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Embodiment and Ethnographic Sensitivity in Narrative Inquiry

Katja Sutela[1], Juha Ojala[1], & Marja-Leena Juntunen[2]

Author Note

[1] University of Oulu, Finland.

[2] University of the Arts Helsinki, Finland.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Katja Sutela, Music Education, P.O. Box 2000, Faculty of Education, FI-90014 University of Oulu, Finland. Contact: katja.sutela@oulu.fi

Abstract

In this article we reflect on how aspects of the researcher's embodiment may infuse narrative inquiry. For reflecting on the role of the researcher's embodiment, we use an opportunity provided by a case study in which the development of one adolescent student's agency during a teaching intervention was observed, analyzed and presented in a narrative form. The case is a part of the first author's ongoing ethnographic practitioner research, which examines the possibilities of Dalcroze-based music teaching in fostering students' agency in the context of special music education in Finnish lower secondary school. The PhD study focuses on students' capacity for narrative self-expression through non-verbal communication, by telling stories *out of* and *through* the body as indicators of agency.

In this article we explore how different aspects of embodied interaction between a teacher-researcher and a participating student may infuse narrative analysis. We identify four ways in which the teacher-researcher's and the student's embodied interaction shaped the interpretation of the narrative that the student told through his body and bodily expression: *clarity of experience*, *empathy, valence* (of experience), and *balance* (of power relations and roles). While also contributing to the research in special and music education by dealing with inclusive aspects of music education, this article invites other narrative researchers to enter further dialogue on embodiment in narrative analysis by asking: What is the meaning of the relationship between the researcher and the participant in terms of embodied experiences, senses, feelings, perceptions and emotions?

Keywords: embodiment, ethnographic sensitivity, narrative inquiry, special music education, Dalcroze approach

Introduction

Working as a teacher with students with special educational needs (SEN)[1] is highly rewarding yet includes pedagogical, methodological and ethical challenges that require reevaluation of positions, values and practices. The joys and frustrations of teaching, getting to know the students and their individual needs, and monitoring their progress oblige the practitioner to a dialogue with students, parents, colleagues and with herself as a human being and a pedagogue. When the teacher is simultaneously a researcher, further demands arise, as the teacher-researcher takes into account the pertinent methodological issues of data production, analysis and reporting. This all calls for sensitivity to emotions, power relations, ethics, and different aspects of embodiment, such as nonverbal communication. This also calls for critical reflection on how they influence the inquiry.

The purpose of this article is to examine how different aspects of embodied interaction between a teacher-researcher and a participating student may infuse narrative analysis. With our thematic analysis, illustrated by episodes later, we highlight the diversity of articulations and interpretations of embodied experiences in the process of producing and analyzing data from video-recorded classroom events and encounters between the teacher-researcher and the student. The notion of embodiment here holds that the body-mind is an integrated entity and the locus of all perception, experience, knowledge, and agency. It recognizes the mind as embodied and the body as inseparate from the mind. Through our embodied exploration,

[1] Based on the Basic Education Act (1998), in Finland, the student is entitled to guidance and adequate support in learning throughout the basic education. Support has to be given as soon as the need for assistance becomes apparent. There are three levels of support in learning: general, enhanced and special support. If the enhanced support to the student is not sufficient, an administrative decision for special support is made based on pedagogical examination, supplemented by psychological, medical, or social assessments.

through movements, gestures and bodily interaction, we become to know the world, others and ourselves, and become capable of expressing our thinking, knowing, and feeling. (See e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Johnson & Rohrer, 2007; Shapiro, 2010; Matyja & Schiavio, 2013; Määttänen, 2015; Maes, 2016). This stance abandons the metaphysical and epistemological dichotomies of mind-body dualism.

The embodied experience of the narrative researcher can evoke critical examination and intense moments of self-reflection regarding the role of embodiment in the process of analysis (Sparkes & Smith, 2012). When studying human practices and using qualitative methods, it is necessary to understand what kind of impact embodied interaction may have on the process of data production and analysis. The teacher-researcher is, after all, a human being susceptible to misinterpretations while also entitled to emotional, holistic reactions in the process of embodied interaction. For the sake of trustworthiness of research, the misinterpretations may be reduced by reflection and conscious, systematic attention to the issues that may contribute to the infusion into the inquiry. This turns the analytic lens on the other side of the narrative analysis.

Commenting on an earlier special issue on the state of the art of narrative inquiry (*Narrative Inquiry* vol 16 no 1), Brett Smith (2007, p. 395) pointed out the need “for an embodied rather than a disembodied narrative inquiry”. According to Smith (ibid., p. 394), we are at an early stage of understanding how the body is always connected through narrative and how narratives are embodied, although “narrative inquiry might benefit enormously from a fuller engagement with theories of embodiment”. Similarly, Ellingson (2006, p. 298), in the context of qualitative health research, called for researchers to “represent their bodies by incorporating autoethnographic narratives, drawing on all of their senses, interrogating the connections between their bodily signifiers and research processes, and experimenting with the semantics of self and body.” With this article, we aim to contribute to the debate on and the understanding of the role of embodiment and ethnographic sensitivity in research in the contexts of music education, SEN education and narrative inquiry.

The discourse on the role of the researcher’s embodiment has drawn on, for example, ethnography (Coffey, 1999), embodied sociology (which regards the social as emerging from living, corporeal emotional beings, see Inckle, 2007; Shilling, 2007; Sparkes & Smith, 2012), and feminist theory (in which knowledge is produced through the embodied ways of being in the world, see Butler, 1999; Price & Shildrick, 1999; Ellingson, 2006). For example, Ellingson (2006, p. 298) states that the researcher’s sense of embodiment, experiences, senses and emotions keep her rooted in the awareness that knowledge is produced through and by the body, which unavoidably affects all aspects of the research process. By paying attention to the researcher’s self and one’s bodily reactions both during and after the fieldwork, the researcher may get a holistic view about the embodied nature of the research, and gain thick descriptions pertinent to ethnographic research.

The researcher’s lived body as a resource in ethnographic fieldwork has been outlined, for example, by Coffey (1999) and Monaghan (2006). The researcher’s body and the lived experiences up until and during the fieldwork construct the basis where her knowledge is built and thus make a remarkable contribution to the analysis process. Sparkes and Smith (2012) ask how the researcher might begin to engage in ways in which his or her body is linked with the different forms of analysis and how the empathy within the process of analysis has effects on the narrative analysis. They maintain that "[b]eing tuned into our own embodiment creates a whole other dimension from which to understand and engage with our research" (p. 69). Our study is particularly influenced by the "sensitive ethnography of change" (Hasu, 2005) as it understands the ethnographer's position and subjectivity as a resource for narrative analysis. We also consider John-Steiner's (2000) notion of "creative collaboration" where interaction refers not only to the possibility of empowerment but also to the vulnerability of participants in joint creative endeavors. Participation in a teaching intervention[2] creates a shared space in which the narratives of both the researcher and the case participant interact and affect one another. This can be described as "a reflexive interplay", where people's narrative practices shape and are shaped by their narrative environments (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009). The close interplay forms an environment for providing narrative resources and circumstances that enable but do not determine the stories. In order to understand the narrative environments and practices (for example, expressions through bodily movements in this case), ethnographic sensibility is needed.

Pursuing narrative research brings up a variety of challenges and questions in terms of the trustworthiness of the research process: How does the researcher's narrative encounter and enter a dialogue with the narrative of the participants in the meaningful moments in which the data about their agency arises and gets analyzed? What or where is the space for this interaction? As Josselsson (1996) suggests, the mutual and collaborative nature of narrative inquiry enables the relationship between the researcher and the participant by allowing the telling and retelling of those

[2] Intervention here refers to a study design in which the participants undergo intentional changes to their established patterns of action for a certain period of time. In this case, the students participated in added music teaching, influenced by the Dalcroze approach, in order for the researcher to evaluate its impact.

moments and stories that emerge in interaction. Thus, when conducting sensitive research, the relationship between the researcher and the participant as well as their personal, contextual and cultural circumstances create frames for the inquiry.

To address the complex phenomenon of ethnographic sensitivity, we exploit the opportunity provided by a case study (Yin, 2011; Stake, 1995) in which the development of agency of one adolescent student during a music teaching intervention is observed, analyzed and presented in a narrative form (Sutela, Juntunen & Ojala, 2016). The case belongs to the first author's ongoing practitioner research (Cooper & Ellis, 2011) – a Ph.D. project, which examines the possibilities of Dalcroze-based activities in fostering students' (age 15–16) agency through a teaching intervention in special music education in a Finnish lower secondary school.

The researcher's sensitivity is analyzed by asking: How do we as researchers and embodied human beings receive, experience, and interpret participating students' embodied expressions, such as waving of the head, swaying of the arms, or turning away, which communicate their personal stories (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 201)? What emotions, thoughts, and memories do they arouse in us? Finally, how do our perceptions, emotions and experiences affect the narrative analysis of students' responses?

Teaching intervention as a means of data production

The data for the whole project was produced in a Finnish special education school in an intervention where a group of Finnish grade 8 and 9 students (aged 15–16) with special educational needs (SEN) received additional music and movement lessons (one lesson a week) taught by the first author from August 2015 till March 2016. Also the classroom teachers and teaching assistants participated in the intervention. In the music and movement intervention, the teacher-researcher applied the ideas of Dalcroze pedagogy in the context of general music education.

Dalcroze pedagogy is a music teaching approach that enables musical participation, experience and creative expression through whole body movement (see e.g., Juntunen, 2016). It aims at making students both bodily, emotionally and mentally active by integrating sensing, feeling and thinking with bodily action in interaction through music. The therapeutic aspects and possibilities of the Dalcroze approach have been recognized for long. For example, in the context of music therapy, Dutoit (1971) asserts that Dalcrozean education enables a (special needs) student's development of the physical, muscular sense of "me", a feeling of balance that serves as a basis for psychic development and education in general. According to her, the Dalcroze practice also serves as psychomotor re-education and develops perception of space and the body as well as attention, concentration and memory.

The design of the teaching intervention was based on earlier studies. Studies in music education suggest, for example, that Dalcroze teaching improves attention, concentration and memory, promotes social interaction and communication as well as develops musical and bodily skills (e.g., Abril, 2011; Davidson, 2009; Van Der Merwe, 2015; Wang, 2008). In addition, by offering opportunities for music making through body movement, it fosters students' musical agency and sense of self (e.g., Greenhead & Habron, 2015; Juntunen, 2015; Juntunen & Hyvönen, 2004). The therapeutic potentials are being confirmed by studies in modern neuroscience (e.g., Altenmüller, 2015; Altenmüller & Scholz, 2016; Seitz, 2005ab). Regarding the contribution of Dalcroze pedagogy for neurological music therapy, Altenmüller and Scholz (2016) consider both multisensory stimulation and the creative and intersubjective dimensions as fundamental benefits of the approach for the treatment of a patient. According to them, “a musical stimulus is not only a ‘timekeeper’, but a meaningful event that affords a variety of self-regulative, interactive, and sensorimotor processes depending of the agent-music interaction’s degree of complexity” (ibid., p.115). Yet, there are few studies regarding the possibilities of the Dalcroze approach within special music education. In Habron-James’s (2013) study of four children with special educational needs, Dalcroze teaching had a positive impact on children’s well-being through the development of communication skills and sense of contentment in music and movement exercises.

In the intervention, body movement was applied both in teaching music and in students’ (narrative) self-expression. Thus, non-verbal bodily exploration, expression and communication played a crucial role. Using body movement is a meaningful way of working since verbal communication is challenging for these students with special educational needs. It is more natural for them to make sense of their (life and teaching) experiences through telling stories *out of* and *through* their bodies, and their bodies affected the kind of stories told and analysis produced (see Sparkes & Smith, 2012, p. 55). Thus, they manifested both their personal stories and agency through embodied actions, which is in line with the suggestion that narration and the development of agency can be seen as closely linked (see Herman, 2012, p. 220).

The student participants (N=13, from two different classes) had no previous experience of music and movement lessons and were recruited by requesting volunteering teachers and their classes to take part in the study. Since the teacher-researcher had been working as a music teacher in the school in question before, it was not difficult to get permissions (from the principal, form teachers, assistants, therapist, students and their guardians) for the study. The positive positioning of the teacher-researcher as a former music teacher enabled access to the classroom, as the participants trusted her and wanted to collaborate with her (see De Tona, 2006). The goals and contents of teaching were determined and developed during the intervention, as the teacher-researcher got more familiar with the skills and challenges of the participating students.

The case student Noah is a 15-year-old boy with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD)[3]. The teacher-researcher knew Noah from years before as her former student in the school. In the beginning of the intervention, the teachers regarded Noah as a hypersensitive, introvert and lonely boy who did not want to participate in musical activities. The teacher-researcher was aware of these preconceptions related to Noah's participation and the risks of imposing these as well as her own experiences and perceptions on the study.

Based on the descriptions by his teachers, assistants and therapists, and experiences by the teacher-researcher, Noah's position in the spectrum indeed falls more to the high-functioning end of the ASD. He faces the biggest challenges in communication and in being understood: it is difficult for him to verbalize his aspirations, skills, and needs. He expresses needs to explore and interact with the environment in concrete ways by intermittently touching the walls or other people in the room. His body language is non-attending. For example, he often turns away from the center of action, he waves or contracts his arms while walking, and his small and narrow movements in general give a shadow-like impression.

Data collection and process of analysis

[3] The autistic spectrum is a developmental disorder. Its manifestations vary in ability and by age. The main impairments are in communication, socialization and imagination, which are present in different forms, at all levels of ability and at all stages of development (Zachor & Merrick, 2013; Costley, Clark, Keane, & Lane, 2012; Reichow, Doehring, Cicchetti, & Volkmar, 2011; Gold, Wigram, & Elephant, 2006). Following earlier diagnostic manuals (DMS-IV), Noah has been diagnosed with an Asperger syndrome (AS), which is a chronic and serious neurodevelopmental disorder defined by social deficits and restricted interests seen in the autistic spectrum. In contrast to the low-functioning forms of ASD, AS is characterized by less severe language and cognitive impairments (McPartland, Klin, & Volkmar, 2000; Meyer & Minshew, 2002).

Music and movement lessons were video-recorded and transcribed, and all the classroom teachers, assistants, therapist and students were interviewed (teachers and assistants in pairs and individually; students in groups and individually). The project data also included the field notes (notes and quick reflections on activities, student participation, etc. written right after the lessons) and a research diary (deep and analytical reflection on teaching, learning, interaction, etc.). Photos, drawings and sociometric tools contributed to the triangulation of the data.

As we started to reflect on researcher-student interaction and its impact on data analysis, we chose to focus on the case student Noah. When reading through the field notes and research diary and watching the transcribed videos during the intervention, we had already extracted the specific moments of interaction between Noah and the teacher-researcher. Later, we chose to focus on those situations where a clear change in Noah's interaction with the teacher-researcher could be identified. In the meantime, the preliminary analysis of the video data and transcripts of the lessons invited the teacher-researcher to reflect on her embodiment from the viewpoints of both a teaching and researching human being. During the intervention, different encounters had evoked a variety of feelings and emotions related to the vulnerability, disability and inaccessibility of the participating student. Gradually, bodily and musical interaction had created a shared space for a contact between the teacher-researcher and the student to emerge; a space that allowed the articulation of a narrative variety expressing significant experiences, emotions and agency; a space in which the narratives of both the researcher and the case participant interacted and affected one another.

Finally, to interpret the role of the researcher's embodiment in the process of data collection (teaching situations) and analysis among a variety of possibilities, we chose to focus (1) on the moment-to-moment interaction unfolded in the music and movement lessons, and (2) on the ways this interaction shaped the researcher's experience and understanding. We regard the transcriptions of the video recordings, field notes and research diary as narrative texts in which "events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience" (Riessman, 1993, p. 1), the audience here being the community of narrative inquirers. Here, the research data represents the narrative "ways of knowing and communicating" (ibid.) – in this case within the research process. We analyzed the data from the methodological viewpoint of the research task of this article. It should be noted that it is challenging here to distinguish between where the teacher-researcher is producing reflection and other narrative data to be analyzed and where she participates in the joint analysis of the data – should that distinction be necessary: it is rather a continuum inherent in practitioner research. In the analysis, we were interested in the content of the texts, rather than the structure, performance or interaction of the texts. Hence, the thematic analysis (Riessman, 1993, p. 2; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Clarke, Braun, & Hayfield, 2015), which is illustrated by vignettes compiled from the data. The thematic vignettes themselves form another narrative – a narrative analysis of the developmental turn in Noah's case. (Cf. paradigmatic and narrative analyses, Polkinghorne, 1995; see also Kim, 2016).

Findings

We identified four themes, i.e., four ways in which the first author's and Noah's embodied interaction and encounters as well as their changing positions and stances shaped the interpretation of the narrative that Noah told through his body and bodily expression. The identified themes were *clarity of the experience*, *empathy, valence* and *balance*. In what follows, each theme will be illustrated by a narrative description, a story of the actual classroom events. Each presented episode quotes the fieldnotes, as registered by the first author after lessons. Three of the episodes were later amended based on the teacher-researcher's reflections on the analysis process, here marked accordingly. Each episode has been a turning point in the interaction between the teacher-researcher Katja and the student Noah. They all have shaped the ways in which Noah and his agency has been perceived, interpreted and understood.

EPISODE 1

> I interact bodily with Noah for the first time when doing a stretching exercise together as a pair. In the exercise, we are supposed to lean on each other while stretching. In the beginning, Noah seems distant and absent, but as the exercise proceeds, he becomes more focused and starts to participate and interact. When interacting bodily with Noah, I think I gradually begin to understand him and to get some kind of hunch of his experience.
>
> [Later:] However, when watching the video, I feel confused as I notice a contradiction between Noah's absent look and monologue, on the one hand, and his active participation in the exercise, on the other. Thus, I start to question whether it is really possible to understand what the other is experiencing? This feeling of uncertainty made me search afterwards for more information regarding Noah's disorder in order to gain more understanding of the phenomena.

The first identified theme *clarity of the experience* concerns the ambiguity and truthness of the embodied ways of understanding the other – in this case the ways in which the participant's experience is interpreted and understood through shared bodily involvement and interaction by the teacher-researcher. In contrast to propositional knowledge shared by means of mutually agreed verbal symbols, in embodied interaction, the participants are in first-hand contact with one another, organically revealing the meanings they hold by their actions and being perceived, judged and understood more directly, without the language game and its demands of learned conventions or opportunities to hide behind the conventions. Embodied interaction may thus serve as a more ”user-friendly”, more nuanced, more ”honest” channel for communication – a more fundamental one, in contrast to the linguistic channel. As Gill (2000, p. 100) put it:

> The subtleties of the human form of life, together with its cognitive processes, cannot be taught by explicit rules and instruction. They can only be caught by indwelling the practices and procedures comprising the warp and weft of the fabric thereof. Only against the backdrop of embodied experience does propositional knowledge become comprehensible and useful.

In their embodied interaction, the teacher-researcher and the student here jointly dwell in the practising of music and movement. However, perceptions of actions and embodied experience, while true by default, are also subject to reinterpretations. Actions, movements, gestures, and facial expressions constitute a complex set that may, on closer examination, reveal something other than *in situ.*

The understanding of another’s presence and participation in embodied musical activity is naturally partial and filtered through the experience of the individual who is attuning to it. As noticed in the episode above, there is a chance to entirely misunderstand the experience of another. Fuchs and De Jaegher (2009, p. 479) suggest that these mismatches and misunderstandings when followed by repair can lead to more profound understanding in the end. Thus by acknowledging his or her own failures in the process of data production and analysis, the researcher can develop improved research methods based on these not so successful experiences. Bresler (2016) calls it “qualitative dissonance”, where incongruity is not to be solved, but to indicate important underlying questions, and as Polkinghorne (2007) notes, the ways in which we interpret others’ stories and experiences and make meaning of them play a crucial role especially for validity in narrative analysis. Hence, it serves well for the teacher-researcher to be aware of and sensitive to the directness, openness, clarity, ambiguity and possible misconstructions in the interplay of narratives in embodied interaction.

The second identified theme is *empathy*. The following episode describes the moment, when the student finally overcame obstacles in doing the suggested exercises and succeeded in a task that first seemed impossible for Noah to accomplish, from the researcher’s point of view. This touched the teacher-researcher deeply, she wanted to understand Noah and his world in-depth and she experienced profound empathy for him. Noah’s expressive and open movements and his commitment to the performance made the teacher-researcher realize her supposition of sameness and prejudice of what is the “open” way of expressing oneself. Still, she felt that through his mirror movements with the assisting teacher, Noah had expressed something unique, which she as a teacher-researcher wanted to understand.

EPISODE 2:

> In one exercise, done in pairs, for the purpose of developing kinaesthetic awareness and body consciousness, one acts as a marionette while the other moves the marionette by pulling the imaginary strings attached to the joints. At first, the exercise that Noah is doing with the assisting teacher seems

> impossible for him and it turns into a mirror game. However, when music is added and the exercise turns into a free improvisation exercise accompanied by me playing *Clowns* by Kabalevsky on the piano, Noah becomes surprisingly present and starts to move in an expressive, open and honest way. At that moment I realize that something important and impressive is taking place.
>
> When accompanying the exercise, I feel moved [almost to tears] by how Noah opens himself [up] to [a] large[r self], hands open, facing his partner. I think: "This is just wonderful!" And as if Noah would really be able to anticipate when the piece ends, he makes a large opening gesture and then, just at the right time, lets his arms come down. I think this is the best achievement that has happened in the development of Noah's agency in music and movement lessons for a long time!

Empathy has its possibilities and advantages in research but also constrains it. Empathy can be understood as "entering into" another's situation. Yet, it is a slippery term and may cover a variety of emotional responses (Sparkes & Smith, 2009). Firstly, it is challenging to become aware of, understand and articulate our empathic attunement to others, since we do it corporeally and unconsciously rather than intellectually. Secondly, as argued by Watson (2009, p. 114), we should be suspicious about empathy since "we do it too easily, projecting out understanding onto the unsuspecting other and in the process prematurely closing down research". In contrast, according to her, we should acknowledge *difference* as a starting point. When discussing the possibilities as well as limits of empathy, Smith (2008) asserts that through the sensing body the researcher may empathize and imagine inhabiting the body of the other, which may open up the avenue to understanding the embodied other. However, one should be cautious with putting oneself into the position of the other. The other *is* the other and should be respected as other, thus acknowledging what Levinas (1998) called *alterity* – ”the person’s *otherness* that precedes any attributes” (Sparkes & Smith, 2009, p. 69). Nevertheless, instead of conceiving empathy as a means of imagining being the other, it can be about imagining oneself in the context of the other.

It appears there is still need for the call for sensuous (Stoller, 1997) and empathetic (Osteen, 2008) scholarship, in which “a blend of experience and scholarly rigor, of intelligence and emotion can engage scholarship in a true dialogue with disability and difference” (Osteen, 2008, p. 300). Engaging with Noah through musical bodily involvement created a possibility of entering the experience and life-world of the other. Music and movement exercises enabled a space in which embodied interaction was situated and allowed the teacher-researcher to engage with the experiential world of a student with autistic spectrum disorder. This engagement required a holistic presence (by the researcher), including both “affect and cognition” (Duncan & Barrett, 2007), that is, embodied knowledge of the otherness. When pursuing to deepen the understanding of Noah’s socially isolated experience of the world, both empathy and other embodied experiences (within the research process) and the ethnographic commitment to the community of research participants helped the first author to imagine herself in the context of his life-world.

The third identified theme *valence* is about how the strong emotions and experiences evoked by the encounters between the teacher-researcher and Noah were positive versus negative. The theme of valence is illustrated by two episodes: the first episode presenting an example of a positive encounter and the second one a negatively experienced encounter.

EPISODE 3:

> We are playing catch around the room for as to experience spatial relationships and distances. This is the first time that me and Noah, forming a pair, are forced to have an eye contact. In the beginning, Noah always turns his back and walks away after throwing the ball. After a while, I walk after him and ask him to come back, and he does! He also answers me verbally! For the first time, I feel some kind of connection with him as he is communicating with me. It is a joyful surprise since usually Noah (because of his Asperger syndrome) has major difficulties in communication and interaction with others. This feeling of joy makes me see him in a positive light. It makes me believe that he is making remarkable progress in the development of agency.

EPISODE 4:

> I face feelings of fear and disappointment as Noah has a fit of rage in the middle of the lesson, possibly because of the recent news of a terrorist attack in Paris discussed at the beginning of the lesson. He doesn't like one exercise and starts to retreat away from the learning situation. I keep on teaching even though I notice his reaction and also assisting teachers pay attention to it. Eventually, Noah has a very strong, physical fit of rage and gets everybody's attention. I try to talk with him without succeeding. He keeps on repeating the word[s like] "retarded" by which he probably expresses his opinion of the

> exercise. Since we do not find another solution, he is finally escorted to his own classroom.
>
> After the lesson I reflect on the situation with other teachers. Noah's strong physical reaction and the racist [and other derogatory] words he repeated to the teacher who was trying to help him to overcome the burst of emotions have raised feelings of fear and disappointment in me. I don't see him anymore as a "victim" of illness or disability but rather as an agent capable of terrible things.
>
> [Later:] I realize that this emotionally charged incident has helped me to expand my understanding of Noah by seeing the "other side" of him and in doing so, has completed the picture of him.

The second and third theme, empathy and valence, are both associated with emotions. Embodied emotional orientations, such as empathy, "always and inevitably influence the research process" (Sparkes & Smith, 2009, p. 65) and thereby call for reflection on their possible effects on the reliability and validity of the research. Yet, as Ahern (1999, p. 408) suggests, considering the role of the researcher's own personal emotions and feelings is a question of the researcher's reflective ability rather than a question of objectivity, since it is not possible to set aside things researchers are not aware about. Reflexivity, in turn, involves the understanding that researchers are part of the social world that they study and requires honest examination of how the interests and values of the researcher may have an impact on research work (Frank, 1997; Porter, 1993). In addition, reflection is a "holistic process that draws on all the senses to know self, rather than merely a cognitive process", as Johns (2002, p. 9) states. Thus, subjective reactions should not be ignored, but examined systematically, leading to deeper understanding and new insights. Ahern (1999, p. 409) encourages researchers to determine the origin of the feelings, because it may help to gain insight of and articulate reactions from past events to ongoing research. Narrative analysis allows and also requires this kind of systematic study of personal emotions and experience (Riessman, 2001, p. 706).

The fourth theme, *balance,* points to the power relations between the teacher-researcher and the student, and the different roles of the teacher-researcher. The next episode describes a relaxation exercise – done in pairs, back to back, taking turns in leaning on each other. In this exercise, it is crucial to trust the other, breathe, and let go, as the other supports one's reclining.

EPISODE 5:

> I pick Noah to be my pair in the exercise, and he agrees to it. For the first time I get a sort of physical connection with him, and when we're doing the pectoral stretch, he also responds to my movement. Also when we're stretching back to back, I feel how he really leans on me. It feels somehow so good, I feel how he trusts me and has the courage to recline on me. But in a way I also need to encourage him in doing so: as soon as I release my grip, he leaves.
>
> [Later:] When I look and analyze the data, lots of different emotions arise, such as pity and lethargy in relation to Noah. I realize that I have failed many times when trying to engage him in the exercises. It disappoints me and frustrates me. It makes me feel that I am not a good and inspiring teacher after all. I keep pondering how I could do better and get him to participate though I realize that it is not just up to me.

> [Yet later:] I keep on wondering whether I am trying to influence the narrative of Noah, his development and success in these music and movement activities by planning the exercises according to his development. In principle that's what the teachers do, but now it has become a spiral in which analyzing the previous lesson and Noah's participation in it seems to have a big influence on how the next lesson is planned and carried out. I wonder whether my expectations for the success of this whole project affect lesson planning. Do I want the whole group to enjoy this as much as they can or are the musical contents more important? Because the group is so diverse and heterogenic, can I take notice of everyone? How do the rebellious boys affect my lesson planning? What about him whose narrative is being analyzed? Am I writing his narrative?

The objective of teaching practice aims at the development of students. In the intervention, the teacher-researcher's goal was to improve students' musical learning through bodily musical activities by monitoring students' participation in each lesson and planning new ones based on their progress. On the one hand, the teacher-researcher was an important part of the interaction and a catalyst for the coalescence of a variety of phenomena related to the development of agency. On the other hand, the students were responding and trying to meet the teacher-researcher's presumed expectations. In sum, the musical activities could not have been the same without the teacher-researcher's involvement and contribution to the planning of the lessons. Her situatedness within research was notable and she had an effect on the setting and students' participation being studied. Hence, as Berger (2015) states, there is a need for researchers to self monitor the impact of their biases, personal experiences and their beliefs on their research.

Margareta Hydén (2013) reminds us that, in narrative analysis, there is always a power relation between the teller and the listener, and this is self-evident particularly when researching sensitive topics (and) in the context of (special) music education. According to Tamboukou (2013, p. 90), power interferes especially “in creating conditions of possibility for specific narratives to emerge as dominant and for others to be marginalized”. In this study, this was revealed through the teacher-researcher’s understanding that her interest in the participation of this particular student and the development of his agency affected lesson planning and her own positioning in the music and movement lessons. Here, turning the analytic lens to the teacher-researcher’s side of embodied interaction revealed four themes for monitoring the detachment versus involvement of the reseacher for the sake of enhanced rigor and ethics of research: *clarity of the experience*, *empathy, valence* and *balance.* In pursuing practitioner research, the roles of teacher versus researcher unavoidably blend, and the process becomes subject to ethical critique: how does one balance between the aims and methods of teaching versus research. Does research “jeopardize the best interests of their students”, or are the “blended roles” truly “an advantage and a potential window into rich and enhanced insights about the practice” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 46)? This calls for continual awareness and reflection of the inherent power issues for the benefit of sensitivity and trustworthiness in narrative research.

Discussion

Pursuing sensitive narrative and ethnographic research brings up a variety of challenges in terms of trustworthiness. In sensitive research, the relationships between the researcher and each participant as well as their biological, personal, social, and cultural circumstances create frames for the data production and analysis. Embodied reactions and experiences, empathy, and efforts to understand the world and the story of the other in it may raise more questions than answers.

It seems that meaningful ways to engage in a narrative analysis as a practitioner and a researcher are provided by deliberately looking for a balance between getting too close to or being too distant from the participant, and by finding and respecting the boundaries between one another. Denzin (2003, p. 13), for example, turns our attention to a "moral ethnography that presumes a researcher who builds collaborative, reciprocal, trusting and friendly relations with the person he or she studies". By acknowledging the importance of ethnographic sensitivity in narrative data production and analysis, the development of agency is here primarily interpreted through the analysis of students' bodily expression and interaction with others and embodied expression of the self. This makes sense, since the students with special needs, in comparison to other students, have different, usually more embodied ways of articulating themselves and their development. Furthermore, Lars-Christer Hydén (2013) argues that bodies – including gesture, touch, voice, silence, gaze, positioning and other movements – are never neutral and the effects of the "diseased body" on the story and storytelling activity have been excluded from the analysis of narrative research. Infusion into the analysis, students' movements and other bodily expressions mutually evoke researcher's bodily responses. Interpreting students' actions, gestures and responses is challenging. The student may, for example, unintentionally signal a negative reaction through his bodily expression by turning his back towards the teacher, which might be interpreted as a rejection.

To conclude, while also contributing to the research in SEN and music education by dealing with inclusive aspects of music education, this article serves as an invitation for other narrative researchers to enter a further dialogue on embodiment in narrative analysis by asking: What is the meaning of the relationship between the researcher and the participant in terms of embodied experiences, senses, feelings, perceptions and emotions? How do these experiences affect the processes of producing and analyzing the data? Self-monitoring the embodied experience of the researcher is an indispensable tool in research. Researchers and participants are embodied and emotional beings, which cannot be overlooked in any phase of the research process. As Sparkes and Smith (2012) maintain, "[b]eing tuned into our own embodiment creates a whole other dimension from which to understand and engage with our research" (p. 69). The researcher's sense of embodiment, experiences, senses and emotions keep her rooted in the awareness that knowledge is produced by the body, which unavoidably affects all aspects of the research process (Ellingson, 2006). By paying attention to the researcher's self and the one's bodily reactions both during and after the fieldwork, researcher may get a holistic view about the embodied nature of the research, and gain thick descriptions pertinent to ethnographic and narrative research.

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