

Institutionen för pedagogik, kommunikation och lärande

Children´s collaborative
technology-mediated story
making.

Instructional challenges in early childhood
education.

av

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Abstract

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The overarching purpose of the present thesis is to contribute to the understanding of what kinds of activities emerge when children in two Swedish preschool classes are instructed to create stories in collaboration by the use of digital technologies. For the present thesis, this entails empirically studying children's storymaking activities with an analytical focus on the interaction between the children, the teacher and the cultural tools used. What motivates the research is the expansive digitalisation that increases children's access to technology and experiences of digital texts from an early age. The development raises questions about how these wider social and cultural changes transform children's literacy activities within the institutional context and what challenges it poses to literacy education. The theory underlying the thesis is a sociocultural perspective grounded in the epistemological view of learning as contingent on social interaction taking place in situated and sense-making contexts and encompasses available cultural tools. Another premise is that narrative genre, which often serves as a means for engaging children in their early reading and writing, constitutes an essential mediator for communication and sense making. The data material was generated through video observations of 16 storymaking activities involving two preschool teachers and 16 six-year-old children. The films were partly transcribed and analysed according to the principles of Interaction Analysis. Additionally, 15 digitally produced stories were collected. The thesis consists of four empirical studies and an extended summary where the overall findings show what primarily mediates the children's storymaking and contributes to the participants' level of success in establishing sufficient intersubjectivity to perform the task, is the teachers' organisation of the activities, the introduction, the contingent scaffolding strategies, the design of the selected technologies and the children's common experience of popular culture. The findings show that the children, while practicing the ability to collaboratively negotiate an intelligible story, must simultaneously learn how to operate the digital technologies, which to some extent proves to be demanding and implies a subordination of the narration. At the same time, the activities and certain inherent qualities of the technologies appear to contribute to an aesthetic experience as the children, while narrating, build upon their cultural experience and use their repertoire of semiotic means, such as verbal and written language, images, colours and forms. A noticeable difficulty is the transformation between means, for example from the verbal to the written, or to the visual art. These difficulties largely depend on the governed laws of the semiotic means but are also evoked by the teachers' scaffolding and the meaning potentials offered by the technologies. The pedagogical challenges lie in finding a coherent alignment between learning goal, form of instruction and support, and choice of technology.