



Children remembering and reshaping stories in retelling

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ABSTRACT: This study concerns the *processes* of storytelling and remembering in the context of how 4-5-year-old children orally retell stories they have been told by a teacher. Understanding children's retellings as a sense-making activity, the analytic focus is on what children pick up from, and how they transform, the story. The storytelling activities have been video recorded, transcribed and analyzed from a sociocultural theoretical perspective. With an interest in studying the nature of narrative activity, three retelling activities of one focus child were chosen for analysis. The results show that the child remembers details, introduces new elements and in various ways transforms the story. On a more overarching level, the study shows how the child's retelling and remembering are clearly related to the sense she makes of the story and the activity she engages in. This implies that narrative practices contain an important reflexivity; when teachers support the processes of storytelling and remembering, they also support children's sense making, and conversely, when supporting children's understanding of stories, teachers assist children's remembering.

Keywords: *Narrative remembering, preschool, children, oral storytelling, sociocultural theory*

Introduction

In the present study we are interested in how children orally retell stories they have been told. More specifically, we analyse what a 5-year-old focus child, serving as an exemplar, picks up from the story she has been told, and what features she introduces and perhaps transforms, when retelling it. Closely related to these questions, we will analyse how the

activity appears to the child, that is, the child's perspective (Sommer, Pramling Samuelsson, & Hundeide, 2010) on the narrative activity. Narrating is frequently employed in arguing for the beneficial effect on children's development and literacy learning (Cortazzi & Jin, 2008; Hakkarainen & Vuorinen, 2018; Heilmann, Miller, & Nockerts, 2010; Kao, 2017; Macleod, Macmillan, & Norwich, 2008; Silva, 2017; Skantz Åberg, 2018; cf. Wells, 1986). In contrast, the interest of the present study is in oral storytelling as such and what this tells us about children's remembering.

In the present study narrating is studied as an activity and narrative is understood as a fundamental tool for sense making, learning and remembering. As elaborated by Bruner (1990), people as well as collectives (societies) organize their experiences in narratives in order to make sense and remember. As a genre, narrative consists of a series of related events, related in time and space with actions driven by intentions. Some kind of obstacle or problem tends to be encountered, and has to be overcome or solved, by the protagonist. Furthermore, some form of breach of normal happenings or expectations is important for a story to be worth telling, (Bruner, 1990; Ødegaard, 2006). In the present case, a particular kind of narrative is retold: a trickster story (Oshiro, Pihl, Peterson, & Pramling, 2017), that is, a story with anthropomorphized animals (typically a fox) in some way tricking someone.

Theoretical grounding

The present study takes a sociocultural perspective on learning, communication and remembering. Founded on the work of Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) and further developed by contemporary scholars such as Wertsch (2007) and Säljö (2002), this perspective provides conceptual resources for studying cultural activities such as narrating. To understand human memory/remembering, Vygotsky (1997) makes a distinction between an elementary and a higher-mental function. The former denotes how people remember whether they want to or not; remembering as an elementary function is simply a consequence of how we function as biological beings. In contrast, in order for us to remember what we want to remember we actively do something; remembering as a higher-mental function is a form of cultural activity; it is (a) tool-dependent, (b) voluntary, and (c) something we learn to do. We learn to remember through participating in cultural practices where people render their experiences and through appropriating this practice and its cultural tools, including, critically, narrative as a cultural tool for sense making and remembering.

From a sociocultural perspective, there is a close tie between narrative and remembering (Bartlett, 1932/1995), and remembering is not conceptualised merely a reproductive activity but also a creative, sense-making one (Wertsch, 2002). What people do not

remember, they fill in (Bartlett, 1932/1995) to make a meaningful story. In more contemporary terms, Bartlett's study can be seen as an example of making the learner's perspective (Sommer et al., 2010) a central part of the investigation. As human beings, we make sense of our world; we do not merely process information (Bruner, 1990). How children learn to remember and retell stories is consequently of great interest to research on children's learning and development.

Previous research on narrating and remembering

The interest in narrative spans several disciplines: sociolinguists, psychology, pedagogy and communication studies. From the tradition of educational psychology (pedagogy), Ødegaard and Pramling (2013) argue that studies of narrative as a "collaborative making and use of a cultural artefact can give new insights into children's and teachers' perspectives" (p. 38). In the mid-1990s, Engel (1995) argued that there was a want of studies analysing the process of narrating. Since then there has been studies of children's ability to narrate and preferably autobiographical narratives. A pioneering study in this tradition is *Narratives from the Crib* (Nelson, 1989), where the conversations between a young child and her parents, and her soliloquys at bedtime during a fifteen-month period were documented and analysed. The recordings were analysed with an interest in the child's emerging ability to use language and imagination and her understanding.

In a classic empirical study, Istomina (1975), investigated how 3- to 7-year-old children remembered under two conditions. A number of ingredients was to be remembered. One condition was simply to try to remember the items. The other condition was to try to remember what ingredients to buy in a store in the context of playing the preparation of food. What was found was that how much the children remembered was contingent on the conditions of the activity.

TABLE 1 Children's remembering under two conditions (Istomina, 1975)

<i>THE CHILDREN'S AGE (YEARS)</i>	<i>NUMBER OF REMEMBERED ITEMS</i>	<i>NUMBER OF REMEMBERED ITEMS IN PLAY</i>
3-4	0.6	1
4-5	1.5	3
5-6	2.0	3.2
6-7	2.3	3.8

Evidently, it was easier for the children to remember in the context of an activity that made sense to them than to remember in the abstract; playing food preparation could be

expected to be a familiar activity for many children. That the activity makes sense to children means that they can engage in it, which makes a difference to their remembering. Istomina's study gave important contributions to memory research in clarifying that the individuals' capacity for remembering is not constant; rather it is contingent on, for example, how the activity as such, where remembering fills a function, is perceived. Consequently, people's remembering is contingent contextual framing (Hirst & Manier, 1995; Wertsch, 2002). Some basic experience of narrative as a cultural tool can be considered analogous to play in this regard: it provides a meaningful context for remembering.

In a more recent study, Glenn-Applegate, Breit-Smith, Justice and Piasta (2010) argue that artfulness and creativity are aspects of children's narratives in need of further research since they are predictors of quality that is rarely considered in traditional studies of the development of children's language skills. Children learn to use artfulness, such as creative, imaginative, and joyful elements to captivate the attention of the listener. Moreover Glenn-Applegate et al. (2010) found that children used important aspects of oral storytelling that indicate an awareness of the need to address the listener, such as humour and stressing particular words for effect.

Pointing out that oral storytelling has significant benefits for children's development and education (see also, e.g., Kao, 2017), and despite arguably being the oldest form of education, Hibbin (2016) claims that this activity is under-utilized in contemporary early schooling. She further claims that the prevailing practice of education (in the UK) is literacy-based and that speaking and listening are taken for granted as non-problematic resources to support literacy development. She proclaims a pedagogic orientation towards speaking and listening with oral outcomes as the end point and not only as vehicles to literacy development.

Another study analysing the relation between children's narrative ability, memory and their suggestibility is reported by Klemfuss and Kulkofsky (2008). In their study, the quality of children's narratives was coded for volume (the length of the statement), complexity (degree of details), descriptive texture (amount of descriptive details) and cohesion (temporal cohesion of the narrative). 112 preschool-aged children were interviewed about a previously staged event. The researchers started the interviews with open-ended questions about the event but also asked leading and misleading questions. They found that narrative ability appeared to supersede age as a predictor of resistance to suggestive questions. Thus, their study illustrates how narrative ability is important to yet another feature of children's development.

In a study by Pramling (1990), stories were read to preschool children, who were later interviewed about these stories. Children from two groups (A and B) had participated in

what is referred to as a didactics group, where their teachers worked with engaging the children in reflecting on their own learning (i.e., taking a meta-perspective on activities). There were also two control groups (C and D). In the first study, the preschool teacher assistant read *Sagan om det röda äpplet* [The Story about the Red Apple], a picture book written by Jan Lööf. The children were subsequently asked to draw something from the story and then to bring the drawing to the interview. In the interview, they were asked what the story was about. The number of events that the children were able to account for was documented, showing that the children in the experimental groups (A and B) could account for more events than the children in the control groups. In the follow-up study, the children were read a story without seeing any pictures or being told the title of the story. The children were interviewed about what the story was about and they were asked what they thought would be a good name for the story. The children in the experimental groups were seen to be more capable at understanding the plot of the story. Hence, in Pramling's (1990) study, children's understanding of story is investigated as an outcome of different pedagogical arrangements.

To summarize, previous research into children's narrative remembering has investigated this practice as, metaphorically speaking, a window into other abilities in children, and how to support children's development. However, the very process of children's retelling is still to a large extent understudied. Some important features of the present study that indicates that it could contribute further to our knowledge of how children remember and retell stories is that we analyse these (i) as processes, not products (e.g., how much children remember), that is, how remembering/retelling is done by children, (ii) over the short and long term, and, in addition, (iii) in terms of the child's own perspective on the activity, through her reflections when watching herself on film retelling the story.

Method and methodology

A basis for this empirical study is the Canadian *From3to3* –project, which started in 2005. The purpose of this project is to develop language and social reasoning skills in minority language children from the age of 3 to grade 3. From 2013, the program is running also in a Swedish preschool (in Sweden, preschool denotes early childhood education and care for children 1 to 5 years); as in the Canadian study, with multilingual children. In concrete terms, the activities are structured thus: the participating teachers gather the children and tell rhymes and oral stories. The children are later encouraged to orally retell these rhymes and stories to each other (see Pihl, Peterson, & Pramling, 2017, for further information about this project).

Empirical data, transcription, selection of cases, and analysis

The empirical data for this study was generated in the preschool already described. From a larger corpus of data, consisting of 12 children aged 3-5 years retelling in total 19 stories, in this study three retelling activities are analysed. The storytelling activities were videotaped from fall 2014 to spring 2016. These activities lasted on average about 7 minutes. The analysis is reported closely adjacent to excerpts from the empirical data.

The activities were documented by a static video camera directed toward the children who sat on a rug facing the teacher. During activities with only two participants, they sat facing each other; on these occasions two video cameras were used in order to capture their body language. On the final activity analysed in the present study, where the focus child and the teacher watch a film of the child's previous storytelling, the film was displayed on a laptop and the child and teacher/researcher sat beside each other. A static camera was directed toward them. Behind them was placed a mirror, allowing us to capture both what happened on the screen and how the participants reacted, which is, arguably, important in such a situation (Peterson, 2011).

When translating the transcripts, care has been taken to, as closely as possible, mimic the participants' speech (see Jidai, Kultti, & Pramling, 2017, for a discussion). Since the children speak Swedish as an additional language, there are on occasion some awkward turns of phrase. When necessary, we have added a clarifying word within parenthesis. In the transcripts, except for comma and point we avoid imposing literate conventions such as initial upper-case letter and question marks. Words within double brackets indicate that what is heard is not entirely clear but has been interpreted as transcribed.

The chosen samples are representative of the total empirical material in the sense that they contain the same kind of retelling activities (i.e., how activities are structured) and the same kind of stories (trickster stories), and population (children of the same age all speaking Swedish as an additional language).

Generating and analysing data are contingent on theoretical point of departure (Derry et al., 2010). With an interest in the processes of retelling and remembering, video recordings of storytelling activities (cf. Säljö, 2009) become critical, allowing us to analyse not only children's stories and what they say but also features of activities such as embodiment. The entire data set was transcribed and reviewed in mutual data sessions, critical to these iterative processes. On the basis of the review, critical activities and events having bearing on our theoretically-motivated research questions were selected. The transcripts were analysed as responsively unfolding utterances, allowing participants' voices to come to the fore, critical to an interest in children's perspectives

(cf. Sommer et al, 2010). Analytical claims are closely grounded in transcribed excerpts of data. This makes transparent and possible to critically scrutinize claims made, instrumental to the validity of the study (Schoultz, Säljö, & Wyndhamn, 2001).

The article is structured by presenting examples from these three retelling activities where the same story is told by a child (Emina, 5 years old). First, Emina retells the story she has been told by the teacher to a friend; second, she later retells the story together with the same friend; and third and finally, commenting on what she sees when looking at a video recording of her own previous retelling. The first retelling is done shortly after having heard the teacher tell the story, the second retelling is done 7.5 months after the first retelling, and the third and here final retelling is done 5 months after the second retelling (and thus more than 1 year after initially having heard the story).

Following the retelling of the same story by the same child, under different conditions, allows us to study in detail the nature of these narrative activities. On the basis of our analysis, we will also discuss what we can say about how the activities engaged in appear to the child, that is, what kind of activities these are from the child's perspective.

The story retold

Preschools participating in the *from3to3* program have access to catalogues of stories and rhymes; the story retold in the present study, "The Fox and the Walking Stick" is one example. It does not appear to be publicly available outside the program, but there are similar stories found on the Internet, allegedly a Bulgarian folk tale. The story is about a fox who finds a stick when she is out walking, thinking this can come to use. When the evening comes she knocks on a woman's door and asks if she can sleep in her home. She is allowed to do so. In the morning she throws the stick into the open fire and claims that someone has stolen it. As compensation she wants a chicken. The procedure is repeated in every new home she visits; she secretly eats the animal she has been given as compensation for her alleged loss and demands a new one as compensation. This plays out until a shepherd gets suspicious and puts a dog in the fox's sack (saying that it is a lamb). When the fox opens the sack, the dog gets out and chases her to a hole in the woods. Covering up in the hole, not big enough to fully encompass her, the fox asks her body parts how they helped her escape from the dog. The tail replies that it did not help, so the fox lets it hang out of the hole and the dog bites it off.

Ethics

In research involving children, researchers need to take a reflexive stance through the study. On the one hand, children can be perceived as vulnerable and unable to realize what it means to participate in a study; on the other hand, they can be perceived as competent

agents of their own lives, with a right to participate in research activities (Farrell, 2016). Critical to the research process is the researcher establishing a relationship to the children. In the present case, the researcher conducting the field work was well-known by the children, being one of their ordinary preschool teachers. The study follows the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). The children and their caregivers were informed about the purpose and design of the study, before the study commenced, and were asked whether they would like to participate. They were informed that all participation was voluntary and that participants can decide to end their participation at any time, should they want to. They were also informed that participating children and the preschool would be given pseudonyms when reporting the research. The children were subsequently asked, on every occasion to be documented in the study, whether they would like to participate and be filmed. Evidently, it may be difficult for young children to understand what it means to participate in a study; therefore the researcher/preschool teacher was careful to be sensitive to any signal that the children did not feel comfortable being filmed. Letting the children view themselves telling stories (see Excerpt 3, below, for an example), in addition to generating further insight into their understanding and remembering, provided a way of allowing them to get a sense of what being filmed during storytelling activities means. This activity, thus, also fulfilled an ethical function.

Findings

The excerpts analysed are from retelling activities where one child (Emina) first retells it to another child (Maria) (Excerpt 1a–d), and then the two girls later collaboratively retell it to the teacher (Excerpt 2a–c). Finally, Emina watches herself on video retelling the story, and comments on what she sees and remembers (Excerpt 3).

The First Retelling: Emina Retelling the Story to Maria

Maria is asked if she wants Emina to tell her a story, which she wants. The two girls sit on opposite chairs and the teacher/researcher is behind the video camera.

Excerpt 1a: Changing an unfamiliar word to a more familiar one

1.	TEACHER:	so
2.	Emina:	once upon a time there was a... a hm girl who is a fox and she knocked ((knocks
3		on her chair)) on the door. please can I sleep on your ehh bed, she said

The teacher saying “so” is taken by Emina as a signal to start the storytelling. She opens with the classical phrase, “once upon a time”, before hesitating and then saying “a girl who is a fox”. Emina then proceeds to the sequence where the fox knocks on the door, an event she recounts through knocking on the chair she is sitting on. She continues the story by saying that “please can I sleep on your ehh bed, she said”, referring to the fox. In the original story, the fox asks whether she can sleep by the fireplace. The Swedish word used by the teacher (“*spis*”) can be translated to English either as “fireplace” or as “stove”. A fireplace might be something unfamiliar to a 4-year-old child (in ‘modern societies’), while sleeping is associated with a bed. Emina’s hesitant utterance, “ehh” (line 2) can be interpreted as indicating that she is trying to recall what happened in the story or searching for a word that makes sense. In this short sequence the child *transforms the story* by changing what may be an *unfamiliar word (and concept) to a more familiar one*. She also jumps ahead *directly to a critical event of the story* (in effect skipping parts of the story leading up to this event), grounding the story in a *conventional phrase* – not used by the teacher in the initial storytelling – and presenting the main character of the story.

Excerpt 1b: Retaining meaning with alternative wording

4	Emina:	noo there is no ((throws her hands out)) room. but then I can take the tail
5		((grabs a pretend tail)) and and eh put on the head. and the boy said okay. and
6		then when it gets... sun he said I have no chicken ((said in a loud voice)) I

In the teacher’s storytelling, the fox persuades a woman to let her in, saying that she can put her walking stick under the bench. In the morning, the fox throws the walking stick into the fire. This sequence disappears in Emina’s retelling, and perhaps because of this also the character (the woman). Instead “the woman” from the original story is transformed into “the boy”, and “in the morning” is transformed into “when it gets... sun”. The transformation from “in the morning” to “when it gets... sun” is logical since the sun rises in the morning. With this alternative wording, the basic structure is retained. Words such as ‘woman’ and ‘man’ (Swedish: ‘*kvinna*’ and ‘*man*’) may be quite exotic to children; typically, at least in the Swedish language, children would use the equivalents of ‘girl’ and ‘boy’ also for adults, as Emina here does. The excerpt thus shows how she transforms the story through *replacing unfamiliar words with more familiar ones*.

Excerpt 1c: Enacting the story with embodied means and shifting tone of voice

7	Emina:	want my chicken he said, and she. and then knocked on another door ((knocks
8		on her chair)). and then kind boy can I (save) sleep to your bed. there is
9		no room ((throws her hands out)) and then, then I will put my tail here in
10		the head ((raises her hand to her head)). and he slept and slept and he slept
11		quietly ((leans her head and shuts her eyes)) and then when it gets sun, then

Emina says that the fox first calls out “I have no chicken” and after that “I want my chicken”, before jumping ahead to the sequence where the fox once again knocks on a door. Already when Emina hears the story for the first time, she is actively participating in the teacher’s storytelling, through repeating the names of the animals introduced in the story. She also repeats gestures used by the teacher, such as knocking on the chair (see Excerpt 1a, line 2). Now when she retells the story, she uses such embodied enactment to render the story in a manner similar to the teacher’s previous telling. In this sequence of the story, the fox is first stopped from coming inside to sleep. Emina says that the boy replied that there is not enough room and she throws her arms out saying this (to indicate that nothing can be done). Enacting how the fox explains that she can put her tail around her head, Emina puts her hand on her head and when she says that the fox slept, she lowers her voice. The sequence shows how the child *takes over embodied enactment cues* from the teacher’s telling.

Excerpt 1d: Introducing and excluding elements from the story

14	Emina:	walked] so... and then... run came the dog and jumped on the fox and
15		then... the fox run so fast ((waves her arms)) he could
16	Emina:	and then he putted ((put)) him and the dog saw-ed ((saw)) the tail.. and then
17		((speaking louder))... took ((takes a step forward and pretends to take
18		Something)) the tail. and he cries the fox, he has no tail. and then... <i>snipp</i>
19		<i>slapp var svag</i> eh eh ehm another saga ((smiles))

In line 16, Emina says that the fox lies down, not mentioning the fox hole. After having said “then” (line 12) Emina pauses briefly. In addition to “then” marking out that the story consists of sequences it also gives Emina time to remember what’s next in the story.

She enacts how the dog takes the fox's tail. Furthermore, Emina ascribes feelings to the fox: "he cries the fox" (line 18), which was not part of the teacher's telling. This excerpt exemplifies not only how *new elements*, such as feelings, are *introduced* but also how *others are left out* (e.g., how the fox talks to her own body parts). As we have already mentioned, in the teacher's storytelling the fox is chased by a dog into the woods where she hides in a hole. In this sequence she talks to her body parts, asking how they helped her get away from the dog. Having a verbal dialogue with one's own body parts may seem somewhat strange and therefore it might not be considered or remembered in retelling. (However, the next time Emina retells the story, she includes it.) The utterance "*snipp, slap var svag*" is her version of a *conventional conclusion*, and marks the end of the story in a way not preceded by the teacher's telling (of this story).

The Second Retelling: Emina and Maria Retelling the Story Together

Seven and a half months after having retold the story the first time, Emina retells it again; this time together with her friend, Maria. Since it has been quite a while since the story was told first to, and then retold by, Emina, she is initially a bit unsure about how it goes. The teacher suggests that the two girls help each other to remember it. Maria remains silent throughout the retelling, but, as will be seen, she still participates in the retelling through embodied enactment.

Excerpt 2a: Meta-communicating about the story

1	Emina:	okay it starts like this, once upon a time there was a fox. then he wanted to
2		go out and sleep. knock on the door ((knocks with her hand on the chair))
3	Maria:	((knocks with her hand on her chair))
4	Emina:	please can I sleep with you? no no no there is no room. please I will
5		I will ((leaning her head backwards)) ah I again forget. I will put my
6		tail on my heady ((head)). okay then... just come in ((in a lighter voice))
7		then when it was morning the fox he he took his cane ((holds her hands
8		as if holding a cane)) and putted ((put)) up ((lifts her hands
9		above her head)) then said ((lowers her hands)) where's my cane where's my
10		cane ((in a lighter voice)) you shall give me candy ((smiles)) said the fox
11		mmm ((shuts her eyes, then looks at the ceiling)) aha ((leans forward)) I want
12		candy now I have lost my... ((looks up at the ceiling))

In lines 1 and 2 (Excerpt 2a), Emina clarifies what the story is about, that is, takes a *meta-perspective* on the story: it is about a fox who “wanted to go out and sleep”, whereas the teacher introduces the story as to be about a fox trying to trick people to get animals to eat. That Emina, like the teacher before, states what the story is about in intentional terms (“he *wanted*” and “a fox *trying* to trick people”, respectively) is important, since narratives are driven by human (or human-like, i.e., anthropomorphized) *intentional action* (Bruner, 1990; Oshiro et al., 2017). Still, what the story is about is, perceived differently by the teacher and the child, as indicated by their meta-talk.

Emina speaks with the voice of the characters in the story (i.e., from their perspectives); first the fox asking if she can come in and sleep and then the antagonist saying that there is not enough room. Emina then starts a response from the fox: “please I will I will” (lines 4-5), stops, leaning her head back and bursts out “ahhh I again forget” (line 5). This is a rare occasion of a child in retelling meta-communicating in terms of forgetting/remembering. Immediately after having said that she forgets, Emina continues, speaking from the perspective of the fox: “I will put my tail on my heady (head)” (lines 5-6). Again, taking the voice of the antagonist, Emina says “okay then... just come in” (line 6). The shift between protagonist (fox) and antagonist (whose identity is never explicated) is marked with a shift in tone of voice.

Notable is that when Emina first told the story to Maria she transformed “in the morning” to “when it gets... sun” (see Excerpt 1b line 6). Now when she again retells the story, she uses practically the original expression of “when it was morning” (line 7). The walking stick was absent from her first retelling but now, when again retelling it, it returns. In the teacher’s rendering, the walking stick burns up. Possibly, this expression (Swedish: “*brunnit upp*”) is new to Emina; in her rendering, the fox holds the walking stick above her head, that is “up” (line 8), but it does not burn up. The sequence that explains how the walking stick disappears is lost altogether in Emina’s retelling. She uses her voice to characterize how the fox exclaims “where’s my cane, where’s my cane, you shall give me candy” (lines 9-10). In response to what may be difficult to understand due to the unfamiliarity of the expression of the original story, Emina *invents another action, filling the same function* in the story.

Having invented a new part (the fox asking for candy), there is some hesitation about how to proceed with the story, but with some prompts from the teacher, Emina goes on with her retelling. Her utterance “I have lost my...” (Excerpt 2a, line 12) may indicate that in Emina’s understanding of the story the walking stick disappeared in an inexplicable way.

Excerpt 2b: Telling that something happens but not how it happens

13	TEACHER:	what had he lost, his
14	Emina:	((turns around on the chair and closes her eyes))
15	TEACHER:	was it the cane
16	Emina:	the cane, now you'll have to give me candy I have lost my cane
17	TEACHER:	mm
18	Emina:	and then he had (eated[ate]) candy he walked on another. walked walked ((walks))
19		with her fingers on the chair and her legs)) walked. knocked ((knocks on her chair))
20	Maria:	((knocks on her chair))
21	Emina:	please can I sleep with you? no no there is no room ((in a stronger voice)) it said
22		the man. but I can put my tail under. okay then ((in a lighter voice)) said that boy
23		and then when it was again morning then he said, where's my candy where's my

As the retelling unfolds, there are many examples of how Emina enacts the story with embodied means. The *tone of her voice* also changes to *match the unfolding events*. With a strong tone of voice she says: “no no there is no room”, to characterize the response from the man (Excerpt 2b, line 21). She then takes the voice of the fox saying “but I can put my tail under” (line 22). Again taking the voice of the man, she then uses a lighter voice as she says “okay”. “The man” and “the boy” are used synonymously (cf. Excerpt 1b, line 5). As mentioned above, Emina transformed “in the morning” to “when it gets... sun” in her first retelling (see Excerpt 1b, line 6). Now the expression “was again morning” (line 23) returns.

Excerpt 2c: The lamb returns through adhering to a song

24	Emina	candy ((with lighter voice)) and then, now you'll have to give me a chicken said the
25		fox. and then... mmm what's called... okay then but don't forget it (inaudible). then
26		shall sleep, said the fox. and then when... it was morning again then the fox it said,
27		where's my chicken ((in a stronger voice)) now you'll have to give me a a
28		<i>bä bä vita lamm</i> ((white lamb)), I want to eat it ((smiles)) said... okay then
29		now I get, now I go another's house now (then sleepped (slept) again to he)
30		walked walked walked ((walks with her fingers on the chair, turns her back
31	Maria:	towards the camera) hah I saw one more house knock (knocks with her hand
32		on the chair))

Continuing the retelling, Emina gives voice to the fox asking for a chicken. As in Excerpt 2a, line 7, Emina uses the expression “morning”. Stating that “it was morning again” (Excerpt 2c, line 26, our emphasis) indicates that she has perceived and is cognizant of one of the recurring patterns of the story. After having left out the lamb in the first retelling, Emina now reintroduces it, saying “now you'll have to give me a a *bä bä vita lamm*”. With this expression, she elaborates on the lamb of the story; rendering this character in terms of “*bä bä vita lamm*”, a phrase from a well-known children's song. Emina also *introduces a new element* into the story; the fox expressing her *intention* to eat the animals: “I *want* to eat it” (line 28, our emphasis). Continuing taking the voice of the fox, she says “hah I saw one more house”. The use of “*one more* house” (our emphasis), while not occurring in these terms in the original story, again indicates that she has perceived and considers in retelling the *recurring pattern(s)* of the story (cf. above). Finally, in the sequence, Emina states an action (knocking) and enacts it with embodied means (knocking on the chair, as does Maria, line 31). This is one of many indicators of the children having picked up and using different semiotic means, other than verbal ones, from the teacher's storytelling, when retelling the story themselves.

The Third Retelling: Emina and the Teacher/Researcher Watch a Video Recording of Emina Retelling the Story

In preschool settings it is common to arrange for reflecting on activities and one's experiences by letting children watch photos or video recordings of activities they have been involved in. The teacher/researcher arranges for Emina to watch the video recordings of herself retelling the story, with an interest in how she reflects on it. This

approach can also be understood as an ethical issue, letting the child take part of the video recordings of herself. The teacher/researcher asks Emina if she wants to watch herself on the video film retelling and if it is alright that the conversation is video recorded. Emina agrees to this. The teacher/researcher also explains that she is interested in finding out how Emina does when she retells stories. The video recording is from when Emina and Maria retell the story to the teacher 5 months earlier. The teacher/researcher and Emina sit next to each other with the computer with the video recording on the table in front of them, and there is a mirror behind them. A video camera is directed towards Emina's face and the mirror behind her to enable following what happens on the film at the same time. In Excerpt 3, text in *italics* denotes what is said on the video recording the child and teacher look at.

Excerpt 3: Elaborating with two identities

104	Emina:	<i>then and then when it was morning it was morning... now you'll have to give me</i>
105		<i>a</i>
106		<i>dog ohh ((looks at the teacher and smiles))</i>
106	TEACHER:	hi hi hi
108	Emina:	no not a dooog ((leans forward towards the screen and raises her voice))
109	TEACHER:	wasn't it like that
110	Emina:	no... it eh it was a it was a lamb again it was a lamb
111	TEACHER:	aha
112	Emina:	she doesn't she doesn't know that Emina (points at the screen and smiles)
113	TEACHER:	that Emina has forgotten how it went but this Emina remembers
114	Emina:	yes
115	TEACHER:	how strange I think that that Emina has forgotten but this one remembers
116	Emina:	it was me
117	TEACHER:	is that you
118	Emina:	yees

This example contains the only other example from our data of a child explicitly commenting on the retelling in terms of “not knowing” (cf. Excerpt 2a, line 5, on ‘forget’).

Listening to herself retelling the story, Emina explicitly corrects herself (Excerpt 3, lines 108 and 110). She also meta-comments that “she doesn’t know that Emina” (line 112). As the activity evolves, she constitutes two identities for herself, one on the screen, who does not know, and one in the here-and-now, who does know (reformulated by the teacher in terms of “forgotten” and “remembers”, line 113). Her commenting on and correcting herself in this manner further serve to illuminate the intricate relationship between situational conditions and remembering (cf. below): there is no linearity in that something learnt is increasingly forgotten; rather, what was not remembered (or considered relevant) in the time of retelling a story may on a later occasion again be remembered (rendered). This testifies to the importance of understanding narrative remembering as a communicative practice, where considerations about relevance and the perceived audience are constitutive features.

Discussion and conclusions

In this study we were interested in investigating empirically how primarily a focus child orally retells a story she has been told by a preschool teacher. The analytical focus was on what the child picks up from the story told and how she introduces new elements and in other ways transforms the story, when retelling it to someone else (cf. Bartlett, 1932/1995). The results show that the retelling of the story by the focus child (Emina) – with some assistance from her occasional partner (Maria) and the teacher – is characterized by her (i) retaining the basic structure (recurring patterns) of the story (i.e., coming to a series of houses, talking one’s way in, sleeping over, eating an animal and demanding a new one); (ii) embodied enactment and shifting tone of voice between characters of the story; (iii) rendering what may be unfamiliar words and concepts in alternative and more familiar terms (cf. Kultti, 2017); and (iv) introducing new elements to the story (onomatopoeia, and enacting and explicating feelings, and conventional phrases to initiate and conclude a story); and (v) associative playfulness.

Hence, Emina shows that she has picked up many features of the story. She has picked up features of not only *what happened in the story* but also *how the story was told by the teacher*. Accordingly, an analytical distinction can be made between rendering elements of the story (the plot), on the one hand, and the practice of telling a story, on the other. Clearly, these are not empirically distinct matters. Phrased differently, Emina not only picks up elements of the unfolding story but also features of the teacher’s storytelling (i.e., how to tell a story): through embodied enactment and shifting tone of voice in manners similar to the teacher’s previous telling.

At times, Emina’s retelling renders *that* something happened, but not *how* it happened (see e.g., the disappearance of the candy, Excerpt 2a, line 12 and Excerpt 2b, line 23).

Without any clarification of how this happened, the event is not comprehensible to a listener who is not already familiar with the story. Being responsive to what needs to be told (made explicit) in a story in order to make sense to a listener is critical to developing the skill to narrate (Pihl et al., 2017; Pramling & Ødegaard, 2011). Hence, here we can locate a developmental space for teachers to contribute to supporting children's storytelling.

We were also interested in discussing the meta-question of what the activity participated in means to the child, that is, how it appears from the child's perspective (cf. Sommer et al., 2010). On two occasions – and these are the only instances of this in our data corpus – Emina meta-talks about the activity in terms of 'forgetting' (see Excerpt 2a, line 5, and Excerpt 3, line 112 'doesn't know'). Hence, here she indicates that she perceives the activity in these terms, rather than, for example, as an invitation to associate more freely and make up a (partly) different story. (There is also another instance of the word "forget" being used by Emina, Excerpt 2c, line 23; however, this is in the context of the story, not as a meta-comment about her own storytelling.)

That some elements are left out or replaced by the child in retelling but subsequently re-entered by herself in subsequent retelling indicates that the practice of narrative remembering is far more complex than what can be conceptualized as a matter of what the child does and does not remember (Hirst & Manier, 1995; Wertsch, 2002). Rather, children's remembering (as that of adults) arguably needs to be understood and analyzed in terms of ongoing activities of narrating (e.g., Adelswärd, Nilholm, & Säljö, 1997; Middleton & Edwards, 1990), which always implies some communicative adjustment to perceived (or imagined) listeners (what they may know, be interested in and understand). In addition, this serves as a reminder that what children understand may be more than they are able to communicate in words; and to follow a narrative is less demanding than telling a story.

This study contributes with detailed knowledge about the process of children's narrative remembering. In doing so, the study clarifies how children's retelling and remembering are clearly related to the sense they make of the story and the activity engaged in. This implies that there is an important reflexivity in these practices: when teachers support the processes of storytelling and remembering, they also support children's sense making, and conversely, when supporting children's understanding of stories, teachers assist children's remembering.

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