



Excursions into the Richness of Human Communication

Theory and practice during and before the 10 years of the
International Master program on Communication and Congenital
deafblindness

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Abstract

This article addresses the themes of the International Master Study in Congenital Deafblindness and Communication in the context of an ongoing dialogue between theory and practice, between scientists and practitioners. The article foregrounds how the contemporary thematic focus on dialogicality and embodiment in processes of meaning-making and sign-making is grounded in dialogues taking place in pre-master years. The emphasis is on how congenital deafblindness as a very specific and complex communicative circumstance pushes towards identifying relevant knowledge about universal processes, and vice versa. The article uses the notion of the third party to point at the implicit influence of normative ideologies about language, and at the need for a contrasting and explicit diversity perspective. The text exemplifies how microanalysis guided by concepts from dialogical theory can lift forward the bodily- tactile voice of the person with cdb, i.e. expressions of his/her subjectivity.

Introduction: A meta-view on communication analysis and intervention

The International Master study on Communication and Congenital Deafblindness has existed for ten years. In what follows we shall share our views on what has been accomplished. Most of the theses by the master students are case studies. It means that a new landscape for the academic study of human communication is being discovered and documented. The new landscape is a narrow ecological niche which cultivates sharable communicative spaces between the congenitally deafblind manner of being in the world, and that of ourselves; the sighted and/or hearing. When analyzing these documented spaces we discover interesting things: First, the communicative processes are complex and rich. Second, the tendency to engage in sense-making, meaning-making and language-making activity is very robust in humans as it is expressed in a diversity of forms. Third, the congenitally deafblind manner of being in the world is prominently embodied and dialogical.

The Master study program is situated in an ongoing dialogue between professionals close to the very specific and academic scholars deeply into the universal. The encounter with the reality of congenital deafblindness pushes towards theory that can move us beyond cultural and modality specific practices, into more fundamental embodied and dialogical layers. In this manner our professional gaze becomes sharpened by theoretically grounded concepts. This changes what we can see, and what we can do.

In what follows we shall demonstrate how the dialogue between academic scholars and ourselves has worked. Ivana Markova has time and time again presented us with one or more concepts from dialogical theory and invited us to explore if and how it is useful for us. One of these concepts is 'the third party' (Markova, 2006). We shall try to develop a use of this concept that can help structure the topic of this presentation.

Monological vs dialogical ideas about communication: the influence of the third party

"The third party however involves more than a reference to shared knowledge. It is actually the organizer of topics, of ideas and even of positions from which dialogical partners speak" (Ivana Markova, 2006:134)

From Linell (2009) we have learned to think about the way we understand communication, language and thinking in terms of monological versus dialogical models. From Ivana Markova (2006) we have learned to think about influences or voices in ourselves about

which we are not aware as third parties. The term monological is used here about practices that reflect the influence of the idea of normalization: i.e. that this child with deafblindness will have a better life if he learns to act and communicate in accord with the manners and norms of his surrounding non-deafblind culture. The implied pedagogy is instructional where input from one to the other is expected to re-occur as output by the other. The term dialogical is used here about practices that reflect the influence of the idea of reciprocity, co-creativity, diversity or manifold in manners of interacting with the world, and in subjective voices. We shall operate with three analytical levels:

1. The micro-analytical level where interactional dynamics between subjectivity-intersubjectivity can show
2. The situational level of the ongoing action
3. The contextual macro-level of third party influence.

Level 1 and level 3 are not directly observable, they require analysis. In the example we will share, Level 1 lifts into the open the expressions of subjectivity from the part of the child, and differentiates these expressions from expressions of intersubjectivity and subjectivity from the part of the teacher. The situational level singles out the structural design of the ongoing action. The contextual macro-level is used to identify expressions of the influence of dialogical versus monological third parties. The structure of ongoing action can, by different degrees, be influenced from top-down and bottom-up. Microanalysis can reveal tensions and imbalances between subjectivities and may push towards awareness of third party influence on the structural design of ongoing action. There can also be tensions between the levels.

Let us move to our example. We are looking at a videotaped sequence of interaction, filmed in the year 1984 at Spermalie, Brugge. The tape is chosen because the teacher is obviously competent within the approach to cdb communication and learning characteristic of that time. Thus we can leave the issue of the teacher's competence out of the analysis and concentrate on third party influence.

Brief Description of the Scenario

We see 'Geert', a profoundly deafblind 5-year-old and his 'Teacher'. There is also a brown plastic box and a colourful chain of plastic pearls. It is Teacher's intention to learn Geert how to unchain the pearls, piece by piece, and put them in the box in front of him. Geert is compliant and likes to work with Teacher. She leads him, making him manipulate objects with his hands under hers. Also when signing to him, e.g. "TAKE it", she does that by speaking herself with his hands. She directs him to perform the task, gently but focused. And he is acknowledged for following her intention by her rubbing his head.

Analysis

In the following we use text-type to differentiate the three levels of analysis described above, and in addition a fourth text type suggests an alternative design of ongoing action. The alternative emerges as the framing voice of the third party (the ideology of normalization) is substituted with dialogical theory which acknowledges diversity, complexity and tension. Microanalysis may accordingly identify expressions of the child's subjectivity and eventual tensions between subjectivities. Building on these expressions of the child's subjectivity, an alternative design of the action might enhance the child's voice and more generally, his participation in his own development and learning.

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- Regular elements belong to the structural design of the action
 - **Bold grey elements are expressions of Geert's subjectivity**
 - *Elements in tilted text belong to the influence of third party: monological model*
 - Underlined elements suggest an alternative design of the action informed by a diversity perspective on communication

- T rewards G for keeping the pearl over the box.

She wants to express her appreciation for every step that brings him closer to performing the task.

-Then T scaffolds G's action, holding his L-hand with yellow pearl. It is T's intention to make G let it fall down in the box.

T hopes Geert will learn to play with this material independently (for times that she nor her colleagues are available for G).

- by tapping with G's hand T holds the pearl against the inside of the box wall and T urges G further to let go of the pearl

T tries out how to make G do it as fluently as possible.

- T lets go of G's hand now

T is testing if G will go further on his own now.

Alternatively to the role of instructor of G's action we would like to see T in the role of an interested follower of G's actions, mediated by a gentle permanent touch. The tactile impression of an interested follower of his attention and interest might enhance G's subjectivity: his sense of agency.

-After T. did let go of G's hand, G on his own brings the pearl back towards him

- T interrupts that and scaffolds G to let go of the pearl into the box, by tapping his hand with pearl against inside of box wall.

T interprets G's behaviour as not being compliant with the task. T is driven by her intention to show G how to perform this game of unchaining pearls and rassemble them in a box. But working co-actively in this way she is making herself 'needed' in the game.

In a setting designed for dialogue, it would be possible to differentiate and reciprocate roles, e.g. unchaining a pearl and putting it in the box by the adult, attended to by the child first. Then giving the turn to the child, attended to by the adult.

- G brings the pearl into the box

T's hand is still nearby in case it goes wrong and she has to correct him. Her touching is instructing the direction of G's action.

When considering perspectives and positions in a dialogical framing, T's hand would suggest an otherdirected listening position, and not an action-oriented instructing role/position. And for G, the availability of T's touch would be for contact, for communicating together and for sharing in what happens.

- T lets go of G's hand,

T is hoping that G can continue by himself, one of her main aims with this task.

T is not keeping in touch, indicating she is not in the role of one making him feel acknowledged by an other as one able to put the pearl in the box.

- Geert now plays with the pearl inside the box, in the corner against the wall.

G is exploring the pearl in the box , constucting an embodied and bodily-tactile impression/expression of it, the corner is the best place for it, keeping the pearl within reach of his touching fingers for a while. T is waiting until G is ready to go on with the task again. She is not sharing in his play with the pearl in the box which would have let him know she appreciates his exploration and is interested in what he can do with the pearl. This might have promoted his agency and sense of self.

-The pearl escapes and rolls away towards the opposite side.

-Geert's hand, fingers stretched, is trying to follow the pearl.

In a setting designed for conversational dialogue, with permanent other-directed conversational touch, it would be possible to perceive G following the rolling pearl. And it would give the opportunity to follow, and share his interest in it. This moment of sharing could be realised by reciprocating his spontaneous iconic gesture (indicated by his stretched-fingers-handshape) and commenting upon the pearl being 'GONE'. Even expanded with an emotional expression of 'OOOHH'

- but G could not catch the pearl and he slaps on the vertical wall. Teacher does not consider this as part of the task/game and lets it pass (probably has interpreted it as an emotional utterance of stress). Geert's creative symbolic mimetic gesture is probably an internal referential comment on that 'possible-to-knock-against-vertical-wall- object'. G is thereby in the creative process of making sense, making meaning and making language from that in his own voice, which with reference to dialogical theory we recognize as languaging activity (Cf. Linell 2009)

-immediately followed by a manual gestural expression -could this be an emotional comment?

-and then G comes into his signing space in front of himself and makes a gesture with both hands. With our theoretical knowledge of today (concepts and technology) this gesture is noted as a mimetic referential expressions : i.e. 'as-if unchaining- a-pearl' and thus an utterance in his own voice, and a part of his subjective engagement and languaging activity)

-afterwards he bends down, face forward and finger against the eye. Teacher recognises **Geert's typical posture and interprets that he needs a break. At that time we had experienced that children with cdb do need many pauses. *G is thinking/processing - making meaning for himself. The need to withdraw from the action into an inner mental processing space indicates that something meaningful for the child has happened***

CONCLUSION: The Teacher with the monological third voice influence, of which she is not likely to be aware of as such, is directing Geert to let go of the ball and Geert is interested in the ball and in sharing his interest with teacher, where he turns towards Teacher before referring (mimetically?) to his actions)

The touching by G indicates what he attends to and is interested in (his subjectivity). The touching could have been regarded as communicative pointing gestures if organised within a tactile conversation space. The partners might then direct, follow, share and reciprocate each other's attention directions and attention foci, giving more possibilities to thematize and comment on each other's experiences, perspectives and intentions during a joint explorative project. G is showing several instances of languaging. Sharing those moments and negotiating about possible meanings would have been interesting in order to develop a co-creative game where G might discover his own voice.

Figure 1: Teacher Lets Go of His Hand



In the following part we shall tell the story about the contents of the Master, how it developed and is developing. The story is about a sustained dialogue between professionals in the practical field and academic scholars.

It belongs to the story that the whole process of knowledge development that led to the master started as a reaction to a suggestion by a prominent scientist, a radical behaviorist, to substitute prompting behaviors by adult caretakers in the field with robots. The argument was that it would be cheaper and more efficient. This was almost 30 years ago, but it is more relevant today than it was then for professionals to consider when technology is useful and not.

Connecting Practice and Theory: The Story

The contents of the Master study is building on the mentioned historical protest against the idea of prompting robots, which led to 25 years of systematic inquiries into Congenital Deafblindness and Communication. Professional experts from the practical field from five different countries agreed that it was time to let knowledge from the academic study of early communicative development inform practices in the field. They formed the DBI Working Group on Congenital Deafblindness and Communication (DBI-WGC). The group arranged a series of international conferences and workshops where academic scholars were invited to join in microanalysis of documentary videotapes. The purpose was to discover and discuss how concepts about universal processes applied. The videos were produced so as to function as exemplary cases. These dialogues between professional experts and academic scholars were striking the thematic and methodological chords underlying the contents of the Master study. Students are improvising further over these thematic chords, sometimes striking new ones. These dialogues are still going on, we are still in process.

The First Chapter

The first theme in the still lasting series of conferences and workshops was about *the contribution of the cdb person to his own communicative development*, presented in the *European DBI Conference in Potsdam 1993* (Nafstad, Rodbroe, Daelman, 1993).

The initial inquiries were inspired by clinical experiments by the French professor in psychology Jacqueline Nadel and her collaborators (cf. Nadel & Peze, 1993). Nadel referred to research in peer interaction showing that peers, before they speak, engage in co-creative social interactive play by imitating each other. She used immediate imitation as an experimental strategy to come into social interactive play with youngsters with autism. Our own explorations with persons with cdb confirmed the efficiency of the same strategy. Social directedness and reciprocity was boosted. Immediate imitation from the sighted and

hearing partner helped the person with cdb recognize the other as one like self and vice versa. In that way Jacqueline Nadel was the first academic scholar to support our systematic search for relevant knowledge. She brought with her a book edited by herself and Luigia Camaioni (1993) titled *New Perspectives in Early Communicative Development*. The research articles were expanding on the robust discovery of social directedness in humans from infancy. Among Nadel's collaborators and co-authors were besides Luigia Camaioni, Colwyn Trevarthen (1993; 1999) and Michel Deleau. Nadel brought them to the first Paris conference in 1996 and some came back to work with us later, on related themes with other academic scholars.

This was the start and this is how these dialogues continued, progressively involving more scholars from the University world, the list would be long.

In the first phase we studied also in much detail a small selection of documentary tapes of mother-child, father-child, and mother-child-father interactions. The reciprocal sensitivity to bodily tactile signals was very high in these videos. We learned that the first signs uttered by the cdb children we studied were embodied bodily tactile signs for MUM and DAD, originating in ritualized play with emotional/physical distance and proximity. We discovered the reciprocal sensitivity to bodily-tactile signals by looking at videotapes in slow motion; we could not notice the refined reciprocity in the ordinary scale.

In sum, in the first phase of this 25 year old project we explored participation in improvised sequences of social-interactive play where the sighted and hearing adult plays the role of a peer. The person with cdb presented himself as an other-directed creative, playful and emotionally engaged social agent. We also explored participation in emotionally motivated episodes of parent-child-interaction, where the cdb person presented himself as a co-creator of parts of embodied bodily-tactile language. We considered from then on embodied bodily- tactile parts of language to be the first language of the congenitally deafblind, and more knowledge about it has been added to this day, also by Master students.

The good story versus a good exemplary case: towards a relevant understanding of language.

When it comes to language, the mainstream conception of what it is, does not apply to congenital deafblindness, other than in exceptional cases. It is quite obvious that the linguistic practice of surrounding culture is extremely difficult to access when there is very little or no help from functional sight or hearing be it spoken, written or signed. It is not obvious, but logical, that the parts of language that are more accessible are the more fundamental or deeper embodied parts, and they will become more prominent in cases of congenital deafblindness than they usually are. Knowledge about those deeper embodied

layers was scarce before the end of the 20th century. David Good started however to look into embodied language of the congenitally deafblind as documented in '*A world without words*' (1990), with inspiration from Merleau Ponty. Now there is much more and more easily understandable scientific literature on the topic, so we have been able to continue along this track, the working group and the students.

The problem of focusing one-sidedly on language in the sense of the linguistic practice of surrounding culture is that what is there is not seen, whereas what is looked for is rarely found. In other words, there is and should be a difference between a good story and an exemplary case. So, in essence; we needed a more open entry into what we call language than the mainstream conception of it. From back in the 90's, we followed a track that looked into the aesthetic patterns of social and communicative interaction; spanning music, dance and drama. (cf. Hallan Tonsberg & Strand Hauge, 1996). This path has been expanded on in several master theses. Another path was addressing gestures, first gestural sequences. We had discovered that the tendency to engage in spontaneous bodily-tactile gesturing was robust in persons with cdb. Thus it was necessary to study spontaneous gesturing in more detail. The discussion about when gesturing is symbolic and when it is not goes far back, and we took up that thread.

Moving along the declarative communication path.

Bertil Bjerkan from Tromsø University in Norway was also invited to the 1996 conference in Paris and he pointed to the formal logical difference between social and communicative acts and social and communicative interactivity (cf. Bjerkan, 1997). Social and communicative acts have only two turns, but interactive acts have at least three, starting from the person with cdb. Communicative interactivity requires a minimal sequence of three topically interconnected turns. There needs to be a triadic interconnectedness between utterances, as expressions of topical connectedness between minds/subjectivities, not just between interacting bodies. This logic was clarifying, but difficult. It helped when we were guided to start differentiating gestural sequences according to their effect on the other person, i.e. the communication partner, as inspired by the research on referential gestures by Luigia Camaioni from University la Sapienza in Rome, and by the interest she showed in our videos.

The example of The Blue Tunnel.

We had in 1996 (DBI-WGC, 1996) a pearl of a video tape from the practical field, called Thomas and the Blue Tunnel. We showed it to Luigia Camaioni in a seminar. She was invited to lecture on the difference between declarative, imperative and instrumental gestural sequences, all of it relating to clarify the empirical grounding for the concept of communicative intention and joint attention. She saw our tape, pointed out an example of declarative referential gesturing, and said it had not been documented in the deafblind

before. What we saw in the video, with her guidance was that Thomas, although he was totally blind, was pointing for his teacher to the tunnel, but he could not see the tunnel, so he pointed by touch, literally pulling the tactile attention (the arm hand and fingertips) of the teacher to the tunnel, until there was a shared tactile focus on the tunnel wall, which was out of nylon and vibrating. Then he made a gestural utterance of three signs, directed in a bodily-tactile manner with tactile conversational hand positions to his teacher. The teacher understood the pointing to be about the tunnel, but she did not understand the three commentary signs, although she was a very good teacher and knew him very well. Thomas used these signs creatively. The interpretation by the teacher was that Thomas wanted her to understand what he wanted her to do, what kind of action; and she arrived at the idea that he wanted to tell her to go inside the tunnel again, as she had done before where he had felt her movements from the inside. And so she went into the tunnel again. When applying Luigia Camaioni's differentiation between declarative and imperative gesturing, we could look at the tape with new eyes. There was an utterance by Thomas, which the teacher listened to. In the sharable bodily-tactile gestural modality there were only two elements, an utterance from the child and a responding action from the adult. When going back to Bjerkan's criterion of a topically related 3 element sequence we could say this was not communicative interaction. It was a communicative act, and the sequence was dyadic and imperative. But Luigia Camaioni's point was that from the point of view of Thomas, it could be declarative. He did not give any cues indicating that his intention was for the teacher to go into the tunnel. This means that the manner of relating to Thomas' gestural utterance as a request to enter the tunnel again was an uncued linguistic overinterpretation. Thomas had not done any more than point for the teacher to the tunnel and comment something about it, still addressed to her in a bodily-tactile manner. Which means the teacher could have answered differently to the utterance, and she could have answered the utterance as a declarative narrative one, assuming his intention might be to tell something about this tunnel, make something he was thinking about on that moment known to her. It was possible in practice to pay special attention from then on to triadic, referential and declarative sequences, which seemed the most vulnerable and also the most important to enable further communicative development.

Sustained Conversational Sequences

Sighted and hearing communication partners that we worked with to explore theoretically guided practices were now disciplining the tendency to engage in uncued linguistic overinterpretations and uncued guesswork. A co-creative negotiating communicative practice was more and more sustained. The effect was a different kind of communication data, we could call it difficult or complex communication. We had now several videotaped conversational sequences with a lot of potential meaning, but very little negotiated shared

meaning. The cdb person showed himself as a sense-making communicative agent, but in a nonconventional and creative embodied bodily-tactile gestural modality. However, we did not worry, because we had also invited Katherine Nelson to one of the first Paris conferences. She motivated us then and through more recent works to focus on how the child's prominent engagement in making sense of the circumstance she found herself in is reflected in her use of language (cf. e.g. Nelson, 1999). So we were pushed in the direction of looking at cognition as engagement in spontaneous gesturing for sense-making, meaning-making and language making in the context of the conversation. We had thought that the point about communication was to understand and be understood, such words are often said. It was not the case. It seemed more that the point of this kind of 'declarative-narrative-tell and show-genre' was more to remain in the dialogue, to engage in the collaborative project of the dialogue. But we did not have the right words to describe it yet, we just observed that this seemed to be the case. Declarative narrative types of dialogues could be sustained in spite of very little shared understanding regarding conversational topics. So we started to understand that intersubjectivity in a conversation was not going about successful decoding of messages. Of course, there is no need to start negotiating shared meaning if a person is hungry and asks for bread. But there was another rule, a different kind of purpose for declarative narrative sequences, in line with the mentioned suggestion by Camaioni, and a similar mentioned idea by Katherine Nelson to think in terms of engagement in meaning making.

A focus on meaning- making.

We needed to discipline the analytical focus on difficult communication, i.e. on the sustained dialogues that tended to be very difficult for sighted and hearing to understand with regard to what the cdb person was thinking about and tried to make known to himself, and to the other. The theme became more focused on meaning-making and transactional processes and patterns in meaning making, an inspiration from Jerome Bruner's book *Acts of Meaning* (1990). We knew that the tradition of cognitive linguistics in the US had come with theories about embodied meaning in language, and we oriented ourselves in this direction. We invited Georg Lakoff to a conference. He answered friendly, and sent one of his students, Sarah Taub. Sarah was a sign language linguistic from Gallaudet University who had done groundbreaking research on embodiment in sign language (Taub, 2001). She looked at some of our videos, and could immediately analyse the embodied cognitive image structures underlying the form of the gesture and the utterance, thereby unpacking the potential meaning. At the same time we also invited a cognitive semiotician from Denmark, Per Åge Brandt, to look at the same videos as we presented to Sarah Taub. He also did analyse the possible meaning of the sign and the utterance using mental space theory (Brandt & Brandt, 2005) but modeled it a bit differently, with less emphasis on analyzing the construction of

iconic sign as such. Per Åge Brandt had a student Flemming Ask Larsen (2006). This explains the place of both cognitive linguistics and cognitive semiotics in the Master module. It is all about tools enabling the analysis of potential meaning in utterances that are difficult to understand, and about understanding how iconic signs are constructed through embodied cognition.

The Discovery of BETS

We had discovered BETS when analyzing Thomas in the Blue Tunnel, but this discovery did not have a name yet, and we did not know then if the phenomenon was robust.

The working group collaborated with several colleagues in the practical field in our preparatory studies, one of them the Norwegian teacher for the deafblind Gunnar Vege and his collaborators. In the role of teacher for Ingrid, a deafblind young woman, Gunnar Vege tried out systematically how to transform both embodiment theory and a co-creative and co-authoring dialogical practice into a sharable embodied bodily tactile communicative practice with his pupil. In this manner the relevance of combining embodiment theory and dialogical practice was being tested. Gunnar and his collaborators edited the authentic recordings from the explorations into the documentary TRACES for staff training purposes (Vege a.o. 2004). The work with TRACES stabilized the conviction that the basic units of languaging activity, the most basic components of referential gestures are gestures where the person with cdb indicates by touch the locus of a trace of a bodily-tactile impression of an event. The film TRACES, and in particular the sequence The CRAB illustrates all the parts of the process. As the working group had captured similar processes in other videos the data seemed sufficient to formulate the idea that the basic embodied referential gesture component, i.e. the basic potential sign component is embodied and can be called a BET: a bodily emotional trace. BETS have since been pointed at in many theses by the students. Of course BETS occur also under ordinary circumstances, like when we touch sometimes without being aware of it, where a fly touched our skin. However, the significance of this referential touch for languaging is normally not an issue, because there are so many other components to draw (meaning) from. The BET is significant in our context because there are so few other components, and access to components coming from the social and cultural context are extremely restricted. To touch a BET could be treated then as a step towards referential and co-referential pointing.

The Turn Towards Dialogical Theories

We knew about the Norwegian professor Ragnar Rommetveit, and his orientation towards the Russian Bakhtin, and his application of Bakhtinian thought to the study of human communication, language and thinking. We needed to know more about dialogical theory and find out how it would be useful to our thematic focus on meaning making, so we invited

one of Rommetveit's collaborators, Ivana Markova. Later we invited another member of this circle, Per Linell. The two have been and are still influencing the content and methodological orientation in the direction of dialogical theory. We are in the process of exploring the relevance of concepts and orientations informed by dialogical theory, and it has appealed to many students already. We find interesting things, for example that persons with cdb engage in languaging even though they have very little language in the linguistic sense, and we find clear indications of strong communicative agency in spite of very few linguistic skills. This is how their voices are being heard.

Still it is a question how to design access to culture in a manner that can be afforded to the person with cdb, and the most promising suggestion so far was presented by Master student Eija Lundquist: The procedure of tactile overhearing in multi-party interactions, which we point to in our second example in the last part of this paper.

A Contemporary Example

Let us then move to our second example. We shall visit the same institution in Brugge Belgium again, to look at contemporary practice, as influenced by dialogical theories and communication practices developed within this contextual frame. The persons with cdb are not the same as in the first example, but we do not think that affects the structural design of the situation. The sighted and hearing communication partners (teachers and caretakers) are not the same, but are as competent as in the first example and vice versa. Thus we can again leave the issue of partner competence out of the analysis

A brief description of the scene.

A prototype example for the structural design of the tactile multi-party conversation was developed and evaluated by Eija Lundqvist in 2012, in her Master thesis in this program. The purpose was to extend bodily-tactile conversational practices from involving only two partners in face-to-face relations, and give access to participate in how language lives in use by other people/in culture. The situation is therefore designed so as to give two persons with cdb (M and K) and two sighted and hearing adult caretakers (P and C) tactile conversational access to each other's talking/signing.

Analysis.

We can look again at the relation between the three analytical levels: The micro-analytical level where interactional dynamics between subjectivity-intersubjectivity can show, the situational level of ongoing action and the contextual macro-level of third party influence.

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- Regular elements belong to the structural design of the action

- **Bold grey elements are expressions of Marie**
- Underlined elements are expressions of Kevin

-Petra (P) asks Kevin (K) to leave the table. Then she brings his R-hand into the direction of Carla's (C) L-hand.

-C signs and vocalizes HELLO It's ME, CARLA. And MARIE is also here.

C is watching/waiting until **Marie (M) places her hand on C's arm in a following/listening-to-the-other position.** Thereafter C turns towards- and listens to Kevin, while **M follows by aligning her attention direction with that of C to K and what he has to say**

K utters "SHOP"

C reciprocates K's utterance "SHOP/shopping" and turns to P, asking her laughingly in spoken Flemish "who has told this to him?"

It seems P wants to take over C's role in the conversation, but C maintains her role and addresses Kevin...

C. signs "PETRA TOLD she will NOT go TO the SHOP. Because it is RAINING OUTSIDE"

P touches K's R-under arm and C, noticing this, leads K's L-hand a bit in P's direction.

M attends from short distance through vision.

K turns to P in position for 4-handed tactile conversation.

P asks "WHAT/wat?"

K signs "SHOP"

P answers : "We are NOT/not going TO/to the SHOP/shop".

P signs "LAST WEEK/last week we went to the SHOP/shop".

While signing this P looks at M, who is vocalising a bit and keeps her R-listening/following hand on P's R-signing under arm. K feels that P is turning towards Marie and he spontaneously turns towards Carla.

C asks "WHAT/what?"

K signs "FORGOTTEN"

C listens and reciprocates promptly "FORGOTTEN/forgotten – WHAT/what?"

K comes closer and signs "MONEY".

P looks astonished and M's listening hand is in touch with P's listening-hand

C is listening confirming "the MONEY/money, YES/yes"

P looks astonished/surprised while watching what K. will do. C. goes on "I FORGOT/forgot the MONEY/money. I DID /did-WHAT/what?"

K concentrates for some seconds -: "RUNNING - SCHOOL - FETCH ing – MONEY". On his face we see a glimpse of proudness because he remembers.

M is listening to P listening to K speaking, keeping her L- listening hand on top of P's listening R-hand to K's speaking hand.

M is trying to follow the dialogue by auditory listening, tactile listening and looking visually, very attentive! (when tired of looking M listens, a bit later going on watching again.

M keeps tactile contact via touch with L-hand, but not continuously

After his answer K gives back his turn. C and Petra look at each other, proud and surprised.

C signs to K "YOU/you KNOW/know that still" . "and Do YOU/you STILL/still KNOW/know WHAT/what you did BUY/buy in the SHOP/shop?"

Kevin is thinking for almost two seconds and... answers with an expression consisting of “moving- C- in- a- backward- and- downward direction” (expanding signing space by directing the other’s whole body motion in physical space) K and C share the knowledge that the fridge is located behind Carla and the eggs are kept on a lower shelf.

C laughs and comments to K “EGGS/eggs hé” and turns to Marie ...

C asks M “do you STILL/still KNOW/know what YOU/you did FETCH/fetch in the SHOP/shop?” P takes over K and C asks M “Will YOU/you TELL/tell this to KEVIN/kevin? K. is listening to this question also, L- listening hand on R-speaking hand of Carla.

C and P bring hands of M and K together, enabling them to be in direct dialogue with each other. Kevin bends towards Marie, in an attentive listening-to-her-position.

M signs “BUTTER”. All three listen tactily to Marie’s sign

P translates M’s signed utterance orally “boter”; C watches K, sensing that he is going to turn towards her. C leads K’s hands towards P. While P is addressing K, C repeats ...

...“MARIE/Marie SAYS/says that SHE/she FETCHED/fetched BUTTER/butter in the SHOP/shop, LAST/last WEEK/week” .

M vocalises slightly, confirming?

Figure 2: Petra Invites Kevin in



With regard to *the structural design of ongoing action* we saw a design lifting forward the conversational agencies and voices of two deafblind youngsters, K and M. This multi-party dialogue is part of a well known design, build up over more than two years, with recurring alternating shopping and cooking activities. These youngsters have discovered those contexts step by step, together with their teachers. Negotiating together which cake would be baked and controlling in the cupboard what ingredients were necessary. Going to the shop in function of their cooking. Cooking, making use of the articles that were bought in the shop. And also the walk to the shop, the formation of the participating group that day and the necessary clothes, depending on the weather was part of it. So this multi party dialogue is building on shared memories of daily-life routines and rituals, and an unexpected barrier that paved the ground for a good story.

In this example third party influence is explicit theoretical and practical knowledge about dialogical practice and conversational roles and perspectives: P and C design a multi-party situation because they have learned with reference to Eija Lundquist's original master thesis (2012) to understand that this design gives access to the experience of how language lives in the world to co-create shared situated knowledge/stories/socio-cultural realities.

The level of interactional dynamics between subjectivity-intersubjectivity builds on information from micro-analysis. The dialogue is driven forward though continuous shifts and reciprocations in conversational perspectives and complementary conversational roles. All four participants are engaged in the dialogue. The design allows many more shifts in perspectives and roles than a dialogue with only two participants and is therefore, as originally shown in the mentioned master thesis of Eija Lundquist (2012) much richer. The highlights in microanalysis are the voices of the persons with cdb: A profoundly deafblind youngster, Kevin, is taking on the role of steering the content of the dialogue. And a colleague student, Marie, is eager not to miss anything of the dialogue, and thus on her turn is able to become the speaker when asked for, listened to by her class mate. All four are using a gentle (almost) permanent touch to stay in dialogue with at least one other partner, communicating their communicative availability. We see the tension between the subjectivity of each youngster with cdb and his/her teacher, giving and taking turns with respect for each other's voice. The intersubjectivity of both teachers is shown in their partnership to sustain this multiparty interaction, giving chances to both youngsters to be engaged in co-creating the dialogue and co-authoring the story and also create new parts of language. We see higher conversational agency than formal linguistic skills in the manifold of forms in which Kevin and Marie express their subjectivities. Both make engaged use of their preferred modalities and cognitive talents. K uses e.g. his ability to construct iconic whole body utterances through the use of Real Space Blends.

In sum, we see how this knowledge about the prototype situation is relevant because it is appropriated creatively in the local context when spread to the practical field in Brugge.

New bits of knowledge are created locally which in turn add to the total picture when documentations and analysis from several exemplary cases combine. When we see how such a well known design is giving the floor to the voice of the deafblind youngsters, proudly reminding the teachers of the unexpected that happened a week ago, it is without any doubt that more such situations should be organised.

A landmark for the diversity perspective on human communication

The lived lives of the people with cdb with regard to communication were until quite recently a nameless circumstance. The Master study has changed that since the interests and concerns of the academic society can reach beyond that of mainstream culture. Embodied bodily tactile variations over universal processes are being looked for, discovered, named, and made known. Persons with cdb exemplify real life circumstances that are lived differently, but still in manners that point at universal core processes in human communication. The exercise that we engage is one of radical decentration (cf. Deleau, 2000). In the academic field decentration is a guided and disciplined process. Outside it, perspectives can glide in all directions. The Master study is in this sense a landmark for the diversity perspective in the study of human communication. The mainstream conception of what communication is, how it lives, develops and looks like, is being challenged. The relevance goes beyond topics related to deafblindness. The students' theses exemplify what a diversity perspective is about, how it affects practice and theory. Students are using theoretical and methodological concepts about universal core phenomena such as languaging, voice, agency, other-directedness, embodiment, attunement, to lift forward the prominently embodied bodily- tactile communicative engagements of the cdb person as a particular variation. From the point of view of philosophy and ethics, it means to be aware of variation and difference (Cf. Kristeva, 2008). In a society, however, certain ways of living, being and talking are overpowering other ways, and come to define what is real. This is one of the ways in which the academic society can make a difference. Manners of being in the world that are vulnerable, rare and small scale can, when properly described and nourished, emerge into more clear forms and be named and made known, protected and preserved as parts of culturally shared and sharable knowledge.

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