

Chapter 2

Learning to Narrate: Appropriating a Cultural Mould for Sense-Making and Communication

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Introduction

In the field of educational psychology, two foundational modes of sense-making, in various guises, have frequently been recognised. They are referred to as ‘spontaneous concepts’ and ‘scientific concepts’, respectively, in Vygotsky (1978, 1987) and as ‘narrative’ and ‘paradigmatic’ modes of discourse or reasoning in Bruner (1986, 1990, 2002, 2006). The spontaneous concepts or narrative modes of discourse are perceived as more characteristic of an everyday way of speaking and reasoning, while scientific concepts or paradigmatic modes of discourse are usually seen as typical of institutionalised discourse as appropriated in formalised schooling. The following excerpt from Luria’s (1976) classic study of, among other things, the way people’s reasoning changes when attending formalised schooling and learning to read and write will serve to illustrate the difference between the two concepts or modes. Simplifying his complex and rich study for the present purposes, we can briefly consider the difference in how participants in his study who had received some schooling (and were literate) differed from unschooled (and illiterate) participants in, what for the experimenter was, a categorisation task. The following is one empirical example from the reasoning of an unschooled participant. In the excerpt, which follows the original text, text in quotes is the subject’s words, text in bold is the interviewer’s words and plain text is Luria’s own description:

Subject is then shown drawings of: *bird-rifle-dagger-bullet*.

“The swallow doesn’t fit here...No...this is a rifle. It’s loaded with a bullet and kills the swallow. Then you have to cut the bird up with the dagger, since there is no other way to do it.” [—] **But these are weapons. What about the swallow?** “No, it’s not a weapon.”

So that means these three go together and the swallow doesn’t? “No, the bird has to be there too, otherwise, there’ll be nothing to shoot.” (Luria 1976, pp. 56–57; italics and bold in original)

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There are many things that could be said about this excerpt and Luria's study as a whole. However, for the present purposes the following has to suffice: Rather than categorising the objects according to the abstracted principle of, in this case, 'weapons', as the schooled subjects did, the unschooled subjects made sense here by constructing a small narrative, binding or weaving together the objects as events. Participants who had not been allowed to attend school did not see and could not be convinced of the point in sorting objects according to some overarching category or classificatory system, since this had no part in their everyday lives. At a general level, these findings illustrate the difference in modes of reasoning between what Bruner (2006) has referred to as a 'paradigmatic' and a 'narrative' construal. While the latter is a common way of making sense in a great variety of practices, the former is a communicative form closely related to institutionalised practices such as schooling.

The developmental importance of appropriating a paradigmatic mode of reasoning is already recognised in some preschool activities, such as different categorisation games and in informational, expository texts such as picture books about natural and life science (Mantzicopoulos and Patrick 2010). However, recognising the widespread importance of narrative as a sense-making form of practice (genre) (cf. Bamberg 1987, 2007; Bruner 1990, 2002; Gärdenfors 2006; Kamberelis 1999; McCabe and Peterson 1991; Ochs and Capps 1996, 2001; Tomasello 1999; van Oers 2003), which all cultures seem to do (cf. Rogoff 2003; Schick and Melzi 2010; Tomasello 1999), preschool teachers also work with developing children's narrative skills, i.e. scaffolding them to tell a story in a culturally interesting and intelligible way (for a recent example, see Ødegaard 2007a; for an early example, see Chukovsky 1925/1974). In more general terms, learning to narrate may also be seen as an example of what Kozulin (1998, p. 109) has argued to be "the major focus of modern education, i.e. the development in the student [or child] of an ability to become a true 'agency', i.e. an active source of his or her own learning activity". This kind of learning practice, i.e. children's appropriation of narrative skills is the focus of the present chapter. That is, we will analyse in detail children's appropriation of narrative skills.

We shall carry out a detailed analysis of two different kinds of narrative practice, both from Nordic preschools. In the first, taken from a Swedish preschool, teachers have planned to help children start appropriating this communicative form in a collaborative, group activity. In the second practice to be analysed, taken from a Norwegian preschool, we look at a child-initiated narrative and how a teacher supports the child in developing the story to become intelligible to others who were not present at the event referred to by the child. The findings from these analyses will be discussed in terms of didactics and children's narrative learning.

Research on Children and Narrative Discourse

There exist several different (but partly overlapping) research traditions on children and narrative discourse. In this section we will review some of these that have bearing on didactics and children's narrative learning. One of these traditions takes

an ethnographic approach and gives rich descriptions of teacher practices and children's experiences. One example is Paley's (1997) work with a story table, in which children's narratives are written down, giving the children opportunities for playing them out in structured drama activities as well as in activities organised by themselves. Paley's descriptions of and reflections on teachers' approaches to children's stories are widespread in many Euro-American teacher communities and have inspired researchers to investigate children's social and textual lives in classrooms (cf. Dyson 1997; Ødegaard 2007a; Sawyer 1997).

Another research tradition (cognitive psychology), building upon Propp's (1968) study of Russian folktales, focuses on identifying the basic structural elements used by children in narration. Attempts are made to link children's narrative abilities to cognitive skills. This research has shown how children's narratives become 'more complete' as they get older. Characteristic of this development of narrative skills is the movement from brief, non-causally linked descriptions to more sophisticated, causally-linked stories. According to studies in this tradition, where age has been considered important, young children will most frequently tell personal stories, while older children will add fantasy stories to their evolving narrative repertoire (Glenn-Applegate et al. 2010). Another example of studies in this research tradition is McCabe and Peterson's (1991) study, based on Labov and Waletzky's (1967) structural analysis, with the main interest in mapping the function of clauses and how children link together a series of clauses that build up to a high point. This work also includes the aim of developing methods for eliciting children's stories in teacher-led activities and discussions, making suggestions for how to organise rich language, narrative and literacy classrooms. They also suggest that teachers should be close to children for an extended period of time as in a language activity or during a mealtime (McCabe and Peterson 1991).

A third research tradition has been concerned with narrative development in mother-child dyads at home (Blum-Kulka 1994; Nelson 1989). These studies have shown how maternal conversational discourse shapes children's use of genres and that highly elaborate mothers that engage their children in lengthy (narrative) conversations, where they ask open-ended questions, provide narrative structure and supply rich information, guiding their children to develop decontextualised language, a skill necessary for successful learning at school (Aukrust 2005; Boyce et al. 2010; Reese et al. 2010; Schick and Melzi 2010; Snow et al. 1998).

Some research on children and narrative discourse has thrown light on cultural variation. It has been suggested that Euro-American as well as Latino parents and teachers tend to engage in talk about the self, elaborate stories about personal experiences, while, for example Maori discourse tends to rely on traditional cultural stories rather than personal narrative (Rogoff 2003; Schick and Melzi 2010). Lai et al. (2010) studied how age and culture affected the production of personal stories and compared narrative practices in two Asian children's groups. They found that Korean children were less likely than American and Taiwanese children to share narratives about emotions. This is in sharp contrast to the practice in Norway described in a recent study (Ødegaard 2006), where Norwegian 2-year-olds took the initiative

to tell about strong emotional states associated with personal experiences that made them frightened, angry, miss someone or desire something. This highlights one of the challenges teachers face when intending to develop narrative skills in children in multicultural environments.

In an institutional educational setting, such as preschool, narrative conversations are likely to differ to some extent from stories told at home. Narratives told in families will generally be less structured and fewer children will usually be involved at the same time. For example Dickinson (1991) found that narratives in school were more scripted and shorter in length than the ones at home. There are also certain places and times (activities) during a preschool day where narrative activities are more likely to occur. These include circle time, book reading, mealtimes and other teacher-led activities with smaller groups of children, or speaking with the child's parents coming to leave or pick up the child from preschool (Boyce et al. 2010; Cote 2001; Higham et al. 2010; Michaels 1991; Ødegaard 1998).

Another activity that could trigger narratives is the excursion. In a study in a Norwegian preschool, Ødegaard (2007a) found that the number of narratives increased during mealtimes after excursions. This finding suggests that new experiences give something new to talk about and that common experiences will make it easier to connect to children's initiatives to tell and to share experiences standing out from the ordinary preschool life. In a related study of teachers' strategies in co-narrating practice during 15 mealtime observations, eight varieties were found. However, a strategy related to what we in this chapter refer to as 'learning to narrate', where genre skills would be required, was not found in the Norwegian preschool studied. Rather, the dominant strategy was to listen to children's telling and follow up their thematic threads (Ødegaard 2007b).

Even if, as suggested by this literature review, *what* is narrated and valued or not valued differs from one culture to another, the skill of narrating is a central one in all cultures. It is with this narrative skill that we are concerned in the present study. That is, we wish to find out how teachers go about supporting the appropriation of this fundamental sense-making and communicative format in preschool in two different settings of the kind suggested by the reviewed research to be potentially good opportunities for this activity to take place.

Socio-Cultural Theory and Narrative Genre

From a socio-cultural perspective (Daniels et al. 2007; Nelson 1996; Säljö 2005; Tomasello 1999; Vygotsky 1978, 1987; Wells 1999), learning is conceptualised in terms of appropriation (e.g. Kozulin 1998) of cultural tools and practices. 'Appropriation' as a metaphor for learning is a theoretical attempt to indicate the active and dynamic nature of learning. Appropriating a cultural tool requires some effort on the part of the learner; he or she cannot simply 'take in' knowledge as something ready-made and transmitted from, for example a teacher. Furthermore, appropriat-

ing tools does not simply mean that the learner ‘has’, as distinct from ‘has not’, this particular knowledge in a clear-cut and general sense. Rather, appropriation means to be able to use tools in more or less relevant ways in various practices. It is in using cultural tools that the learner shows his or her knowing. The concept of appropriation is also an attempt to capture the fact that cultural tools often ‘offer resistance’. Appropriating a tool may often involve a long familiarisation process (Säljö 2005). An illustration of this claim may be the cultural tool of writing (or speech, for that matter). Even if we are able to write or speak competently in many situations, when facing novel communicative demands we may again struggle with how to write, read or speak (Säljö 2005). We never fully master a cultural tool such as speech or writing. For this reason, it may be misleading to make claims about what learners ‘have’ or ‘have not’ in terms of knowledge. Instead, we shall make an empirical study of how learners appropriate and use tools more or less competently for different purposes in various practices. According to Vygotsky (1978), all ‘higher mental functions’ such as reasoning, categorising and voluntary remembering first occur in communication with others (on the social plane) and subsequently in communication with oneself (on the individual plane) (cf. Mead 1934/1967). What communicative practices learners gain access to and are invited to take part in will thus be pivotal for the competences they develop. The present chapter will be concerned with children’s appropriation of a prevalent and powerful cultural tool, the narrative genre and its constituent parts. As already mentioned, narrative is an important form for sense-making, including, as developmental psychologist Nelson (1996) has argued, for remembering (cf. Säljö 2005; Wertsch 2002) as well as for the development of self-identity (Ochs and Capps 1996, 2001). These are some examples of inter- and intramental functioning (Vygotsky 1978) well-served by narrative skills. In Wells’ (1999, p. 238) words, narrative genre is a pivotal tool “in the semiotic tool-kit of language”. While the genre of ‘narrative’ may be defined in various and increasingly detailed ways (see e.g. Bruner 2002; van Oers 2003), the basic constituents of this communicative genre, as the term is used in this text, is that it is an account of events related by time and human (or human-like) actions. This means that a narrative as a minimum requires (1) one (often several) actor(s), (2) actions (events), which as such (3) take time (are organised temporally). The last point emphasises how a story depends on how the events are woven together (related). A simple way of doing this is to say ‘...and then...’, which can be repeated throughout the story. More developed ways of weaving the events into a story may be to say ‘...because...’, ‘...which lead to...’, ‘...caused...’ etc. In order to make the story coherent, it is also common to refer back to previous events. Weaving together utterances (the events of the story) is a form of contextualisation (van Oers 1998) or intertextualisation (Torr 2007). The word ‘context’ stems from the Latin *con* meaning ‘together’ and *texere* meaning ‘text’ and ‘weave’. *Inter* means ‘between’, ‘together’ (Barnhart 2000, pp. 213, 535). Hence, to contextualise means to weave things together, for example events in a narrative sequence. How this ‘weaving work’ is done is therefore an important feature to observe when studying the appropriation of narrative skills.

Empirical Study

In this section, we will analyse two different narrative practices taking place in preschools. In the first example, teachers and children work on constructing a collaborative story using cards depicting objects, animals or people. In the second example, a co-narrative initiated by a young child and developed in conversation with his teachers (and another child) during mealtime is followed.

Collaborative Story-Making with Cards

The setting is the following. Six children (1–4 years old) and two teachers sit in a circle on the floor. The light is switched off. A candlestick is placed in the middle of the circle. The activity commences with the children trying to remember the magical formula that needs to be uttered to get the lid of the box to open. Through this ‘ritual’, a communicative ‘room’ is established into which the children and teachers can enter. After a few unsuccessful attempts, they manage to get it right and the box is opened. The box is filled with cards, each one depicting an object, a person or an animal. The box is passed around the circle and every child and teacher takes a card. The cards picked this time show: a cinnamon bun, a cat, a chimney-sweeper, strawberries, a baker, an umbrella and a squirrel. The narration begins:

Excerpt 1a

- 1 Teacher 1: How do stories usually begin?
 2 Evelina: Once.
 3 Teacher 1: Do you want to start?
 4 Evelina: Yes. Once there was a bun and then, then, then did, then baked buns, the chimney-sweeper baked buns. And then he invites all his friends. And then they ate.

In turn 1, the teacher asks the children how stories usually begin. As Evelina’s suggestion in turn 2 indicates that she knows, there are conventions in genres, or, rather, it is these conventions (expectations) that constitute the genre as such. These expectations can be used or played with by not fulfilling them. Evelina is given the ‘communicative floor’ (Goffman 1981) by the teacher and begins to tell the story. Evelina’s utterance in turn 4 is particularly interesting, for several reasons. She begins by saying that Once there was a bun and then, then, then did, then baked buns, the chimney-sweeper baked buns. She suggests a temporal aspect, as necessary in creating a story, through repeating that Once there was and she starts the story from her card, which depicts a bun. The problem she now faces in starting with this bun, as made evident in her getting temporarily stuck (then, then, then), is that in order for a story to develop someone has to do something. Evelina thus introduces, did, then baked buns. In this way, an activity is introduced in order to set off the narrative event. In her continuation, Evelina also introduces the last necessary aspect, the

chimney-sweeper baked buns. Through introducing the chimney-sweeper (who is also depicted on one of the cards picked by the children), an agent or actor (i.e. someone who does something) takes the stage and sets the narrative in motion. Hence, in this short utterance, Evelina introduces an object, an act (event) and an actor (agent). In this utterance we can see some of the fundamental building blocks or constituents of what makes a story a story. The way Evelina tells and solves the problems she faces when starting the story in an object (the bun) tells us something about her knowledge of this cultural genre (a narrative), that it requires an event and an agent. Continuing the same utterance (turn 4), Evelina then introduces additional events into the story, *And then he invites all his friends. And then they ate.* In addition to the first agent, the story has now been expanded with his friends and two new events, an invitation and a meal. These events are woven together with the previous event through a temporal marker (*then*) and that it was the agent's friends (i.e. related to him) and the act of eating (the buns, as already introduced).

The narration continues:

Excerpt 1b

- 5 Teacher 1: And you know what. In the middle of the bun party, a cat turned up. And it crept up onto the table and sniffed mmmm. And when no one was looking, when everyone was looking away, the cat tasted a bun. What happened then, Alexandra?
- 6 Alexandra: When they turned round.
- 7 Teacher 2: Did he turn round? Did he see when the cat ate up the buns?
- 8 Alexandra: [nods.]
- 9 Teacher 2: What did he say then?
- 10 Teacher 1: Did he say anything to the cat then? No, nothing. Did he do anything else?
- 11 Alexandra: Crept home again.
- 12 Teacher 1: Yes.

Now it's the turn of one the teachers to continue the story. Her initial, *And you know what* (turn 5), signals that the listeners should pay attention, since something unexpected is about to happen. She introduces a new agent, a cat. Suspense being pivotal to a story, it is suggested that the cat *crept up* and took the chance to taste a bun when no one was looking, when everyone was looking away. The event and when and where it took place all appear in the teacher's contribution (turn 5). *What happened then, Alexandra*, the teacher asks in a way of handing over the communicative floor to the next speaker. Alexandra's response (turn 6) that *when they turned round* continues to weave the story, building up the suspense between the agents of the story (the chimney-sweeper and his friends, on the one hand and the cat, on the other) introduced by the teacher. The teacher scaffolds (Wood et al. 1976/2006) the child's contribution by reformulating it and then asking a question suggesting a possible development of the event, or, rather, what needs to be made explicit in order to become intelligible to a listener, *Did he see when the cat ate up the buns?* Alexandra confirms this to be the case. The teacher asks another question that points out a possibility of

developing the story further, What did he say then? (turn 9) and the other teacher follows up with, Did he say anything to the cat then? (turn 10). Alexandra does not reply to this question. The teacher then asks a different question, Did he do anything else? With this opening, when she no longer needs to find out something that the chimney-sweeper could have said, Alexandra replies that the cat crept home again (turn 11).

Excerpt 1c

- 13 Teacher 2: Ida, are you going to show your card then? Ida, are you going to show your card?
- 14 Teacher 1: What picture have you got?
- 15 Teacher 2: And Maria can show one.
- 16 Ida: [Holds up a card] Look.
- 17 Teacher 2: Yes, You have strawberries on your cards, both of you, Perhaps the chimney-sweeper went and fetched strawberries? Yes, strawberries. Do you know who he went to to fetch strawberries?
- 18 Children: No.
- 19 Teacher 2: He went to the baker [holding up her card showing the baker]. Because the baker had lots and lots of strawberries. And the baker thought, then the cat can have strawberries instead. Because that cat, he liked strawberries very much. So he went back and asked, May I have a few strawberries? Ye-es, said the baker. And what happened then Anna? Show your friends the picture.
- 20 [Anna holds up her picture.]
- 21 Teacher 2: What's that?
- 22 Anna: Umbrella.
- 23 Teacher 2: Yes. What did he do with it then?
- 24 Anna: When it rains then have.
- 25 Teacher 2: Did it start to rain on him and all the strawberries? What luck that he had an umbrella with him.
- 26 Anna: Mm.
- 27 Teacher 2: Mm. And then what, Peter? Come, did he meet a squirrel?
- 28 Peter: [nods.]
- 29 Teacher 2: What did the squirrel say then? Did the squirrel say anything to the chimney-sweeper? What did he say? Can you think of anything? Shall we let Evelina continue, Peter?
- 30 Peter: [nods.]
- 31 Teacher 2: Yes.

The turn in the circle has now come to two of the youngest children, Ida and Maria. They show their cards (both depict strawberries) and Ida says *look* while she holds up her card (turn 16). One of the teachers responds by naming what the children have on their cards: *Yes, you have strawberries on your cards, both of you.* The teacher then helps the children to continue the story by making a suggestion, *perhaps...and asks Do you know who he went to to*

fetch strawberries? The teacher weaves her card (the baker) into the story and reconnects not only to the chimney-sweeper but also to the cat that have previously been introduced into the story. Stories are often held together by the same actor or actors taking part in a series of events (Tomasello 1999). As earlier, the teacher hands over the communicative floor by asking *What happened then?* She also encourages Anna to show her card to her friends. Anna shows the children her card but does not say anything at first. In response to the teacher's question about what was on the card, Anna says *umbrella*. The teacher confirms and asks *What did he do with it then?* This developing question departs from the object on the card but opens up for an event (what the actor did with the object), i.e. *what happened then?* Anna's response (in turn 24), *when it rains then have is ambiguous*. Is this a generic claim, that she knows that when it rains, umbrellas are used, or does she mean that this happens in the story? The teacher follows up by slightly reformulating Anna's utterance in narrative terms when she asks, *Did it start to rain on him and all the strawberries?* (turn 25). The next child in the circle, Peter, is also very young. The teacher helps him by suggesting *if Did he meet a squirrel?* Peter nods in confirmation. The teacher then suggests that the squirrel says (acts in speech) something to the chimney-sweeper, which is fully reasonable within the frame of the story. Peter is interested but does not make any verbal contribution at this point but nods instead.

Excerpt 1d

- 32 Teacher 2: Do you want to finish what happened when he met the squirrel?
- 33 Evelina: Yes, I want to.
- 34 Teacher 2: Yes. Can you go on with the story?
- 35 Evelina: Yes.
- 36 Teacher 2: What happened when the chimney-sweeper met the squirrel?
- 37 Evelina: Er, then the squirrel ate up the chimney-sweeper.
- 38 Teacher 2: Er, did he? What do you say when it's the end of story then?
- 39 Evelina: Snipp snapp snut, nu är sagan slut [A little rhyme to mark the end of the story].
- 40 Teacher 2: Yes, snipp snapp snut, så var sagan slut. How clever you are at telling stories.
- 41 Teacher 1: So we've done another one.
- 42 Teacher 2: Think how many different stories can come out of these cards.
- 43 [Evelina goes round with the box and collects the cards.]

The narrative has now come full circle in that every child and both teachers have contributed to the story. Hence, the girl who began the story, Evelina, gets the question from one of the teachers whether she would like to end the story. She wants to and so the teacher asks, *What happened when the chimney-sweeper met the squirrel?* Evelina suggests, *Then the squirrel ate up the chimney-sweeper*. This, somewhat unexpected, turn of events, gives the story an important twist. The teacher's *Er, did he?* implies that this event was surprising. Finally, the teacher asks the children *what you say when the story is over*

(turn 38), i.e. she suggests that there is a conventional way of saying this. Evelina is apparently familiar with this genre convention, as seen from her concluding rhyme, *snipp snapp snut, nu är sagan slut*.

The genre for communication and sense-making referred to as a ‘story’ or a ‘narrative’ (Kamberelis 1999; van Oers 2003) in its constituent parts consists of a series of events through which agents do something (cf. Wells 1999). How these events are related is decisive for the development of speech into a narrative, as we have already discussed. As seen in the analysis above, agents (the cat, the chimney-sweeper) and objects (strawberries) previously introduced returned and were related in the story. It is also possible to perceive the teachers’ questions about what happened then and so on as a kind of forward-oriented intertextual scaffolding, helping the children to weave together what is happening with what has happened. These contextual ties are critical in achieving a coherent, intelligible, story, rather than a simple addition or list of happenings and objects.

Supporting Children’s Initiatives to Narrate During Mealtimes

The second example of narrative practice takes place during a mealtime situation, more specifically at the beginning of a routine breakfast on a Monday morning. Two girls and seven boys, 1–3-years old and three teachers (one teacher and two teacher assistants) are sitting around a table. Conversations during mealtimes are important arenas for language socialisation and learning (Blum-Kulka 1994; Cote 2002; Tullviste 2000). We will look at a narrative that evolved between teachers and toddlers in preschool. In this particular preschool, mealtimes seem to be an ideal place and time for children to participate in narrative conversations (Ødegaard 2007a). The staff are sitting down with the children at the table, which is decorated with flowers. The teachers sometimes take the initiative to narrate by inviting children to tell about an event or by telling a story from their own experiences, adjusted to the child audience. Occasionally they pick up an utterance or a gesture from a child as an invitation to communicate and narrate. The following is one example:

Excerpt 2a

- 1 Sander (2.10): Me been party.
 2 Teacher Assistant 1: O, party?
 [pause]
 3 Teacher Assistant 2
 [addresses Sander]: Did you have guests?
 4 Sander: Yes, guests.
 5 Teacher Assistant 2: Why did you have guests then?
 6 Sander: The bell rang.
 7 Teacher Assistant 2: Did the bell ring in the church?
 8 Sander: Yes, Grandma and Granddad was there,
 Great Grandma also came.
 9 Teacher Assistant 1: Were there so many people there?
 10 Sander: Yes.

In his first utterance, Sander (in turn 1) initiates a narrative. Through saying *Me been party*, he introduces an actor (himself) and an event (a party). In addition, he sets himself and the event in the past tense (*been*). The teacher's response (in turn 2), *O, party?*, at the same time confirms that she has paid attention to what the child has said and encourages him to say more, to develop his recounting of this experience. Teachers could support children when spontaneous utterances like these occur so as to encourage narratives in everyday conversations. However, such mundane speech events are fragile. As seen in this brief excerpt, Sander takes the initiative to tell and gets a response from one of the teachers. The response given does not seem sufficient to get Sander to tell about this event. It results in a pause, which could have put a stop to the narrative process. However, to get Sander going with his story-telling, one of the teacher assistants adds a question about *guests* (turn 3). This question suggests a way of developing his account of the event, by introducing new actors and roles. Sander confirms that there were guests but does not, at this point, develop this strand of the story. His answer, *Yes guests*, could put a stop to a narrative process. Instead, Sander suggests, *The bell rang*. Here, once again, Sander uses the past tense and with this answer he extends the narrative and indicates to the teacher assistant what kind of event the guests came for. In her follow up (turn 7), the teacher assistant introduces *the church* as the scene for the event Sander is referring to. In this way, she confirms his utterance and at the same time extends it. She makes explicit the scene of the event (the church). In this way, she establishes and clarifies where the event took place. Sander continues to bring new elements into the story. In turn 8, he lets his listeners know that his grandparents and his great grandmother were there. The teacher confirms Sander's contribution of bringing in actors by answering, *were there so many people there?* This question also serves as a brief summary of what Sander said. At this point of their talk, Sander and the teachers have brought in several elements necessary for making a narrative. Sander has been cast as the protagonist of the narrative. Sander has been referring to this event in the past tense, implicitly set the scene (the church, through the bell) and introduced co-actors (the grandparents). These elements are Sander's own contributions to the emerging story. Rephrasing Sander's *bell* in terms of *the bell [...] in the church* (turn 7), suggests that the teachers already knew about the event, that Sander's little sister had been baptised. Through this knowledge, the teachers can ask informed questions that help the child develop his story of the event. According to Bakhtin (1986), speech and utterances are inherently responsive; the listener in a sense becomes the speaker. When the teachers take the initiative to reconstruct an event, they might try to act in accordance with the response they anticipate. Hence, such contributions are examples of contextualising 'backwards' (against a known event) and 'forward' (paving the way for what 'is coming') in developing the story. In these ways, the teachers' knowledge of the children's experiences will be crucial for encouraging children to tell about life experiences and use the narrative format.

The narrative activity continues:

Excerpt 2b

- 11 Teacher Assistant 1: And your uncle Sverre?
 12 Ane: Grandma, granddad, mama, papa, Ane.
 13 Teacher Assistant 2: Did your Uncle Roger come?
 14 Sander: Aunt Bitte.
 15 Teacher Assistant 2: Aunt Birgitte?
 16 Sander: Yes.
 17 Teacher: Yes, Ane also once was in the church,
 I know.
 18 Sander: Uncle Finn and Aunt Mina
 19 Teacher Assistant 1: Uncle Finn and Aunt Mina
 20 Sander: Yes.

In turn 11, one of the teacher assistants continues to suggest more co-actors to the story, and your uncle Sverre? At this point Ane, one of the other 2-year-olds, joins in the co-narration by saying: *Grandma, granddad, mama, papa, Ane* (turn 12). Sitting at the table, Ane has been listening to the conversation and the naming of the co-actors, family members that she might recognise and be familiar with, as suggested by her utterance. One of the teacher assistants does not follow up on Ane's contribution. Instead, she addresses Sander with a direct question, *Did your Uncle Roger come?* Sander tells that Aunt Bitte was there, whereas the teacher assistant says, *Aunt Birgitte*. Clearly, she knows the family to some extent, being able to name Sander's family members. At this point (in turn 17), the other teacher assistant picks up on and answers Ane's utterance. She acknowledges Ane by telling her that she knows that Ane has also been to the church. Ane's contribution could be seen as an example of children learning by actively observing and 'listening-in' in everyday practice (Rogoff et al. 2003). Sander continues to bring more co-actors into the narrative and the teacher continues to confirm his contributions.

The narrative is developed further:

Excerpt 2c

- 21 Teacher assistant 2: What is uncle Sverre good at?
 22 Sander: He is good at playing the piano.
 23 [The teachers laugh.]
 24 Teacher Assistant 2: And inside the church, did he play
 a little honkey tonkey?
 25 [Sander gives her a look (serious and closed face expression).]
 26 Teacher Assistant 2: Did your little sister Camilla get
 water on her head?
 27 [Sander still gives her a look.]
 28 Teacher Assistant 2: Did you get water on your head?
 29 Sander: No
 30 Teacher: Did Camilla cry then?
 31 Sander: No.
 32 Teacher: Oh no, she didn't cry.
 33 Sander: No.

In turn 21, one of the teacher assistants introduces a possible act (a way of developing the story) when she asks, *What is Uncle Sverre good at?* Sander an-

swers that he is good at playing the piano. The teachers' laughter indicates that they know this and Sander's answer is what they expected. The teachers seem to amuse themselves with this event from the church, and inside the church, did he play a little honkey tonkey? Asking what one of the actors of the story (Uncle Sverre) is good at (turn 21 and its follow up in turn 24) paves the way for the development of character in the story ('fleshing out' characters' traits). Sander does not answer this question verbally; he looks at the teacher assistant with a serious and closed expression on his face. There seems to be a shift in engagement in this part of the conversation. While Sander had brought in new elements to the narrative (in excerpt 2a and 2b), now his contributions (in this excerpt, 2c, excerpt initially in turn 22) are reduced to answering no or not answering at all. The teacher assistant's humorous tone and questions indicate a shift in the 'authoring' of the story. The teachers expand by introducing more actions to the story. They use their cultural knowledge of what is happening during a baptismal ceremony and use their previous knowledge of Sander's family. In asking about his little sister Camilla (turn 26), relationships and identities (name, sibling) between the participants of the event and hence actors and roles in the story are thematised by the teacher assistant. In addition to asking whether the little sister cried when getting water on her head, what happened and who the actors were and how they responded to the event are developed. The teachers are scaffolding (Wood et al. 1976/2006) a narrative, but one might also question if they scaffold Sander's story at this point. Perhaps it is the teachers' rather than the child's version of the event that is now being told. The teachers' questions in a sense close Sander's own narrative thread, Sander's 'authoring' of the story. The teachers might not recognise the ongoing co-narrative as a situation for learning. They might be curious to know more about Sander's home life and consider the conversation as a mundane chat. They might not consider the young child as a co-teller (as an 'authoring voice') in his own right. We will elaborate on these issues in the discussion (below).

As the conversation proceeds, the teacher once again comes in:

Excerpt 2d

- | | |
|---|---|
| 34 Teacher: | Were there many people in the church then? |
| 35 Sander: | Yes, Granddad and Great Grandma, they came. |
| 36 Teacher: | Oh yes, Great Grandma, did come. |
| 37 Teacher Assistant 1: | Great grandma, that's very good that she could come. |
| 38 Teacher: | And then afterwards, did you have a gathering then? |
| 39 Sander: | Yes. |
| 40 Teacher: | Did you have lots of good food to eat then? |
| 41 Sander: | Yes and Aunt Louise came. |
| 42 Teacher Assistant 2
and Teacher simultaneously: | Aunt Louise! |
| 43 Teacher: | That's amazing, so many names, Aunt Louise, think of that, she was there! |

The teacher asks, were there many people in the church then, which is a ‘closed’ question with only two clear options: ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Nevertheless, Sander seems to be back on his track. He repeats that Granddad and Great Grandma, they came. The teacher seems to be sensitive to Sander’s story agenda and gives him the opportunity to continue with telling who the visitors were. When she asks (in turn 38), and then afterwards, did you have a gathering then?, she helps Sander move the story forward, by pointing to the next event, according to her cultural knowledge of baptisms (cf. turn 40). A meal is central to the idea of a celebration according to cultural knowledge about such an event. The teacher’s question (in turn 38) about then afterwards, is important in establishing a narrative sequence, linking events within the larger event (baptism) in time and action. By asking whether they had lots of good food to eat then (turn 40), the theme is also developed ‘in content’. Sander answers yes to those two questions and introduces yet another actor onto the celebration scene, Aunt Louise. In turns 42 and 43, the teacher assistants confirm his contributions. It seems that they are amazed by his ability to remember all the names of the participants. Their way of answering with emotional support might encourage Sander to go on developing his story through bringing still more actors into the narrative. The exclamation of the teachers (turns 42 and 43) indicates that what Sander has told is worth paying attention to. Learning what and what not, to tell (Aukrust 1996; Ødegaard 2006), i.e. what may be of interest to others who were not there is an important part of developing narrative skill and a skill dependent upon the response by (and telling of) others (cf. Pramling and Wallerstedt, this book). The story now comes to a close:

Excerpt 2e

- 44 Sander [is leaning back on his chair]: There were still more people.
 45 Teacher Assistant 1: I know, afterwards you went to your Granddad’s mechanics, and what was it that you picked up there?
 46 Sander: Cake.
 47 Teacher Assistant 1 [with a whispering voice]: Cake! Did you taste it at the mechanics?
 48 Sander: No.
 49 Teacher Assistant 1: I know, you had to wait until Sunday, didn’t you?
 50 Sander: Yes.
 51 Ane: Wait, wait?
 52 Teacher: Yes, Sander had to wait for the celebration of the baptism.
 53 [Sander keeps on smiling.]

In turn 44, Sander’s answer indicates that he is telling a story to someone that admires his remembering the names of the guests there were still more

people. Here he shows responsiveness to his listeners. In a sense, he gives the audience what they want. According to Bakhtin, this addressivity will be part of the speaker's speech plan (Bakhtin 1986). Like the teachers (see above), Sander appears to speak in accordance with the response he anticipates (and has experienced). He has experienced the teachers being interested in his guests and his contributions are in accordance with this curiosity shown by the teachers. According to Bruner (1996), curiosity could be a trigger for narrating and a way of understanding why stories are being told in a certain way to certain audiences. Narratives are not texts without owners (cf. the issue on 'authorship' above). It could be argued that a narrative 'belongs' to the audience as much as to the teller. Showing an interest in a story being told encourages the speaker and triggers the participants to contribute to the collaborative narrative process in various ways.

The teacher's utterance, *I know, afterwards you went to your Granddad's mechanics, and what was it that you picked up there?*, shows that she has an agenda. She is already informed of the event, probably because Sander's parents have told her. So she brings her version of the next chain in the event to the 'communicative floor' (Goffman 1981). It does not seem that her first agenda is to support Sander's versions of the story. She also wants to contribute what she knows. There is a story to share about what happened during Sander's little sister's baptism, who were there and what they ate at the gathering afterwards.

The teacher's whispering *cake!* (turn 47) works as a subtle meta-signal that this part of the child's story is exciting and noteworthy (cf. above). She helps Sander formulate and develop this part of the story (*cake-eating, I know, you had to wait until Sunday, didn't you?* (turn 49). This prompts another child (Ane), who has listened-in on the story, to ask, *Wait, wait?* (turn 51). The teacher answers her by saying that, Sander had to wait for the celebration of the baptism. In this way she also verbalises what kind of event the story has been revolving around, or been about. This has until now remained implicit throughout the story. The teacher now gives a name to the event. In a sense, she baptises the story!

This co-narrative (Ochs and Capps 2001; Ødegaard 2007a) shows that mealtime serves as a place and time for the uses of everyday language, including the narrative genre. So what takes place here, to a certain extent, is familiarisation of the narrative genre. Being an everyday narrative, we were able to recognise some typical genre traits, but not others that could be seen in the first example, which began with 'once up a time' (excerpt 1a) and ended like a fairytale (excerpt 1d). These two stories are narrative sub-genres, a fantasy story and a life story, respectively. Still, temporal elements, the use of the past tense, setting a scene, introducing relationships between actors and a chain of events were visible in both narratives. The teachers were interested in and surprised by the remembrance of all the names Sander could come up with. However, they did not encourage him in a way story didactics often suggests, i.e. by saying "tell us more" or asking "what happened next?"

Discussion

Learning to narrate is an important skill (or rather a set of skills), since the narrative genre is a multi-functional cultural tool. Some functions well-served by narratives are to share experiences, the presentation of self (identity work), create continuity in learning through connecting the child's home with his or her preschool, collective remembering and learning to attend to what, for example the teacher or, by extension, the community, considers to be essential.

In a didactic perspective, this suggests that teachers have an important role in promoting and scaffolding narrative skills in children. As seen in the analyses in this chapter, the teachers take on this task by asking certain kinds of questions, for example asking about the aspects that need to be made explicit in order for the story to be intelligible to others (listeners to the story who were not part of the event narrated), for example: Who were there [participants, actors], where did it take place [setting], when did it happen [time]? Through their questions they also direct children's attention towards what they consider worth telling (Aukrust 1996; Ødegaard 2006). They also ask for and help children to clarify 'motives' for actions (i.e. Why did it happen like that?) and the need to engage the listeners (to introduce something unexpected, some surprising turn of events). In addition, they scaffold the children's narratives through providing contextual ties (backwards and forwards) and putting the focus on the narrative genre (form: how it begins, develops and ends).

Studying narrative practices in preschool with an interest in didactics brings interesting dilemmas and didactic challenges to light. One way of formulating this tension is to ask how the teacher can support a child in narrating his or her story without it becoming the teacher's story (as different from what the child is concerned with; cf. the distinction between the learner's and the teacher's perspective, in this book). On the one hand, we have what we have referred to as the 'authoring voice', on the other, a story could be said to belong to the listener as much as to the speaker. On the one hand, we have the attempt to share personal experiences, on the other, we have the aim of making collaborative sense. In the perspective of socio-cultural theory (Daniels et al. 2007; Wells 1999), cultural tools (e.g. speech or narrative genre) are the 'bridges' between the individual and the collective (Kozulin 1998; Säljö 2005). This means that an individual's development can be seen in terms of the appropriation of cultural tools, i.e. his/her increasing ability to take over and use such tools in functional ways by him- or herself. Supporting children's appropriation, as seen in terms of a changed division of labour between, for example a teacher and a child, is what Wood et al. (1976/2006) refer to as 'scaffolding'. Also, even if (as in our second example) the story is primarily told by one child (with the assistance of the teachers), other children are also present and 'listen-in' (Rogoff et al. 2003) and it is important in a collective arena such as preschool that these children, too, can learn from the activity. It can be said that it is by 'listening-in' that familiarisation with the use of the narrative genre begins. Everyday opportunities like these during mealtimes therefore constitute important arenas for gradually learning to narrate.

In the analysis of the second narrative, we raised the issue of ‘authoring’ and co-participants supporting someone (e.g. a child) to tell *his* or *her* story or to build up a mutual story. This could be conceptualised as an inherent didactic tension between the particulars of individual experience and a form that could be shared and contributed to by others (cf. Pramling and Wallerstedt, this book). In terms of the identity of story-tellers, this could be seen as a question of ‘Who am I?’ versus ‘Who are we (as a cultural community, group)?’ In a concrete and didactic sense, the second narrative analysed in this chapter also raises the issue of whether teachers aim at helping children develop a good story (according to genre criteria) or an accurate account of personal experience. A teacher may ask herself, What skill do I want to facilitate when a child is engaged in story-telling? In part, different kinds of questions and support (scaffolding) will be needed, depending upon how the teacher answers that question. Neither ‘form’ (narrative genre) nor ‘content’ (personal experience) can be developed separately. However, in a didactic encounter, the teacher can choose to highlight a certain feature, a ‘figure’ as opposed to the ‘background’. In that way, children’s attention is directed towards something so that they are guided into discerning that feature of the conversation.

At the same time, when a person utters a word or a sentence, he or she will expect some kind of response (e.g. an answer, sympathy, antipathy, support or resistance). Utterances are given meaning in human interaction in the way others respond to them (Bakhtin 1986; Goffman 1981; Rommetveit 1992). A story-teller wants to tell, not only *something*, but also *to* someone. Hence, it will be of pivotal importance to a child’s developing narrative skills to meet teachers (and others) who not only have the ability to scaffold the child’s narration further but who are also interested and communicate that they are interested, in listening to these emerging narratives. This way of viewing narratives (and communication more generally) in effect questions the notion of the individual’s personal story. All stories are in a way inherently dialogic in nature. This is a challenging notion when discussing issues concerning personal experience and collective knowing in educational settings.

The analysis of the two settings, the first one framed and planned as a collaborative story-making activity and the second one a spontaneous everyday language exchange, made visible a difference in the teachers’ approach to the task if seen in terms of learning to narrate. In the first example, it is obvious that the teachers have certain basic skills in mind in developing narrative skills in young children. They arranged the setting for promoting these skills. In the second example, the teachers’ skills are not as explicit. Here the narrative process could have, in part, taken place without such skills. Still the fact that the co-narration lasted for several minutes indicates that the teachers realised the importance of talking extensively with children. The long duration of the narrative could be due to the teachers’ amusement, they were informed of the child’s experience and enjoyed themselves by keeping the narrative conversation going (Ødegaard 2007b). An everyday co-narrative process like this, during a preschool mealtime, is fragile since there will be competing claims for the communicative floor (Goffman 1981). Even if children take the initiative to tell of and share their experiences, in order to be able to elaborate these experiences into stories, they will be dependent on the teachers finding it worth

supporting this skill, the making of a narrative. Even if teachers can support this skill through more informal conversations with children (as in our second example), supporting the development of narrative skills could also be facilitated by teachers promoting such skills more systematically (as in our first example).

Learning language and becoming part of a culture are ongoing processes in children's lives. When children take the initiative to narrate and are invited to participate in narrative practices, or when their verbal initiatives are extended by a more competent communicative partner, the participants' sense-making could be stretched beyond their immediate understanding (Dickinson and Tabors 2001). This is obvious when it comes to children. However, teachers could also learn from the process of co-narration. During everyday co-narratives, teachers have the opportunity to learn about children's world-making and lives and thereby have the opportunity to expand their understanding of children's experiences. Efforts to listen and interest in listening to elicit children's narratives may have the potential to broaden teachers' knowledge of the events. Narrative activities in preschool are therefore important not only to the learning of the children but also to the learning of the teachers.

In contrast to a 'paradigmatic' mode of speaking and reasoning (Bruner 2006; cf. Vygotsky 1987), the apparent omnipresence of narratives in human communicative activities (cf. Bruner 2002; Luria 1976; Tomasello 1999) may imply that this skill develops 'naturally' by itself. In part, this skill is developed in the child through participating in (and being socialised into) a speech community (Rogoff 2003; Rogoff et al. 2003). Many children may well be familiar with narration, for example through being told and read stories at home. However, narrative skills are very unevenly distributed among children of different backgrounds (Wells 1986). This is particularly unfortunate considering the important functions served by this skill (including literacy development and hence success in school). Also, Kozulin (1998, p. viii) reminds us that what appears 'natural' and developed by itself, upon closer scrutiny (and e.g. cross-cultural comparisons) in fact tends to be appropriated through participation and support in "specific educational or experiential practices". This important reminder implies that in an institution such as preschool we need to make sure that all children are given ample opportunities and support in developing this vital means of (mould for) sense-making and communication. The distinction between a 'paradigmatic' and a 'narrative' mode of speaking and reasoning (Bruner 1986, 2006) also suggests that genre is a key concept in considering communicative development in the child (cf. Kamberelis 1999). Learning to narrate means appropriating a cultural mould for sense-making and communication, through which we learn and make sense of the fantastic (e.g. strawberry-eating cats and chimney-sweeper-eating squirrels) as well as the ordinary (e.g. the baptism of one's sibling), ourselves and each other.

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