals and agendas of the peer group (Cook-Gumperz & Corsaro, 1986; Corsaro, 1985; Goodwin & Kyratzis, 2012). While creating a new paradigm in developmental research, this research has, nevertheless, remained in step with the convention of keeping the social apart from the cognitive (Johnson, 2015).

The aim of this article is to resituate children as *agents of their own learning* while exploring the entanglement of resources (e.g., intonation, facial expression, gesture) that mutually elaborate each other as part of the production of social and cognitive

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2016.09.003>

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Please cite this article as: Johnson, S.J., Agency, accountability and affect: Kindergarten children's orchestration of reading with a friend, *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction* (2016), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2016.09.003>

action (Goodwin & Cekaite, 2014). The combined analytic frameworks of participation (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004) and situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) guide this study. As defined by Goodwin and Goodwin (2004, p. 222), participation refers to “actions demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk.” The framework has three considerations in terms of analysis: a) attention is given to the interactive work the hearers as well as the speakers engage in, with an interest in the reflexive stance of all parties to the talk in progress; b) the focus is on how participation is organized through dynamic, interactively organized practices; and c) analytic interest is given not only to linguistic structure within the stream of speech but also to embodied action (e.g., prosody, gaze, gesture) and material structures within the environment. Goodwin and Goodwin (2004, p. 223) propose that a primordial site for studying participation is a situated activity “within which multiple participants are building in concert with each other the actions that define and shape their lifeworld.” The notion of participation is thus valuable for the present study as it provides a framework for locating cognition, language, and action within the organization of human social interaction.

The framework, however, does not explicate how individuals are *learning* as part of their participation in concerted action with one another. Here the framework of situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) is informative in its conception of learning as increasing participation in communities of practice. Rather than focus on the individual learner, the unit of analysis is the multiparty and situated interaction where more expert members guide novices in the sociocultural practices of the community. The present study, which examines peer interaction as part of an everyday reading activity, draws upon these combined frameworks so as to provide “descriptive adequacy” of “taught cognitive learning in its immediate environment” (Erickson, 1982b, p. 149). It describes the intricate and embodied practices whereby children achieve accountable participation in a classroom peer book-reading activity. These practices are important as they set the stage for cooperative learning, or transformation of participation in book reading (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and have implications for children’s development (Weisner, 2013).

1.2. Embodied directives and learning interactive academic routines

The study of directives—utterances designed to get someone to do something (Goodwin, 1990, p. 65)—in classroom instruction provides a powerful locus for understanding the social organization of classroom learning (Erickson, 1982a). In her pioneering work on directives and structures of control, Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1982) points out that, in speech, the directive function can be realized by a variety of linguistic forms, including: imperatives, such as, *Sit down, Jim*; interrogatives, such as, *Is that the way to talk to the teacher?*; desire statements, such as, *I want everyone to sit down*; hints, such as, *I’m hungry*, and declaratives, such as, *It’s time to clean up*. The form used (e.g., whether a more bald form or, alternatively, a more mitigated form) is determined by a number of factors, including: social group differences, status of the speaker relative to the addressee, gender, the kind of activity and activity context (e.g., classroom, home), and the situation (e.g., whether delivery of the directive is at the beginning of an activity versus mid activity) (Ervin-Tripp, 1982; Goodwin, 1990).

In classrooms, directives serve two primary functions; they can be used to instruct (i.e., implementing classroom procedures or teaching agendas) or to discipline behavior (He, 2000). The way a teacher issues a directive may be direct, putting a student in the spotlight of public attention, or masked or indirect, avoiding singling out children for public scrutiny (Erickson & Mohatt, 1982). The form of directive used is consequential as students’ correct interpretation and response to a directive requires that a child be familiar with classroom routines and norms for participation (Philips, 1972; Erickson, 1982a, 1982b), and lack of understanding of directives can hinder students’ participation (Waring & Hruska, 2012) and learning outcomes (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). Not responding to a directive appropriately can additionally be consequential, as when students appear resistant or affectively defiant to teacher’s directives, children can be positioned by adults and peers with problematic identities (e.g., oppositional and unwilling to learn) (Cekaite, 2012).

In focusing on *embodied* directives, the present investigation is informed by recent studies of family interaction which demonstrate how embodied directive sequences, through their intricate design of bodily movement and spatial practices, provide a site for the situated, moment-to-moment socialization of a child into accountable accomplishment of routine family tasks (e.g., teeth brushing, chores, preparing for bed) (Cekaite, 2016; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013, 2014). Notably, such an approach departs from a long-standing tradition of research on directives where directives are conceived as consisting of primarily spoken language (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Brown & Levinson, 1987). It is consistent, however, with more recent research and theorizing on social interaction which emphasizes that the “social, cultural, material and sequential structure of the environment where action occurs figure into its organization” (Goodwin, 2000, p. 1491). For example, as demonstrated by Goodwin and Cekaite (2014), directive *trajectories* have multiple stages that involve the movement of participants’ bodies through time and space. An agreement through a verbal response (e.g., the agreement particle, “okay”) may constitute only the first stage of a directive sequence. Participants who issue a directive often engage in considerable work to achieve a child’s compliance, whereby the child fulfills a requested course of action. They mobilize a variety of operative participation frameworks (e.g., one or both parents may direct a child’s activities) and facing formations (e.g., facing a child towards a table that needs to be cleared); they physically dislodge a child from distracting activities, and steer or even carry a child to a target destination (Cekaite, 2010).

In sum, directives are a primary means by which tasks and activities get organized in the home and in institutional settings and much has been said about how they function in asymmetrical, adult-child relations. To my knowledge, no research has examined embodied directives between peers as part of their moment-to-moment participation in classroom lessons. (See, however, Kyrtziz, *in press*, for an analysis of peers organizing their play enactments of reading.) For this study, I examine embodied directive/response sequences that are launched in response to a breach in the normative participation framework for peer reading, where each child is accountable to a bodily position in which she has access and can focus on her peer’s reading. In

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