Universität Basel

Research Project

Bodies at Play

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This doctoral project investigates the social and interactional organisation of body-based videogaming activities, specifically looking into their temporal, sequential, and multimodal details. It adopts an EMCA (Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis) approach, which is qualitative and empirical in essence (Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Lynch, 1993; Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007). Examining the situated practices that participants deploy in their ongoing videogaming activities, this project addresses language in action and technology in use, and explores the issue of what is to engage in collocated videogaming activities. This study treats the videogaming activities and interactional resources deployed by participants to play together and coordinate with each other as social phenomena in their own right (see Keating & Sunakawa, 2010; Mondada, 2012, 2013; Nishizaka, 2000; Reeves, et. al., 2017; Sharrock & Watson, 1987). Through examining the participants' conducts in the actual instances of playing videogames, this project investigates the social, interactional, intersubjective and practical work of participants engaging in videogaming activities together.

Based on a video-recorded corpus of situated Kinect videogaming activities at homes in Turkey, this study considers the interactional ecology of such body-based activities in its totality, in which players and other participants accomplish and adjust their actions and activities in collaborative and coordinated manners. The advantage that a close look into the overall interactional ecology of these activities brings is that it provides rich resources and means to examine the social and interactional practices lodged within and around their situated environments. Within this overall interactional ecology, different opportunities, through various actions and practices, for engagement with and participation in the videogaming activities situatedly and contingently arise.

In the thesis, the first analytic chapter is devoted to the investigation of temporal relations between spectator utterances – with instruction formats – and player bodily movements. The sequential and temporal analysis of proto instructions demonstrates that spectator utterances are not treated as instructions, thereby not constituting conditionally relevant first pair parts. It is shown that proto instructions, largely enabled by dual vision, manifest and exhibit co-engagement in the ongoing situated activities. The second analytic chapter focuses on the sequential environment of problematic game outcomes. More specifically, we examine why-interrogatives and allahallah-utterances, produced in the interactional environments of problematic game outcomes. We show that why-interrogatives explicitly describe the troubles, and they are often heard as searching for causes, whereas allahallah-utterances implicitly signal the troubles without any specific descriptions of them, and they are mostly treated as manifesting puzzlement. Moreover, though these two formats make relevant the participation of people sitting around, they do not establish normative obligations for them to reflect on these reported or displayed/implied troubles. In the last analytic chapter, embodied demonstrations of game relevant bodily movements, produced by spectators, are investigated. In "successful" demonstrations players and spectators col-

laboratively and intersubjectively establish and attend to the demonstrations, systematically working to locate the trouble sources and propose corrective solutions. Yet, in "unsuccessful" demonstrations, the bodily movements of spectators remain unattended by players who continue their engagements with the gameplay. As such, demonstrations – as holistic multimodal gestalts – are produced and attended to only when players and spectators intersubjectively share a similar orientation towards the troubles in the games.

Overall, the thesis offers contributions to the study of situated activities – with a specific focus on talk, body and technology – from a social interactional perspective. It revisits the notions of sequentiality and participation, by providing examples in which some actions are treated as not being conditionally relevant to one another in unproblematic ways. Along these lines, it characterises proto instructions within their specific temporal and sequential environments, in relation to the ongoing bodily movements of players. It also presents spectating as an interactional activity, which is temporally coordinated and sequentially ordered. Furthermore, the thesis explores morality in interaction, examining the practices that participants produce and negotiate in their observable and reportable conducts. Last but not least, the analysis also provides a novel understanding of Turkish grammar in use in interaction.

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