



Brief

Listening-storytelling with children in preschool. Encountering the social, ethical, and political challenges of the future together with preschool children

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The purpose of this article is to, with starting point in children's stories about the future, explore other and new ways of listening and storytelling in Early Childhood Education research. Based on the Italian town Reggio Emilia's municipal preschools and Loris Malaguzzi's and Carla Rinaldi's work and development together with preschool children of Reggio Emilia's pedagogical philosophy more than 70 years ago, this article develops an updated pedagogy of listening inspired by Donna Haraway (2016; 2017) and Anna Tsing (2015), feminist new materialism and activist narrative research. This study is theoretically and methodologically inspired by Tsing's and Haraway's scientific engagement with *arts of noticing, storytelling, and scale analysis*.

As part of this investigation, the concept of *listening-storytelling* is created, where listening and storytelling are enacted intermingled simultaneously and mutually. In this study, listening is thus included in narrative storytelling practices in preschool, and vice versa, continually in interaction with the social and material world we are of and in. The empirical material consists of pedagogical documentation produced within the framework of an intervention study where children and teachers together explored what it might be like to live in the future, in hundred years. In the analyses, careful attention is paid to the different forms of listening-storytelling that take place in today's preschool, with a focus on how crisis and crisis preparedness are talked about and played with in this creative and explorative hands-on project with 5-year-olds.

The following research questions are explored:

- How can listening-storytelling with children in preschool contribute to transforming a pedagogy of listening from Reggio Emilia into a listening feminist activist neo-materialist and contemporary storytelling practice?
- How can a pedagogy of listening that is also a storytelling pedagogy be updated and implemented in Swedish modern preschools, in today's situation in the preschool and society, to encounter the social, ethical, and political challenges of the present and the future together with children in the preschool?

A further research focus is to examine the emergent feminist research methods put to work in this study, focusing on intervention rather than understanding and identification, and examine how feminist and activist arts of living with the world are included in empirical material from preschool practices, in this study in the form of pedagogical documentation.

The analysis shows that when Reggio Emilia's pedagogy of listening is transferred to a contemporary preschool practice, with feminist new materialist theories and scale analysis, an expanded *sympoietic* and *polyphonic* listening emerges that weaves the preschool together with our contemporary society and current and future societal crisis. A listening-storytelling pedagogy, sympoietic and polyphonic, can contribute with alternative ways of living in and with the world, to encounter challenges of the present and the future together with children in preschool. Sympoietic listening can operate as a figure of thought in early childhood research as well as in pedagogical work with preschool children. It is a hopeful proposal that invites researchers, teachers, and preschool children to practice the arts noticing and listening-storytelling and experience and think-feel what it is like to live *with* a problem, *with* a crisis, to be here-and-now, with the world, the environment, and the climate. This might support our ability to imagine other and yet not conceivable futures, which is a significant and powerful thought in the face of the challenges that society is confronting today.

Keywords: *listening; preschool; arts of noticing; storytelling*