Enchantment in storytelling: Co-operation and participation in children's aesthetic experience

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

Article history:
Received 2 February 2018
Received in revised form 22 August 2018
Accepted 30 August 2018
Available online 19 October 2018

Keywords:
Storytelling
Multimodality
Social interaction
Affective stance
Literacy

A B S T R A C T

In early childhood education, storytelling has traditionally been seen as a learning activity that lays the groundwork for children's vocabulary and literacy development. The present study uses video-recorded storytelling events to examine young children's emotional involvement and aesthetic experiences during adult storytelling in a regular Swedish preschool for 1- to 3.5-year-olds. By adopting a multimodal interactional perspective on human sense-making, socialization, and literacy (Goodwin, 2017), it contributes to research examining multimodality in early childhood literacy (Kyratzis & Johnson, 2017). The analytical focus is on co-operation in aesthetic experience: the teachers' ways of organizing an entertaining, affectively valorized and 'enchanting' storytelling, and the children's audience's verbal and nonverbal participation (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004).

The study shows that teachers used 'lighthouse' gaze, props, marked prosody and pauses to invite the child audience to participate, join the attentive multi-party participation frameworks and share the affective layering of story. The young children exploited the recognizability of the story and contributed by co-participating through bodily repetitions, choral completions, elaborating or volunteering anticipatory contributions, and pre-empting the upcoming story segment. The study suggests that through adult-child co-operation, the embodied telling becomes a site for children's affective and aesthetic literacy socialization.

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1. Introduction

In early childhood education, book reading and storytelling have traditionally been seen as learning activities that lay the groundwork for children's literacy development (Collins, 2010; Heath, 1983; Whitehurst et al., 1994). There is, however, another side of stories (written and oral narrative texts), that is, their potential to promote children's socio-emotional learning and socialization. The aesthetic characteristics and developmental advantages of stories, including literary fairy tales, have been the focus of various literary and psychological approaches (Bettelheim, 1976; Lubetsky, 1989). Bettelheim foregrounds "the uses of enchantment" in stories as significant for children's development and exploration of their world and social concerns, noting that:

For a story truly to hold the child's attention, it must entertain him and arouse his curiosity. But to enrich his life, it must stimulate his imagination; help him to develop his intellect and to clarify his emotions; be attuned to his difficulties, while at the same time suggesting solutions to the problems which perturb him. (p. 5)

Whereas pleasurable features, enchantment with the story as aesthetic experience and emotional involvement are highlighted as important characteristics of childhood literacy experience (e.g., significant for children's self-identification as readers, Johnson, 2017; Poveda, 2003), the main bulk of the research has examined what traditionally has been viewed as literacy-enhancing verbal acts (e.g., adult questions, verbal expansions) and their uses during picture book reading practices (Connor et al., 2006; Snow, 2004).

In the present study, we direct our focus at young children's emotional involvement and aesthetic experiences during adult storytelling in a regular Swedish preschool for 1- to 5-year-olds. Telling is defined here as reading aloud and enactment of a text with a narrative structure (fairy tales, other book stories) that is performed for an audience of young children. The present study adopts a multimodal interactional perspective on human sense making, including socialization, learning, and literacy (Goodwin, 2017; Johnson, 2015, 2017). It contributes to research examining multimodality in early childhood literacy by adopting an expanded conceptualization of language and aligning with a view on children's involvement in literacy events as "meaningful and useful for themselves" in their daily life (Flewitt,
children’s participation in classroom reading of fairy tales constituted (Hall, 2013: 14; Kress, 1997). For instance, Poveda (2003) shows that some future literal stage” (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Gee, 2008; Gillen making, “through the multiplicity of modalities in social events, that affective stances – language-mediated and embodied resources – “through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others) . . . with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field” (Du Bois, 2007: 163; Goodwin, Cekaite, & Goodwin, 2012) is emphasized in that they clearly contribute to aligning participants into the co-operative operation of a common course of action. By adopting the multimodal interactional perspective, the present study will analyze and discuss storytelling as an interactionally accomplished and sociocultural poignant practice, where young children can immerse themselves in early literacy by co-operating in aesthetic experiences and affective evaluation of story characters and events.

1.1. Early literacy and children’s contribution to literacy activities

Storytelling and book reading have primarily been seen as activities that can enhance children’s literacy development. For instance, a wealth of research – taking psychological, linguistic, and educational perspectives – has shown that the literacy environment in early childhood contributes to children’s emergent literacy development (Dyson, 1991; Genishi & Dyson, 2009; Guo et al., 2012). A growing number of studies have examined how adults/caregivers, during picture book reading, use questions, vocabulary explanations and other verbal methods to engage children in literacy training (Heath, 1983; Marková, 2016). Notably, literacy is not limited to written language. It also includes abilities to structure textually cohesive and coherent stretches of spoken discourse (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2004; Snow, 2004). Children’s book stories, and their language features, can be incorporated into children’s play and have the potential to foster discursive literacy skills (Vardi-Rath, Teubal, Ailenberg, & Lewin, 2014). Children’s peer interactions have also been recognized as comprising simple narratives in pretend play (Björk-Willén, forthcoming; Kyratzis, 2014).

A broad definition of early literacy views it as a process of meaning making, “through the multiplicity of modalities in social events, that takes place here and now rather than constituting a stage on a path to some future literal stage” (Bezemër & Kress, 2008; Gee, 2008; Gillen & Hall, 2013: 14; Kress, 1997). For instance, Poveda (2003) shows that children’s participation in classroom reading of fairy tales constituted part of language socialization, and ultimately, incidental learning and socialization through literature to literature (see also Sterponi, 2007 on ‘clandestine’ reading and literacy). Several recent studies have adopted a multimodal interactional perspective on literacy events and examined embodied participation frameworks, objects, graphic texts/pictures, and bodily alignment as meaning-making resources in children’s reading practices. For example, Moore (2017) and de Leon (2017) demonstrate that children’s participation in literacy practices was guided by adults through their use of directives that monitor and re-calibrate children’s attention. As shown by Kyratzis (2017), young children skilfully used multimodal actions to achieve a playful performance of ‘reading a picture book’ (see also Cekaite and Björk-Willén, 2013), and in this way contributed to their own literacy socialization. In a study of primary school peer literacy activities, Johnson (2015, 2017) shows that collaborative reading was dependent on children’s mutual coordination of multimodal participation frameworks. Notably, the study demonstrates that literacy acquisition was intimately related to the children’s affective stances and development of identities as avid readers who enjoy the reading process.

1.2. Aesthetics, pleasure and performance in storytelling

As suggested above, stories, both literary and oral, are not “designed for utilitarian purposes to inform” (Pratt, 1977). Rather, both literary and oral narratives are designed “to elaborately display highly tellable circumstances and incidents in such a way that the audience will respond effectively in the intended way, adopt the intended evaluation and interpretation, take pleasure in doing so”. Similarly, interactional approaches have highlighted that the ways in which stories are told provide information about “how human beings organize their experience of the events they encounter in the world” (Bruner, 1990; Goodman, 1990: 236). They are morally and affectively charged, and in this way help the participants, speakers and listeners, to make sense of the events in the world and themselves (Ochs & Capps, 2001). Moreover, storytelling is a dialogic event and performance, in which listeners, i.e., the audience, actively contribute to the dynamic process of telling (Goodwin, 1990, see also Duranti, 1986). Performance is choreographed through speakers’ use of talk and nonverbal resources to animate story characters and the reactions to them. It brings alive a vernacular theatrical performance and engages the audience (Goffman, 1981).

In the present analysis of teacher–child storytelling, we direct our attention to how the telling (narrative performance) is accomplished through the carefully coordinated actions of multiple participants. We will explore in detail how the adults and young children draw upon a range of modalities – such as voice, intonation, facial expressions, gaze and gestures – in their aesthetic and affective enactment of the storytelling. The analysis highlights the ways in which “enchanted” telling and aesthetic experience involve attentional, and co-operation – sharing of – affective stances among adults and children.

2. Method

2.1. Data and analytical procedure

The present study was conducted in a public Swedish preschool for 1- to 5-year-old children.3

In Sweden, public preschools, which are attended by approximately 95% of children, constitute the main early childhood setting for “educare”: they provide parents with childcare when they work and at the same time educate children. Their aims and work methods are defined by the Swedish National Curriculum that foregrounds a holistic approach to child development, learning, and

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3 The study is part of a larger project on children’s emotion socialization, PI A. Cekaite. Financial support from Swedish Research Council is gratefully acknowledged.
emotional well-being. The present preschool was located in a suburban middle-class area in a middle-sized Swedish town. The data consist of 20 h of video-ethnography (recordings, observations and interviews with staff) conducted during a period of 1.5 years. Thirty children and five educators participated in the study. In many of the preschool activities (e.g., free-play, circle-time) the mixed-age group of children participated together. During instructional activities (e.g., story-telling) children were divided into more age-coherent groups and the activities were adapted to the children’s knowledge and developmental level. Storytelling events were performed on a daily basis and usually took place in a cozy, comfortable preschool space (a sofa or soft corner) with a small (three to five) or larger (eight to ten) group of children. Storytelling activities had multiple goals: they provided literacy training and created a cozy and restful time. Many of stories (e.g. fairytales) were frequently repeated and were well-known to the children.

2.2. Analytical procedure

The analysis began with the repeated viewing of the video-recorded data. The initial indexing of video-recorded activities indicated that storytelling situations were entertaining and dynamic social encounters characterized by teachers’ verbal and elaborate embodied methods for engaging the child audience. We have selected and analyzed 10 video-recorded storytelling events (teachers’ reading, telling and enacting of fairy tales or other stories to children) for various age groups of children. The storytelling events were transcribed and embodied actions noted. We specifically focused on the teachers’ and children’s affective stances and engagement with the story. Situations where the participants’ affective stances were prominent were selected for further analysis (conducted through repeated viewing). The analysis was inspired by a conversation analytic approach (CA) analyzing naturally occurring practices. Our focus was on multimodal – verbal and embodied – resources that participants use to act and make sense of each other’s embodied actions in a sequential context of emergent activities. This analytical perspective adopts Goodwins’ framework of participation (2004) and contextual configurations (Goodwin, 2000) in examining how participants invoke and deploy various semiotic modalities and build alignments with each other in a specific social situation. The transcriptions are informed by conversation analysis (Jefferson, 1984, see “Transcription conventions” in Appendix).

3. Findings

In our analysis of the teachers’ and children’s interactions during storytelling events, we have found intricate work that the teachers used to involve and sustain the children’s attentive listening.

The categorization of affective stances was based on previous research (e.g., Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004; Goodwin et al., 2012), and was refined during analysis in relation to the embodied conduct of the participants, the goals and affordances of the educational activity. The categories evolved inductively and the participants’ affective stances were categorized according to their main communicative functions, and embodied characteristics. The analyses were discussed at local and international seminars. Repeated data sessions and discussions within a research group, in addition to methodological workshops contributed to discerning robust findings. The extracts here are selected from three representative activities to illustrate the key phenomena characterizing the affective and multimodal organization of storytelling. They involve three narrative situations: (1) the teacher’s enactment of The Three Billy Goats Gruff (by using toy props: a bridge, three goats, a troll and grass) for four toddlers (1.2- to 1.5-year-olds) (Fig. 1); (2, 3) The teacher’s reading of Little Red Riding Hood and A Bad Dream from an iPad for five children (ages 3–3.5, Fig. 2), who are sitting closely tucked in together in a soft corner with a blanket over their legs. The teacher is in the middle; three children are sitting to her right and two to her left.
Excerpt 1: The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Participants: preschool teacher, children Annie, Sue, Laura and Bill.

01. Teacher: vet ni vad det här är ((shows a toy "bridge"))
   Do you know what this is?
02. (0.2)
03. Teacher: vad är det här för nåt=
   What is this?
04. Annie: =än ((turns her head left))

05. Teacher: en BRO
   A bridge
06. Annie: bro
   Bridge
07. Teacher: en bro ((puts toy bridge on table))
   A bridge
08. Annie: {((nods, mouth open)}

participation and co-experience of the story. They deployed various – verbal and embodied – methods to secure and sustain the children’s ‘enchantment’ with the story and to engage the child audience. Embodied displays of affective stances provided significant resources in the organization of and responses to the telling. The telling and listening were far from one-way communication, rather they were co-operatively accomplished (Goodwin, 2017). In the following, we will describe interactional methods the teachers used to choreograph the child audience’s attention and understanding of the story, and outline the children’s responses, in this way demonstrating the participants’ co-operation in the affective and aesthetic experience of the story.

3.1. Setting up the story and introducing story characters

As a way of securing the toddlers’ listening comprehension, engaging their interest, and creating conditions for literacy learning, the teachers used props and ‘baptized’ – labelled – them. They established the connection between the main characters, lexical concepts, and visual props, disambiguating the meaning of lexical concepts. In Ex. 1, the teacher introduces the story of The Three Billy Goats Gruff. She initially shows and labels the main props and solicits the children’s responses. First, she shows a toy bridge, a central object in the story plot.

The teacher repeatedly asks the children what it is (lines 1–3). The children look at her with serious facial expressions, but do not respond, and she loudly answers the question herself, emphasizing the word ‘bridge’ by using marked high pitch (line 5). Immediately, Annie (1.5 y.) repeats ‘bro’ ‘bridge’, and the teacher herself uses an emphatic repetition to confirm Annie’s response (line 7). Next, Annie displays her engagement and understanding of the concept by nodding.

The extract exemplifies several characteristic features: (i) the teacher skilfully uses her voice, gaze, props, and question format to excite the children’s interest and curiosity; simultaneously, (ii) the educational practice seeps into the event in the shape of the teacher’s known-answer questions (lines 1, 3; Mehan, 1979), which allow her to initiate a concept-learning practice. The teacher builds up the children’s interest in the story, and their knowledge about the main characters and story conditions and enables the children (who have heard the story before) to demonstrate their knowledge and, in this way, contribute to the storytelling.

3.2. Teachers’ “lighthouse” gaze in creating a multiparty participation framework

During storytelling for a group of children, the teachers employed various visual resources – gaze, book, iPad – to choreograph a dialogic and active multiparty participation framework. While visual information on a book page or on an iPad screen constitutes an important source of story information that is accessible for young children, the teachers used what we here call a “lighthouse” gaze, i.e., sweeping gaze across the children, to solicit and sustain attentive listening, monitor the children’s participation and their story understanding. Moreover, by displaying a particular (e.g., ‘sad’, ‘excited’) facial expression, the teachers mediated – distributed – story-relevant affective stances to the multiparty audience.

Excerpt 2: A Bad Dream. Participants: preschool teacher, the children Julia, Beth, Eva, Lilly and Sue.

7 Teacher: ser du va leden Fido ser ut
   can you see how sad Fido looks
8   ((gazes at Julia and Beth
9   sitting to her left))

10 Julia: mm [lessen ((sad voice, points at her eye))
11   mm sad
12 Teacher: [man blir ju leden om
   if you get sad
13 inte () om kompisarna
   not if your friends
14 försvinner ifrån en
   disappear
15 ((gazes at Eva Lilly and
16 Sue sitting to her
17 right))
In Ex. 2, the preschool teacher is reading a story called A Bad Dream for a group of 3–3.5 year-olds. The story is about fantasy animals, and Fido, one of the characters, has a dream in which his friends do not want to play with him.

When the teacher in line 7 calls attention to Fido's affective stance: “can you see how sad Fido looks”, she gazes at Julia and Beth, and she also makes the image visually available on the iPad (lines 7–8, Fig. 3). Her facial expression corresponds with the textual stance of sadness, and Julia responds in a sad voice with a comment about Fido’s sadness. She also points at her eye, illustrating a tear. The teacher emphasizes Fido’s feelings using an emotion label – ‘sad’, and she explains why Fido is sad, “you get sad if not if your friends disappear” (lines 11–13). Acting unpleasantly is causally linked to ‘becoming sad’.

While explaining why Fido is sad, the teacher turns her gaze and iPad to the other children (lines 14–16, Fig. 4). She uses a lighthouse gaze, shifting it between the children, from one side to the other. Her sweeping gaze and facial expression carry out the interactional work of cueing and organizing the audience’s participation and attentive listening, as well as publically distributing her embodied affective stance. The lighthouse gaze provides the teacher with opportunities to observe and notice the children’s actions and affective stances. The teacher conveys to the children, together with her meta-level stance. The lighthouse gaze provides the teacher with opportunities to observe and notice the children’s actions and affective stances.

In Ex. 3, the teacher sets up a dialogue between the little goat and the troll by using pauses and prosody to highlight the keywords, which played out events and dialogues in full dramatic force through the multiplicity of voices (Bakhtin, 1981). The teller animated principal figures and their experiences, and offered her commentary on the unfolding actions (Goffman, 1981; Goodwin, 1990). In doing so, the teachers invited and captivated the child audience’s engaged listening, what we here call ‘enchantment’ with the story. The teacher continuously adjusts the rhythm and pace of her telling using pauses, purposefully incomplete turns, and emphatic production of keywords. The design of their talk-in-telling was multifaceted: it built up drama and suspense, and created conditions for the young children to parse the meaning of the story and, importantly, to co-operate, i.e., contribute to the telling by using, for instance, verbal means and repetitions. Some children, especially the older ones, appropriated the cultural resources from the teachers’ repertoires and exploited these affordances by recycling elements (single words or short phrases) or expanding on various aspects of the story.

In Ex. 4, as the teacher reaches the climax of the story where the big Billy Goat Gruff walks across the bridge and meets the troll, she makes salient the keyword ‘stora’/’big’.

The teacher emphatically pronounces elongated o and a (s::to::ra::, line 92). The elongated s in the beginning of ‘stora’ delays the production of this word, and in a slightly delayed overlap, Annie (1.5 years) joins in on the teacher’s ‘stora’/’big’ (Fig. 6). The teachers’ designedly-incomplete utterances or markedly elongated words allowed the children to complete the utterances by themselves, and also enabled coordinated and joint adult-child completions. Here, pronouncing the word in coordination with the teacher, the child’s mouth widely open, and recycling the teacher’s ‘excited’ intonation, the toddler shadows (Björk-Willén, 2007) and joins in on the affective stance of excitement.

The teacher continuously adjusts the rhythm and pace of her telling by using pauses and prosody to highlight the keywords, which the toddler repeats: bridge, big, you and come (thereby displaying her understanding of lexical items and the story). In line 95, the teacher pauses after ‘bridge’, and Laura immediately repeats and fills in the

3.4. The rhythmic organization and pace of the telling: affordances for co-narration

The teachers calibrated the rhythm and pace of the telling using pauses, purposefully incomplete turns, and emphatic production of keywords. The design of their talk-in-telling was multifaceted: it built up drama and suspense, and created conditions for the young children to parse the meaning of the story and, importantly, to co-operate, i.e., contribute to the telling by using, for instance, verbal means and repetitions. Some children, especially the older ones, appropriated the cultural resources from the teachers’ repertoires and exploited these affordances by recycling elements (single words or short phrases) or expanding on various aspects of the story.
Excerpt 4  The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Participants: preschool teacher, children Annie, Sue, Laura and Bill.

91 Teacher: så boken fick gå över  *(moving toy goat over bridge)*

92 So the goat was allowed to cross the bridge

93 oh nu kommer den s::[to::ra:: boken Bruse oh han klampar

94 and now comes the big Billy Goat Gruff and he tramps

94 Annie: [stora: (*open mouth*)

95 klamp klamp

95 big

96 tramp tramp

95 Teacher: klamp låter det (0.2) ‘venär det som klampar på min bro’

95 who is tramping on my bridge

96 Anie: [boo "bridge"

97 Teacher: sa trollet() ‘de äh ja den sto::ra boken Bruse’ (0.2) ‘nu

97 said the troll ‘it is me the big Billy Goat Gruff’ ‘now

98 kommer jag och åter upp dig’ (0.1) sa trollet

98 I will come and eat you up’ said the troll

99 Annie: [hâ [sto:la

99 big

100 (raises her arms)]

101 (waves her arms)]

102 Teacher: ‘ja kom du bara[jag är inte rådd för dig (.), nåe’ så trollet

102 ‘yes just come I am not afraid of you no’ so the troll

103 han kom

103 he came

104 Annie: [kom (waves her arm, gesturing ‘come here’)]

word ‘bridge’ without disturbing the teacher’s telling. A similar inter-

actional, joint completion is produced in lines 97 and 98: the teacher

pauses after “the big Billy Goat Gruff” and “eat you up”. Here Annie

repeats “big”, which she embellishes with an elongated ‘o coordinated

with a symbolic gesture (Fig. 7). A wide gesture of ‘bigness’ publicly

exhibits her excitement and engagement with the story (lines 100-1).

She also repeats you after “eat you up”, moving her arms in excite-

ment. As demonstrated in Ex. 4, the teacher’s verbal and nonverbal

actions constitute rich contextual configurations that enable Annie
to contribute to the ongoing telling. The toddler exploits various
features of the teacher’s performance in designing her participation
and, by repeating keywords, displays her understanding of the lexical
items and the narrative.

3.5. Children’s co-operation in storytelling as expanded and

pre-emptive contributions

The teachers, together with the children, frequently chose to
read stories and fairy tales that had a rather repetitive structure
and recognizable literary conventions, and that were well-known
to the children. The children exploited the recognizability of the
story structure and elements (Poveda, 2003) and contributed to the
embodied telling by volunteering contributions that elaborated on
the emergent story segment, or anticipated actions and events to
follow. In Ex. 5, Annie (1.5 y.) volunteers a demonstration of “goat is
eating good grass” that expands on similar aspects of the teacher’s
telling.
Excerpt 5  The Three Billy Goats Gruff. Participants: preschool teacher, the children Annie, Sue, Laura and Bill.

34 Teacher: "å dom skulle gå över" bron ((points with her finger on the bridge))
35 för åta "de guda grå: set som fanns på andra sidan=
36 to eat some good grass that was on the other side
37 (moves her hand in a circle on the other side of the bridge, Sue and Annie gaze at her movements))
38 Annie: =((puts her hand to her mouth, 'eating' something))

When the teacher illustrates the place where the “good grass” grows by making circular movements with her hand, she pronounces “grass” in an appealing way (lines 35–36). The good grass is presented as something desirable, and Annie immediately displays her attuned understanding: latching onto the teacher’s move, she puts her left hand to her mouth, and elaborates on the teacher’s telling, as if ‘eating something’ (Fig. 8, lines 38–39). The teacher recycles Annie’s ‘eating’ gesture (Fig. 9), embellishing ‘eating’ performance with a delicious smacking sound that is recycled by Annie in the next turn.

3.6. Co-operating and sharing the child’s pre-emptive contributions

Below, we will demonstrate the children’s pre-emptive – anticipatory contributions, which they volunteered prior to a relevant segment of the teachers’ telling. Their verbal and nonverbal pre-emptive contributions attended to the content and/or the affective aspects of the story. Acting in a co-operative telling mode, the teachers attended to, recycled or otherwise ratified the children’s anticipatory contributions. Because many of these pre-emptive contributions displayed the child’s affective stance regarding the events of the story, the audience and the teller co-operated in establishing a shared affective stance and distributing it across the audience.

Excerpt 6 shows how the teacher attends to and recycles the child’s anticipatory embodied stance as her own enactment of suspense and fear.

During the teacher’s reading of the highly exciting and scary event in LRRH, when the wolf “opened the door and ran inside oh” (line 9), Lilly vividly displays an affective stance of ‘being scared’ to the teacher: she moves her hand to her face and opens her mouth (a ‘scared’ facial expression, Fig. 10, lines 10–11). Lilly, through her teacher-directed display of affective stance, anticipates that some scary things are about to happen in the story.

The teacher aligns with and ratifies the child’s enactment, which pre-empted and embellished a particular story segment. She repeats – shadows – Lilly’s ‘scared’ performance (Fig. 11) just before she narrates the climax event of the story when the wolf eats the grandmother up (line 13). Simultaneously, the teacher continues the educational project: using her ‘lighthouse’ gaze and sustaining the affectively valorized, ‘scared-surprised’ facial expression, she publicly displays the affective stance – which originated in Lilly’s performance – to the other children. In this way, the teacher invites
Excerpt 6 Little Red Riding Hood. Participants: preschool teacher, the children Julia, Beth, Eva, Lilly and Sue.

1 Teacher: under tiden sprang vargen hem till mormorn när rödluvan gick
during that time the wolf ran home to grandma when LRRH went
där och plötsade blommorna (0.2) Ah! oh knockade på dörren
out to pick flowers and knocked on the door
knock knock knock (knocks with her hand on her knee)

knock knock knock knock

4 Lisa: — (makes knocking gestures)

5 Teacher: ’vem äh det’ (changes voice) ropade farmor - eller mormor-
‘Who is it?’
calls grandma or grandma

6 (gazes at children to right) (0.2) ‘då äh ja rödluvan’
‘it is me LRRH’

7 (changes voice) svarade vargen kom in kom in rödluvan
the wolf answered come in come in LRRH
och sprang in

8 (changes voice) sa mormor och vargen han öppnade dörren
and ran inside

9 sa mormor och vargen han öppnade dörren

10 Lilly:

11

Fig. 10 [Lilly raises her hands, opens her mouth, ‘scared’ facial expression]

12 Teacher: oh: (raises one hand, ‘scared’ facial expression, looks at
children to her right)

13 och åt upp hela mormor

14 and he ate grandma all up (turns to children on her left,
‘scared’ facial expression)

15

Fig. 11

the child audience to observe this co-operatively achieved affective orientation towards the events in the story. By calibrating and fine-tuning her embodied actions, the teacher is able to publicly demonstrate that she shares the child’s affective stance. Storytelling is co-operative (Goodwin, 2013) and collaborative: the teacher’s and the child’s coordinated embodied moves constitute a joint aesthetic involvement and affectively aligned performance.

4. Concluding discussion

The present study has examined storytelling (teachers’ reading and dramatic performance of fairy tales for toddlers and 3–3.5 year-olds) in Swedish early childhood education. Specifically, analytical attention was directed at the teachers’ choreography of children’s attentive listening, multiparty participation frameworks, and the methods in which the young audience’s engrossment – in other words enchantment with the story – was solicited and collaboratively achieved.

4.1. The teachers’ methods for organizing attentive listening and co-narration

The study has outlined the teachers’ embodied choreography of the telling that invited the children to participate and share aesthetic experiences, including ways in which the teller and the audience acted together – co-operated – in accomplishing a joint entertaining and ‘enchanted’ activity. The teachers used embodied conduct – gaze, enactments, props, marked prosody and pauses – to invite the child audience to participate and share the affective layering of the emergent storytelling. The teachers’ gaze behaviour – a ‘lighthouse gaze’ of looking out over the child audience – together with the embodied display of affectively valorized facial expression (including visual information from the book, iPad and props) constituted the methods used to monitor the children’s listening behaviour (de Leon, 2017; Moore, 2017; Tulbert & Goodwin, 2011) and comprehension, and to mediate – distribute – relevant affective stances (regarding the story or story characters) across the audience (Author, a).

As a method of building up dramatic experience and suspense during the storytelling, the teachers used multiple voices and choreographed the rhythm and pace of their telling. They regularly took pauses and emphasized key words in particular segments of the story. In doing so, the teachers provided opportunities for the children’s active participation in the co-narration – repetitions and choral production of the story’s key concepts. The teachers’ designately incomplete utterances and pausing after significant chunks of information served as an invitation to children to co-participate in the display of story-relevant information. Vocally, the teachers’ talk promoted attentive and focused listening: their
increased volume, pitch and emphasis focused the child audience’s attention to the dramaturgically poignant words and affectively significant aspects of the story.

4.2. Co-operation in shared affective and aesthetic experience: children’s responses and participation

Importantly, paying analytical attention to the young children’s listening – embodied and verbal – behaviour reveals that listening, even when it is silent, can be seen as participation, responsive to and also shaping the adults’ telling. By directing attention to the toddlers’ embodied actions, we have explored what they consider to be funny and entertaining during the storytelling. The young children, including toddlers, attended to the teachers’ story performance by engaging in attentive listening, volunteering embodied affective stances, verbal repetitions, and pre-emptive moves. They exploited the recognizability of the story elements and contributed to the telling by co-participating in bodily repetitions, choral completions, elaborating on or volunteering anticipatory contributions, and pre-empting the upcoming story segment. The co-narration was supported by the teachers’ ratification, recycling, and sharing of the children’s verbal and embodied contributions across the audience. In this way, the children and teachers co-operated in a shared aesthetic and affective experience of the story. The children’s pre-emptive contributions and the teachers’ uptake demonstrate that audience consequentiality is consequent for how a story is enacted.

4.3. Implications: storytelling as a framework for socialization

The study shows that entertainment, sense-making and knowledge are closely related in storytelling activities for young children. Stories, especially fairy tales, are built around a similar and repetitive structural framework and can easily become recognizable templates for children’s aesthetic experiences, excitement and co-participation in the telling. The present study shows that performance is characteristic not only of everyday storytelling, but that it is also present in early childhood education, where stories are read and told for a variety of purposes, including educational/literacy promoting ones. Affective valorization constitutes an inextricable part of captivating and enchanting telling; at the same time, affective stances are linked to the moral aspects of social conduct depicted and evaluated in the stories. Through adult-child co-operation in a shared affective and aesthetic experience of the story, the telling becomes a collective site for children’s socialization. In this sense, fairy tales, through situated storytelling events, emerge as contemporary cultural artefacts that mediate what it is to be human; they operationalize the concepts of good and bad, and children’s own concerns and experiences (Bettelheim, 1976; Corsaro, 2005; Lubetksi, 1989).

Storytelling events are thereby interactive practices that allow children, together with adults, – in co-operative actions – to engage in social cognition as well as to learn to differentiate and reintegrate social relations, causality of action, and affect, thus becoming a member of their own community. Importantly, for the young listeners storytelling is closely linked to entertainment, enchantment and fun.

Appendix A. Appendix

A1. Transcription conventions

- prolonged syllable
AMP relativally high amplitude
(()) further comments of the transcriber
? indicates rising intonation
bro sounds marked by emphatic stress are underlined
kommer indicates talk in Swedish
( ) micro pause
(0.5) pause length in seconds
come translation to English
| indicates overlap in talk or nonverbal acts

References


Björk-Willén, P. (in press). ‘Now it is my turn!’ Use of tense work as an important social and organization device in preschoolers’ pretend play.


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