

# Mobility

## Encyclopedia of Terminology for CA and IL: Mobility

In Conversation Analysis, the term **mobility** is used in the context of how social participants talk and interact while moving from one place to another.

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Conversation Analytic work on mobility focuses specifically on whole-body movement through space and is thus distinct from analyses of body part movements (e.g., gestures or shifts in body orientation). It also embraces not just walking bodies, but bodies that are being transported or conducting various forms of transportation.

Mobility is a ubiquitous feature of everyday life. Often mobility also involves participants talking and interacting with each other, and in these situations talk and action can become intimately intertwined with the accomplishment of mobility. This interconnectedness of talk/action and mobility becomes visible in interaction in two ways (Haddington et al. 2013).

On the one hand, talk and embodied actions can be used to coordinate and make (joint) mobility possible. This is illustrated in the following brief in-car navigation sequence that comes from a patrolling exercise in a crisis management training course (Rautiainen, 2021). In patrol teams, team leaders (TL) are responsible for navigation and drivers (DRV) for driving the vehicle. In the excerpt, the team is approaching a junction when the driver (l. 2) requests TL to confirm their next mobile action, a turn to the left.

(1) [UNMEM 1/2019 Oscar, 27 March 2703.mp3 (05.42:27)] (Rautiainen 2021)

01 (6.0)  
02 DRV: lef- lef:t?  
03 (. )  
04 TL: yeah,  
05 (2.3)

In line 4, TL confirms DRV's enquiry, and they take a left-turn at the junction. With the two turns the team members establish and confirm their joint understanding about their next mobile action, making it possible, relevant and accountable.

On the other hand, mobility as a contextual feature can shape and contribute to the organisation of talk and embodied interaction. This can be seen, for example, in car driving episodes in which the driver drops off a passenger before continuing their journey (Haddington, 2019). In these situations, the in-car participants coordinate the closing of the encounter step by step, parallel with and relative to the driving activity and the car's movement, making possible a smooth and coordinated stop-and-go.

While the above distinction is useful for analytic purposes, many interactional actions and practices simultaneously shape and are shaped by mobility (for overviews, see Haddington et al. 2012; Haddington, et al. 2013; McIlvenny et al. 2009; McIlvenny et al. 2014; De Stefani et al. 2019).

The interest in Conversation Analysis on the issues of mobility can be traced back to Erving Goffman's work on encounters between mobile pedestrians and how "vehicular units" coordinate and adjust their movement with respect to other such units (Goffman, 1971: 5–18). Additionally, Laurier et al. (2008) can be considered as a landmark paper connecting issues of conversation and mobility and influencing subsequent work in conversation analysis.

Since Goffman (1971) and Laurier et al. (2008), Conversation Analysis has been used to study a wide range of interactional actions, activities and practices and their interrelationship with movement and mobility. For example, it has studied the ways in which people accomplish navigation in different contexts (Haddington, 2012, 2013; Psathas, 1976; Rautiainen, 2021), what happens inside cars during overtaking (Deppermann, et al. 2018) and how people orient to concerns of being a group when moving together (McIlvenny, et al. 2014). It has also studied how instructors, when instructing a learner to, for example, drive, ski or fly, parse the instructed mobile task (e.g., turning or landing) into sub-actions in order to guide the learner to carry out the task (Rauniomaa et al. 2018). These studies have covered a wide range of mobile activities and contexts, such as cycling (McIlvenny, 2013a, 2013b), driving (Haddington, 2010; Laurier, 2013, 2019; Laurier et al. 2008; Mondada) 2012, flying (Nevile, 2004a, 2004b, 2009, 2013), walking (Broth & Lundström, 2013; Broth & Mondada 2013, 2019; Mondada, 2009, 2014; Weilenmann et al. 2013) and patrolling (Rautiainen, 2021). There are also several studies attending specifically to learning in and for mobility, for example in driving (Broth et al., 2018; De Stefani & Gazin, 2014; Deppermann, 2018; Levin et al 2017; Rauniomaa, 2017; Rauniomaa et al., 2018), flying (Melander & Sahlström, 2009) and dancing (Broth & Keevallik, 2014). Sometimes this body of research is referred to as 'interactional mobility studies' (McIlvenny, 2013c; McIlvenny et al., 2014).

#### **Additional Related Entries:**

- **Embodiment**
- **Interactional space**
- **Instruction**
- **Materiality**
- **Multimodality**
- **Objects**

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