Teachers' experiences of telling stories in primary and lower secondary Swedish classrooms

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Introduction

Storytelling is deeply interwoven with the act of teaching and learning (Kuyvenhoven, 2005) and it is an acknowledged and efficient way to transfer knowledge from one generation to another (Ong, 2002). For centuries, teachers have used different genres of stories such as stories from the lives of famous scientists, politicians and cultural personalities, fables, legends, myths and fairy tales, depending on the subject being taught. For example, from a 17th century European perspective, Comenius (1868/1907) pointed out that storytelling is an appropriate teaching tool. He primarily focused on the content of the story in order to nurture and teach using moral fables, myths and edifying historical or religious legends, but he also used a more practical approach relating to the impact that storytelling has on pupils' learning by creating interest and stimulating involvement. Storytelling as an appropriate tool in teaching has in particular been used in language teaching in all subjects. In the current Swedish curriculum (2011), storytelling is presented as a concept within the framework of native language teaching, and it is expected that pupils should have the opportunity to practise oral narration as early as in the first years of primary school. It is also suggested as an appropriate communication tool in other subjects such as social science and natural science. This requires that teachers develop their own knowledge and skills in storytelling in order to develop students' storytelling skills.

The aim of this study

In this study our main focus is teachers' experience of spontaneous or planned storytelling in their ordinary classroom teaching. We assume that it is in the everyday life-world in school that teachers' storytelling occurs, i.e. that it is in the daily interaction with pupils that teachers' storytelling

deepens the content of a subject at a given time in class. Unlike professional storytellers or writers who visit schools, a teacher's storytelling does not interrupt other activities and it is not by considering the charismatic storyteller that we may best describe storytelling in pedagogical contexts, but rather by focusing on the presence and practice of the teacher and his or her pedagogical skill. Theorists, philosophers and educators highlight the narrative way of thinking and communicating as something fundamentally human for everyday use (Bruner, 1986; Ochs and Capps, 2001; Ricouer, 1979; van Manen, 1991; Young, 1987).

The aim of this study is to illuminate Swedish teachers' experiences of telling stories in primary and lower secondary classrooms.

Storytelling and teaching

The English word storytelling corresponds to the Swedish concept *muntligt berättande*, which we use in the interviews with the teachers and which is also emphasised in the Swedish syllabus. The concepts in both languages have the similarity that they concern oral narration and that they are not limited to traditional storytelling. Narratology, the study of narrative, is a broad category and covers all forms of narrative, from novels to mime, including oral narratives. Storytelling refers exclusively to oral narratives, which is our concern in this article. However, the English word storytelling is nowadays often used in Swedish, although it refers more to the performance of professional storytellers, moviemakers or authors. None of the teachers consider themselves to be storytellers, but they all see themselves as teachers who sometimes tell stories.

When reading contemporary research, we found that storytelling in teaching seem to be crucial for pupils' personal engagement and provides great opportunities to contextualise the subject of the teaching (Cheeseman & Gapp, 2014; Andersson, 2014). It is also crucial in improving literacy among students. Kuyvenhoven (2005), who followed a teacher who was also a storyteller by profession, points out that the teacher's storytelling had a positive effect on the students' writing. When reading and writing were conducted in connection with storytelling, it improved the students' performance remarkably. Dougherty (2012) followed five teachers who were introduced to the tradition of storytelling by a professional storyteller. She underlines in her thesis that teachers' oral storytelling transformed their pedagogical practice because their storytelling revealed their genuine pedagogical knowledge in a reciprocal relationship with the pupils' listening.

Despite all this, Andersson (2014) shows in her thesis that a tradition of teachers' storytelling holds an increasingly less important position in the modern Swedish school. The teachers who were interviewed in her thesis were very aware that storytelling was an important aspect of teaching and that without it, there was a risk that teaching would become "just about the facts" (p. 186). The teachers stressed that the pursuit of individualisation and greater achievement of goals had resulted in less time for storytelling. There are larger classes and more administrative tasks for teachers in schools today, Andersson points out. Moreover, the teachers feel that pupils show deficiencies in the ability to listen to each other and that there is no time to practise listening skills. Another reason given for not using storytelling in teaching is that the teachers think that there is a risk that they could lose control of regular teaching, Anderson concludes.

The main focus in this study is the teachers' experiences of storytelling as such rather than the content of the narrative being told. With regard to what is meant by "narrative" in the context of this study, we make use of a concept, which in narrative research is called an *event narrative* (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008). This can be described as the "spoken recounting of particular past *events*" (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2008: 8), which has either the storyteller or someone else as a character in the story. It is close to Labov's (1972) structural analysis of oral narration and has had great influence on scholars in diverse disciplines such as ethnology, sociology, education and psychology. The virtue of his research in the field of sociolinguistics was that he made it possible to examine how storytellers organise and structure their narratives in a verbal interaction. He describes different parts of the narration such as the abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result and coda.

The work of Young (1987) is important in this field of research. Young further developed Labov's ideas. She did this from a phenomenological perspective and made use of Schutz's (1980) ideas about the different worlds of experience. Young argues that a shift of attention moves the listener to another realm, a province with another meaningful alternative experience of reality (Young, 1987). Storytelling gives us the opportunity to shift focus from being a participant in the events of our daily lives to being able to reflect on them by reliving them in a narrative structure. Young says that "narrativity shifts my attitude to life from my engagement in it toward my reflection on it" (Young, 1987: 12). The storyteller guides the listeners, within the *Storyrealm* (the narration) into the *Taleworld* (the events of the narratives) and, according to Young, storytelling therefore constitutes an eminently physical (bodily) and social (relational) activity, an interaction

that always appears together *here* (spatial) and *now* (time), with one or more listeners in interaction with the storyteller.

Ochs and Capps (2001) analyse people's everyday storytelling based on the work of Ricouer, who argues that the use of narratives offers us an opportunity to gain perspective on *being in the world;* what *concerns* us allows us to meet our lived experiences and makes our personal experiences universal in narrative form, when the narrating of events that are of concern to us is used "to launch and justify present time practices" (Ochs and Capps, 2001: 184). Ochs and Capps focus on storytelling and narratives in a dialogical form, where the narratives are incomplete and tentative, and where meaning and intrigue is not always as clear as in ready-made and complete narratives, such as legends, fairy tales and myths. Van Manen (1991) also argues that our ability to tell stories provides meaning in our lives by offering the opportunity to reflect upon everyday events:

> We might say that telling anecdotes is a form of everyday theorizing that enables the teller to bring experience into language. In this way we can come to terms, as teachers, with something significant, something worth telling, something important in the anecdote. (van Manen, 1991: 204)

Method

Teachers' storytelling in classrooms is a complex phenomenon to capture in a study. Because of that, a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach has been selected for this study, as we wanted the richness and the contradictions in the empirical data to take a central place. Our aim is to try to understand the teachers' being in the world and at the same time we want to understand the lived meaning in classroom contexts – the everyday *life-world* of school. Phenomenology is a movement with a great influence on different disciplines in human and social sciences over a long period of time and with many different ways of interpreting philosophers like Heidegger (2008/1962), Merleau-Ponty (1964), Schütz (1980) and Ricoeur (1979, 1980).

At the University of Gothenburg, researchers in the field of pedagogy have been inspired by this movement in their effort to describe everyday classroom teaching (e.g. Claesson et al., 2012; Levinsson, 2013; Lilja 2013). Because we want to be responsive to the phenomenon being studied we cannot use the same method all the time. Therefore there is no special method for conducting a study "in a correct way" – the philosophy is there to guide the researchers to see things in new ways, to try to see what "the

natural attitude" is and to see what might be beyond that. Therefore as researchers, we use a hermeneutic way of interpretation. Actually, interpretation is there all the time because we are humans; it is impossible to set strict rules about how interpretation must be done. All researchers have to distance themselves and to reflect in a certain way in each study (Claesson et al., 2012).

In order to achieve the aim of the study, three concepts besides the notion of life-world are used and we outline them as follows. The notion of *intercorporeality*, developed by Merleau-Ponty (1964), is used to understand the embodiment of lived experience. When Merleau-Ponty writes that we *are* our body, he emphasises that the division between body and soul is just an analytical tool: in the life-world, body and soul are intertwined. When we as researchers deal with human relations, we have to consider intersubjectivity, the significance of the other, and as Trigg (2013) and Young (2011) show, intersubjectivity is intercorporeal in structure. When teachers reason about their experiences of storytelling, we can, through the use of the concept of intercorporeality, understand their experiences of their bodily self. The importance of the bodily presence is also highlighted in David McNeill's (1992) work on gestures in storytelling. The notion of *ambiguity,* the dual character of our selves as lived bodies as developed by Merleau-Ponty (1964), has been of importance for our understanding of what teachers say about their experiences in this study. There are often at least two or more (and sometimes contradictory) experiences of the same phenomenon. Ambiguity is a concept that can clarify a phenomenon by highlighting the contradictory nature of the lived experiences of the phenomenon. *Tact of teaching* is a concept developed by Max van Manen (1991) that will also be used in this study. By tact, what is meant is that teachers adapt to their pupils, and tact, as developed by van Manen, also includes an ethical dimension. Tact of teaching concerns subject teaching as well as reciprocal, caring and vocational aspects of teaching.

The interviews

The interviews conducted for this empirical study are to be seen as dialogues (Michler, 1986). They address experiences of telling stories in teaching and include 20 Swedish teachers in primary and lower secondary classrooms. We asked questions, structured and semi-structured, about which occasions they use to tell stories and about what, how and why they do this, but at the same time we were sensitive to informants' responses and therefore considered the interviews to sometimes have more of the

character of a dialogue than an interview. We also asked them to tell us about a particular event linked to a storytelling occasion in a teaching situation. By asking them to tell us what happened and about their own experiences, rather than their opinions, we hoped to create a vivid picture of the situation of storytelling and at the same time it was an attempt to get the teachers to access their lived experiences of storytelling (van Manen, 1990, 2014). The interviews were mainly conducted in the schools where the teachers worked. The school principals made the selections of the teachers in some cases; in other cases, names were given by the teachers who were interviewed and a in few cases, the teachers were already known to us beforehand. The group of respondents consisted of 14 women and 6 men, of ages ranging from 24 to 67 and they had professional experience of teaching of between two and 45 years. None of those interviewed considered themselves to be storytellers nor do any of them perform as professional storytellers alongside their teaching. All dialogues lasted between 35 and 45 minutes and the interviews were all recorded and transcribed.

After transcribing the interviews, we read them several times and searched for passages where the teachers' lived experiences were highlighted and, as mentioned, the concepts of *intercorporeality*, *ambiguity* and *tact* have been of importance in the interpretation of the interviews.[12] After that, we listened to the interviews once more, and at the same time reread the transcripts, and in our interpretation we have tried to capture the lived meaning of storytelling in everyday teaching. We also discussed some differences in our interpretations.

In the end, we arranged the quotations thematically. Both quotes that affirmed each other, and also quotes that directly contradicted each other but still gave perspectives on the same theme, were used.

Result

In the interviews, it is notable that teachers' experiences of telling stories spontaneously were contradictory and ambiguous and this provides richness in the description of the phenomenon of storytelling in pedagogical contexts. Therefore the results are structured in such a way that contradictions and tensions are visible. Those fields of tensions have helped us in our interpretation and have given rise to the headings, and they also

[12] It should be mentioned that some of the quotations in this study are used in a book in Swedish, aimed for Swedish teachers, by Henricsson & Lundgren (2016), concerning oral storytelling in multilingual classrooms. However, in this article the empirical data is viewed from a different angle.

inspired the subtitles of the descriptions of the results, such as *Taking/Releasing control*, *Dependent on the pupils' response/Capturing pupils' minds* as well as *Open and inviting/Fear and uncertainty*. These crystallised fields of tension are intertwined in the lived experience and therefore the resulting descriptions-quotations connected to one field of tension also fit under a second field of tension. All respondents' names have been changed.

Spontaneous/Planned storytelling

The teachers say that their storytelling either occurs spontaneously or is planned but that they use spontaneous storytelling more frequently. The desire to tell stories spontaneously in the pedagogic context is awakened mostly by another story, a past event or an upcoming event, according to the interviews. For example, something has happened between the pupils during the break or during the lesson, which inspires the teacher to tell an anecdote or a story. Furthermore, the examples from the teachers' experiences of spontaneous storytelling were closely linked to the subject being taught at the time.

One of the teachers, Eve, decides to take up a position in the room from which she can capture the pupils' attention as easily as possible, and she uses her body language to further create the conditions for getting them involved from the start:

> I gather them a little closer and I lean forward a little and make it a little exciting to ensure that everyone is involved so you can have eye contact with everyone. I think that is the best way and that you try to tell [the story] as vividly as possible.

In this way, Eve experiences the importance of embodied storytelling. She then says that the content of a spontaneous narrative aims to communicate lived experience to the pupils. She remembers one time when she found herself spontaneously telling a story when talking with her pupils about the importance of learning to swim:

> It was totally shocking of course. They [the pupils] could see it in front of them too when I told them: "I looked down over the edge of the jetty and there I see my mother and my brother, but I also see how they float up to the surface and my mother grabs my brother and they swam." The students then burst out: "Oh, what luck!" "Yes, I should learn to swim", "I can swim, teacher!" "I cannot swim!" "No, but then you go on Fridays!", I say.

The upcoming event is the swimming lesson for the pupils and she wants them to join the swimming class next Friday.

Almost all of the teachers say that they sometimes use planned storytelling, often with the aim of arousing curiosity and commitment in subject teaching. Michael describes how he tells the Iliad at the start of a project on ancient history in a secondary class and how he accentuates the story by dressing up in a new way and changing the room and the light:

> So we all went down to the basement. Then I was dressed a bit like a storyteller from that time. I had some white sheets and stuff like belts and there was a little candlelight down there and they sat in a circle and I told the Iliad. They were very afraid because it was very dark and there was some noise, probably from mice or rats down there, but the pupils still listened to the story because it was fairly quiet anyway […] It became a tradition, and so other teachers did this later, that they went down there and told the story.

One teacher, Reza, says that he does not usually plan to tell stories himself but considers, remembering listening to his old teacher telling stories, how storytelling spontaneously raises a sense of expectation for him:

> Yes, you are always expecting something to happen [when listening to a story]. Really, in ordinary teaching, you don't expect much.

In this case, it is not the storytelling occasion that is spontaneously unfolded but the experience of the content in the Taleworld. Reza knows that telling a story and the expectation evoked by the story have pedagogical consequences – it is a way of teaching that creates expectations and involvement.

In summary, the teachers say that they use storytelling in teaching both spontaneously and in a planned way. The desire to tell stories spontaneously in the pedagogic context is evoked mostly by another story, a past event or an upcoming event unfolding in the life-world of the school.

Taking/Releasing control

Once the urge to tell a story is felt, it is, according to the teachers who have been interviewed, all about deciding to take control. The teachers manifest storytelling primarily bodily. Annelie describes an inner focus, deciding to be the one who tells a story:

> When I tell [a story] I probably take a little deep breath and I notice that I stand with my feet firmly on the ground. But I do something like: "Now

> I'll tell a story" or something so I know myself. I think it's mostly for myself not for those who will listen. It is for myself so that I: "Now I am telling a story."

Annelie illuminates the bodily expression of launching a narrative, taking control of the extended turn, while Mia puts it: "I use myself as a tool". She says that her experiences of storytelling are in a way connected to letting go of her planning; it is not so easily done but she says that it is worth it.

> But it takes a lot of practice to let go and try, and to just throw yourself out. I mean it can just go to hell. You must dare to be bodily open not just stand there with the planning notes in hand and dare to listen to the children's questions, to pick them up, and not just "No, I cannot take it now because I …we shall have ten minutes of this and two minutes of that. I'm not in line with a schedule as I should be." So yes, there may be a conflict. But it's great to see when you dare to let go and capture the kids in a completely different way.

Mia confirms that she gets the pupils' attention in a certain way while telling a story and most of the teachers confirm that storytelling has a strong appeal for the listener, but sometimes it can happen that one participant does not follow the rest of the class to the Taleworld, to use Young's concept. Therefore, many of the teachers say that they need to use some disciplinary tricks to get them there. Conny says that he tells stories instead of reading in order to be able to reach the pupils.

> I have probably often preferred to tell a story instead of reading it out loud. When reading you lose about two-thirds of the class. When I am telling it I can see them watching me and they are focused and I can take control of the whole class, and if someone is suddenly fiddling with a pen I can say: "Or what do you think Tom?"

In fact, one way to understand what Conny talks about is that he uses disciplinary tricks but he also says that you don't need to use them while you are telling stories as much as when you read aloud.

In conclusion, the teachers take control in the conversation realm with internal focus and external techniques, but at the same time they release control and instead they improvise and become more playful. They can use disciplinary hints and keep control over the class during storytelling - but at the same time they feel responsive to the pupils' curiosity and commitment and to how these influence the content of teaching.

Dependent on the pupils' response/Capturing pupils' minds

The interaction with the listeners thus appears to be important when telling stories. The listener nods, confirms by comments or evaluates what the storyteller shares. The pupils' responses help Rachel:

> When you announce that you intend to tell something, it takes a second and then you see that they are listening. Well, they listen almost with the entire body. They sit leaning slightly forward and you can see that they quite quickly get into the story and are inside these images of the story.
>
> Yes, it means that I am also aware of "Oh I have them with me" and then I become even more intense and also fall into the fairy tale.

Rachel is affected by the listener's response and the pupils help her to enter into the story. When the teacher tells a story, it is easier for the pupils to keep up; they are focused and the teacher can have eye contact with all the pupils. The teacher holds the time in her hand when telling a story according to Malin:

> Yes, but that's because it's *time* that you hold in your hand, pauses to experiment with. It feels like I have a great responsibility because I have their entire focus and direction. It's also scary because you can think of how malleable one audience can be. Thus, that responsibility comes from me as an adult. It is so important. That's the thing with the future and why you want to meet children where they are and show them that they will find themselves and their power. It makes me really [sigh]… I know what I mean, but I really have to ... I can only tell the kind of stories which I myself feel have a quality.

But having the pupils' 'total attention' can sometimes, as Malin says, be perceived differently for the teachers, and with the knowledge of pupils' overall focus, comes the awareness of the power of storytelling. Another thing that the teachers emphasise is that the events in the narrative are experienced as real. Anna says:

> When you tell a story yourself they think it's cool because it's happening right now. It is real somehow "I'm sitting here and I'm a part of this now." It is a presence, and it is a type of community, and we have this moment together.

It is an illusion that the images of story that the pupils themselves create in their own mind are experienced as being more real than, say, a movie but

the storytelling *is* for real and it's about sharing a moment. Malin talks about how she experiences the shared feeling of hope while telling a story:

> But I still think that they feel (when listening to a story) that they are located in a "place" where anything is possible. And "there *is* such a place, and I can *get* there, and *this teacher* will get us there."

The teachers' reasoning is that they experience their storytelling as something that can bring hope and a feeling of having opportunities, and that offers a sense of safety to the pupils.

In conclusion, they are spurred on to create and enter the Taleworld when they have the pupils' total attention but as soon as they have an awareness of the power of the story, they say that they feel that they have a great responsibility to communicate beliefs and possibilities.

Open and inviting/Fear and uncertainty

When teachers describe their lived experiences of telling stories, it appears that something changes in their perception of their bodily selves. For example, they experience themselves as more playful and alive. There are several teachers who say that they "imitate and joke", gesticulate, change their voices and dramatise. Susanne says that she experiences that she becomes someone else:

> Yes, I make a few gestures like this and change my voice and so on. Yes, I think I do. I'm someone else.

While Emma, in contrast to Susanne, says that she becomes *herself* instead, in order to be able to be believable:

> For me, to be able to convey it in a credible way, I have to make it enjoyable for me and then it will be in my way.

Perhaps it is that Emma and Susanne, in fact, say that there is a change; they experience themselves in a different way when they tell a story than they do otherwise. Elsa experiences herself, for example, as more open and inviting:

> Yes, when I tell [a story], I become a little more playful. I think the face is happier or more open, and the body is more inviting. I get more excited, too, and my tone of voice and body language are also more enjoyable and then it will be fun to listen to someone who looks happy. I'm getting a little more tolerant too. I think you should offer a bit of yourself because I think you will be rewarded. The children respect me very much.

Elsa underlines joyfulness, excitement and tolerance as she talks about how she experiences herself during the storytelling, but at the same time some teachers say that they often feel an uncertainty, and even a fear before they begin to tell a story. They express doubt about whether the pupils will actually listen. In order to tell a story vividly the teachers need to be able both to improvise and to use body language. This is a nervous experience for several of the interviewed teachers. You always give something of your own engagement and if it is not received in a good way, it can be difficult. Monika describes how she, even though she feels unsafe, tells a story to a class in secondary school and how she does not manage to get the pupils into the Taleworld:

> Hopefully the students are nice enough to me that they give me the time it takes to tell [the story], whether it is ten minutes or a quarter of an hour or whatever it may be of their lesson. But then it has happened that a few pupils have come in late and they don't come on time and they come in and start walking around and talking to each other and they disturb, destroy, and do not respect that others may want to listen. They have not come in carefully "Oops I arrived late", and cautiously crept in, but instead they come in and interrupt. Then you lose the thread [sigh] and then maybe you try to start again but then you have lost something.

Not managing to get the pupils to the Taleworld is perceived as a failure, and the feeling of not succeeding is described as losing something.

In conclusion, the teachers feel open, inviting and present but simultaneously they can feel an uncertainty and a fear of being ignored while telling a story.

Discussion

In our attempt to illuminate teachers' experiences of storytelling in a pedagogical context we have used a hermeneutical-phenomenological approach with particular focus on three main concepts. The concept of ambiguity helped us to highlight the teachers' contradictory experiences of telling stories. When the teachers and the pupils enter the Taleworld, they express their bodily experience of telling stories so the concept of intercorporeality will help us to understand the reciprocal perspective of the bodily experienced storytelling (Young, 2011). The teachers say that the lessons where they tell stories do not turn out as planned because the narratives raise questions and entail a kind of involvement they cannot foresee, which, they say, requires them to be responsive and flexible. The

concept of tact could illuminate the ethical and pedagogical experience of grasping a certain moment to tell a story.

When interpreting we have asked ourselves what do the interviewees really mean by storytelling? Perhaps the teachers report, describe, instruct or even read aloud instead when they say that they use storytelling? If so, this means that we cannot know with certainty that it is the lived experience of their storytelling that the teachers describe. We are aware of this limitation in the choice of our method and if we had recorded the teachers' storytelling, it is more likely that we would with greater certainty have been able to define descriptions as lived experience of oral storytelling.

Due to what the teachers underline as crucial aspects of the experience of storytelling, the corporeal and the intercorporeal, this study's contribution could be even greater with the help of video recordings. But studying the teachers' body language, posture, voice modulation and gaze is planned as the subject of the next study. At the same time, it should be said that all teachers were asked to give examples of occasions of storytelling and explain how they experienced those situations, and in the anecdotes, their storytelling became noticeable, especially when comparing their answers with Young's (1987) phenomenological study of oral narratives. Young (1987), quoting Merleau-Ponty, writes that our body is not only a thing in space but that it also haunts space. Our memory 'makes copies' of bodily experience (Young, 2011) and the memory can sometimes be difficult to catch, but it is nevertheless there in our body.

Time and space for storytelling in teaching

Kuyvenhoven (2005) also stresses that the teacher must possess a social awareness for knowing the right time to tell stories, in terms of the pupils' needs, to understand when it is a good time and when it is not a good time for stories. She describes it by saying that the teacher "nourished storytelling participation in social awareness" (Kuyvenhoven, 2005: 208).

Concerning time, on the one hand, we have the so-called clock time (Ricoeur, 1980), the time it takes to tell the story, the time the teacher has in relation to lesson time. Teachers can plan for storytelling as a series during the semester or teachers can choose to tell stories at the beginning or end of a lesson and so on. On the other hand, we have the experienced time. For teachers who tell a story, time can be experienced in many different ways. A teacher has time in her control while telling stories, as Malin put it. But there is also the time of the Taleworld, where 1000 years can pass in seconds. However, none of those who were interviewed expressed that they do not have time for storytelling. On the contrary, it seems that there *is* time

for storytelling according to the teachers' responses, but the storytelling occasion is entirely dependent on the interaction with the pupils. A successful storytelling is always described as an interaction with pupils, either during the storytelling, in terms of how the pupils respond and pay attention, or afterwards when the pupils ask questions and show their engagement. One of teachers fails in her storytelling because some of the pupils came in late and thereby disturbed the lesson, and they were neither interested in respecting the teacher nor the other pupils who were listening. This underlines that this teacher is aware that the interaction is central in creating time and space, which also means that Conny, for example, uses disciplining tricks to maintain interaction in order not to lose time and space for storytelling.

It is the shared lived experience that frames the space and time for storytelling in the pedagogical context. It seems to be a central criterion for storytelling pedagogy that teachers express the importance of seeing all students. The room can, on one hand, be limited to the classroom walls and objects between storyteller and listener. Therefore, teachers arrange things in their classrooms or decide on a special place for the storytelling. On the other hand, and much more commonly according to the interviews, they create a space whenever they tell a story spontaneously, as Eve does in her storytelling about her brother almost drowning, with the help of their ability to encounter the students' gaze.

According to this study, the shift of consciousness to the Taleworld is possible when teachers first take control of the storytelling occasion. To give life to a narrative orally, the teachers reason that they use their ability to improvise and interact with the pupils and that is a way of releasing control of the story. So, if the storyteller, in this case the teacher, is not involved in creating images and giving life to events, pupils will not reach the Taleworld. Furthermore, the interaction is manifested in teachers' bodily lived experiences. It is a mutually experienced phenomenon.

Body and storytelling in teaching

Intersubjectivity comes into play when you tell a story and furthermore intersubjectivity is intercorporeal (Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Young, 2011). Rachel relates that she "falls into" the story, entering the Taleworld, with the help of the pupils' visual and bodily expressed response. Susanne and Emma express themselves differently, with an awareness of changes in their own attitudes, and uses of voice modulation, body language, facial expression and other basic storytelling techniques, they experience themselves in the view of the other - the pupil. Elsa experiences herself as more open and

inviting, while Anna also feels afraid of failure. The narrative structure is based on events and events often awaken emotions; the story touches the listener. When you tell a story you invite the listener to experience the events in the Taleworld and it allows the listener to respond more expressively than when you give a lecture or a review of facts. The teachers describe their own and pupils' involvement in the characters and plots in the narratives. Sharing emotions and events, therefore, always feels more personal than just sharing facts. You take a risk.

Following McNeill (1992), and his research on storytelling and gestures, when people tell a story they often use iconic gestures for the most important events. That is why the listener is not just *waiting for something to happen*, as Reza puts it, but waiting for *that something* to *be visible* in the storyteller's gestures, postures and facial expression, and that is why pupils want to see the teacher although she is not acting, just telling a story.

During storytelling, the interaction with the pupils is occurring in the space between the teacher and the pupils. McNeill (1992) calls it *the narrative space*. If the spoken words of a story are the tip of the iceberg, what happens in "the narrative space" is the rest of the iceberg. It is about intercorporeality - a meeting between bodies that experience each other and create meaning (Young, 2011).

Ambiguities of storytelling in teaching

One aspect of storytelling in teaching that is made apparent by this study is the teacher's ability to grasp a certain moment to tell a story. Inspired by Max van Manen's 'tact of teaching' (1991), it is in a deep sense the same thing as *sharing* lived experience and is intertwined with the notion of tact. It is also the ethical existential way of being. In a lived moment, the teacher finds it crucial to tell a story, either a well-known story, an anecdote from something that has happened recently or something from her or his own life.

Ochs & Capps (2001) emphasise oral storytelling as a tool to create meaning through stories about everyday situations. This is noticeable, for example, when teacher Eve tells a story about her mother saving her brother from drowning, which is aimed at motivating her pupils to go to the swimming lesson. What van Manen describes as the *tact of teaching* is exemplified in Malin's response, which describes a responsibility to meet and lead the student towards a future where opportunities will be provided. This happens the moment after she admits to the experience of discomfort with the feeling of the power of the story and the ability to manipulate a listener.

The teachers reason that their storytelling makes them more bodily engaged, inviting and present in their students' life-world. However, the teachers' experiences of their own storytelling can also be described as ambiguous and contradictory. This ambiguity points towards a more complex understanding of the teachers' storytelling and in some ways it mirrors the complexity of the teaching profession. Despite the ambiguous experience, or rather thanks to it, we find that there is a special time for storytelling and it is closely linked to the pedagogical context and the relationship between teacher and pupils. We suggest that it can tentatively be understood as the *tact of telling*, following van Manen's (1991) concept, *tact of teaching* and Kuyvenhoven's (2005) idea that a teacher must possess a social awareness for knowing the right time to tell a story. The tact of telling includes knowing when to tell which story and to whom, but also knowing when it is not the time for stories.

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