Triadic conflict mediation as socialization into perspective taking in Swedish preschools

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1. Introduction

Early childhood education settings are organized around various societally poignant norms and values and they constitute significant and multifaceted arenas for children’s socialization. In Sweden, where preschools are attended by 95% of one to five-year-old children, socializing children into morally and emotionally appropriate, societally valued normative conduct usually is considered to be part of teachers’ institutional responsibilities. The socializing potentials of adult-child interactions in situations that revolve around mundane moral issues – especially peer conflicts – provide a fruitful site for uncovering otherwise rarely articulated normative socio-cultural assumptions of how to perform actions, express emotions and maintain relationships. Children’s peer conflicts provide occasions for socialization into interactional competences, comprising discursive ways of handling conflict situations and maintaining social harmony. Teachers’ discursive practices are thus context dependent (Ochs, 1996). Teachers can exert overt or covert social control, providing children with possibilities or limiting their space for negotiation or resistance. They can also demonstrate attention to children’s perspectives, or discipline them (Ahn, 2016; Cekaite, 2013; Demuth, 2013). Perspective taking can constitute an important feature of conflict resolution, because the ability to understand others’ perspectives is one of the significant characteristics of human sociality and development (Tomasello, 2019). It is associated with the social actor’s orientation towards others; it makes it possible to understand and attend to the other’s needs and therefore constitutes one of cornerstones of moral accountability (Keane, 2016). Notably, some discursive practices can comprise various normative dilemmas (e.g., regarding alignment of adult-child, individual vs. collective perspectives, Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018).

By adopting a language socialization perspective which views language use as inextricably related to the indexing of cultural values (Ochs, 1996), the present study examines the linguistic, discursive and embodied organization of teacher-mediated children’s peer conflict resolution in preschools in Sweden. It discusses children’s socialization by examining widely used teacher strategies, here called – triadic conflict mediation – that encourage and guide children both to articulate their own and to take into account their opponents’ perspectives, and highlights the social and moral norms that are being implemented by the discursive practices. The study is based on a video-ethnography from three preschools in Sweden (for children from three to five-years old) conducted during a period of approximately one year. The methods adopted combine a micro-analytic approach to everyday multimodal interactions (Goodwin, 2006) with ethnographic fieldwork of language socialization practices (De León, 2012).

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1.1. Theoretical perspective

The present study is informed by a language socialization perspective (e.g., Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; see introduction to this special issue). From this perspective, socialization is a process of assigning situational meanings to particular linguistic and embodied acts and forms (i.e. of indexing temporal and spatial meanings, social identities, social acts as well as affective and epistemic stances, Ochs, 1996: 410). Social interaction is viewed as participation within socially situated activities and as accomplishment within dynamically evolving contextual configurations that entail language, the material environment, facial expressions and embodied action (Goodwin, 2018). In particular, affective and moral stances reflect and instantiate cultural expectations, social and moral values. In order to be able to participate in various sociocultural communities effectively, social actors need to produce and interpret behavior in a way that aligns with the norms, practices and values of the community (Ochs, 1996: 129), and be able to take the perspective of others. Accordingly, children’s acquisition of sociocultural competence, language and embodied repertoires and moral norms are processes that mutually inform one another. Importantly, children are viewed as agents in the socialization process who align with, resist, or ignore adults’ actions.

Moral accountability is inextricably linked to social actors’ orientation to the perspectives and actions of others. Based on interactional and ethnomethodologically inspired approaches, here morality is conceived as a mundane, “inherent and common feature of everyday encounters, situated within the basic structure of discourse” (Bergmann, 1998: 283; Keane, 2016). Accordingly, the moral order is invoked, negotiated, and even contested when breaches in social practice occur (Bergmann, 1998; Goffman, 1971): the categorization of an event as problematic provides the grounds on which to blame or account for social actions that depart from the normative order.

1.2. Children’s conflicts in educational settings and discursive socialization strategies

Interactional research on children’s peer groups shows that children can hold each other accountable for breaches of social and moral order by, for instance, engaging in sophisticated discursive practices – she-said-he-said – narratives that articulate and justify various versions and others’ perspectives on problematic events (Goodwin, 1990). Educational settings also provide a social space where peer group relations and friendships are negotiated and established (Bateman, 2015; Björk-Willén, 2018; Evaldsson & Melander, 2016; Holm Kvist, 2018). Individually, they are recurrent sites of peer conflicts and negotiations of social order; moreover, they are sites where children’s social relations are shaped in the peer group, as well as by teachers (Burdelski, 2015; Cekaite, 2012b; Danby & Theobald, 2012).

When looking through the lens of mundane morality, there is a great deal of variability in discursive socialization practices among educational settings in different cultures. Research shows that the ascription and negotiation of moral agency – such as intentionality and accountability for untoward actions – can be accomplished in rather contrasting ways. The teachers can attend to the institutional or individual child’s perspectives, use prohibitions or exert covert control in order to achieve children’s accountability and compliance. For instance, Lo (2004, 2009) has shown that Korean heritage language teachers deployed presumptive questions in making students accountable and assigning them culpability for what adults viewed as socioculturally inappropriate conduct. In a Thai classroom, children were held accountable for acting in socially and morally appropriate ways (e.g., displaying respect, by speaking and acting in an affectively levelled manner towards adults, Howard, 2009). In a study of American middle-class preschools, Ahn (2010) examined teachers’ discursive strategies used for conflict resolution. Ahn’s study shows that preschool teachers aimed to inculcate in the children so-called practices of ‘emotion metanarrativity’ (2010: 99) and to encourage children to articulate their inner emotional perspective to the others. The teachers taught them to communicate emotions by using verbalizations such as ‘say ‘I feel sad’ (when you do this to me)’ and configure verbalizations as discursive moves to prevent and make peers accountable for their untoward acts. This kind of meta-level talk conceptualized emotions as a transparent and spontaneous expression of an individual’s feelings and articulation of her affective perspective. However, as suggested by Ahn, in the young children’s peer group social interactions, emotion metanarrativity was exploited as a powerful discursive tool in order to advance their social positions, to include or exclude members of the peer group.

In a study of a preschool, Burdelski (2013, this special issue) shows that adults mediated in children’s conflicts and other interactions by using a ‘triadic gloss’ (e.g., reporting one child’s actions or feelings to another and using formulaic expressions in order to teach children what to say). However, in another study, Japanese preschool teachers took a less interventionist approach by encouraging children to work out the conflicts on their own (unless they escalated too much) (Tobin, Wu, & Davidson, 1991). Yet another way of addressing children’s distress in conflicts is documented in Moore’s (2013) study of a Russian preschool. Here, adult caregivers’ admonishments demanded children to constrain their negative emotions: teachers socialized children to acquire awareness that their negative emotions are publicly monitored and disapproved of their peers (see also Ahn, 2016 on Korean teacher’s prompting children to modify their conduct by showing concern to teacher’s negative feelings). It is not only teachers, but also caregivers in informal settings, who socialize children’s awareness of the others’ perspectives. Clancy’s (1999) research with Japanese children shows that caregivers formulate and ‘quote’ the feelings and needs of others to encourage children to take their perspective. Multiparty family discourse is shown to provide a need for perspective-taking and understanding different social actors with varying authority, and knowledge (Blum-Kulka & Snow, 2002).

Research also demonstrates that the adults’ positioning as an institutional authority with responsibilities to care for and to teach children is inextricably related to their responsibilities to handle morally intricate and ambiguous situations. Adults can be called up to respond to, or to mediate in children’s conflicts on the basis of peer group members’ reports, accusations, or morally poignant negative affective stances, such as crying. As demonstrated by studies on adults’ verbal responses to reports about children’s normative transgressions in informal family (Sterponi, 2014) and formal (Cekaite, 2012a, 2013) educational settings, adults’ responses discursively accomplished a moral sense of the events. Various ways of formulating questions (‘what happened?’, ‘how come?’ vs. ‘why did you do that?’) about the child’s alleged normative transgressions ascribed children various moral positions or otherwise evaluated their conduct vis-à-vis each other. The adults positioned children as culpable or gave them ‘the benefit of doubt’; and provided or constrained the interactional possibilities for articulating their moral position and perspective. Moral order was instantiated through accounting practices employed to negotiate responsibility and (re-) categorize the problematic event (e.g., Sterponi, 2003). As demonstrated in a study on children’s peer conflicts in a Swedish kindergarten classroom (Cekaite, 2018).
of their moral valence as complaints, accusations and counter-accusations was ascribed within the teacher-initiated triadic framework for children’s perspectival tellings (see also Burdelski, this special issue; Moore, this special issue). In all, previous studies show that teachers’ conflict mediation can socialize various values and norms, and provide children with significantly different participatory rights and learning opportunities.

2. Method

2.1. Data, setting and participants

The data involve a multi-sited video-ethnography conducted in three regular Swedish preschools for three to five-year-old children during a one-year period.\(^2\) In Sweden, public preschools are attended by approximately 95% of children, and constitute the main early childhood settings for “educare”: they provide childcare and educate children. Approximately 15 children and three educators from each preschool (45 children and 10 educators in total) participated in the study. Two preschools were located in a middle class, and one in a low-socioeconomic area.\(^3\)

Video-recorded data (approximately 30 hours in each preschool) was logged, and recurrent interactional events noted. Peer conflicts in the recordings from the three preschools were identified (54 in total). Conflicts usually occurred during children’s free play, which constituted a significant part of daily activities. The peer conflicts involving teacher-mediation were viewed repeatedly, interactionally analyzed and their common discursive features across the sites discerned. Situations where the teachers took a prominent role in conflict resolution were selected for further analysis. The categories evolved inductively and the analyses were discussed at local and international seminars. Repeated data sessions within a research group contributed to identification of recurrent sociocultural features of the encounters.

The analytical methods adopted combine ethnographic fieldwork with a microanalytic approach to everyday interactions (Goodwin, 1990; Goodwin & Cekaite, 2018), which means that talk is studied as social action, produced by the participants within embodied participation frameworks (Goodwin, 2018; Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). Such an approach entails detailed attention to interactional work, explored through the participants’ sense-making orientations, which are displayed on a turn-by-turn basis in verbal and embodied actions, embedded within and indexical of sociocultural norms and values.

The present conflict mediation analysis is based on the entire collection of conflict mediation episodes (54 cases, representing three preschools). It revealed similar discursive patterns that a number of teachers across the preschools used when responding to children’s conflicts. The main characteristics involve socialization strategies based on teachers’: i) inviting both sides’ telling of the events; ii) using various question formats to guide the children’s tellings, and iii) arranging children into triadic “participation frameworks” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). The results reported in the present study exemplify the core features of the findings. In order to be able to demonstrate the temporal complexity of conflict resolution practices, an extended trajectory of conflict and conflict resolution was selected for the presentation in this article. The particular case of conflict mediation occurred in a preschool located in a multiethnic preschool located in a low socioeconomic area.

2.2. Children’s participatory rights in society and educational institutions in Sweden

A strong emphasis in Swedish society at large, and in the early childhood education, is placed on the active participatory rights of children. An important goal of the Swedish educational system is to foster egalitarian values and equality in schools and society. For instance, the Swedish National Curriculum for preschool (policy that is mandatory for all preschools in Sweden) details educators’ responsibility to foster children’s respect for others and their perspectives, assist them in developing their ability to understand their rights and obligations and take responsibility for their actions. This also includes assisting children in developing their abilities to listen, reflect on and understand the other’s perspectives as well as abilities to form personal standpoints and express them to others (Curriculum for the Preschool, 2018). Embedded within the implicit and widely accepted notions of the qualities of good citizenship, these tasks echo the wider societal democratic ideology of children’s participatory rights (see also Aronsson, 2012, Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013 on parent-child relations) and “egalitarian individualism” in Sweden (Cekaite, 2012b), according to which people should be treated as equals, in fundamental worth or social status. Simultaneously, there is a strong emphasis on the individuals’ possibilities for self-realization, and infallibility of one’s wants and wishes.

3. Findings

In video-ethnographic data collected in three different preschools in Sweden, a characteristic and prevalent discursive organization of teachers’ and children’s dealing with children’s peer group conflicts was discerned. This discursive organization is here called triadic teacher mediation, where teacher/mediator and two or more children participated. It involves phases where: i) one child informs about the violation; ii) the teacher initiates the two children’s tellings about the problematic event; iii) the teacher suggests a resolution, requesting the two children’s alignment with and confirmation of the proposed solution. In the following, this triadic mediation and its socialization potentials into perspective taking will be described. The study pays particular attention to the embodied features and spatial organization of this mediation (i.e., what here is called the triadic/multiparty participation framework of moral accountability).

3.1. Reporting a normative transgression and achieving a preliminary problem definition

The child’s initial informing about a problematic event was accomplished as a report of the infractor to the teacher, an institutional authority who can set things right. The report articulated the child’s perspective; it was designed in various ways, e.g. as a verbal telling about the untoward act, a public display of a negative affective stance (i.e., crying), caused by the normative infraction. In Extract 1 a-b, the conflict arises during children’s free play and is initially indicated by a child’s loud crying. The children are playing and dancing in the ‘pillow room’ without teachers present. When Johnie climbs onto the windowsill and Miran pulls him back so he falls down onto the sofa, Johnie immediately starts crying.

**Excerpt 1a** Participants: teacher, boys Johnie (3.5 y.), Babir (4 y.), Miran (4 y.), Steve (5 y.) and girls Miia (4 y.) and Felis (3 y.)
### 3.2. Soliciting and listening to children’s alternative versions of events: enacting and socializing the right to speak and be heard

For the Swedish preschool teachers, getting only one child’s (the ‘victim’s’) perspective on the untoward event is not enough to achieve a solution and to finish a remedial interchange (Goffman, 1971). The teachers’ conflict resolution involved mediating between the children by assigning equal speakership rights both to the ‘victim’ and the alleged perpetrator in telling their version of the conflictual event. Usually, the teachers posed open-ended questions about what had happened and invited a telling about the event within a multiparty participation framework & Bergnéhr, 2018) arranging a relationally significant bodily formation. By gesturing to Johnie to come and then scooping him up into her lap, the teacher positions the two children (assumed to be involved in the problematic event) to sit close to each other. In this way, the teacher establishes an embodied multiparty framework of participation in a remedial interchange (Goffman, 1971). Johnie embellishes his accusation by showing what has happened: he demonstratively pulls his t-shirt and overlays his complaint with an affective stance, positioning himself as a victim of Miran’s untoward conduct (line 11).

The teacher’s comforting actions are public – visible and audible – for the entire children’s group (lines 8, 10; 15). Johnie’s affectively charged accusations are successful in mediating his individual negative experience: the teacher not only comforts Johnie with an embrace but also uses a question ‘Don’t you like that?’ to explicate and make public his negative stance towards Miran’s physical actions of pulling (line 15).

Johnie confirms the teacher’s interpretation by shaking his head (signaling that he does not like that, line 16) and the teacher makes public his negative experience, linking it causally to the peer’s physical action. Her gaze at Babir (whom she ostensibly assumes to be the culpable child, despite Johnie’s accusation of Miran) indicates that the affirmation of Johnie’s negative feelings and her comforting is not only directed at the crying child, but also at the alleged perpetrator (lines 17–18). One of the ways that the children can gain knowledge about how to interpret and narratively construct their moral accountability and emotions is through hearing adult and other peers’ narratives (Bruner, 1990; Cekaite, 2013). Here, the teacher’s personal example (Griswold, 2010) “no sometimes I also think that I don’t want anybody pulling my shirt like this” verbalizes an aligning sensorial and affective experience, an individual evaluative perspective, and supports the crying child’s emotional stance. The teacher’s suggestion and prompt to Johnie to tell Miran that he does not want him to pull his shirt (‘then you can say ’no I don’t (want to)’, line 20) instructs and models verbal ways of preempting the conflictual situation and negative emotions that need training (the teacher uses an auxiliary verb ‘gör’ ‘to do’ to retroactively refer to the volition verb ‘vil’ in her previous utterance, line 15–18). The teacher prompts the child (using elicited imitation) to convey his experience (negative wants and preferences) (lines 20–22).

The teacher’s solicitation of the crying child’s telling is a significant and recurrent socializing strategy in the Swedish cultural context (see also Cekaite, 2013 on similar accountability practices in a kindergarten classroom) that provides the child with opportunities to articulate his/her own perspective. Importantly, the ratification of the crying child’s negative experience does not result in the teacher’s outright disciplining of the implicated child or a general statement of rules. Rather, the teacher uses discursive strategies that solicit the other participant’s telling and perspective, as will be demonstrated in Ex. 1b. Such strategy can be seen as an everyday discursive implementation of a democratic and egalitarian society, where children are encouraged and expected to verbalize their views.

Johnie’s loud crying calls the teacher’s attention and invokes her institutional responsibilities to attend to the potential problem and she enters the playroom (lines 1–4). When Johnie reports an untoward event with an accusatory statement ‘Miran pulls my sweatshirt like this’, the teacher affirms Johnie’s telling ‘Oh yes’ and physically comforts him (lines 7–8). She puts him into her lap and embraces him (e.g., on affectionate touch in preschools see Cekaite & Bergnéhr, 2018) arranging a relationally significant bodily formation. By gesturing to Johnie to come and then scooping him up into her lap, the teacher positions the two children (assumed to be involved in the problematic event) to sit close to each other. In this way, the teacher establishes an embodied multiparty framework of participation in a remedial interchange (Goffman, 1971). Johnie embellishes his accusation by showing what has happened: he demonstratively pulls his t-shirt and overlays his complaint with an affective stance, positioning himself as a victim of Miran’s untoward conduct (line 11).
(Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004). This discursive practice was multi-dimensional: The teachers engaged the children in the immediate conflict resolution on the basis of the alternative versions of the problematic event. By soliciting and scaffolding children's perspective taking, teachers socialized them into societally valued democratic discourse and provided children with opportunities for egalitarian participation.

In Ex. 1b (an immediate continuation of 1a), the teacher continues the conflict mediation by asking the alleged perpetrator Babir ‘what happened?’, however, she self-corrects and invites an opened-ended telling with a question ‘do you also want to tell’ (lines 23-24). The teacher’s choice of the verb ‘berätta’ ‘tell’, volition modal ‘vill’ ‘want’ and the interrogative syntactic format index that he is invited to tell his version and that he is offered an extended interactional floor. With a conjunction ‘också’ ‘too’ the teacher makes a link between this solicitation of a story and the previous (the alleged victim’s) one.

Excerpt 1b

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Babir</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Vad hände- vill du också berätta Babir då?</td>
<td>av</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Vill du också berätta?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>What happened- do you also want to tell, Babir?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Do you also want to tell?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>((Miran repeatedly tries to engage Babir in play. Teacher tries to get Miran’s attention))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Nu får du <strong>lyssna</strong> istället.</td>
<td>No but Miran now you interrupted Babir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>when he was going to tell. Now you have to listen instead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Först först går vi där till Steve. At first, at first we go to Steve.</td>
<td>(continues story about boys’ dance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When Babir tells about the boys’ dancing but is interrupted several times by Miran who tries to divert him into play, the teacher reprimands him by telling him that he should listen to Babir instead (lines 27-29). The teacher’s disciplining here shows that individuals not only have the right to speak but they also have to listen to the other parties and engage in mutual perspective taking. Babir proceeds with his telling, but his story does not mention the alleged untoward act of him pulling Johnie. In response, the teacher adds a temporal narrative link to the boy’s untoward act ‘Then you grabbed Johnie’s sweatshirt’ (lines 31-32).

The teacher’s solicitation of the children’s tellings is clearly directed at the children as key participants in the conflict – the ‘victim’ and the alleged ‘perpetrator’ – whom the teacher invites to verbally articulate their perspectives on the event. However, in this case, the teacher erroneously assumes Babir’s culpability and his telling does not produce an alternative perspective. Upon the clarification of misunderstanding (lines 34-35), the teacher engages Miran in a conflict resolution. She unpacks and articulates the victim’s perspective and ensures the perpetrator’s alignment by soliciting his active display of understanding the other child’s perspective. Miran? Do you understand what Johnie meant? He does not want you to pull his shirt’ (lines 37-41). The solution deals with the individual child’s preferences, and the teacher uses a discursive “activity contract” (“spoken agreements about future compliance that make children morally accountable for their future actions (and for failed action)”, documented in parent-child interactions in Sweden, see Aronsson & Cekaite, 2011: 139). By formulating an activity contract, the teacher scaffolds the perpetrator’s understanding of the normative appropriateness of one’s actions from the individual perspective – likes and dislikes – of the other child and establishes the child’s promise of moral accountability.

The lack of the transgressor’s knowledge about the peer’s individual preferences is considered by the teacher to be causally related to the child’s misconduct. Conflict resolution is temporally bi-directional: it deals with retrospective normative evaluation of the past events and involves prospective orientation to the distribution of knowledge between the peer group members. Not only is Miran repeatedly informed about Johnie’s individual perspective, but he also needs to publicly display and confirm his current understanding and his ability to act accordingly in the future encounters (lines 43-44). In relation to language socialization into perspective taking, the discursive strategies used by the teacher demonstrate that children’s moral accountability is invoked not through child-directed reproaches and disciplining but by implicit means; that is, by seeking the child’s alignment and individual understanding of what constitutes problematic conduct.

3.3. Soliciting the children’s telling of an individual perspective within a triadic participation framework of moral accountability

As demonstrated, the teacher solicited multiple perspectives on the problematic event. This discursive activity was characterized by a triadic participation framework and consecutive allocation of speakership rights. In an embodied way, the teacher enacted the role of a mediator by positioning the involved children within a triadic participation framework in the proximity of each other in a face-to-face formation (Kendon, 1990). This body-spatial arrangement was an inextricable part of teacher conflict mediation and can be seen as an embodied framework of moral accountability.

An important part of socializing the children into perspective taking involved modeling the children’s interactional and social skills in preventing peer group conflicts. The children were guided...
to discern and verbally express their volition – what they do and do not want. The teacher repeatedly modelled the children’s social acts for expressing, asserting and listening to each other’s perspectives. These perspectives represented individual likes, dislikes, wants and desires. The teacher’s repeated deployment of the modal ‘vill’ (denoting volition) and other linguistic resources served as socializing discursive tools, indexical of the societal views that foreground and value individual’s integrity.

In Ex. 2a, the children’s (Johnie and Miran’s) conflict evolves again during their continuation of play-running-dancing. Johnie gets pinched by Miran and he goes to another room to report Miran’s untoward act to the teacher. The teacher stops what she is doing and accompanies him to the play room, where she initially reproaches Miran by implicitly invoking the activity contract. She refers to their prior agreement ‘what did we say?’. Grammatical and prosodic features (past tense and emphasis on the verb ‘say’) marks her question as a reproach.

**Excerpt 2a**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Johnie:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01.</td>
<td>Nu får vi stänga av det.</td>
<td>Så därför vill jag dansa. (Fig. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02.</td>
<td>We have to turn it off (cd player) now.</td>
<td>I want to dance like this. ((runs in a circle))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miran. What did we say?</td>
<td>OK. And then.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Johnie:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Johnie:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jag sa ‘SLUTA’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>I said ‘STOP’ ((enacts gesture))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Då får du säga till Miran.</td>
<td>Hur vill du att det ska vara när du dansar?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>How do you want it to be when you dance?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jen.</td>
<td>((starts jumping-running around, showing how he dances))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Johnie:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ne-Johnie.</td>
<td>((Miran and Steve start to teasingly laugh at Johnie’s dance. Teacher admonishes them mildly))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Johnie:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ne-Johnie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ne-Johnie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Berätta hur det ska vara när du ska dansa? Tell us how it should be when you are dancing?</td>
<td>Känner du att Miran jagar dig dä</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>eller hur? You feel that Miran is chasing you, don’t you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>((to Johnie))</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teacher sits in between the two boys at their eye level and is a focus of their attention. The teacher’s body posture, together with her gesture and facial expression, indicates ‘active’ and ‘serious’ listening, taking in the child’s perspective. This spatial-bodily positioning not only configures a common focus of attention for the children but also positions them into the spatial and aural proximity of each other (see also similar participation frameworks arranged by the teacher in Ex. 1a-b). The teacher, through her bodily posture, displays attentive listening of Johnie’s talk, and her preparedness to attend to Miran, the allegedly guilty child’s views. The embodied triadic participation framework provides conditions for a multiparty explication of various perspectives in that the teacher positions the two children as speakers and listeners. In this embodied framework of moral accountability, the teacher guides the children’s talk as articulation of the perspective of one child to the other (Ex. 2b). Notable is the teacher’s use of various linguistic resources within the semantic field of volition of individual children who are solicited to present and to listen to each other, rather than to the teacher’s institutional authority. The teacher uses linguistic resources that index and emphasize the individual child’s right to self-determination, and honors individual preferences and choices (‘how do you want it to be when you are dancing?’, ‘there is something that you do not want’, see also Ex. 1a, ‘he does not want you to pull his shirt’). Socialization into individual perspectives thereby constitutes a part of the teacher’s discursive practices as the adult accentuates children’s agency, their right to make choices about what they want, or do not want, and invokes the peers’ responsibilities to respect each other’s choices and perspectives.

3.4. Scaffolding children’s telling and participatory rights

The present data corpus from three Swedish preschools shows that the teachers created an extended interactional space for the children’s articulation of their story and allocated the children speakership rights to make public their perspectives. However, it is also apparent that the children’s tellings in conflict mediation were not entirely free but were discursively guided by the adults. Teacher scaffolding and guiding of the children’s participation correspond with the institutionally advocated moral perspective of what is right and wrong became especially visible when children, for instance, had displayed a lack of interest, understanding, or reluctance, or had produced only minimal or topically irrelevant verbal contributions.

As demonstrated in Ex. 2b, one of the children involved in the conflict is positioned as the ‘principal’ (the one whose views are represented) and the other child as the ‘recipient’ (the one to whom an utterance is addressed) (Goffman, 1981). In numerous cases when the children did not expand on the teacher’s questions, the teacher actively guided the content of their responses and collaboratively constructed a representation of the individual’s perspective. Here, the teacher directs several questions to Johnie about his experiences, but when she does not receive appropriate responses she starts guiding his talk.

**Excerpt 2b**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teacher:</th>
<th>Känner du att Miran jagar dig då eller hur? You feel that Miran is chasing you, don’t you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>((to Johnie))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The teacher guides Johnie’s talk by asking him questions and directing his responses to Miran. She repeatedly uses Yes/No questions, formulating a version of his experiences and stances towards Miran’s actions: ‘You feel that Miran is chasing you, don’t you?’ ‘You don’t want Miran to chase you, do you?’ (lines 15-16, 20). The teacher represents Johnie’s perspective to both participants: by publicly and collaboratively formulating Johnie’s perspective, she constructs Miran’s chasing act as problematic and causally links it to Johnie’s negative experience. This triadic telling does not involve direct quotes and the teacher enacting the child’s talk (cf. triadic glossing, Burdelski, 2015). Rather, its characteristic format comprises collaboratively constructed utterances that represent and confirm the children’s perspectives and seek the child’s (Johnie’s) alignment with the teacher’s formulation (lines 15, 20-22, 27, 34-35). The teacher’s discursive guidance gives Johnie the opport

17. Johnie: (Fig. 6) ‘(dances, tries to stand on his head))
18. Teacher: Johnie. (0.6) Johnie!
20. Teacher: Vill du inte att Miran ska jagta dig eller hur? You don’t want Miran to chase you, do you? (‘looks at Miran)
27. Teacher: Nej. Jag förstår inte hur du menar riktigt. No, I don’t actually understand what you mean. (‘to Johnie)
28. Johnie: (‘looks at teacher but does not respond)
29. Teacher: Vi pratar fortfarande att du inte ska jaga Johnie.
30. Teacher: We talked before, that you should not chase Johnie. (‘to Miran)
31. Miran: Va?
32. Teacher: What?
33. Johnie: (‘nods demonstratively)
34. Teacher: Men så gör du det ändå. But then you did it anyway.
35. Johnie: (‘nods demonstratively)
36. Teacher: Mh. Vet du hur Johnie menar då? Mh. Do you know what Johnie means then? Do you know what Johnie means?
37. Teacher: (‘points as Miran who has disengaged from conversation)
38. Miran: Nej.
39. Teacher: Då får du berätta lite. Then you need to tell him a little.
40. Johnie: (‘talks about Miran’s Spiderman costume, runs around dancing)
41. Teacher: A. Men då tänker du lite grann. Yeah. But you have to think (about this) a bit. (‘toggles Miran)
42. Johnie: Anna det är dans till dig. Anna (teacher) this is my dance for you. (‘runs around)

4. Concluding discussion

The present study examined the discursive, linguistic and embodied features of the teachers’ and children’s ways of organizing and participating in conflict mediation and resolution. In doing so, it described the ways in which children in preschools in Sweden are being socialized into the interactional competences necessary for managing conflict situations. The study documented how peer conflict resolution was accomplished as teacher triadic mediation, located within embodied multiparty frameworks of accountability, how children were socialized into perspective taking, and how moral norms were invoked, inculcated or resisted (see also Cekaite, 2012a; Burdelski, this special issue; Moore, this special issue). The study revealed the ambiguity and complexity of conflict resolution that the teachers configured as egalitarian discourse, but that they were not always able to achieve because of the lack of the children’s active and normatively appropriate participation.

4.1. Triadic conflict mediation

The characteristic feature of conflict resolution documented in various preschools in Sweden (see Björk-Willén, 2018; Holm Kvist,
repeatedly
one's
bally
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living
tured
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involved
teacher.

demonstrates
cases
and
discursive
resources,

The
evaluation,
forms
of
the

equality,
children's
framework
of
the

embodied
approach
is
seen
as
the

moral
reasoning,
the
preschool
teachers
conveyed
positive
tendencies
of
the

wider
societal
normative
preferences,
and
the

values,
the

school

or

society,

By
modeling
the
children's
deployment
of
the

features
that
foregrounded
the

child's
wishes,
rather
than
general
moral
norms,
institutional
expectations
and
values,
the

children's
individual
rights
in
relation
to
the

view
of
social
relationships
as
being
about
individual
preferences.
During
conflict
resolution
practices,
the
teachers
can
be
seen
to
work
to
facilitate
democratic
values,
perspective
taking
and
equality,
as
well
as
children's
participatory
rights,
foregrounded
by
wider
society.
Simultaneously
teachers'
primary
orientation
to
individual's
private
emotional
states
socialized
individual-directed
empathy,
rather
than
commonality
and
shared
moral
responsibility.
Such
practices
make
it
possible
to
discursively
instantiate
children's
rights
to
participation
and
agency,
at
the
same
time
as
they
may
foster
individualism
and
downplay
the
shared
moral
order,
commonality
and
sharedness
of
moral
values.

4.3. Dilemmas associated with triadic conflict mediation

Importantly,
some
of
the
implications
of
the
study
are
related
to
the
dilemmas
embedded
within
the
discursive
implementation
of
the
egalitarian
and
individualistic
societal
views.
The


telling
of
givethat
child

indexical
of
wider
societal
views
on
children's
rights

democracy,
and
the
conceptualization
of
children
of

different
ages
as
competent
and
receptive
to
rational
argumentation
(e.g.,
Aronsson
&
Cekaite,
2011;
Goodwin
&
Cekaite,
2018
on
similar
discursive
organization
in
Swedish
parent–child
interactions).
Such
argumentation
and
moral
reasoning
were
not
neutral.
Rather,
these
discursive
practices
were
implicitly
steered
by
the

toward
a
particular
moral
view.
The

did
not
articulate
or
present
this
view
explicitly
as
their
own
or
institutional
normative
stance.
At
times,
such
triadic
teacher
mediation
and
its
implicit
moral
instructions
were
unsuccessful
in
that
a
particular,
institutionally
desirable
direction
of
moral
instruction
was
not
easily
accomplished
in
social
interaction
with
the
young
children
who
did
not
engage
in
the
tellings
in
expected
ways.
The
adults
in
such
cases
assisted
and
steered
the
children
in
the
production
of
the

relevant
normative
discourse.
Paradoxically,
by
using
open-ended,
polar
and
tag-questions,
they
strictly
scaffolded
the

into
taking
on
the
institutional
norms
of
conduct.
At
the
same
time,
they
downplayed
the
articulation
of,
for
the
school
or
society,
a
common
set
of
rules,
norms
and
expectations.

By
modeling
the
children's
deployment
of
the
linguistic
and
discursive
features
that
foregrounded
the

child's
wishes,
rather
than
general
moral
norms,
institutional
expectations
and
values,
the

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of
the

individual's
rights
in
relation
to
the

peers
and
indexed
the
view
of
social
relationships
as
being
about
individual
preferences.

5. Transcription conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>:</td>
<td>prolonged syllable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMP</td>
<td>relatively high amplitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>()</td>
<td>further comments of the transcriber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>denotes rising terminal intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>indicates falling terminal intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bro</td>
<td>sounds marked by emphatic stress are underlined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kommer</td>
<td>indicates talk in Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>()</td>
<td>micro pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.5)</td>
<td>pause length in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>translation to English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[]</td>
<td>indicates overlap in talk or nonverbal acts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.
References


