
Communicating and hand(ing) technologies. Everyday life in educational settings where pupils with cochlear implants are mainstreamed

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Abstract

In this study, we take an ethnographical approach to the way that learning and instruction is organized in Swedish primary school classrooms for deaf pupils who wear a surgically implanted cochlear hearing aid. The study addresses questions related to communication, language use, and identity positions in the everyday lives of these children in school settings. In mainstream classrooms where these children are members, different types of technologies are commonly used. The study takes sociocultural (Wertsch, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978) and language ideology (Irvine 1989; Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2010) perspectives as points of departure and specifically examines the role of a range of technologies that are deployed in these settings, their application, how pupils react to them, and how the technologies shape classroom interaction. The ethnographic data includes fieldwork notes, video-recordings and conversations with professionals in two mainstream classrooms in Sweden. The ethnographically framed analysis includes a modified version of a Conversation Analysis transcription that has enabled the representation of mundane interaction complexities, including visual elements. Our findings show that the use of different technologies significantly shape deaf pupils' opportunities to access and participate in everyday classroom life. The hegemonic position wielded by adults with regard to technology usage also has specific implications for deaf pupils with cochlear implants. The results also indicate that language ideologies play out in specific ways in the highly technified mainstream classroom environments. Oral communication tends to be privileged while visually-oriented communication is marginalized. At an overarching level, the findings indicate that pupils with cochlear implants have a peripheral identity position in mainstream classrooms. The findings have major relevance in that they contribute to an important gap in the literature on the mainstream situation of deaf pupils with cochlear implantation.

Keywords: cochlear implants, language ideology, oral communication, visually, oriented communication

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