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Abstract

Interpretation of children's pictures – possibilities and constrains

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Children's pictures can be looked upon from different theoretical perspectives and today the perspective of pictures as communication is advancing. From sociocultural perspective children's pictures can be viewed as products from a social practice, created in tune with peer cultures, media and as bridges to other practices. They are regarded as means for communication and are used by us researchers to try to gain understanding for children's everyday life. What can we get to know by children's pictures? The researcher does not have to look for one truth, one perspective, but rather open up for several interpretations and point on several perspectives. In what way can we use children's pictures as a methodological tool and in what way can they be analysed? Possibilities and constrains?

This paper takes its point of departure within sociocultural perspectives of children's meaning making (Vygotskij, 1934; Wenger, 1998; Wertsch, 1998) and make use of Bakhtin's (1991) theories of communication and dialogue. Aronsson (1997), Löfstedt (2001) and Änggård (2005) belong to those Swedish researchers that in their studies view children's pictures as communication, rather than the prevalent view upon children's pictures as artistic aesthetical or psychological expressions. I have built on Aronsson's results from comparative studies of children's pictures created before modern massmedia made its entrance in children's pictorial language and to the middle of the twentieth century, together with Löfstedt's (2001) and Änggård's (2005) result from studies of children's making of pictures in the educational practice and in dialogue with the age in which we are living. My studies show how the digital media culture are reflected in the children's productions and how the computer gives prerequisites for the making of pictures with a special content, expression and structure.

The analysis is built upon two stories mainly driven by pictures. The stories are made by two children, a boy, seven years old, and a girl, eight years old. The children have made their stories in their after school centre. The stories are made with a digital multimedia software and the multimedia productions have been analysed building on the assumption that children draw that which is important for them. The aim is to make visible the significance of narrative structure, reaccentuation, intertextuality, multivoicedness and various levels of interpretation. These conceptions have been used to discover what theoretical concepts generated from the creation of preceding generations mean in the narratives of the children and how this constitute a ground for reconstruction of culture.

More and more I have come to reflect upon children's pictures as methodological tools and to me this is a complex issue, but highly worth considering. I hope for an interesting discussion about how we can use children's pictures as a tool for understanding children's world.

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